

# West Yorkshire Group Newsletter



*The astonishing garden of Staffordshire HPS members Anne and David Smith visited by West Yorks HPS Group on the 2015 Summer Holiday.*

**May 2016**

# Welcome to the 'Spring into Summer' 2016 Newsletter

Welcome to the 'Spring into Summer' issue of the Group newsletter. Apologies for the sporadic timing of the newsletter but I do find it difficult to fit in. Thanks to Genny Twigge for offering her help; this will lighten the load. Would you please think about contributing written items or photographs with captions for inclusion? Snippets (or essays!) about favourite (or hated) plant/garden visit or nursery reviews/propagation successes or failures – all material would be most welcome and, without doubt, sharing your experiences will create enjoyment for others. Contact details are on the back page.

April is eagerly anticipated by me, with a volunteering stint to help 'man the stand' at the Harrogate Flower Shows now firmly on my gardening calendar. You get to speak to lots of interesting gardening enthusiasts and free entry to the Show in return for a few hours of your time. Manning the stand is in pairs and if you are lucky (like me this year) you get partnered with someone such as Anne Fritchley. Anne has so much botanical knowledge that she freely imparts, making the whole experience a very enticing deal in my view.



*Congratulations to the exhibition team for their medal win.*

On my way in this year I stumbled across Hartside Nursery – also known as 'Plants with Altitude', Cumbrian growers with a special love of primulas (look out for their expanding line, the 'Lindum' series of *Primula allionii* hybrids bred by Martin and Dreena Thompson). Hartside was celebrating their 40th year of attendance at the Harrogate Flower Show. Neil Huntley told me he and his father had first attended, with little experience of exhibiting, back in 1976. Pricing in those days was very much a fine art (as it is today). They had on display and for sale an arresting little primula with a brilliant story behind it.

It was very rare but Neil's father had to be firmly persuaded it was worth a £10 price tag – in those days £1 was a steep price. Such was the beauty of the primula they sold all their stock on the first morning. To honour that memory, Neil had the same primula on the 2016 stand, and for sale at the princely sum of ... you guessed it, £10.



*Plants with Altitude in their 40th year at the show.*

The primula in question is *Primula aureata*; it has zig-zag petals and leaves, and the leaves are covered in a heavy sprinkling of farina that makes them appear variegated from a distance. It can be grown outside or under cover, which is better for preserving the farinated look. It has a story to it – never known until the 50s or 60s when a seedling appeared at Edinburgh Botanic Garden under a rhododendron that had been wild-collected in Nepal or thereabouts. It was propagated by specialists here in the UK and passed to the Huntleys, who have kept it ever since. Rounding the story nicely, populations have since been found ‘in the wild’.



*Primula aureata*

## Gargrave Open Gardens July 2015



Many towns and villages have open garden schemes to raise funds for local charities and Gargrave is one such. The event had been on my radar for a few years and last year, after spending time on the Group Holiday with Marguerite Mason, I'd had a timely reminder for my diary. So off to Gargrave on a stunning July Saturday, the type that exemplifies the view that the Yorkshire Dales is indeed God's own country. (Gargrave's charity in question was the local church so I guess He had good reason to pull out all the stops.)

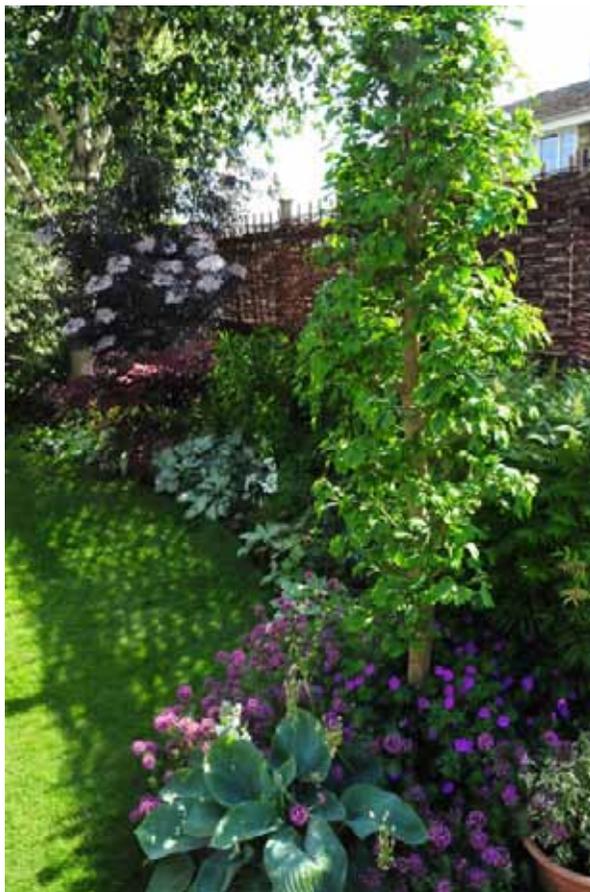
After paying my entry and collecting a map I was off; first stop was Marguerite Mason's garden. She was busy when I arrived but during a lull gave me a guided tour of her well-established garden including geranium collection – at least 8

different species were in flower. The garden surrounds 3 sides of her bungalow. Landscaping, when Marguerite and her husband first moved in, was a big job and included improving the soil while making use of the rocky situation. The garden has matured nicely with some carefully chosen specimen trees; *Pinus mugo* (above) was particularly handsome at 10 years old.

Marguerite was pleased that



*Marguerite (2nd left) speaking to visitors to her garden last summer*



the pineapple broom was in flower, and with the sun on it the fragrance was obvious. While I was looking round the local vicar arrived; he asked about perennials for his garden and Marguerite deftly advised on suitable geraniums, knowledgeably explaining their features and promising to split some of her own for his garden.

With a quick stop at a garden on the river (a nature lover's garden) it was on to Marie Dexter's. Marie's is a pristine urban garden full of choice trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. Against the shaded side of the house *Berberis magellanica* and a pale linaria caught the eye. Turning the corner, gold was the theme for the sunny half of the back garden with *Sambucus* 'Welsh Gold'; *Gleditsia*; *Spiraea* 'Gold Fountain'; *Ligustrum* 'Lemon and Lime'. In contrast at the shady end of the garden she had chosen *Cornus mas*

'Variegata' underplanted with *Sanguinaria canadensis* and placed it with a black sambucus and a red acer underplanted with silvery grey leaved pulmonarias and brunnera.



## Tribute to Marguerite Mason

It is with sadness that we report the death in February of one of our most senior members, Marguerite Mason. Marguerite attended many of the West Yorks HPS meetings, despite living in Gargrave, making the long drive together with her friend Marie Dexter. She was so positive – in between the heart attack that she had in November and her last illness she had bought a new car, but never driven it. When Marie had visited her the week before she died they had talked of having some trips out to visit gardens in the better weather.

Marguerite was very involved in Gargrave village life so the parish church was well filled for the funeral service, with five of us from HPS present. The 'life history' part was largely recounted by her grandchildren, who are in their late teens/twenties. Her twin grandsons are both doing medical training and apparently Marguerite would proof read their work, checking for both accuracy and grammar! She had a scientific background, having studied chemistry at Cambridge, using this qualification to teach at a private school in Leeds.

Group Chairman Sue Gray concludes, 'I knew I could always rely on Marguerite for a 'vote of thanks', which she always carried off with aplomb, even after one particularly memorable talk – memorable for all the wrong reasons! I will miss her'.



*Marguerite's garden last summer when she opened for Gargrave Open Gardens weekend.*

# Dougie Stewart – ‘New Plants’

## February 2016 Speaker Review by Pat Inman

A lifetime working in many areas of horticulture has resulted in Dougie being a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker. A few of us would have preferred more plant content but he did cover some recent colourful introductions which we will easily find in garden centres rather than specialist nurseries. It was interesting to learn that heucheras bred in this country are hardier and not susceptible to heuchera rust as are the American ones introduced by Terra Nova nursery – 3/4 years ago when I was manager of a plant area this was a huge problem and many garden centres seemed unaware of it – (check the underside of the leaf where the disease shows first but heucherellas do not get rust). Terra Nova do have other excellent introductions including *Thalictrum* ‘Black Stockings’ with almost black stems. Seiont Nursery in Caernarfon breed some good heucheras amongst other plants and in 2015 introduced *Eryngium* ‘Neptune’s Gold’ with golden foliage. Check plant labels to find which nursery they come from.

Some of the other plants to covet were: a hardy scented *Viola* ‘Frilly Dilly’, very pretty with strong erect stems. *Hosta* ‘Purple Heart’ with yellow/green leaves, dark stems and pinky-purple flowers. From Holland comes the *Hydrangea* Magical Series bred for colour changing petals which are also thicker so more resistant to adverse weather conditions. Some of this series are only available as cut flowers but Magical Amethyst is available to buy as a plant from J. Parkers.

I’m going to try a tip from Dougie and buy some uncooked polenta to scatter round the base of rose bushes and dig it in as, when it rots, a fungus grows which establishes a mycorrhizal relationship with the rose and prevents any other fungus entering the plant. Must be worth a try!



# Annual Plant Forum 2015

August is the month when our indoor meetings reconvene. As it is a bountiful month in the garden what better way to come together than to share the delights of our own gardens and gardening skills. And what skill is on display – seed sowing and propagation, coaxing shy and tender plants that are a challenge. But isn't this why we are called 'Hardy Planters'? First up this year was Denise Dyson who waxed lyrical about a super tree called *Robinia hispida*, which grows 6 foot in 10 years and has pink wisteria-like blossom. Denise paints watercolours, so combinations are important to her and she recommended a white dahlia with *Astrantia* 'Hadspen Blood'.



Judith Loomes had brought a melianthus, a plant she's had in her garden for a long time but lost in the hard winter of 2010. Her current plant was rather special as she'd grown it from seed sown in autumn and was expecting dark red flowers. She explained that it's called honeybush in its native South Africa, and says it smells like peanut butter. As it's not hardy she mulches it over winter. At its peak it grows to 7 foot tall, with spectacular foliage that captures raindrops (one wonders if it

does much of that in its native S Africa). It doesn't appear to have any pest problems.

Judith Ladley had brought in a gorgeous pot of colour she called 'A Touch of Lime and

Lemon (and Chocolate)'. It contained *Agastache rugosa* 'Golden Jubilee'; *Aralia cordata* 'Sun King', this has yellowy lime foliage and it dies down in the winter but reappears in the summer. Looks great with the Ricinus, *Catalpa bignonioides* 'Aurea' AGM (this is a big tree but Judith keeps it stooled to 3-4 foot ); *Salvia elegans* (pineapple sage – this overwinters in the greenhouse and has bright red flowers); *Leycesteria formosa* 'Golden Lanterns' AGM; *Tanacetum vulgare* 'Isla Gold'; Heuchera perhaps Lime Ricky or Key Lime Pie; *Dahlia* 'Bishop's Children'; *Ricinus communis*; *Actea* (previously called *Cimicifuga*); *Colutea arborescens*; *Aster macrophyllus* 'Twilight' now reclassified by the taxonomists as *Eurybia x herveyi*.



Anne Fritchley's delicate vase contained the 'Heralds of Autumn': *Scilla autumnalis* and *Leucojum autumnale*, both tiny plants grown in a trough. Pink and white *Cyclamen*



*hederifolium* AGM are a favourite – she's not so keen on the foliage when it appears later. Orange is Anne's favourite colour, so she'd brought 2 orange beauties: South American *Desfontainia spinosa* AGM which has orangey red flowers (bottom left of photo) and mitraria, not as tough but can grow to 6 foot, and has orange yellow tubular flowers (bottom right of photo). Anne

grows it in a pot on the north wall of the house; she does cover it up in winter. Pat Inman had many favourites that she described so well. Her choice contained a bronze flowered *Centaurea* 'Phoenix Hybrids' bred by Marina Christopher at Phoenix Perennials from parents *C. macrocephala* and *C. atropurpurea*. They grow to 5 foot high and flower colour varies from bronze/ orange/ yellow, followed by lovely seed heads.

She also talked about a pink dandelion, *Crepis incana* AGM, part of the Asteraceae family, an alpine from Greece. Hers is now a 20 inch high clump; it doesn't seed about and needs to be split to propagate. You can also see a clump in the Valley Gardens in Harrogate. *Rosa* 'Stanwell Perpetual' is an 1858 seedling found in a garden. It has *R. pimpinellifolia* in its parentage, and so has tiny prickles. It grows to 5 foot tall against a trellis in Pat's garden; has a gorgeous scent and will flower at Christmas. The first flowers are white and as the weeks go on it gets pinker.

Liz Hall is known as a seed expert and she had brought along some lovely specimens such as annual *Larkspur* 'Clouds of Blue' (grown from HPS seed); *Dianthus superbus*, which has a fabulous evening scent; an agastache that can be white, pale pink or dark mauve from seed; *Cosmos* 'Cupcakes'; and – a triumph from seed – blue and white agapanthus; as well as eucomis.

Pat Clark also had an impressive array with her (I had to share my seat with some of them on the journey to Paxton). She spoke about anemones being late to flower this season and very hard to split as they were so solid (advice from the floor was a saw or an axe). *Perovskia* had also done well this year. Another plant



with a new name is *Epilobium donnii*, which is 2-3 foot tall and has the same spread. It seeds about and the bees love it. As a phlox lover Pat has many – *P. maculata* 'Alpha' is nicer than 'Omega', a white flower with spotted stems. *P.* 'Logans Black' has very dark stems, with lots of good flowering heads of pink flowers. *P.* 'Dresden China' is reputed to have the biggest pip of any phlox; the phlox with the nicest scent is 'Rainbow'.

James Fonquernie loves the plants that friends have given him. He started with the Willow gentian that he'd had from Anne Fritchley; it is a stunning blue. He loves his Lily 'Stargazer' all the more because it was 3 bulbs for a £1 from Morrisons. *Aster frikartii* 'Monch' AGM he misheard for many years as 'African Monkey', which brought smiles to our faces.



# Paradise Gardens, Glenorchy, New Zealand

## What a Surprise!! by Vicky Harris

We recently visited New Zealand for a holiday and found an absolute gem of a garden which was situated in the area where *Lord of the Rings* was filmed and where the famous snow-capped mountains reflect in the waters of the lakes. I had heard a rumour that there was a garden near Queenstown but it was difficult to find as there was no publicity about it, no signage and it did not show up on any road maps. Eventually however we found our way to a garden which has been created on a sloping site at the side of Lake Wakatipu.

Everything in the garden and the house has been created by the owner Thomas Schneider,



a Swiss artist and his wife, Christie.

Most of the materials in the gardens and house have been collected from the Lake and its surroundings and adapted for use in the garden. There are quirky sculptures, structures and fantasy figures throughout the garden plus amazing webs and ropes made from fine wire covered in a type of tiny gravel. This technique is used to make hair on the statues,



decorate the gates and to give texture to the models.

The planting is wonderful with random clusters of plants, shrubs and trees placed in mixtures of traditional roses (over 3000), herbaceous plants as well as indigenous plants such as phormiums, huge echiums and 8ft high lilies. In addition a collection of birds including peacocks, turkeys, chickens and ducks strut around the garden following the visitors.

We had the garden to ourselves so we were able to soak up the atmosphere and to feel the silent magic of the garden. The final touch was the toilets! No white porcelain here, but a fish tank to store the water which went up and down when flushed and water appearing like magic in the basin when the toilet was used! A magical place, well worth a visit.

<http://www.littleparadise.co.nz>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v+KRxhMH\\_VAQ4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v+KRxhMH_VAQ4)

[http://www.littleparadise.co.nz/queenstown\\_gardens.html](http://www.littleparadise.co.nz/queenstown_gardens.html)



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