



Somerset Group Newsletter

January 2021



<https://somersethps.com/>

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From the Chairwoman

Looking back on 2020 HPS Somerset Group did manage to get together several times.

In July and August several members opened their gardens to fellow members to visit following the social distancing rules. I understand that all went well and the gardens were much admired. In true gardener fashion cuttings and plants were acquired on some visits. Many thanks to those members who opened their gardens. Maybe it is something we should consider doing again even when life is back to normal.

You can read Jane Hunt's article on the visit in September to Babbs Farm in this newsletter.

The group had two successful meetings at West Monkton Village Hall in Autumn following Covid 19 rules. The Committee had no idea how many members were prepared to attend under such restrictions so it was a great relief when bookings were made and members turned up on the day. The number of people allowed to attend was less than half our usual number and the popular plant stall, book stall and sundries were missing although we did hold the 50/50 plant sale outdoors in September. Understandably the atmosphere was not the same but I found it a real boost to get out and do something different and see members albeit slightly blurred through a mask. At short notice Roy Stickland gave us a talk with the intriguing title "No, it's not too big" which turned out to be the opposite of the response given by many potential purchasers after asking how big does this plant grow. Two feet seems to be the favoured height of a plant.



© Caroline Reeves

In October we listened to Roy Cheek talk about 'Irresistible Garden Plants for Butterflies'. This was particularly interesting as he indicated which cultivar was the best rather than a species and reminded us that to have beautiful butterflies and moths the caterpillars also need to be accommodated.

In November we held the AGM and lecture via Zoom. I was convinced that a lot of members would not want to use this method but was delighted to see the

number of participants reach 60 during Bob Brown's talk. A success according to the feedback we have received. Of course, we have no idea as this goes to print whether we will be able to meet in person in January 2021 or if a Zoom lecture is the best option. We will let you know.

I made two announcements at the AGM in November about the group's involvement in the Conservation Scheme Group and the national AGM and lecture day 2022.

The **Conservation Scheme** is important in fulfilling two of the objects of the constitution of the HPS:

a) To advance the culture, study and improvement of hardy herbaceous plants; and b) To preserve the older, rarer and lesser known hardy plants, cultivars and varieties from being forgotten and lost to cultivation.



Two of the plants on the scheme list (photos © HPS) *Lychnis x walkeri* 'Abbotswood Rose' AGM and *Astilbe* 'Sheila Haxton' (chinensis)

If you are unsure what participation in the scheme involves more information can be found on the website <https://www.hardy-plant.org.uk/about-plants/conservation/conservation-organisation>

including a list of plants in the scheme. In a nutshell, members grow and propagate hardy perennials that have gone out of general circulation but are still worth growing. I shall be the Conservation Scheme Group Coordinator for Somerset Group and thankfully several members contacted me after the AGM interested in growing plants in the scheme. Plants are distributed at an annual meeting which unsurprisingly could not take place

in 2020. Hopefully next year's meeting will go ahead and we can acquire the desired plants for growing.

HPS National Annual lecture day and AGM 2022

You will have heard me say that I have volunteered Somerset Group to host the 2022 national AGM and lecture day. I did not notice any looks of horror on your faces (but then again, the images are quite small) so I am sure I can count on your support both in the planning stages and on the day. As an incentive, if you assist on the day you are assured of a seat. I have looked at a few venues but plans are halted now because of the pandemic restrictions.

Have you gardened much more than usual this year? I have gardened and read more plant / garden design related books than usual but I did not achieve the condition I kept hearing about: 'I haven't a weed in the garden' and 'all is neat and tidy'. I still had and indeed still have weeds and there are areas of the garden that need something but what that something is, is still to be decided. This is when meetings and garden visits are so useful as well as just interesting. I see a plant described in a talk or a pleasing group of plants growing in a garden and the wish list grows longer and plants are moved around.



Verbascum and Monarda © Caroline Reeves

One of my plant combinations that I particularly liked is this vibrant combination of a self-seeded Verbascum and a Monarda. It won't be the same next year as the Monarda wanders about at will. I know some gardeners are averse to having yellow in the garden only making an exception for spring flowers but I like it.



Ophrys apifera
© Caroline Reeves

I have seen this bee orchid for a couple of years now when out walking. It is growing in a field which has planning permission for over 100 houses so I doubt it will be seen again. The only other time I saw one was years ago and I was not allowed to tell anyone where they were growing.

Let us hope that we will be able to meet and join in the visits that are included in the programme for 2021

Caroline Reeves

Your HPS Group Needs You!

Each HPS post need only be held for three years, so please bear in mind these roles are not open-ended commitments.

Treasurer - Stuart Senior is stepping down from being Treasurer at the end of 2021 after 10 years in the post. He will be a hard act to follow but someone out there has the necessary skills to take on the role. All spreadsheets will be set up and ready to go. If you have any interest please talk to Stuart. The earlier the better to enable you to see what is needed throughout the year.

Newsletter Editor – This role requires a commitment twice a year to produce the newsletter. You do not need to be a member of the committee but it is sometimes helpful to attend a committee meeting.

Nurseries list compiler – this is an important source of income and good advertising for the group.

New Members

A warm welcome to the new Somerset Group members:

Maxine Courage, Taunton and Tricia Newton, Romsey

New Committee member

I am pleased to welcome Kay Savage onto the committee. Kay's first tasks will be helping with publicity for the plant fairs. The Early Plant Fair will be held at a new venue to us in Milverton.



© Caroline Reeves

HPS Somerset Group Early Plant Fair
Milverton Recreation Ground
Butts Way, Milverton
Taunton TA4 1JR

Saturday 27 March 2021
10am – 3 pm

Entry £3 plus booking fee
Plenty of Parking Refreshments available

Subscriptions

Just to remind you that subscriptions for 2021 are due this month. The cost remains the same, at £5 for single and £8 for joint membership. It is easiest to pay by standing order but for those who prefer to pay by cheque, the usual payment slip is included with this Newsletter. If you would rather pay Caroline, our Membership Secretary, direct, you can do so at the next lecture meeting.

Please note that to be a member of our Somerset Group, you are required to be a member of the National Hardy Plant Society. A Somerset Group membership cannot be issued without a National membership number. National subscriptions can be renewed on the National HPS website - <http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk> - and you can subscribe to *Cornucopia* at the same time.

Alternatively, you can pay by BACS transfer online to the Somerset Group bank account:

Bank Branch:	NatWest, Bridgwater
Account Code:	Hardy Plant Society (Somerset Group)
Sort Code:	60-03-27
Account Number:	46429956

Please remember to quote your Somerset Group membership number (it's on your membership card and also on your Newsletter envelope).

In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, please be advised that your full membership details are stored electronically. For full details of the Somerset HPS GDPR policy, go to bit.ly/shps-privacy

Cornucopia

Cornucopia is a twice-yearly magazine which brings you the pick of the best articles from the HPS Local Group newsletters. Recent topics have been diverse and fascinating, from articles on garden visits including Greencombe Gardens by Tim Longville to advice on how deal with slugs. You can browse articles from previous issues online at this address: bit.ly/hps-cornucopia

Cornucopia is a snip at only £3.50 a year (incl. postage), and subscriptions are currently soaring, so don't miss out. Subscribe when you renew your membership, or call Clare at the Administrator's Office, 01386 710317, to subscribe separately.

Marion Jay

Group visit to Babbs Farm

After months of no Group activities throughout the spring and summer months, the opportunity to enjoy a visit to the delightful garden at Babbs Farm, near Highbridge in September came as most welcome to the members who decided to venture out.

The weather could have been a bit kinder as there had been some drizzle earlier in the day, but the recent rains had refreshed the borders and there was much to enjoy.

The gardens are arranged largely into "rooms" and divided off by hedges. One area is divided into four squares with clipped box hedging around each one and with *Cornus alternifolia* trees growing in each of the squares together with *Acanthus hungaricus* and irises.



There are two ponds - one near the house being fairly formal and one further away which is more natural and a home to wildlife. Specimen trees, some arranged formally in mown grass and others more casually beyond the long grass areas, and as features in the flower borders, add to the interest within the garden.

The owner, Sue O'Brien, is a keen grower of salvias and there are many varieties in the garden, both in pots and in the borders. Many members were heard admiring the salvias and other late summer perennials.

We were all surprised that Sue could manage without a greenhouse of any kind, storing only a small proportion of her many tender plants in her conservatory and simply replacing those that died the following spring.

Ian and Teresa Moss were also at the garden for the afternoon and several members went home with a salvia to remind them of their visit.



Jane Hunt

Photos © Jane Hunt

Gardening gadgets and other things I would not want to be without

If you have finished pouring over the seed catalogues you may like to consider your supply of garden tools (or for your own wish list) here are a few ideas to look at:

Jakoti shears – originally made for shearing Greek sheep these were I think originally imported by a company near Somerton. Long blades make the cutting back of lavenders, thymes, marjoram etc. a doddle compared with ordinary secateurs and have the advantage that by holding a large handful in your other hand, they can go straight into the barrow rather than having to be raked or gathered up afterwards. They are obviously also a lot quieter and more environmentally friendly than petrol or even electric trimmers. I have had mine for nearly 10 years and have never had to sharpen them (they claim to be self-sharpening) and just the odd dab of oil keeps them sweet. They are properly made for proper tough jobs even the red paint on the handles is still nearly all intact! Available from Mole Valley Farmers and probably on-line.

Clipper box - Whatever your style of garden it will probably look better if your lawn edges are kept trim, but the task of collecting up the cuttings is long past for me since I discovered this neat little gadget that clips onto your edging shears and catches the grass as you cut it. A flat strip is stuck on to the blades of the shears, onto which the box is clipped and so can be removed when you don't need it. Mine did many miles before one of the hooks broke and had to be replaced. Originally designed and made by a company in Sussex.

Bosmere Jumbo Tip bag – Made of strong woven recycled plastic this favourite is about a foot tall and about 2½ ft wide. It stays upright and open by itself but because of its width doesn't blow over easily in the wind. It is very light and has 2 sturdy handles. I find it invaluable for carrying voluminous materials such as leaves in the autumn or light weight foliage (such as old pea plants) that would require 2 barrow loads, a lot of which would fall, or be blown, off on the way to the compost heap. A piece of rope tied to one handle can be looped through the other which keeps everything in and to sling the bag over your shoulder. The rope can also be used to tie it down to something when a hurricane is forecast, so that it doesn't blow off to the next county!

Enviromesh ultrafine – I wish I'd known about this years ago! Very

thin lightweight netting that literally drapes over plants and stops flea beetles and large and small white butterflies, I find it invaluable to protect brassica seedlings before transplanting and wallflower seedlings and rocket from the flea beetle. Just make sure it is pinned down very securely in one corner so it doesn't blow away in a gale otherwise small canes will keep the rest of it in place the rest of the time. Even wet it doesn't impede seedlings growth. Available by the meter from pestfreegardening.co.uk

Poligrip – A rather strange addition to my list, but I use it to hold together all sorts of things that will get wet in use but don't need to be permanently stuck together (e.g. the broken clipper box above!!)

Kate Harris



Frosted sedums ©
Bill Hodgson

A Joyous Mystery

In a corner of a bed largely dominated by *Crocus tommasinianus*, *Allium aflatunense*, which seeds around very happily, and a muscari cultivar, which seeds around even more joyously, I noticed something creamy yellow which I didn't recognise. Closer inspection revealed *Narcissus bulbocodium* (commonly known as the hooped petticoat daffodil) with three good flowers, sitting very comfortably alongside its neighbours, with another plant about 12" away. I had not planted these bulbs, so the mystery was how they came to be there. I later discovered another *N. bulbocodium* in another bed some distance away.

The common factor was that both beds had been generously mulched with the same garden compost last autumn. I then remembered that about 4 or 5 years ago, I had planted seed of *N. bulbocodium* ssp. *roumiexii*. Nothing had come up, and sometime later the discarded pot would have been emptied onto the compost heap, from whence these plants were then delivered in the compost mulch.

The chances of this happening must be remote, so I count myself very lucky to have found not just one, but four good plants of this lovely little gem. I just hope it will reappear and thrive next year and beyond.

Roy Stickland



© HPS Library

Live and let die

When I mentioned to Stuart Senior that I was considering writing an article on plants that die well, he gave me a wry smile and remarked that it was an appropriate subject, considering the dry summers we're having. But I'm not talking about total extinction of life here, more the way a plant goes over when it's finished flowering. It's a quality found in the plants which the Dutch designer, Piet Oudolf, uses in his landscapes, such as Oudolf Field at Hauser and Wirth, near Bruton. As flowering periods are often brief and ephemeral, the lasting bracts or seedheads which follow can provide valuable structure and interest late into the season. Very often these plants are also stiff-stemmed and sturdy, requiring little or no staking and minimal maintenance during the summer months.

An example of a plant with a particularly bad post-flowering habit (in my opinion, at least) is the busy lizzie. As the flowers die, the petals adhere themselves to the nearest leaf and decompose soggly, in full view. It's as though it's fouling its own nest and, as bedding plants go, it is surely one of the least satisfactory. I prefer plants which make themselves useful by producing an attractive seedpod.



Salvia sclarea var. *turkestanica*
courtesy HPS image library

Plants that die well have various characteristics which extend their value, including coloured bracts, interesting seedheads, autumn colour, and architectural structure. Herbaceous salvias provide some of the best examples of coloured bracts which persist long after the flowers have perished; the biennial clary sage, *Salvia sclarea* var. *turkestanica*, sends up muscular flower spikes to around 1.2m, the large, showy, bluish-pink bracts lasting much longer than the rather less significant white flowers within. The popular salvias 'Amistad' and 'Black and Blue' also demonstrate this trait, their deep blue flowers offset by large, rich black-purple bracts which endure well. Bracts also enable some plants to keep their flowering 'look' intact: hellebores, euphorbias and astrantias fade gently as they pass over because their 'flowers' are largely constructed from robust bracts (in fact, the true flowers within are often tiny). *Astrantia* 'Roma' flowers are still attractive weeks after their peak, when their papery, bleached-pink pincushions develop a somewhat wistful 'Miss Haversham' quality.



Salvia 'Caradonna' © Bill Hodgson



Salvia 'Purple Rain' © Marion Jay

In early summer, hardy perennial salvias such as *S.* 'Caradonna' and *S.* 'Purple Rain' send up multiple spikes of deep blue and purple flowers respectively, which may be left on rather than deadheaded, as they fade only gradually and provide short, vertical accents in the border. Enjoying the same sunny, well-drained conditions, *Agastache* 'Black Adder' is similarly useful, its cylindrical flowerheads consisting of a dark purple core studded with rich blue flowers. The core lasts, retaining colour and structure, for weeks. I've noticed, however, that inferior varieties have been sold as *A.* 'Black Adder' by some plant nurseries recently. *A.* 'Black Adder' is a sterile hybrid and can only be propagated vegetatively, so if you ever see *A.* 'Black Adder' seeds for sale, don't be tempted.



Agastache 'Black Adder' © HPS image library

Seedheads of all shapes can be valuable in the garden, from some of the spring-flowering bulbs right through to late summer perennials. Alliums are well-known for their globe-shaped seedheads which, if picked when still swelling with seed, survive brilliantly when dried; I wire a gold-sprayed *Allium christophii* head to the top of our Christmas tree each year. Several species of herbaceous perennials also

produce spherical seedheads: monardas have a distinctive shape, if you have the patience to ignore the mildew which so often blights the foliage. Mildew-resistant varieties such as *Monarda* 'Raspberry Wine' and M. 'Gardenview Scarlet' fare better. Once the stems are left naked, topped with little pompons, they become a magnet for goldfinches. The annual *Scabiosa stellata* 'Sternkugel', easily overlooked when producing its flowers of palest-blue, comes into its own when the petals drop. Papery cones tessellate to form spherical drumstick heads, 5-8cm in diameter, which are perfect for drying.



Phlox seedheads © 'Urban Pollinators'

Many varieties of *Phlox* are also beauties at the seedhead stage, with little round puffs ranged up the stems, especially eye-catching after a night's frost. As, too, is *Echinacea pallida*, one of my very favourites; from a distance its burnt umber, mini-hedgehog seedheads appear suspended, seemingly unsupported, above the fragmenting autumn border. It is a signature Oudolf plant, as elegant and structural in life as in death. Both of these species have strong stems and generally withstand the equinoctial gales of autumn.



© Bill Hodgson

Some seedheads are ephemeral; the pinkish, wispy seedheads of *Geum triflorum* give it its common name of 'prairie smoke', as *en masse* they give the impression that the ground is smouldering. The silky seedheads of *Pulsatilla vulgaris* are similar, as are those of *Clematis alpina*, catching the light with their silvered filaments. However much time we may spend weeding rosebay willowherb out of our borders, there can be

no denying that their stretched-gossamer seedheads have great presence when backlit by the slanting autumn sun. There is a sterile, pure white form - *Chamaenerion angustifolium* 'Album' - which still produces the effect but doesn't actually drop anything that germinates. It is well worth growing in a moist, wild corner of the garden. Make sure you are buying the sterile variety, as there is a fertile white form too.

For a more solid legacy in the borders, sedums cannot be beaten. The flower colour on these fleshy plants gradually deepens as autumn progresses until, approaching midwinter, they become a deep beetroot red and finally russet brown. Like the phlomis, it is a superb plant when embellished with hoar-frost, which imbues it with a fragility it lacks in summer. Mophead hydrangeas also retain the impression of solidity after their foliage has dropped, their clouds of shabby-chic flowerheads lending structure to the border right through to the spring. Of course, this is due to bracts again, those tough modified leaves which play host to short-lived flowers.



Sedum and Calamagrostis © Bill Hodgson

Ornamental grasses vary in stamina; none of the molinias last through the winter, their stems breaking off at the base around Christmas time, and I have found the golden oat (*Stipa gigantea*) to be equally frail once the winter weather arrives. Miscanthus are sturdy and their fluffy plumes last well. However, the stalwart of my winter garden is *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' which withstands the worst that winter can throw at it. During the summer it produces tall (4ft), pinkish-grey inflorescences which are not particularly shapely or dramatic. At this stage, if it is a particularly wet summer these fresh stems can break during heavy rains, but

it is rare for extensive damage to occur. As August progresses, the open panicles tighten up and coalesce to form buff taper candles which stand perfectly upright. This is what endures during the colder months, contributing a graceful vertical accent to the border, contrasting with tumps of evergreen shrubs and catching the winter light. It's remarkably versatile, tolerating a wide range of conditions: I have used it in pots, borders, dry areas and damp, and even as a hedge. An added bonus is that it is a sterile hybrid, so it doesn't litter the ground with seedlings.

Marion Jay

A Garden for the Year

My Mum's aunt Vi was a World War 1 war bride and went to live with her American serviceman husband in California after the war. My Mum was a keen letter writer and she and her aunt corresponded for many years, until Vi's death, although they never met. Vi sent the following "poem" to Mum many years ago and I found it amongst her things after she passed away. Written on the reverse was a handwritten note that said "I got this when I was President of Veterans' Auxiliary. I used to put one on the board at meetings". I think that it still has great relevance today.

A Garden for the Year

In my good garden, I would first plant five rows of peas:
Preparedness, promptness, perseverance, politeness and prayer.

Next to them, I will plant three rows of squash:
Squash gossip, squash criticism, squash indifference.

Then I will put in five rows of lettuce:
Let us be faithful, let us be unselfish, let us be loyal, let us love one another, let us be truthful.

No garden is complete without turnips, and mine will have:
Turn up for Church, turn up for meetings, turn up with a smile, turn up with a new idea, turn up with real determination."

Jane Hunt

A Joyous Sight on a Dreary Day

On holiday a few years back, I was able to visit the garden of Andy McIndoe, well known for his amazing Chelsea exhibits for Hilliers. There I saw, for the first time, a shrub that I'd heard about. I had seen Roy Lancaster's ecstatic review of it. That shrub was *Calycanthus x raulstonii* 'Hartlage Wine'. Andy had a plant for sale and it was an immediate no-brainer: I didn't even ask the price!



It is now a shapely 5 – 6 feet and a real treasure. It is a plant that thrives in the worst soil in the garden – thin, stony and containing some of the heavy metals for which Shipham is well known. The foliage is a soft light green, and the wine-coloured flowers come at the end of every growth so that they are well distributed over the whole plant, their appearance being enhanced by its light, airy structure.

Photos © Roy Stickland

It is a mystery to me that this plant is not better known: most visitors to my garden certainly notice it and ask what it is, and usually confess that they have never heard of it. It probably likes a slightly more shaded position than I have given it, as the colour tends to bleach a bit in strong sunlight, but it is a reliably consistent performer, flowering from early to late summer. There is a white-flowered version called C. 'Venus' which doesn't seem to have quite the same vigour as 'Hartlage Wine'.



The flowering this year has come at an opportune time, bringing cheer to our enforced isolation.

Roy Stickland

2021 Programme

All lecture meetings are held at West Monkton Village Hall (TA2 8NE) and are free to members (except for the Group Plant Sale in April). Non-members are welcome, at a modest charge of £5 per person. With the option of becoming a member. Doors open at 10.30am and tea/coffee and biscuits are available before the lecture. The Group has a plant stall and a book stall at most meetings, plus a 'Plant and Flower of the Month' competition.

Further programme details may be found on the website, which is updated whenever fresh information is released. Location maps or directions will be supplied once a place on a trip, or ticket for an event, has been booked.

Information on how to book is at the end of the Programme pages.

Saturday 16th January – 11.00am

Jane Moore – 'Painting with Plants'

In a horticultural career spanning almost 30 years, Jane has been Head Gardener at The Bath Priory since 2003. She is also a guest presenter on BBC Two's Gardeners' World.

In this talk, Jane will discuss how making clever use of colour can turn your garden into something really special. She has plenty of ideas on how to introduce colour using both flowering plants and foliage, from romantic, soft toning colours and subtle, fragrant plants, to the drama of a bold, vibrant colour scheme. Jane can recommend plants and combinations that will look great, whatever the size of your garden.

<https://www.thebathpriory.co.uk/hotel/gardens>

Saturday 20th February – 11.00am

Timothy Walker – 'Euphorbias: Probably the Best Plants in the World'

Timothy Walker is a lively and entertaining speaker; very enjoyable to listen to, yet full of useful information at the same time. He is the former Director of Oxford Botanic Garden, which houses one of the National Collections of hardy euphorbias.

I'm sure no HPS member needs to be convinced of the value of spurges as garden plants for every situation. Timothy's talk will explain some of the natural history of euphorbias and their botany, along with details of some of the most desirable species and cultivars, and suggest some planting combinations we can try in our own gardens.

Saturday 20th March – 11.00am

Dr John Grimshaw – ‘Paying Rent: Plants that Earn Their Keep’

John Grimshaw has enjoyed a varied and interesting career, including nine years restoring the Gardens at Colesbourne Park (famous for its snowdrops) before he became the Director of the Yorkshire Arboretum in 2012. He is a respected gardener, author and botanist, and is Vice-Chair of the RHS Woody Plant Committee. Fascinated by all plants, he has grown a huge diversity of them over the years.

In this talk, John will introduce a range of plants of all kinds, chosen for their long or multiple seasons of interest in the garden. Just the thing for those of us who want colour all year round in our borders.

<https://twitter.com/johnmgrimshaw?lang=en>

<https://www.yorkshirearboretum.org/background>

Saturday 27th March 10.00am – 3.00pm

HPS Somerset Group Early Spring Plant Fair

Milverton Recreation Ground, Butts Way, Milverton, Taunton TA4 1JR

The annual Spring Plant Fair is a popular event and always draws a crowd. Stalls from local nurseries will be offering an array of tempting plants, rich with the fresh foliage and jewel-like flowers of spring.

Saturday 17th April – 11.00am

Sue Applegate – ‘English Wine and Vineyards’

Sue, of Hurstbrook Plants, has spoken to the Somerset group before, but she usually talks on the subjects of peonies and irises. However, she also runs a two-acre vineyard, Stocklands Vineyard, producing award-winning white, rose and red wines grown and made in the Polden Hills, right here in Somerset!

In this talk, Sue will talk about the development and progress of English wine-making, the techniques involved and its increasing popularity.

<https://www.poldenwines.co.uk>

Thursday 27th May

Self-drive Visit to Pulham Rectory, Nr Sherborne and Ashington Manor, Mudford, Nr Yeovil

The garden at Pulham Rectory is a feast for the eyes: four acres of formal and informal gardens, incorporating yew pyramid allées and hedges, box parterres and beautifully planted herbaceous borders amid a backdrop of mature trees. A myriad of garden features include terraces, a fernery, a woodland walk and a ha-ha. The large, spectacular bog garden is awash with primulas and irises in May. Splendid views.

Ashington Manor is the nascent garden of Chelsea gold medal winners Julian and Isabel Bannerman. They have designed for such A-list gardens as Highgrove for the Prince of Wales, Arundel Castle in Sussex for the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk and Wormsley Park in Buckinghamshire for John Paul Getty II. During the first lockdown, the Bannermans threw themselves into developing their own garden at Ashington Manor, which they bought in 2019. This promises to be an eye-opening visit, with lots of ideas to take home.

Thursday 10th June

Self-drive Visit to Westbrook House, Nr Glastonbury and Batcombe House, Nr Bruton

Garden designer Keith Anderson and painter David Mendel began laying out the garden at Westbrook House in 2004. Set within four acres, the garden has three distinct formal areas around the house. Clipped box and yew offset lively borders of herbaceous perennials and cottage-style plantings. Beyond are mown paths leading through a meadow, peppered with species and wild roses. Finally, there are two orchards where the fruit trees are interplanted with shrub roses and philadelphus.

Libby Russell has created a superb garden in the nineteen years she has been at Batcombe House. Sitting snugly in its valley setting, it is a garden of two halves: one undeniably romantic, with frothing borders of roses, nepeta and herbaceous geraniums punctuated by conical yews; the other rather more contemporary, with lawns punctuated by hummocks of box rising in an amphitheatre of curves, fringed with planting in cool greens and whites. Featured in *Gardens Illustrated* in 2020.

Saturday 4th July

HPS Somerset Group Summer Plant Fair at Lower Severalls

Summer plant fairs are the most colourful of the year, and have the advantage that you can really see what a plant will look like in the border when you buy it in full bloom. The fair at Lower Severalls has become increasingly popular, with nurseries from across the area bringing their best plants to sell. It will be a smorgasbord of colour, not to be missed.

Further details to follow

£4 for general entrance and £3.50 for HPS and RHS members.

Booking Information

All coach trips and garden visits must be pre-booked with Penny Berry:

Tel : 01278 662720

Email : p.berry487@btinternet.com

If you would like to book places on any of these events and trips, please complete and return the entire enclosed Booking Sheet. The joining instructions for each event will then be sent to you via email or by post.

To receive the instructions via email, simply fill in your email address on the Booking Sheet even if you believe I already have a note of it. In addition to emailing your joining instructions, I will also email your booking confirmation. Please print your name clearly, and remember to advise me of any change to your email address.

To receive your joining instructions by post, please remember to send me **TWO SAEs** for **EACH** event you wish to attend.

Penny Berry

Cover photo © Robert Reeves

In case you are wondering, this is a real photograph taken by my husband. It is not two pictures combined together. **Caroline Reeves**

Plant Fairs

At each of the Plant Fairs in the programme there will be a Somerset Group plant table. So, when you start propagating your interesting and desirable plants in your garden, grow a few extra for the table. Remember to clearly label and if possible, add brief information about growing conditions to inform the buyer. Volunteers will also be needed to run the event.

Photos courtesy Jane Hunt



Committee

Chairwoman/Membership Sec

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