

# The Newsletter

## Worcestershire Group



**Issue 62**

**Spring/Summer 2026**



**HP**  
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

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## HPS Worcestershire Group

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### Photos in this edition:

Cover photo: The Hardy Perennial Garden at Pershore College, 2004 (HPS image library)

Other photos by

Mike Bentley, Rob Swallow, Sue Fairman, Bill Simpson and Mick Dunstan



## From the Editor

Welcome to issue 62 (the fifth digital version) of the Worcestershire HPS Group's newsletter.

Thank you for your contributions to this newsletter and please keep them coming in. I am aiming to produce the next edition in the autumn.

We've got a busy season ahead for the group; as well as the usual plant sale and our speakers we have visits arranged to local members Hazel and John Wagstaff's garden on 8th August, a visit to a National Collection of Hostas held in Worcester by Ben Matthews on June 27th, plus a visit to Morton Hall on 3rd September. In addition to this we are looking for volunteers to work with Josh Egan-Wyer to restore the Hardy Perennial garden at Pershore College (more of this later in the newsletter).

Some tips for making my life easier when submitting articles:

- Please don't embed your photographs in the text, as I will only have to take them out again to get the formatting to work properly in the Microsoft Publisher software that I use. If you leave the photos as separate files I will be able to handle them much more easily.
- The format of the text doesn't matter too much as I can alter this, but if you submit it in Arial (font size 12) that saves me a few minutes.
- A picture paints a thousand words, so please let me have photos to accompany the text if you can.
- I am happy to accept handwritten submissions.
- If you end up with a file that is too big for your email provider (providers vary but the limit is often between 10 and 20 megabytes) you can use a file transfer service e.g. WeTransfer ([wetransfer.com](http://wetransfer.com).... ask me if you need more information about this).

Mike Bentley, Editor

# From the Chair



It is quite unbelievable that we are already halfway through the year and looking forward to our plant sale in June! This is growing every year, and this year we are thrilled to have three nurseries joining us. The Lincoln group recently told me that they had 12 independent nurseries attend their plant sale. To help us raise funds, it would be wonderful if you could donate some of your own plants to sell. Please ensure that anything you bring is labelled, well-rooted, and not newly divided, so they are in the best possible condition for buyers.

Looking ahead, we have a number of visits and open gardens lined up over the coming months, which will be a real treat. Tracey and I are always inspired when we look around other gardens and spot plants we can use in our own spaces. We will also have a stand at the Worcester Show and hope some of you will join us on the day!

## **Volunteer & Work Parties**

We recently completed our first work party at the hardy perennial garden at Pershore College. If you follow our Facebook page, you can see some pictures of the great work done so far. Our next session will be on **3rd June between 3:30 PM and 7:00 PM**. If you would like to join us, we would love to see you there!

I would also like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has kindly invited Tracey and me for coffee. Because I am still employed and frequently working away from home, our weekends are extremely busy, meaning it isn't always possible for us to accept. However, please do continue to invite other members to catch up and hopefully, our schedules will align soon so we can join you too!

Finally, on another positive note, the group is in a great financial position. Because of this, we are highly likely to be in a position to reduce our membership fees again next year.

I hope you are all enjoying the weather and managing to stay cool in your gardens!

Best wishes, Robert Swallow

## **In memoriam: Stella Sullivan**

***We were sad to hear of the death of Stella Sullivan, a long-standing member of the Worcestershire HPS Group. Our former Chair, Lyn Maile, shares her memories of Stella:***

**“I first met Stella in 2013 when I joined HPS Worcestershire; Stella, Linda Marsh and I were all “new girls” on our first outing with the group, we sat together as we did not know anyone else.**

**Over the intervening years, Stella contributed to group activities in a variety of ways; she was a keen and knowledgeable gardener, bringing plants to the monthly plant table and annual Plant Sales; she had a particular interest in succulents.**

**In her youth Stella had trained as a Home Economist, this gave her the skills to make the most professional and delicious cakes for the groups’ monthly meetings.**

**She regularly volunteered to help at the annual Malvern Show when HPS had a stand there. In 2017 she also assisted with the preparations and delivery of the successful Worcestershire HPS Chelsea Show stand.**

**In 2019 we were both involved in the research and delivery of the Worcestershire HPS group Garden Tour to Hampshire. Stella took over the organisation of coach trips from Sue Chitty (now Horsnell). I particularly enjoyed the memorable day trip to Colesbourne to see the Snowdrops one chilly February.**

**I had the pleasure of her company on the group tour to Ireland in 2022 organised by Mick Dunstan.**

**Stella was an asset to our group and she will be sorely missed.”**



Stella (in orange top) with fellow members during the build-up to the Chelsea Flower Show in 2017.

The following article, originally published in the Autumn 2017 newsletter, was written by Stella Sullivan following the 2017 RHS Chelsea Flower Show, where the Group's stand was awarded a silver-gilt medal.

#### THE ROAD TO CHELSEA BY STELLA SULLIVAN



Silver gilt... Stella, right, with Linda, Jan and John

## The final leg...

On the morning of 23 May, the first public day at Chelsea, I arrived at the showground at 8am. I didn't need to be there until 10am, when I was helping on the stand, but I was eager to find out how we'd done.

I met Jan Vaughan just as I got inside; she'd had the same idea. We went straight to the stand to find John and Linda already there, and thrilled to discover that we'd been awarded a silver-gilt medal. This was a fitting culmination to all the work done before.

I'd already spent the previous Saturday and Sunday helping with the set-up. The stand had already been built when I got there, so I was involved in placing plants, stuffing the gaps with paper, and disguising pots with bark. Then it was making sure that every single plant was labelled correctly, with its QR code to link directly to the website plant list. The stand had to be perfect and pristine by Sunday evening, as you are not permitted to change anything on the judging day. Fortunately everything went smoothly – a few hiccups but no real disasters, thanks to meticulous planning.

The next two days were pretty busy. The Chelsea regulations allow only six complimentary tickets each day for exhibitors, so it was planned to have two people each doing two two-hour shifts. It soon became apparent that this wasn't

enough, and most of us spent far more than our four hours on duty. This was no problem for me: I loved being on the stand, talking to people, telling them about it and the HPS, and hopefully signing up new members.

Interest in the stand was huge, even before the TV coverage: a couple of people suggested we should have seating so that they could sit and watch the plants rotate, and one or two decided it would be ideal for the patio! All agreed that it was much easier to stand and see the plants come to them, rather than the frequent scenario of having to push through the crowd to get a view.

Being on the other side of the fence, was fascinating. At the weekend, the site was full of cars and trucks, and the sound of sawing and hammering, with huge trolleys of plants being wheeled around. I was amused to see a couple of trolleys of roses from the David Austin stand opposite us, labelled "rejects". The maximum we had of any one variety was eight and we used almost all of them! We knew how much work had gone into our small stand, so it helps you appreciate the effort needed for some of the big nurseries.

By the end of the four days, I was pretty tired, but when I had to go home on the Thursday morning I was really disappointed that I wasn't heading back to Chelsea for another busy day on the stand. ■

# MINUTES of the AGM 2026

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## Hardy Plant Society Worcestershire Group

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> March 2026  
**Venue:** St Peter's Baptist Church  
Eden Close  
Worcester  
WR5 3TZ

### Welcome

The meeting commenced at 15.45 The chairperson welcomed members to the meeting

### Apologies for absence were received from

John & Hazel Wagstaff  
Rose Beeston

Claire Constantine  
Leslie Bryant  
Jenny Constant

Claire wants on record:

"I would like to put on record my thanks and huge appreciation to all the members of the new committee for the sterling work they have done this year in providing an entertaining and informative programme and in developing many new and engaging initiatives. I look forward to the rest of 2026."

### To receive and adopt the minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Previously circulated by email

Proposed by: Jo Simpson  
Seconded by: Jan Vaughan

Passed by a vote of members and signed by the Chairperson

**Matters arising:** none

(Continued)

The Treasurer read her report. A copy of the balance sheet and income and expenditure account had previously been circulated by email. A copy of the report and the Annual Statement of Accounts are filed with these minutes.

The Treasurer stated that the group finances are in good order. This will be confirmed by the Independent Examiner in due course.

Our reserve account stands at £8080.00 and we are obliged to keep 3 months running costs as a general principle. We would like to work towards reducing our fees to make the group more accessible to people.

### **Independent Examiner of Accounts**

We will retain Jonathan Davies as our Independent Examiner.

As yet the accounts have not yet been audited but when the process is completed, we will communicate Jonathan's findings.

**Re-election of current Committee** all of whom offer themselves for re-election

**The Chair**, Rob Swallow

**Treasurer**, Tracey Swallow

**Secretary**, Jo Simpson

The above three officers will carry on serving on the committee for the coming year.

**Newsletter Editor - Mike Bentley** (4 years served)

Proposed by: Jo Simpson Seconded by: Lyn Maile

Passed by a vote of members

### **Membership Secretary - Liz Demaison**

Proposed by: Jo Simpson

Seconded by: Lyn Maile

Passed by a vote of members

### **Members' Representative - Sue Fairman**

Proposed by: Jo Simpson Seconded by: Lyn Maile

Passed by a vote of members

**Positions open:**

Social media - Looking for someone to push things out

Publicity - to take on advertising in free papers e.g. St Johns Villager etc. Looking for someone to take it on as we haven't got time

**Chairman 's report:**

This was received and adopted and a copy is filed with these minutes.

Additionally, the annual plant sale is a great source of income. Last year we signed up 14 new members at the plant sale.

We will need your help again this year by providing plants and volunteering etc. Across the country every organisation is struggling with volunteers – we are the last generation of volunteers.

We want to build on our success - in the past we have won a variety of awards at Malvern.

Rob then showed a PowerPoint with membership details etc. Last year, when he assumed leadership, Rob wanted to increase membership to 50 and now we have 66 members.

We have also increased our attendance and are averaging 40- 50 people attending our meetings.

It has been a fantastic year getting to know people and to see their gardens.

**AOB:** none

**Date of next AGM:**

The next AGM for Worcestershire HPS will be on Saturday 13th March 2027

The meeting concluded at 4pm.

## Plant sale 13th June 2026



A reminder that our annual public plant sale will take place on Saturday 13th June. The plant sale is a major contributor to our group funds, raising around £1,000.

To make the plant sale successful we need plants, people to help and publicity! Please bring along any spare plants that you have.... these don't have to be hardy perennials, we also get vegetables, shrubs, houseplants etc.

If you can help, whether it's baking a cake, providing plants or helping out on the day please don't be shy! Speak to one of the committee or just turn up on the day!

## Visit to Ben Matthew's Hosta collection 27th June, Worcester

Ben Matthews has kindly offered us the chance to visit his National Collection of Hostas. He took over the collection curated by Una Dunnet and now has over 180 different Hostas. Ben specialises in species Hostas (those that are found naturally in the wild) and British hybrids introduced between 1976 and 2016. Joining details will be sent out by email.



## Wow Japan! – a Trio of Beautiful Gardens by Sue Fairman

From 18<sup>th</sup> October – 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2025 I enjoyed a fabulous two-week holiday in Japan with my son Peter and his husband Khoi. We visited many beautiful, interesting places and saw so much. Peter and Khoi have visited Japan many times and were very keen to show me many of their favourite places and share their love of Japan.

This is what I said to Peter and Khoi after our holiday.

***“Thank you so much, I have loved every minute from very ancient to the very modern, from the mountains to the sea, the cities and the villages, the lovely hotels and traditional houses, the boats, buses, trains, bullet trains and subways, the tiny restaurants to the bigger and busy ones, the gentle and kind Japanese people, the beautiful shrines and temples and the modern art and buildings, all the lovely peaceful gardens, the quiet and the busyness and all the sights, sounds, smells, feel, taste and everything. “***

During our holiday we enjoyed visiting different gardens, large and small and in different locations and seeing the natural world all around us.



### **Koishikawa garden, Tokyo**

The first garden we visited was called Koishikawa Korakuen Garden in Tokyo, known as the most beautiful Japanese garden in Tokyo. We visited it on a damp, cool day and it was very quiet there with only a few visitors..The garden was surrounded by a busy area of Tokyo but it was very peaceful there. We walked along the circular path around the pond to see different views and admired the Full Moon bridge with rocks around it and Koi carp in the stream.

The second garden we enjoyed was the beautiful and famous Kenrokuen Garden in Kanazawa. This garden was on my list of places to visit particularly after Monty Don's programmes about Japanese gardens in 2019. The garden was just as I remembered from the series and we saw the gardeners working there to support the trees and carefully tend to the plants. We visited on a lovely sunny day and enjoyed the many bridges, ponds and plants.



**Kenrokuen Graden in Kanazawa**

The third we visited was Koko-en Garden at Himeji Castle near Osaka. This was a traditional walking garden too but was opened in 1993 and it re-created the older 17<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century Edo periods of the other two gardens we visited. The garden consisted of nine individual gardens such as the bamboo garden and the pine garden, each one showed different Japanese landscaping, and they all flowed into each other. We enjoyed the tea ceremony garden for a traditional matcha green tea experience.



**Koko-en Garden at  
Himeji Castle**

Thank you for reading my article and sharing these lovely gardens with me.  
Sue

## What to look for in a Japanese garden

Traditional Japanese gardens are landscapes designed to create sanctuaries for reflection and meditation influenced by the Shinto and Buddhist religions. Shinto emphasises the sacredness of nature, while Buddhism promotes mindfulness and meditation. The gardens emphasise simplicity and natural beauty to create a sense of peace and contemplation, encouraging visitors to connect with nature. They feature natural elements such as water, rocks and carefully selected plants to create a harmonious and serene layout.

Japanese gardens are very carefully designed landscapes and common features include:

**Water** – Ponds, streams and waterfalls to symbolise life and tranquillity.

**Bridges** – These have practical and symbolic purposes and symbolise the journey from the earthly world to the spiritual realm. For example, arched bridges, called soribashi, represent a difficult journey, flat bridges emphasise harmony with nature and stepping stone bridges slow visitors down so they can take in the beauty of nature around them.

**Rocks and gravel** – Used to represent mountains and rivers and arranged to create a naturalistic appearance. In the gravel gardens we saw the gravel was neatly raked to show lines and waves patterns.

**Plants** – Evergreen plants are used for their year-round beauty and some seasonal flowering plants for subtle and seasonal colour such as plum and cherry trees which blossom in Spring and many trees such as maple and acer trees to provide lovely autumn colours.

I was very pleased that we were able to visit three very beautiful and famous gardens. These three large gardens were “strolling gardens” designed for leisurely walks. They were such a pleasure to visit and featured winding paths which led us through scenic views, ponds and bridges and so much more.

## **Some thoughts from Selwyn: Plants for Pollinators, a sceptical view**

We have heard a lot about plants for pollinators over the last two or three years. Everyone is pushing them, even the RHS (which really ought to know better). This article aims to take a look behind the hype and try to ascertain whether they really are all they are cracked up to be and whether they are, in the words of the Radio 4 programme, SB or BS.

There is no doubt that pollinating insects are having significant problems in the UK and that numbers are well down on what they were in the past. Reasons for this vary from species to species and include (amongst other causes) habitat loss, loss or diminution of availability of larval food plants (our native flora is also in considerable difficulties), excessive use of (mainly agricultural) insecticides, pollution, climate change, competition from or predation by recently- arrived alien species and (yes, sometimes) lack of food sources for adults. These are a complex and inter-linked set of causes and to address them would take (you would think) a multi-faceted approach. Instead, we are offered the one-size-fits-all panacea of “Plants for Pollinators”.

First, it is worth considering which plants are suitable to be “Plants for Pollinators”. There are a wide range of insects which act as pollinators, some more effectively than others. (Pollination by birds, mammals, reptiles and even slugs takes place elsewhere in the world but not really in the UK - at most it happens by accident.) Bees, wasps, flies, butterflies and many moths, many beetle species - all of these perform pollination to a greater or lesser extent.

Mouthparts vary - butterflies and moths have long extensible probosces which enable them to probe deeper into flowers than, say, beetles. However, insects in the UK are, to a large extent, generalists - we do not have the highly-evolved co-dependencies seen in parts of the tropics where, for example, only a particular species of moth has mouthparts long enough to pollinate a specific orchid. So, a wide range of plants can provide nectar and pollen sources to our native insects. Shallower flowers will be accessible to most species (we are all familiar with the phenomenon of short-tongued bumble bees biting through the bases of broad bean flowers to get the nectar as their tongues are not long enough to access it via the flower tube). Single flowers are generally more beneficial than doubles, as in the latter it is frequently the case that the sexual parts have been modified into additional petals, often with the loss of the nectaries as well. Plants with higher production levels of nectar will be more beneficial. Beyond

Beyond this, though, almost anything which is not explicitly wind-pollinated can be used. Next, it is worth asking the question : where can “Plants for Pollinators” be most beneficial. If you live in what might be described as a “Pollinators Desert” then sources of nectar and pollen will be very attractive and beneficial to insects. Such areas might include being surrounded by cereal fields (wind-pollinated), conifer plantations (ditto) or in industrial or urban areas where flowering plants are in short supply. (Although, studies have shown that gardens and parks in many cities provide a very high level of flower availability.) If you live in a suburban or rural area with a diversity of gardens, crops and wild plants, then the need for additional nectar sources is likely to be far less.

Diversity of flowering seasons is another key issue. Even where there are extensive native and garden flowers available, there will be times of the year when flowers are in short supply. Typically, this will be at the start and end of the growing season, although you can have a summer hiatus when fewer flowers are available (many gardeners talk of the “June gap”, though this is more a matter of perception than reality). If we have a summer heatwave and drought—increasingly frequent - then many native plants may go over, leaving a shortage of nectar sources which can be filled by garden flowers. Winter-flowering shrubs are a good source of nectar, although most key pollinators are unlikely to be active in the depths of winter - some early bumble bees in February, perhaps.

Late-flowering perennials will definitely be of benefit at a time when the vast majority of British native plants have finished (although the effects of climate change on the seasons means that this is not as clear-cut as it once was). Incidentally, this clearly refutes the views of some zealots who proclaim that we should only be gardening with British native plants (and try to define those...). If native plants are not flowering, how are we then supposed to provide nectar for pollinators? It is worth noting that the most important native source of nectar over the late autumn and winter months is Ivy - frequently viewed as a menace by many gardeners! It is also worth considering that climate warming means that key pollinator species such as bees and bumble bees will stay active longer into the winter and emerge earlier in the spring, meaning that availability of nectar outside the “traditional” flowering seasons becomes increasingly important.

Similarly, a diversity of types and shapes of flower is beneficial. Even though, as noted above, most of our pollinating insects are generalists, some flower types suit particular groups better than others. Buddleia, with a well-justified common name of “Butterfly Bush”, has narrow tubular florets which are not easily accessible to

beetles, for example. For these, the wide flat heads of umbellifers and many composites prove far more attractive. It is worth asking : “What do pollinators do for us in the garden?”. The answer, perhaps surprisingly, is “Less than you might think”. In the wild environment, they are of course essential and a reduction in pollinators results in a reduction in many native plant species, which in turn further affects pollinators. In the garden, however, things are less clear-cut. Let us consider where we need pollinators in our gardens. ....

Clearly, for fruit trees and bushes (although currants are also self-fertile, but with typically smaller fruit and yields than if insect-pollinated). Vegetables : peas and beans of all sorts need insect pollination. Elsewhere, not so much or at all. Lettuces and other salad leaves are eaten young before they flower (bolt). Similarly for crucifers (cabbages, kale, radishes etc.); where the flowering parts are eaten (cauliflowers / broccoli), this is when they are immature. Root vegetables - onions, leeks, carrots, beetroot, parsnips etc. - are mainly biennials and are eaten before flowering. Potatoes have their flowers removed so that the plant puts its energy into storing food in the tubers, rather than using it to create (poisonous) fruit. Courgettes need pollination, as do peppers. Tomatoes and aubergines are largely self-fertile and insect interaction mainly only acts to disturb and release the pollen (a sharp tap on the plant does this just as well). Sweetcorn is, of course, a grass and hence wind-pollinated. For cucumbers, pollination is explicitly avoided as this results in bitter fruit. Male flowers are removed as soon as they appear and many popular varieties now are all-female.

When it comes to flowers and shrubs, it is a similar story. Trees and shrubs grown (at least in part) for their berries require pollination. Similarly, where you want seed heads for autumn/winter display, or to collect seeds for propagation, pollination is required. Grasses, as already noted, are wind-pollinated. So is anything with catkins. For the rest, pollination is not usually necessary and, indeed, we often go to considerable effort to undo the work of pollinators! Once plants have set seed and it starts to ripen, the majority produce hormones in the seed heads which instruct the rest of the plant to stop producing flowers and concentrate on the seeds. Gardeners dead-head flowers on a frequent basis, not just for tidiness but also to promote the growth of new flowers and prolong the flowering season. It is perhaps ironic that whilst we want our garden peas pollinated, the reverse is true of sweet peas and we carefully remove any pods. (Although, frequent picking of peas and beans not only gives us young and tender veg but also promotes further flowering and hence extended cropping.)

The same is true in agriculture. Some crops definitely need pollinators; many (e.g. cereals, sugar beet) do not. Oil-seed rape, that visual despoiler of the countryside, is self-fertile and partly wind-pollinated. However, research has shown that insect-pollinated rape has both a higher yield and higher quality oil. Hopefully, this might persuade at least some farmers to stop blasting it with pesticides, to the detriment of many pollinator species. So, whilst pollinators definitely have their uses in gardens, much of the reason for supporting them is altruism - a desire to help and protect our natural environment. It is this altruism that the horticultural trade has latched onto in promoting "Plants for Pollinators".

It is hardly surprising that the horticultural trade will promote anything that will help it sell more plants. Also, given what plants are most suitable for this purpose, it helps to sell plants which are less in fashion - older varieties rather than modern heavily-bred ones, singles rather than doubles and so on. Although, I have seen almost anything which is not actually wind-pollinated pushed under the "Plants for Pollinators" banner. We are all (quite rightly) exhorted to do our bit for our struggling natural environment, so people latch on to "Plants for Pollinators" as an easy way to help. If the slogan helps persuade non-gardeners or novices to plant more flowers, then it will have been of some benefit. However, in general, it is just a way to your wallet.

So, do we actually need to go out of our way to specifically provide extra pollinator-friendly plants? For the vast majority of Hardy Planters and other keen gardeners, in the majority of situations, the answer is "probably not". We already provide a wide range of plants over a wide span of the year. Most of us are keen to extend the seasons in our gardens, so as to provide as near as possible year-round interest. If your garden lacks early and / or late flowers, then adding some will be beneficial for pollinators, as well as enhancing your enjoyment. If a garden is largely lawn, or mostly conifers, birches and grasses (as beloved by certain garden designers), then it would certainly benefit from some pollinator-friendly planting (to stave off boredom as much as anything else!).

Since lack of habitat and larval food plants has far more impact on insect populations, leaving a wild patch (if you have room) is likely to be far more effective, particularly in built-up areas where such may be in short supply. I leave a patch of Hedge Mustard (food for Orange Tip butterfly caterpillars) by my compost heap and am rewarded by seeing Orange Tips every Spring.

“But”, I hear you say, “Surely it doesn’t do any harm?”. In general, no, except perhaps to your wallet! There are a few situations where it might be less than beneficial. Consider a scenario where pollinators are in very short supply in a particular area, for reasons other than lack of nectar sources. Providing an “all you can eat” pollinators buffet could, in theory, result in the insects patronising the easily-accessible food sources in your garden to the detriment of their pollination activities elsewhere. However, in reality this is unlikely to be a widespread or serious problem.

So, to summarise and conclude, although pollinating insects are indeed suffering in the UK, “Plants for Pollinators” are unlikely to form more than a small part (at most) of the solution.

Most well-tended gardens, particularly those of Hardy Planters, are already likely to have a wide range of suitable plants. Extending the flowering season is most likely to be beneficial, particularly in an era of changing climate and milder winters. However, the conclusion has to be that “Plants for Pollinators” is more BS than SB!

SL



## The Story Behind the Pershore Perennial Garden: Jan Vaughan



Did you know that there is a chapter of Hardy Plant Society history here in Worcestershire? Many of us will have visited Pershore College, perhaps to buy plants at the Garden Centre there (now sadly no longer open), but within the grounds there is an area that was designed and planted by the HPS as a demonstration garden for hardy perennial plants.

In 1992, as part of the arrangement with the College, the project set for the HND (Higher National Diploma) students specialising in landscape design was to design and build a garden that would promote the ideas and aims of the society, using both familiar and unusual perennial plants.

Ruth Gwynne produced the winning design, the hard landscaping was done by Pershore students during the winter of 1993–94, while Anne Jenner (HPS Trustee) designed the planting plan. The garden was planted up during spring 1994, and formally opened at the HPS Autumn Weekend that year.

Various features in the garden were donated by Local Groups of the HPS. A bench by the Southern Counties Group and the gates by the Nottingham Group in memory of Joan and Robin Grout, originators of the Hardy Plant Directory (a precursor

of the RHS Plant Finder) and there is a plaque in the Octagon to this effect. Five terracotta pots were donated by Cheshire and Friends Group.

The garden was overseen by a Garden Panel, chaired by Anne Jenner, with Tony Lord, Pam Schwerdt and Sybille Kreuzberger (who had been Head Gardeners at Sissinghurst and who were by then living at Stow-on-the-Wold), local nurseryman, Bob Brown, and two local HPS members. Pershore College was contracted to maintain the landscape elements, whilst HPS volunteers worked on the garden. The garden was open year-round to visitors and available to the College as an educational resource.

However, by 2006 the project was floundering with too few volunteers and poor maintenance input from the College and the HPS Trustees decided to terminate the Society's contract with the College.

A few volunteers continued to work in the garden including Anne Jenner and Sandra Hartley (another HPS member from the Southern Counties Group who had been involved with sourcing the original plants). The lifting and splitting of large clumps of plants provided lots of material for potting up and made enough money, from selling them at College Open Days and later in the Plant Centre, to fund buying new plants and supplies such as mulch to maintain the garden. With no official connection to the HPS the garden was now referred to as the Pershore Perennial Garden and it was still looking good when the national AGM was held at Pershore College in 2023. However it is now once again lacking regular maintenance and is becoming overgrown.



The Octagon at the entrance to the garden, in 2004 (photo: HPS image library)

## **Editor's note: an update...**

### **and opportunities to help get the garden back in shape!**

At the end of 2025 (writes Mike Bentley), in my role as a volunteer with Garden Organic, I was asked to talk to Josh Egan-Wyar (Head of Horticulture at Pershore College) about helping them to improve their composting facilities. I already knew Josh, both through my time as a student at Pershore between 2014 and 2017 and as a regular customer of their trade nursery, so I was happy to advise. Many readers will also know Josh, both as a former member of the Worcestershire HPS Group and a regular speaker at our meetings.

While I was there Josh walked me around the Pershore Perennial Garden and I was very sad to see how overgrown it had become since my time there as a student. We talked about getting the Worcestershire group (and anyone else who was interested) involved in getting the garden back into shape. Following a meeting between Josh, myself and Rob Swallow an initial work party was arranged for 16th May.

A good number of members turned up and, assisted by Josh, made great progress in clearing the weeds from the first of the borders and adding mulch. We are hoping to be able to continue this on a regular basis. Watch for announcements about future opportunities!

I am very grateful to Jan Vaughan for her history of this garden; I had no idea of the background!



Work party, including  
Josh, May 2026

## RHS Garden Bridgewater



In April Bill Simpson visited the recently opened Royal Horticultural Society new garden, near Salford in the North West. This is the latest venture of the Society and cost £190 million, raised through sponsorship and funding from the Peel Foundation and from Salford Council. It is one of the largest new public gardens in Europe.

This is the RHS's fifth major garden in the UK, following their acquisition of Harlow Carr twenty years ago, and with Marcus Chilton-Jones as Head of Site is their biggest project in recent years.

In 2015 the RHS acquired the derelict site of Worsley New Hall, the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Victorian House built for Lord Francis Egerton. The landscape architect William Andrews Nesfield designed the original gardens, which included terraces, fountains, and stone balustrades plus landscaped parkland, an arboretum and an eleven acre kitchen garden. It was magnificent but, sadly, in 1943 there was a fire in the top rooms and it was demolished. It became derelict until obtained by the RHS in 2015 and with Salford Borough Council a new 154 acre garden was established: RHS Garden Bridgewater.



Landscape architect Tom Stuart-Smith was commissioned to produce the overall layout. Tom placed a Paradise Garden in the centre, with water features and planting from around the world. He also designed the kitchen Garden with orchards, the formal Worsley Welcome Garden, the Chinese Streamside Garden, Ellesmere Lake and the Victoria Meadow. It is a masterpiece. Tom invited young designers Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg to create the Kitchen & Fruit areas. Work commenced in 2017 and later the Peel Learning Garden with new teaching facilities for organised school children was added. There is also a Community Wellbeing Garden, with community grow area designed by RHS horticulturist Katie Irwin and local gardener Leon Davis, teaching sustainable growing skills. All these are used by community groups, encouraging more people to get involved in gardening.



Marcus Chilton-Jones was appointed as curator and oversaw the transformation, using excellent plants with the very best of trees & shrubs. It is amazing what was achieved. The garden, which includes a garden centre with shopping and dining for visitors, opened in May 2021 following delays caused by the Covid pandemic. Numbers of visitors have increased over the years, with produce being sold to the public.

There are three Plant Heritage National Plant Collections: *Pelargonium* (all types), *Rheum* (rhubarb) & *Ribes uva-crispa* (gooseberry). All of the plants are well-labelled and on record for you to enjoy. So much to see and so refreshing.

RHS Garden Bridgewater is excellent and well-worth a visit: Occupation Road, Off Leih Road, Worsley, SALFORD, Greater Manchester, M28 2LJ Tel: 0161 503 6100.



At RHS garden  
Bridgewater

