



# HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

## Somerset Group Newsletter January 2022

Issue number 68



<https://somersethps.com/>

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## From the Chairwoman

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Welcome to a new year of lectures and trips. The articles herein reflect on the past year and look forward to 2022 with a programme full of interesting topics and garden visits for you to enjoy.

Following our AGM in November I would like to welcome Angela Summers to the role of Nursery List Co-ordinator. The Nursery List is very useful for advertising local nurseries and promoting our group as it reaches people across the county that may not have heard of the HPS.

I have distributed a few of the Conservation Scheme plants and kept a few for propagation myself. When there are sufficient plants of a suitable size they will be passed on to other groups in the scheme. This helps to ensure they are suitable for growing in different circumstances and can truly be said to be a 'good-doer'. 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 on.

You will find enclosed with your newsletter a small poster for our Early Spring Plant Fair to be held at Yeo Valley Organic Garden. It would be most useful if you could find somewhere to display it; may be at your local garden group or in your window.

### **HPS National Annual Lecture Day and AGM 15 September 2022**

The ALD/AGM will soon be here. Several of the HPS specialist groups plan on attending and there will be several nurseries in attendance. We have to organise and run the day but booking tickets will be done by Clare Powell, HPS Office Administrator. Please let me know if you are willing to help either on the day, with planning or growing plants for our plant stall.

**Caroline Reeves**

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## Your HPS Group Needs You!

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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 2022 after many years in the post. If you are able to balance your own bank account you have the necessary skills to take on the post. 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.

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## New Members

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A warm welcome to the new and returning Somerset Group members:

Anna Yates, Weare

Nicky Ramsay - Porlock

Neil Jones & Sharon Bradford -  
Thurlbear

Jon & Angela Summers- Tiverton

Tambloyn Streeter - Honiton

Suki Commin -Lympstone

Ian & Katrina Pitman -Monkton  
Heathfield

Claire & Terry Cawley- Creech St  
Michael

James & Stephanie Penny -Bilbrook

David Norman - Wellington

Gill Cramer- Wiveliscombe

Linda Ferguson -Burnham-on-Sea

Peter Evered - Bridgwater

Maxine Courage -Taunton

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## Visit to Stoneleigh Down Garden, and Special Plants

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On one of the hottest days of the year, a group of us met at Stoneleigh Down Garden at the start of a really interesting day. It was very apt, therefore, that as we entered the garden, we were met by the vibrant colour of *Tithonia* torch, a blazing hot colour for a blazing hot day!!

The garden has been created over the last seven years by Su and John and now contains several varied beds situated around the S shaped lawn. The lushness of the planting is no doubt helped by the fact that in a previous life there was a smallholding on the site which left a legacy of nutrient rich soil.



After entering the garden, you pass the Exotic Border with the bluey/green hues of *Melianthus major* making a bold statement. Then onto the Wildlife Pond, a remnant from the original garden, across from which is the Oriental Pond – one for newts and one for fish!

*Persicaria* 'Red Dragon' lines some of the gravel paths as you wend your way down to the Conifer Corner, Acer Woodland

and Butterfly Row before returning to the house via the Oriental Pond, Tea House and Mixed Borders. It always amazes me that people who previously described themselves as 'novice gardeners' can plan such a varied garden. It gives us all hope!

Photos of *Melianthus* and *Salvia involucrata* 'Hadspen' close up HPS image library

Other photos © Christine Martin



It was then back for a welcome coffee and a piece of Su's delicious cake, consumed whilst admiring the *Dahlia* 'White Star' and the *Salvia involucrata* 'Hadspen'.



After a short journey we arrived at Derry Watkins's Special Plants Nursery and Garden- quite a contrast to Stoneleigh Down as it is situated on a steep hillside overlooking a valley and began its creation in 1996. Derry manages to find unusual plants from all over the world and so it was no surprise to see many of the group exploring the plant nursery as their first port of call.

Once inside the garden you are immediately struck by the new gravel garden with its imposing animal obelisk sculpture by David Mayne. Derry has a particular love of Mediterranean plants and so has created two gravel gardens to accommodate a wide range of plants. Walking along the edge of the Box Ball Bed, *Geranium* Rozanne softens the border and provides a lovely contrast to the various *Crocus*s.

The garden has so many different areas reflecting plants from all over the world and there is certainly something there for everyone – prairie planting, rockeries, a fernery, ponds and a bog garden, a shrubbery and much, much more. I loved the Red Hot Bed with the *Dahlia coccinea* var. *palmeri* and *Kniphofia* 'Mango Popsicle' providing bursts of intense colour



A cup of tea with home-made flapjack was a fitting end to a lovely visit. Many thanks to all those involved in organising such an interesting day.

**Christine Martin**

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## Subscriptions

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Just to remind you that subscriptions for 2022 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 Jenny Barr, 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 is 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](https://bit.ly/shps-privacy)

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## Plant and Book Sales

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Some of our newer members might not know that the Group relies on donations of quality plants and books from members to sell at meetings and plant fairs. This enables the Group to raise funds to finance our lecture meetings and keep entry to meetings free for members. The Group's modest annual subscription just about covers the cost of the Newsletters and general administration - in a good year - so it is vital that we raise additional funds. We usually have a plant and a book stall at our monthly lecture meetings and also a plant stall at the major plant fairs and indoor plant sale we hold each year.

In 2021 we were only able to hold the Summer Plant Fair and 50/50 Plant Sale (more of that in June's Newsletter). The Summer Plant Fair, kindly hosted by Mary Cooper at Lower Severalls near Crewkerne, raised several hundred pounds for Group funds this year – much of it from the sale of plants donated by members on the stall manned by our members.

In 2022 we are holding two plant fairs: on 26 March our Early Spring Plant Fair takes place at the Yeo Valley Organic Garden at Blagdon and on 12 June we return to Lower Severalls for our popular Summer Plant Fair. Further details about these events will appear on our website very shortly. We will again rely on members to donate quality, labelled plants for us to sell at these events and also to volunteer to help man the stall for some of the day.

Nearer home, we will hold our Annual Plant Sale at West Monkton Village Hall on 23 April. This event gives members the opportunity to have a table to sell their own plants to the public. Tables will be £5 each to hire. Please let me know if you wish to book one. However, we would also welcome donations of plants to sell on the Group's table too.

Finally, I should like to thank all of our members who either generously donated plants or books in 2021 or who gave their time to help the Group at the Summer Plant Fair.

Jane Hunt

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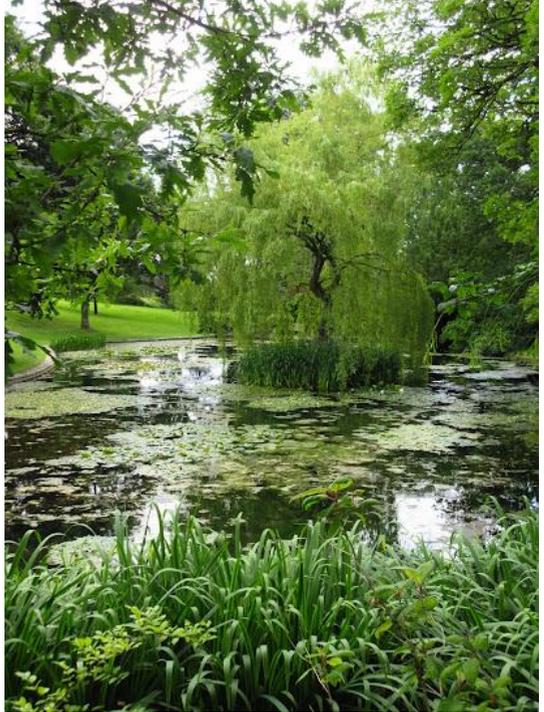
## Group visit to Holcombe Court

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As members of the Somerset Hardy Plant Society, we were given the opportunity of visiting the private gardens at Holcombe Court. The group had visited the gardens a few years into the latest transformation, and were looking forward to seeing it again today. It was my first visit.

We were met at the arched entrance by one of the permanent members of the garden staff. As we waited there for a few moments, it gave us time to admire the two Copper Beech Trees each side of the garden at the entrance, and to take in the fine house with its Union Flag waving proudly above the castellated entrance tower at the end of the wide drive set in beautifully mowed lawns.

Our walk took us through trimmed yews and up along the drive to the front terrace where Head Gardener Kathy Worner was at hand to greet us. The large lawns were green and sloped off to the left down to a series of ponds, the lowest two I understand are fish ponds original to the Old Court, whilst the upper two were added in the nineteenth century.





Kathy explained the garden maintenance regime explaining that the staff have their specialisms. Given the large walled garden with its many espaliered trees, and the large cider apple orchard beyond, it is not surprising that one person is responsible for the care of that area, and with the many yew and other topiary hedges in the formal parterres, another member of staff spends the bulk of time looking after that aspect. Additional staff work during the summer, or when more help is required.

Kathy very much enjoys the challenge of expanding the planting and arranging year round interest, with the only proviso, from the owner Mr Wiggins, that there should be no pink. The odd pink poppy that should emerge amongst the deep purples, simply have their petals removed quickly. Kathy frequently confers with Mr Wiggins, asking him what has particularly appealed to him along a certain border, and so over the last twenty years together they have built up the most pleasing of Gentleman's Pleasure Gardens. Paths are generously sized as are the borders and are perfectly in balance with the proportions of the house.

Although plants are brought in to add to the borders to refresh and update plantings, many plants have been in the garden for years and are kept rejuvenated by being pruned, or divided and increased. Repeats can be spotted along the long borders sometimes in combination with different plant types, giving a most harmonious feel to the long borders. Particular favourites are reds and purples, and Kathy has placed these judiciously with other plants.

We moved on to a stretch of garden where pillars of topiary grew up like green buttresses holding up the house and where beds of purple lavender filled the air with scent, and the sound of buzzing bees

All along the right hand side of the wide path, and backed by a stone wall, the long border stretched in the distance, except that in the middle was the most amazing of garden structures.



Described as a fan-vaulted gazebo in Country Life's article, which I read after my visit, the family and staff refer to it as 'The Bus Shelter', as there was a small structure which it replaced, very similar to the sloping roofed village type Bus shelters.

On the top of the gazebo is a large viewing platform giving a great vantage from which to view the gardens. Within the walled gardens there is a good view of the formal parterre arrangement with block planting of vegetables in the middle portion surrounding the raised pond and fountain.



There is also a good view of the long border towards the woodland or along the same border on the opposite side towards the House or a cheeky look through the pierced quatrefoil stonework towards the lakes.



The structure of parterre within the old walled garden has been developed since 2001. Further away from the house apple arches have formed tunnels, which must be a delight to walk through during blossom time or later when the apples are ripening. The four tunnels radiate out from a finely trimmed centrepiece. After all the details in the walled garden with its great variety, a change of gear as you walk the long grass walk bordered by the 'lollipopped' hornbeams so green and calming: a lace walk to think and contemplate.

The planting around the ponds deserves attention.



One leaves having viewed the most handsome of gardens: designed, developed and maintained to a standard any Tudor Lord would be proud of.

**Noelle Mace**

All photos in this article © Noelle Mace

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## **2022 Programme**

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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.

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### **Saturday 15 January – 11.00am**

Sue Applegate – 'English Wines 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>

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## **Saturday 12 February – 11.00am**

Michael Marriott – ‘The Rose: The Most Garden-Worthy of All Plants’

Michael Marriott was the chief rosarian at David Austin Roses for 35 years. His enthusiasm is infectious and his knowledge of roses is encyclopedic, especially for species roses, old roses, climbers and ramblers, the best modern roses and, of course, David Austin’s English Roses. He has designed many rose gardens and borders around the world. His own gardens have always been run on organic principles, selecting only the healthiest varieties of roses and using companion plants to attract beneficial insects.

Michael believes that roses are incredibly variable and versatile plants: “Not only can they look even more beautiful in association with other plants, they can also help with reducing pest and disease problems. It is easy to argue that they are the most garden-worthy of all plants.” This talk should persuade even the hardened sceptic that no garden is complete without roses.

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## **Saturday 12 March – 11.00am**

Tamsin Westhorpe – ‘Stockton Bury Gardens Through the Seasons’

With over 25 years’ experience in the horticultural industry, Tamsin has plenty of practical, hands-on knowledge. She was Editor of The English Garden magazine for six years, and is now the curator and gardener of Stockton Bury Gardens in Herefordshire, an award-winning garden which was created by her great-uncle, Raymond Treasure. Tamsin is also an RHS Chelsea Flower Show Judge, and author of Diary of a Modern Country Gardener.

This talk will feature plants and practical tips particularly relevant to spring and early summer; Tamsin has years of experience fielding visitors’ questions during Stockton Bury’s open days, so she’s aware of what gardeners really want to know. This promises to be a lively and informative talk covering a wide range of topics.

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## **Saturday 26 March 10.00am – 3.00pm**

### **HPS Somerset Group Early Spring Plant Fair**

Yeo Valley Organic Garden, Garden, Holt Farm, Blagdon, BS40 7SQ

For the first time our popular annual Spring Plant Fair will be held at Yeo Valley Organic Garden. The six-and-a-half-acre garden was the inspiration for RHS Chelsea Gold and People's Choice Medal winner, Tom Massey, assisted by owner and Head Gardener Sarah Mead. Many of the 2021 Chelsea plants will have been planted in the garden, and there could also be the opportunity to purchase some for yourself.

This, and the array of gorgeous plants, rich with the fresh foliage and jewel-like flowers of spring, from specialist West Country nurseries, will get your garden off to a flying start. Luckily, the cafe will be open, so you can refresh yourself with coffee and cake. All tickets including a free parking permit must be pre-booked from 1 February 2022 via the link which will appear on the Group's website.

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### **Saturday 9 April – 11.00am**

Sally Gregson – 'Practical Propagation'

Co-founder of the HPS Somerset Group, Sally Gregson trained professionally at Hadlow College and ran Mill Cottage Plants in Wookey, Somerset, for 20 years. Together with Bill Hodgson, she created the video on fern propagation for the Somerset Group (<https://somersestps.com/videos/>). This talk is a purely practical explanation and demonstration of how to make more from your garden, including some 'tricks of the trade'. As the author of 'Practical Propagation' (2008), Sally is also supremely well placed to answer any questions from the audience.

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### **Saturday 23 April - 10.00am to 12.30pm**

#### **HPS Somerset Group Plant Sale**

West Monkton Village Hall

Admission: £1 on the door

Sale tables may be booked with Jane Hunt at £5 per table (members only). If you have a lot of plants and want to book two tables, it will be £10.

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## Tuesday 10 May

Self-Drive Visit to **Little Ash Bungalow**, Fenny Bridges, Devon and **South Wood Farm**, Cotleigh, nr. Honiton (same day)

The garden at **Little Ash Bungalow** was created by Helen Brown, who arrived there in 1998 with two horse-box trailers full of plants. Helen follows Gertrude Jekyll's colour theory, and her soft and voluptuous planting style is contrasted by metal sculptures dotted throughout the garden, and solid, oak-slab seats. The garden includes a gravel garden for alpiners, a pond surrounded by rodgersias and hostas, extensive mixed borders crammed with sun-loving perennials, and an alder copse which is home to a variety of woodlanders. Little Ash was the winner for the South West Region in the Nation's Favourite Garden Competition 2021, run by The English Garden magazine.

**South Wood Farm** was redesigned and renovated by Arne Maynard in 2008, and as a country garden it exemplifies how contemporary design can be seamlessly integrated into a traditional setting. Surrounding a 17th century thatched farmhouse, the established garden of five acres is set within an area of traditionally managed hay meadows. Herbaceous borders, roses, yew topiary, a knot garden, wildflower meadows, orchards, lean-to greenhouses and a mouthwatering kitchen garden combine to create an unforgettable sense of place.

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## Tuesday 7 June

Coach Trip to **Stockton Bury Garden**, nr. Leominster, and **Stone House Cottage**, nr. Kidderminster (same day)

Following Tamsin Westhorpe's talk in March, this trip gives members a chance to see the garden where she works. Stockton Bury Garden sits at the heart of a working farm, which was originally one of the Bury farms of the Benedictine Priory in Leominster. The dovecote and medieval barns remain important landmark features.

The garden has been in the Treasure family for three generations, and much of it was pasture until thirty years ago, when Raymond Treasure and Gordon Fenn transformed it into this well-acclaimed garden. The original Victorian kitchen garden and impressive monkey puzzle tree are still very much part of the new garden, but a recent addition is the Pavilion – a perfect place to sit and enjoy views of the countryside. There is a plant

sales area, too, for those who have gaps in their borders at home. The garden at **Stone House Cottage** is an enchanting gem created by owner Louisa Arbuthnott. Although only one acre, it seems much larger. The beautifully maintained walled garden is enhanced by Louisa's late husband James' unusual red brick follies, the walls, arches and towers of which are covered with a multitude of rare climbing and twining plants. According to Louisa, he "just liked bricklaying". Tigridias such as 'Red Hot Tiger', green or dark orange-red flowered veratrums – the place is full of fascinating and diverting attractions. The garden acts as a shop window for the adjoining nursery. Here you can buy plants of almost everything that grows in the garden – the list of shrubs and climbers includes many rarely seen for sale in the UK.

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## Sunday 12 June

### HPS Somerset Group Summer Plant Fair at Lower Severalls

10.00am – 3.00pm Admission: Non-members £4 HPS & RHS members £3.50

Our Summer Plant Fair is being held a month earlier this year, which may bring a different palette of plants to the stalls. The fair at Lower Severalls is a popular event, with independent nurseries from across the South West bringing their best plants to sell. June really will be bustin' out all over!

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## Thursday 7 July

Coach Trip to **Mothecombe House**, Holbeton, nr. Plymouth and **Little Dartmouth Farm**, nr. Dartmouth (same day)

Mothecombe House and gardens are tucked under one side of a valley running down to Mothecombe beach. Several degrees warmer than the nearby village of Holbeton, the gardens are sheltered from the prevailing south westerly salt-laden winds, allowing tender plants to flourish. Mothecombe House is a Queen Anne house with additions by Sir Edwin Lutyens. On the south front there is a walled garden with Lutyens terraces planted with eryngiums, nepeta, salvias, hebes and agapanthus, and a lawn with herbaceous borders. Along the bottom path, two giant gunnera of elephantine proportions flank a pool, and in the bog garden masses of cool green ferns and huge arum lilies thrive. The Bee Garden was created

in 2013; the planting of 250 lavender plants in 12 varieties has brought a visible increase in bumble bees, solitary bees and hoverflies to the garden.

From its extraordinary position on the South Devon coast, Little Dartmouth Farm commands a vast panorama of sea and sky, its garden merging seamlessly into land that slopes gently to the cliff edge. Owners Edward and Sally Benthall bought the 300-acre farm 14 years ago and have remodelled the house, outbuildings and landscape, working with garden designer Dan Pearson to create a sustainable garden which fits well in the landscape.

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### **Saturday 10 September**

**HPS National AGM and Annual Lecture Day**, hosted by the Somerset Group at the Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre near Taunton

Speakers Keith Wiley and Rosy Hardy. Stalls include displays from HPS Specialist groups and nurseries.

Admission by ticket only. Details will be in the national newsletter.

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## **Booking Information**

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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**

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## **Autumn Events**

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### **Saturday 17 September**

**50/50 Plant Sale**, followed by Charlie Pridham, Climbing Plants

### **Saturday 15 October**

Andrew Ward – Marvellous Mints and Perfect Poppie'

### **Saturday 19 November**

AGM at 10.30am, followed at 11.15am by  
Fergus Garrett – Designing with Plants

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# Committee

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**Chairwoman/Newsletter Ed.  
(Temp)**

Caroline Reeves  
01963 351269  
carolineofcc@gmail.com

**Secretary**

Jane Hunt  
01934 732441  
hunt.frogshole1@btinternet.com  
Frogs Hole Farm  
Brinscombe  
Weare  
Axbridge BS26 2LH

**Membership Secretary**

Jenny Barr  
jennyb.hps.somerset@gmail.com

**Visits & Events**

Kate Harris  
nunnington@aol.com

**Treasurer**

Stuart Senior  
01823 442344  
stuart\_senior@msn.com

**Speakers**

Maralyn Norman  
01823 975899  
beaconview@yahoo.co.uk

**Publicity**

Kay Savage  
aks4849@uwclub.net

**Hester Messom**

hesterem@yahoo.co.uk

**OTHER ROLES****Visits & Events**

Penny Berry (bookings only)  
01278 662720  
p.berry487@btinternet.com

**Conservation Scheme**

**Co-ordinator**  
Caroline Reeves

**Website**

Bill Hodgson  
01643 841486  
info@somersetgps.com

**Plant Fair Co-ordinator**

Vacancy

**Newsletter Editor**

Vacancy

**Nursery List Co-ordinator**

Angela Summers