



HENLEAZE GARDEN CLUB

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No 68

NEWSLETTER

September 2021

Hello Members! I hope you've had a good summer. From torrential rain to heatwave and back again followed by a cold and miserable early autumn, extremes of weather continue, but all in all I don't think it's been a bad gardening season. On balance I've watered less than in recent years, contended with more blackfly and bindweed than usual, picked more flowers than ever and, of course, increased compost production due to the lack of green bin collection! I'm not complaining – just so grateful to have a playground! I'm looking forward to setting about some of the tasks Andrew Mikolajski recommended in his talk last week. For those unable to attend the meeting, there's a brief resumé on page 4.

I read an article by Monty Don a few weeks ago about the difficulties of writing a piece that won't be published for some weeks – he was only referring to the weather! This edition of the Newsletter has been particularly difficult to write and rewrite.

We were heartened when we heard back in June that St Monica's hoped to welcome us back in September for a proper face to face meeting. We started to plan in earnest. I was imagining Andrew Mikolajski talking to us live in the Hall. But then the final step in the roadmap was delayed and Covid cases spiked. Government was simultaneously telling us restrictions had been lifted, but advising us not to meet in large groups except outdoors. A nifty bit of buck passing. Then, as you know, St Monica's revised the terms of their draft hire agreement to reduce the capacity of the Hall and to require a lateral flow test from all attendees on the day of a meeting. Covid cases in Bristol reached their highest level yet. Whilst it has always been, and remains, the Organising Team's intention to return to face to face meetings as soon as feasible, we were aware that some Members would be prepared to do that sooner than others – hence the decision to carry out a survey of the membership. You can read more about this on page 4.

PLANT SALE

Around 60 members booked slots and attended the plant sale on 23 June – the e-mail booking system worked really well and we were blessed with a sunny afternoon. Many thanks to those members who donated plants and to the Organising Team plus Chris Purvis, Sue and Myrah for helping set up and at the sale. It was hard work, but thoroughly enjoyable and worthwhile. I loved it!! Every time I uttered "I'll buy that if it's left at the end", that was the next plant to sell! Plant and card sales raised a total of £617.50 to add to Club funds including 20 red pelargonium sold to passers-by afterwards. We donated a small number of



plants to the Friends of the Botanic Gardens for their sale on NGS Day. Ideally, we would have held the sale a month or so earlier, but held off hoping that Covid restrictions would be eased so that we would not have to limit numbers nor the time spent in the garden, but sadly that wasn't possible. **BUT NEXT YEAR** we are planning to hold a plant sale in mid May followed by a Garden Party later in the summer which will include the sale of later season and larger plants so let's get growing my propagator is already full of cuttings! Just need a bit of patience.

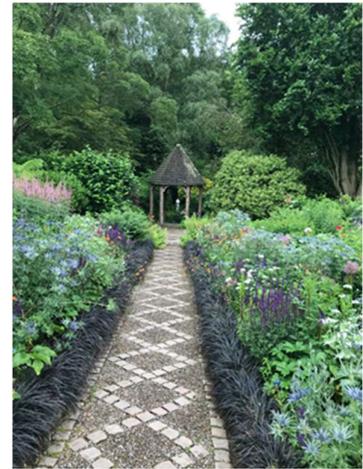
Gardens of Yorkshire 4-7 July

This was never going to be a normal trip. In these Covid-times it felt bizarrely strange to be going away at all, let alone sharing a coach with 26 fellow travellers and staying in a hotel for several nights. Our chair, Chris Radford, waved us off. This doesn't normally happen! And as we walked into our first garden thunder clapped and black clouds loomed.

Watching the direction of the rain clouds was a theme of our tour. But it did not stop us enjoying the wonderful gardens as we managed remarkably to have dry and even sunny periods on all our visits and we learnt to time our shelter accordingly in cafes/glasshouses and under tree canopies.

Trevor Edwards, our Brightwater Guide, invited us throughout our visits to consider whether what we were seeing was horticulture, art or architecture.

We were based in Harrogate and our first visit was to **York Gate**. This is a Grade II national heritage garden inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement (notably Hidcote) and was created by the Spencer family between 1951 and the 1980's. It has a number of structured garden spaces each with its own character and interconnected with deliberate vistas, paths and differing materials. It was entrusted to the charity Perennial in 1991 so that the garden could live on and continue to be enjoyed by the public. It was immaculately groomed and lived up to its reputation as one of the finest small gardens in the country. Our second day was spent at **Harlow Carr**, the RHS's northern flagship. It sits in a gentle wooded valley and is dominated by a lake and the Streamside garden that runs through it. Set in 58 acres it has



a variety of landscapes from water features to woodland; from lavish main borders to lush moisture loving plants around Streamside (when we visited the Primula colour combination of yellow, apricots and pinks looked amazing).

Many of us took the opportunity to take refreshments in the famous Betty's Tea Rooms either at Harlow Carr or in Harrogate.

The following day we visited three very different gardens.

Jackson's Wold is a family garden which has been evolving ever since the current owners moved there. Situated on the edge of the Yorkshire wolds it comprises a walled garden with mixed borders and numerous old shrub roses, a traditional vegetable garden that leads to a wild flower meadow and woodland paths. The scent of the roses did not disappoint. Wonderful!

Burton Agnes Hall (right) is an Elizabethan manor hall surrounded by lawns and clipped yews. In 1990 the walled garden was laid out with a maze, colour themed gardens, herbaceous borders and a jungle room of bamboos and exotics. It holds the National Collection of Campanulas. Magnificent!



Burnby Hall Gardens comprise Upper and Lower Lakes set in nine acres of woodland. Created by Major Stewart, who died in 1962, it was provided in his will that a trust be set up to look after the gardens for the people of the town of Pocklington. The lakes are home to the National Collection of over 100 hardy Water Lily and a truly magnificent rock garden. Relaxing!



On our last day we experienced two contrasts. **Yorkshire Sculpture Park** (left) is set within a 500 acre estate and shows modern and contemporary sculptures by British and International artists, including Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth and Damien Hirst. A must for the art lovers.

Hardwick Hall is one of Britain's greatest Elizabethan houses and has one of the finest collections of Elizabethan tapestries in Europe. The gardens are laid out in four rectangular courtyards containing a herb garden, orchards, summer borders and formal hedges. A must for history lovers.

Spurred by the experience of this trip a number of the group enquired about joining the Isle of Wight tour. Sadly, due to the low numbers, we had to cancel that one. Hopefully, HGC will be able to offer more trips in 2022.

Sophie Bindloss

Usk Open Gardens 2021

Well under an hour's drive from Bristol, Usk in Monmouthshire is known as the town of flowers. As well as the gardens open to the public in 2021, the whole town gets involved with flower displays outside pubs and cafes and in public areas, and provides a colourful and friendly



atmosphere throughout. There are plenty of cafes and pubs for refreshments.

In 2021, there were 15 gardens open (normally 25 or more, but covid restrictions meant many of the smaller gardens could not provide a one way system).

There is a wide variety of gardens - allotments, cottage gardens, formal gardens and a Japanese garden with hundreds of Bonsai. Most gardens provided seating for a few people to rest their weary legs.

A highlight was the private gardens around Usk Castle and favourite plant was Gillenia Trifoliata. It was a lovely day out.



Christeen Davis

The Survey

Google indicates that on average there is a 30 per cent survey response rate. At the time of writing, just over two weeks after the survey was distributed we have received 129 responses. WELL DONE HENLEAZE GARDEN CLUB – we are more than double the average!!

As expected, the general consensus is that we want to get back to face to face meetings as soon as possible. We all miss meeting our fellow members/gardeners. However, a very significant number of Members don't feel ready to return yet. Here is a representative selection of the feedback comments which demonstrate the general mood of the membership.

"I miss the interaction between members so would prefer face to face meetings"
"Probably will be happy for face to face, but not just yet"
"It's a bit early to say how comfortable I am with face to face meetings. I would look to watch the numbers and decide each month"
"I am reluctant at present to return to face to face meetings and would prefer to continue on zoom"
"Zoom is good, but there is nothing like going out and meeting up with friends, this I do miss, so it would be nice to have our meeting back. So nice to be asked. Thank you"
"I would prefer to zoom this winter"
"I appreciate the Committee is doing its best in v difficult circumstances, but one of the reasons for joining a club is for the social interaction. I'm sure we all miss it!"
"It is difficult to know how to answer in a changing situation"
"We are not out of the Covid woods yet and we need to protect ourselves"
"Really good speakers are available on zoom. Not always so face to face"
"I really enjoy coming to meetings and seeing other people so zoom meetings are not for me"

A small number of comments were from those who wished to return immediately or did not want to Zoom. The Organising Team will continue to keep alternatives under monthly review including the possibility of a hybrid system- zooming to/from the Hall – when the infrastructure permits. A big THANK YOU to those who took part. The survey charts can be viewed on the Club website :

www.henleazegardenclub.com

Coming up soon

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|--------------------|--|
| 6 October: | Sally Nex – Year Round Vegetable Growing |
| 3 November: | Katherine Crouch – Exotic Plants |
| 1 December: | Troy Scott-Smith - The Delos Garden at Sissinghurst |

BULB SALE 2021

Once again, I have ordered spring flowering bulbs for the Club Sales Table from our usual wholesaler. Initially, I plan to repeat the Click & Collect system that we employed last year and hope that there might be an opportunity for *in person* sales later in the autumn. As soon as I have received the delivery, you will be sent an e-mail with information about the bulbs available. It will also include details of how you can send me your order and collect it once I have bagged it up for you.

Sue Knight

Andrew Mikolajski's Topical Tips

At the September meeting Andrew suggested some interesting horticultural tasks for the Autumn. These included how to chip Narcissus to make more bulbs for next year, making your own Mycorrhizal fungi from Plantain roots and bonemeal and composting perennial weeds with "liquid gold". He also recommended sowing sweet pea seeds (whether saved or bought in) outdoors in October, which in his trials have given better results than January sowings. He warned of the requirement to report any sighting of the Oak Processionary Moth and to look out for the very beneficial stag horn beetle. Recommended plants for the Autumn included *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabel', *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Melianthus major*, *Echinacea* 'White Swan' and *Betula albosinensis* var. *septentrionalis* and plenty of Dahlias and Salvias as seen at Coton Manor in Northamptonshire, winner of the Nation's Favourite Garden Award. And finally, most important of all - ensure that you add a bag of horticultural grit to your Christmas list!!

2022 Speaker Programme – The Story So Far

The Speakers' Group has been busily working on the Programme for next year. During the interregnum a number of potential speakers are no longer giving talks for one reason or another. We have rebooked three of the speakers who were unable to visit in 2020. The effervescent **James Alexander Sinclair** will give his hot off the press latest talk in March and **Fergus Garrett** from Great Dixter will let us into the secrets of **Succession Planting** in September. We will also hear the **Confessions of a Plant Freak** from local Pan Global plantsman, **Nick Macer** and all being well **Andrew Tolman** will finally get to speak about **Ferns Stumperies and Shady Friends** just about 3 years after we originally made the booking! **The X Factor** isn't over – **Neil Ross** will be back to give us his version. The full programme will be revealed soon.

DAY VISITS 2022

Coaches have been booked to enable the following Day Visits to take place:

Wednesday 15 June : The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Thursday 7 July: The Gardens of the American Museum, Bath and The Courts (NT)

We also propose a day visit to The Gardens of Usk which is held on the last weekend in June – see article by Christeen Davis on page 3

Peat Free

In feedback several members have sought advice regarding peat-free compost. Have a look at the work of young designer, Jack Wallington : <https://www.jackwallington.com/peat-free-compost-trials-2021/> . I tried to persuade Jack to give us a talk but sadly he thought Bristol a bit too far to travel from West Yorkshire. Jack confirms, as some of us have discovered, that although seeming to dry out, peat free is very water retentive. It will just take some practice to get the watering right. For another useful article see <https://www.learningwithexperts.com/gardening/blog/going-peat-free-the-myths-busted> by our October speaker, Sally Nex.