



Plant Hunters' Fairs

Newsletter 2018

We're all
passionate
about plants



“We’re all passionate about plants” is a something we can all say about ourselves, and it applies equally to our nurseryfolk: our venues; you, our customers and friends; and to us, Janet and Martin, at Plant Hunters’ Fairs.



When we started Plant Hunters’ Fairs a decade ago both Janet and I were thinking solely about our passion for plants and gardens and bringing the best of both together at affordable prices. To arrange a specialist plant fair with all our favourite nurseries at our favourite local garden was a dream come true.

We’ve been living the dream ever since!

Little did we imagine that first Plant Hunters’ Fair at The Dorothy Clive Garden would blossom and grow into 45 events across 10 counties and featuring a growing band of nurseries and artisans currently numbering 49 and travelling from 20 counties.

We couldn’t have kept going and growing without the passion for plants you all have shown over the years—thanks!

“Passionate about plants” is the theme of this newsletter and we have lots of brilliant articles on all aspects of plants and planting.

Special features by our top nurseryfolk and head gardeners:

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Plus news of our new nurseries and artisans and details of our calendar of 41 events planned for 2018.

Cover photo: Nic Ffoulkes Jones of Hall Farm Nursery at our August Bank Holiday plant fair at The Dorothy Clive Garden.
 Photo credit: Rob Potterton of Pottertons Nursery and Garden home of our plant fair on Sunday 27th May

The Lavinia Walk at Cholmondeley Castle

Head Gardener Barry Grain on planting a tribute to the lady who transformed the gardens

Visitors to Cholmondeley last year will have seen us marking out some new beds either side of a long gravel pathway running from the herbaceous borders down towards the temple garden. This new and important garden feature is called the Lavinia Walk, and is dedicated to the late Lavinia, Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley, and in celebration of her life's work in the garden here. So in January 2017 I sat down with Lord Cholmondeley and his family to plan the two year work program to implement these new borders, and design the planting scheme. This area of the garden is currently very open, and contains only expansive grassed areas and mature trees set back from the main axis, so all in all quite a dramatic change.

It all started with the marking out of the beds in the loose style of a Greek key pattern, with the larger sections 6m deep and 7m long, the smaller recesses being 3m deep by 5m long. Whilst the existing herbaceous borders would ultimately be incorporated into this new design, we left them for the time being, and in March marked then sprayed off the turf down the avenue to give the 'footprint' of the new borders. In April mild steel edging was installed along the inside of the borders to act as a barrier between the gravel path, with the plan in September to lay turf up to the edging to frame the borders. For now the beds were rotavated, and to save them being fallow until autumn we broadcast sowed Essex Red Clover as a green manure to help build up some bulk density and nutrient levels within the soil, which up until this point had just laid under turf. Now the clover of course is very vigorous so to save it running to continuous flower through summer and seeding itself everywhere we ran the strimmers over the beds 3 or 4 times during the course of the season to prevent this, and then rotavated it all in in early September.

Now, the idea of borders in this chosen shape may seem unusual, but the borders needed a backdrop of some form given the open nature of the site, and it was felt that running a hedge along the back of the borders (a more commonly chosen solution) was not for us. The family wanted to be a bit more creative, and also with these borders running from west to east the light and sun levels would be uneven throughout the year meaning uneven growth. Therefore in the grassed recesses we searched for a suitable variety of tree, to give all year round interest and act as a less formal non-solid backdrop. After much thought we selected *Malus hupehensis*, which for me is one of the very best crabs. It is very hardy, with good vigour and constitution, and is the kind of tree that we could formatively prune to maintain a more compact, yet open and attractive habit. The real beauty of this *Malus* is its late white blossom from pink buds, small cherry red fruits, and superb autumn colour. These duly arrived with us from our friends at the excellent Cherry Tree Arboretum in Cheshire sometime



“the ‘footprint’ of the new borders”
Photo: Barry Grain

in early October, and were duly planted without haste, all very exciting!

In the meantime we were working on the plant list, and were talking with our talented local blacksmith Matthew Hallett about some new ironwork supports to grow climbing roses centrally in each of the larger recesses. Roughly fifty percent of the plants in the existing herbaceous borders were to be kept, with most scheduled for lifting and division in spring 2018, but some like Penstemon 'Garnet', Salvia patens, and the superb Diascia personata would require propagating and planting out fresh, so our 'greenhouse man' Bill got busy with that. Of the fifty percent of varieties that would not fit into the new scheme all were to be lifted, divided and distributed to other areas of the garden, thus giving us the impetus to also give areas like the glade and parts of the temple garden an overhaul.

So as to the new plant list, well, in Cholmondeley style, and fitting for the lady of its creation it is both bespoke and exciting. Borders with lots of interest all through the year are very much our preference here. So several varieties of hellebore such as H. 'Angel Glow' and H. 'Mme Lemonnier' were planted in strong groups around the base of each of the new rose supports as a good use of space and winter

interest, along with carefully positioned groups of Euphorbia characias 'Wulfenii' to add permanent structure. Early to mid-season colour will start with thousands of tulips, with T. 'Carnival de Nice' and T. 'Estella Rijnveld' planted in ribbons all along the borders, and these will give rise to bearded Iris 'Carnaby' I. 'Caldron' and I. sibirica, Eremurus 'Cleopatra', Delphiniums, climbing roses and several fine selections of tree peonies from Kelways.

The colours change and intensify as summer progresses with bold reds and oranges, but also lots of pink shades. Season long colour is provided by Penstemon 'Garnet' and the still superb Diascia personata. Alstromeria, Helenium, Crocosmia, Lilium, Persicaria, Monarda, and ultimately Aster and Amaryllis belladonna to name a but a few continue the interest through the year and into autumn. Lots of half-hardy plants will be seasonally added every year with selections of Dahlia, Salvia and Canna, adding further textures and wow factor.

The borders themselves will be spectacular enough, but at either end of this walkway some real presence will be created. At the western end two pieces of statuary in the form of garlanded cherubs by Van Nost will be installed atop the rose garden steps. These two pieces have spent many years ornamenting the temple garden, and are from the third hall and gardens of the early 18th century, and will be restored over the coming months with final placement taking place in October 2018. At the eastern end, towards the temple garden, three classical stone benches will be recessed into a large half circle of hornbeam hedging that arches over the path. In front of these will be a central dedication from the family to Lady Lavinia herself, with carved stone, pebbles and a decorative urn, all of which is to be placed through 2018.

All told I personally cannot think of a greater tribute to such a fantastic lady gardener, who almost single handed transformed Cholmondeley into what it is today.

Cholmondeley Castle Gardens Plant Hunters' Fair

Sunday 29th April 2018 10am - 5pm

Special Event Price Fair and gardens: £3.50

Free Parking.

Cholmondeley Castle Gardens

Malpas

Cheshire SY14 8AH

Tel: 01829 720383 website: www.cholmondeleycastle.com



"At either end of this walkway some real presence will be created"

Photo: Barry Grain



10 Years at Adlington Hall

It's our 10th glorious year at Cheshire's Adlington Hall and what a wonderful time we've had here.

Photo: Zoltan Hamori

With the fair laid out around the hall; teas on the lawns; bluebells in bloom through the woods and flower borders bursting with colour; this must be one of our favourite places to hold a plant fair.

Bridge Farm Plants with interesting and unusual perennials

ChickenStreet with chicken-proof plants for the garden

Conquest Plants Nursery specialising in coloured foliage

CraftyPlants with air plants, bromeliads as well as other tropicals and sub-tropicals

Green's Leaves from Gloucestershire with the newest lines in flowering plants

Hall Farm Nursery specialising in perennials and alpinas.

Jurassicplants Nurseries growing unusual seed-raised trees, shrubs and climbers

Lyneal Mill Nursery with cottage garden plants

Mandsand Plants Nursery from Cheshire specialising in Perennials and shrubs with an emphasis on interesting foliage which includes a good range of Heucheras, Heucherellas and Tiarellas

Mayfields Plants with bee and butterfly friendly perennials

Meadow View Plants growing sought after perennials

Packhorse Farm Nursery specialising in Acers and other ornamental trees and shrubs.

Pottertons Nursery specialising in alpines, dwarf bulbs and woodland plants.

ShadyPlants.com with plants for shade

SpecialPerennials growing summer and late flowering perennials to attract wildlife.

Standwell Tools with garden tools designed to help prevent back ache

Stonyford Cottage Nursery with sempervivum and moisture loving plants

The Gobbett specialising in Syringa (Lilac), flowering dogwoods and beardless Iris

Tissington Nursery specialising in perennials.

Sunday 13th May 2018 10am - 4pm

Gardens and plant fair: £3.00 Free parking. Dogs on leads welcome

Mill Lane, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 4LF

Tel: 01625 827 595 Email: enquiries@adlingtonhall.com website: www.adlingtonhall.com

Helping Hope House Hospices

At the British Ironwork Centre

2018 will be our 4th year at the British Ironwork Centre in Oswestry Shropshire and we are really proud to have helped raise over £5000 for Hope House Children's Hospices through the donations you make when coming into the fair.

Let's smash that total in 2018!

Sunday 20th May 2018

Sunday 29th July 2018

Times 10am - 4pm

Entry to fair, sculpture trail and ironworks : £1.00 in aid of Hope House

Free parking

The British Ironwork Centre
Whitehall Aston
Oswestry
Shropshire
SY11 4JH

E-mail: info@britishironworkcentre.co.uk Phone: 08006888386 website: www.britishironworkcentre.co.uk



Back to Bosworth

Saturday 9th June 10am-4pm

We had a lovely time at Bosworth Battlefield last June and it was lovely to see so many families enjoying the wonderful plants on offer.

Entry to fair £1.00 (under 16's free)

Dogs on leads welcome

P&D Parking

Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre
Sutton Cheney, Nuneaton CV13 0AD

Phone: 01455 290429

email: bosworth@leics.gov.uk

Website: www.bosworthbattlefield.co.uk.



"That's enough plants Mummy"

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

Picture Perfect Persicarias

Kim Hurst of the Cottage Herbery in praise of a favourite family of herbs



On the wall above my desk hangs a watercolour of a small selection of the herbs we grow. It was painted by our very talented friend Charlotte Walter as the front cover of a booklet, which I put together back in the days of exhibiting at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. Central to the picture is a sprig of *Persicaria odorata*, which Charlotte captured beautifully in its high summer colour, when the plants leaves have a distinctive russet red lipstick kiss marking on the leaves. *Persicarias* are high on the list of one of our favourite genus and we have many, but its as herb growers that the edible forms interest us most, especially a certain trio.

First up *Persicaria bistorta* syn. *Polygonum bistorta* commonly known as Bistort. In our previous garden Bistort grew with health and abundant vigour, enjoying the semi-shaded position in the moisture retentive soil, which was a gift for the native herbs we grew there.

A hardy sturdy herbaceous *Persicaria* producing a wealth of leaves in early spring, which is the best time to eat them, when they are young and tender. One particular dish known as Easter Ledges pudding uses these young leaves shredded, mixed with fresh young nettle leaves plus other spring herbs of family preference then added to beaten egg. This mixture was then poured over a base of oatmeal and barley, then oven baked creating a dish of sustenance and a herbal spring tonic.

Historically the roots were used often in times of hardship for their high starch content helping to stave off starvation.

However, what about being garden worthy? Well that comes with the appearance in spring of the ramrod tight buds that push through the leaves reaching about 35cm before opening out into 'easy on the eye' pink shaggy flowers. These are usually 6/8cm long and vary in thickness, they last about 3 to 4 weeks depending on the seasonal weather. Often in late summer you get a bonus second less vigorous flush of flowers.

Division of the rootstock in early spring is advisable to keep the plants from developing woody crowns which reduces the production of flowers and all round general performance.

Secondly, *Persicaria odorata* and now for something deliciously exotic known as Vietnamese Coriander to us because of the taste being very like coriander. It is a native of south East Asia where it grows profusely in the wild in mostly damp moisture retentive ditches, on stream banks and around ponds. However, this *Persicaria* is not frost hardy and is best grown as a potted herb in temperate climates.

Our stock plants only leave the glasshouse when there is no threat of frost. Easily cared for growing in our own coir peat-free growing medium and fed regularly with our own organic liquid feed we can grow substantial plants that will fill a 10 litre pot in one season.

Do encourage new growth as these young leaves have the better sweeter flavour, ageing leaves become much stronger in flavour and slightly bitter which is not to every ones taste.

One plant can grow and produce enough leaves for our own consumption throughout a season, if we have a reasonably warm spring, summer and autumn. Pot on before plants start to show signs of stress.

One piece of advise for growing this *Persicaria* would be to always keep a few cuttings going especially through the unpredictable winters we tend to have. When taking cuttings make sure you include a piece with a node attached, this will form roots when placed in water within days.



"*Persicaria bistorta* produces a wealth of leaves in early spring, which is the best time to eat them".

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs



"*Persicaria odorata* is known as Vietnamese Coriander to us because of the taste being very like coriander".

Photo: Kim Hurst

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In Asia it is commonly known as ‘Laska leaves’, Vietnamese Mint due to it’s rampant growth habit and Rau Ram by the Vietnamese. Wherever migrant Vietnamese have journeyed they have taken a few sprigs of this herb with them as it is essential to the flavour of their cuisine.

There are so many dishes in which to use this herb but one that always seems the most appropriate to extol its use in is the Vietnamese spring roll. The main ingredient is dry fried minced pork with finely chopped spring onion, chilli to taste, seasoning and a whole leaf of *Persicaria odorata* all rolled up in a rice pancake and steamed, delicious street food.

Thirdly, *Persicaria hydropiper* var. *rubra* . This plant heralds from Japan, where it is known as Azebu-tade, we know it as Red Hot Water Pepper, another name is Marsh Pepper Knotweed, as it’s names suggest it likes moisture. It grows in damp places and shallow water. The green wild form can be found in the wild in Australia, New Zealand, temperate Asia and North America.

An attractive decorative bronze/red high glossed leaved member of the genus which again although perennial is frost tender. We grow this from cuttings in the spring as soon as we see the stock plants showing signs of growth or by seeds which we sow fresh off the plants as soon as they are ripe, overwintering the seed trays in a frost free glasshouse.

As not to repeat myself the growing of this *persicaria* is the same as the *odorata*, one tip is to never let it dry out, better to err on the damp side. It makes a very attractive pot plant especially when it flowers in July through to September, these are diminutive, delicate, pink, floral scented and numerous.

The leaves are hot, pungent and peppery to the taste being used in Japanese salads, soups and in freshwater fish dishes only. The young sprouted seeds are called ‘beni-tade’ and used as sashimi garnish. While the dried seeds are added to wasabi, made into a peppery condiment and the young fresh seeds used as a salad garnish.

Kim Hurst runs The Cottage Herbery with husband Rob and is the author of “Hidden Histories Herbs – 150 Herbs” published by Timber Press



“*Persicaria hydropiper* var. *rubra* is from Japan, where it is known as Azebu-tade, we know it as Red Hot Water Pepper”.

Photo: Kim Hurst

Whittington Castle

Good Friday 30th March 10am-4pm

£1.00 per car

Easter weekend is the biggest in the gardening calendar for buying and planting plants. Our Good Friday fair at the dramatic Whittington Castle near Oswestry Shropshire is the absolutely ideal time to get those plants to perk up your pots, boost your borders and beautify your beds.

The fair and castle grounds are free to entry—it’s just £1.00 to park. Dogs on leads are very welcome and the tea rooms and gift and book shops will be open throughout.

We’ve got the high quality nurseries you expect from a Plant Hunters’ Fair so there’s no excuse not to pop in and pick up a plant (or two!)

Whittington Castle, Castle Street, Whittington, Shropshire SY11 4DF

Telephone 01691 662500 E-mail info@whittingtoncastle.co.uk website: www.whittingtoncastle.co.uk .





Photo: The National Memorial Arboretum

New Award Winning Garden at the National Memorial Arboretum

Plant Hunters' Fairs have been coming to this inspirational, national venue now for 9 years and we have watched the arboretum grow and mature whilst building a loyal following of plant enthusiasts for these three friendly and free to enter events.

There's always something new for garden lovers to discover at the arboretum.

A new garden space was officially opened at the National Memorial Arboretum in October 2017, donated by the Institute of Quarrying (IQ) as part of its centenary celebrations.

The multiple award winning IQ Quarry Garden featured at this year's RHS Chatsworth Flower Show and was designed by garden expert Paul Hervey-Brookes. It won Best In Show, Best Construction and a Gold Medal. The garden has been reimagined to fit a bespoke space just inside the entrance to the National Memorial Arboretum.

Paul, an old friend of Plant Hunters' Fairs, having attended our events for several years with his then nursery in Gloucestershire, is responsible for interpreting the IQ Quarry Garden at the National Memorial Arboretum. "The new design is true to the spirit of the original IQ Quarry Garden, which represented the life cycle of a quarry, from extraction to reinstatement and sustainability. It incorporates many of the features of the RHS Chatsworth show garden, including elements of 'Passing Light', a three metre tall, distressed Corten steel sculptural artwork created by artist Ann-Margreth Bohl. Hidden amongst the planting are a number of slate monoliths, acknowledging the garden's quarrying roots.

"We have created a linear 'walk-through' space, providing a beautifully planted corridor linking elements of the Arboretum. It's wonderful to think that the garden will now be enjoyed by future generations, as well as providing a lasting legacy to the Institute's centenary."



"We have created a linear 'walk-through' space, providing a beautifully planted corridor linking elements of the Arboretum"

Photo: The National Memorial Arboretum

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The garden brilliantly tells the story of how plants can recolonise the harshest environments and the rusted features illustrate how disused man-made features can be transformed into something beautiful. Part of the motto of the Institute of Quarrying is carved into the uprights: “The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s, but the earth he hath given to the children of men.”

Sarah Montgomery, Managing Director of the National Memorial Arboretum, said: “The Arboretum lies at the centre of the Trent Valley’s valuable sand and gravel resources and, with active working for minerals close by, we have a daily reminder of the origins of our site. This new garden will help explain to visitors the evolution of the landscape and illustrate the wonderful uses that former quarries can be put to.”

“The ICS Quarry Garden is not only a beautiful addition to the Arboretum, it will also play an important role linking several of our other gardens and memorials, helping visitors explore this area of our grounds in a new way.”

Thanks to the National Memorial Arboretum for the quotes used in this article.

We have our usual three plant fairs at the arboretum in 2018:

Saturday 17th March

Saturday 12th May

Saturday 28th July 2018

Times: 10am - 4pm (Venue open at 9am)

As always, the plant nurseries will be setting up along the Yeomanry Avenue near the main Armed Forces Memorial.

Free entry to fair and arboretum
(Pay & Display Car Park)

Dogs are not permitted in the arboretum but there is a dog walking circuit around the perimeter of the venue.

Restaurant open throughout.

National Memorial Arboretum,
Croxall Road, Alrewas, Staffordshire
DE13 7AR

Tel: 01283 792333

Email: info@thenma.org.uk

website: <http://www.thenma.org.uk/>



“The rusted features illustrate how disused man-made features can be transformed into something beautiful”.

Photo: The National Memorial Arboretum



“The earth He hath given to the children of men”.

Photo: The National Memorial Arboretum

Top Ten Ornamental Grasses for your Garden

Christine Ffoulkes Jones of Hall Farm Nursery counts down her personal hit-parade



People often ask me ‘What is your favourite plant?’, which of course for any gardener is a difficult question to answer. We have so many “favourites”, don’t we? Perhaps it is something that grows well in our own garden and gives us a long season of interest – like *Verbena bonariensis* for me. Or for my husband it’s the fleeting beauty of *Sanguinaria canadensis* ‘Flore Pleno’ with the most exquisite flowers each one lasting hours rather than days.

But I can be sure that if there is one group of garden plants that gives me great pleasure, it is the ornamental grasses.



“...attracted by the ornamental grasses I have to stop or at least linger a moment for closer inspection of this picture of everchanging beauty”

Photo: Christine Ffoulkes Jones

There is something about the way their leaves and flowers waver in the air, beckoning the attention of anyone passing by. Each time I walk through my nursery in late summer and autumn, I am attracted by the ornamental grasses and have to stop or at least linger a moment for closer inspection of this picture of everchanging beauty. The flowers seem to transform their hues as the sunlight falls upon them throughout the hours of the day. On rainy days the flowers can bow over from the weight of moisture and then resurrect, with beads of moisture holding on and glistening in the light. On breezier days the movement is more intense and the sounds created by the some of the larger grasses introduce an extra sensory dimension into the garden. Even without our gardens, we are in contact with grasses throughout our lives. We love to sit on a grassy bank for a picnic or take walks in the countryside surrounded by grasses and sedges.

Through my decades of professional gardening I have grown a great range of the commercially available grasses. In the early days I made mistakes – for example by planting *Phalaris arundinacea* ‘Picta’ in my herbaceous border. This plant is commonly known as ‘Gardeners Garters’ and it is perhaps the one grass that sadly puts off more people growing grasses than any other. It has strong creeping roots and spreads quickly, taking over other less vigorous plants. But non-the less, its’ handsome striped foliage can be used to good effect in large container schemes. Remember that adage ‘right plant, right place’ – as gardeners we aspire to that day when all our plants are in the ideal place.

I see my top ten selections as the tip of the iceberg, I could easily make it my top 100 but that would be a book. I have chosen some well-known plants that many of you will already grow and some are lesser known. They are chosen for their long-lasting beauty, structural form lasting through winter months, ease of growing and well-mannered habit.

And in at number 10 is *Hakonechloa macra* ‘Aureola’. Many grasses like an open sunny spot, but this is one which is happy in at least partial shade. It forms distinctive rounded mounds of tumbling golden foliage thinly striped with green. It is at home at the front of a woodland border or excellent in containers. It slowly grows year by year, eventually being big

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enough to fill a stately home sized container. If you have trouble remembering or pronouncing its name then use my pet name for it ‘Hack ‘em off lower’....it will also help you to prune it...in February do precisely that!

At number 9 is *Calamagrostis brachytricha*. Known as Korean Feather Grass. 4 to 5ft high in flower it forms a clump of loose, glossy green leaves and plumes of purple-tinged sprays of flowers in late summer and early autumn. It remains upright and attractive through until spring.

For the children we have number 8. *Lagurus ovatus* ‘Bunny’s Tails’. I include this annual grass in my list because if you grow a batch of these from seed this spring you will be sure to tap into the imagination of someone young or young at heart. Within weeks you will have neat little clumps of soft grassy foliage, topped with furry bunny tail flower heads. Collect your own seed for future plantings. The flowers also dry very well too for floral art work.

Number 7 is one of the many *Miscanthus - sinensis* ‘Morning Light’. This sturdy clump forming perennial attains a height of 5 to 6ft with its fine silvery variegated foliage. It is quite slow to start but left undisturbed it steadily increases to form an eye-catching accent plant. It looks stunning against a dark background.

At 6 it is *Pennisetum alopecuriodes* ‘Red Head’. Some *Pennisetums* are prolific self-seeders, but not this one. It is a politely mannered perennial which thrives in an open sunny position. Striking dark bottlebrush flowers spray out of the compact mounds of foliage from midsummer onwards. They remain on the plant standing well throughout the worst of winter weathers – including snow. Also, the flowers are good for cutting, a virtue of many ornamental grasses.

In at 5 it’s *Cortaderia selloana*, the Pampas Grass. Many of us will remember how popular this plant was in 1970’s front gardens, where it left little room for anything else. If you have a small garden there are dwarf forms available such as ‘Pumila’, but if you do garden on a larger scale then the Pampas Grass is a bold and impressive garden plant.

At 4 it’s *Stipa tenuissima* or Pony Tail Grass. Growing about 18” tall in flower, it is useful in borders, containers and gravel gardens. Admire it early in the season with its fine fresh verdant feel, then in summer as it starts to flower neat and upright and into late summer when the flowers erupt into clouds which billow in breeze. See it at dawn on a summer morning, heavy with early morning dew from a cool night and the effect is surreal and eerie.

Number 3 is *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’ Widely used in landscaping schemes, especially on traffic islands on the continent, it is more than worthy of a place in the finest gardens. It has a very strong upright habit and I like to describe it as taking up the space of a slim 5 to 6ft high person standing in the garden. It is a great accent plant and works well as a single specimen or in mass plantings.

At 2 is the subtle beauty of *Panicum virgatum* ‘Squaw’. As the name suggests it is a native of the North American Prairies. Forming strong clumps 4 to 5ft high, with dainty airy panicles of flowers in late summer and autumn. These flowers seem to reflect the colours of surrounding plants, whether it is the powdery blue of *Aster* ‘Little Carlow’, striking yellow of *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *deamii*’ or strong mauve of *Verbena bonariensis* – all of which associate perfectly with this grass.



“*Hakonechloa macroa* ‘Aureola’ is happy in at least partial shade.”

Photo: Christine Ffoulkes Jones



“*Calamagrostis brachytricha* is known as Korean Feather Grass.”

Photo: Christine Ffoulkes Jones



“*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* ‘Karl Foerster’ is a great accent plant.”

Photo: Christine Ffoulkes Jones

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And still at number 1 after so many years it is *Stipa gigantea*. Often called Giant Oat Grass it stands 5 to 6ft high in flower, with its heads of open golden oat-like flowers. I have seen it thriving in almost all types of soil – from light sands to heavy, claggy, even wet clay. Just give it an open sunny spot and it will take care of itself for many years. I recently found my grandfather's RHS pocket diary from 1965. In the back was a list of recommended ornamental garden grasses and there was *Stipa gigantea* – 50 years later it is still at the top.

This top 10 includes some of the well-known genera but there are so many more that you could choose. Once you get swayed towards growing grasses you will be wisped along on a delightful journey with them.

You will soon get the hang of the cultivation and maintenance. There are a few basic guide lines. The most important is never cut your grasses down in the autumn. Many grasses are deciduous (they lose their colour in the autumn, but continue to stand up in the garden until spring), these ones we can cut down right to the ground in February or March. Other grasses and many of the sedges (*Carex*), are evergreen or semi-evergreen, (these keep their colour during the winter months), these are the ones we don't cut down but tend to tidy up or comb through with our rubber gloved hands in the spring. Incidentally, if you want to know an easy way to distinguish between a grass and a sedge then run your closed finger and thumb carefully along the wide surface of the leaf...the sedge blade is triangular and will not feel like a flat surface. "Sedges have edges!".

I hope this article will inspire you to try some different grasses in your own garden this year.

Why do I love ornamental grasses so much? The answer my friend is blowing in the wind.

Christine Ffoulkes Jones runs Hall Farm Nursery with husband Nic and is a well-known garden speaker and show judge.



"*Stipa gigantea* is often called Giant Oat Grass: it stands 5 to 6ft high in flower."

Photo: Christine Ffoulkes Jones

Plant Hunters Fair and NGS Open Day at Norton Priory

Sunday 10th June 2018 NEW DATE 10am - 4pm

FREE ENTRY TO FAIR Free parking

The Walled Garden itself will be open in aid of the National Garden Scheme (NGS) with a special admission price of £3.50 for the Walled Garden (entry to the garden is optional).

Norton Priory Museum & Gardens,
Tudor Road, Manor Park, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 1BD

Photo: Norton Priory

Alderford Lake

A new name for this free to enter fair in Whitchurch

Sunday 18th March 2018 10am - 4pm

Alderford Lake (formally known as Dearnford Lake) is the venue for our early plant fair in Shropshire. This is our 5th year here and we love coming along in March to get the season well and truly kicked-off!



Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

Entry to the fair and parking is completely free, as is access to the super café serving locally sourced food throughout the day.

This year will have a record number of nurseries and artisans at the event—20 at last count so there's even more reason to come along.

The lakeside walks are available for a small charge of 50p per person to cover their upkeep.

Let's face it; it's March so dress up warm and plan to stop for a hot drink when the plant buying's done!

Nurseries attending 18th March 2018:

- **Bridge Farm Plants** specialising in interesting and unusual perennials
- **ChickenStreet** with a wide selection of chicken-proof plants for the garden
- **Chris Cooke** specialising in rare and less common hardy and half-hardy bulbous, herbaceous and shrubs. RHS Gold medallist.
- **Conquest Plants Nursery** specialising in coloured foliage
- **Cooper and Jones** with handmade metal plant supports
- **Cotswold Garden Flowers** Bob Brown's well known nursery specialising in rare plants of all kinds.
- **CraftyPlants** with Tillandsia (air plants), bromeliads as well as other tropicals and sub-tropicals
- **Green's Leaves** specialising in Australasian & coloured leaf shrubs
- **Hall Farm Nursery** specialising in perennials and alpines. RHS Gold medallists including Chelsea Gold.
- **Hooksgreen Herbs** specialising in unusual herbs. RHS medallists.
- **Jurassicplants Nurseries** specialising in unusual seed-raised trees, shrubs and climbers
- **Lyneal Mill Nursery** specialising in Agastache, Digitalis, Epimedium, Eryngium, Erysimum, Scabious, Verbascum and simple flowered Dahlias
- **Mayfields Plants** specialising in bee and butterfly friendly perennials
- **Meadow View Plants** specialising in sought after perennials in the Apiaceae family, plus a choice range of Geum, Pulmonaria, Sanguisorba, Thalictrum, Aster, Hesperantha
- **Orchard Furniture** with a great range of teak garden furniture
- **Packhorse Farm Nursery** specialising in Acers and other ornamental trees and shrubs. RHS Gold medallist
- **Penmere Plants** specialising in Fuchsias
- **Pottertons Nursery** specialising in alpines, dwarf bulbs and woodland plants. RHS Gold medallists including Chelsea Gold.
- **SpecialPerennials** specialising in summer and late flowering perennials.
- **The Gobbett** specialising in Syringa (Lilac), flowering dogwoods and beardless Iris

Alderford Lake, Tilstock Road, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 3JQ

Sunday 18th March 2018 10am - 4pm Free entry to fair, free parking.

01948 258639 email: info@alderford.com website: www.alderford.com

Any Questions?

Linda Scott proves there's no such thing as stupid question



Since starting to sell plants at fairs in 1999, it has been my pleasure to meet many lovely gardeners from absolute beginners to total addicts. Being one of the addicts myself I totally understand. At least it's a healthy addiction with many physical and mental benefits.

The range of questions I have been asked over the years varies greatly. One gentleman admitted he had never gardened before, and after acquiring his first garden he wanted advice on plants that were easy to grow and would fill his plot quickly. After hopefully pointing him in the right direction he finally asked if the plants he had just bought needed taking out of the pots before he planted them. A lesson for me not to assume that things are obvious just because I've been doing them for years.

Another lady had bought a plant from me to put in a pot, the following year she came back and said it wasn't doing very well. Apparently it repeatedly grew well for a while then almost died before recovering again. After some discussion I realised there were no drainage holes in the pot and the poor plant nearly drowned every time it was watered. Again, just because we more experienced gardeners know these things we shouldn't assume everyone does.

Most customers just want advice on the best plants for particular areas of the garden such as dry shade or very wet areas. Some ask me to identify a plant from a photograph and if I don't know the answer one of the other nurseryfolk at the fair can usually help. A more difficult identification is when someone asks, 'I have a plant in the garden with blue flowers, can you tell me what it is?' or 'My plant has long narrow leaves, what is it?' After a bit of a question and answer session we can usually get to the species if not the exact name.



"Don't be afraid to ask a question. The stallholders are always happy to try and help"

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

At the other end of the scale are the really experienced gardeners who know as much, and probably more than me. These conversations are where I get to ask the questions and learn about plants I don't know.

Sometimes my husband Stephen comes to the fairs to help. He is very good at helping with things such as unloading and parking the van but is not a gardener, so please forgive the hesitation if you ask him a botanical question. All the other stallholders find it amusing when I am chatting to them on their stall and my phone rings, they know that someone has asked Stephen a question and I need to return pronto! He is getting better, try him on bearded iris.

So whatever your gardening experience please don't be afraid to ask a question. I and I'm sure the other stallholders are always happy to try and help.

Linda is an expert and enthusiast on hardy geraniums.

Southwell Minster

Sunday 12th August

11am—4pm

Entry to fair and garden: £1.00 donation
to preservation work at the minster.

On Sunday 12th August the fair returns to the romantic setting of the Education Garden at Southwell Minster, Nottinghamshire NG25 0HD.

The garden, created in 2014 on the south side of the Minster building, nestles under the 1452 gable of a former palace of the Archbishops of York.

We asked Charlies Leggatt from the Minster to tell us something of the intrigues and history.

“Here, in 1530, Cardinal Wolsey spent the last summer of his life trying in vain to appease the wrath of the King over the failure to secure a divorce from Catherine of Aragon”.

“Don’t miss the Minster’s Chapter House with its wonderful medieval stone carvings of plants, flowers, animals and green men. In her novel ‘Wolf Hall’ Hilary Mantel imagines Wolsey in the Chapter House with the carvings ‘so subtle that it is as if....stone has burst into florid life.’”

Rich in history, the town of Southwell itself is a delight with many individual family-run shops and tea rooms, as well as the coaching Inn where King Charles I spent his initial moments of final captivity.

There is a wonderful line-up of nurseries at the event: **Ashdale Nursery** with herbaceous, shrubs and alpines; **Bridge Farm Plants** with unusual perennials; **Chris Cooke Plants** with rare hardy and half-hardy bulbous, herbaceous and shrubs; **Conquest Plants Nursery** specialising in coloured foliage; **FronDESCENCE** with Hostas and Ferns; **Green's Leaves** with new perennials; **Hall Farm Nursery** specialising in perennials and alpines; **Jurassicplants** with unusual edibles; **Linda Scott Plants** specialising in hardy geraniums; **Malcolm Allision Plants** with hardy perennials, alstroemerias and shrubs; **Penmere Plants** specialising in Fuchsias; **Piecemeal Plants** with herbaceous perennials; **Plantwild** specialising in native wildflowers; **Pottertons Nursery** specialising in alpines, dwarf bulbs and woodland plants; **SpecialPerennials** with summer and late flowering perennials; **The Gobbett** with flowering shrubs and perennials and **Tissington Nursery** specialising in perennials.

For a full day’s visit, don’t miss the National Trust’s Workhouse, on the edge of the town.

www.southwellminster.org

Dogs on leads welcome.

Refreshments available throughout the event.



Photo: Southwell Minster



“The garden, created in 2014 on the south side of the Minster building, nestles under the 1452 gable of a former palace of the Archbishops of York”

Photo: Plant Hunters’ Fairs



Photo: Plant Hunters’ Fairs

Delivering the Dream

Jane Allison of Mayfields on the difficult task of the garden designer



Photo: Rob Potterton

My horticultural year is split into three activities: growing and selling my large selection of bee and butterfly friendly perennials for Plant Hunters' Fairs, giving my horticulture talks to garden societies and U3A groups, and spending hours at my drawing board creating garden designs which hopefully fulfil my clients' wish lists.

In my role of garden designer, I work closely with my clients to create their vision of what they would like to see when they look out of their windows and into their garden space. Quite often, however, this vision is only partly formed and they will be unsure how it can be achieved. Some will only require me to walk round their garden with them and advise them on how a border shape could be changed, or the planting made better, or where they could site a pond etc. Some will want a detailed planting plan for an existing border and a list of plants which can be disposed of or re-sited. What many cannot face is a complete make over (probably influenced by the antics of 'Ground Force'!) This latter group probably accounts for 40% of my clients, but the other 60% comprise those brave souls who want to take that complete leap of faith with you, and hold onto it even when the mini-digger comes in!

Creating a garden's genius loci (spirit of place) is very important. A garden is closely linked to our emotions, and I always start with the question 'What is Your Garden For?' Do you want it to be a relaxing and contemplative space? A protective space where grandchildren can play? A showcase for unusual plants? A private haven where you can sit beneath an arbour and read the gardening section of the 'Sunday Telegraph'? A 'homage' to a beloved late parent? I have been asked to design all these. No matter what the dream is, the designer must create something harmonious, using a combination of hard and soft landscaping, with different planting colour palettes. The golden rules all designers work with are Balance, Unity/Harmony, Rhythm, Line and Proportion.

A vital first decision the client makes is whether they would prefer a formal or informal style or a careful mixture of both. This determines the use of line: i.e. symmetrical planting and linear lines or asymmetrical planting and curved shapes. Then there is a decision to make about the planting: do they have favourite colours? (I was once asked to use only black and white flowers and foliage to reflect the decor of the house! The planting plan included Viola 'Molly Sanderson', Anemone 'Honorine Jobert' and Ophiopogon planiscapus Nigrescens). Using an 'oceanic' palette of blues, whites, purples and creams can create a very restful space. Using only hot colours, however, can be challenging to the eye and the emotions (Christopher Lloyd understood this emotional language of flowers very well).

Sometimes a client's wish list can be too full and complex for the size of the space (e.g. a feature to entertain a very young god daughter, a herb garden, a water feature, a pergola, a rock garden, a herbaceous border like Arley Hall's and something to reflect their interest in railways—all in a small rectangular space!). This requires delicate negotiation to prevent the common mistake of trying to squash too many features into a small space thus making it look fractured and claustrophobic.

Client budgets will, of course, vary from, say, £10,000 to design and put in a sloping, terraced woodland garden which is also a haven for wildlife, to £600 for a new rockery in a paved front garden. Generally, the more hard landscaping you have the greater the expense. Paths are vital in design, but they don't have to be constructed from Indian stone or have complex rope edging. Using a simple combination of grey flagstones with recycled or engineering bricks can be much cheaper and extremely effective. If you visit Great Dixter and Sissinghurst you will see this in action. And the simple tile-on-end designs of Edwin Lutyens are easy to create using kit packs.

I always encourage clients to do a simple zonal plan of their garden with me, or tackle one on their own, which is a very satisfying way of ensuring they feel that they are a vital part of the process. Testing the Ph balance of the soil together, looking at levels, areas of damp ground, working out the compass points and the direction of the prevailing wind. This determines the plants and their positions, the groundworks (such as vital drainage), the type of fencing.

Working to a meticulous Client Brief, which is arrived at after much consultation, usually means you can avoid the necessity of providing lots of preliminary sketches, and making major alterations to the master plan drawing later. Taking the time to work on that and the Zonal Plan often means that (for example) a shed, a greenhouse, a sunny patio, a winding path, a small retaining wall, a water feature, will practically locate themselves on the Design plan.

The style of the garden needs to be in harmony with the house, and constructed from materials which are unified and kept relatively simple. Using local stone and matching brick and flag colour to the house and to each other are important considerations when constructing a patio and a path. Then there is the issue of the lawn: how much do you want? Can it be situated on the flat and with easy access to the mower (there is no point in having the lawn on the most sloping part of the garden, with the mower located in the garage at the top and miles away). Cottage gardens with their riotous planting of fruit, vegetables and flowers, and gently curving paths look well with older properties and a more 'rustic' approach to hard landscaping, while a more linear approach with definable beds, ornamental walls and edged paths tend to suit newer properties.

For example: my most recent design was for a young man's first home on a new estate, which had a medium-sized rectangular garden plot. The soil was, of course, an appalling mix of builders' rubble and cinders topped with two inches of poor quality topsoil. His 'wish list' was simple: a shed, a small patio, and some plants which would 'look after themselves' because he was away a lot, and Astroturf instead of lawn. Privacy was an issue (it was overlooked on three sides). We constructed three raised beds following the lines of the perimeter and filled them with good quality topsoil and all-year-round-interest shrubs such as Ribes sanguineum 'Pulborough Scarlet', Ceanothus 'Puget Blue', and Philadelphus Aurea. His small shed was situated out of direct eye, and a rambling rose (Rosa 'Rambling Rector') planted to grow up and over the trellis fixed to the shed sides. A mountain ash (Sorbus aucuparia) was situated in one corner, and a nine-bark (Physocarpus opulifolius 'Lady in Red') in another, where the garden was most overlooked. Neither of these trees grow to a great size, which would make them out of proportion with the space. The patio area was dictated by the maximum number of people he thought he would be entertaining at any one given time and made up about a third of the total space. Very simple. Very functional. Very low maintenance.

My first design next year is for a large Provence-style garden, complete with lavender parterres, roses, small statues and a linking water feature. My second is a miniature formal garden for medicinal and culinary herbs. Both will be a joy to do, and hopefully I will 'deliver the dream'!

Jane's tips for dealing with a long, narrow space.

"The best thing long narrow gardens have going for them is the perspective, so throwing up barriers such as trellises or ornamental walls which will make the eye stop dead and foreshorten the view is inadvisable."

Far better to create a little mystery with a small pergola to start the journey through carefully placed areas which could perform different functions like herbs, cut flowers, vegetables, etc towards a strong focal point such as a brimming urn water feature or a stand-alone specimen tree like a weeping pear."



"... a strong focal point such as a brimming urn water feature..."

Photos: Iain Jeffrey

Sandwell Valley Park

A new venue in the West
Midlands

Saturday 14th April 10am—4pm
FREE ENTRY TO FAIR

Sandwell Valley Country Park is in the heart of the West Midlands and just one mile from West Bromwich town centre: a real oasis in the urban scene of the West Midlands.

The fair is free to enter. There is a small parking charge and the farm and garden are subject to normal entry charges if you choose to visit them. The country park walks are yours to explore without charge.

Sandwell Valley Country Park was once the site of Sandwell Priory, a 12th-century Benedictine monastery which itself was founded on the site of an earlier hermitage. The monastery was closed on the orders of Cardinal Wolsey in 1525 and by 1705 the land was redeveloped once more, into Sandwell Hall, built for the Earl of Dartmouth. From the late 19th century the Hall was used as an asylum, and then in 1907, a home for boys, calling itself "Sandwell Hall Industrial School for Mentally Defective Boys". In 1928 Sandwell Hall was demolished due to subsidence caused by mining from Sandwell Park (Jubilee) Colliery which employed over 600 miners. A coal tramway ran from the Jubilee pit through the Sandwell Park to the canal at Smethwick.

Today, as well as two working farm visitor centres, we have nature areas, an aerial assault course and adventure playground, a mountain bike trail, the RSPB Visitor Centre, woodland, meadows and farmland.

Sandwell Park Farm is a restored Victorian farm with an historic farmyard and a Walled Kitchen Garden, Tea Rooms and gift shops. It is home to rare and endangered breeds such as Hereford cattle and Berkshire pigs. The plant fair will be held in front of the park farm visitor centre. There is a charge to enter the farm and garden should you choose to do so.

Finding somewhere for a quiet walk is easy in Sandwell Valley Country Park, whether you are a keen rambler, or just want to go for a walk with the dog or family, with 660 acres to walk round, you can go for a quiet stroll in pleasant surroundings through woods, farmland and by pools and streams.

Many of the footpaths are surfaced, providing access for all, though many are left as natural tracks to provide a sense of a real countryside.

There is a trails map which shows the main footpaths through the Country Park and adjacent areas. Copies of the map are available from Sandwell Park Farm.

Sandwell Valley country park stretches from the A41 at West Bromwich to the edge of Walsall, with car parks in Forge Lane and Sandwell Park Farm. The main entrance to for the plant fair site is at Sandwell Park Farm, Salter's Lane, West Bromwich, B71 4BG

continued >>>



Photo: Sandwell Valley Park



"Sandwell Park Farm is a restored Victorian farm with an historic farmyard and a walled kitchen garden, tea rooms and gift shops."

Photo: Sandwell Valley Park



"With 660 acres to walk round, you can go for a quiet stroll in pleasant surroundings through woods, farmland and by pools and streams"

Photo: Sandwell Valley Park

We have a great line-up of nurseries already booked with more expected to join the throng, so keep an eye on our website and social media feeds for updates!

Confirmed so far:

- **Alluring Plants** from Shropshire specialising in plants for bees & butterflies
- **Bridge Farm Plants** from Derbyshire specialising in interesting and unusual perennials
- **ChickenStreet** from Shropshire with a wide selection of chicken-proof plants for the garden
- **Conquest Plants Nursery** from Cheshire specialising in coloured foliage
- **Green's Leaves** from Gloucestershire specialising in Australasian & coloured leaf shrubs
- **Hall Farm Nursery** from Shropshire specialising in perennials and alpines. RHS Gold medallists including Chelsea Gold.
- **Jurassicplants Nurseries** from Denbighshire specialising in unusual seed-raised trees, shrubs and climbers
- **Lyneal Mill Nursery** from Shropshire specialising in Agastache, Digitalis, Epimedium, Eryngium, Erysimum, Scabious, Verbascum and simple flowered Dahlias
- **North Staffs Hostas** from Staffordshire specialising in Hostas, ferns; hemerocallis, carex grasses and ivy
- **Orchard Furniture** from Gloucestershire with a great range of teak garden furniture
- **Packhorse Farm Nursery** from Derbyshire specialising in Acers and other ornamental trees and shrubs. RHS Gold medallist
- **Penmere Plants** from Cheshire specialising in Fuchsias
- **Piecemeal Plants** from Leicestershire specialising in herbaceous perennials
- **Plantwild** from Cambridgeshire specialising in native wildflowers
- **Pops Plants 2** from Hertfordshire specialising in auriculas
- **ShadyPlants.com** from Gloucestershire specialising in plants for shade
- **SpecialPerennials** from Cheshire specialising in summer and late flowering perennials.
- **The Cottage Herbery** from Worcestershire specialising in organic herbs. RHS Gold medallists
- **The Gobbett** from Worcestershire specialising in Syringa (Lilac), flowering dogwoods and beardless Iris
- **Tissington Nursery** from Derbyshire specialising in perennials. RHS medallists.

Plantwild (Cambs) and Pops Plants 2 are new to Plant Hunters' Fairs for 2018 and we hope you'll give them a very warm welcome to our merry band of plantaholics.

www.sandwell.gov.uk/sandwellvalley

Sandwell Valley Country Park, Salters Lane, West Bromwich, West Midlands, B71 4BG.

P&D parking (very reasonable charge!)

Dogs on leads welcome. Refreshments available throughout the event.



"The fair will be held on the flat grass in front of the Park Farm visitor centre."

Photo: Sandwell Valley Park

Coopers Nurseries

Coopers Nurseries is a family run plant nursery which specialises in producing perennials of the highest quality from seed, cuttings and field grown clumps.

Throughout the various seasons they will also have a great variety of planters, tubs and hanging baskets for instant colour.

Joanne will be bringing her lovely plants to these Plant Hunters Fairs in 2018:

Sat 9 Jun Bosworth Battlefield

Sun 24 Jun Sugnall Walled Garden

Sat 11 Aug Carsington Water



Photos: Coopers Nurseries

So you want to host a Plant Hunters' Fair?

Rob and Jackie Potterton rise to the challenge



During the summer of 2016 Jackie and I approached Martin and Janet Blow, organisers of Plant Hunters' Fairs, with a proposal to hold an event at our nursery in Lincolnshire, combining it with a NGS day on Sunday 28 May.

The nursery is well established with a large landscaped garden, that contains many planting features including alpine rockeries with pool, stream and waterfall, raised beds, troughs, tufa stone bed, crevice garden, woodland and peat beds. All extensively planted with hundreds of varieties of alpines, bulbs and woodland or shade loving plants, providing lots of colour and interest all year round and would be at its peak towards the end of May. With the experience of holding our own Open Days we felt that by combining the attractiveness of the garden with several invited specialist nurseries we could offer a fantastic day that would attract visitors in sufficient numbers. After brief discussions with Martin and Janet the idea was approved.



“We felt that by combining the attractiveness of the garden with several invited specialist nurseries we could offer a fantastic day.”

Photo: Pottertons Nursery

It has to be said that Jackie is a great organiser and planner, whereas I am a great listener and can easily be told what to do!!!

A list of requirements and a timetable was quickly established, most importantly we wanted to invite top quality nurseries that would offer an extensive range of plants to suit all tastes. PHF has many such nurseries and it was quite difficult to narrow it down to just seven but invites were quickly acknowledged and the task of advertisement commenced in early Autumn.

We approached local organisers of NGS and they too gave us quick approval, a figure of £3 per head on entry was agreed, all money to be donated to NGS.

Refreshments feature strongly at a NGS days, our friend Kate was invited to organise and supply cream teas, cakes and drinks. A large tent was hired from another friend and we needed to find volunteers to help serve the refreshments.

We wanted to maximise our visitors' enjoyment on the day, Rob Potterton would lead tours around the nursery and garden, Jackie Potterton organised a photo display detailing the 47 year old history of the nursery and Lisa Plaskitt who works at Pottertons Nursery designed a nature trail for children. Our local Alpine Garden Society group were invited to put up a display, this they agreed to do, and two members would give advice throughout the day.

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We calculated we had space on site for up to 140 cars, another two volunteers were needed to ensure safe parking.

Finally, we needed to prepare the garden, to have it weeded and in pristine condition. My mother, who is an exceptionally fit eighty-something year old began this huge task in October 2016 working up to six days a week for the next eight months.

By early 2017 we had been approached by 5 societies or garden groups to book in advance coaches or mini buses. All proceeded as planned, we updated our Facebook pages regularly showing progress of preparations and talked nonstop about the day wherever we travelled. We received a positive response from all, but when organising such a grand event there is much doubt on how many would attend.

Two weeks before the event normal work in the nursery stopped and all we did was clean, weed, sweep and prepare.

With three days to go the weather deteriorated, torrential rain was forecast for our weekend. We sat glued to the TV and computer willing the forecasters to be wrong. The day before the event we had heavy showers in the morning, followed by warm sunshine which was enjoyed by the three nurseries who set up their stalls on the Saturday. Thankfully the forecast for Sunday was perfect, warm with lots of sunshine.

On Sunday we were up at 5am, placing posters and directions on roads and junctions by 6am. The first nursery to arrive was Edrom who had left their home in Berwickshire at 1.30am, they passed by me as I erected a NGS sign and by the time I arrived back our good friend Janet was preparing bacon butties and drinks for them and continued to do so for all the other nurseries.

By 9.30am we were ready and a queue of cars was forming at the entrance. Thirty minutes after opening 350 visitors had arrived and by 11am the car park was full. Fantastic but somewhat chaotic for us, we hadn't expected so many people. We were overwhelmed but managed somehow. Everyone was so friendly, so understanding and with a smile on their face. The weather was fantastic, the garden and plants looked amazing and people flocked into the fair and struggled back to their cars overloaded with plant purchases.

At the end of the day we collapsed into our chairs in the garden, enjoying a Chinese and a couple of beers. A few hours later I was driving down the road in my van, in torrential rain to the next PHF at Carsington Waters. We had been oh so lucky with the weather.

Overall, we had a very successful day. Just over 1,000 visitors raised £3,000 for NGS charities. All nurseries reported healthy business. Visitors to the refreshments tent had consumed 46 very large cakes and every-time I meet someone who visited, they congratulate us on giving them a unique and most enjoyable day.



“Excellent plants from Edrom who left home in Berwickshire at 1:30am.”

Photo: Pottertons Nursery



“Thirty minutes after opening 350 visitors had arrived .”

Photo: Pottertons Nursery



“The garden and plants looked amazing and people flocked into the fair.”

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

continued >>>

Will we do it again? Of course, we will: **Sunday 27th May 2018, open 9am to 5pm.**

For 2018 we have even more nurseries to delight you:

- **Bridge Farm Plants** from Derbyshire specialising in interesting and unusual perennials. **NEW TO EVENT**
- **Edrom Nurseries** from Berwickshire specialising in woodland plants for shade and unusual alpines RHS Gold medallists including Chelsea Gold.
- **Green's Leaves** from Gloucestershire specialising in Australasian & coloured leaf shrubs
- **Hall Farm Nursery** from Shropshire specialising in perennials and alpines. RHS Gold medallists including Chelsea Gold.
- **Mayfields Plants** from Cheshire specialising in cottage flowers
- **Packhorse Farm Nursery** from Derbyshire specialising in Acers and other ornamental trees and shrubs. RHS Gold Medallist
- **SpecialPerennials** from Cheshire specialising in summer and late flowering perennials.
- **The Gobbett** from Worcestershire specialising in Syringa (Lilac), flowering dogwoods and beardless Iris. **NEW TO EVENT**
- **Tissington Nursery** from Derbyshire specialising in perennials. RHS Silver Medallists
- and of course a wide selection of outstanding plants from **Pottertons Nursery**

Sunday 27th May 2018

Times 9am - 5pm

Fair and gardens: £3.00 in aid of the National Garden Scheme (NGS)

Pottertons Nursery and Garden, Moortown Road, Nettleton, Caistor, Lincoln LN7 6HX

www.pottertons.co.uk



“At the end of the day we collapsed into our chairs in the garden.”

Photo: Pottertons Nursery

Glittering Prizes!

In November 2017 Rob Potterton was honoured to receive The Sir William & Lady Lawrence Award at the Alpine Garden Society AGM from President Christopher Bailes.

The citation reads: **“To recognise his long term commitment and expertise in propagating and making available a wide range of alpine plants to growers of all levels of experience and skill. Rob is also well known for his excellent and informative lectures on alpines and his ability to engender enthusiasm generally for alpine plants.”**

Rob commented that the award was shared with his fabulous hard working wife Jackie.



Three Sips of Carsington Water

3 great free to enter fairs to slake Derbyshire's thirst for plants



We are back at the walkers' paradise of Carsington Water for our, now traditional, three plant fairs. We are now pitched on the paved area right in front of the visitor centre, handily placed for the restaurant and car parks.

As always, the fairs are **free to enter** with just a very reasonable pay and display parking charge.

Saturday 24th March 2018

Monday 28th May 2018

Saturday 11th August 2018

Times: 10am - 4pm Free Entry to fair and country park

Restaurant open throughout.

Carsington Water, Big Lane, Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 1ST

Pops Plants 2

A feast of auriculas

We welcome Pops Plants 2 to our fairs in 2018. Tom Morey & Susi Clarke are specialist growers of Auricula from Hertfordshire.

Tom's family are Auricula specialists and until recently, owners of the internationally renowned Pop's Plants and home to four national collections of Auriculas). Now Tom and Susi have become the proud owners of Pop Plants 2!

So, with buckets of enthusiasm and a hint of trepidation we have put our love of plants to the test.

Tom and Susi will have lots of auriculas at these Plant Hunters Fairs in 2018:

Sat 14 Apr Sandwell Valley Park

Sat 5 May Donington Le Heath Manor



"Sergeant Stripe"

Photo: Pops Plants 2



"Avon Bunny"

Photo: Pops Plants 2

Growing History at the 1620s House



Photo: Zoltan Hamori

We love coming to the 1620s house at Donington Le Heath, Leicestershire for our 2 fairs in May and August. You can almost feel the history well up out of the ground and in 2017 more history was growing in the new 1620s vegetable garden.

The garden was dug out in the winter of 2016-17 and planted in four beds to allow “rotation” of crops with vegetable types and varieties you could have seen growing at the house in the 1620s.

The onion bed includes garlic and leeks as well as traditional round onions.

The pea and bean bed is a little different from today’s. There are no runner beans: these did not arrive until in Britain until the 1700s. Instead Broad Beans were grown widely and eaten both fresh and dried. Field peas rather than the sweet, juicy garden peas of today were grown to dry and store through winter. The pot marigolds interplanted with the onions deter pests and the flowers would be have been used to create a soothing ointment.

The third bed is for the brassicas (cabbage family). This would have included Kale, Collards (like spring greens) and even Brussels sprouts which arrived in the UK in 16th Century.

The fourth bed is for root crops. There are no Potatoes: these had arrived in England from the Americas but were rumoured to be poisonous being part of the nightshade family. Another nightshade, Tomatoes, were also something of a curiosity at this time and grown as ornamental plants.

Skirret, a member of the Parsley family, was fashionable, although now largely consigned to the history books. The mass of slender roots must have been a bind to clean for cooking. Carrots and Parsnips, which would replace Skirret in the nation’s stock pots, were already grown. Carrots at this time came in white, yellow or purple forms—orange came a lot later! Parsnips were valued for their large roots and sweet taste.

The root bed includes a leaf crop called Good King Henry (probably named after Henry V of France). This is known as Poor Man’s Asparagus, Perennial Goosefoot and Lincolnshire Spinach—take your pick!



“The vegetable garden has crops that could have been found growing in the 1620s”

Photo: Plant Hunters’ Fairs



“The onion bed includes leeks and garlic”

Photo: Plant Hunters’ Fairs

continued >>>

In the main garden you will find Royal Medlar which is said to have a better flavour than the common-or-garden one. It is known as “cul de chien” in France: “Dog’s Backside” - if look at the top of the fruit you can see why!

The fruits are hard and acidic, but become edible after being softened, 'bled', by frost, or naturally in storage given sufficient time. Once softening begins, the skin rapidly takes on a wrinkled texture and turns dark brown, and the inside reduces to the consistency and flavour reminiscent of apple sauce. This process can confuse those new to medlars, as a softened fruit looks as if it has spoiled.

Once bled, the fruit can be eaten raw and is often eaten as a dessert or used to make medlar jelly. They are used in "Medlar cheese", which is similar to lemon curd, being made with the fruit pulp, eggs, and butter.

Thanks to the Friends of the Garden for their useful signs that contributed greatly to this article

We have our usual two plant fairs here in 2018:

(because of the way calendar falls this year our May event is on the Saturday of the Early May Bank Holiday weekend)

Saturday 5th May 2018

Sunday 5th August 2018

Times 10am - 4pm

Fair, gardens and grounds £1.00 House open (additional charge if you decide to visit the house)

Free parking Dog’s on leads welcome in the fair and garden Cafe open throughout.

1620's House and Garden, Donington Le Heath, Coalville, Leics LE67 2FW

E-mail: dlhmanorhouse@leics.gov.uk Phone: 01455 290429 website: www.doningtonleheath.com



“Medlar is known as ‘cul de chien’ in France: ‘Dog’s Backside’”



Photo: Zoltan Hamori

Plantwild

Wildflowers from Cambridgeshire

We welcome Lindsay & Steven Lester, new owners of Plantwild, to our fairs in 2018. Come and say hello at:

Sat 14 Apr Sandwell Valley Park

Sat 5 May Donington Le Heath Manor

Mon 28 May Carsington Water

Sun 12 Aug Southwell Minster Gardens



Spring Climbers

Charlie Pridham of Roseland House Nursery on the heralds of spring



When April arrives with winter largely over but still awaiting the flowering of the Wisteria which for me always heralds a change in the garden from spring to early summer there have already been a number of the climbing plants vying for our attention.

The first of these, an evergreen self-clinging climber from Chile called *Ercilla volubilis* it looks a bit like a pale pink climbing *Ceanothus*, absolutely smothered in the scented fluffy pink flowers. Long recognised as an almost indestructible plant for maritime exposure it has much to recommend it anywhere that an evergreen is required, I use it as a tough windbreak on some trellising and grow late flowering clematis through it for summer colour. Although it has been in this country since 1840 and was given an "Award of Merit" by the RHS in 1975 you still do not see many specimens around which is a shame given its performance, it eventually makes a large woody stemmed climber if left unpruned.

My second star climbers in spring are the *Akebia*. *A. trifoliata* and *A. x pentaphylla* are usually the first to flower and being deciduous show off the chocolate scented flowers well on the bare wood, while *quinata* and the cream form have slightly larger and more showy flowers are inclined to hang onto their old leaves.



"*Ercilla volubilis* looks a bit like a pale pink climbing *Ceanothus*, absolutely smothered in the scented fluffy pink flowers."

Photo: Roseland House



"*Akebia quinata* and the cream form have slightly larger and more showy flowers."

Photo: Roseland House

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The star for me is however the more recent introduction of *Akebia longiracemosa* as its name implies much longer racemes of flowers and is a neat evergreen. *Akebia quinata* comes from that area of China and Korea where the two countries join, this is a very cold place in winter and its no surprise to find that *Akebia quinta* is very hardy, however they have short springs in that part of the world while in the UK climate the poor plant is often fooled into flowering as early as February, some while before the danger of frosts is past, with the result that flowers can be frosted off. For reliable flowering a wall is therefore recommended in cold parts, the good news being that it can be a north facing wall as *Akebia* will flower just as well there as anywhere else. Often billed as evergreens *Akebia* will change their leaves as the flowering starts, which actually improves the display as flowers are then more visible and the new foliage is fresh and green. Books will tell you *Akebia* will also fruit but it is rare with just one plant to get pollination in this country despite both male and female flowers being present, the fruit however is rather eye catching (and edible) so its worth doing a bit of hand pollinating. These climbers are all good garden plants and flower all the way down to the ground.



“*Akebia longiracemosa* has long racemes of flowers and is a neat evergreen”.

Photo: Roseland House

The buds on the Wisteria are a promise of what's soon to come in the garden but its good to have something to fill the gap that will also have good foliage for the rest of the season.

Charles Pridham with wife Liz runs Roseland House Nursery holds the National Plant Collections of *Clematis Viticella* cultivars and *Lapageria rosea* cultivars.

Consall Hall

A landscape waiting to be explored.



Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

The stunning Landscape Gardens at Consall Hall are the result of over fifty years of careful planning, hard work and amazing vision by the owner Mr William Podmore OBE. Consall Hall Gardens attracts visitors from all over the world.

Our 70 acres of picturesque garden boasts breath-taking views, numerous majestic lakes, romantic pack-horse bridges, follies and summer houses creating a series of enchanting vistas enticing you to explore.

Although the gardens are vast, there are plenty of pathways making them easily accessible with plenty of areas to sit and admire the views.

Sunday 15th April 2018 10am - 5pm

Fair and gardens: special event price of £3.00

Free parking

Consall, Wetley Rocks, Staffordshire ST9 0AG

Phone: 01782 551947

Abbeywood Prairie Style

Sunday 8th July 2018

Sunday 23rd September 2018

10am - 5pm

Fair and gardens: £3.00

Free parking. Dogs on leads welcome in fair.



Photos: Plant Hunters' Fairs

Abbeywood Estate, Chester Road, Delamere, Cheshire CW8 2HS

Tel: 01606 888251 www.abbeywoodestate.co.uk/gardens/

Helenium Man and the Seven Dwarfs



Hi-ho, Hi-ho, it's SpecialPerennials' very own
Martin Blow

I had it coming to me. Confessing on national TV to being “a helenium nut” is likely to stick with you and it certainly has with me. Having said that, most people now recognise me as the “the helenium man” which, as notoriety goes, isn't too bad a thing.

Janet and I are totally addicted to Heleniums and who wouldn't be? All those brilliant colours in summer and autumn and all those bees and butterflies creating a gentle buzz in the garden as they are attracted magnet-like to the centres of the flowers. We grow lots of varieties in our garden and try to propagate for sale as many types as possible. This year we have 35 types in our catalogue and most will be available at Plant Hunters' Fairs early in the season.

Heleniums are justly popular now (and I think we can take some credit for this) but it wasn't always so. I remember vividly one long standing nurseryman asking me what plants we specialised in, and dismissing our passion with “oh, those floppy daisies”. He lived to learn better (just!).

I suppose he was right in a way. Those straggly seed grown specimens offered as simply as “Helenium” or worse, “Helenium hoopesii”; a slug dinner that rarely flowers in northern climates and is, thankfully, no longer classified as a helenium,

are hardly worth garden room.

Most modern Heleniums stand up well casting off the “floppy” tag for good!

There are of course some short, dare I say “dwarf”, varieties now available suitable for the front of the border and these have really long flowering periods – from mid-June until well into October and beyond. I say “dwarf” but let's be clear that I'm talking knee-high or less and it's also worth saying that if you feed them a lot, they're going to get taller – heleniums really respond to feeding – so just a light feed in spring and no “miracle grow” or some such unless you want miracles of growth!

The long flowering period is bred-into these varieties, but it does require that you regularly dead head the spent blooms and for helenium novices remember that dead heads are like brown balls and new buds are like green sun-shines: don't get them mixed up!

Here's my favourite Seven Dwarf heleniums; there's certainly **Happy** here but I've yet to find a **Bashful** one. If you keep them well watered, they won't be **Grumpy**. Don't be **Dopey** and over-feed them and remember in the winter they'll be **Sleepy** so cut



“Mardi Gras: a festival of flower”

Photo: SpecialPerennials



“Red Army, the best of the reds”

Photo: SpecialPerennials

continued >>>

them down to the ground then. Despite their common name they won't make you **Sneezy** but they are toxic if eaten. The 7th Dwarf is "**Doc**" but as heleniums are healthy plants you won't need to call on him!

1. "Mardi Gras": a festival of flower and a challenger for the best helenium of all and the first to flower usually. The flower colour is akin to the popular "Sahin's Early Flowerer" but Mardi Gras is half the height.

2. "Red Army": The best of the reds with large, black-centred, tomato-coloured flowers on neat, bushy plants. The flowers fade to a softer russet colour, so dead head early if you want the brightest display. The varieties Vivace, Kupferzwerg and Meranti are very similar to Red Army.

3. "Waltraut": a little taller but with wonderfully large flowers on straight stems. Definitely don't feed too much. Glowing orange at first and in the heady days of summer. As temperatures cool and light levels fall in October the flowers are more yellowy. Waltraut is female equivalent of the name Walter in her homeland of Germany.

4. "Gelbe Waltraut": meaning "Yellow Waltraut". A seedling sent to us from the late Hartmut Rieger, probably the greatest helenium collector of all time. It came up under a plant of Waltraut and is shorter and has pure yellow petals and a tan-brown centre.

5. "Carmen": Very similar to the old variety "Wyndley" but healthier and a little shorter. This new variety is going to become very popular.

6. "Fata Morgana": named after a type of mirage and the dancing flowers hover above the leaves are like a vision. A little taller than the other dwarfs.

7. "Pumilum Magnificum": Possibly the oldest cultivar still being grown. Introduced by Amos Perry in 1896. A little floppy so use bits of brush wood around the plants.

Spring is the best time to plant heleniums, although any time until the end of September is possible.

February (as I write this) is the best time to divide up plants for propagation so hi-ho it's off to work I go!

Martin runs SpecialPerennials with wife Janet and together they also organise all the Plant Hunters' Fairs.



"Waltraut has large flowers"

Photo: SpecialPerennials



"Gelbe Waltraut is pure yellow"

Photo: SpecialPerennials



"Fata Morgana like a mirage"

Photo: SpecialPerennials



"Carmen is a new variety"

Photo: SpecialPerennials



"Pumilum Magnificum from 1896"

Photo: SpecialPerennials

Bodenham Arboretum

Free entry to fair: more left for plants and tea!

Saturday 31st March

Saturday 1st September



Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

This is Plant Hunters Fair's 9th year at this magical Worcestershire arboretum. We are lucky enough to hold two fairs at this venue each year.

It's completely free to enter the fair which is held just in front of the main arboretum entrance. There's also ample free parking, so you can pop in for some plants and visit the restaurant for a cuppa without breaking the bank. The fair is on hard standing so there's no need to worry if the weather is wet!

You can choose to explore the arboretum itself at normal entry prices.

For our Eastertime fair on Saturday 31st March, nineteen top specialist nurseries are booked to attend including 5 RHS gold medal winners and 3 nurseries new to the event. New comers are: Alluring Plants specialising in bee and butterfly attracting plants, Malcolm Allison Plants with some amazing perennial flowers and Mynd Hardy Plants specialising in Day Lilies and Penstemons.

Our autumn plant fair is here on Saturday 1st September

Bodenham is an oasis of plantations, pools and avenues beautifully landscaped including over 3000 species of trees and shrubs from all over the world. The Arboretum lies around the big pool where many rare and ornamental trees can be seen in flower or fruit at all times of the year; their autumn colours are a special beauty. The Grand Avenue, which is in its infancy, is planted with Pope's Seat Provenance Beech to mature over the next century. It stretches up the hillside to the Gazebo, built to celebrate the Millennium, and the higher reaches of the Arboretum where extensive views to the Clent Hills and surrounding countryside can be enjoyed.

Dogs on leads are very welcome.

Saturday 31st March 2018

Saturday 1st September 2018

10am-4pm. Free entry to fair.

Bodenham Arboretum, Wolverley, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY11 5TB

info@bodenham-arboretum.co.uk

www.bodenhamarboretum.co.uk

Tel: 01562 852444

Weston Park

Always so much
to see

It's our 8th year at wonderful Weston Park and as always our two plant fairs have so much to offer visitors at incredible value prices.



Photo: Rob Potterton

The line-up of nurseries on the Diary Green just gets better and better with such a great range of plants for every garden, style and budget.

The thousand acre park and gardens are a joy to explore and picking out just a few highlights from the many attractions is difficult indeed

Temple Wood is part of Weston's extensive grounds and is one of the jewels in the crown of Capability Brown's work, showcasing his virtuosity as a landscaper. A naturalistic and romantic paradise, over the last 15 years the Weston Park Foundation, the charity that owns and maintains the estate has gradually returned the landscape to Brown's original vision.

Capability Brown designed the Temple Wood Pleasure Ground as a relaxing haven for the Bridgeman family. Brown was commissioned to create the wood to please all of the senses, and it still does today.

Within the woodland, visitors can enjoy a stroll, spot the wildlife that makes its home in the scenery, and see a host of historic sights.

In addition to exploring the natural delights of Temple Wood, families can enjoy the highly popular Woodland Adventure Playground. This much loved area of the park is home to swings, slides, cargo net, climbing wall, ground level trampolines, rotational nest swing, log swing, large sandpit complete with sand diggers plus, at nearly 40 metres, one of the longest double zip wires in the country!

The Walled Kitchen Gardens originally produced fruit and vegetables for the Bridgeman family, their guests and staff. The 4.5 acres of garden were built on the sheltered south facing slope with the walls dating from the late 18th century and the gardens were in production until the 1970s.

The Southern Walled Garden was restored by the Weston Park Foundation in 2005 and is now home to a Yew Hedge Maze, labyrinth and grass mazes as well as heritage varieties of apple trees and a sensory garden.

The Northern Walled Garden, which was originally divided into four areas by paths to enable a four year rotation of crops is also being restored on a gradual basis and is currently home to Jacob and St Kilda sheep, which are heritage breeds. A wild flower meadow, changing displays of contemporary sculpture and restoration of the gardener's bothies are also planned for the future.

Sunday 6th & Monday 7th May 2018 Fair and gardens £3.00 Times: 10am - 5pm

Sunday 9th September 2018 Fair and gardens £2.50 Times: 10am - 4pm.

Weston Park, Weston-under-Lizard, Nr Shifnal, Shropshire TF11 8LE

Phone: 01952 852100 Email: enquiries@weston-park.com Website: www.weston-park.com

A Few of My Favourite Umbels

Alison Farnsworth of Bridge Farm Plants on the best of the Apiaceae



They are the 16th largest family of plants and we probably all know them as umbellifers, but now the umbel family has a much more scientific name of Apiaceae.

Apiaceae was first described by John Lindley in 1836; the name being derived from the type genus *Apium* which was originally listed by Pliny the Elder, circa 50 AD, for a celery-like plant. Their former name however, better evokes the lacy, umbrella-shaped flowers members of the family carry. (An umbel is an inflorescence – flowerhead – which consists of a number of short flower stalks which spread from a common point, somewhat like umbrella ribs).

Many umbels are instantly recognisable – cow parsley, angelica, fennel and dill, to name but a few; others don't look like a typical umbel at all – astrantias and eryngiums – but if you look closely, the same structure is there. Typically, they have long stems often with light, feathery foliage (though not always), and flattish or gently domed clusters of lacy umbel flowerheads.

They are some of the prettiest garden-worthy plants for all situations and includes annual, biennial and perennial species. They are also much valued for their contribution to the garden eco-system, as the open structure of the flowers make them attractive to insects (they provide plenty of nectar and pollen and flying insects need both - nectar for carbohydrates and pollen for protein) and many set seed freely so will provide a source of food for seed-eating birds in autumn and winter.

One of the most useful insects for the gardener is the hoverfly: Hoverfly larvae consume large numbers of aphids before pupating but they have strict preference: Having small mouths, they like tiny flowers and members of the cow parsley family are perfect.

These, then, are just a few of my favourite umbellifers:

Anthriscus sylvestris – Our native cow parsley epitomises the British countryside in spring and early summer and whilst it may be too much of a thug to invite into your garden, there are two coloured leaf forms that are garden-worthy: 'Ravenswing' is a handsome dark leaved form with deep purple-maroon leaves and stems (needs a sunny position for the best leaf colour); 'Going for Gold' has golden-yellow foliage and looks superb in a shady spot. It leafs up over winter and is a good foil in early spring.

Angelica archangelica – beautiful architectural flowers and equally good seedpods. Green with contrasting dark stems. It grows to statuesque proportions (up to 180cm) and is a magnificent garden plant if you have room for it. It is also a natural sweetener and can be added to rhubarb and gooseberries to reduce the need for so much sugar. *Angelica gigas* – equally impressive and statuesque with huge but elegant, domed, crimson flowers. *Angelica sylvestris* 'Vicar's Mead' has dark maroon foliage and branching stems terminating in dusky pink flowers.

Astrantia major – long-flowering plants with neat, papery bracts surrounding mass of individual flowers. There are many new crimson varieties. 'Roma' is a strong pink and sterile.

Ammi majus (Bishop's Flower) – lacy, white flowers like a delicate form of cow parsley. *Ammi visnaga* is a chunkier form of *Ammi* with dense, but delicate, white and green domed flowers.

Bupleurum longifolium – a lovely and unusual perennial with copper / bronze 'flowers' (actually petal-like bracts), which are long-lasting. The seed heads are almost as decorative. *Bupleurum fruticosum* – unusual in that it is a shrubby umbel, has grey-green foliage topped by acid-yellow flowerheads. It is irresistible to flies, which are excellent pollinators. Originating from southern Europe, it is said to need a sheltered spot,



"'Ravenswing' is a handsome dark leaved form of anthriscus"

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs



"'Angelica 'Vicar's Mead' has dark maroon foliage and branching stems terminating in dusky pink flowers"

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

continued >>>

but I am trying it anyway, despite our garden being cold and exposed, as any acid-green plant is irresistible to me!. So far so good, but it hasn't really been tested by cold winter yet!

Cenolophium denuadatum (Baltic Cow Parsley) – a billowing umbellifer from Russia and north Asia with dark green divided foliage and tall branching stems topped with flat heads of white flowers in early summer. The green flower buds are equally attractive.

Chaerophyllum hirsutum 'Roseum' – one of the joys of early summer this cow parsley (actually a form of hairy chervil) has rich green, ferny leaves and lilac-pink flowers.

Daucus carota – also known as Queen Anne's Lace, this is the wild form of carrot from which the familiar orange roots were developed centuries ago. Grown purely as an ornamental now, it has airy, elegant, lacy flowerheads. The cultivar 'Dara' has variable shades of pale pink through to dark maroon; 'Purple Kisses' is a mix of crimson and white.

Eryngium alpinum – a glamorous sea holly with a double layer of metallic blue bracts which are deeply divided, making them look fluffy. Unlike most other sea-hollies, they are soft to the touch. *Eryngium giganteum* is a very architectural, self-seeding biennial, silvery sea-holly. All eryngiums are loved by bees and hoverflies.

Hacquetia epipactis – an understated woodland beauty. Early in the year it produces tiny clustered yellow flowers surrounded by apple-green bracts which persist for months before giving way to astrantia-like foliage. It is slow to establish but makes a reliable, ever-spreading clump. 'Thor' is a sought-after and unusual form with variegated bracts surrounding the domed yellow centres.

Ligusticum lucidum – a seldom seen umbel with finely feathered but substantial foliage (like a frothy green cloud) and pure white flowerheads.

Myrrhis odorata ('Sweet Cicely') – easily identified by the strong aroma of aniseed its foliage emits when crushed, this old cottage garden herbaceous perennial was traditionally grown near the kitchen door, where its attractive fern-like leaves were at hand for sweetening tart fruits such as rhubarb and gooseberries. The flowers, young leaves and seedpods can all be harvested to add an aniseedy flavour to salads.

Orlaya grandiflora – must be one of the prettiest of annual umbellifers. It's common name of 'White Lace Flower' fittingly describes the 'lace-cap' arrangement of the tiny flowers surrounded by larger, sterile florets.

Pimpinella major 'Rosea' – delicate clusters of soft pink, cow parsley-like flowers and glossy green foliage. A charming and classy umbel, with a little more refinement than *Chaerophyllum hirsutum* 'Roseum'. (Although requiring rich soil; *Chaerophyllum* is easier on poor soil).

Selinum wallichianum – E A Bowles called it "the queen of all umbellifers, with its almost transparent green-ness and the marvellously lacy pattern of its large leaves ... the most beautiful of all fern-leaved plants".

Smyrniolum perfoliatum – a biennial with tiny, airy flowers surrounded by showy bracts in acid-yellow. If, like me, you are a sucker for acid-green foliage plants as well as all things cow parsley, this plant has it all: The acid-yellow of euphorbias with the airiness of cow parsley! Very slow to get going but a lovely addition to the woodland edge or mixed border where it will slowly build up to put on a showy spring display.

Zizia aurea ('Golden Alexanders') – a native of the eastern United States, where it is most often found in moist woodlands, meadows and prairies, this has a flat-topped yellow umbels. It is long-flowering and will grow in sun or light shade and although it is a short-lived perennial, it will self seed.

Alison and partner Jason run Bridge Farm Nursery in Derbyshire. Alison is a keen plantswoman and an active member of the Hardy Plant Society.



"*Cenolophium denuadatum* (Baltic Cow Parsley) – a billowing umbellifer from Russia and north Asia"

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs



"*Eryngium giganteum* is a very architectural, self-seeding biennial,"

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs



"*Pimpinella major* 'Rosea' – a charming and classy umbel"

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

Planti-Ness!

Spring and Autumn fairs at this wonderful Wirral garden

We love our two fairs at opposite ends of the season at Ness Botanic Gardens. We are now snugly situated in the old herb garden which has a lovely, friendly atmosphere.



All the established favourites will be there plus we welcome Vertical Shores in March with their hand-crafted stained glass garden art.

It's just £1.00 to come into the fair (Friends of Ness free) and this is redeemable if you then decide to pay to go into the garden.

Sunday 25th March 2018

Sunday 2nd September 2018

Times: 10am - 4pm

Free parking. Dogs on leads welcome in the fair but assistance dogs only in the gardens.

Restaurant open throughout.

Ness Botanic Gardens, Ness, Neston, South Wirral CH64 4AY

Tel: 0151 795 6300 email: nessgdns@liv.ac.uk website: www.nessgardens.org.uk

Vertical Shores

Unique stained glass art for your garden

From his Studio in Audlem, Cheshire, Ian Reynolds creates unique glass work, either for display in the garden or celebrating that special day. The striking yet subtle Garden Art designs incorporate the traditional craft of Stained Glass with Stainless Steel to provide a striking addition to any garden environment.

Each piece of Garden Art will be unique and can be displayed as standalone feature, placed in a border to complement the planting or bring colour to a dark corner.

Ian also undertakes traditional stained glass window commissions.

Ian will be selling and taking commissions for his unique garden art at these Plant Hunters' Fairs in 2018:

Sun 25 Mar Ness Botanic Gardens

Sun 22 Apr Bramall Hall

Sun 16 Sep Henbury Hall



"a striking addition to any garden environment"

Photos: Vertical Shores

Hoghton Tower

Saturday 7th April 2018

10am-4pm Entry to fair £1.00



Photo: Zoltan Hamori

The dramatic and historic backdrop of Hoghton Tower is venue for Lancashire's only Plant Hunters' Fair. Nestled around the stone barns the fair attracts the best of small specialist nurseries from near and far.

Nurseries from 7 counties will be coming on 7th April laden with wonder, home-grown plants to delight all gardeners.

Special Perennials and Hall Farm Nursery were named in Gardens Illustrated Magazine's Top 50 nurseries in the UK for their great quality and range of plants. Quirky nursery, Jurassic Plants always cause a stir with their unusual hardy edible fruiting plants. If it's foliage that takes your fancy then there's none better than Conquest Plants, North Staffs Hostas and Mandsand Plants for coloured leaf plants. For that cottage garden look, Meadowview Nursery and Lyneal Mill Nursery have all those old favourites. The Gobbett nursery always have a great range of flowering shrubs and iris.

And when all the planting is done, you'll need a comfortable garden seat; Orchard Furniture will have a great display of oak furniture to buy or order.

Entry to fair: £1.00 in aid of Hoghton Tower Preservation Trust (charity number 508357)

Free parking

Dogs on leads in the fair only.

Refreshments available throughout

Hoghton Tower, Hoghton, Preston, PR5 0SH

Phone: 01254 852986 email: MAIL@HOGHTONTOWER.CO.UK Website: www.hoghtontower.co.uk

Green End Farm

Home-grown treasures from Yorkshire

In 2018 we welcome Green End Farm Nursery to our fairs. This Yorkshire nursery, sited 900ft up, offers a wealth of interest not only to the plant connoisseur, but to lovers of cottage garden and alpine plants too. With many favourite hardy plants and shrubs to choose from, Jean also specialises in the not so well known varieties. There is always a selection of unusual gems to tempt the collector.

As well as being a busy plant nursery, Green End Farm is also a working dairy farm – home to both Shorthorn and Friesian stock. Husband David oversees the farming operation but with serious help from Jean, especially at calving time – anecdotes upon request (but not for the squeamish!)

Jean will have her great range of plants at these Plant Hunters' Fairs in 2018:

Sat 24 Mar Carsington Water

Mon 28 May Carsington Water

Sat 11 Aug Carsington Water



Epimedium Amber Queen

Photo: Green End Farm Nursery



Fritillaria camschatcensis

Photo: Green End Farm Nursery

Gardening in Damp Shade

Mandy Featherstone of Mandsand Plants entreats us to go with our boggy, shady spots

Boggy, squelchy, claggy and shady spot? Or is that just an extra dimension in your garden? Adopt the latter mentality and create yourself a 'cool soft terrain' instead. We most of us admire the mosses lichens and ferns tucked into crevices on our woodland walks, not to mention the soft terrain underfoot, so why not embrace such conditions in your own spot? We introduce 'beach -type' plantings to our plots so I would say a 'wet-spot' fits very well into a garden like mine in Cheshire!

Yes, land drains can and should be considered, but there are other ways to deal with wet shade for those of us who can't go down that route and maybe just want to get on with growing/planting within the confines we face.

So, without further ado, here are a few thoughts on getting your plants off to a flying start in these conditions.

Plant in the spring and throughout the warmer growing season, as opposed to leaving new plants lying dormant in the cold and wet. Grow on your plants into a reasonable size with an established root system, rather than let a very young plant have to work too hard. This also works well for bulbs, and lets you plant at a time when you can see a position for them following the winter clear-up.

Proud or mound planting works well in these conditions, so that roots are not initially so bogged down that they fail to travel successfully into their new location.

As the soil is likely to be impoverished, try at least to give your planting hole a good start by digging it large enough so that you have room to backfill with good friable earth into which those roots can grow. Along with organic matter, I find adding plenty of composted bark works a treat in breaking up those clods and looks very natural should you choose to top-dress.

The good news is that, when it comes to plants for this location, there is an abundance of material - something for everyone, be it big and bold, all-season interest, natural and native, or herbaceous havoc.

Dogwoods (NOT, I believe, a plant just for roundabouts!) give fiery stem colour for months, and their Spring pruning provides you with stakes and maybe further plants too. Instead, try a contorted *Salix tortuosa* underplanted with snowdrops, carpets of *Primula vulgaris*, *Ranunculus 'Brazen Hussey'*, pulmonarias, lily of the valley and snakeshead fritillaries. This would delight you for weeks. Intersperse with ferns, the pink cow parsley, and foxgloves. Strategically, add the odd log or stone and you could stop there.

Alternatively, for further colour, move onto the statuesque candelabra primulas, sibirica iris, ferny-leafed dicentras, trollius, astilbes, hostas, geum rivale, ligularias and woodland cranesbills, which will provide all manner of colour, shape and form. For later season, you can do no better than a dark-leafed, *Cimicifuga racemosa* (Actaea) which emits a heady scent in August, followed by super seed-heads, having already given months of interest from its foliage alone. A clump of *Persicaria amplex-*



“Dogwoods, not, I believe, a plant just for roundabouts!”

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs



“Underplant with *Ranunculus Brazen Hussey*”

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

continued >>>

icaulis and lythrum, combined with a grass such as a miscanthus or a calamagrostis, will reward you for weeks.

If you have plenty of space, darmera combined with the variegated Iris pseudocorus and a blue leafed hosta such as 'Krossa Regal' is dramatic, as is the royal fern Osmunda regalis which is a statement all on its own.

Ferns, hostas, grasses and bamboos work in harmony with plenty of shapes and sizes to choose from. The carex grasses give colours of yellow, bronze and greens, and Acorus 'Ogon' certainly brightens a spot in Winter. Beware when choosing bamboo as some can RUN. It took me two years to dig out the result of just one offshoot someone once gave me! Go for clump-formers and consider planting in a large container. Watch out for lysimachias too: they grow a treat but be ardent in splitting them as they too run.

Once you have got to know your spot, the orchids, arisaemas and podophyllums like these conditions.

Maybe 'less is more' for you. (I love it but have never achieved such in my own plot - someone please tell me how when you want to 'grow and experiment'!). Consider the bark of the birches, multi-stemmed especially, underplanted with a 'lawn' of ivy. Add a stumpery, a rustic bench - hey presto just sit back and enjoy!

There are many shrubs which will suit this site especially if you proud plant initially. For a low-maintenance and all season scheme I found pyramid or column yews repeat-planted and carpeted with one of the silvery euonymus worked a treat, providing winter colour and form and a cool restful haven in summer. Holly or bamboo would have a similar impact, should you prefer glossy leaves or movement from them.

Finally, invest in some good-soled, warm wellies to encourage you to traverse your new terrain throughout the season - whatever the weather!!

(And don't forget a spot for a pot of colourful heucheras, heucherellas and tiarellas!)

Mandy is a very experienced nurserywoman and keen plantswoman. She runs Mandsand Plants and gardens in the north of Cheshire.



“... a clump of Persicaria amplexicaulis and lythrum”

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs



“Don't forget heucheras, heucherellas and tiarellas”

Photo: Plant Hunters' Fairs

Easter at Dorothy Clive

Sunday 1st & Monday 2nd April
10am—5pm

£4.00 for fair and gardens—
better half standard price.



Our summer fair is on Sunday & Monday 26th & 27th August.

This is Plant Hunters Fair's 11th year at stunning 12 acre garden. This is the first of two fairs held at this venue each year. This Easter there are more stalls than ever booked as this event goes from strength to strength.

Avondale Nursery, triple National Collection Holders, will be making their annual pilgrimage to the fair and this is your only chance to see them in the area.

Coming all the way from Cornwall are Roseland House with their National Collections of Clematis and Lapageria as well as a great array of stunning climbers at great value prices.

The ever popular Edrom Nurseries will be travelling down from Berwickshire and we know there will be lots of really unusual and hard-to-obtain woodland plants on their stall.

New comers to the event include: Bridge Farm Plants from Derbyshire with lots of unusual perennials and Linda Scott from Nottinghamshire with her vast array of hardy geraniums. The Gobbett will be bringing shrubs especially Lilacs and perennials, with a great range of iris. Returning after some years absence is Penmere Plants with lots of hardy and tender Fuchsias.

Regular visitors will be pleased to learn that Studio 8 Pottery are back with their hand-thrown and home-fired terracotta garden wares made using Staffordshire clay.

If this isn't enough there are 7 RHS medal winners at the fair: Chris Cooke (woodland and species plants); Edrom Nurseries (woodland and alpine plants); Hall Farm Nursery (a wide range of plants); Packhorse Farm (Acers and other trees and shrubs); Potterton's Nursery (award-winning alpins); Tissington Nursery (perennials) and Wildegoose (violas and violets).

The smaller, family run nurseries are always popular as a source of the new, the old or the different! Conquest Plant Nurseries have a wonderfully wide range of variegated plants. Green's Leaves specialise in Australian plants plus a sprinkling of the newest flowering plants on the market. Jurassic Plants Nurseries always cause a stir with fantastic, exotic and hardy edibles. Mayfields Plants specialise in cottage garden favourites. Shadyplants.com need no explanation! SpecialPerennials are the helenium and phlox specialists.

There are many areas of spring interest within this 12 acre, hillside garden. These include a new winter garden, an edible woodland, a woodland quarry with waterfall, an alpine scree and pool, rose walk and amazing drifts of spring bulbs.

The spring plant fair is the time to see hellebores, camellias, crocus and daffodils making a mark on the garden along with magnolias and early flowering rhododendrons.

Dogs on leads are very welcome.



Photos: Plant Hunters' Fairs

Willoughbridge, Market Drayton, Shropshire TF9 4EU

Tel: 01630 647237 email: info@dorothyclivegarden.co.uk website: www.dorothyclivegarden.co.uk

Henbury Hall Gardens

Saturday 30th June & Sunday 1st July 2018

Sunday 16th September 2018

Times: 10am - 5pm

Fair, gardens and grounds £2.50 (Half standard price)

Free parking. Dogs on leads welcome



Henbury Hall Gardens, Henbury, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK11 9PJ

Telephone 01625 422101

Email: gardens@henburyhall.co.uk

website: www.henburyhall.co.uk

No Standing Still at Hodnet Hall

Gardener Ross Underwood is planting ready for the new season



Winter is the time when the garden generally stands still waiting for the turn of the seasons.

However, it is often the time of greatest transformation for gardeners when new projects are undertaken. Hodnet Hall is no exception.

Normally the three gardeners who work in the pleasure grounds are kept permanently busy during the growing season. Larger projects must wait until the end of the year.

This time we tackled two areas immediately below the house. One of which was dominated by a rather tired planting of rhododendrons that had originally been put in as a windbreak. The second occurred because a large and imposing Abies had to be felled. Some wind damage resulted in a tree inspection when large cracks were found, and it was decided that the safest thing was to bring it down. Specialists were called in as the tree towered over one of the summer houses next to the main lake. As it had just been renovated and given a new roof care was needed!

This left a large hole in the bank which we have been working to replace. A large Liriodendron was purchased to quickly fill a gap and surrounded with three Eucryphia. Below it on the south facing slope have been added Euonymus, flowering dogwood (Cornus), roses and deciduous Azaleas. On the opposite side Magnolia stellata and hydrangeas have been planted for a massed effect in spring and summer.

As I write this in February there is nothing to see but we hope that when you visit you can begin to see the new planting taking shape!



“On the south facing slope flowering dogwood (Cornus) have been added”

Photo: Ross Underwood



“On the opposite side hydrangeas have been planted for a massed effect in spring and summer”

Photo: Ross Underwood

Hodnet Hall Gardens

Sat. 2nd and Sun. 3rd June

10am - 5pm

Fair and gardens £3.50



2018 is our 8th year at this magnificent Shropshire garden, and every year I find new parts I've never seen before. Add to this the new planting and improvements that the gardening team is constantly undertaking and we can be sure in the claim that "there's always something new to see!" We can also be sure the reduced entry price of £3.50 represents the best value garden event you will find anywhere when there's 63 acres of stunning gardens to explore.

This year we have a biggest (and arguably the best) line up ever at Hodnet Hall with established favourites and a good smattering of new faces as well. All in all 23 nurseries and artisans will be there.

The new faces include **Alluring Plants** who's stall will be a-buzz with plants for bees and butterflies planted in plastic-free pots. Alison and Jason of **Bridge Farm Plants** will also be making their debut at the event. Their stall is always full of the little gems not available elsewhere. **ChickenStreet** have lovely cottage garden plants with the added benefit of being chicken-proof! If day lilies or penstemons are your desire then look no further than **Mynd Hardy Plants** who will also have lots of other herbaceous plants.

Returning after a "career break" last year is the massively popular **Studio8 Pottery**'s hand-thrown, home-fired garden pots and accessories. If you don't have any of his practical and beautiful cane tepee tops then I can recommend them for sweet peas or runner beans.

Making their annual trek from Cornwall will be **Roseland House**, with clematis, and other climbers and ramblers of all types. And once you've chosen a climber you will need a support it for and **Cooper and Jones** will be on hand with their beautiful hand-crafted iron plant supports from their Shropshire workshop.

If foliage is your passion then **Conquest Plants Nursery** (coloured and variegated foliage), **Shadyplants.com** and **North Staffordshire Hostas** (Saturday only) will be your first stops.

Alpines and woodland plants are well represented by 3 award-winning nurseries at the event: **Edrom Nurseries** from Scotland, **Pottertons Nursery** from Lincolnshire and **Chris Cooke Plants** from Gloucestershire.

For trees and flowering shrubs we have **Packhorse Farm Nursery** (Acers, cornus, hydrangea) and **The Gobbett** (lilacs and also lots of iris).

For culinary herbs, traditional and new, have a look at award-winning **Hooksgreen Herbs**. Other edibles will be found on a weird and wonderful stall of **Jurassicplants**. Specialist in hardy figs, exotic and unusual edibles (including the Blue Sausage Tree!) and so much more.

Cottage plants are well-represented by **Mayfields** and **Lyneal Mill** each with your favourites old and new.

Green's Leaves will have the best in new plants both for foliage and flower. **Hall Farm Nursery** will have a great mix of herbaceous, grasses, herbs and exotic plants from their Shropshire Nursery. **SpecialPerennials** will have a great range of herbaceous and grasses for summer and autumn colour.

Once you've done all that planting you'll need somewhere to sit and **Orchard Furniture** will be on hand with lovely oak garden furniture.

Dogs on leads welcome. Café open throughout. Ample free parking.

Hodnet Hall Gardens, Hodnet, Market Drayton, Shropshire TF9 3NN

Phone: 01630 685786 email: secretary@hodnethall.com Website: www.hodnethallgardens.org.

Sow Unusual

Martin & Janet Blow love growing exotic looking hardy plants from seed



It's such fun to have something exotic in your garden to draw envious looks from your gardening friends. It's even better when the plants are hardy perennials grown from seed at a fraction of the cost of full grown plants.

The great thing about growing unusual perennials from seed is the tremendous range available and the low cost means you can experiment with hardiness or plant a large drift without breaking the bank. Some perennials can take one, two or even four or five years to flower from seed but I have picked out some that should give some flower in their first year.

You might need to search the seed catalogues for these or even better join a plant society that issues a members' seed list such as the Hardy Plant Society, Cottage Garden Society or Alpine Garden Society.

All the plants mentioned below can be sown in late winter or spring in a little heat using standard seed compost. Remember to transplant the seedlings into pots as soon as they have their second pair of the leaves as seed compost has little food in it and they will stop growing.

One of my favourites from seed and always reliable to flower in the first year is the exotic looking Commelina. This is relative of the Tradescantias we grow as house plants but they are fully hardy in well drained soils. The common name is Sleeping Beauty as the brilliant blue flowers close each afternoon and open again in the morning. I find these beauties will self-sow into a gravel path or you can collect seed to sow in the spring to make more plants.

Foxgloves are commonly grown from seed and varieties like Pam's Choice make a pleasant change in colour from the wild types. There are also some perennial species from southern Europe and these can only really be grown from seed. The Milk Chocolate Foxglove (*Digitalis parviflora*) forms neat rosettes and has masses of chocolate brown flowers in summer. This is one for a sunny, dry soil as is its cousin the Rusty Foxglove (*Digitalis ferruginea*).

Some of the more exotic looking Sages are easy from seed. The Sliver Sage (*Salvia argentea*) has large, woolly-coated leaves and whorls of purple tipped, white flowers in summer. Another unusual one to try from seed is the Yellow Sage (*Salvia flava megalantha*).

The Purple Sunflower (*Berkheya purpurea*) is a spiky, thistle-like plant from South Africa with large pale purple flowers in summer. These are really easy from seed and its far easier growing new



"The brilliant blue flowers close each afternoon"

Photo: SpecialPerennials



"Rusty Foxglove is one for sunny, dry soil"

Photo: SpecialPerennials



"Sliver Sage has whorls of purple tipped, white flowers"

Photo: SpecialPerennials

continued >>>

plants than trying to divide up these unbelievably prickly plants. You might find the seeds listed as Zulu Warrior or Silver Spike – all of them are the same!

One of the most exotic looking flowers in our garden came from tiny, almost dust-like seed from a garden society and is now the largest and showiest plant in our garden. That is Devil's Tobacco (*Lobelia tupa*). It's incredible to think that an 8ft (240cm) plant will grow from such tiny beginnings. The seedlings are so small that is impossible to separate them into individual plants so we just prick out a clump of seedlings to pot on. Although hardy they need a whole growing year to establish in the ground so we keep them in pots in a greenhouse through their first winter and plant them out in the following spring.

Slightly trickier to germinate than those above is the Leopard Lily (*Belamcanda chinensis*) because the seed compost must be kept quite moist at all times to be successful. The reward is short plants with exotic looking freckly flowers in summer – indeed another common name is "Freckle Face".

Giving your garden an exotic look using hardy plants grown from seed is simple and rewarding. What are you waiting for?

Janet & Martin run SpecialPerennials nursery from their garden in Cheshire. Plants are available at Plant Hunters Fairs and by mail order. They are always happy to bring an order to a plant fair for collection.



"It's incredible to think that an 8ft (240cm) plant will grow from such tiny beginnings"

Photo: SpecialPerennials

Middleton Hall

Sunday 8th April & Sunday 22nd July

10am-4pm

Hall, gardens and fair just £2.00

Our 2 brilliant plants fairs are back at this beautiful and historic venue in April and July.

We've been wowed by the popularity of the events over the last 4 years but given the tremendous value of £2.00 for entry to fair, gardens, lake-side walks and the hall it's no surprise!

Dogs on leads welcome (not in hall). Refreshments available throughout.

Middleton, Tamworth, Staffordshire B78 2AE

Phone: 01827 283095 email: trading@middleton-hall.org.uk website: www.middleton-hall.co.uk



Photo: Zoltan Hamori

Snow and Storms

The winter's tale at Arley Arboretum

The snow in December 2017 fell steadily for a few days and then the temperature dropped and the snow remained in the tree canopies.



It looked very picturesque and the arboretum was eerily quiet apart from the occasional creak crack and crash as overburdened limbs were torn away from the trunks. Our mature collection of Cedars of Lebanon, one recorded as planted in 1820 and standing at 31m tall and a girth of 5.47m were particularly affected and also the Scots Pines. We were able to prevent damage of some plants such as the smaller acers and our box hedges in the Italian Garden by shaking off the snow.

The snow was followed a week later by storms which caused further damage the team were kept very busy throughout January clearing. Some of the limbs went crashing into our shrubberies which necessitated pruning to regain the overall shape we tackled the Laurels but will wait to do the same to the Camellias and Rhododendrons until after they have flowered.

We have a collection of Rhododendrons named after the Severn Dwarves, Grumpy is living up to its name and is looking a bit unhappy and misshapen. The Shrubberies are used in the arboretum to extend the season of interest with spring colour in the flowering season and are useful as an evergreen backdrop. The Shrubberies also act as a lower level shelterbelt for our more tender trees such as our extensive Acer collection,

Acers are particularly prone to windburn on their leaves. On the upside we have piles of woodchip which will be used as mulch once they have been stored for a while and plenty of logs to keep the Bothy wood burning Rayburn going next winter. We have only lost one major tree and another has been left as standing deadwood as a wildlife habitat to support our colony of bats.

[continued >>>](#)

Photos: Arley Arboretum





“Wisteria should be in flower”

Photo: Arley Arboretum

Arley Arboretum & Gardens

Saturday 19th May
NEW DATE

Times: 10am- 5pm

Gardens, arboretum and
plant fair: £2.50

Free parking

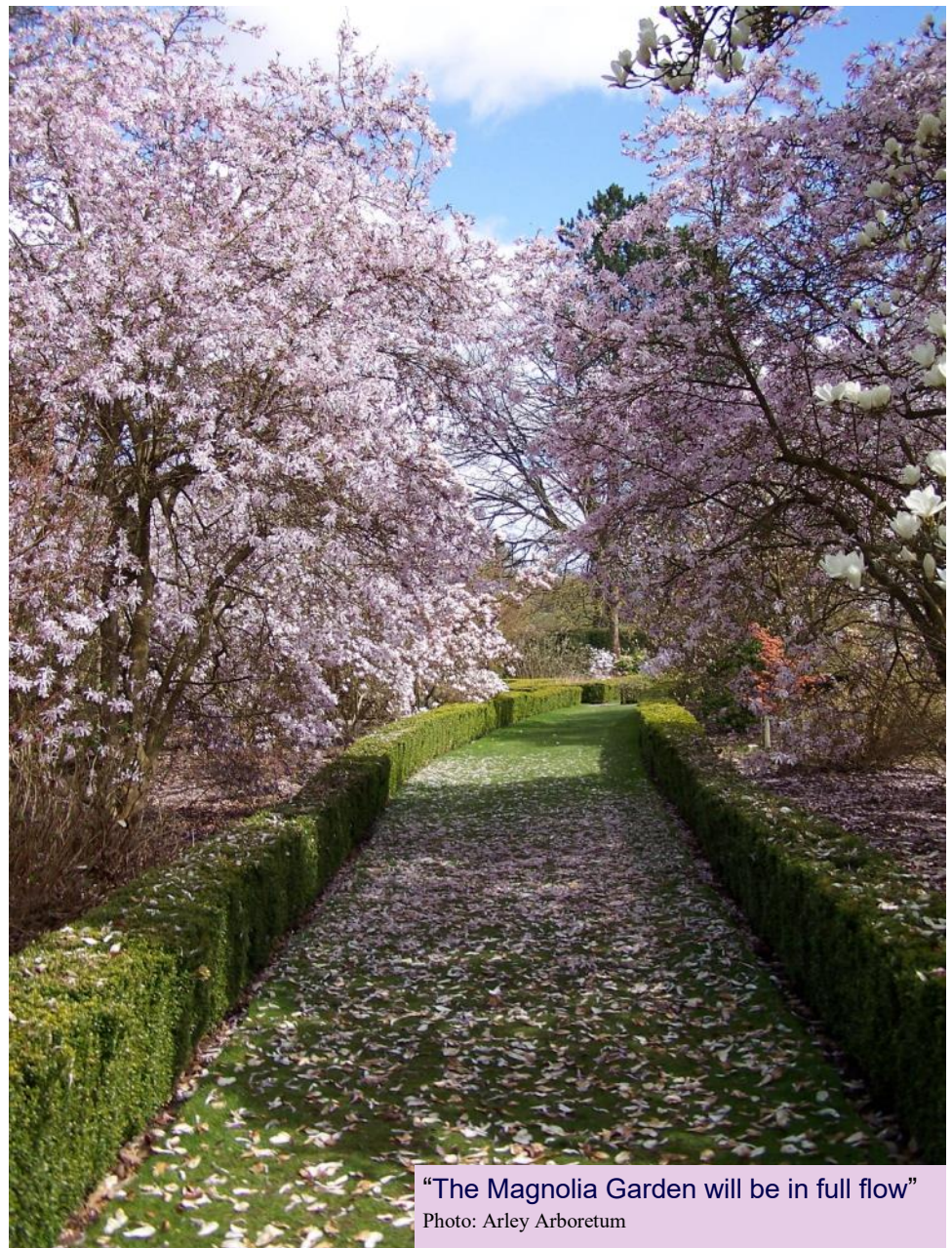
Come and meet the Garden
Team Staff and Volunteers at the
Plant Fair we will be happy to
answer your questions.

It's the first time Plant Hunter's
Fairs have visited the arboretum
in May and this is a lovely time in
the garden and the woods.

At the time of the Plant Fair our
Wisteria should be in flower and
perhaps early flowers on our La-
burnum Arch. The Magnolia gar-
den will be in full flow and the Bog
Garden marginal plants will be
providing colour.

Arley Arboretum & Gardens
Upper Arley,
Near Bewdley
Worcestershire
DY12 1XJ

Email: info@arleyarboretum.co.uk
Estate Office: 01299 861368
website:
www.arleyarboretum.co.uk



“The Magnolia Garden will be in full flow”

Photo: Arley Arboretum



Photo: Zoltan Hamori

Saturday 28th April 2018

Sunday 24th June 2018

Times: 10am - 4pm

Fair and walled garden £1.00 Free parking

Sugnall, Stafford ST21 6NF

The Walled Garden is on the B5026, Eccleshall to Loggerheads road, 2 miles from Eccleshall

Phone: 01785 850820

Walking the Viking Way

In July Jackie Potterton of Pottertons Nursery, will be doing a charity walk to raise funds for the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance. This will be her first long distance footpath.

Jackie told us “the furthest I have walked is 10 miles in a day followed by a week of pain because of an aching body. I will be getting lots of practice for it, in the next few weeks and months, walking round the nursery, picking out orders and telling husband Rob what to do. I shall be attempting to walk The Viking Way, a distance of 150 miles in 12 days from Oakham in Rutland to The Humber Bridge. Rob will be acting as supporter, map reader and flask carrier”.

You can read Jackie’s story and sponsor her walk at Just Giving:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/jackie-rob-potterton>



Standwell Tools

Standwell Tools aim to transform the approach to common garden tasks. Simple but careful design changes to traditional tools have created a range that challenges and overcomes ways of working that have always led to unnecessary effort & strain. Both productivity & safety in the garden can be improved with Standwell long pattern tools: an innovative range of traditionally crafted garden tools.

All essential tasks can be carried out without the need to bend over. For both amateurs & professionals this can mean greater productivity & less time lost to back pain.

The bespoke tools feature: extra-long handles, specially angled sockets and full width, shorter blade and tines on the spade & fork. Traditional ash handles are used throughout for flexibility, strength & durability. The spade, fork & digging hoe have forged carbon steel heads that will never break in normal use. All the tools are suitable for both allotmenters and home gardeners but are tough enough for professionals. They are manufactured in Yorkshire and provided at the lowest cost to promote new, safer working methods and help everyone to carry on gardening.

You can meet Alan and handle these innovative tools at these fairs in 2018:

Sat 17 Mar National Memorial Arboretum

Sat 24 Mar Carsington Water

Sun 8 Apr Middleton Hall

Sun 15 Apr Consall Gardens

Sun 22 Apr Bramall Hall



“All essential tasks can be carried out without the need to bend over”

Photo: Standwell Tools

Battlefield 1403

A free to enter plant fair

Saturday 21st April 9:30am-4pm

Whatever the weather our fair at Battlefield 1403 farm shop and café is a must visit.

Strategically placed on the edge of Shrewsbury the farm shop is a must visit for foodies and on the day of our plant fair, plantaholics too!

As always it's completely free to enter with free parking.

The café is always popular and I'm ready to do battle again with the very generous bacon rolls on offer!

Dogs are welcome in the fair.

Upper Battlefield, Shrewsbury SY4 3DB

Located just off the A49 at Hall's roundabout just north of Shrewsbury

Telephone 01939 210 905 Email: info@battlefield1403.com website: www.battlefield1403.com



Photo: Battlefield 1403

Bramall Hall

Sunday 22nd April
11am-4pm

Entry to fair: £2.00
in aid of special
projects at the hall

Laid out across the croquet lawn nestling up against the welcoming black and white hall, the Plant Hunters' Fair at Bramall Hall has become a local favourite and is back again in 2018.

The line-up of nurseries is impressive for such a great value event and includes 5 RHS medal winning growers: Packhorse Farm with great value acers and other ornamental trees; Hall Farm Nursery with a wide range of garden plants; specialist herbs from Hooksgreen Nursery; Lincolnshire's Pottertons with alpines and Tissington Nursery with perennials.

The wide spectrum of perennials is also well represented by the interesting and unique ranges brought by Bridge Farm Plants from Derbyshire and also Cheshire's SpecialPerennials who were named in the Gardens Illustrated Top 50 nurseries in the UK.

If foliage is your fancy then Conquest Plants Nursery specialise in coloured foliage; Mandsand Plants Nursery will have a good range of heucheras, heucherellas and tiarellas and North Staffs Hostas from Staffordshire specialising in hostas, ferns and ivy.

For cottage gardeners there will be Mayfields Plants and Stonyford Cottage Nursery from Cheshire and Meadow View Plants from Lancashire specialising in cottage garden perennials.

Green's Leaves from Gloucestershire always has the best in new varieties of flower and foliage.

The Gobbett from Worcestershire have lovely ranges of flowering shrubs as well as many types of iris.

The event also welcomes Standwell Tools from Derbyshire with garden tools designed to reduce back strain.

Cheshire artists Vertical Shores will be selling and taking commissions for their studio created stained glass garden art

Dogs welcome in the fair and park.

Hall open as well (separate charge)

off Hall Road, Bramhall, Stockport SK7 3NX

phone: 0161 474 2020

email: bramall.hall@stockport.gov.uk

website: www.stockport.gov.uk/bramallhall





Thanks for all your support over the last 10 years

Buying so many plants...



... and supporting lovely gardens.

Here's to the next 10 years with Plant Hunters' Fairs
Janet & Martin



Plant Hunters Fairs 2018



March
Sat 17 National Memorial Arboretum, DE13 7AR 10am-4pm Arboretum & Fair: Free Entry (P&D Parking)
Sun 18 Alderford Lake, Whitchurch SY13 3JQ 10am-4pm Fair: Free Entry
Sat 24 Carsington Water, Ashbourne DE6 1ST 10am-4pm Country Park & Fair: Free Entry (P&D Parking)
Sun 25 Ness Botanic Gardens, Wirral, CH64 4AY 10am-4pm Fair: £1.00
Fri 30 (Good Friday) Whittington Castle, Oswestry, SY11 4DF 10am-4pm £1.00 per car
Sat 31 Bodenham Arboretum, Kidderminster DY11 5TB 10am-4pm Fair: Free Entry

April
Sun & Mon 1 & 2 Dorothy Clive Garden, Newcastle Under Lyme TF9 4EU 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £4.00
Sat 7 Hoghton Tower, Preston PR5 OSH 10am-4pm Fair: £1.00
Sun 8 Middleton Hall, Tamworth B78 2AE 10am-4pm Hall, Gardens & Lake & Fair: £2.00
Sat 14 Sandwell Valley Park, West Bromwich B71 4BG 10am-4pm Country Park & Fair: Free Entry (P&D Parking)
Sun 15 Consall Hall, Wetley Rocks ST9 OAG 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £3.00
Sat 21 Battlefield 1403, Shrewsbury, SY4 3DB 9:30am-4pm Fair: Free Entry
Sun 22 Bramall Hall, Stockport, SK7 3NX 11am-4pm Park & Fair: £2.00
Sat 28 Sugnall Walled Garden, Eccleshall ST21 6NF 10am-4pm Gardens & Fair: £1.00
Sun 29 Cholmondeley Castle, Malpas, SY14 8AH 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £3.50

May
Sat 5 1620's House Donington Le Heath, LE67 2FW 10am-4pm Gardens & Fair: £1.00
Sun & Mon 6 & 7 Weston Park, Shifnal TF11 8LE 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £3.00
Sat 12 National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas DE13 7AR 10am-4pm Arboretum & Fair: Free Entry (P&D Parking)
Sun 13 Adlington Hall, Macclesfield SK10 4LF 10am-4pm Gardens & Fair: £3.00
Sat 19 Arley Arboretum, Bewdley DY12 1XJ 10am-5pm Arboretum & Garden & Fair: £2.50
Sun 20 British Ironwork Centre, Oswestry SY11 4JH 10am-4pm Displays & Fair: £1.00
Sun 27 Pottertons Nursery & Garden, Caistor, LN7 6HX 9am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £3.00
Mon 28 Carsington Water, Ashbourne DE6 1ST 10am-4pm Country Park & Fair: Free Entry (P&D Parking)

June
Sat & Sun 2 & 3 Hodnet Hall, Market Drayton TF9 3NN 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £3.50
Sat 9 Bosworth Battlefield, Market Bosworth CV13 0AD 10am-4pm Fair: tbc (P&D Parking)
Sun 10 Norton Priory, Runcorn, WA7 1SX 10am-4pm Fair: Free Entry
Sun 24 Sugnall Walled Garden, Eccleshall ST21 6NF 10am-4pm Gardens & Fair: £1.00

July
Sat & Sun 30 Jun & 1 Jul Henbury Hall, Macclesfield SK11 9PJ 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £2.50
Sun 8 Abbeywood Gardens, Delamere, CW8 2HS 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £3.00
Sun 22 Middleton Hall, Tamworth B78 2AE 10am-4pm Hall, Gardens & Lake & Fair: £2.00
Sat 28 National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas DE13 7AR 10am-4pm Arboretum & Fair: Free Entry (P&D Parking)
Sun 29 British Ironwork Centre, Oswestry, SY11 4JH 10am-4pm Fair: £1.00

August
Sun 5 1620's House Donington Le Heath, LE67 2FW 10am-4pm Gardens & Fair: £1.00
Sat 11 Carsington Water, Ashbourne DE6 1ST 10am-4pm Country Park & Fair: Free Entry (P&D Parking)
Sun 12 Southwell Minster, NG25 0HD 11am-4pm Fair: £1.00
Sun & Mon 26 & 27 Dorothy Clive Garden, Newcastle Under Lyme TF9 4EU 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £4.00

September
Sat 1 Bodenham Arboretum, Kidderminster DY11 5TB 10am-4pm Fair: Free Entry
Sun 2 Ness Botanic Gardens, Wirral, CH64 4AY 10am-4pm Fair: £1.00
Sun 9 Weston Park, Shifnal TF11 8LE 10am-4pm Gardens & Fair: £2.50
Sun 16 Henbury Hall, Macclesfield SK11 9PJ 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £2.50
Sun 23 Abbeywood Gardens, Delamere, CW8 2HS 10am-5pm Gardens & Fair: £3.00
Correct at time of press. Please check before travelling.



Full details at planthuntersfairs.co.uk