



**CORNWALL GROUP
NEWSLETTER FOR
November 2020**

Dear all

So here we all are in another lockdown until 2nd December, and after that, nobody knows at this moment in time! At best we will return to the tier system that was in place before the current lockdown but whatever tier is applied to our region it still will not allow for meetings such as ours to take place.

Sadly therefore, I must tell you that the December Social meeting is cancelled and the Christmas Festive Lunch, which many of us enjoy, will not be taking place this year. I think it fair to say that the New Year Walk is currently also seriously in doubt.

Looking for some glimmer of light on the horizon you will all be aware of the current news of a number of vaccines possibly coming on stream soonish. I am very wary of the hype and speculation being banded around in the media, certainly in respect of the timeline projections, but it does sound promising for the future.

Based on this I have asked your committee to plan for a full programme of guest speaker meetings and garden visits, including our Spring Plant Sale, for the 2021 season. We will then continue to review the situation on a monthly basis as we monitor how any immunisation program unfolds, and hopefully, restrictions on our daily lives ease.

This is where I promote our newsletter produced by John Sirkett (cornwallhps@gmail.com) and indeed very soon you will receive the December edition. Sadly, John has decided, after 5 years of providing this service, to hand the reins over. The problem is, at this moment, there is nobody to pick up those reins and we need someone to do so urgently. So, please, please, if you think you have the aptitude for it contact me for further information. Your society needs you.

The more observant of you will have noticed that our Facebook page address (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/cornwallhps>) now ends with our name rather than a long meaningless set of numbers. I was pleased to resolve how to achieve this, and now that you are aware of it, I'm sure you are too!!

Come and join us there.

*Kind regards
Phil Gadd.
Chair*

Peter Margetts

Peter Margetts, CHPS member, died peacefully but suddenly at home on 19th November. Our thoughts are with his family at this time.

Dark afternoons are driving me out of the garden. It seems only a moment ago that I could do some gentle weeding in the evening, suddenly I am looking at the darkening sky by 3-o'clock. If I stop for a cup of tea I am unlikely to go out there again. It may be cold and wet, but weeding at this time of the year has its satisfactions. Many herbaceous plants have fat growths at the base of the old stems that promise a rush of growth as winter turns to spring. The green shoots of *Crocsmia* are already showing - wouldn't it be nice if the old leaves came away more easily. Unfortunately they are adapted to survive in a competitive world. The old leaves smother surrounding plants as they fall, leaving the ground clear for the new growth. *Iris sibirica* uses the same clever trick, a useful survival strategy but it does lead to a tiresome mess in winter. Fortunately the winter solstice is near, the sun will start to rise in the sky and the days become longer. I grew a willow once that responded to the first sight of the sun. It was worth looking for the catkins in the week between Christmas and the New Year, I was always disappointed if they weren't there. The fat shoots of daffodils are appearing and before long there will be flowers. After a long and dark year there is a spring in prospect.



I leap on the first signs of spring with alacrity, they appear long before winter has done with the garden. Many Mediterranean bulbs have autumn flowering forms but I prefer to see them as a trailer for the main event of spring. The first snowdrops will flower in October and there will be flowers to be had from them until the end of March. I choose to see it as six months of spring and overlook the fact that it can get quite cold in January. I don't mind celebrating the spring with stamping feet and puffing condensation if I have to.

Galanthus reginae-olgae will have finished flowering by the time the cold weather arrives. It hails from Greece, its distribution spreading northwards into the former Yugoslavia and with an odd outlier in Sicily. The bulbs flower after the summer when they feel the first chill rains of autumn. In habitat they grow in surprisingly rocky places as well as the thin woodland that we normally associate with snowdrops. In cultivation they appreciate a warm, dry bake through the summer and in Cornwall that means full sun and fingers crossed. A scree bed might be ideal but I have never had really good results outside. Years ago I settled for growing them in large tubs in the greenhouse. They produced lovely leaves in the garden but flowers were scarce. Autumn snowdrops are particularly appealing to enthusiasts at present and some unexpected variations have been selected. For more than a century people have been searching for a pink snowdrop among wild populations. At the end of the 19th century flowers were even exhibited, though it later became clear they had been dyed. The sudden appearance of *G. reginae-olgae* 'Pink Panther' on the market demonstrated that it is possible. I am happy to acknowledge that it isn't very pink, but it is slightly pink, enough to keep people searching fervently for something better.

G. reginae-olgae 'Miss Behaving' follows a more usual line in snowdrop variation, with green tipped outer segments. It earns its name by having a strange and unreliable white margin to the spathe. Discovered in 1996 in Anglesey Abbey, 'Miss Adventure' is a sister seedling - both ladies are rather frail in cultivation.



Galanthus reginae-olgae
'Miss Behaving' .



Galanthus reginae-olgae .



Galanthus reginae-olgae
'Pink Panther' .

The first *G. reginae-olgae* will be followed a fortnight later by *G. peshmenii*. It is found in south west Turkey and was long confused with *G. reginae-olgae* before being formally described in 1994. I find it easy in the greenhouse where the bulbs clump up rapidly. In the garden it produced lovely leaves. Lots and lots of lovely leaves.

There is a small population on the Greek island of Kastellorizo where it grows from the cracks in north facing limestone cliffs by the sea. Martyn Rix collected it from the Greek island and this stock is now in cultivation as 'Kastellorizo'. It is taller than my Turkish form of the species, with a larger flower, but it is really only its' origin and remarkable habitat that mark it out.

G.p.'Green Flight' on the other hand is distinctive. It is a small form with green tipped outer segments, the size of the markings varying from year to year. Many snowdrop species produce forms with green tipped flowers and it is good to see that there is some variability in *G.peshmenii* despite its very restricted natural range.



Galanthus peshmenii
'Kastelloriza'.



Galanthus peshmenii .



Galanthus peshmenii 'Green Flight'.

The situation is reversed for *Galanthus elwesii* with has a wide distribution in Turkey and the Caucasus. It has been common in the trade for a century or more, initially available as wild collected bulbs. In recent years it has been grown as a crop in Turkey, and increasingly in Holland. The species shows enormous variability and a great many cultivars have been named. Wild collected bulbs had a reputation for being short-lived but named cultivars and Dutch grown stock have proven longevity. In cultivation it responds well to a sunny site, the glaucous greyish leaves are not well adapted to shade.

At the start of the snowdrop season it is the Hiemalis Group of *G. elwesi* that attract attention. The name Hiemalis Group is a catch-all title for any form of the species that flowers before Christmas. My plant came from Broadleigh Gardens many years ago and to be honest it isn't very reliable. In some years it flowers in the garden in November and in other years it waits until February. The cultivar 'Barnes' has been much better, always flowering at the end on November and into December. However the first snowdrop in the garden is 'Remember Remember', generally in bloom for the 5th November. As the fireworks from the village were thundering around the house this year I was grieving for a single flower, eaten by a slug before I could photograph it. Never mind, there's always next year.



Galanthus elwesii 'Remember Remember'.



Galanthus elwesii Hiemalis Group.



Galanthus elwesii 'Barnes'.

Suddenly with the arrival of November there is a rush of snowdrops urging the spring onwards. *G. 'Autumn Beauty'* is said to be a hybrid between an autumn flowering *G.elwesii* and *G. reginae-olgae*. When introduced the name was applied to a number of clones of the hybrid and

in recent years *G.* 'Autumn Belle' has been selected from the mix. It has a large green mark on the inner segments and flowers a week later than my plant of *G.* 'Autumn Beauty'.

As we approach the solstice, *G.* 'Three Ships' comes sailing by. It is an autumn flowering form of *G. plicatus* that has been vigorous and free flowering in my garden. I have considered spreading it around under the trees but when it flowers there is usually a thick carpet of fallen leaves still lying on the ground. I do love stomping around on crunchy leaves in the depths of winter, kicking them hither and thither. If I planted 'Three Ships' I would have to give it up and I'm not sure I'm ready for that yet. For now it will stay in an increasing clump in the snowdrop border, pure, almost immaculate and hopefully unkicked.



***Galanthus* 'Three Ships' . *Galanthus* 'Autumn Beauty'. *Galanthus* 'Autumn Belle'.**

The winter solstice marks a change. It is just wishful thinking but immediately the skies lighten, buds begin to swell and the robin starts to sing again. Once Christmas is over there is a delight in walking (or sometimes staggering) around the garden looking for signs of growth. The first of the spring *Camellia* buds will be swelling and all around there are bulbs being nosey, peering upwards from below ground.

With the arrival of the New Year the last of the leaves have been kicked and any sunny spell could find me crawling between the trees looking for the first signs of *G.* 'Moccas' in growth. It is a vigorous thing, selected by Percy Picton from the variable 'Atkinsii'. Almost as soon as the noses break through the ground, the stems elongate and the flowers open. It marks a change in the pace of spring, now there will be a stream of variety from new snowdrops. By the time they end the garden will be flushed with Azaleas.

The first of the double snowdrops appears in the first days of the New Year. 'Farrington Double' is a tidy thing that manages to hold its head up if there is any early sunshine to be had. It doesn't riot through the beds like the common double snowdrop at the start of February, for me it keeps to its place, a small clump under a leafless and sleeping *Magnolia*. With it will come 'Atkinsii', usually a week after 'Moccas' in this garden. It is a signal to me that it is time to visit Rosemoor again where great drifts of 'Atkinsii' frost the burgeoning borders.



***Galanthus* 'Moccas'.**

***Galanthus* 'Farrington Double' .**

***Galanthus* 'Atkinsii' .**

So spring has started among the dangling heads of the snowdrops and soon it will be evident throughout the garden. This has been a dark year in many ways, but perhaps (just perhaps) brighter times are coming.

THANKS FROM THE EDITOR

After five years it is time for me to step down as editor and allow someone new to guide the newsletter in their own style. Can I take a moment to thank everybody who has contributed over the years, and to thank members for the unfailing kindness of their comments.

Hopefully someone will step forward to put a newsletter together for next year, it is going to be an exciting time with the potential for a return to meetings and the Plant Sale in May. If you feel able to help, please contact Phil Gadd.

Keep safe during the lockdown, I wish you all well for Christmas and the winter season. Let us all hope for a brighter New Year.

John Sirkett. x

Results of the THREE STEMS competition for October.

In a burst of wild self-indulgence I have judged the three stems competition myself. Congratulations to the winners.



Tricia Howard came first with *Rudbeckia triloba* 'Prairie Glow', *Dahlia* 'David Howard' and *Chrysanthemum* 'Dixter Orange'.



Second went to Joanna Holah with *Clerodendrum trichotomum*, *Nerine bowdenii* 'Stephani' and an English shrub rose.



Trish Wilson came third with *Salvia guaranitica* 'Black and Blue', *Salvia uliginosa* and *Salvia patens*.

Why not enter the competition in December? The rules are very simple, pick three stems that you like from your own garden and present them in a container of some sort. It doesn't matter what you choose as long as there are only three stems in the container.

Take a photograph and post it on the Cornwall Hardy Plant Society facebook page.

The THREE STEMS competition for November.



Peter Howard's entry of *Dahlia* 'Lismore Robin', 'Promise' and 'Lavender Line' .



Tricia Howard has entered three pot marigolds.



John Sirkett has submitted *Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Elworthy Candy'.



Pam Dormand posted *Camellia sasanqua* 'Crimson King', 'Gay Sue' and 'Plantation Pink'.



Chris Sullivan picked *Abutilon megapotamicum*, *Abutilon* (Yellow) and *Hesperantha coccinea*.

COMING EVENTS

It is a delight to have an upcoming event to draw to your attention.

Sunday 29th November, 2.30pm.

Zoom talk on "Indispensible Plants", to be given by Dr. Andrew Ward.

Andrew is a well-known and popular speaker to national and local groups of HPS and Plant Heritage. He is an experienced plantsman who runs Norwell Nurseries and Gardens in Nottinghamshire, where he grows over 2500 plant varieties across a wide range of genera (including National Collections of Astrantias and Hardy Chrysanthemums). Andrew will show us a range of more uncommon plants which he considers invaluable for a variety of reasons, in what will be an excellent and informative illustrated presentation.

The Zoom meeting will open at 2.15pm and the talk will start at 2.30pm, followed by questions.

Tickets are £5 per person for HPS members (£3 for Kent HPS). To book, please email Jenny Gibb at gibb81@live.co.uk with the number of places you require. Jenny will reply with confirmation and details of how to pay (BACS or cheque).

Best wishes to all our fellow HPS members from Kent group.

Cornwall Hardy Plant Society on Facebook.



Halloween produced some scary contributions. Pam Dormand started it with her spookily coloured orange and purple lilies. I added a little atmospheric moonlight to enhance the time of year. Sarah Wilks showed us a magnificent clump of yellow hot *Kniphofia* and Phil Gadd topped the thread off by snarling at us in the person of his alter-ego. Don't worry, he will be back to normal in time for the New Year.



Tricia Howard posted some of the autumn highlights from Hidden Valley Gardens. The butter-yellow leaves on *Ginkgo biloba* made a bright show, catching the last of the year's light and making a glowing statement at the end of the garden. *Brachyglottis* 'Moiria Read' produces similar bright flashes of yellow on a much smaller scale, the colour enlivening the grey leaves. I don't remember seeing it when we visited Moyclare, I hope it is still grown in the garden. The bright leaves of *Acer palmatum* are a classic adornment to the autumn garden but the shining yellow stems of *Phyllostachys vivax aureocaulis* really come into their own as the leaves fall.



Martin Pallett found a beautiful day for a walk around Heligan. The Acers and Beech trees were putting on a remarkable show. *Acer palmatum* puts on such a reliable show that it is easy to overlook the magnificent display that our Common Beech can produce in bright autumn light.



As the leaves fall and before winter takes a grip on the garden, it is cheering to see the scented flowers of *Camellia sasanqua* appear. They add an extra element to the rich scents of the woodland. The *Aechmea* nestling between the stumps must have added interest through the summer. It is quite cold tolerant though it is stretching a point to call it a hardy plant, however it is well worth the trouble of moving it in again for the winter, the rosettes of leaves and distinctive red flowers bring a 'jungle feel' to planting.

Thanks to Martin for sharing his day with us.

Visit to Lanhydrock in October. by Tricia Howard.

Peter and I visited Lanhydrock House our nearest National Trust property, near Bodmin on the 8th October. The Jacobean house was devastated by fire in 1881 and has now been refurbished in the Victorian style.



Lanhydrock .



Nerine bowdenii.

After entering the gate house our timed entry was checked and we were allowed to enter the formal gardens, which are dominated by enormous clipped rows of dark green Irish yews. There was a large clump of *Yucca* on one corner with spikes of creamy bells and bright pink nerines by the house walls.



St Hyroc church .



Acer .



Chaenomeles fruits.

The box parterre beds at the side of the house were empty of their usual colourful bedding, hopefully waiting for their spring planting. We continued up the steps in the crenelated wall to the higher gardens, passing by the old church of St Hyroc. Amongst the woodland evergreens an *Acer* with good autumn colour stood out. The thatched cottage walls which earlier were adorned with red *Chaenomeles* flowers were now replaced with fat yellow fruits.



Herbaceous circle .



Thatched cottage .



Autumn foliage.

On reaching the herbaceous circle we were pleased to see sedums, dahlias, fuchsia, anemones and the sinister dark purple monkshood still in flower amongst foliage with autumn tints and seed heads. On one corner was a lovely *Gentiana asclepiadea* with royal blue, bell-shaped flowers and we also admired a toad lily, *Tricyrtis*, with pink spotted flowers.

We then completed our daily exercise by walking back to car park through the parkland and down the long driveway.



***Gentiana asclepiadea* .**



***Anemone* .**



***Tricyrtis*.**

Message from Tricia Howard

I would like to record my deep thanks to John for his wonderful monthly CHPS Newsletter. About five years ago there was a need to divide the role of secretary into several roles in order that all aspects of CHPS were well supported by your committee. I asked John if he would take over the monthly Newsletter knowing he had a flair for that role. I never expected that he would produce such an extensive, informative and colourful monthly masterpiece. It has been a joy to receive his monthly edition and I have always been amazed not only by the garden visits he is able to make but by the in-depth information and photos he produces on them. Not only is he a great gardener of the more unusual and rare plants, but I am sure he must also be a secret publisher of garden articles or books.

Thank you again John and very well done.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting which would have been our Christmas Social on Wednesday 2nd December 2020 has been cancelled as a result of the Corona virus lockdown.

ADVANCE NOTICE

There has been some optimistic news through the month but it is still impossible to know when we will be able to resume meetings, you will be informed as soon as we can bring you any details.

Thanks for everything. Please keep sending contributions for the newsletter to cornwallhps@gmail.com



All the best,

John Sirkett