



Lathyrus 'Lady Grisel Hamilton' 24

SUSSEX GROUP

Autumn 2018

Number 96



***Hedychium* Study Date with Andrew Gaunt**

This plant had been named *Hedychium rubrum*, until extensive research in India led to it being identified as the rare *Hedychium deceptum*

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All drawings by Jenny Stewart

Chairman's Letter

Gary Firth

I was approached by National Office towards the end of July to enquire whether the Sussex Group would be interested in hosting the National Annual Meeting and AGM of Plant Heritage as they had had no other confirmed offers from other groups. Having offered to investigate the possibilities I subsequently learnt that we had just four weeks to provide details of a provisional programme in the Autumn National Journal!

I approached EYAS, the small family owned conference organiser that we used for our national conference back in 2011 and was delighted to learn that all three staff members that we had dealt with then were still in post and happy to help us find a suitable conference hotel in Sussex (not easy given the high costs of these things in Sussex). They were able to find two hotels within the central Sussex area within our price limitations and of these, the Crowne Hotel in Felbridge near East Grinstead was a clear winner.

Within two weeks we had an almost complete programme of lectures and garden visits put together in time to meet the deadline for the national journal (compared with over a year back in 2011). Despite this I think we have managed to offer an excellent programme, including talks by a number of really good speakers, including Tom Hart Dyke from Lullingstone Castle in Kent.

The programme is shown on page 20 of this journal, with the booking form in the National Journal.

We hope to meet many of you there. For those Sussex members who are able to provide a bit of help during the event (eg. manning the meet and greet reception area) we are able to offer a small discount on the non-residential rates.

Dates for Your Diary **2019 (Provisional)**

Saturday 2nd February, Seedy Saturday, Town Hall, Lewes,

Saturday 6th April. Spring lecture. Steve Bustin 'Ghosts, Guns and Guerrilla Gardening: The life and times of Ellen Willmott'

3rd—5th May, National Members Weekend and AGM, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Felbridge, East Grinstead

THE PROGRAMME

FRIDAY 3 MAY

12am onwards. Optional visits by own transport to either National Trust Standen, a William Morris inspired Arts and Crafts House and 12 acre gardens just 3.5 miles away, or for the plant enthusiast Wakehurst Place (Kew in the Country) with its extensive plantings over 500 acres.

2-6pm Arrival at hotel.

Plant Exchange starts from 2pm

7pm Dinner followed by presentation by Stephen Herrington, Programme Manager for National Trust Gardens and previously Head Gardener at Nyman's Gardens talking on his recent expedition to Tasmania in the footsteps of Harold Comber.

SATURDAY 4 MAY

9am Welcome and introductions

9.15am Andrew Gaunt (APHA) – More pests and diseases

9.45am Talk (TBA)

10.30am Tea and coffee

10.45am AGM

12 noon Buffet lunch

1pm A choice of garden visits

Either visit Borde Hill Gardens or Leonardslee Gardens:

Borde Hill Gardens (fairly level and easy access) is home of our Sussex Group President and has extensive plantings of Magnolia, Rhododendron, Camellias with champion trees including many Wilson and Forrest original trees

Leonardslee Gardens has extensive lakeside plantings of Rhododendrons, Camellias and other trees. 2019 marks the reopening of this much loved garden that has been closed to the public for the last 10 years. It is now under new ownership and has been extensively renovated and updated. (some difficult paths and inclines).

5.30pm Depart for hotel

7pm Conference Dinner There will be a choice of all courses and delegates will be requested to provide their first options prior to the event. Following dinner there will be a talk by Tom Hart Dyke of Lullingstone Castle and the World Garden in Kent.

Plant Heritage Annual National Members Weekend and AGM Sussex 3-5 May 2019



We look forward to welcoming you to the 2019 National Members Weekend and AGM in Sussex. We have a first class range of speakers to inspire you and gardens to impress.

THE VENUE

We shall be staying in the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Felbridge near East Grinstead. This is very convenient for the M25 and M23 and is only 10 miles from Gatwick Airport. All bedrooms and public areas have been recently updated and the conference facilities are all very conveniently located in a single area, and there are options to upgrade to superior rooms. There is a spa and swimming pool on site for residents.

News of the Sussex Plant Collections

Gary and Maria Firth, Sussex Collections Co-ordinators

We are delighted to report that Roger Parsons, holder of the National Collection of *Lathyrus* in Chichester has been awarded Scientific Status for his collection by the Plant Conservation Committee. This is the highest status that Plant Heritage can award to a National Collection and recognises the comprehensiveness of the collection and the high standards of research and publication that have been achieved. Very few of the 650 or so National Plant Collections are awarded this status, the only other ones in Sussex being the *Betula* and *Skimmia* collections at Wakehurst Place Gardens. Very many congratulations to Roger for his achievement.

Initial Applications have also been received for a collection of *Armoracia* (horseradish) and for a second collection of Douglas Chalk Hebes in Sussex. We will hopefully have more to report on these in the coming year or two.

Welcome to New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members. We hope that you will be able to participate in the varied activities offered at local and national level and that some of you may ultimately be able to contribute to extending the range of plant collections within Sussex.

Please make yourself known to a committee member when attending any of the Sussex events:

Dr Claire Farrer
Ms Susan Norgrove-Moore
Mrs Hannah Strange
Miss Sally Vickers
Mrs Harriet Waller
Mr Lawrence Wiseman

East Preston
Brighton
Chichester
Findon
Maresfield
Haslemere

A PLANT THROUGH TIME

Acanthus or Bear's Breeches

Jenny Stewart

A genus of ornamental plants indigenous to the Mediterranean and the tropical belt in Africa and Asia. The official flower of Greece; and 'The Language of Flowers' refers to 'fine art and artificiality'. The word *acanthus* comes from the Greek *Akanthos* (spine), and from the medieval Latin meaning bear's claw. The origin of the word 'breeches' remains unknown, although it has been suggested that the rather large hairy leaves resemble a bear skin.

The most common varieties grown in this country are the soft leaved *Acanthus mollis* and the spiny *Acanthus spinosa*. In Greek legend *Acantha* was the name of a nymph who was loved by Apollo, who later changed her into a flower. The leaves of Bear's Breeches symbolise immortality and were used as a design on Greek memorial stones. The *Acanthus* leaf was a popular decoration in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, when the thorns of *Acanthus spinosus* became a biblical symbol indicating sin. The hooded flowers themselves also contain small hidden spikes.

Kallimachos the Greek sculptor (5th Century BC) is said to have taken his inspiration for the decoration on Corinthian columns from plants which he saw growing on a Corinthian girl's grave.. The *Acanthus* leaf pattern in the Renaissance and Baroque periods appeared in architectural prints, architecture, wood carving, freize, and furniture decoration.

The roots and leaves of the common Bear's Breeches were used by physicians for healing and medicinal purposes from the 1st Century AD, and mentioned in herbals throughout the Renaissance, and by Nicholas Culpepper in his herbal of 1653,

The plants were lost to cultivation for a time: *A. mollis* being reintroduced in 1548: recorded by William Turner in his 'New Herbal' as growing 'plentifully in my Lordes garden at Sion' (*A. spinosa* was introduced in 1629). In the 18th Century Philip Miller thought them only of use in collectors' gardens – warning gardeners of their propensity for swamping.

They are extolled by William Robinson in his 'Wild Garden' of 1870. Such was the popularity of this book we are growing these plants majestically and successfully today

The Winter Garden will be underpinned by a stately frame of elegant Himalayan Birches (*Betula utilis* var *jacquemontianii*), interspersed with the coppery gleam of the Tibetan Cherry (*Prunus serrula tibetica*). Within this canopy, *Daphne* and Witch Hazel's rich, penetrating fragrance, a tactic evolved to overcome the sporadic presence of winter pollinators, will be harnessed for our noses by placement close to paths. Texture and colour will come from massed blocks of *Cornus* (including the cultivars 'Anny's Winter Orange' and 'Bud's Yellow'), succulent bronze *Bergenia* 'Eroica', soft, feather-like *Calamagrostis* and *Pennisetum* grass and Hellebores, amongst many others. In total, c.33,000 plants will combine to create a new seasonal highlight, a compelling reason to brave the winter weather.



The New Winter Garden at Wakehurst Place Gardens

Ed Ikin, Head of Landscape and Horticulture,

It wasn't that long ago that winter was no time to visit gardens. Why brave biting winds and grey skies to see bare soil and branches? Given the paucity of content available, some heritage properties did the sensible thing and closed completely from October to April, welcoming post-hibernation visitors back once some flowers could be guaranteed.

How times have changed. Ice skating rinks, lantern festivals and tastefully presented Father Christmases are de rigueur for attractions making getting out and about an essential element of surviving winter: Christmas and February half-term are some of the busiest times for outdoor properties. Times have also changed for horticulture, winter gardening is now a fully established discipline, underpinned by a rich plant vocabulary and distinctive design style. Wakehurst was an early pioneer as it bucked the trend of local rivals and offered year-round opening from the outset. The Winter Garden, launched in the late 1980s, brought together the essential elements of Birch, Dogwood, *Daphne* and Witch Hazel. Developed in unison with its contemporary at University of Cambridge Botanic Garden, Wakehurst's Winter Garden was illuminated by the low winter sun and offered easy access to less intrepid visitors.

Over time, the Winter Garden lost some of its dynamism, with beds and plantings thinning. New contemporary gardens emerged, most notably at Anglesey Abbey and Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, showcasing different design directions and challenging us to be bolder. Last year we decided enough was enough, it was time to revitalise our winter garden and restore its place at horticulture's firmament. Wakehurst's revitalised Winter Garden will have one clear mission: to lift spirits during the coldest darkest months and provide sensory delight to those immersed within. A rich and varied composition of shimmering bark, vivid stems, soft foliage and fragrant scent, the Winter Garden will draw upon the original planting's spirit, but express it through a more contemporary language.



HOW AUTHENTIC ARE OLD SWEET PEAS?

Roger Parsons

Fothergill's catalogue arrived this week and tells us that Sweet Pea 'Cupani' was introduced by Franciscan monk, Brother Cupani, in 1699. Thompson & Morgan tell us that 'Matucana' was first introduced into Britain in the 17th century by Sicilian monk, Franciscus Cupani. So which is the original Sweet Pea, 'Cupani' or 'Matucana'? The answer is neither.

Both varieties have the same flower colour and form as the original Sicilian wild Sweet Pea but there the similarity ends. 'Matucana' was discovered in the 1950s in a garden in Peru by Prof. S.C. Harland. It has many features which distinguish it from the wild Sweet Pea, including longer flower stems, four flowers per stem, taller and more vigorous. 'Cupani' was introduced in 1992 by Peter Grayson who selected it from an Old-fashioned mixture, recognised it had more primitive form than 'Matucana' and supposed it must be Cupani's original introduction. If he had seen genuine Sicilian material at that time, he should have recognised that his 'Cupani' has all the characteristics of an Eckford Grandiflora. Henry Eckford bred a considerable number of varieties between 1880 and 1905 and termed these Grandiflora because they had larger flowers, more flowers per stem, were taller and more vigorous than Sweet Peas which had gone before.

We have good provenance for 13 varieties of Grandiflora type. By 1918, this type had become a rarity but there is documentary evidence that the Ferry Morse wholesale seed company in California maintained 13 varieties and

sold them to other retailers so they occasionally appear in seed catalogues in the 1920s and 30s. In 1950, the same 13 were reintroduced into the UK and there is a trail of ownership to the present day which confirms their authenticity. It might be supposed that maintaining for over 100 years a variety which reproduces annually from seed would lead to some genetic drift. In fact we know from contemporary measurements that these varieties are remarkably stable.

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Lathyrus 'Prima Donna'



Planting up the new winter garden at Wakehurst Place Gardens



NEW THREATS TO THE ELM TREES IDENTIFIED

Andrew Gaunt (APHA)

Recently two new threats have been found in England that attack the elm, even the new Dutch Elm resistant versions, as well and everybody is being asked to look out for them:

The zigzag elm sawfly (*Aproceros leucopoda*)

This has been identified in the UK for the first time from the distinctive signature of its feeding, in Surrey. Originally recorded in Japan and also found in China, it was first observed in Europe for the first time in 2003, when it was identified on several species of elm in Poland and Hungary. Since then it has been found in Belgium, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and now in Surrey.

Bacterial Leaf Spot of Elm (*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *Ulmi*)

This disease has been found for the first time in the UK this year, on Dwarf Asiatic *Ulmus* imported trees into Sussex. The leaves showed chlorotic, angular leaf spots and this is the first finding of *P. syringae* pv. *ulmi* in England. There is very little information on this species, apart from that it has been recorded in former Yugoslavia. Although this species has not been recorded as an economic, environmental or social pest, because it has not previously been found in England but has shown damaging symptoms, the trees have been destroyed.

To report possible sightings of both, please use the Forestry Commission's [TreeAlert](#) online reporting tool.



Image: Ewald Altenhofer (CC BY-SA 3.0 DE)



Characteristic traces of frass from young zigzag elm sawfly larvae on a wych-elm leaf
Photo: Doris Hölling (WSL)



Typical image of a larva measuring approximately 10 mm in length: a dark stripe on the head and a T-shaped spot on the front legs. Photo: Stephan M. Blank (Wikipedia)



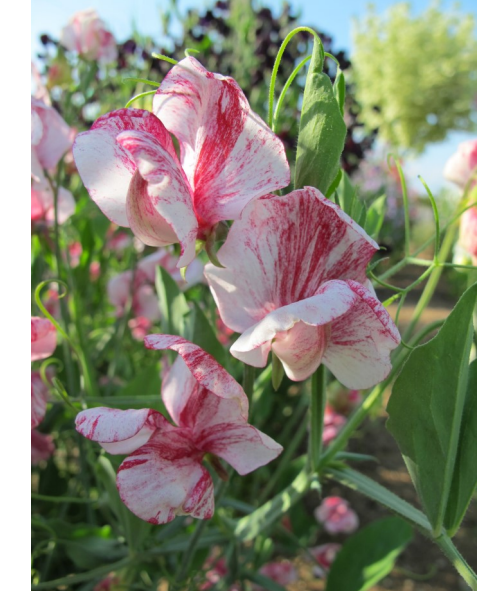
Lathyrus 'Cupani'



Lathyrus 'Matucana'



Lathyrus 'Painted Lady'



Lathyrus 'America'

Requesting Unusual Plants from Sussex Group Members

Maddy Ward

We regularly have a presence at various plant & garden fairs to promote Plant Heritage. To aid our work we fund these activities by selling plants / seeds. If you have any spare plants (or seeds), particularly if they are unusual, we welcome their donation to further our cause.

We would also welcome new volunteers to help “man” our stand at these events and publicise the collections that we have nationally and locally in Sussex.

I would like to thank those members who have already done so over the last ten years.



Sussex Plant Heritage members at the study day



Andrew Gaunt with a Hedychium he has bred which is going to be named Hedychium Jackie, after his mother.

NATIONAL PLANT COLLECTION STUDY DAY
Hedychiums and other sub-tropical plants
Frances Druce

Andrew Gaunt, NCH of Hedychiums ran, what is hoped to be, the first of many Study Days based on a National Collection.

We met in his extensive glasshouse south of Chichester which is crammed full of *Hedychiums* and other sub-tropical plants, a collection he started about fifteen years ago. He began by explaining how best to design a garden with semi tropical plants which are dormant for months but, with the clever introduction of bulbs, from *Galanthus* to Lillies, keeping the garden colourful and interesting all year round. We then had fun arranging semi tropical plants into a suitable design for a border.

He went on to underline the importance of choosing the right genera and species for the area and which plants need to be plunge planted to facilitate bringing them under cover for the winter. Large specimens would require protective covering in situ which, unless correctly placed, could prove just as deadly as exposure to cold and wet.

Andrew's explanation of nutrition and pH is applicable to all aspects of gardening, not just semi tropical. We may all have been experienced gardeners but the science behind the application of specific fertilisers and the current presentation of them by the industry was invaluable.

He described the regions favoured by various species, relating these to choosing the right species for the conditions available either in gardens or glasshouses and conservatories. Cultivation and propagation methods were explained in detail.

During the tour of the glasshouse Andrew related the story of being given by the breeder in Florida a *Hedychium* 'Tarissima'. Thus the hybrid was rare indeed and even rarer after armadillos had destroyed the original plants whilst searching for ants during a dry period. Andrew was, of course, able to return a specimen to the original breeder from his own stock. This illustrates the value of Plant Heritage.

It was a very enjoyable day not only because of Andrew's engaging and knowledgeable presentation but being in the company of other enthusiastic gardeners and sharing a sense of humour. Needless to say, not one of us could resist taking home a plant or two on which to lavish our new-found knowledge. If I can keep mine alive and thriving I will let you all know. Silence will mean I failed but that will be down to my lack of attention not the knowledge Andrew imparted.

AZORES PINEAPPLES
Peter Ward

Being situated in the Southern part of the North Atlantic Ocean and influenced by the margins of the gulf stream, the Azorean temperatures rarely ever fall as low as 5°C or exceed 25°C, and the islands are bathed in sunshine for much of the daytime. This would be ideal for cultivating pineapples if only the temperatures were a little higher. This problem has been solved by using glasshouses, scorching of the foliage being prevented by whitewash shading. Rainwater runoff is collected in sumps for regular irrigation.

The process starts by burying the old stems of harvested pineapples in damp soil for six to eight weeks. This stimulates the development of new side-shoots. The strongest of these are selected and planted with a spacing of 1 metre. The planting medium is composed of a mixture of soil and composted bark and pineapple leaves. After some 6 months the developing new leaves are shortened by half. This reduces the risk of injury to the gardeners from their pointed ends. Some of these removed leaves are then burnt slowly overnight in the houses for several nights, the smoke from the charring providing a stimulus for the development of the mature pineapple. It is however another 18 months before they are ready for harvest. The rest of the removed leaves are composted as mentioned above.

The 'fruit' thus produced are sweet and very juicy (from personal experience). Unfortunately the 2 year lead time and high labour costs means the industry cannot compete effectively with the produce of other countries. The result is that as the ageing greenhouses deteriorate, it is proving too expensive to replace them and the industry is declining.



PLANT HERITAGE, SUSSEX GROUP

AUTUMN LECTURE & THE 36th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY 27th October 2018
COMMENCING AT 2.00PM

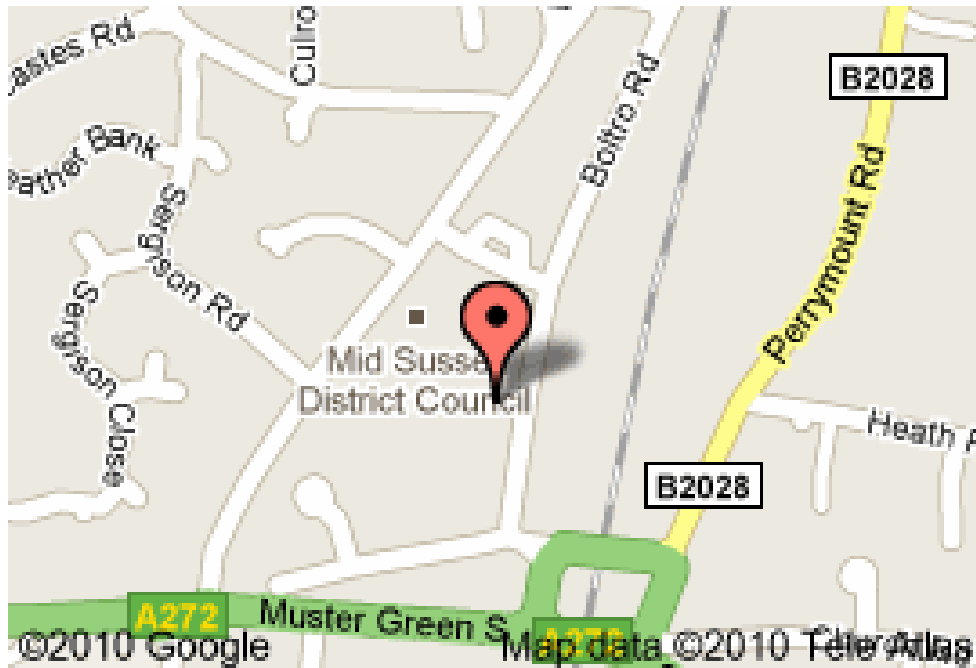
AT HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN HALL
40 Boltro Road, Haywards Heath
West Sussex, RH16 1BA

LECTURE: 'TREES FOR AN URBAN ENVIRONMENT'

BY **JIM GARDINER**, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE RHS AND
FORMER CURATOR, RHS GARDENS WISLEY

TEAS PLANT SALES RAFFLE

TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 36th Annual General Meeting of the Sussex Group of Plant Heritage
will take place at Haywards Heath Town Hall on Saturday 27th October
2018
commencing at 3.30pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 35th AGM 2017
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Annual Report
5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts 2018
6. Report from Sussex Plant Co-ordinators
7. Committee comments on the past year
8. Election of Officers and Committee 2018/9
9. Any Other Business

Committee

We are looking to strengthen the committee with new blood as we move ahead in support of the charities mission of conserving garden worthy plants and of educating the public on the value of these plants. If you feel that you would like to get involved but would like more information please contact any of the members listed on page 22.

Nominations for all posts are invited and should be submitted to the Secretary in writing, signed by the Proposer and Seconder by the 20th October at the latest.