

Worcestershire Group Newsletter

Issue 59
Spring 2024



HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

Index to Issue 59, Spring 2024

From the Editor	3
From the Chair	4
Invitation to coffee morning	7
Minutes of 2024 AGM	8
Garden Quiz	11
An introduction to HPS Special Interest Groups	12
Liz Demaison goes orchid hunting in France	13
Vacancy:: Conservation Co-ordinator	16
Oh Deer... Jackie's four-legged problem	17
Magnificent Magnolias: Alan takes a trip to Cornwall	20
Stella Sullivan reports on a succulents workshop	22
Quiz answers	25
Contact Details	25

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From the Editor

Welcome to the new-look, digital version of the Worcestershire HPS Group's newsletter. This is the first time that we've tried this; please let us have your feedback on how you find it. I'd like to say a huge "thanks" to Mick Dunstan and Ged Lennox, who on our previous issues turned the articles submitted by the Editor into the finished newsletter ready for the printers. I'm also really grateful to everyone who has submitted articles for this edition.

I am on a fairly steep learning curve as I get to grips with the software programme that helps me to create the newsletter. This edition will be relatively basic but you can expect to see improvements as I become more familiar with the technical side of the editing. Please let me have contributions for the Autumn newsletter as soon as you can.

It has been a busy winter for Kathryn and myself as we have had landscapers in to transform our old garden (you may remember the photo of a paved courtyard, completely plant-free except for a rampant bamboo hedge along the back). The bamboo and much of the artificial turf have now gone; we have taken up about fifteen square metres of paving to create planting areas and brought in five tons of topsoil. You'll be able to see the result for yourselves by coming to our open garden/coffee morning in June: included in the morning is a short guided walk around the nature reserve across the road. You'll find more information about this later in the newsletter.

Mike Bentley

From the Chair

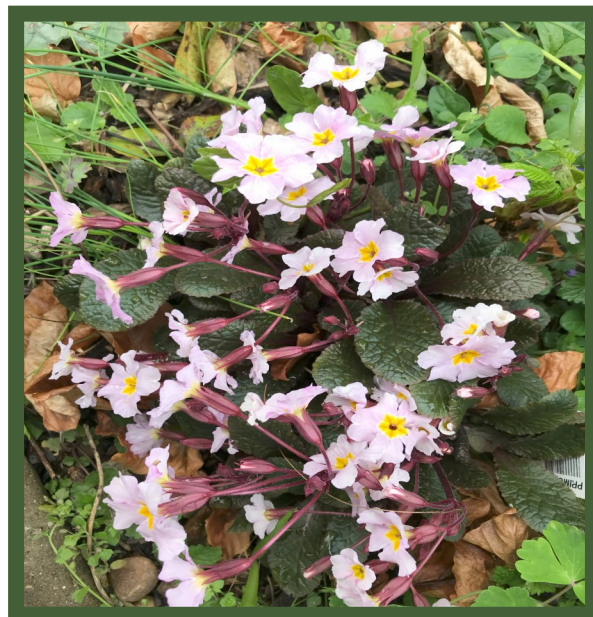
Every cloud has a silver lining and for me this Spring when I have been recovering from my operation and not able to do any gardening, I have walked around the garden and had the time to observe plants as they emerged and take notice of how each individual plant is growing. We have all been aware of what a wet winter and Spring it has been but some plants have thrived with the extra moisture which may be something to take note of for the future.



I am very fond of Primulas, their fresh lemon flowers have been providing colour for weeks. They like to grow in moist soil in partial shade and the common primrose, *Primula Vulgaris*, will self- seed even in grass. I particularly like the “hose in hose” type and this year I acquired a new one from Avon Bulbs, named after plantsman, Alan Street, some of you will know of him for his reputation with Snowdrops.

I also have “Barn Hall Blue” (left) given to me by a fellow member of our group.

Cotswold Garden Flowers at Badsey have a good selection of Primulas; I purchased the pink Garryarde Guinevere (right) from there..



Many years ago I attended a talk at the RHS Early Spring show in The Westminster Halls in London. Barnhaven Primulas, a nursery in the north of England, had grown the most beautiful jewel coloured plants which thrived in my Raspberry beds until the drought of 2023, when I lost them all! I went on line to try to replace them and discovered that the nursery had moved to Brittany after Brexit and the plants were no longer available in the UK. In my 2018 copy of the Plant Finder only one nursery in Scotland stocked them.

Another good plant is the Pulmonaria. I can particularly recommend "Diana Clare" (below) which I purchased from Wendy Richards on our group's monthly plant table, it has lovely foliage and pretty flowers. It has made a plant the size of a dinner plate and is very happy in moist soil in a partially shaded bed facing north.



Fritillaria meleagris, the Snakeshead fritillary, have also liked the wet conditions I saw some in a friend's garden recently that were twice the normal size of the ones I have, which have also put on a good show this year.

I hope you all read what Tamsin Westhorpe had to say about supporting specialist nurseries in the National Newsletter. From my own personal experience I know of several which have closed in recent years and more will be under threat after the 30th April when the new rules come in and growers will face increased costs and regulations.

Before 2016 Avon Bulbs had a lucrative market for their snowdrops at fairs in Belgium and Germany but they stopped attending after Brexit and this year they are closing. I follow Jimi Blake the Irish gardener on line, whose garden our group visited in 2022. He usually visits UK nurseries each summer with a van to buy plants for his garden but due to the new EU regulations he will no longer be able to do this.

I hope it stops raining soon and we have some dry, sunny weather I am looking forward to getting my hands in the soil again. I am hoping to divide some perennials for our Plant Sale in June I hope you will do so too.

Lyn Maile

Lios Mhairi/ Mairi's Hebridean Garden (BBC iPlayer)

I came across this by accident, writes Mike Bentley. Mairi Gillies has moved to the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides, and this short series follows her as she creates her garden in the overgrown grounds of a former school, seen in the background of the photo. As well as coping with the challenges of the climate, (not that cold, due to the gulf-stream, but very windy) Mairi also visits other gardens around Lewis. It's worth a look.

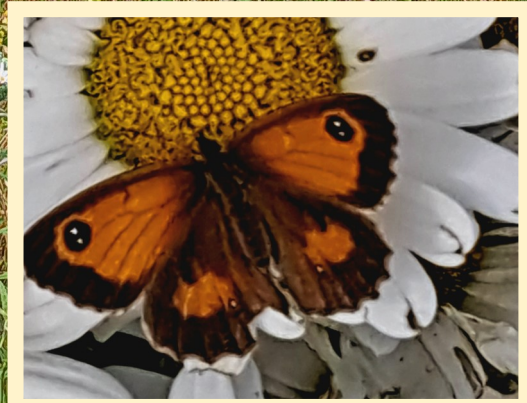
By the way, it's in Gaelic with English subtitles..... you don't get that on Gardeners' World!



**Mike and Kathryn Bentley are pleased to invite
Worcs. HPS Group to a Coffee Morning at
6 Earls Court Way WORCESTER WR2 5GN
on Sat 22nd June at 1030**

As well as visiting our very newly-planted garden there will be the opportunity to join a guided walk around the Earls Court historical and nature reserve, directly opposite our house. The walk takes in wildflower meadows, woodland (with some veteran trees) and the moated 13th Century Manor of Earls Court. The walk is on level ground and will take about 30 minutes.

There's plenty of on-road parking . Well-behaved dogs, on a lead, are welcome. You'll find Earls Court Way at the Western end of Bromyard Road (travelling from the City, turn right at the traffic lights outside St Johns Medical Centre. Travelling from the bypass towards the City, turn left at the first set of lights).



HARDY PLANT SOCIETY WORCESTERSHIRE – MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held on Saturday 9th March 2024 at St Peter's Baptist Church Worcester, WR5 3TZ.

The meeting commenced at 15.45 with 20 members present. The Vice-Chair welcomed members and led the meeting in the absence of the Chair.

1) Apologies for absence were received from: Lyn Maile, Claire Constantine, Petra Sturgeon, Pippa Hawkins, Frances Evans, Margaret Tyas, Pam Norrington, Leslie Bryant, Judith and Adrian Gurney, Sue Fairman

2) To receive and adopt the Minutes of the AGM held on 11th February 2023, previously circulated by email

Proposed by Mick Dunstan **Seconded by** Jackie Davies **Passed by a vote of members**

3) Matters Arising. None

4) Chairperson's Report.

The Chairperson's report, previously circulated by email, was adopted; a copy is filed with these Minutes. A member thanked the committee for their work but added that it was sad that no volunteers had come forward to fill those roles where people were clearly wishing to stand down after years of service.

5) To receive and adopt the Annual Statement of Accounts for the financial year ending 31st December 2023. The Treasurer read her report, previously circulated by email along with the Annual Statement of Accounts. A copy of the report and the Annual Statement of Accounts is filed with these Minutes.

A member asked if the costs of hiring the venue were likely to rise? The Treasurer stated that any increase was likely to be from 1st April but no notification had been received so far from the church. The group was receiving good value from the church in terms of all that was provided. A member was pleased to note that the finances looked to be healthy. What additional plans were there for expending the budget? The committee was considering establishing a group website and also potentially making improvements to the refreshment offer. A member referred to the group subscription level and it was noted that membership had declined in recent years, thereby shrinking the pool of potential volunteers. The newsletter going digital would also reduce printing costs. The member offer seemed to have reduced in terms of trips and visits, member events etc. One of the committee members was leading on welcoming and maintaining contact with visitors as they might become members with some further encouragement. Posters advertising meetings were discussed, and a member offered to help with the design, although it was recognised that not all venues such as garden centres were willing to accept material from groups which also sold plants. Social media presence was discussed, and speakers' own social media could provide useful links to events. The Treasurer thanked members for their contributions and offers of help and said the issues raised would

Minutes of AGM continued

..... be discussed at the next committee meeting. The three members – Sarah Charlton, Selwyn Lane and Wendy Richards- who made such a huge contribution to the group through the monthly plant sales were thanked and received a token of gratitude from the group.

Adoption of the Annual Statement of Accounts

Proposed by Selwyn Lane **Seconded by** Stella Sullivan

Passed by a vote of members

6) To transact any other business of which 21 days' notice had been given – none received

7) Election of Officers- the following offered to serve on the Committee for the next twelve months

Lyn Maile having served for four years offered herself for re-election as **Chairperson**

Proposed by Jackie Davies **Seconded by** Mick Dunstan

Passed by a vote of members

Ange Burnet having served for four years offered herself for re-election as **Treasurer**

Proposed by Sarah Charlton **Seconded by** Lindsay Stanton

Passed by a vote of members

Ruth Jenkinson having served for one year offered herself for re-election as **Group Secretary**

Proposed by Jan Vaughan **Seconded by** Stephen Atkins

Passed by a vote of members

8) Election of the Committee

Speaker Secretary Petra Sturgeon having served for two years offered herself for re-election as **Speaker Secretary**

Proposed by Mick Dunstan **Seconded by** Jackie Davies

Passed by a vote of members

Minutes of AGM continued

Programme Secretary Claire Constantine having served for five years offered herself for re-election as **Programme Secretary**

Proposed by Lindsay Stanton **Seconded by** Wendy Richards

Passed by a vote of members

Publicity Secretary Petra Sturgeon having served for four years offered herself for re-election as **Publicity Secretary**

Proposed by Stella Sullivan **Seconded by** Wendy Richards

Passed by a vote of members

Newsletter Editor Mike Bentley having served for two years offered himself for re-election as **Newsletter Editor**

Proposed by Liz Demaison **Seconded by** Pete Burnet

Passed by a vote of members

Members' Representative Sue Griffith having served for one year offered herself for re-election as **Members' Representative**

Proposed by Stephen Atkins **Seconded by** Lindsay Stanton

Passed by a vote of members

Members' Representative Liz Demaison having served for one year offered herself for re-election as **Members' Representative**

Proposed by Stella Sullivan

Seconded by Pete Burnet

Passed by a vote of members

9) Election of an independent Examiner of Accounts- Jonathan Davies

Proposed by Jan Vaughan **Seconded by** Mick Dunstan

Passed by a vote of members

10) The next AGM will be held on Saturday 8th March 2025

The meeting concluded at 16.15

A member requested a quiz... here you go. Let us know how you get on! Answers on page 25.

1. What popular garden plant has cultivars which include 'Mai Tai', 'Totally Tangerine' and 'Mrs J Bradshaw'?
2. In which British newspaper did Adam the Gardener give advice?
3. Name the three conifers which are native to the UK.
4. Which 1960s children's TV programme featured, amongst other characters, Bayleaf the gardener and Parsley the lion?
5. Dahlias are native to which part of the world?
6. Which one of these plants is **not** mentioned in the folk song "English Country Garden" (a 1960s hit for Rolf Harris): Hollyhock, Snowdrop, Iris, Meadow sweet?
7. What is the gardening tool known as a 'switch' used for?
8. The 2015 film "A little Chaos", starring Kate Winslet, is set in which famous garden?
9. In which English county will you find the gardens of Scotney Castle, Yalding and Goodnestone Park?
10. In Scotland, *Dianthus barbatus* (Sweet William) is known by what common name?
11. What is the Chelsea Chop?
12. Which Scottish garden features a 14 metre pineapple?
12. What series of books features the incompetent garden designer and inventor B. S. Johnson, whose creations included a fifty-foot deep haha (known as a hoho), an exploding pagoda and an inch-wide trout lake?
13. For what was the Somerset gardener Rozeanne Waterer best known?
14. What do the initials 'PBR' following a plant's name mean?

HPS Special Interest Groups: an Introduction by Jan Vaughan

Have you got a favourite plant or group of plants? If a plant does well in your garden and looks good then most of us find ourselves adding a few more, perhaps different flower colours or a variegated form. Sooner or later we want to explore our favourite plants in greater depth and that is when it is well worth looking at what the HPS Special Interest Groups have to offer.

There are currently seven such groups; covering a single genus like hardy Geraniums or a family of genera such as Hellebores, Thalictrum and Clematis that all belong to the Ranunculaceae. The Shade & Woodland Plants Group concentrate on plants that prefer a shady situation whether in a woodland setting or in shade cast by single trees, shrubs or nearby buildings.

All the Special Interest Groups produce newsletters and meet once a year for an AGM and lecture day with plant sales and often a garden visit. As these are national groups the venues move around the country to allow as many members as possible to attend. There is a small subscription to cover the costs of running the group and you can find out more about each one on the national HPS website at www.hardy-plant.org.uk

I have been involved with several Special Interest Groups and enjoyed meeting other enthusiasts, acquiring new plants and learning from experts in the field. I should stress that you do not need to be an expert to join a group - all are welcome. This year three of the Groups are meeting in the local area, **Shade & Woodland Plants Group** will be in Colwall on 27th April, the **Peony Group** are at Spetchley Park on 12th May and the **Ranunculaceae Group** are meeting near Tewkesbury on 7th July. All welcome visitors (as long as you are an HPS member) and you can find details on the HPS website and in the March Newsletter.



Dainty *Pulmonaria* 'Anne Wood'
from a Pulmonaria Group plant sale



Geranium phaeum 'Joseph Green' surrounded by
self-sown Nigella



Orchid-spotting in South-East France

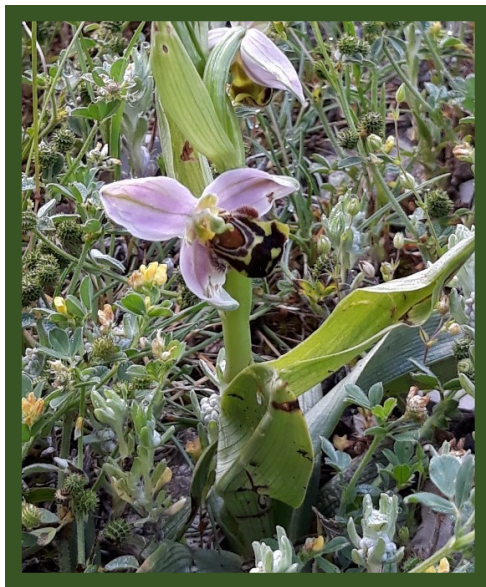
Liz Demaison

Last year I went on a walking holiday in the Vercors (south east France – near Lyon) in early June. I'd booked the walk as I wanted to go a quieter part of France with fewer tourists than other more popular locations in France. As this wasn't a specific floral walking holiday, I hadn't anticipated that I would see so many beautiful flowers, particularly orchids... and ones that are so rare! The walking company (Rustic Trails) does run floral & fauna walks so luckily our guide knew quite a bit about the local flora.

The Vercors Massif lies in the Prealps, straddling the Departements (administrative regions) of Drôme and Isère. There are more than 80 protected plant species in the Vercors region including Lady's Slipper orchid, the Bear's Ear primrose and the wild tulip. The Vercors is known to be one of the key areas in Europe for orchids, home to a species list of about 64 species and subspecies. I saw so many flowers and rare orchids, I've only included a small number here.

***Orphys saratai* (Orphys de la Drôme) (right)**

Orchids prosper in this region and the Drome 'departement' even has an orchid name after it - Orphys de la [Drôme](#) (*Orphys saratai*). This orchid only grows in the Drôme region and is protected.



***Ophrys apifera*
(Bee orchid) (left)**

This hardy orchid has a unique flower, with pink petals and a brown centre which looks like the body of a bee. It can grow up to 30cm but can take 5 to 8 years to flower. This orchid is not commonly found in the UK.

***Cypripedium calceolus* (Yellow lady's slipper orchid) (right)**

We were so fortunate to see this clump of Yellow Lady's Slipper orchid as they are fairly rare even in this region of France. Amazingly we saw 2 clumps on our week-long walk, but our guide said the locations are usually kept quiet even in the Vercors. Declared extinct in the UK in 1917, it was re-discovered in a secluded part of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, where today even only a small group of botanists know where they are located within the Park.



Anacamptis pyramidalis
(Pyrimidal orchid) (Right)

This beautiful orchid has a clear pyramid shape. We saw lots of these on the walk. They can also be seen in England and Wales in well-drained alkaline soils.



Even without having had the privilege of seeing such a stunning number of orchids, this walking holiday was brilliant. The scenery is outstanding and the Vercors is also a very interesting area as the area was home to the Maquis du Vercors, a rural Free French resistance ("maquis") group who resisted the 1940-1944 German occupation of France in World War II. The Museum of the Resistance of the Vercors, built into the hillside, is an impressive museum. I've included a link to the walking company I used for this amazing holiday in case anyone is interested: <https://rustictrails.co.uk/guided-walking-holidays/wildlife->



SITUATION VACANT

CONSERVATION CO-ORDINATOR, WORCESTERSHIRE HPS

After almost six years in the role, Kathryn Elrick Smith has stepped down as Conservation Coordinator for our group, so now we need someone to volunteer to take over this position.

This interesting role is not onerous, and offers the opportunity to become more involved in the Worcestershire group as well as meeting members from around the country at the annual exchange meeting. It involves:

- Co-ordinating the efforts of the individual Worcestershire growers
- Liaison between them and the National Coordinator
- Publicising the scheme to all group members and encourage them to join the scheme.
- Keeping a record of the growers to whom the coordinator has circulated Conservation plants, together with the growers' feedback on the plants, and details of plants that have been propagated and returned for the plant exchange meeting.

- Attending the annual plant exchange, which is usually held in September/October somewhere in the Midlands, and to which the coordinator takes plants propagated by the group growers, and to bring plants back for the group.

Group coordinators can organise their involvement to suit what is best for them within the general framework of the scheme, but obviously some points of organisation are the same for everyone so that accurate and informative details about the plants can be put onto the database.

If you feel that this interesting and important role is something you would like to do, please contact Ruth Jenkinson, Group Secretary (contact details on the back page of the Newsletter).

One of the plants from
our conservation
scheme:

Chrysanthemum
'Dulwich Pink'



Oh Dear, Oh Dear OH DEER

Jackie Davis

(Editor's note: the photos not from Jackie's garden but used
with permission of Sean Ingamells)

I'm lucky to have a good sized garden despite being only about 6 miles from the city of Birmingham. The Lickey Hills are on the northern side, my home is "halfway up" between Bromsgrove and the highest point of the hills. Large fields border two sides of the main garden, the third border consists of a very thick *Leylandii* hedge with chicken wire as well, which had always contained our dog - a Labrador, very satisfactorily (cont'd)

We were delighted to catch a glimpse of a young deer in the copse at the back of the garden only a few weeks after moving here, 37 years ago. Little did we know how I would come to dislike them intensely! Until 2 years ago we never saw one again anywhere near our garden borders. Then, over a period of several months I saw deer in the garden many times - then they were always Muntjac which are relatively small. My garden fences/wall etc were examined and a few obvious weak areas reinforced, to no avail. A lovely patch of runner beans was devoured one morning, then several clumps of *Campanula* 'Kent Belle' literally disappeared. The tops of my potato plants were also eaten. Luckily I had harvested my first earlies, but I think the main crop may have suffered somewhat. Even raspberry canes were eaten, no Autumn raspberries at all last year! They are emerging as I type this, so I have netted them as an extra precaution.

I should add that over the past 18 months I have seen beautiful fallow deer PLUS the Muntjacs in my garden and in the nearby fields. The latter are beautiful creatures -but NOT when they are ravaging my garden plants. Until 2 years ago we never saw one again anywhere near our garden borders.



I had some special deer netting installed professionally, the deer managed to find another way in despite me spending over £200 on that exercise!

I have got a large bottle of 'Raid' to spray on plants that the deer attack. Apparently it is not harmful to the deer (rabbits too) but the smell, which I can't detect, repels them. I have only used it once, but since I have a few delphiniums emerging, plus some roses, I must get spraying. I only hope "It does what it says on the tin"

My Hellebore clumps were devastated early this year. I went to in the garden to brave the weather in early January to cut back the old hellebore leaves. To my astonishment I looked at the rather bare areas. I instantly felt I really was losing my short term memory and had obviously already cut them. No! The deer had got there before me and done a rather messy but thorough job, leaving the leaf stalks irregularly sticking up out of the earth. Just what had happened to my large pots of hostas the previous autumn. The latter have begun to emerge now ,but I will have to net them too. Easily done when in pots.

I think I will finish this chapter of disasters with a list of plants that deer LIKE. I have lists of hostas that rabbits don't like, this is to counterbalance that!

Here goes - raspberry plants, hostas, hellebores, potato foliage, runner bean plants, lettuces, campanulas (particularly "Kent Belle"!), Hemerocallis foliage. That's just for starters — well, I did want to live in the countryside!



Magnificent Magnolias at Caerhays

Alan Young takes a trip to Cornwall

Where do I start with an article about the Caerhays Estate, that magical springtime garden set on a hillside, midway along the South Cornish coast?

Its geographical location is the best place to start...considered to be one of the best woodland gardens in the world, it really does have that word 'micro-climate' attached to it. The garden is bathed in moisture and humidity with 55-60 inches of rain per year, sea mists rolling in, an acidic free-draining hillside soil; the climate is generally frost-free and is protected from the warm south westerly winds which blow in from the mid Atlantic. Surely this must get you thinking about Magnolias, Camellias, Rhododendron, Evergreen Oak, Eucryphias, Stewartia, Podocarpus..... the list can go on and on. Today we can see the rewards of those plant hunting ventures. Caerhays holds the National Collection of Magnolia some 90

species, at least 500 named cultivars and around 200 seedlings and unnamed cultivars. As we resurfaced back out into our gardens from the long, wet winter of 2023/24 a visit to Caerhays in early March was a real pleasure. I've been meaning to visit for many years, but this year I decided to actually do it.



Magnolia 'Albatross'

The Caerhays Estate is currently owned by the Williams family and the garden layout is attributed to John Charles Williams (known as "JC") who moved to Caerhays in the late 1800's. JC was influenced by great garden owners and nurserymen of the day: James Veitch, Lionel de Rothschild (at Exbury), Col. Stephenson-Clarke (at Borde Hill in Sussex), the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, here new plant discoveries were being sent from China by George Forrest and Ernest Wilson. JC was so committed to new Chinese Plant introductions that he financially contributed to many of these plant hunting expeditions, actually funding the entire cost of George Forrest's 3rd expedition entirely himself.

Caerhays also has at least 80 'Champion Trees' and 'Cornish Champion Trees'. In comparison Kew Gardens has 120, Westonbirt has 82, and the Windsor Great park has 35.

When I visited on 10th March 2024 the Magnolia season was in full swing. After this warm, wet winter some had even finished flowering but there were plenty in flower and later varieties still to come into flower throughout March. Many of the Camellias and early flowering Rhododendrons were just beginning to come into flower, so there will be plenty to see throughout the coming Spring months.

The labelling in the garden is so impressive: clear names, introduction dates, countries of origin plus other information relevant to the tree or plant you are observing.



Magnolia 'Betty Jessell'



Magnolia x veitchii 'Isca'

I could sit here writing this article and produce lists of Magnolias, *Camellia x williamsii* cultivars, Rhododendron species and cultivars, and countless other rare trees and shrubs which you can see at Caerhays, but my best advice is take a trip down to Cornwall this Spring and see it for yourselves...you will not be disappointed.

Caerhays garden is open from mid- February to mid -June

Stella Sullivan takes part in a Succulents Workshop at Old Court Nursery

I've been growing succulents for many years, mainly Echeverias, Aeoniums and Agaves. I was attracted initially by the shape and symmetry of the rosettes, as well as the huge variety of leaf shape and colour.

So last year I was interested when I saw that Ross Barbour, of Old Court Nurseries in Colwall, was running a succulents workshop last year, and I went along with a friend.

About ten of us assembled at the nursery, and Ross started by talking about Aeoniums. Those grown in this country are mostly hybrids, tender plants which must be kept frost-free in winter. The best known is probably *Aeonium* 'Schwarzkopf', but Ross prefers 'Voodoo' as it tends to hold its foliage all down the stem, and gives a chunkier plant. He also likes 'Velour', which branches more readily and has a better shape than 'Schwarzkopf'.



Aeonium 'Voodoo' in flower
in the greenhouse

Another favourite is 'Phoenix Flame', with a more tulip-shaped rosette and brighter colour.

One of the few species aeoniums that is readily available is *Aeonium tabulaiform*, a completely flat rosette with a Fibonacci arrangement to the leaves. This is monocarpic but apparently is easy to propagate from seed – I have yet to try this as I usually replace them when they die.

They are hungry plants and I've always used a mix of John Innes No. 3 and horticultural grit, but Ross uses a 4:1 ratio of SylvaGrow and sharp sand. He tops with akadama clay granules, which are sold for top-dressing Bonsai, and have the advantage of turning paler when dry so are a useful indicator when watering.



I was lucky to inherit a large greenhouse when I moved to Malvern

Propagation is simple. Propagate in spring or autumn, when the plant is actively growing – they stop growing in the summer. Cut stems from the top of the plant, as the new growth will root more easily. Remove lower leaves from the cutting and place in a pot of damp compost, where it will root readily. The remaining stem can be left to produce more rosettes from the sides, which can be removed and propagated.

The alternative to propagating is to allow the plant to continue to grow – ‘Voodoo’ can become very large! (photo)

We then moved on to echeverias, of which there are many species as well as an almost unlimited number of hybrids. These originate in mountainous regions of Central America and so will tolerate frost if the roots are kept completely dry. So a cold greenhouse, rainproof coldframe or porch will be fine. The compost mixture is the same, but unlike aeoniums, many echeverias can be propagated from leaves, and this is fun to do. Choose a leaf from the base of the stem, and pull off cleanly so that the base is undamaged. Place the leaves on a tray lined with kitchen paper and leave in a shaded area. Over time, roots and a tiny new rosette will grow from the base of the leaf, which can then be potted up. Otherwise, propagate from rosettes as for aeoniums.

The compost mixture is the same, but unlike aeoniums, many echeverias can be propagated from leaves, and this is fun to do. Choose a leaf from the base of the stem, and pull off cleanly so that the base is undamaged. Place the leaves on a tray lined with kitchen paper and leave in a shaded area. Over time, roots and a tiny new rosette will grow from the base of the leaf, which can then be potted up. Otherwise, propagate from rosettes as for aeoniums.

Very tight rosettes, such as *Echeveria agavoides* ‘Ebony’, (photo) can be more difficult to detach, so Ross suggests wrapping a piece of dental floss around the plant and feeding it between the leaves, then cross the ends over and pull so that it slices through the stem without damaging the leaves. Pull some of the lower leaves off to give clear stem for planting.



Above: *Aeonium* 'Blushing Beauty'

Right: *Echeveria agavoides* 'Ebony'



Ross grows a few other smaller succulents such as Crassulas, Kalanchoes and Senecios, some of which look like strings of beads. We discussed problems and pests, the worst of which is vine weevil. I've often picked up a plant in the spring to find that the rosette comes away in my hand! But if the stem is cleaned up it can be repotted as usual. Mealy bug is another pest, and with a bad infestation it's probably best to destroy the plant before it spreads. Another problem is overwatering, as the fleshy roots rot easily.

After tea and a delicious home-made cake, we were invited to make a "Pixie Garden"! We were supplied with a variety of small containers such as broken pots and china teacups, and a tray of tiny rosettes taken from a huge variety of different plants, and planted them up to take away. (Photo)

Ross does a variety of different workshops through the year and I thoroughly recommend them. You can find details on their website:

www.autumnasters.co.uk/events/



The Pixie Garden

Quiz answers (see page 11):

1. Geum 2. The Sunday Express 3. Juniper, Scots pine and Yew 4. The Herbs 5. Mexico and Central America 6. Iris 7. Brushing dew off turf 8. Versailles 9. Kent 10. Stinking Billy (also Stinking Willy, Sour Billy etc.) 11. Cutting back certain hardy perennials in late May or early June to get more compact growth and/or later flowering 12. Dunmore Park 13. Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels 14. *Geranium* 'Rozanne' (*Geranium himalayense* x *Geranium wallichianum* 'Buxton's Variety') was found in Rozeanne and her husband Donald's garden and is named after her. 15. Plant Breeders' Rights: you cannot propagate, sell or export the plant without permission of the breeder.

HPS Worcestershire Committee members' contact details

Chair: Lyn Maile

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01905 820267

Secretary: Ruth Jenkinson

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