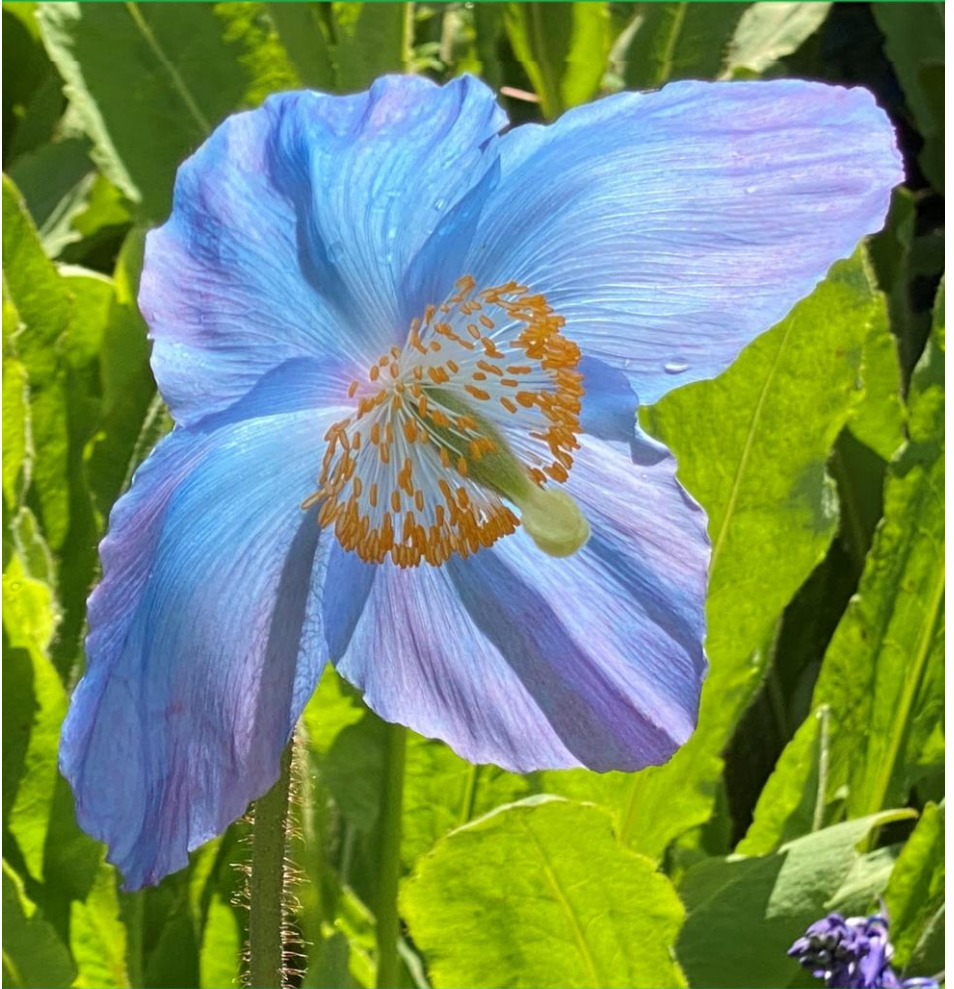


NORTHERN Leaves

Issue No. 50

November 2022



**The Newsletter of the Hardy Plant Society
Scottish and Northern Borders Group**

www.hardy-plant.org.uk

<https://sites.google.com/site/scottishhps>



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The Hardy Plant Society

The Hardy Plant Society was formed to foster interest in hardy herbaceous plants. It aims to give its members information about the wealth of both familiar and less well known plants and to ensure that all garden-worthy perennial plants remain in cultivation and have the widest possible distribution.

HPS website: www.hardy-plant.org.uk

The Scottish and Northern Borders Group has members all over Scotland and several in the north of England. The group organises garden visits in spring, summer and autumn, with lecture days in the winter, arranged at a variety of locations throughout Scotland. The group produces a magazine *Northern Leaves* in spring and autumn.

website: <https://sites.google.com/site/scottishhps/>

The next issue of *Northern Leaves* will be published in May 2023, please send any articles to be included in this issue to **Chris Sanders**, 3 Queen Street, Helensburgh, G84 9QH
Tel. 01436 678028 e-mail sanders94@btinternet.com

It would be appreciated if members could set up standing orders or direct debits to pay their annual subscription promptly.

We are grateful for the financial support of our advertisers and ask members to mention *Northern Leaves* when replying to advertisers by post or when visiting them to buy plants. Advertisers need to know that they are getting value for money from advertising in *Northern Leaves*.

Photographs on the covers

Front Cover: Meconopsis at Craigowan

Brenda White

Back Cover: Agapanthus at Cambo Garden

Brenda White

From the Convenor

Attendances have been variable this session so far and regrettably we had to cancel the Autumn Colours trip. We hope for good attendances in the lecture day and the programme of visits as we move into next year with overnight trips planned for Aberdeenshire and Galloway gardens as well as the normal programme of day visits and hopefully a summer trip. If you have favourite gardens, please suggest visits. We also hope to have a members' plant sale day in June combined with a garden trip so get propagating! As always try and use these events to encourage new members.

The Scottish and Northern Borders branch has agreed to host the HPS national AGM in 2024 and a small organising group from the committee is looking at this and the accompanying logistics. This annual AGM moves around branches and has never, as far as we know, been held in Scotland before now. More news on this to follow.

When you read this the seed orders will be underway and the nursery plant lists arriving in the inbox or mailbox, it's always good to think of future planting when you are in the heart of winter.

Andrew Holmes

From the Editor

At the AGM in March this year I raised the possibility of distributing *Northern Leaves* electronically instead of getting it printed and posted out to members. Electronic distribution, which is employed by many organisations, would save the expense of printing and postage and be more sustainable. Most of the people at the meeting said they would prefer to receive a paper copy, however some said they would be happy with an electronic version.

It was therefore agreed that, starting with this issue, all members would be asked whether they would prefer a paper or an electronic version. All

those with no email address and all the advertisers would continue to receive a paper copy. After Christina sent out an email at the end of September, I have received 56 replies from the 92 members, singles or couples, with email. Of these, 23 said they would prefer a paper copy and 33 said, more or less reluctantly in some cases, that they would be happy with an electronic version. All those who have not responded will receive a paper copy.

I will keep this situation under review, please let me know if you wish to change your preference after the experience of this issue.

Chris Sanders

Stewart McKee

As news of the death on 21st July 2022 of our friend and fellow Hardy Planter Stewart filtered through to the membership, shock and sadness were felt by all who heard it. Elaine was very touched by the number of members who came many miles to be present at his funeral, a testament to the regard in which he was held by many.

Stewart had faced a good deal of illness in recent years, and this had culminated in his being admitted to Crosshouse Hospital near Kilmarnock. Despite all the efforts made by the wonderful staff at the hospital, kidney failure took its toll.

Stewart was a long-standing and hard working member of the group, serving as Convenor from 2008 to 2010 and as a committee member over a long period. He bravely took on producing *Northern Leaves* for two or three years, and served year after year on the holiday committee. He was always there helping at AGMs, acting as auctioneer on occasion.

Quite apart from all this service to the group, he was a loyal attendee at garden visits, and was always good company, spreading his humour and goodwill to all. Bouts of indifferent health had prevented him and Elaine from attending as many meetings as they would have liked in recent years, and of course Covid 19 robbed us all of much social contact

over far too long a period. We will also miss his well known aptitude for causing many a laugh by getting lost en route to garden visits.

I personally will miss him a great deal. No Stewart on the 'phone, saying 'be ready in an hour, we're going out to lunch'. I will always remember him sitting in his usual chair in my conservatory, drinking tea, eating forbidden cake and talking about anything and everything under the sun, with Elaine and I chipping in.

Slightly adapting the words written to Elaine by a member of the group and taking the liberty of adding some of my own, Stewart was such a witty, knowledgeable, kind and thoughtful man and many of us will miss him too.

Joan Gilchrist

Plant Profile – Persicaria



Persicaria polymorpha

This genus of herbaceous perennials and annuals occurs almost worldwide and is commonly known as bistort or knotweed. Persicarias come in all shapes and sizes from the tall and flamboyant *Persicaria alpina* (*syn. polymorpha*) to the ground-hugging, tiny-leaved *Persicaria vacciniifolia*. Although persicarias have a reputation of being invasive, they do have value in the garden if you have the space. They will grow on almost any soil and in sun or shade, flowering for a long period in varying shapes and shades of red, pink and white. They are self-sufficient in the garden, tough, hardy and long-living

plants and don't need staking or fussing. Sadly, despite all these wonderful attributes people can quite often be seen running for the hills when I mention growing persicarias in their gardens (only joking, but people are wary of them).

Persicaria amplexicaulis and its varieties live up a border with their tall, airy flowers, growing happily in amongst grasses and other perennials where it will tolerate most soils. Left to its own devices it will form a sizeable plant after three or four years. The large, dock-like leaves appear from large clumps of roots, covering the ground and smothering out any weeds below. The flower-spikes appear from early to mid-summer (depending on the variety), often to the worst frosts. The flowers are not dense or overpowering, but add structure and interest amongst other plants in the border, almost like gypsophila in a vase of flowers. Shorter, ground covering varieties like *Persicaria affinis* ‘Donald Lowndes’, *Persicaria affinis* ‘Superba’ and *Persicaria vacciniifolia* will cover a few metres if allowed, which makes them ideal for covering bankings and other more challenging garden areas.

The flowers vary in size and colour: from the dark red of *Persicaria*



Persicaria bistorta ‘Superba’



Persicaria amplexicaulis
‘JS Calor’

amplexicaulis ‘Firetail’, the salmon orange of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Orange Field’ and the pale pink of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Rosea’ to the delicate white of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Alba’. The distinctive pink "mini milk" flowers of *Persicaria bistorta* ‘Superba’ appear early in the persicaria season, flowering right through summer. Then there is the bi-coloured flowers of *Persicaria affinis* ‘Donald Lowndes’ and



Persicaria microcephala
'Red Dragon'

Persicaria affinis 'Superba' so, as you can see there is something for everyone. I love them all but perhaps especially the pale pink of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Rosea' amongst tall grasses and perennials. See them all in the nursery gardens.

Because of their toughness and ability to cope with most soils (except very dry soils), sun or light shade they are great in mixed borders, prairie gardens and the more exposed, colder gardens of Scotland.

I have successfully grown them in the nursery gardens, here on the side of an exposed hill in central Scotland at 850 feet above sea level, in clay soil. Their pretty shades of pink, white and red go well with other pinks, mauves, blues and whites. I have teamed them up with grasses, veronicastrums, echinops and asters. I have included a photo of *Persicaria* 'Red Dragon' as an example of the showy colourful foliage some persicarias have, sadly this is not hardy here in our corner of Scotland. I've tried it for a couple of years here in the nursery with no success.

If you have a space in your garden I would recommend you give these plants a go. Which one to go for depends on your colour preference. I have grown all these cultivars in exposed gardens on clay soil. I recommend the following which are all available from my nursery:

***Persicaria affinis* 'Donald Lowndes' AGM**

Tough little ground-cover plant that is suitable for growing on a dry bank, an old wall or for softening the edges of paving. Short spikes of pale-pink flowers turning dark red in summer over glossy green leaves with good autumn colour. H 20cm, S 100cm.

***Persicaria affinis* ‘Superba’ AGM**

A great low growing ground-cover plant that is suitable for dry banks and ground cover. Short spikes of pale-pink flowers turning dark red in summer over glossy green leaves with good autumn colour. H 20cm, S 100cm.

***Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Alba’**

One of my favourites, this rarer and less vigorous form has delicate, wispy, often branched spires of pure-white flowers with tiny, royal-purple stamens from July to the first frosts. Not as enthusiastic as some varieties and lovely in mixed borders. H 80cm, S 60cm.

***Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Atrosanguinea’**

Plentiful dark red spikes come out at all angles on a bushy but lax plant with light green leaves. All the usual characteristics of *Persicaria amplexicaulis* varieties. H 1m, S 1m.

***Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Firedance’**

A vivid, salmon-red flowering persicaria and the finest of several selections by Piet Oudolf. Well worth a place in the garden for its, enthusiastic growth, making it good for ground cover and its long flowering period. H 90cm, S 100cm.

***Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Firetail’ AGM**

Stonking cultivar with numerous erect, fiery crimson spires on tall stems over bushy, green-ribbed foliage tinged red at the tips. Flowers from mid-summer until the first frosts, when the whole plant collapses until the following spring. Stunning with *Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Alba’. H 1.2m, S 100cm.

***Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Inverleith’**

Vigorous plant with lots of short, divergent to upright spires of dark crimson-red flowers on a lower-growing plant with excellent weed-suppressing foliage. H 45cm, S 100cm.

***Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Rosea’**

Numerous erect spikes of graceful, light-pink flowers for months on end. A very effective screening plant that can provide privacy without cutting down on light levels. Grow something more colourful behind it that will ‘shine’ through or use to knit planting schemes together. One of my top plants of all time! H 1.4m, S 100cm.



Persicaria amplexicaulis ‘Rosea’



Persicaria amplexicaulis
‘Atrosanguinea’



Persicaria amplexicaulis ‘Inverleith’



Persicaria amplexicaulis ‘Alba’

***Persicaria bistorta* ‘Superba’ AGM**

Enthusiastic spreader with stubby, pale-pink pokers described by a young visitor to the nursery as a ‘Strawberry Mini-Milk’. Brilliant against a dry-stone wall or with a multitude of other border plants. H 75cm, S 100cm.

Persicaria polymorpha

A true giant of a plant! Stout, branching stems which are smothered in a mass of tiny, cream flowers in summer, ageing to bronze-pink in autumn. Tough, self-supporting and non-invasive. H 2m, S 100cm.

Rona Dodds

VISIT TO EAST LoTHIAN 27th April 2022

Macplants

In 1979 Beryl McNaughton and her husband Ian started a nursery and in 1995 when their son Gavin, with a degree in biochemistry, decided to join them they needed a bigger space. They left Edinburgh and bought a big field in East Lothian at Bogs Holdings, an area of small holdings.

A new site meant that all the infrastructure needed could be installed on a blank canvass. There are watering systems that can water each area as much and for as long as needed with the press of a button. They built an array of polytunnels to suit all needs covering them in plastic, shade netting and even a kind of industrial grade bubble wrap. A big concrete area has huge bays for lorry loads of specially mixed potting compost, a big shed where the mail orders are packed and even a large pile of crushed tarmac ready to be spread out on paths.

The potting compost for sale is all peat free but due to cost and the difficulty of getting bulk delivery so far north they still use 40% peat mixed with wood fibre to achieve a pH of 7.

Gavin has the help of four full-time employees and a good number of part-time and seasonal helpers and of course Mum. They grow most of their plants on site but buy in bigger trees and shrubs. They supply plants to National Trust gardens, landscapers, garden designers, other nurseries and in bulk to big private gardens. Their mail order business really took off during the COVID pandemic so now the beginning of the week is extra busy getting orders packed and sent out.

When we eventually arrived all the chat was of the police activity and delays on the bypass. Over tea and excellent scones we got down to business. Gavin led us round the nursery and then let us loose in the sales area. Lots of lovely well presented plants, some quite unusual and difficult to come by; alpines, perennials and shrubs. Hard choices were made, which erythronium or how many to buy? Would that plant like the same conditions as that one because they look so nice together in the trolley? Judging by the number of full trolleys going out to the car park I think everyone had a very satisfying visit.

Before we left Colin made an impassioned plea for people to join the committee as without enough people to help run things we will not have an active HPS group in Scotland. It is not an arduous job with lots of support from past and present committee members. We all love the visits, seeing new gardens and meeting up with other plant mad people, we may be a dying breed!

Judy Jones

Tynebank

After our morning visit to Macplants hosted by Gavin McNaughton it was going to be difficult for Beryl to match Gavin's hospitality, generosity, horticultural expertise and knowledge. No problem! We picnicked in her garden on tables and chairs lifted out of the house, enjoyed cups of tea and coffee brewed by Beryl herself. The conversations were lively and very interesting. We learned that she and her husband (Ian, now dead) had been at Tynebank for 32 years. Ian was a botanist with a particular interest in gentians and he developed and bred many excellent varieties now on sale at Macplants. In particular Ian bred 'The Caley' an autumn flowering gentian to celebrate the bi-

centenary of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. The variety named ‘Tynebank Glory’ commemorates the garden created by Beryl and himself at Spilmersford. The varieties named ‘Balmoral’ and ‘Braemar’ are also well known and on sale at Macplants. We learned that the interest in horticulture, the environment generally and landscape in particular was passed down to the three children Gavin, with a PhD in Microbiology now running a high quality, successful nursery; their daughter is a professional garden designer, and Fraser, with a landscape degree from Edinburgh now working for NatureScot helping to protect and enhance our national natural environment.

The house is situated on a rocky outcrop with woodland stretching down to the banks of the East Lothian Tyne River and bordered by open fields to the south. The path and areas along the river, which flood regularly, have recently been upgraded. At the end of the path is a beautifully located summerhouse/sitting area overlooking the river and it is ideal for relaxing meditations! The rock outcrops have led to numerous rock gardens and steep but interesting paths down into the woodland. Many of the trees and shrubs planted by Beryl are now approaching maturity, indeed, a mature tree removed early this spring has opened up a large gap in the canopy and Beryl is already thinking hard as to how she is going to plug this hole, or maybe leave it! As well as rock plants the garden is known for being rich in meconopsis with numerous cultivars of big perennial blue poppies.

Between the house and adjacent fields the garden slopes down more or less evenly and this is where Beryl began to grow plants commercially. Being a private house she was not allowed to sell/retail directly from home so she supplied plants to other nurseries or sold plants, fruit and vegetables privately. Gavin, apparently, used to help his Mum in this ‘nursery’ area and loved it, so when he finished university they looked for a ‘proper’ nursery site for him and found the current Macplants. The rest is history. Beryl remains an incredibly fit and active elderly lady and continues to garden and help in Macplants. Long may she continue to do so.

Ross Anderson

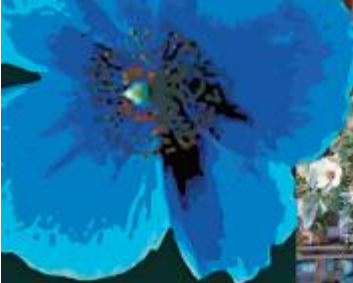


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VISIT TO EAST PERTSHIRE

25th May 2022

Craigowan

As I drove up the motorway through Fife on Wednesday 25 May, I looked out on thick fog and lashing rain and I wondered what on earth I was doing, visiting gardens on a day like this! But the spirit of Hardy Planters past and present spurred me on, and eventually I emerged into the sunshine of Perthshire, and the welcoming arms of the Nae Limits café in Ballinluig. Endurance rewarded!! And there were familiar faces sat round tables bearing coffee, and of course scones with liberal quantities of butter and strawberry jam. No excuse now for not getting on with the first garden...

And that was Craigowan, a first-time visit for HPS, where we were warmly welcomed by Simon, son of the owners Ian and Christine Jones. The family have been there for about 35 years, during which they have added a couple of fields to extend their garden space. That space is now about 5.5 acres, and that's plenty of garden in which to spend a happy and interesting morning. Which we did.



The principal feature is the major collection of rhododendrons, much of it collected via Glendoick from some of the well-known plant collecting expeditions of the last half-century, but augmented by some significant hybrids in recent years. Simon explained that the pattern and the



colours of the collection are constantly changing. The reason for this is that, when an original planting gets too big for its patch, it is moved to another more suitable location. This has been going on for many years, thanks largely to a friendly contractor who has become adept at digging the correctly

sized hole to accommodate it – not too big, as rhododendrons are shallow-rooted plants. All these rhododendrons are labelled throughout the garden – Simon believes them to be correctly named though he admits that Ken Cox from Glendoick has challenged a few of them! Happily, most of the plants were in full bloom on the morning we visited and there were some truly spectacular specimens, in a range of glorious colours, with many striking colour combinations and clashes. It must be mentioned that a relatively small specimen with sparkling white blooms, which was much admired, was labelled *Rh.* ‘Persil’. That must be right!!

But despite the obvious predominance of woodland – and there are many trees of interest besides the rhododendrons – there are also grassed garden areas of immaculate presentation, flanked by herbaceous borders with an amazing collection of varied plants. Prominent in these borders in late May was a wide range of different species



of meconopsis, all in peak condition. Sadly, the garden's labelling doesn't seem to extend beyond the rhodo collection, so I can't tell you what these different species were! (That's absolutely the only little criticism I have of the garden.) The same problem exists with another of the garden's major collections, that of trilliums. These are everywhere, large and small, and in a range of colours. It is obviously a very comprehensive collection. My own acquaintance with these plants having been limited to small plants with white petals and dark green leaves, I was amazed at the sheer variety of scale and colour. Quite an education!

One of the joys of this garden is the variety and the contrast of its plants and its contexts. Wherever you stand and wherever you look, there is a vista of colours and textures to enchant the eye. And I must not forget to tell you that, at this time of year, the bluebells are everywhere! A vivid blue carpet forming a background for so many delights.

This may have been the Hardy Planters' first visit to Craigowan, but I'm certain it will not be our last.



Brenda White

Cluny House

Cluny is always a good visit because John and Wendy Mattingley love their garden so much, and the garden responds by looking wonderful in all seasons, but this time I wasn't sure what degree of devastation we would see as Storm Arwen had hit at the end of last year.



Cluny House

During his introduction John told us of some of the damage with Arwen cutting a swathe through the garden destroying 70 year old rhododendrons and conifers, some of which landed on a 250 year old walnut tree. They feared the worst but as the debris was cleared the walnut emerged, battered and battle scarred,

but still standing, although perhaps not as straight as before. Another victim was the log store which took a hit and is now looking surreal with an undulating roof, back and sides, and broken planks sticking out at odd angles.

There has been a massive amount of work to do removing the felled trees and broken branches. As no heavy machinery is allowed in the garden this all has to be manual, and as much as possible of the wood is reused in the garden for handrails and supports, step edges, even a bridge. A very tactile experience holding a handrail of dark brown silky, peeling bark while going up and down steps. The plank cutter has been working overtime, and anything that has no use is taken to the boundary fence and put over into the field for



Wellingtonia

collection. There were large logs and slices of trunk around the garden, and at one point the path itself had been taken out by a falling tree. The path side has been reinforced with rocks and part of the trunk cut and used to make a huge trunk bench, where I sat to gather my thoughts and start to write my notes surrounded by the scent of an undamaged azalea.

Walking around I had my eyes down looking at all the beauties showing their faces and nearly missed the magnificent handkerchief tree *Davidia involucrata* standing above me, waving its hankies in the breeze, luckily somebody else spotted it and drew my attention. I also spotted a beautiful acer, its fresh red leaves shimmering, and spread through the garden were assorted rhododendrons and maples.

It is amazing how resilient nature is, although starting to look a little weary the hellebores were still holding their own with the ferns unfurling their bright green crooks and bluebells everywhere, they look beautiful in a natural woodland garden like Cluny, but they drive me up the wall when they keep appearing where I don't want them in my own garden, especially in the middle of other plants with their bulbs trying to pull themselves down to Australia.

I spotted a lonely arisaema with its fascinating pitchers, and a bit further on was a large clump filling a glade. OK, I like slightly strange plants, or I guess most plants, unless they're bright yellow ... we were too late for erythroniums as only their seedheads remained but trilliums were on their way out and I saw several I



Cardiacrinums

would like, white 'Flore Pleno', a red single and a single pale pink, not sure if the pink was part of the ageing process. Meconopsis with their flowers looking almost like silk were glowing, primulas were also

coming into season as were martagon lilies getting ready to flower and with a taste of things to come, the huge leaves of rodgersia were starting to spread themselves, along with the growing spires of cardiocrinums.

It has taken John and Wendy the last four months to get the garden cleared of fallen wood, which leaves them four months of routine work to catch up, no small thing as this is a large garden, with some challenging terrain. I had forgotten how deep and steep it is in places – or is that my age showing...

A lovely afternoon, it didn't rain. A huge relief that the *Sequoiadendron giganteum* were still standing. My only disappointment was that I didn't see a red squirrel, was I too busy looking down, or were they busy raising young – hopefully the latter.

Jo Goldsworthy

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GARDEN TOUR TO CHESHIRE 13th – 17th June 2022

Sizergh Castle

This was a good stop on our journey down from Glasgow. It appeared to be really busy, but it's a huge estate and with plenty of walks through the policies. We first visited the rock garden with its Westmorland lime stone and huge Japanese maples; they are mainly *Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum', in both green and purple, sold as slow growing, which is true, but after 100+ years they were huge.

Then the vegetable garden; I had Jane with me and, as she has a very productive allotment in Greenock she could cast a professional eye over the produce. I am pleased to say she was impressed. The beds were edged in slate with some further divided into 60cm squares containing herbs, different coloured lettuce etc we thought rather effective. Next the Stumpery; now I had seen pictures of the one at Highgrove, which is quite something, but there only appeared to be one stump and a log at this one, but there were wonderful ferns and rodgersias.

Then round to the front of the house overlooking a large lake and parkland with ancient trees. Behind us was the house with a long flight of stone steps leading up to the front door; in all the cracks and crevices were plants of that wee daisy *Erigeron karvinskianus*; it looked great. After a wander round the grounds off to the excellent cafe for some lunch.

I must say how much I enjoyed the holiday. It's so good to see everyone after the lockdowns etc. Here's to another in 2023.

Oliver Miller

RHS Bridgewater



Visitor Centre

Having heard so much about the building of RHS Garden Bridgewater in Salford it was wonderful to have the opportunity to visit and see how work was progressing.

The garden is named for the Bridgewater Canal running along the southern edge of the estate, and has been built on the site of

the long gone Worsley New Hall and grounds. Salford City Council have had a big involvement in the project, and I think I am right in saying that Tuesday is free entry day for local residents as a ‘thank you’, and to encourage an interest in all things natural, outside and horticultural.

Although work was only started in 2017 a lot of existing structures and plantings have been incorporated so although some areas are still very new, others have more maturity, especially water and tree landscapes, there is a lot to see.

I decided to start my visit with a trip to see the black Berkshire pigs, with their white feet. They are used as natural bulldozers to clear areas, feeding the soil as they go; very sound ecology and so natural to see pigs running free, although you are warned to keep hands away...

Walking to the pig field took me past the large children’s playground which has been built in an area of woodland, with climbing frames and virtually all equipment constructed from felled trees, ‘hedged’ with felled trees and branches, some with amazing shapes. All very natural and the children were all having great fun. This was in the ‘wild’ area where *Rhododendron ponticum* is still growing, helping contain the sounds of excited children enjoying life, and allowing them space for adventure.

The huge walled garden is in two halves, the 'productive area' with some beds still a work in progress, some experimental beds, and large vegetable and herb plantings with all produce used in the on-site restaurants, nothing goes to waste. Copper beech hedges divide beds with rusty metal columns for roses in amongst mixed herbaceous plantings, with very chunky, tall rusty metal pillars in the centre to support rampant rambling roses.

An area has been dedicated to medicinal trees, shrubs and plants, very interesting reading the labels and information boards, it is fascinating to think that some of these ancient remedies can still be relevant and research is still increasing our knowledge.

The second half of this area is the Paradise Garden with hard landscaping including a rill linked to fountain pools, all combined with stunning colourful textural and perfumed plantings. Some of the striking plants in this area were the grey felted leaves and stems of *Ballota pseudodictamnus*, vivid flower spikes of kniphofia, perfume of dianthus, an intense purple salvia, dramatic spikes of *Stipa gigantea*, *Cornus kousa* giving some bulk to the planting, large spiky purple spheres of *Allium cristophii*, *Phuopsis stylosa* giving textural ground cover, *Stipa lessingiana* wafting in the breeze, *Digitalis lutea*, and balls of *Allium nigrum*, *Melica ciliata*, a lower growing delicate grass.



Paradise Garden



Bedding!

Molinia caerulea (purple moor-grass), monarda, *Selinum wallichianum* a tall impressive white umbelifera, tall either blue or white spikes of camassia, pink, red or white brushes of sanguisorba, low growing geum leaves with their flowers hovering above them and weaving through the stems of taller neighbours, astilbe plumes of various heights and colours, and various clumps of astrantia from white to dark red, *Thalictrum aquilegifolium* with clouds of flower heads, agastache with aromatic foliage, *Persicaria bistorta* ‘Superbum’, *Iris* ‘White Swirl’, spikes of various coloured *Veronicastrum virginicum*, and really standing out was a rogersia with its large leaves and amazing large fluffy peachy/cream flower heads. Apologies for the list of plants, but hopefully those of you who know your herbaceous plants will be able to picture them, not in the solid mass of the formal herbaceous border, but colour highlights floating through and above the green base foliage layer, not graduated by height but some taller plants to the front; these beds really impressed me.

There was so much I didn’t have time to see, I really needed to do a survey of the plant sales area. I have to say it was very well stocked with very good quality plants, far more interesting than the average garden centre, but not cheap.

Perhaps my favourite planting area was the Learning Garden, a group of irregular shaped beds in prairie style with variety of heights, textures and colours, and varying combinations. The plants I found most impressive were *Cirsium rivulare* ‘Atropurpureum’ making a big statement, deep velvet purple iris, vivid yellow euphorbia,



Chinese Garden

On the day of our visit the great and good of the RHS were gathered at the garden for their AGM and the troublemaker in me was greatly tempted to gate crash the meeting to point out to them that although they tell us how much they do for their members they should remember that their more northern members need to take in the region of three days of their lives to spend one day at any RHS property or event, but decided my time would be better spent enjoying the visit. I think I am always reminded that during my last two years living in England I was 30 minutes from Wisley, and I wasn't a gardener let alone a member, so never visited. How life changes!!

This was a very interesting garden and it will be good to revisit in future to follow the development, as an RHS member with free entry I am considering doing a tour of RHS, and other gardens, finishing at Harlow Carr before dashing back over the border.

Jo Goldsworthy
Pictures by Chris Sanders

10 Statham Avenue

We left RHS Bridgewater, a large public park type garden and looked forward to a smaller more personal garden. Statham Avenue is not the most bus friendly place but we got there and were welcomed by Mike and Gail Porter. They have developed their garden behind their 1870s house for 40years and have opened for the NGS for some years.

Walking in, between the house and garage we passed a venerable contorted hazel, the big trunks had real character and the contorted leaves were high enough to be ignored. There was also a large acer that those that know about acers were very impressed with.



Acer palmatum 'Seiryu'



Actinidia kolomikta

Beside the house and at the back of the garage is a secluded, paved courtyard and greenhouse. A peach tree on the wall, a small water feature that gave a cooling feel to this amazing space. Mike has so many pots, small, big, and very big pots with a comprehensive watering system containing a jungle of large leaves including, agapanthus, hostas, a huge ligularia and a much admired white parahebe. He has a small raised bed for veg and a line of potatoes in bags.



Bougainvillea



Bridgewater Canal with Heron

Past the conservatory dominated by a huge, bright purple bougainvillea we entered the open garden. The garden is on clay and slopes steeply up from the house to a gate opening on to the Bridgewater Canal. We should have travelled by boat! Mike has constructed beds using sleepers and metal surrounds rather than terracing the whole plot so that the grass paths and steps wind round the garden meaning all the beds can be reached from all sides. There are plenty of sunny bits and shady bits and sitting bits to pause and consider.



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Not much of the original planting remains but there is a very tall laburnum tree that sadly had gone over when we were there but the BIGGEST ROSE IN LYMM, *Rosa* ‘Paul’s Himalayan Musk’ in full flower more than made up for it. In the middle of the garden a mature bed with a gunnera and large clumps of *Peltiphyllum peltatum*, purple leaved lysimachia, Solomon’s seal and pink persicaria dominates, but is balanced by plantings round about of rhododendrons, azaleas, a parrotia, cornus, cerci and more.



Rosa ‘Chandos Beauty’



Cephalaria gigantea

Each bed has its own style but throughout the garden are roses in colours that complement their neighbouring plants. Some are on sturdy metal pillars. One pink one commented on by many was a Fryer’s rose called *Rosa* ‘Chandos Beauty’ but my favourite was a five foot high *Rosa* ‘Mutabilis’ covered in single flowers that darken as they age.

I cannot finish this appreciation of a really interesting garden without mentioning the tea. Homemade meringues, mixed berries and cakes all served with such generosity and joyfully accepted. We will all remember different parts of the garden but we will all remember the tea!

Judy Jones
Pictures by Alistair MacCormick

Bodnant Gardens

We visited Bodnant Gardens on a beautiful summer's day on Wednesday 15th June 2022. The garden is situated in North Wales, just south of Colwyn Bay along the east side of the Conwy Valley. It was mainly developed after a prominent industrialist, Henry Davis Pochin, purchased the estate at auction in 1875. It was not long before he began planting and expanding the garden and many of the venerable trees we were to see date from the 1870s.



The car/coach parking area is, in fact, across the road from the garden itself which is reached by a curving descent under the main road to reach the entrance gates on either side and above is a glorious rambling rose, pink in colour and providing a wonderful invitation to enter and enjoy the delights to come.

Once in the garden proper, the group soon went their separate ways but were often encountered as our paths crossed. Janette and I spent some time in the top of the garden near the house. The beds against the wall to the left of the main path through which one gains access to the plant sales area and a cafe were immaculately maintained and contained a few notable plants which we hadn't seen before. These included a brilliant *Abutilon* 'Ashford Red', a stunning orange, low growing perennial, *Arctotis* 'Hayley' and a very unusual plant which turned out to be *Impatiens niamniamensis* – the cockatoo busy lizzie with its unusual flowers which did indeed resemble miniature cockatoos!

Unfortunately none of these are likely to be hardy with us in the



Abutilon 'Ashford Red'

north except, perhaps by the west coast and in sheltered positions, but we might try anyway!

Across the main path and at right angles to it another bed had a plant of *Baptisia* ‘Purple Smoke’, about one metre in height with upright spires of lilac coloured pea like flowers.



Arctotis ‘Hayley’



Imaptiens niamniamensis



Baptisia ‘Purple Smoke’



Iris sibirica ‘Vi Luihn’



Pinus radiata



Laburnum Arch

Further along this path was a vibrant blue *Iris sibirica* ‘Vi Luihn’, which Janette would like to find and plant in memory of her special friend, Iris Heasman.

Back up the slope a short distance away we came across a group of old trees planted in the 1870s. A sweet chestnut, *Castanea sativa*, had lost the right hand half of its trunk but the left hand side was alive and had grown into a massive tree. Two of the lower branches had layered themselves and the two uprights had formed large trunks of their own, adding considerable mass to the whole tree – very impressive.

Close by, a very large tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, complete with tulips was also impressive, as were two large oaks – *Quercus petraea* and a large mature beech – *Fagus sylvatica*.

In the same area but with a more open aspect was a mighty pine which was identified by one of the garden staff working nearby as the Monterey pine – *Pinus radiata* – with a stout gnarled trunk soaring upwards, the foliage contrasting beautifully with the cloudless blue sky.

Just a little further uphill was the south entrance to the famous Laburnum Arch, 180 feet long and the longest in the UK. Flowering seemed all but over, but a walk through to the other end revealed a patch where the flowers were almost at their best and gave an idea just how magnificent

an experience it would be to see the whole arch in full flower!



Rhododendron

We started to retrace our steps downhill and found a delightful path through a pink rhododendron which formed an arch through which we gaily proceeded.



The Mid Way Pond



Olivia Rose Austin



The Rose Garden



The Lily Pond



Centaurea montana 'Jordy'



Arbutus x andrachnoides

We passed many other splendid shrubs and trees and were very taken with a large circular pond on the way, full of water lilies just about to open and surrounded by plantings of palms, cordylines and other exotics.



Campanula

Traversing south and descending again we soon approached the Water Lily Pond but were waylaid by perhaps the highlight of the day. Along a lavender lined pathway and down a stairway with glorious blue campanulas emerging from each tread, we reached the Rose Garden which was in just

spectacular form. We spent a long time marvelling at the variety of colour, form and perfume of hundreds of these wonderful flowers. Olivia Rose Austin proved to be one of our favourites.

And so to the Water Lily Pond itself with the Pin Mill at the south end, white water lilies there and red ones at the north end. *Sambucus nigra* 'Gerda' in one of the surrounding borders was eye catching.

Soon we started our journey up towards the cafe having decided not to go all the way down to the River Conwy as our time at Bodnant was running out. We had, perhaps, spent too much time admiring and revelling in the exquisite scents of the roses! On the way we passed a clump of



Sambucus nigra 'Gerda'

Centaurea montana 'Jordy' which we had not come across before. Near the house and our last spectacular plant with striking orange peeling bark was *Arbutus x andrachnoides*.

The Plant Centre beckoned but, as we had to queue for too long to have some lunch there was not enough time and no plants were purchased. Altogether the visit to Bodnant was memorable indeed and we shall not forget it.

Alistair MacCormick

Plas Cadnant

Having left Bodnant we travelled west along the coast and over the Britannia Bridge into Anglesey (we weighed too much to use the Menai Bridge – all that delicious food in the hotel!) to visit Plas Cadnant, one of Wales' Secret Gardens.

The original owner of the estate, John Price, bought the land in 1804 and ensured that the area was well maintained. In 1928 the estate was split up and sold. One of the later owners was related to the Tremayne family of Heligan House in Cornwall, now famous for its Lost Gardens.

The estate was bought by the present owner 26 years ago which is when the restoration of the grounds began. The work was a huge undertaking as the garden and grounds had been neglected for over 70 years. Three different gardens were discovered – a walled garden with curving walls and a pool, a secret valley garden with three waterfalls and a river, and an upper woodland garden with stone outcrops and the remains of a 19th Century folly.



However, both the climate and the topsoil are good and over the years the garden has been gradually improved. The one and a half miles of paths are often narrow and undulating, possibly dangerous in wet weather. There is a kitchen garden, a double herbaceous border and a newly created grotto and pool devoted to the Grecian river god Alpheus.



At the end opposite the garden entrance is 'The Jungle' with many old trees and shade-loving plants including giant tree ferns. There is also a belvedere, a pool fed by a natural spring, and a ravine adjacent to a tributary of the River Cadnant. A bluebell glade is now part of an SSSI and follows round into thirty nine steps; a large stand of cardiocrinum was in full flower.

Returning towards the house there are the Upper Valley Gardens and Ann's Seat and Valley View. The last passionate gardener was Mrs

Fanning Evans, and she created a Secret Garden in the late 1940s, the only surviving planted area at the start of the restoration. Continuing along that edge of the garden is a raised terrace full of colourful plants.

Lastly there is a Pit House, a pre-1830 glasshouse of unusual design and restored after lengthy research. It was heated by flues under the growing bed and still has its original chimney. In the corner was a tomato tree, *Cyphomandra betacea*, tamarillo, with large scarlet fruits. It is native to Peru and the fruits, rock hard at present, are apparently edible but usually stewed.



Sheila Phillips

Stonyford Cottage

This garden is said to be inspired by Monet's garden and reminiscent of the Florida Everglades but having been to neither I cannot comment on this. We were guided round the garden by Andrew who owns it along

with his twin brother and I thought that I would stay close to him and listen to what he said but when he turned on the narrow paths I frequently found myself at the back of the group. This means that the following is snippets about the garden.

The garden was created from a wetland area that once was full of bulrushes but over thirty years many unusual plants have been grown in the sandy soil that was in a frost pocket. Paths, boarded walkways and bridges led us through eight acres where, catching my eye, were candelabra primulas, hardy orchids and beautiful dark foxgloves. Last year I was very enthusiastic about geums and I think that they may have been too as we saw several.

Other features that stood out for me were a hosta with huge leaves called 'Empress Wu', the bamboo culms and the many birds. Fortunately we did not meet any of the crocodiles we were told to beware of!

After our tour we enjoyed a lunch of quiches and cakes served in the marquee. Then, the moment we were waiting for, we reached the plant sales area. We were glad of the empty seats in the coach as many purchases were made.

Liz Johnston

Stretton Old Hall Gardens

Our last afternoon visit was an absolute delight. The weather was perfect as we gathered to be given an introductory talk by Head Gardener, Stephen Gore. He outlined the history of this relatively new garden and gave us an insight into its conception and construction. The house dates from the 17th Century and was extended in the 19th Century. The owners, Ken and David an Architect and an Interior Designer, bought the house and five acre field ten years ago. They designed the gardens and started laying them out after 18 months, Stephen joining them six years ago. They all have similar tastes and ideas as to the development, none of them keen on variegated plants! Only an old ash and sycamore remain on the site. Semi-mature trees worth approximately £0.5m including *Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata' (hornbeam) and clipped conifers

as well as olives have been planted to give the garden a sense of maturity and structure.



The formal gardens

We entered the garden round the side of the house into a shaded sitting area with pleached hornbeams, a formal pool and waterfall alongside a garden room, a paved path which ran SW away from the house, between wide lawns bordered by colourful herbaceous borders. On either side of the path were four huge terracotta pots containing old olive trees

cushioned by froths of *Erigeron karvinskianus* and fronted by narrow borders of low growing perennials. A square of dark flowered dwarf lavender backed by a stand of yellow *Sysyinchium striatum* at the house end of each border was associated with a group of formal rounded shapes – box balls, metal depictions of artichoke heads and a metal lattice work sphere through which were growing *Verbena officinalis* 'Bampton', all set in pea gravel. Glimpses of the swimming pool area were visible through the double beech hedge on the left hand side of this top garden.

This path formed the main axis of the garden and on either side were smaller enclosed gardens surrounded by clipped hedges of yew, hornbeam and beech. A change in level was defined by low hedges backing the herbaceous borders at the near ends of which were metal structures giving height and definition to the planting and no doubt interest in winter too. Down some steps and to the right a rill flanked by grasses formed a cross axis within a shaded garden containing some interesting sculptures and backed by a red brick wall. Two carved ornamental doors in the wall led into the kitchen garden (once a tennis court!) at one end of which was a metal greenhouse. Laid out formally, a central octagonal stone fountain was flanked by red stone built planters containing fruit trees and vegetables. Two of the planters housed 400 year old olives with the most wonderful gnarled bark. At the far side



The shaded garden

steps led up to a raised area covered by a metal rose arch with a pink rose.

Further down, the main path gave way to gravel and on either side a scree/gravel garden planted with drought tolerant, Mediterranean plants and grasses such as *Stipa gigantea*, *Cercis siliquastrum* (Judas trees)

gave height and shade and there were large smooth grey boulders scattered around, some inviting you to sit a while. An iron gateway opened onto a large expanse of lawn with curved wild flower borders amongst young silver birch trees and a large hen run to the right hand side. A lake with water lilies, *Zantedechia* (arum lilies) and yellow iris with a paved sitting area on the far side, gave a long view back up to the house. There are plans to open up the lake and extend it into the field beyond, which will entail some re-lining and the formation of a weir. The area around is quite boggy and planted with cornus, salix and other wet loving plants forming a wild life haven. A bark covered path led through an acer and birch glade with shade loving plants such as foxgloves, hardy geraniums and brunnera to a metal roofed hut furnished as a quiet retreat and then on up steps through trees and shrubs to the outdoor pool and pool room.



Border with sculpture

This was a quiet sheltered area behind the outbuildings at the rear of the house. On the shadier side and against the double beech hedge were two borders with numerous tree ferns of differing sizes under planted with

grasses and box balls. At the time the ferns were being watered into their crowns because of the dry weather, by the only part-time helper in the garden! As you walked into the double beech hedge there was a striking sculpture set in grass with a backdrop of trees, at one end. A garden described as ‘Controlled Exuberance’ and all in all a fabulous way to end our stay in North Wales! Small wonder it was voted ‘People's Garden of 2021’ for the NGS.

Ennid and David Hart



Cheshire 2022

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VISIT TO EDINBURGH 14th July 2022

Riccarton Mains Farmhouse, Currie

In the best traditions of the group the initial focus of the visit was to do justice to the superb baking provided by our hosts before we moved on to the garden.

The garden was started forty years ago by the current owners in what was then a field. The garden surrounds the farmhouse with the most striking feature being the terraces of mixed herbaceous borders rising up the steep slope behind the farmhouse. The roses were particularly fine on the day of the visit, as were the delphiniums. Also noted were the *Cephalaria gigantea* and the yellow kniphofia. Above the borders were grassed areas divided by clipped hedges and attractive cobbled paths. The sculptural shapes of the spherical *Ilex* 'Argentea marginata' provided an enjoyable contrast to the exuberant herbaceous beds. The sheltered vegetable garden had been redesigned for easier maintenance and consisted of two wooden raised beds and a small plot. A clever extension had been added to the house with a sunroom projecting at first floor level to meet the slope, thus creating a bridge from the house.

In contrast, at the front and to one side of the house were shaded wooded areas within which were the remnants of old stone farm buildings, whilst old stone walls bordered the garden. The woodland area comes into its own in the spring. The visit ended with a vote of thanks in a small courtyard garden next to the house, containing a pond and an impressive wisteria.

Patrick Callaghan

Glenlockart Valley

Jamie and Monica told us they moved to their house ten years ago “to have a garden”... and what a beautiful garden they’ve created. It wraps around the house with a variety of habits and therefore a range of plants from shade to dry sun. Monica says she did plan the garden but really it evolved as it went along and is now in the process of redeveloping. As we know, gardens never stand still, do they! Jamie is the one with the special awareness of where things will go, whereas Monica’s focus is the plants – an ideal combination for knowing where and what to put in a garden.

The front is the more enclosed of the spaces with more shade. Here, they’re in the process of removing the more time-consuming herbaceous and extending the heathland style planting with shrubs, making it a bit more maintenance-free. Plants currently in place included several lovely flowering parahebes which lead you round the side to the back area.

The back gets the sun and is laid out as a gravel garden. Given that it’s only a year old, it was wonderfully floriferous and full of colour, ranging from the yellow phlomis and helichrysum in full flower and glorious perfume, *Brodiaea laxa* ‘Corrina’ (aka ‘Triteleia’) with its wonderful blue flowers, matched by the *Catananche caerulea*, and an *Aeonium haworthii* hybrid in a pot.

With the added bonus of sun and comfortable chairs, Monica and Jamie’s garden provided the perfect place for a picnic lunch. Thank you to them for their hospitality and letting us into their enchanting garden.

Pam Wortley

89 Ravenscroft Street

89 Ravenscroft Street is the home of Alex and Andrew Grey Muir, who have spent nearly 60 years transforming the former market garden for the nearby big house into a wonderful garden with many different garden rooms, each with their own style of planting.

The garden, hiding behind an unassuming Georgian house, covers nearly three quarters of an acre and is mostly within the walls of the mid 17th Century big house, which no longer exists. This provides shelter for a wide variety of plants as the garden is on an exposed, elevated site with great views over Edinburgh and the surrounding countryside. It also features a Grade B listed gazebo, or lookout point, probably built in the 17th Century when the big house was constructed.



Sunken Garden



Sunken Garden and Gazebo



Gazebo



Herbaceous border



Edge of woodland



Pond

We started our tour with Andrew leading the first group around the garden on his favoured route, so we could experience the different sections of the garden to their best effect. The area near the house is laid to lawn with extensive wildlife friendly herbaceous borders, cutting border and vegetable plot. The border nearest the sun room was looking particularly good, with verbena, dioramas, roses, grasses and geraniums providing soft, cottage style planting. The wall was smothered in a number of different roses and clematis.

We next moved into a wild area with trees and long grass, which is at its best in the spring with aconites, crocus and bluebells, but which in summer provided restful shade. The sunken garden beside this area was planted with fig and apple trees, which were producing well in the shelter of the walls. This area was also a riot of lovely soft planting with roses, grasses, lavender and euphorbias.

The next garden room to visit was the pond area with a stream and bridge, planted with primulas, iris, alchemilla mollis, hostas and geraniums around the pond, with a large pineapple broom beside the wall.

As our tour was drawing to a close, the heavens opened and everyone beat a hasty retreat to their cars after an enjoyable visit to a lovely garden.

Lesley Reid

VISIT TO EAST FIFE

18th August 2022

Wormistoune House Crair

We arrived at the 17th Century restored Scottish Tower House to be met by Joshua the Head Gardener. He was accompanied by his assistant gardener and Karen who works part-time in the garden and runs her own Nursery. She supplied plants for the garden and a plant sale for us.

We entered the Walled Garden through a beautiful wrought iron gate which was made by a local metal worker. The garden is divided into a number of rooms. The main axis leads along an impressive yew backed double herbaceous border with an attractive path of pebbles in sand and paving leading to a wooden moon gate. On either side of the moon gate are two Moorish style rectangle pools joined by a rill and in each corner is a pavilion.



Wormistoune House



Lawns

were grown from seed.

A new garden area has been developed close to the house. This can be viewed from the tower. The circular lawn is surrounded by new mixed herbaceous borders. They are filled with roses, *Scabiosa caucasica*, alstroemeria, *Achillea millefolium*, *Verbena bonariensis*, penstemon and other perennials described as “old ladies’ plants”. Many of the herbaceous plants

The potager provides the gardeners with the challenge of growing a wide variety of produce in their no dig beds. The onions and sweetcorn looked very impressive. On one side of the Walled Garden are four huge griselinia underplanted with ferns and other shade loving plants.

The finale of the visit was the opportunity to visit the plant sale. The plants were supplied by East Neuk Perennials based in Colinsburgh. (Karen's Nursery). Lovely big healthy plants.



The Owner



Serpent's Tail

Joshua and his team were very generous with their time and knowledge. They have offered us another visit once the garden renovations have been completed.

Marjorie Anderson

Cambo Gardens

From Wormistoune Garden near Crail, in the East Neuk of Fife, where we spent a very pleasant and interesting morning, we progressed a little further north and came to Cambo Gardens, where we were to spend the afternoon. Of course we have been to Cambo before, but usually in the winter when its famous snowdrops are on show. But it has many attractions besides the white woods, of which the main one is the 2.5 acre Walled Garden. This afternoon, we were welcomed to the property by one of the gardeners – there are the equivalent of six full-time gardeners plus volunteers and trainees – and then let loose to roam at our pleasure.

Hardy Planters are always happiest roaming over a large garden without restriction! In the event I, and I think everyone in the party, was very happily occupied within the generous limits of the Walled Garden.



The Sustainable Garden

others. And finally, watering like mad to keep everything alive. Aren't we all! Nice to know that they are just like us.

Before you get to the Walled Garden, there is the North American Prairie Garden, through which you literally wade waist-high! This area is all grown from seed, 70% of it grasses many quite unusual for the UK. They are planted through coarse gravel to reduce slug and snail damage and some grow to 2 metres high. The Prairie is cut back in winter. Next, you come to the South African Garden which, although comparatively small, is quite stunning with its vivid blue agapanthus. There are other plants in this little garden, but the agapanthus dominate.

This garden dates from the early 1800s and is still evolving and constantly changing as new interests and fashions develop. At the entrance, you are greeted by a blackboard listing the current activities: cutting hedges of box, bay and beech; maintaining annual displays in the pictorial meadow and cut flower garden; tying in and dead-heading roses; among



The Walled Garden



The South African Garden

And then you are in the Walled Garden's huge space which is divided fairly symmetrically by a trickling stream, on each side of which the ground rises to the high stone walls. The layout is fairly symmetrical too, which makes it easier to explore and to know where you have been!

I climbed through the double herbaceous borders up to the wall from where you get a splendid view over the whole space. One of the many helpful information boards tells you that these famous borders are sadly full of couch grass (is nothing sacred?!) and the problem is being contained by clearing small pockets of plants so that the aggressive couch roots can be dug up. The pockets will be replanted later. Cambo is very good at letting its visitors know what is going on by means of information boards in relevant places.



Phlox grown from seed

Along the wall at the top, is the climbing rose collection, some of it having been at its best last month but some specimens still showing beautiful blooms. *Rosa* 'Crème de la Crème' as you would expect is a lovely cream, while 'Lady Hillingdon' is a subtle and beautiful yellow orange.

From the wall, down the hill to the central stream, was for me one of the most interesting parts of the garden – large beds of highly attractive and beautifully coloured flowers of different species and varieties which form part of the garden's sustainable programme. An information board tells us that UK-grown flowers have about 10% the carbon footprint of

imported flowers and so they are growing a range of annuals, perennials, grasses and bulbs that are cut and sold as posies in their shop and for weddings and other events. I was amazed, along with several others of our party, to learn from a helpful gardener that the amazing display we were looking at was entirely made up of annuals grown from seed: the many different colours of Phlox were the main attraction for me (so much more attractive than the perennial version!) but there was even a euphorbia! Clearly, there was going to be a search on for the seed alternatives! *

Down to the stream, which is a wildlife area adorned by a magnificent weeping willow, and up the other side where a family of scarecrows is one of the eye-catching features. Throughout the whole area, the predominant features were the many and varied grasses, and the huge number of apple trees, all of them heavily laden. I haven't seen so many apples in captivity for a long time!



Our organiser with scarecrow

And another border, alongside the glasshouses, also undergoing renovation because it was overgrown and full of perennial weeds. The plants have been lifted, cleaned and divided and replanting with a new layout is under way.

At this point my stamina ran out! It had been a very full and interesting day, and we were blessed by the emergence of a hot sun mid-afternoon which made it even more enjoyable. And I think I had absorbed enough information by this time to keep me going in my own garden well into the autumn!

*Interested readers may like to know that the current Chiltern Seeds catalogue has all these varieties (though not the euphorbia) for sale at modest prices.

Brenda White



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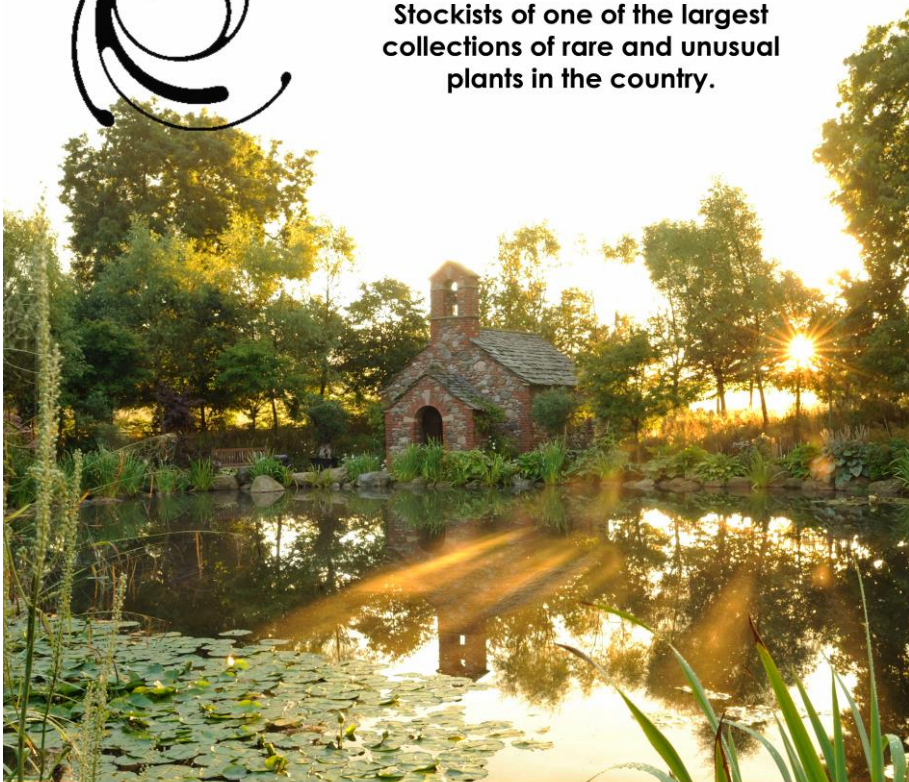
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