

Northern Leaves

Issue No. 49

May 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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Contents

From the Convenor	5
From the Editor	6
Plant Profile – Willows	7
Garden Walk, Gatelawbridge, June 19 th 2022	12
Visit to Pool of Muckhart, October 2021	12
May 2020 (A Sapphic Ode)	18
Lecture Day, Auchterarder, November 2021	19
Visit to Scone – The Snowdrop Day, February 2022	21
AGM and Lecture Day, March 2022	25
Dr Peter Waister – A Tribute	28
The Beeches Story	30
A Well-loved Family Garden Moves On: Part 2	32
A visit to Dumfries House	37
HPS – Scottish and Northern Borders Group – Office Bearers	41
Index of Advertisers	42

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 November 2022, 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: Alliums and delphiniums at Dumfries House *Chris Sanders*

Back Cover: Spring at Dolphin Lodge, Helensburgh *Chris Sanders*

From the Convenor

It is a great privilege to become the Convenor of the Scottish and Northern Borders section of the HPS. For those who do not know me I have been a member of HPS for 13 years and served at various times on the committee. I have since 2008 gardened a steep half acre in Pitlochry, laid out around 1960 as a classic heather and dwarf conifer garden, much modified since including felling no longer dwarf conifers! After learning the hard way that highland Perthshire is a different hardiness zone to our previous garden in coastal Edinburgh we have gradually restocked as a more general garden but still taking the occasional hardiness risk. My latest obsession has become trying to grow lilies from seed, a process designed to encourage patience.

The society, like many other social organisations has suffered because of Covid-19. Membership has declined and a key task is to try and rebuild it to pre-pandemic levels and maintain an attractive programme of events and garden visits. The committee is looking at various ways of advertising ourselves to prospective members but the direct contact by word of mouth helps. Our own membership came from a conversation at a non-gardening event with an HPS member who extolled the benefits of membership and directed us to the website. Lose no opportunity to approach potential members! I would also like to see a geographical widening of membership, by encouraging more garden visits to areas we do not often cover, perhaps by overnight trips, a format which has proved popular in the past. The committee has a rolling programme of visits and events with the annual 5-day tour coming up in June, but we would like to encourage members to think about where we could go and recommend new gardens, even perhaps to take on the task of organizing a visit to a favourite area or offering their own garden as part of a trip.

Lastly, we are very fortunate to have *Northern Leaves* coming to us twice a year. Please think about contributing both articles and plant photos, we have had some wonderful recent editions and need to keep supplying pieces of interest.

Andrew Holmes

From the Editor

I would like to thank all those of you who contributed reports, articles and pictures to this edition; you are the life blood of *Northern Leaves*.

Over the past couple of years some members have queried why we are continuing to produce a paper copy of the magazine and suggested that it would be more sustainable to distribute an electronic version. This would also save almost £2,000 a year in printing and postage. This was discussed at the AGM in March, and, while a clear majority of those present wished to continue receiving a paper copy, some members said they would prefer an electronic copy. It was therefore decided that the current edition would be sent out by post to all; however future editions would be sent electronically to those who prefer that option. Obviously, all those with no email address will continue to receive a paper copy. I will also continue sending a paper copy to all the advertisers.

Please let me know on sanders94@btinternet.com if you would like to receive future editions of *Northern Leaves* as a .pdf file by email.

Chris Sanders

The advertisement for Kevock Garden Plants features a background of soft-focus pink flowers. The text is arranged in a clean, professional layout. On the right side, the company name 'Kevock Garden Plants' is written in a large, dark green, serif font. To the left of this, several lines of text in a smaller, black, sans-serif font provide details about the nursery's services, including its specialization in rare plants, availability for online and mail-order, and bespoke garden designs. At the bottom, the website and email address are listed on the left, and the physical address and phone number are on the right.

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Plant profile – Willow

Willow, a tree now mainly associated with scrubby margins of rivers and streams, was once one of the most useful plants of the countryside. Willow wattles have been woven and used by man for thousands of years. The ability of these materials to weave, twist, whilst being durable and pliable, has been employed for many uses from Neolithic track-ways, Iron Age dwellings and medieval livestock fencing. Archaeological digs in wet boggy places quite often uncover willow articles, almost as in perfect condition as they were when in use thousands of years ago, perfectly preserved by the peat around them.



Salix catkins



Willow basket

Willow was used in basketry for tens of thousands of years, to carry or hold food or household provisions and for eel baskets, to catch this important food source in rivers. It may even predate pottery as a vessel. Babies were placed in willow cribs, the dead buried in willow coffins. Houses were made of willow and mud, baskets lined with clay to make

them waterproof and then of course there are medicinal uses.

Willow bark has been used as a traditional medicine for more than 3,500 years. Unknown to the ancient Sumerians and Egyptians who made use of it, the active agent within willow bark was salicin, which would later form the basis of the discovery of aspirin. Many traditional therapies were used for pain relief over the following centuries but were not studied until the discovery that the bark of the Cinchona tree had fever-relieving properties. This bark was imported at great expense from South America



Willow quite commonly exhibits fasciation

and we now know that Cinchona is a source of quinine, the first treatment for malaria. The use of willow bark was then investigated but the active ingredient in willow bark was not discovered until 1828.

Now willow has much more decorative uses and has sadly been replaced as livestock fencing by wire, or by plastic to hold food and many other things. There is, thankfully, a resurgence in the old and ancient crafts of willow weaving by artisans. Willow hurdles are in much more use in gardens and basketry has become an art, with many artisans running workshops so you can learn these crafts for yourself.



A support for the hop
in the herb garden

In the nursery we use willow in several ways, as a fedge (more of that later) and as supports for climbing plants. I make my own runner bean and hop supports using hazel rods and then weave willow at several different heights to give the plants something to climb through. It is an eco-friendly, recycled, recyclable plant support straight from the gardens.

Willow also makes great mazes, living huts and gazebos, much used by schools to create interesting and fun play areas for children in the play-ground. They lend themselves to this use by creating new material for weaving each year, for free, in the same way our fedge does. Often the children have been involved in the planting and creating of their willow structures, helping them understand the connection between plant, use and imagination.

Here in the nursery we use willow as a living art form, a fedge (a cross between a fence and a hedge) a barrier and boundary between the nursery and the farm. When we bought the nursery five years ago the fedge was very neglected; I don't know how long it had been in existence but it was overgrown, spindly and with no density or height to it. The first year I was cutting down 15 foot long branches, small trees in fact. Once they were out of the way I could get a clearer idea what I was dealing with. There were not many long bendy branches from the

previous year's growth; it was all going into these massive branches and small trees. So I wove in what I could.

In subsequent years the fedge has started to thicken up well. Every year now there is a good supply of new growth to weave back in to thicken it, and add in new rods to close the gaps and to lift the height by a good two feet over the past four years. I find it a relaxing and therapeutic task to do in January and February. It's easy to get lost in the twists and turns of weaving the willow, producing something of beauty and use. Even if there is snow on the ground, weaving the willow fedge is a great job to do when there isn't much chance of doing anything else.



The willow fedge the first year,
I wove it in January 2016



A good job for a snowy day

The annual willow weaving starts at one end of the parallel hedges, with cutting out the dead wood in the section I am working on. There is always some dead wood; willow always has a lot, even when growing as trees. Once that's out the way, it's easier to see what material is left to work with. With luck there are plenty of new whippy lengths to weave in. Short, unusable branches are cut out and the rest woven in until it's suitably chunky. If there is an excess of long rods, I cut them off and use them as new rods to fill in gaps. I've now got the gaps between rods down to no more than six inches, making it more of a boundary and more secure against invasion of farm animals. Once that section is almost finished I move onto the next few feet and start cutting out the dead

wood. The willow gets woven in both directions, to make it strong. This continues until both sides are finished. You can tell what the weather was like the previous year by how much long growth there is. The drier the summer the shorter and less long whippy branches there are to weave in. After a typical wet summer there is an abundance of usable branches!



Spring in the wildlife garden, the fedge is beginning to sprout



In summer the fedge reaches 10 feet high and the wildlife garden becomes a secret garden



One of our willow weaving workshops which I run in January



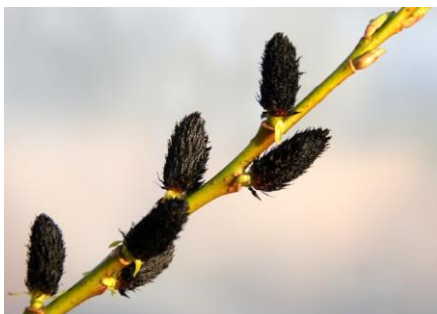
Spare rods for customers

There are also many decorative willows for the garden. They are adaptable plants which will grow in most conditions, except very dry. Some reach small tree height; others are shorter such as the woolly willow, *Salix lanata*.

We have three in stock here in the nursery:

***Salix gracilistyla* 'Melanostachys'**

I love this willow for its dark catkins in late winter and spring which open to white, red and black. Very Gothic! Despite its messy growth habit, it is worth growing alongside a pond or stream for those catkins. Cut back every three to four years to help its shape; height 3m, spread 3m.



Salix gracilistyla 'Melanostachys'

***Salix alba* 'Golden Ness'**

Grown for its glorious golden winter stem colour, as the name suggests. These stems give the best colour if the plant is coppiced each spring. It looks particularly good when planted alongside streams or ponds and is ideal for use in a winter garden or with black or dark purple plants for a real colour contrast; height 10m, spread 8m.

Salix lanata

A bushy, slow-growing small deciduous shrub with rounded, silvery-woolly leaves. Male catkins stand above the branches to 5cm, beginning silvery then becoming yellow. Female catkins are longer and greener. Grow in sun to partial shade in most soils; height 1.3m, spread 1m.

Rona Dodds

Garden Walk, Gatelawbridge, June 19th 2022

Clare Melinsky is helping to organise an open gardens event from 2pm - 5pm on June 19th, 2022, at Gatelawbridge, Thornhill, DG3 5EA, to raise money for Marie Curie. There will be 12 varied gardens to visit, a tea tent with home baking, a plant stall and a raffle with parking in a field. The cost will be £7.00 per person to include parking and teas.

VISIT TO POOL OF MUCKHART 20th October 2021

The Japanese Garden at Cowden

Background

The Japanese Garden is something rather special in Scotland, a unique and utterly authentic bridge between Scottish and Japanese culture. In it are many unique plants and trees, as well as structures with Japanese cultural significance. The garden was founded in the early 1900s by Ella Christie who was one of those wonderful and intrepid women who travelled extensively in the Far East and, on returning from Japan in 1908, became inspired to create her own Japanese garden at Cowden, her family home. Ella employed Taki Handa to create Sha Raku En, 'the place of Pleasure and Delight'. The Japanese Garden at Cowden was the first and the only one of such size and scale to be designed by a woman. From 1908 until 1925, Professor Suzuki, Head of the Soami School of Imperial Garden Design came regularly to prune the many imported shrubs and trees and in 1925 Shinzaburo Matsuo, who had lost his whole family in an earthquake, came to Scotland and worked in the garden until his death in 1937.

Many plants and trees within the garden are representative of what would be found in a typical Japanese garden, though some are Scottish to represent the fusion of the two cultures, such as the 90 different moss species found throughout the garden, which are gathered from the surrounding estate woodlands.

Many visitors came to the garden and it gave Ella Christie great pleasure until her death in 1949. The garden was put in trust for her great-nephew but then in 1963 the garden was vandalised by schoolchildren. In one night the tea houses and bridges were burnt to the ground and antique lamps brought from Japan were pushed into the water.

The garden remained in the family and in 2014 restoration of the garden started, led by Sara Stewart, great-great-niece of Ella Christie. The restoration and development process is still continuing.

The Visit

Considering the dismal weather in the days before, we were very fortunate to have good weather for our October visit – rather windy but dry and sunny.

We entered the grounds through enormous, impressive gates – possibly intended to keep demons out (of which more later). After the essential coffee and scones and greeting of old friends, we were escorted on a tour of the garden by Colin who was extremely knowledgeable, entertaining and had a much better grip of Japanese than the rest of us.



The Gates

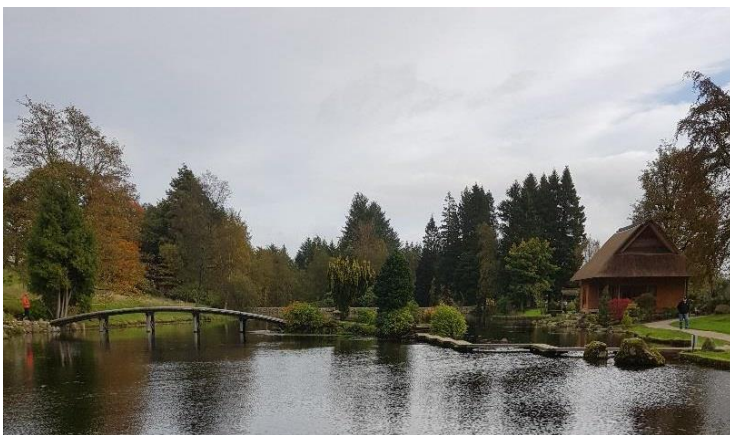


The Azumaya

The Japanese Garden itself is a stroll garden; a relatively large garden centred around a lake, with meandering paths which can be wandered around to take in the changing views. The use of a large pond adds a sense of expansion and openness, while offering the opportunity for reflections of the garden and the sky.

We entered the Garden through the Welcome Gate which led onto the Garden Pavilion, a new building roofed with the most exquisite

thatch. Next was the Azumaya a roofed structure built to allow you to stand and enjoy the garden in all seasons and there are several stone lanterns each of which have slightly different designs and meanings. The approach to the Azumaya is over large uneven stones, which is intentional. The result is visitors have to look down and concentrate on where they are putting their feet. When they arrive, they look up and see the whole vista as a beautiful surprise. In the background is the 'sorihashi' or arched bridge which is built on similar principles, the view cannot be seen until you get to the top. In fact this bridge had a more exaggerated curve when it was first built but safety considerations required the angle to be lowered (perhaps too many visitors fell off when dazzled by the view!).



View from the Azumaya

Next was a dry garden – 'karsansui' – which contains a carefully composed arrangement of rocks and mosses, with sand patterns raked each day to represent ripples in water. There are four moss islands in the 'water' with rock arrangements of a turtle and crane to represent good fortune. The dry garden is surrounded by 'tome ishi', Japanese boundary stones which indicate that visitors are not to enter the area.

There are several small islands in the pond and on one is Tanuki, the Raccoon Dog, one of the many demons who need to be appeased and controlled. He has a sack of grain, a food bowl and a flask of sake, also a large hat to keep off the sun. So much for the appeasement, the control

is, he is on an island and the bridge is a zigzag which demons hate, only being able to follow straight lines. If you feel sorry for him, bear in mind that he is a shape shifter and responsible for the disappearance of the small garden tools which you put down a minute ago and now can't find!



Tanuki, the Raccoon Dog



The Zigzag Bridge

Crossing the bridges to the far side of the pond we were in the foothills of Mount Fuji where white flowering azaleas have been planted to represent snow.

Completing the stroll down the far side of the water we could see koi carp which were relocated from a small pond and seem very happy in their new home. At the bottom end of the pond we returned to the starting point by crossing the dam built to create the small loch in 1908. Having thoroughly enjoyed the morning, we left 'the place of Pleasure and Delight' in search of shelter from the cold wind and lunch!

Hilary Bayley

Hollytree Lodge

Since the house was built in the early 19th century, this was a garden which had evolved over many years. Thirty years ago there had been a major re-design by the then owners, who had planted most of the specimen trees. The current owners had added fruit trees, roses and climbers, as well as herbaceous treasures.



Hollytree Lodge



Sorbus vilmorinii

Starting at the back of the house, I paused to admire the glorious colours of *Parrotia persica*. The *Sorbus vilmorinii* had enough of its lovely pink berries left to give an idea of its full beauty. This area of the garden was backed by spectacular views of the Ochil Hills.

Around the corner, on a trellis on the house wall were several delicate climbers, and I was pleased to see that the purple flowered climbing Aconitum was still there. (I still want one!)

Through the beech hedge, and into the Owl Garden, which clearly got its name from an intriguing wood carving, quite tall, with what I took to be a heron winding up the side, and of course the owl.

This garden featured *Eucalyptus dalrympleana* (mountain gum), which the bees love when it is in flower, and a very striking eucalyptus (snow gum)



Eucalyptus

with pure white trunks. The corners of herbaceous beds featured tall persicaria, which was a recurring and effective theme in the garden as a whole – all shades of pink and red, and providing support and contrast with other late flowerers.

Turning left from the Owl Garden brought me out into the large central area of the garden, with beds planted with shrubs and repeat planting of herbaceous beds around the lawned areas. Catching the eye were the five mysterious Standing Stones – each featuring a carved panel reminiscent of a chequer board, each one leading on to the next – all different but related.



The Stones

Other areas of this very varied garden included a Japanese garden with cloud pruned cypress, and golden leaved acer. A path led down to the sheltered pond area at the bottom of the garden, which was surrounded by rhododendron bushes, which must make the area lavish with colour in May/June.

The garden was a tranquil place to walk round, and it says quite a bit for the planting that I remembered so much of it, and it felt comfortably familiar.

Joan Gilchrist

MAY 2020
(A Sapphic Ode)

Over dew-drenched meadows roaming
spirit of the month of May
hawthorn tree and apple flowering
abundantly.

And in leaf-thatched woodlands springing
bluebell pools among the trees
beech and willow gently swaying
in the soft breeze.

Golden gorse on roadside spreading
ferns unfurl in crevice shade
butterflies and bees emerging
to pollinate.

Yet this is no child of Summer
whose breath is warm but soon grows chill.
Guard your seedlings, eager gardeners,
from frosts that kill.

May Howie

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LECTURE DAY – AUCHTERARDER

13th November 2021

Alpines around the world: *Julia Corden*

Julia is one of Britain's foremost Alpine Plant experts and a recent President of the Scottish Rock Garden Club. She was also for many years the manager of the Explorers Garden at Pitlochry Festival Theatre and is a Botanical Tour leader.

Julia's talk took us from our own Scottish hillsides to the mountains of New Zealand via the European Alps and the mountains of Asia, especially Bhutan and the north-eastern ranges of India. She covered a wide range of plants but particularly interesting were the plants of New Zealand for attracting night flying moth pollinators with their predominance of silver and yellow (57 varieties of *Celmisia*). Other plants ranged from delicate *Ourisias* to fearsome *Aciphylla* with its intimidating spikes. Many of the European plants are familiar to Scottish gardeners in garden settings and small numbers but Julia showed them in their spectacular masses. The plants of Asia took us into the territory of the great Scottish plant hunters, especially George Sherriff who brought us so many of the plants that can thrive in Scottish conditions. Julia had tales not just of the plants but of rough terrain, rain mist and Yaks, a thoroughly enjoyable talk.

Andrew Holmes

Cluny Garden : *John Mattingley*

John runs Cluny House garden near Aberfeldy. He told us that before he saw Cluny House he had no gardening experience and was a physics teacher. He married Wendy whose father, Bobby Masterton, was the local vet, who owned Cluny House and who had started the garden when he bought the house in 1950. The house had been built by a shipping magnate as a shooting lodge with an open view. Mr Masterton's hobby was growing plants from seed which he continued to do at Cluny for 35 years filling the garden as he did so. The garden has a natural windbreak of trees which shelter it from the prevailing wind and has a microclimate

which allows tall plants to grow. There are two iconic Wellingtonias one of which is the second widest single stemmed conifer in Britain. When John and Wendy took over the garden they built steps and paths which were constructed and can be dismantled in situ without damaging the nearby plants. Recently John discovered he could reduce the need for watering the seedbeds, polytunnel and greenhouse by removing the polythene and glass, covering the sides and top with netting to keep the birds off and to let the rain in. This has been very successful and the seed germination has been almost 100%.

The garden is well known for primula, meconopsis, martagon lilies and cardiocrinum. Erythronium, fritillaries and trillium have spread well. All plants are propagated from seed as nothing is bought in as a mature plant to reduce introduced pests and diseases. John listed some plants which he considers to be important and emblematic of Cluny. These are *Buddleia colvilei*, *Primula sonchifolia*, *Meconopsis punicea*, *Decaisnea fargesii*, *Lilium nepalense* and *Arisaema griffithii*.

Catherine Holmes

Tales from an Angus Garden : Colin Ainsworth

Colin is President of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society and was also for many years involved in the Dundee Flower and Food Festival. He is a member of HPS and was a founding Vice President of the Scottish and Northern Borders Group. He described the making of his garden in Angus over a 30-year period, starting with bare ground and builders' rubble. A passion for propagating perennials helped him and his wife Lucy to create a wonderful garden, illustrating the progress and how each part of the plot was transformed. The culmination of his talk was describing how, when the garden was complete (as far as gardens ever are) they moved house and started again!



Colin Ainsworth

Andrew Holmes

VISIT TO SCONE – THE SNOWDROP DAY

19th February 2022

Following some very stormy weather, resulting in trees brought down all over the country, we were blessed with a sunny day, comfortable to be outside wandering about.

That is once I had got over the fright of finding a 'We Are Closed' notice on the gate! All was well, however, as, exactly at 10.00 am, a Land Rover raced down the drive, an arm appeared from the nearside window and pointed a black object at the gate, circled wildly and sped back from whence it had come. Relief beyond belief.

The car park was like a skating rink but we managed to slither our way to the snow covered path, which was much easier to negotiate.

Inside we found the Old Kitchen all ready for our coffee and scones. As I ticked off new arrivals on my list I was delighted that all those expected had arrived safely, and in good spirits to judge by the volume of cheerful greetings being exchanged. It was wonderful to see so many well kent faces as well as a very welcome visitor.

By the time we had finished our coffee etc we were joined by head gardener Brian Cunningham, who led us off on a tour of the grounds. We did manage to see some snowdrops above the snow, especially lining the long drive which had been protected from some of the driving snow of previous days and looked lovely.

However, Brian instead focused on some of the wonderful trees in the vast collection on the estate, stopped to let us admire striking vistas, told us about some recent sad losses of ancient



Brian Cunningham



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and precious specimens, but how even these had their positive side, allowing in more light and providing new planting opportunities. (And we know all about those Dear Readers, don't we?)

Brian went on to tell us about ambitious plans for the future and how the estate team are always striving for continuity by planting seedlings to fill in gaps which inevitably occur through trees reaching the natural ends of their lives or by storm damage, disease etc.

Brian then led us to the walled garden. The planting here of course in February was largely dormant, but it was interesting to see how much this huge area has developed since our last visit, when it was really in its restoration infancy, mostly Brian's brainchild at that stage. It might be good to pay a summer visit some time to see the garden in full growth and colour.

Our tour coming to an end, we headed back indoors for soup and sandwiches.

We were very grateful to Brian for spending so much time with us and giving us his cheerful and friendly company as well as the benefit of his knowledge. He was unfortunately unable to join us for lunch, as he had to drive his daughter to her football match.

Joan Gilchrist

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AGM AND LECTURE DAY 12th March 2022

Spring Flowers and Early Paeonies: *Billy Carruthers*

Billy Carruthers gave us a comprehensive account of early spring flowers and especially the paeonies, some of which have eye-watering prices, that he has specialised in for many years. This was illustrated with a series of excellent images and was full of insights into the rewards and problems of running a commercial nursery.



Billy Carruthers

A Lifetime working with Glass and Flowers: *Linda Cannon*

Linda had a hard task to follow the morning presentation by our old friend from *Binny Plants*, Billy Carruthers. However, she impressed everyone present with pictures of stained glass windows from around the world, the UK and Glasgow. The quality and inventiveness of her work was truly amazing and we were all astounded when, towards the end of her talk she informed us that she was retiring, or giving up her profession, due to the added costs (as much as 50%) of obtaining high quality glass from Germany or France, largely due to Brexit. She could not or would not compete with artists using cheaper and inferior quality glass in their stained glass creations. More sad news was that Glasgow School of Art, where Linda studied Stained Glass, have closed this department along with Edinburgh College of Art so Scotland will, in future, have problems finding local, well-trained crafts persons to create new works or to look after and repair the many beautiful ancient and modern stained glass windows, doors and artistic creations.



Linda Cannon

In her presentation Linda demonstrated her love of flowers and how flowers have played an important role in stained glass designs throughout the ages. Linda is a keen gardener herself and she showed us how colour and patterns, such as parterres have influenced her designs. She worked at the Burrell restoring medieval glass where swirling flowers are frequently a key feature of the designs. Flowers are often used as transition mechanisms in window designs and she illustrated this with slides, from Metz Cathedral in Portugal, the church in Glen Livet, St. Basil's in Moscow and Netherlee Parish Church. She then showed us her work in relation to Mackintosh buildings and interior design features from chairs to light fittings. She has done windows in the House for an Art Lover, glass doors in the Mackintosh tea rooms in Buchanan Street, Mackintosh type windows in Bridge of Allan Church and windows and lamps in the restoration of a Mackintosh house in Kilmalcolm. Throughout her presentation Linda noted the close relationship between stained glass designs and the natural world. One, I guess, that most of us present had only now appreciated.

A most interesting and inspiring presentation. Thank you Linda. You will be a sad loss to the stained glass profession generally and especially in Scotland.

Ross Anderson



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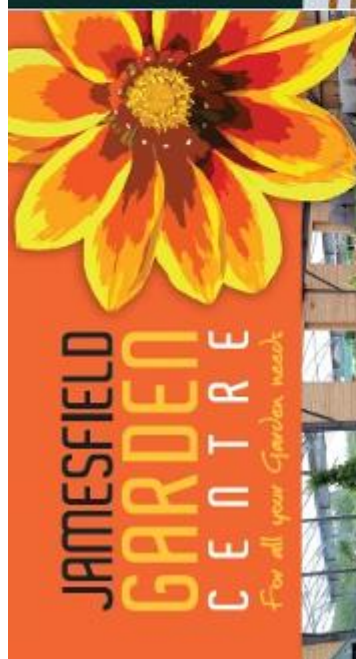
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Dr Peter Waister – a tribute to his 38 year membership of the RHS Lily Group



Peter Waister and Madeleine Tinson

It is with great sadness that I write of the death of Peter (1 March 1931 – 13 January 2022). Much of the information written here was gleaned from the many papers Peter gave me. I met Peter after a friend mentioned his association with the growing of Mylnefield Lilies, best known as North Hybrids in 2010.

Fortunately, when I met Peter he still had a few Norths, many that I would never have been able to find elsewhere. With the others I had managed to source, his contribution enabled me to go on to apply for the National Collection.

Peter had been a colleague of Dr Chris North at the Scottish Crop Research Institute near Invergowrie, where the lilies had been developed. The Lily Group became involved with the North Hybrids and they were looking for someone to propagate them, keep them free of diseases and distribute them. This appealed to Peter and so, having taken early retirement, Balruddery Lilies became a mail order business in 1989.

The 1989 order form states that he sourced his original stock in the Netherlands including Orientals, Asiatics, and a small quantity of species: “They were all being grown under the healthy conditions of Eastern Scotland, where virus spread is at a minimum”. It also says they were building up stocks of the beautiful “North Hybrids bred at the nearby Scottish Crop Research Institute. These are magnificent garden plants and customers ordering bulbs from the current list will be given priority when the first of these new lilies are available for sale in 1990”.

The plant list for 1990 includes five North Hybrids, but the numbers were limited. By 1992 he had added another five and now also had “a

moderate supply of species”. I am not sure how long his Nursery continued to trade, but I do not have any other order forms after 1992.

Peter gave talks, amongst which is one given to the Cumbernauld Gardening Club in November 1997 titled “My Life with Lilies”. He stated he had only become interested in lilies 10 years ago, and until that time had only grown one type of lily in his garden. Then went on to say, the more he grew, the more he wanted to grow. He added “So you could say I was led on by them, and a better title for this talk might have been “My Affair with Lilies”. He then gave the audience a world lily hopping expedition, starting in the United States and Canada, moving right around the globe to Taiwan and China, telling of the lilies grown in these areas, with interesting information and slides of all the varieties.

He went on to tell of his trek with alpine plant enthusiasts, in Himachal Pradesh, Northern India. In thick coniferous forest he saw his only lily growing in the wild, *Lilium polyphylum*, a turkscap rather similar to *lankongense*, but ranging in colour from light to deep pink.

I looked into some of my past *Lilies and Related Plants* and found Peter had written Reviews of the Lily Literature from 1988 to 2004 over five editions. In these, he scanned the abstracts of the world literatures on lilies. Dealing with everything from the strictly practical business of growing lilies commercially, through to esoteric studies on chemistry, physiology and genetics.

I have a paper of his, titled “Lilies for Scottish Gardens” and maybe it gives us a clue to the lilies he grew. Listed were *hansonii*, *martagon*, *davidii*, *pardalinum*, *superbum*, *pyrenaicum*, *chalcedonicum*, *monodelphum*, *szovitsianum*, *wardii* and *duchatrei*. Peter went on to add a second list he considered, given the appropriate treatment and a bit of luck, would grow in Scotland: *henryi*, *lankongense*, *regale*, *pomponium*, *tigrinum* (*lancifolium*) and *x testaceum*.

I will miss him dearly.

Madeleine Tinson

[This article was originally published in the RHS Lily Group Newsletter]

The Beeches Story

We arrived at Beeches in March 2004 to a bare 6-acre field full of potential. Our initial plans were to create a self-sufficient smallholding consisting of sheep, poultry, a large kitchen garden, orchard, and woodland area for wildlife – to ‘live the good life’ in other words. Nowhere in those plans were there ANY thoughts of a plant nursery, especially as we were both working as full-time gardeners on private estates.

Firstly, winter 2005 saw us putting up our first two polytunnels, not for plants but to house our poultry due to avian flu. After this had passed, we had the capacity for sweetcorn, tomatoes ... and maybe a few plants? Secondly, Margaret told me I was getting a baby son for my 40th birthday, and it was from this point that we decided to change our lives ... and perhaps start that plant nursery!

After a year of going through planning, Beeches Cottage Nursery opened in 2008 – probably not the best year to start due to the financial crisis. We now look back and cringe at that first year of a few hundred herbaceous plants, but we have grown organically, year on year, until we have the nursery as it stands today, producing thousands of home-grown hardy perennials. More and more tunnels kept going up, and gardens and stock beds were built to showcase the varieties of plants we grow. A proper car park was built – with an overflow added this winter – and great excitement too when a new compost toilet block was built to fit in with our ethos. Our love of building quirky structures with recycled materials continues to amuse, and hopefully inspire.

So, what started out as growing a few plants has now become an all-consuming addiction. There have been many lows as we’ve gone along, but also many highs too.

Our daughter Emma now runs her own online bespoke biscuit company from a log cabin based here at Beeches. And what of my 40th birthday present ... our son Tom is now heading for 16 and talking about coming

home to work with us on the nursery. If he does, he will be the fifth generation nurseryman in the family!

We count ourselves very lucky indeed to live the life we do, and to have met so many people over the years that we now count as friends. The last 14 years have been an adventure and we look forward to growing plants for many years to come.

Steve and Margaret Harrison



Steve and Margaret



A Visit to Beeches!

A Well-loved Family Garden Moves On

Part 2 – Spring Cleaning!!!

In this “episode” I am going to talk through the huge clearance efforts of the last year. Then bring you right up to date with where I am now, ending with tonight’s garden task.

My first accomplishment was ridding the garden of the huge eight remaining Leylandii trees from the 1970s. They were a well-intentioned attempt at hedging, firstly, to reduce the wind off the North Sea half a mile away and, secondly, to reduce noise from the nearby Army Members Club. Thinned, felled, or topped repeatedly they’ve been a great source of firewood over the decades so not entirely useless. But basically, the remaining trees resembled Giant Redwoods by the end, and were a risk to nearby roads and the high garden walls, let alone the houses. It’s a lot windier without the big trees but hedges and fences in the future will screen out ugly neighbouring buildings without the risks. And, on top of that, the garden was significantly overgrown everywhere else, with some serious junk piles too.

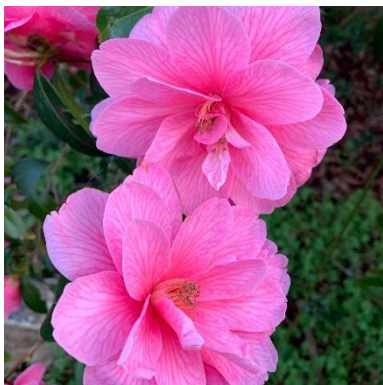


Kogarah with overgrown cherry



Great-great-grandmother's lilac

During the first lockdown my wonderful neighbour, and old school friend, kindly rid himself of the eyesore that overhung his garden. This was about three tonnes of completely mad climbing roses, Russian vine and heaps of Ivy. They had obstructed the whole of the path along the south gable of the house. Frankly the 70s has a lot to answer for in horticultural choices with Russian vine and Leylandii. My late Mother frequently refused to rip out the mad creeper or the massive trees as the birds loved it all. Please don't judge, my late Mother, Jeanne, harshly for this. She was a lover of a good plant, especially if it flowered well, and created many beautiful plant combinations and new borders over the decades. Here is her lovely camellia, that she nursed through many hard winters and now no longer choked by hollies and overgrown bushes, it is loving seeing the light and has repaid me with over 40 blooms.



Thriving camellia rescued from the undergrowth



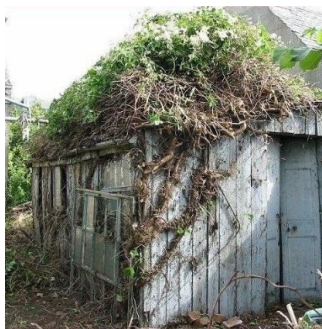
Self-seeded sycamore no more

However on from the large tree removal, a family friend and gardener, Des has been indefatigable in clearing undergrowth ... probably about 15 estate car-loads and eight large trailer-loads have been driven off to the dump! I have organised more tree removal of a hated self-seeded sycamore, and sadly a much-loved pink cherry that I grew up seeing from my bedroom window. Both were far too big, so close to the house, robbing many of the rooms of daylight as you can see in the photo above. Gosh I miss it so much though, and will be replanting something similar further away from the house. However, I saved the lilac from the digger

driver's near destruction. It was grown from a cutting from one in my great-great-grandmother's garden, that my grandfather remembered as a little boy, so it has double sentimental value.



3' foot wide leylandii stumps



Tolmie's Heritage Shed

Sadly, it was also time to say goodbye to the almost famous late 1800s shed and its 10 foot roof of more ivy and Russian vine. The Tolmie's Heritage Shed won an honourable mention in the inaugural Daily Telegraph 'Shed of the Year' way back in early 2000s – it had just had a severe haircut then (picture above) but in recent years there was so much more ivy and Russian vine than shed, which had collapsed into itself, so it is no more! It left, as part of a 19 tonne clear out, with a lot more junk that had made the back garden unusable and impassable.



Remains of the shed and other junk



19 tonnes of overgrowth and junk
exits the garden



Lovely flat smooth area for replanting and a bit of terrace!



Trillium in the wilderness

The cleared back garden you see above will be completely redesigned over the coming years. I have an idea in mind to use a naturalistic style akin to Piet Oudolf and Tom Stuart-Smith et al – I can really see how I could recreate this look on the flat areas here and have a great modern garden area to enjoy. The good news is I have just found a man to quote for the large dining patio and terrace as well as the high fence at the back which will screen it off. Just got to get that finalised and get on his very very long list of clients so hopefully sometime this year. Until then weed fabric is going down.

There has been progress on the redesign and planting front. After spending the last 17 years with a very exposed cliff top garden in Aberdeenshire with “unhelpful” sandy rocky clay it’s a joy frankly to be looking at such great soil to garden in. After another setback with Covid in February – this time Omicron versus March 2020s original Covid – I am beginning to feel more myself. So am pleased with the small successes so far – drastic pruning of climbing rose and replanting the border at the front of the house. I have a lovely trellis and a big arch for the side is on order from Agriframes to set it off. I am planting a selection of hostas, a wonderful climbing hydrangea and various colours of symphytum for the bees down the side of the house too. And the recovering lilac will be trained over the new arch if possible.



Storm Arwen helps out



The soon to be White Border ... and the lawn which needs work!

Today I have been mowing the front lawn and taking a wander around to work out where I can put in a pink flowering cherry was thrilled to find a Trillium (I think) surviving in an abandoned border, choked by weeds and brambles – it is so very pretty. Tonight, I was starting to tackle a huge sheet of ivy I have left drying after Storm Arwen handily ripped it off the wall. It is brown bin collection tomorrow so I am chopping up a bin full every fortnight. I also started to weed the border under the bigger white cherry tree as it was cleared last autumn of a fallen conifer and a retaining wall built ... it is going to be a white border to set off the yukka, white rose there and the white cherry tree so it has been “challenging” to see the colourful tulips, purple honesty, and the beautiful orange *Berberis darwinii*. They can all stay as they brighten spring and feed the bees – might get some white honesty though.

Karen Tolmie

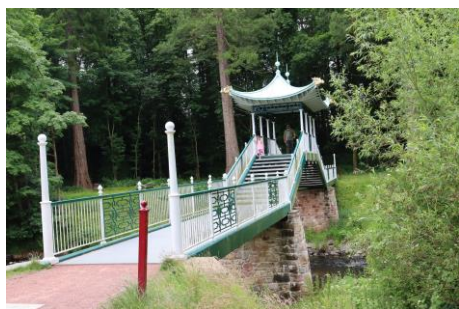
Visit to Dumfries House

You may remember an excellent talk on Hermitage Park in Helensburgh that we had during a lecture day in 2016 from Melissa Simpson, the manager of the Park. At the start of 2020, Melissa exchanged the seven acres of Hermitage Park for the 700 acres of the gardens of Dumfries House in Ayrshire when she was appointed Head of Gardens.

In July 2021, Melissa spent a day showing those of us who had worked with her in Helensburgh around the wonderful gardens of Dumfries House. The pictures below give a flavour of the place.

Dumfries House is off the A70 a couple of miles west of Cumnock in Ayrshire. Admission to the gardens is free except for a small charge for the walled garden.

Chris Sanders







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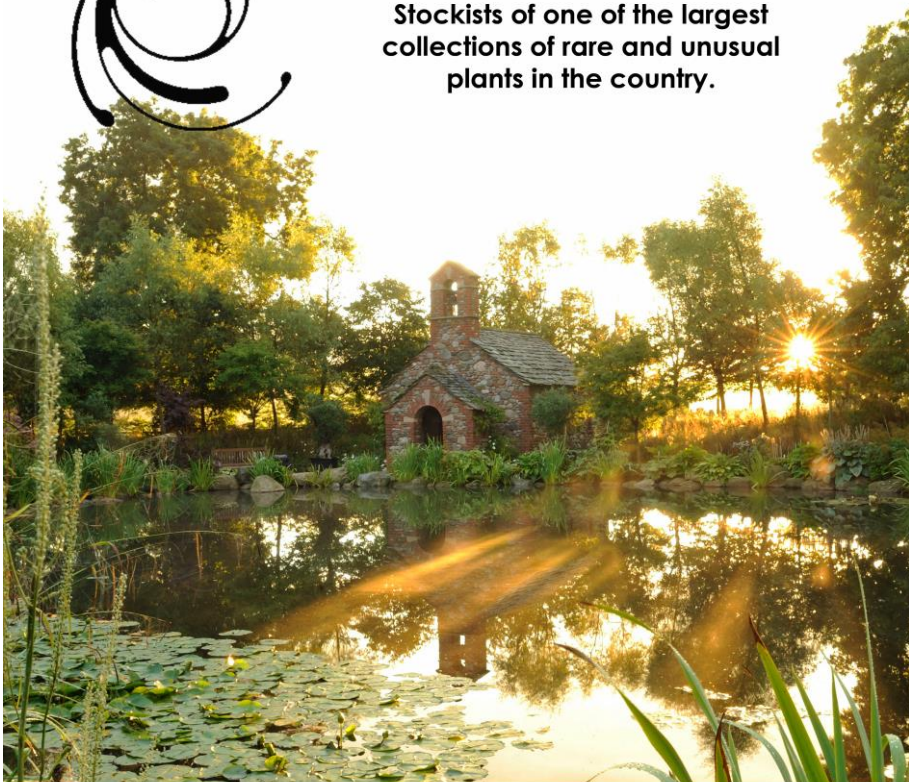
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Index of Advertisers

Ardfearn Nursery	24
Beeches Cottage Nursery	Inside back cover
Bennybeg Plant Centre	.....	27
Binny Plants	.....	26
Garden House Nursery	.....	18
Jamesfield	.....	27
Kevock Garden Plants	.....	6
Larch Cottage	.....	40
Logie Steading	.....	39
McLaren's Nurseries	.....	22 – 23
Quercus Garden Plants	Inside front cover
Rumbling Bridge Nursery	Inside front cover
Smeaton Nursery	39

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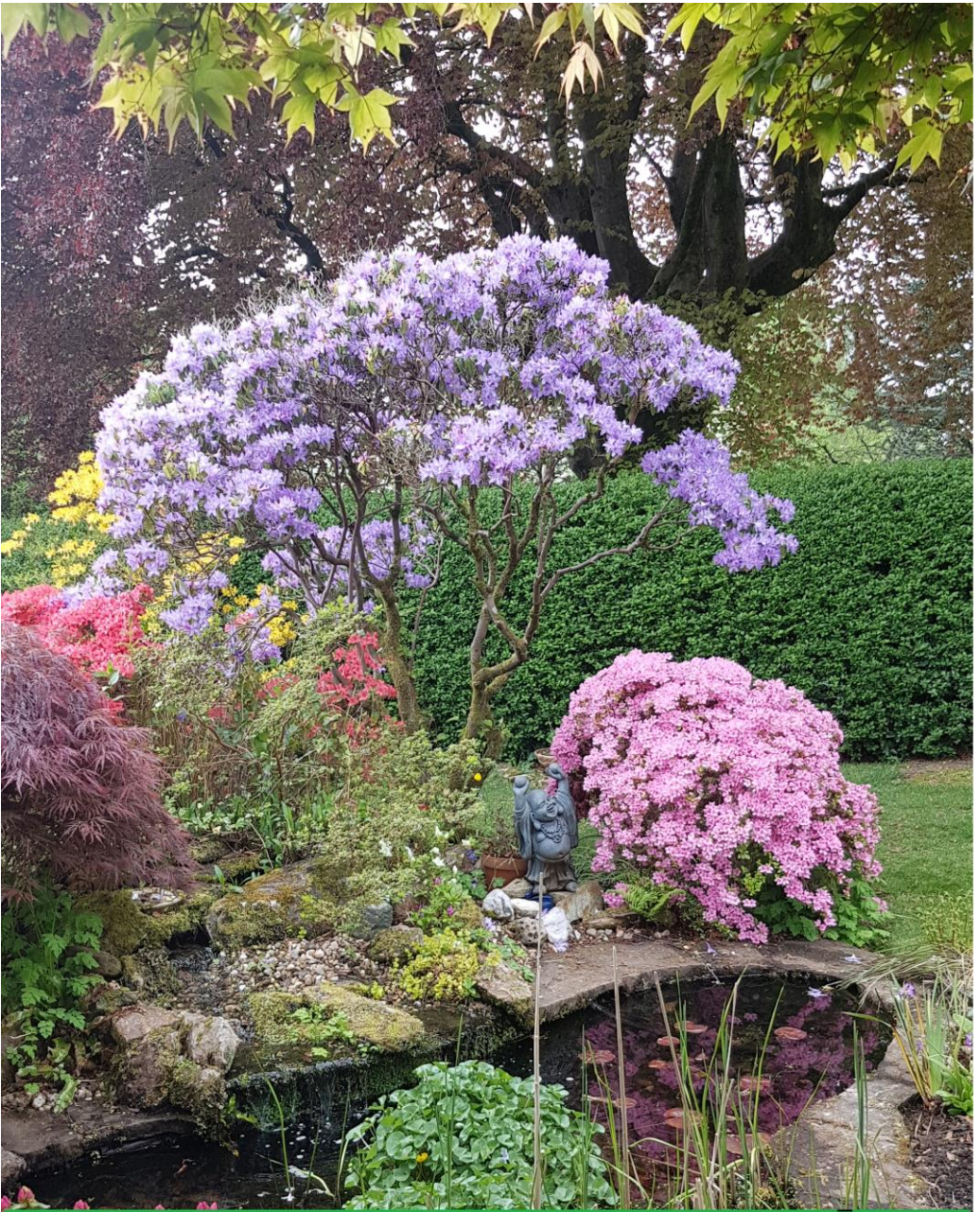
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