

PLANT HERITAGE

National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens



DEVON NEWSLETTER

Summer 2010



GEORGE BARCLAY * GEORG ARENDS

DEVON PLANTSPEOPLE - SARAH & JULIAN SUTTON

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PATRON: Lady Anne Berry

THE MISSION

The NCCPG seeks to conserve, document, promote and make available Britain and Ireland's rich biodiversity of garden plants for the benefit of everyone through horticulture, education and science

DEVON GROUP PLANT FAIRS 2010

All welcome. Wide range of plants from many West Country Nurseries & our own members. Refreshments.

- ① 15 & 16 May Rosemoor 10am-3pm
including National Collection displays
& sales
- ① 11 July South Molton Market Hall 10am-3pm
- ① 5 Sept Rosemoor 10am-3pm
- ② 19 Sept Tavistock Market Hall 10am-3pm

Fairs start at 10 o'clock, members free.

For organizers details see below or page 2:

- ① Derek Burdett
- ② Tim Ellis

EDITOR'S NOTES

Although I might have taken over as newsletter editor, I and I think everyone should be very grateful for the great work that David has done, and is still doing, in laying out the articles in the newsletter before it goes to the printers.

Hope you enjoy the newsletter and if anyone has an article for it, do please send it in.

Malcolm Pharoah

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

I write this during the 1st week in April, and still the weather nor the ground has warmed up! But I must keep my patience and self discipline. There are many worse things happening on this world, than worrying why on earth half (one side) of my *Acacia dealbata* has died whilst the other half is flowering beautifully.

The question of winter hardiness, because of the deep and lasting coldness (-8C in my garden in North Devon, but interestingly no bitter wind), will again be a big discussion point between us all. I think I can still say with confidence that we will all be trying to grow yet another exotic plant or two, despite this winters potential destructiveness. We have yet to experience the obvious cold that Keats wrote about in the opening of his poem. The Eve of St Agnes.

St Agnes Eve -Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a cold;
The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in wooly fold:
Enough! It will be a warm and comforting Summer.

So I wish you all a very happy and successful gardening season, with I'm sure the confidence that whatever is in store for us, will not matter when we are enjoying ourselves outside!

Incidentally, we also grow in confidence in Devon Plant Heritage. Well done everyone.

John Turner. 3 April 2010

A FEW NOTES ON THE START OF PLANT HERITAGE (NCCPG) DEVON GROUP

The National Council for Conservation of Plants & Gardens was founded in 1978. By October 1980 a small staff was being assembled at the RHS Wisley Gardens (Duncan Donald & a part-time secretary a year later) and four County Groups were established: Dorset, Somerset with Avon, Surrey and Yorkshire.

The redoubtable Iris Webb, well-known to flower arrangers, convened a preliminary meeting of the Devon Group on 10 September 1981. She became Chairman, her husband Lt Col R Webb Treasurer & A. P. G. (Philip) Michelmore, Secretary. Philip, once Secretary to Herbert Whitley, was Managing Trustee of the Herbert Whitley Trust & Hon. Managing Director of Paignton Zoological & Botanical Gardens Ltd; gentlemanly, peaceable and content with a battered Landrover.

Our first public meeting, was at 7.30pm on 5 November 1981, in the Ballroom of the Palace Hotel, Paignton, with talks, exhibits, exhortations and Ann Berry (then Lady Ann Palmer of Rosemoor) auctioning plants, until she was weary and someone less effective continued.

The steering committee at this time was, besides those already mentioned: R. Erskine, retired head of Torbay Parks, Recorder of Plants; Jan Hatley from Paignton Zoo; Michael Hickson of Knightshayes; Brian Lord, Newsletter Editor & Recorder of Plants; Liz Read of Vicar's Mead, East Budleigh; Colin Rogers, soon to be Recorder of Plants; Elizabeth Simpson, representing the local Hardy Plant Society; M. J. Sutton of Torbay Parks; Lt Col Webb, Treasurer for a while and Norman Langdon of St Bridget Nurseries. 1983 saw our

first AGM, at St Loyes and five other visits & meetings. In 1984 Knightshayes hosted the first Plant Sale, in the Old Stables, now the restaurant, inspired by Somerset's sales in a farm-yard and farm-buildings at Ryme Intrinsica.

Subscriptions were £2.50 per year, £4 for married couples, £1 for students and under 18s. We were invited to run Plant Sales indoors at the horse arena of Bicton College, opening at noon for members & 2pm to non-members, who would often arrive before their entry time and join the group to get at the plants.

Plants were recorded, propagated and distributed, gardens investigated and catalogued, mostly by Audrey Plack, who lived in a wooden ex mine-manager's house in the Teign Valley, with 2 donkeys, National Collections of *Buddleia*, *Rhus* & *Cotinus*, a Roman pool, and some acres of naked mine tailings. In 1989 our book was published – *The Magic Tree*, later re-jacketed under its subtitle *Devon Garden Plants History & Conservation*; edited by Nest Harris, researched by many members, much rewritten and committed over and for regrettable reasons, published with the illustrations much smaller than originally intended. A name much, probably too much, proclaimed by our Chairman of late 1980s, the late Steve Pugh, has now settled above us – Plant Heritage.

Trevor Wood

A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS OR MADNESS?

I watched Gardeners World one Friday evening in July, hoping there would be something interesting on, and Toby mentioned that the following Wednesday was the closing date for the Gardener of the Year competition.

It was rainy on the Sunday and I couldn't do anything in the garden, so I was surfing nursery websites and then thought I'd take a look and see what the competition was going to be like this



year. Previously it has been more of a garden design trial than actual everyday gardening skills. I spent an enjoyable afternoon (I like quizzes!) filling out the entry form, it was like a job application! I had to answer questions on sustainability, special features, give evidence of my propagation skills and overall gardening ethos, plus a couple of gardening tips – based on things I do myself. Trawling through my photo library I found four suitable photos to show the garden off to its best. I showed it all to my husband, saying I'm not sure whether to post this or not, but I've had a good time filling it in. Still unsure, I took it to work with me and spoke to my colleague about it. She said it was wonderful to have such a skill and hobby that I enjoy so much and encouraged me to post off the entry. Much to my surprise I had a call from the BBC a couple of week's later saying that I had been short-listed to the final ten.

The initial research visit to Little Ash in early August was for the purpose of taking a film of the garden. This entailed the cameraman making a complete tour of the garden

filming as he went. I was then given 20 minutes in which to answer five questions about my garden's development and design, gardening ethos – wildlife, composting, gardening tips, and what gardening means to me. Ten days later I received a phone call followed by a letter, informing me of my selection as one of the final five. I was told that there would be two tasks to complete in front of the judges, as well as answering questions about my gardening thoughts, design and practice; and that I would have five days notice of the tasks and the judges visiting me. The tasks turned out to be taking five cuttings from each of two different plants using correct techniques and growing medium, and selecting and planting up a container for a specific position within a budget of £50.

The big day arrived, with me feeling sick with nerves as the crew rolled up at 8.30am on 1st September. The judges, Gardeners' World presenters Toby Buckland and Alys Fowler along with Superintendent of the Woody Ornamental Department at RHS Wisley, Colin Crosbie arrived by 9.30am and I walked around some of the garden answering questions and chatting with them. We were all too soon called back as they needed to set up the first task, so I was banished indoors while they discussed my garden and answers and prepared for the next shots. The container planting went well I thought, but the cuttings were nerve wracking, I'm sure there must have been a health and safety issue with such a sharp penknife and the way my hands were shaking! Eventually all was done and my final comments in the can, it was only 4pm, but I was totally exhausted.

The judges had awarded their points, and it was now up to the viewers to vote for their favourite gardener, so each of the five finalists five minute films were shown without much fanfare in the Gardeners World programme on consecutive Fridays from 11th September.

Voting took place, with none of the finalists even knowing how they had scored with the judges. We were all then invited up to Greenacres for the announcement of results. It was great to meet everyone, all very friendly and nervous, waiting around in the office near the garden for them to complete the rest of the day's filming before we were due on. The moment came and we were all lined up, they announced the judges' marks in reverse order, I couldn't believe it when I was listed in first place. However, they say pride goes before a fall, and there I was, the first to be named after the viewer vote in 5th place! But it was great just to get that far, I've never entered anything like it, and have made some good friends amongst the other contestants. We met up for dinner at the BBC's expense and had the most

convivial of evenings discussing gardening and plants and even our partners were on the same wave length discussing our strange plantaholic tendencies and inability to go anywhere on holiday without bringing something green home! We're all still in touch now, Gill is a member of Cottage Garden Society and Secretary of their Galanthus group, so I'm going to one of their snowdrop events in February.

There are many more gardeners in Devon, much more knowledgeable than I, who should try entering this competition next year, it's not good for the nerves, but hopefully will have the result I set out to achieve.

I'm always trying to find ways to publicise the garden and raise more money for charity when I open, so this was the ideal opportunity to raise awareness.

Little Ash Bungalow, Fenny Bridges opens for the National Gardens Scheme on Sundays 6th June and 22nd August.

Helen Brown

Also see picture on back page



A Combined Exhibition Over 30 National Collections

**from Devon, Cornwall,
Somerset and Hampshire
and
Plant Fair**

at RHS Rosemoor

15th and 16th May 10am until 3pm

National Collection Plants represented include

*Agapanthus, Alnus, Artemisia, Astilbe, Azalea, Azara,
Berberis, Betula, Buddleja davidii, Clematis viticella,
Cornus, Cyclamen, Dahlia, Dierama, Heuchera,
Iris ensata, Lapageria rosea, Leucanthemum x superbum,
Magnolia, Melissa, Mentha, Oleander, Olsynium,
Paeonia, Papaver, Passiflora, Phormium, Pittisporum,
Rhodohypoxis, x Rhodoxis, Ruscus, Scadoxus, Sempervivum,
Sisyrinchium, Tigridia, Tulbaghia*

A number of National Collection Holders will have plants for sale
PLUS

20 Nurseries selling rare and unusual plants

RHS Rosemoor Gardens close at 6pm

GEORGE BARCLAY PLANT COLLECTOR

George Barclay had been employed as plant collector (herbarium specimens and seeds) for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, on board HMS Sulphur, which from 1838 to 1841 visited the west coasts of S and N America, and Pacific Islands before sailing to China because of the Opium Wars and returning through the Indian Ocean and round the Cape of Good Hope. Richard Hinds and Andrew Sinclair, surgeons, the ship's doctors, collected botanical specimens when free from their other duties. Barclay, from a lower station in life, was not allowed to eat with ship's officers and when travelling alone, had to pay sailors to take him to and from the shore. His 4000 specimens, now in the Natural History Museum, were described as excellent and accompanied by useful notes on locality, habitat and the plants themselves. He is commemorated by *Salix barclayi*, a willow from Alaska.

In 1840 James Veitch sent William Lobb to South America to collect exotic plants for his nursery. In 1841 Lucombe, Pince and Co. followed suit, hiring George Barclay to collect seeds and plants in Argentina and adjacent countries. He received a £75 advance and after delays, and with letters of introduction from Sir W.J. Hooker, Director of Kew, sailed from Liverpool in January 1842. Arriving in Paraguay Barclay found much of the country in rebellion; he was refused permission to collect, and what he had collected was confiscated. After the rebels retreated Barclay collected living plants of *Victoria amazonica* (which didn't reach Britain) and little else.

In 1843 Lucombe, Pince and Co received a letter from Kidd's Hotel, Buenos Aires, saying Barclay was in custody, where he would remain until his bill was paid, he having tried to leave secretly. Did Lucombe, Pince and Co. arrange for payment? Did Barclay send them any seeds or plants? He is said to have died in Buenos Aires.

Despite the best efforts of website writers to convince otherwise, there is no evidence that Lucombe, Pince and Co. ever employed other collectors. They bought material from James Drummond (1784-1863) in the Swan River Colony of W Australia; from Thomas Whitfield, Lord Derby's collector of plants and animals in Sierra Leone and Gambia in the 1840s; and perhaps from John Carne Bidwill (1815-1853), born in St Thomas, who was employed in Australia and New Zealand.

This is not the George Barclay (c. 1789-1869), plant collector in Brazil, who spent much of his life in the Cape Colony.

Trevor Wood

East Devon Events Publicity:

NOT TO BE MISSED – AN OPEN MEETING

Make a date in your Diary now

Friday 24 September at West Hill Village Hall, Nr Ottery St Mary

Enjoy an

Evening of early Autumn propagation techniques with Dr Julian Sutton.

Fill your garden frame, create new plants to share, expand your propagation skills!!

Beginners and experienced gardeners will enjoy Julian's expert but no nonsense and down to earth style of demonstration. Highly experienced and one of the best speakers on the circuit – we are delighted to welcome him back to East Devon.

Plant Stall – with plants from Dr Sutton's nursery – Desirable Plants – (and they ARE!)

Book early to ensure a place with: Mrs Ruth Charter 01404 814798

or: Mr Eric Reynolds on 01297 625342

GEORG ARENDS AND HIS FLOWERS

Have you ever wondered where the plants you buy have originated. Not from which nursery or garden centre you bought them from, but where they came from originally.

Many of course have been found in the wild and brought to these shores by the plant hunters, but equally many more have been the result of a nurseryman or breeder who has spent a lot of time pollinating and hybridising plants and then selecting the best and most unique of their seedlings to present to the gardening public.

One such man was Georg Arends. Born in 1863 in Essen in Germany, he helped his father in his early years with the family nursery before going off to study gardening at the horticultural college. After gaining experience at other nurseries, he eventually started his own nursery in 1901 in Wuppertal-Ronsdorf, a rough and hilly area near Cologne in mid Germany.

He started with one hectare of land (2.4 acres) but the nursery rapidly expanded and by 1914 it covered 13 hectares (32 acres) and employed 75 people. Buildings built for staff and dispatching plant orders are still in use today.

It was in these early years that he started to become interested in hybridising plants and creating more cultivars for his customers to buy. One of his first introductions was selections of *Primula obconica* which he took to the Chelsea Flower Show in 1912. Compared to today it must have been quite an adventure travelling those distances by train, ships and cars carrying all the plants in baskets.

World War I interrupted development but a fresh start was made in 1918 and helped by recent technical developments, the nursery soon achieved pre-war standards. For a gardener it was a special honour to work at the nursery. Looking at Georg Arends work as a hybridiser of plants, it is amazing how many genera he worked with, not only perennials but also shrubs, rhododendrons and fuchsias as well as raspberries were all part of his work.

Astilbes were particularly important, as in the early 1900s the only astilbes were the white flowered species of *japonica*, *simplicifolia*, *thunbergii* and *astilboides*. However he heard about a new species that had just been discovered in China called *dauidii* which was being exhibited by Veitch and Sons at the Royal Horticultural Societies halls in Westminster in London. Having dark pink flowers, he decided that this would be very useful in his breeding programme to hopefully produce a wide range of colours. He acquired a plant and successfully used it with the white forms and a huge quantity of seedlings were produced which he lined out in his fields.

During the next few years during July and August when they flowered, Georg and his wife would walk up and down the rows selecting the best and most distinct selections and release two or three new cultivars each year for sale.

Some of his selections have the characteristic flowers of the japonica parent but in a variety of colours, these he named after the cities of Germany, such as 'Mainz', 'Koblenz', 'Dusseldorf' and 'Bremen'. Some were smaller and looked like the *simplicifolia* species with small simple foliage but different coloured flowers. But others were taller with long



ANJA MAURBACH

Georg Arends giving lectures to apprentices and gardeners.



ANJA MAURBACH

German Garden Society visiting the nursery in 1925.

panicles of flowers in a multitude of colours, these he introduced in 1908 as *Astilbe x arendsii*.

As the years passed new introductions were added to his catalogue and most of the Astilbes we grow in our gardens today are mostly these ones which are so good that they haven't been superseded by more recent introductions from other raisers. The cultivars 'Deutschland', 'Fanal', 'Etna' and 'Venus' have stood the test of time and are still the most popular cultivars we have.

Several other forms were named after the women who worked at his nursery and it must have been a great source of joy and honour when he told, 'Else Schulk', 'Lili Goos', 'Gertrude Brix', 'Grete Pungel' and others that he was going to name a plant after them.

He was also instrumental in selecting new forms of *Phlox x arendsii* hybrids, *Aconitum*, *Bergenia* hybrids such as 'Morgenrote' and 'Abendglocken', *Campanula*, *Geranium cinereum* var. *subcaulescens*, *Nepeta*, *Sedum* and *Eryngium*.

Arends died in 1953 but his son, Werner, continued running the nursery and introducing new plants, such as *Geum* 'Werner Arends'. His nursery continues to this day run by his great granddaughter although on a smaller scale.

Looking after the National Collection of Astilbes at Marwood Hill, I really appreciate the effort that he made in introducing so many new forms and it was like a pilgrimage when I visited his nursery.

Many of his introductions are not commercially available now but are present in the collection and can be seen in flower from the middle of June to early August. It is in preserving these old cultivars that makes having a National Collection so important.

Malcolm Pharoah



Anemone nemorosa

These blue and white flowered plants are at Greencombe garden at Porlock. The garden has beautiful patches of *Anemone* as well as lily of the valley. There is also a champion holly tree. There are four National Collections, for details check the National Collections Directory or Greencombe's website.

David Cann

PLANT HERITAGE AGM 30TH OCTOBER 2010

FROM PLANT TO CUP

THE STORY OF TEA PRODUCTION FROM A CORNISH GARDEN

Our AGM is to be held on the 30th October this year, at Rosemoor again, as it has proved to be such a friendly and easy place for us to meet, with a discounted lunch to hand for anyone who wants to stay and have a walk round the garden in the afternoon. The talk in the morning promises to be extremely interesting. Jonathan Jones from Tregothnan will talk about the garden and particularly the tea production that has been so successful. Below is some information on Jonathan which I hope will whet your appetite for this talk and for a fabulous sounding day at Rosemoor this Autumn.

Jonathon Jones trained at The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh before taking a scholarship to Japan and then working in Gardens of Japan. He joined Tregothnan in 1996 as Head Gardener and as the team and activities have developed, is now Garden Director. He says *'Tregothnan is a fast evolving place but with an amazing continuity of 700 years in the same family. Opportunities like this are rare; I hope the passion of my employers and colleagues is obvious in every product and service from Tregothnan'*.

Jonathan won a Nuffield Scholarship to study the genus *Camellia* for foliage flowers, fruit and tea. This will help develop Tregothnan's position as the leading producer of cut *Camellia* products, including tea. The award focussed on innovation and entrepreneurship, essential to the product development underway at present. Jonathon has received a number of other scholarships, notably the prestigious Churchill Fellowship in 1998, which allowed him to study the historical influence of British gardens overseas and the introduction of exotic plants into British gardens. In late 2006 he visited Brazil with the support of the RHS and the report may be requested here garden@tregothnan.com

Booking details will be in the autumn newsletter.

AREA EVENTS 2010

All events in each area are open to members and members' guests. Charges (including tea and cakes) except where otherwise stated: members £3 per day and members' guests £5. All events will take place whatever the weather. May we ask you to respect the owners' privacy and not enter before the time specified.

EAST DEVON

Area Co-ordinator: Diane Rowe, Orchard House, Parsonage Farm, Uffculme EX15 3DR
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NORTH DEVON

Area Co-ordinator: Mrs Margaret Jewell, The Croft, Yarnscombe, Barnstaple EX31 3LW
Tel.: 01769 560535

SOUTH AND WEST DEVON

Area Co-ordinators: Jan & Rob Wagstaff, North Boreston, Halwell, Totnes TQ9 7LD
Tel: 01548 821320 Email: borestongarden@btinternet.com

Monday 17 May VISIT TO SOUTHCOTTE HOUSE, WIDECOTTE-IN-THE-MOOR TQ13 7TU

Contact: Sally Dean (01548 821714) BOOKING NOT NECESSARY

2.30 pm By kind permission of Dr & Mrs J R Seale. A 5-acre SE facing garden started in 1992 when the present owners moved in. Arboretum & wildflower meadow, with a huge range of native species (over 80) including bulbs & 4 species of orchids. These are ideally suited to the thin acidic soil, with more species appearing every year. The garden has been featured in Devon Life & the RHS journal 'The Garden'. Teas & plant sales.

Directions Take B3387 from Bovey Tracey to Widcombe. Pass Widcombe church on L, continue for 200 yards & turn sharp R signed Southcombe. NCCPG signs from here.

Thursday 27 May MUSBURY BARTON, MUSBURY, AXMINSTER and PADDOCKS, STAFFORD LANE, COLYFORD EX24 6HQ. Contact Diane Rowe 01884 840545.

10.30 am By kind permission of Colonel Tony Drake, 3 or so acres of land with informal wandering paths amongst mature & more recent plantings. Interesting trees & shrubs, newly planted rhododendrons & azaleas, a courtyard with tender plants, stream & many new projects. The garden is very steep in places & damp in others, so unsuitable for disabled. Please bring appropriate footwear. **Bring & Buy plant stall** - PLEASE remember to bring some plants! Quiz!

Directions From Honiton take A35 toward Axminster. Through Wilmington & Kilmington, then take 2nd Axminster turning. Take a L and L again toward Musbury & Seaton. Musbury in 2 miles, on L is a garage & Golden Hind pub. Turn L between the two. Continue for 150 yds to village shop at X roads. Go straight across & up Church Hill. In 120 yards enter cul de sac & **park by church or in lane**. Walk down to House on R.

Cost £3 to include coffee

Lunch pub or picnic

- 2.30pm Brooklands nursery cancelled, in its place we are delighted to visit Alan & Wendy Davis, Paddocks, Stafford Lane, Colyford. Many thanks to them both for standing in! Two acres to stroll round & enjoy the views of the Axe estuary. Gentle sloping lawn, many borders overflowing with interesting trees and shrubs, herbaceous beds, vegetables & orchard.
- Directions* Garden is at W end of Colyford. Park in village memorial hall or carefully in village & car share please as parking could be a challenge near the house! At W end village follow (Grammar school/Sports centre signs), drive/walk down Stafford Lane past the school.

Monday 14 June VISIT TO THE OLD VICARAGE, BERRY POMEROY, TOTNES TQ9 6LH

- Contact: Sally Dean (01548 821714) **BOOKING NOT NECESSARY**
- 2.30 pm By kind permission of Vicky Cattrell & Tony Roberts. A 2 acre garden which is continually being developed, including a Victorian garden, stream, a striking herb garden & magnificent 200 year old copper beech. Teas & plant sales.
- Directions* From Totnes take A385 towards Paignton. Just under 1 mile from Totnes, turn L, signed Berry Pomeroy. In Berry Pomeroy turn R to the church; NCCPG signs from here. The garden is situated opposite the church.

Saturday 19 June ROSEMOOR GARDEN: NATIONAL COLLECTION OF CORNUS WORKSHOP DAY Contact Margaret Jewell 01769 560635

- 10-30 am Arrive at Log Cabin (near car park)
- 11 am Talk by Christopher Bailes, Curator of Rosemoor & our President about the *Cornus* collection.
- Lunch* bring a picnic or lunch in the restaurant.
- 2 pm Walk around the gardens to see the *Cornus* plants and also a look around the nursery. This is a great opportunity to see the *Cornus* in flower and at their best and also the nursery which is not usually open to the public. Lunch is not included in the cost, so either bring a picnic or lunch in the restaurant.
- Cost* £5

Tuesday 22 June HOLCOMBE COURT, HOLCOMBE ROGUS, DEVON

- 10.30am By kind permission Mr Nigel Wiggins. A return visit to this inspiring garden on the Devon/Somerset Border to see how it has matured in the past 5 years. Wonderful walled vegetable garden – with new glasshouse. Woodland, herbaceous border, restored stew ponds, extensive mature grounds, and many other features surround this magnificent C16 house. A not to be missed event!
- Directions* Leave M5 at J27 and take road signed Tiverton Parkway, and then almost immediately take slip road to mini roundabout. Turn R over Link road, signposted Holcombe Rogus. Follow signs, but go straight on until you reach village where you turn L for Holcombe Court. Please park with care in village.
- Cost* £5 for the day to include coffee & cakes. (£4 to All Saints Church, Holcombe Rogus)
- Lunch* Prince of Wales pub in the village. Please indicate if lunch required
- 3 pm **ORCHARD HOUSE, PARSONAGE FARM, UFFCULME EX15 3DR**
Having moved from Little Southey, Diane Rowe has a new challenge. A quarter acre plot with elastic sides! Newly planted, and with more projects

planned. The National Collection of Dierama will be starting to flower. This is an informal visit where input and ideas will be welcomed!

Directions From J27 take the Wellington exit to 1st roundabout. Take 2nd exit - Willand. Take 1st L off this road to Uffculme school. Continue along this road & down hill to village. Turn R at T junction & almost immediately L at Square. L again & follow road downhill keeping Church on L. Over river bridge & 2nd road on R off a grassy triangle. Follow NCCPG signs for parking & garden. Book with Diane Rowe on 01884 840545 numbers limited.

Sunday 11 July SUMMER LUNCH AT COX'S FARM, STRETE, DARTMOUTH TQ6 0RW

BOOKING ESSENTIAL, contact Edwina Pickard, details below

12.30 pm By kind permission of Richard Soans. An inspiring transformation of a working farmyard into a charming garden with many different areas of interest including a Mediterranean garden. Plant sales, drinks & lunch.

Directions From Halwell take A3122 towards Dartmouth. Pass Dartmouth Golf Club on L and take the next R, signed Strete & Blackawton. Follow road signs to Strete & continue through the village to A379 Dartmouth to Kingsbridge road. Cox's Farm is immediately on R. From Dartmouth or Kingsbridge follow the A379 coast road to Strete. Follow NCCPG signs to parking in nearby field.

Cost Please send sae for tickets (£12.50 for members & guests) to Mrs E Pickard, 11 Peter's Close, Elburton, Plymouth, PL9 8NU. Cheques should be made payable to NCCPG Devon Group.

Friday 13 August BOWCOMBE COTTAGE, BOWCOMBE CREEK, KINGSBRIDGE TQ7 2DN. Contact: Sally Dean (01548 821714)
BOOKING NOT NECESSARY

2.30 pm By kind permission of Clare Tod. A large cottage garden in a valley with Bowcombe Creek running alongside it. It has been designed to provide the maximum enjoyment for all the family with a minimum of work. A network of paths lead to a variety of garden features, with places to sit, views to enjoy & surprises to discover. Teas & plant sales.

Directions From Kingsbridge take A 379 towards Dartmouth for 1 mile. At Bowcombe Bridge turn L immediately before the bridge & follow NCCPG signs.

Thursday 26 August PROSPECT HOUSE, AXMINSTER EX13 5BH

10.30 am Peter Wadeley has created a fabulous garden hidden away in town, with many borderline hardy plants giving late summer colour. *Salvias* are his passion, as seen on BBC Gardeners World August 2009.

Directions From Axminster town centre, proceed uphill past George Hotel into Lyme St & Lyme Rd. Garden approx ½m up rd on R, just before petrol station.

Lunch Pub or picnic

2.30pm **CHARTON TREE COTTAGE, NR ROUSDON**

Jane & Sid Gibson have a S-facing garden at 500ft, just under 1 acre with 7 rooms, 2 herbaceous borders & water feature. Kitchen garden with raised beds. Hot border, summerhouse, greenhouse & numerous seating areas. Cream tea.

- Directions* Just off A3052 at Charton Cross, 1½m W of Lyme Regis. Follow NCCPG signs.
- Cost* £5 to include morning and afternoon refreshments. Book with Helen Brown on 01404 850941.

Tuesday 14 September THE ITALIAN GARDEN, GREAT AMBROOK, IPPLEPEN TQ12 5UJ BOOKING ESSENTIAL. Contact Ann Holl 01803 812339. email ann@ambrook.net

2.30pm By kind permission of Ken Rees. A 4-acre Victorian Italianate garden, abandoned for 50 years, has recently been opened up to allow access. There are a number of interesting features including an octagonal pond with a local Ipplepen marble seat. Parking, plant sales & teas at High Barn, Ambrook.

Directions From Totnes take A381 road towards Newton Abbot. Turn L opposite Red Post garage (signed Fishacre Barton & Broadhempston). From Newton Abbot direction turn R at Red Post garage. NCCPG signs from here. Continue on this lane, under railway & over a stream. Turn R at next junction, signed Ipplepen. High Barn is the first group of houses on the R. There is parking for 6 cars for disabled at Great Ambrook. Cars will also be available to drive members from High Barn to Great Ambrook if needed.

Friday 24 September WEST HILL VILLAGE HALL, WEST HILL, OTTERY ST MARY

7.30-9 pm **‘Getting Down & Dirty’** An evening of early Autumn propagation with Dr Julian Sutton. Late softwood cuttings, root cuttings, fern spores & many unconventional ways of reproducing plants to fill your gardens. Julians ‘hands on’ demonstration & extensive knowledge will captivate both experienced propagators & beginners alike. An open meeting, we welcome all those keen to broaden their skills at what promises to be another fascinating evening with one of the best propagators in the business.

Plant Stall A range of Desirable Plants from Dr Suttons nursery will be for sale. West Hill Village hall is in the centre of the village. Directions in next newsletter.

Cost £5 to include coffee & biscuits. Book with Ruth Charter 01404 814798 or Eric Reynolds 01297 625342

Saturday 16 October MARWOOD HILL GARDENS. BOOKING ESSENTIAL

10.30 am Coffee

11 am A trip to South America with the Alpine Garden Society. An illustrated talk by Malcolm Pharoah to see the mountainous flora of the Andes.

12 am Walk around the garden

1 pm *Lunch* in the Tea Room

2 pm A trip to Ethiopia, a talk by Jonathan Hutchinson to see *Scadoxus nutans* in its habitat. Sales, Raffle

Cost £10 for the whole day. Contact Margaret Jewell 01769560635.

NEWS AND EVENTS

IS YOUR GARDEN OR NATIONAL COLLECTION OPEN NEXT YEAR?

Let me know and have the dates included here. **Malcolm Pharoah**

NURSERIES INVITED

There are regular visits to gardens in the South and West area of Devon. We usually invite two nurseries to bring stock to sell at these visits. If you would like to be included in the list of sellers, please contact:

David Molloy tel: 01803 752307, email molloy01@yahoo.co.uk

For a list of gardens to be visited this year see the events listing above.

NURSERIES AT COUNTY EVENTS

One nursery at a time is invited to sell plants at the Devon Group's county events, usually held in March & November. If you are interested in being invited please contact Trevor Wood, who will sent you more details. Email: trevor@wood31.wanadoo.co.uk, Post: 2 Willens Cottages, Kenton EX6 8HQ.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Last summer we took over the collection of *Schizostylis coccinea* cultivars which had previously been held in Lee, North Devon where it was maintained by Bryan Russell. We have been collecting these cultivars for some years and now have applied to become National Collection Holders. We are working to verify the authenticity of our cultivars and would be very grateful for *any* information eg. descriptions, catalogue entries, original drawings or divisions of named cultivars from a known source.

Penny & David Ross (contact details page 2)

Plant Heritage (NCCPG) Plant Sale & National Collections Weekend at Rosemoor Saturday 15 & Sunday 16 May, 10am-3pm

Normal Garden Entry, NCCPG Members Free. Terrace Marquee. We expect there will be approximately 25 National Collections represented from Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Hampshire. The largest number of NCs gathered together under one roof. Plants from some National Collections will be available for sale.

Georgina Craig

Little Ash Bungalow, Fenny Bridges opens for the National Gardens Scheme on Sundays 6th June and 22nd August. See article page 5.

Helen Brown

Foamlea Garden, Chapel Hill, Mortehoe, EX34 7DZ, will be open as follows: 9 & 23 May and 13 June, all Sundays, 2-5. Visits on other dates by request 01271 871182. For full details of the type of garden refer to the yellow book. It is however a 6 year old, 1 acre, full maritime exposed garden, with a wide range of tropical and temperate plants on a frost-free cliff top alongside the SW Footpath. NO parking at house or on Chapel Hill: use Mortehoe Car Park.

Beth Smith

Garden Open, Ash House Farm, Ash, Nr Dartmouth, Saturday, 12th June

In June last year members had the chance to visit this amazing garden, which is rarely open to visitors. This year there is another chance for anyone who missed it last year, or for the many who did go but were so impressed and wish to explore it again. The garden of 12 acres has been developed over the last 11 years around an old farmstead. It is extremely varied, and the approaches to the different areas add greatly to the interest and sense of excitement in exploring the garden as a whole. Areas include a bog garden and ponds, a fantastic wild flower meadow, arboretum, vegetable gardens, masses of roses and much more. Many sculptures, some conventional and some very unusual, add to the interest. Open for charity on Saturday, 12th June, 2 – 5 pm. For any further information contact Jan or Rob Wagstaff, tel: 01548 821320 or email: borestongarden@btinternet.com

South African Weekend At Trecanna Nursery, 7th and 8th August

Members who attended the South and West Area Winter Lunch at Rattery in February were delighted with Mark Wash's informative talk on 'Plant Hunting in South Africa'. There is a wonderful opportunity to follow up on this with a visit to a special 'South African' weekend at Mark's nursery in the Tamar Valley when many of the plants Mark spoke about (and hosts of others) will be in bloom. Anyone who missed Mark's talk will also find a visit informative. For any more details contact Mark Wash at Trecanna Nursery, Rose Farm, Latchley, Cornwall, PL18 9AX. Tel 01822 834680 or 07785 242148, or visit the website at www.trecanna.com

NATIONAL COLLECTIONS OPEN DAYS

The collections of *Buddleja davidii* cultivars (butterfly bush) & *Leucanthemum x superbum* (Shasta daisies) are available for viewing from 1 April–30 September 10.30–4.30, 7 days a week. Special days for NGS are in the Yellow Book but the Garden & Plant Collections can be seen all year between the dates above. Plants from the two National Collections are always available for sale as well as others from the large garden. We have two orchards of West Country fruits & a model raised bed kitchen garden. Admission is £3. **Anita Allen**

Chevithorne Barton, Chevithorne, Tiverton, Devon EX16 7QB

Terraced walled garden, summer borders and romantic woodland of rare trees and shrubs. In spring garden features large collection of magnolias, camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas. Also includes one of only two Plant Heritage Oak Collections. See the *Plantsman* December 2009 for a review of Michael Heathcoat Amory's book of the oaks at Chevithorne.

Directions from Tiverton: M5, J27. Leave A361 by first exit after 300 yards. Through Sampford Peverell and Halberton towards Tiverton. Immediately past golf course turn right then right at next junction. Cross over link road bridge and turn left through Craze Lowman, continue through lanes to T Junction and turn right. Chevithorne Barton is first on left.

Opening Times: 2pm to 5.30pm, Sunday 6 June 2010

Entry Fee: £3.50 Adults, Children free

Guided walk of Oak Collection at 4pm. Cream Teas, available on site provided by Chevithorne Church.

OTHER EVENTS

DEVONSHIRE ASSOCIATION BOTANY SECTION

If you are interested in Botany in Devon then why not join the Devonshire Association Botany Section. We are a group of amateurs and professionals who all share an interest in wild flowers, conservation and recording our natural history. Throughout the year we have a series of field meetings where you can learn and record at whatever level suits you. Last year, visits have included Braunton Burrows, the Axmouth-Lyme Regis Undercliffe, Bolt Head in south Devon and private woodland in north Devon. A huge range of native plants have been seen including *Sorbus devoniensis*, *Scilla autumnalis* (autumn squil), rock rose, and sea stock. Complete beginners, children with families, visitors, everyone is welcome. Please contact Dr. Frances Billinge, Hon. Secretary fbillinge@btinternet.com, 01626 833620.

DEVON PLANTSPEOPLE

SARAH AND JULIAN SUTTON

There are certain words that you automatically think of in pairs: strawberries and cream, gin and tonic, for example; and certain people (remember Flanders and Swan?) in all walks of life, including Plant Heritage. And so it is with the subjects of this article, dedicated plantswoman and plantsman owners of Desirable Plants, Sarah and Julian Sutton. They each have different strengths, skills and interests which are completely complementary. Both say their nursery would not be what it is without them both.

SARAH

Born in London, Sarah grew up in Hampshire in a family with strong horticultural links. Her sister was a botanist in the Herbarium at Wisley and Sarah herself worked in the Herbarium during school holidays. Sarah's mother was a fantastic gardener and plantswoman who, Sarah remembers, would be so absorbed in what she was doing that tea was regularly served very late.

After school Sarah went to university to study horticulture at Wye College but decided very quickly (as the course contained a lot of commercial nursery practice and organisation) that this was not what she wanted to study. She switched to and successfully completed a degree in 'Rural Environment Studies'. Oddly this contained no horticultural studies and after graduation Sarah decided that horticulture was still her main interest so set about finding herself a practically based placement.

She applied for and got a job at Ness Botanic Gardens in the Wirral. Ness Botanic Gardens were established in 1898 and presented to the University of Liverpool in 1948 with a stipulation that they be kept as a botanic garden. Sarah worked in many areas – the native plant garden, on seed collecting and cleaning for the botanic garden seed exchange, and in the glasshouses – building up a wide knowledge of plants and many practical skills.



JULIAN

Julian was born in Shropshire but grew up mainly in Worcestershire. He was fascinated by plants from a very early age, remembering climbing a peach tree when three years old, not for scrumping as most children would, but to see the lupins in a neighbour's garden.

After reading botany at Oxford he went to the University of Liverpool to complete a PhD. He was researching competition between plant species, mainly in the context of various weeds and an agricultural crop. He was mainly interested in the ecological perspective but, as the research was funded by the AFRC (Agriculture and Food Research Council) and NERC (The Natural Environment Research Council), the outcomes of the research were intended to benefit agricultural crops. In later life Julian's research was also to benefit his horticultural propagation skills. Much of his theoretical research was done on the main University campus in Liverpool but much of the practical research was completed in the University Botanic Garden – Ness.

Sarah was working at Ness when Julian arrived and they, to quote the curator of the time, 'formed a relationship'.

After completing his PhD Julian thought an academic research career was not for him and undertook his teacher training at Exeter University.

THE EARLY YEARS TOGETHER

In 1989 Julian was appointed to the post of biology teacher at King Edward VI (KEVICS) School in Totnes and he and Sarah, now married, moved to Totnes. Sarah immediately started to set up a small nursery as well as working at Endsleigh Garden Centre where she learnt much about plant retailing and commercial sourcing. Later she had to fit all this in with raising a family. Julian continued to teach but also ventured into writing a major text, 'Biology', published by Palgrave Macmillan, for A level and first year university studies. This sold all over the world and is still widely used in India. Because of the work load with the writing and the nursery Julian left KEVICS and took a part-time teaching post at Torquay Boys Grammar School.

Meanwhile Sarah was building up desirable plants at home and in her mother's garden in Cornwall to expand the nursery. In 1991 they decided to work towards running a full-time nursery. 1992 saw the acquisition of land near Stoke Gabriel and 'Desirable Plants' was born. By the summer of 1999 they were both full-time on the nursery.

DESIRABLE PLANTS: What and where they sell

Sarah and Julian share many characteristics: they are infectiously enthusiastic, like the rare and individual, are strong minded, like a challenge and are personable and helpful. They relate to people well but as individuals in an informal setting. They are not fond of bureaucracy and formality, but above all else they are passionate about plants. Their key love is plants, their propagation and growing; gardening comes a long, long way behind. All of these characteristics, as well as the blend of their skills and knowledge, define what sort of nursery they run and how they run it.

They have chosen to sell by mail order and at specialist sales organised by Plant Heritage, the Hardy Plant Society etc. This is partly due to the difficult position of the nursery but more to do with the fact that they like to give considered advice and service to individual

customers which is difficult to do well at the same time as propagating, potting on etc. Typical of their approach was the reported incident in *The Independent* following a Plant Heritage plant sale at Meon Orchard. The writer was asking about a particular plant (bought from someone else) with which they were having problems. “Julian Sutton managed to be deeply informative about my plant, giving me careful cultivation instructions, when I hadn’t even bought anything from him.”

As to what they sell – their catalogue says “We specialise in herbaceous perennials, the choice, the interesting and the offbeat ... almost everything offered here is propagated on site, by the two of us.” This is only part of the story and does not do justice to the amazing, rare and unusual plants they sell. It was a conscious decision of theirs to go for the rarities; these plants fit Sarah and Julian’s characteristics of liking a challenge (often rarities are difficult to propagate); of being inquisitive and acquisitive about plants, driving them to look for and source new (to them) plants continually.

Their over-riding ethos is

“Grow the plants we like and enjoy.”

But as Sarah admits this can conflict with commercial reality, they have occasionally produced a range of plants that they think are stunning and very garden worthy only to find their enthusiasm is not shared by buyers. Look at the entry in their catalogue for *Cardamine*.

“Great plants as they are, we can’t fill the catalogue with descriptions of plants almost nobody wants to buy. We have small numbers of the following...”
Having recently bought some *cardamines* from Sarah and Julian I share their puzzlement at the lack of popularity.

Reading through the catalogue it is difficult to say the Suttons specialise in this or that genus, in plants for shade or sun, or bulbs, or tender or hardy, or from this or that continent – they are all there. What unites their offer is the beauty, the rarity and the stunning good health of their plants. I can only imagine Roy Lancaster’s glee when he visited Sarah and Julian recently as part of his series for the RHS magazine ‘*The Garden*’ (article to be published in May issue.)

Sourcing their stock for propagation

With the exception of plants covered by Plant Breeders’ Rights (PBR) which they have to buy in, the Suttons propagate all their stock from a plant, or from seed, from a variety of sources, or by hybridization of their own stock. They do not plant hunt in the wild themselves but often plan family holidays to take in nurseries listed as having a rarity they don’t have. The Plant Finder is a key holiday planner for them!

Plants for propagation are bought from, swapped with or donated by fellow nurserymen and women, friends, customers and various plant enthusiasts in this country and abroad. What is really good is to see these sources referred to in the Suttons’ catalogue:

“*Tritonia crocata* group varieties... ‘Plymouth Pastel’. A very pretty plant which Dave Fenwick was given by Mrs. Pickard of Plymouth”

“*Thalictrum flavum* var. *glaucum* dwarf form... Thanks to Jane Henry of the late lamented Churchills Garden Nursery at Chudleigh for this interesting plant.”

“*Phlox paniculata* cultivars... Thanks to Beeches Nursery and Kevin Marsh...”
Some of the acquisitions do not make it into the catalogue. To quote Sarah: “Some plants

are rare for a reason” – often impossible to propagate in reasonable numbers or time, or sometimes not living up to their potential as a choice garden plant.

Propagation

Julian describes himself as ‘a botanically inclined nurseryman’ and Sarah, after some thought, says she is ‘plant obsessed but also keen to make a living.’

A good combination of preferences which in general are complementary but sometimes lead to debates about a course of action, e.g. whether to pursue producing a group of plants from their own hybridization (botanical) or to buy in some new varieties from, say, America and propagate from these (horticultural). For example there is an ongoing debate at present on sourcing new epimediums.

Before we got down to talking about propagation techniques I asked Julian about the use of ‘Family’ in the classification of plants. He admitted that the family name was of little use to gardeners (good, as I don’t know many who do use it), was essential for botanists, but was also practically useful for propagators, informing on likely successful propagation techniques.

Consider the family Amaryllidaceae – think of the genera *Amaryllis*, *Crinum*, *Galanthus*, *Narcissus*, *Nerine* and *Scadoxus*. These plants, and others in the Amaryllidaceae, can be successfully propagated by either chipping, scaling or twin scaling. If you have a plant in the Liliaceae (narrow sense, i.e. the bulbs) it will rarely scale successfully and certainly not chip. The knowledgeable propagator does not therefore waste time chipping a bulb from plants in the Liliaceae when the technique has little chance of success but will certainly try chipping a new (to them) bulb in the Amaryllidaceae.

Epimedium ‘Tama-no-genpei’



The propagation techniques used by Sarah and Julian are the ones that we are all familiar with though we may not be regular users of them all. The professional propagator uses their skill and knowledge to select the best, most reliable and most productive technique for a particular plant. Many methods will work for many plants but why use a less successful technique than you need.

Most gardeners will use division of clumps of snowdrops (*Galanthus*) to increase stocks. But if a nursery man or woman has just a few bulbs of a rare or new snowdrop which they wish to add to their catalogue they cannot afford to wait for many years whilst the bulbs bulk up naturally into clumps big enough to divide. So they use chipping, where the bulbs are downward cut into about 10-50 segments and potted on in vermiculite for bulblets to be produced. The resultant plants that grow will flower in 2 or 3 years and, at a typical 70% success rate, will produce 7-35 flowering plants from one bulb fairly quickly. A big bulb like *Crinum* will make hundreds of new plants.

Sarah and Julian do use division and cuttings of various types to propagate much of their herbaceous stock. Again, professional knowledge and experience play a big part in selection of method. They will not use root cuttings of a variegated plant as the resultant new plants will grow with green only foliage; they do not use the standard root cutting of 3-4" of thickish root to propagate their range of 'Super poppies'. Longer roots put into 100% perlite are more successful.

They also propagate widely from seed, particularly when they are pursuing hybridization of stock to produce new varieties. We talked about the problems with formation of non-viable seed, often from inter-specific crosses. Seed is formed, so fertilization has taken place, but the seed is defective and it fails to germinate and grow. This can be for a variety of reasons but often can be from failure of the food source within the seed (the endosperm) to nourish the embryo plant.

There is now a plant breeding technique called 'embryo rescue' where the embryo plant in problem seed is dissected out of the seed and grown on in sterile conditions in a nutritive jelly. Not yet a technique for the amateur propagator but one being used by some breeders. The Suttons search for a challenge and quest for knowledge makes 'embryo rescue' an attractive project, but not yet. They are still too busy, hunting, acquiring new plants and propagating them to enable us to share their eclectic collection of rarities.

If this article has generated enthusiasm in what the Suttons do you can ring 01803 864489 (evenings) for a catalogue or go to their website www.desirableplants.com complete with fantastic pictures. Better still, go along to Plant Heritage Plant Fairs at Rosemoor, Tavistock or Totnes to see them in person.

If you would like to brush up on your propagation techniques, and then book yourself in to a workshop on propagation at West Hill Village Hall on 24th September run by Julian and organised by Diane Rowe. Full details are in the Events section of this Newsletter.

Jan Wagstaff, March 2010

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

DEVON POND PLANTS. Unbeatable range of locally grown hardy water loving plants grown near Kingsbridge, South Devon, by a knowledgeable enthusiast. Visit my nursery by arrangement to buy potted or bare root plants; check availability at www.devonpondplants.co.uk. Mail order also available. The usual water lilies, irises and oxygenators plus a wealth of interesting and unusual varieties. Please ring David Kerr on 01548 521286

FANTASTIC FUCHSIAS AT SUNDIAL GARDEN, 700+ varieties, many rare (100+ hardies); 200+ named pelargoniums. Also good range of hardy plants with a sprinkling of treasures for the connoisseur. Pleasant mature garden being rescued and replanted including many hardy fuchsias, open daily all year, café and shop. On the A35 at Offwell, Honiton. Tel: 01404 831549. Fuchsia/Pelargonium catalogue £1.50 + S.A.E. or on www.sundialgarden.co.uk

ELWORTHY COTTAGE PLANTS, Jenny Spiller, Elworthy Cottage, Elworthy, Lydeard St Lawrence, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3PX. Tel:01984 656427. Clematis & Unusual Perennials, especially hardy geraniums, geums, grasses, ferns, epimediums, pulmonarias, crocosmias, campanulas, snowdrops and violas. Open 10.00am to 4.00pm Thursdays mid March to end July. Visitors welcome at other times March to October, please ring first. 1 acre plantsman's garden open at same times as nursery, admission £2. Groups welcome. Plant list: 3 x 2nd class stamps. www.elworthy-cottage.co.uk

BREGOVER GARDEN NURSERY, Middlewood, Nr. Launceston, East Cornwall PL15 7NN. (off the B3254) Interesting range of hardy border plants, Crocosmia, Violets. Catalogue: 3 x 1st class stamps; SAE for violet list. Open from March to mid October, Wednesdays 11am to 5pm. Nursery and cottage garden at weekends by appointment. (NGS opening end of May) Tel: 01566 782661.

FULL AND PART-TIME COURSES IN HORTICULTURE AND FLORISTRY offered for all ages at various levels. Heritage and Botanic Gardens 12 week course, National Award in Horticulture (Design and Landscape) 2 year course, both 1 day/week starting September 2010. Explore how flowers can enhance your home with our Floral Design course; create a design every lesson to take home. Visit the website www.bicton.ac.uk or ring 01395 562400 for more information.

Backcover: The garden at Little Ash, see page 5.

Rates for advertising in this Newsletter

Classified Ads	per issue		3 issues	
	£10	£25		
Display Ads	Black & White		Colour	
	per issue	3 issues	per issue	3 issues
Quarter page	£15	£45	£15	£45
Half page	£25	£70	£30	£85
Full page	£40	£110	£50	£140



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By prior telephone appointment only

Specialist in plants that will survive
heavy clay soil, but also alpines,
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Normally open:
Wednesdays 10am to 5pm and
Saturdays and Sundays.

