



The young gardener (Page 10)



PLANT HERITAGE SUSSEX GROUP

Spring 2018

Number 95



***Acacia melanoxylon* –
planted just in time for
sunset (Page 10)**



MILL HALL FARM WILL BE OPENING UNDER THE NGS SCHEME FOR THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR

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The New Horizons Appeal, in aid of St Catherine's Hospice, is inviting the local community to one of the prettiest gardening events in Sussex - their annual Garden and Produce Fair.

Returning to the exclusive grounds of Cuckfield Park, on Thursday 17 May 2018, the prestigious fair is often referred to as West Sussex's mini Chelsea and is the perfect way to prepare your garden for spring.

Bringing together a range of established traders selling quality products including specialist plants, gardening products and produced food, the event is a favourite in many people's calendars, with many traders returning year after year.

As well as gardening and food gifts, homemade cakes and lunches will be available, and if you really fancy indulging you can buy advance bubbly breakfast tickets, which also give you a sneak preview of stalls ahead of general public entrance.

Run by St Catherine's voluntary New Horizons Appeal Committee, last year the Garden and Produce Fair had more than 50 stalls, attracted more than 600 visitors and raised more than £13,000 for the hospice.

The New Horizons Appeal are long standing supporters of St Catherine's and have been raising money for the local hospice since 1989. Each year, local people enjoy the committee's array of events which also include a lunch club, charity golf day and Autumn Gift Fair.

Sarah Bray, New Horizons Chairperson, said: *"By supporting our Garden and Produce Fair, you're helping us raise vital funds so St Catherine's can be there to provide local terminally ill people with expert end of life care. We're really proud of our fair and are looking forward to welcoming the community to enjoy the fantastic stalls and food on offer. We'd also like to thank Thakeham Homes and Strutt and Parker for their support in helping us host this brilliant spring day out."*

Advance tickets for the Garden and Produce Fair's special bubbly breakfast and stall preview, from 9am to 10.30am are just £15. General public entry £5 per person with the fair open from 10.30am to 3.30pm.

If you are interested in having a stall at the prestigious event or would like to book bubbly breakfast tickets please contact Suzanne Connor, New Horizons Appeal Co-ordinator on: 01293 447367 or email newhorizons@stch.org.uk.

4. Chairman's Report	Gary Firth
5. Report on the Sussex Collections	Gary and Maria Firth
6. Sussex Daffodils	Roger Parsons
8. Aristolochia	Steve Law
10. Acacia melanoxylon	Greg Sweeney
14. Dates for your diary 2018	
15. Sussex Group Spring Lecture 2018	
16. Tree tomato	Peter Ward
17. Book Review	Maddy Ward
18. Growing Hebes in Sussex	Steve Harding
20. Members Gardens open under the NGS Scheme	
22. Magnificent Magnolias at Borde Hill Garden	
24. Searching for Silus Cole	Roger Parsons
26. Cuckfield Garden and Produce Fair in aid of St Catherine's Hospice	



Chairman's Report
Gary Firth

I am delighted to report that as a result of Irma Williamson's research and following my note in the last Sussex Journal eight Sussex Plant Heritage members signed up to participate in developing a dispersed collection of Noel Burr Daffodil cultivars. Despite being rather late in the year, Irma and I were able to locate no less than ten of Noel's cultivars which have been distributed amongst the eight volunteers.

An Initial Application for a dispersed Sussex Collection of Noel Burr Narcissi Cultivars was presented to the Plant Heritage Plant Conservation Committee in November where it received enthusiastic support. We are now eagerly awaiting the arrival of the new season daffodil catalogues in order to try and source some of the remaining 48 cultivars that Noel registered. I have submitted a short article on our activities to the Daffodil Society in the hope that this will generate further information about Noel and his Cultivars. The purchase of the daffodil bulbs is being part funded by the Sussex Group as this will make an excellent conservation contribution to the Plant Heritage fortieth anniversary celebrations. If any other members would like to join us in this work please let me know.

A number of Sussex members together with June James and Gill Groombridge from National Office recently met, by kind invitation of Frances Druce, at her home in Haywards Heath to help package seed for the Plant Heritage stand at the Hampton Court Flower Show. This was a most enjoyable afternoon with so much seed packed that we nearly ran out of seed envelopes. Once we have restocked with these we shall be organising further sessions. The seed shop at Hampton Court usually generated an income of over £5000 so this is a significant contribution to Plant Heritage funds and to plant conservation. We are all now enthused to ensure we collect as much of our own seed this coming year and would encourage other members to do likewise.

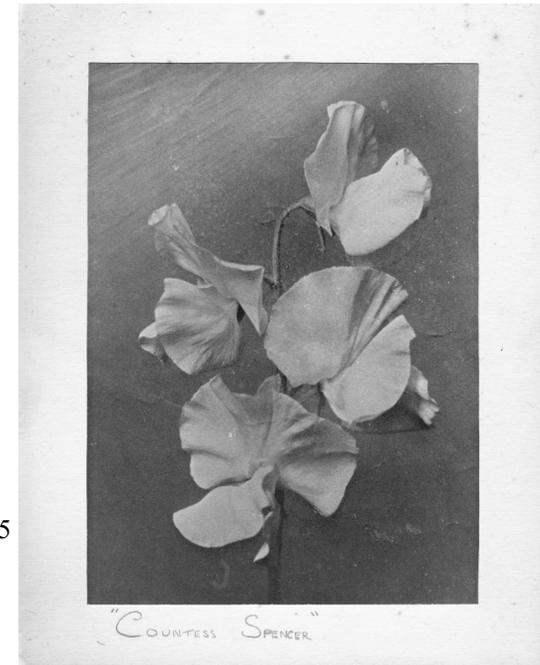
We are delighted that Fergus Garrett, who will be familiar to most of you as the Head Gardener at Great Dixter will be visiting us to give our Spring Lecture on 'Designing with Plants at Great Dixter' on Saturday 10th March at Haywards Heath Town Hall. Those who have heard Fergus talk previously will know that this will be a talk not to be missed. Please bring friends and colleagues with you. Free to members and just £4 to non-members.

And then he disappears. Was he killed in the Great War? He may have been too old to join the Army and his name does not appear on Heathfield war memorial. Did he emigrate? Did he simply die soon after or live for decades in quiet obscurity, either in Heathfield or elsewhere? Similarly, I know nothing about Barklye Nurseries. Can anyone help, please?



SILAS COLE

**LATHYRUS 'COUNTESS
SPENCER'**



Searching for Silas Cole

Roger Parsons (roger@rpsweetpeas.com)

Few names are better known in the development of the Sweet Pea than Silas Cole, yet we know very little about the man. I decided to search for him and was surprised to find Sussex connections. I am hoping that one of our members with access to family or local history records can fill in the gaps.

Silas Cole was born in 1866 at West Thorney in Sussex, around the time when the causeway was being built to join Thorney Island to the mainland. He appears in the 1881 census working as a 15 year old under-gardener at the Garden House, Althorp, Northants, the eldest of five children. His father, Edmund, was the gardener. All of his siblings were born at West Thorney apart from the youngest, aged 2 months. This suggests Edmund may have been gardener to Sir Charles Taylor, Bt. at West Thorney Manor. Taylor died in 1876 with no male issue and this may have been the event that triggered the move to Althorp.

The 1901 census shows Silas (aged 35) still living at the Garden in Althorp but now he is the gardener. His wife, Marion Rose, was aged 32 and they have three daughters, Mabel E. (aged 5), Gladys A. (3) and Hylda S. (2). It was in 1901 that Silas became a world-renowned name when he exhibited the Sweet Pea 'Countess Spencer' at the first exhibition of the National Sweet Pea Society (NSPS) in London. This cultivar had much longer stems, more flowers per stem and larger wavy petals than anything which had gone before. Following on from the revelation of Mendel's Laws of Genetics in 1900 and the use of Sweet Peas to verify Mendel's work, it caused a sensation. The now ubiquitous modern Sweet Peas with long stems and large wavy petals are still known as the Spencer type. Cole was equivocal about the origin of 'Countess Spencer', which is now lost, giving contradictory accounts.

Cole raised other new Sweet Peas during the following years, mostly named after members of the Spencer family, but in August 1910 the 5th Earl Spencer died with no male issue and was succeeded by his half-brother. This disruption to the estate may have been what prompted Cole to return to Sussex. The Northampton Mercury, 24 Feb. 1911, reported the imminent departure of Cole from Althorp. He is found in the NSPS membership lists for 1912 to 1914 as living at Barklye Nurseries, Heathfield. The last reference I have for him is a report in the Surrey Advertiser, 15 July 1914 that "Mr. Silas Cole of Heathfield, Sussex judged at Woking Sweet Pea Society Show".²⁴

Report on the Sussex National Plant Collections

Gary and Maria Firth

As mentioned in my Chairman's report, the Plant Conservation Committee (PCC) has given strong support to our Initial Proposal for a dispersed collection of Noel Burr Narcissi Cultivars and have encouraged us to continue with researching and collecting his registered cultivars. This will make an excellent contribution by the Sussex Group to the fortieth anniversary celebrations of Plant Heritage with its emphasis on Sussex's great heritage of plant breeding and conservation.

At the same meeting the PCC also warmly received an Initial Proposal for a second collection of Sussex Bred Apple Cultivars, based at a site in West Sussex, and have encouraged submission of a Full Application as soon as possible. These apples are growing in a sheltered site on good rich deep soil so it will be interesting to compare their yields and rate of growth to the current National Collection growing on the thin chalk soils at Stanmer Park near Brighton.

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:

Maxine McArthur
Adriane Thorne

Rudgwick
St Leonards on Sea

COACH TRIP SUNDAY 13th May 2018

We shall again be organising a coach trip to a garden of special interest

Pick up at Beech Hurst Gardens, Butlers Green Road, Haywards Heath, RH16 4BB

Please contact Maria Firth for Further Details (see page 27)

Sussex Daffodils
Roger Parsons

My participation in the Sussex Group initiative to form the dispersed Noel Burr Collection of *Narcissus*, bred by him in Sussex, has made me wonder whether anyone else in Sussex is still breeding Daffodils and Narcissi. There are many amateur breeders working in his genus to produce improved cultivars for the show bench but you need to have knowledge and experience of the genus to know whether new seedlings are an improvement on existing cultivars. For me, what would be more exciting would be to work on a new type of *Narcissus*, such as occurred with the introduction in recent decades of the Orchid-flowering type with a split cup (corona).

Rejuvenation of interest in Dahlias has occurred through plant breeders going back to wild species and older, conserved cultivars, such as 'Bishop of Llandaff', to create wonderful new cultivars which you don't need to be a specialist to enjoy. Similarly, in my own genus *Lathyrus*, the introduction of what are known as Modern Grandiflora cultivars and Semi-grandiflora cultivars has proved extremely popular for general gardening. These are intermediate in form between the Spencer type, with long stems for cutting and the show bench, and Old-fashioned type, with their wonderful fragrance and prolific flowering. The aim, of course, being to introduce cultivars with the best qualities of both types.

When I was a student gardener over 40 years ago, our first lesson in practical plant breeding was with Daffodils. This may partly be because they flowered early in the season but it is also because they are very easy to work with. Choosing the right parents to create the effect you want is the hard part.



6

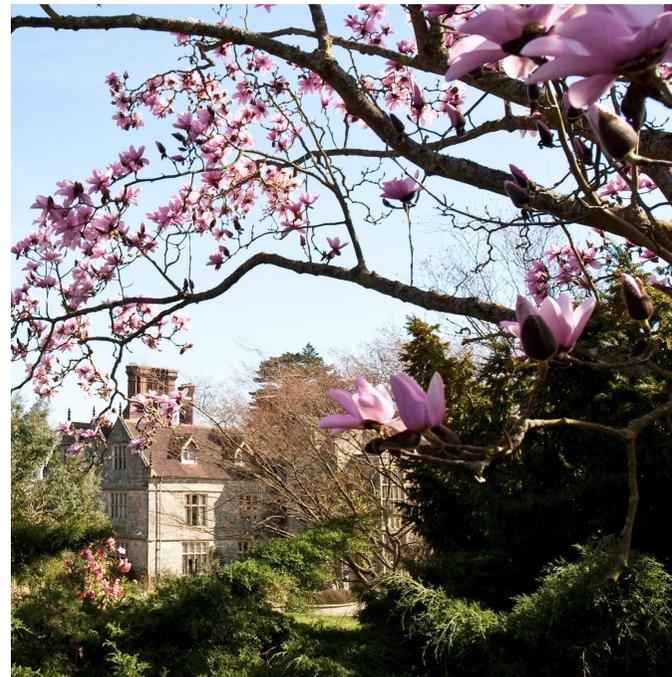
***NARCISSUS* 'CHERRYGARDENS'**



***NARCISSUS* 'CINDER HILL'**



MAGNOLIA 'DIVA'



Magnificent Magnolias at Borde Hill Garden

Don't miss the unforgettable experience of seeing the Garden bursting to life with an abundance of magnolias, camellias and rhododendrons, which flower with dramatic beauty every year.

This spring the Garden will boast a significant new magnolia collection to mark the 125th anniversary of the purchase of Borde Hill by Colonel Stephenson R Clarke, whose express intention was the creation of an internationally important Garden with seeds gathered by the great plant hunters of the early 1900s.

The Garden is home to one of the largest collections of magnolias to be found in a private garden in the British Isles, with several listed as 'champion'.

The new 'Gardiner Grove', a meadow planted with specimen magnolias and birches chosen by magnolia expert and former RHS Vice President, Jim Gardiner, who has been associated with Borde Hill Garden for over 30 years.

Jim Gardiner says, "It has been a huge honour to be associated with this great garden and an enormous pleasure to see it develop, enabling the plant collections to be added to is so important for the Garden. There's a great tradition of planting magnolias and this plantation will continue in the footsteps of those who have gone before me".

Borde Hill also boasts a renowned collection of camellias, including the famous Camellia "Donation", raised in the garden by Colonel Stephenson R Clarke in the 1930s and still thriving today.

The Garden opens on Tuesday 20th March 2018 offering visitors the opportunity to see these springtime treasures on self-guided walks. Alternatively, join a Magnolia Tour with our Head Gardener on Tuesday 27th March or Friday 6th April. Tours are £3.00, booking not required.

On 22nd March Jim Gardiner will present an informative talk on magnolias, after which you can join him for a tour of the new 'Magnolia Grove'. Tickets: £26.00 or £20.80 for Friends of Borde Hill and RHS Members. Booking is essential.

This year, to herald the start of our new season, why not join our Camellia specialist on a guided tour of the Camellia collection. The tour will run at 11am and 3pm on Sunday 25th March. Tours are £3.00, booking not required.

In order to cross two cultivars or species, select a flower on the verge of opening, open the petals by hand and remove the anthers before they develop ripe pollen. This prevents self-fertilisation. The flower should then be covered with a polythene bag for 24 hours to allow the flower to fully open, by which time the stigma will have developed a sweet viscid fluid. The next step is to introduce pollen from a different cultivar or species onto the stigma. This can be done using the stigmas directly or by using a cotton bud, camel-hair brush, or similar. It is important to label the flower stem with the names of the two parents rather than trust to memory. There is a convention to put the name of the female parent first. So introducing pollen from *Narcissus* 'Isenhurst' onto the stigma of N. 'Rushlake Green' should be labelled: "Narcissus 'Rushlake Green' x N. Isenhurst".

After a few days, the petals will fall and a seed pod should start to develop. In about 8 weeks, the foliage withers and the pod turns brown. Tap the pod with your fingers and the seeds will rattle when ripe. Remove the pod before it bursts open and place it in a paper bag, with the label, to fully ripen in a warm sunny position. The pod will shatter but the dispersed seeds should fall within the bag for collection. The tiny black seeds, about the size of a pinhead, should be sown right away in pots or deep boxes where they can spend their first year. Your seedlings can take up to 7 years to flower but may be as short as four. You will then know if you chose the parent plants wisely to produce the offspring you were hoping for. This may seem like a long time to wait but, as *Rhododendron* breeder J C Williams once said: "It will give you seven years of pleasurable anticipation for only one day of disappointment!"



ARISTOLOCHIA
Steve Law

One of the best things about Plant Heritage, if not the best thing, is the national collections scheme, which I was keen to get involved in from the beginning. The only question was choosing a group to collect. A short while after starting the nursery it occurred to me that Aristolochia might be a good candidate. This group of plants is interesting on two counts – the most obvious being that they have strangely coloured tuba-shaped flowers that are pollinated by flies. The flowers resemble pitcher plants except that they don't eat the flies of course. The other fact that appeals to me is that on the phylogeny (family tree) of the flowering plants, this group originates along with the Magnolia and Laurus families in the Cretaceous. The earliest known fossil Aristolochia is less than 10 million years old (from Miocene Austria) and very like modern species but it's possible they have been around a very long time indeed, though where and in what form is impossible to say. Asarum is the other relatively well-known genus in the family.

I tend to like odd cryptic plants like Arisaemas and Asarums and nobody else seemed to be collecting them, and although there are many large tropical species (which would be beyond my facilities) and a few big temperate vines (which I could possibly find space for) there were, I thought, enough small hardy species, mostly from the Mediterranean region that would make a manageable collection for a small nursery like mine in South East England. They like full sun and dry conditions and won't mind the chalk.



ARISTOLOCHIA SEMPERVIRENS
(Above)

8

ARISTOLOCHIA CALIFORNICA
(Below)



Mill Hall Farm

2. Copyhold Hollow, Haywards Heath, Frances Druce

Set in a north facing hollow plants are mostly those which prefer partial shade so rhododendrons, camellias, primulas, epimediums, hostas, etc., feature. Steep in places, the 2 acre garden has a stumpery, woodland and a cottage garden surrounds the 16th century house. Tea and cake available.

Monday, 16 April
Tuesday, 24 April
Bank Holiday, Monday 7 May
Tuesday, 15 May
Friday, 25 May
Bank Holiday, Monday, 28 May (This is in aid of WRAGS)
Monday, 16 July

**OTHER MEMBERS GARDENS ARE OPEN UNDER THIS SCHEME.
SEE NGS BOOKLET FOR DETAILS.**

21

Some Members Gardens Open under the NGS Scheme

1. Mill Hall Farm, Whiteman's Green, Kate Berry

Mill Hall Farm is on the north side of B2115. The drive is at the west end of Burrell Cottages. There is some parking at the house at the top of a narrow 100m driveway with no passing places but good visibility. It may be best to park in the playing fields free car park on south side of B2115 and walk 150m. If you do you might like to take a look at the site where in 1822 Gideon Mantell discovered teeth of iguanodon, one of the earliest dinosaurs to be recognised. It is a short walk across the field by the carpark.

A relatively young 2 ½ acre garden Kate and Jonathan began planting in March 2012 as soon as the site was cleared of builders, landscapers and the buried rubbish they left behind. The garden is establishing and constantly changing throughout the year. We manage it together with the occasional help from a friendly local tree surgeon who also brings us mulch, invaluable for weed suppression. Several of the trees and plants came with Kate from Lancashire in 2010 and were given their permanent home 2 years later. There were some losses, most painfully of a liquidamber Lane Roberts ruined by rabbits. The soil in Lancashire was also heavy clay but it seldom dried out to rock hard as frequently happens in Cuckfield. The people are equally friendly.

There is a north facing long view sloping down to one of two ponds and woodland beyond with lilies, irises, sanguisorba and lots of wildlife including an occasional visiting kingfisher and many other birds. In the mixed borders there are some interesting young trees and shrubs including a cercidiphyllum, catalpa aurea, metasequoia Gold Rush, young acers, several young cornus kousa and young philadelphus, and a leptospermum. Herbaceous plants include pulmonarias, daylilies, phlox, penstemon and brunnera geraniums, several trolius, some climbing roses, clematis, golden hop, a few of the new collection of Noel Burr Daffodils shared by the Sussex group and more.

Some sheep farming still goes on at Mill Hall Farm and there is a vegetable and fruit garden carefully protected from rabbits and pigeons.

The garden will be open under the NGS scheme from 12.30 till 5pm on June 10th.

Little did I know there are as many as 800 species and although many are large tropical vines, a lot of them are temperate and occur all over the northern hemisphere. There is that group that stretches across southern Europe and the Mediterranean basin and into the Middle east - mainly small vines or creepers needing sunny very well drained conditions, possibly with a dry summer or winter and perhaps protection from frost, but then I discovered there are some interesting herbaceous perennials in the Caucasus and Russia, and unsurprisingly, another centre of diversity in China and eastern Asia. Many of these are very big forest vines but by no means all. And then it turns out there is also a large number of species in North America. I knew about *A.californica* and the most familiar garden species is *A.macrophylla* - a huge vine from the eastern states, but it turns there are many other species further east and especially in the southern states. I don't know yet what conditions these need. And then finally there are the South American species, many of which are spectacular tropical vines with enormous flowers, but a few of which are turning out to be surprisingly hardy given just a bit of protection. The Andes also has some cold hardy species that need similar growing conditions to cacti from the same area, with a dry winter.

Several specialist seed merchants offer at least a few varieties, and I've discovered a surprising number of *Aristolochiaphiles* online. There is at least one lively group on Facebook, and since I started offering a few species at the nursery other growers have emerged offering me trades with their collections. Some are growing them mainly as food for certain swallowtail butterfly caterpillars but most just like growing unusual plants. To be honest I'm a little daunted from having too many to choose from. It was easier when I thought there weren't many species and they'd be hard to get hold of. I still have relatively few species here and I should get on with obtaining some more.

Growing conditions will need to be tailored to their individual needs but shouldn't be unusually hard compared to any other group of plants. They're mostly not difficult from seed, although obtaining fresh seed is important and germination may be sporadic. Many of the evergreen vines come easily from cuttings too, albeit slowly. Dividing the herbaceous species may be less successful because many of them form a deep tap root but some sucker and rooted pieces can be detached easily.

Acacia melanoxylon - as seen on the BBC!

Greg Sweeney

Arboricultural Officer, Mid-Sussex District Council

When I welcome fellow Arboriculturalists to Mid Sussex I point out to them the wonders of the landscape, The Weald and The South Downs, as well as how lucky we are to be scattered with so many fantastic plant collections. Some of which are found in parks under public ownership. Take for example, the champion *Stewartia sinensis*, the magnificent example of *Betula alleghaniensis*, champion *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis* and a lovely example of *Sciadopitys verticillata* to be found amongst other delights at Tilgate Park in Crawley. It was this public collection of plants, their association with the plant hunters and those that managed them on behalf of the council that instigated my interest in unusual and rare plants.

During the summer of 2017 I took a walk with Gary and Maria (of Plant Heritage Sussex) around Beechurst Gardens in Hayward's Heath, a site owned and maintained by Mid Sussex District Council (MSDC). The views to the distant South Downs from here are up there with the best. The southern section of the gardens opens out into a meadow, a redundant pitch and putt golf course. It was here that the idea of an 'arboretum in a park' was conceived.

In November 2017 some initial structural plantings were laid down. Three Buddhist pines, *Podocarpus macrophyllus*, with its evergreen foliage and tight upright architectural form, were located in a focal position that leads the eye up the footpath through the section dedicated to plants native of China and Japan.



Podocarpus macrophyllus

The variety "Veitchii" (syn Alicia Amherst) is undoubtedly the best blue flowering Hebe ever. It also used to be named "Royal Blue". It was raised by Veitch and Sons of Exeter in 1911 and grows to a height of 1.2 metres, although in the south east it will only grow to one metre in a sheltered spot. The stems are often red.

For a large growing hedge, you could use either *Hebe salicifolia* or *Hebe stricta*. Both have long, drooping white flowers, pale green leaves and reach a height of 2 metres within a few years. For a smaller hedge, say one metre tall, try *Hebe brachysiphon* or *traversii*. Both have small green leaves and white flowers and can be trimmed easily.

The variety "Midsummer Beauty" is an old favourite. It was discovered in east Sussex at Seaford at the end of the second world war. It reaches a height of one and a half metres and is covered in lilac purple flowers 30cms long from July to November. The stems are a plum colour and it has a distinct red vein on the back of the leaves. Definitely worth growing.

These are only a few of the many garden worthy Hebe out there. For more information on them please visit www.hebesoc.org



PART OF THE HEBE COLLECTION AT VICTORIA PARK, HAYWARDS HEATH

Growing Hebes in Sussex Steve Harding

With over 6000 different Hebe (not Veronica) in existence it can be difficult choosing the right plant for your garden. People think that all Hebe are too tender to survive a typical winter in the South East of the country, but I have been growing them in the ground unprotected for years now.

By far the most popular variety for the last ten years or so has been Hebe Heartbreaker, a variegated plant of compact habit which is ideal for a small border, or even in a pot. It has narrow leaves with a cream margin and new shoots are purple coloured. As the weather turns colder the whole plant takes on a reddish purple hue, still keeping the variegation beneath. It has violet flowers but is worth growing for the foliage alone. Its eventual height and spread would be 45cms x 60cms and has survived minus 12 degrees in winter.

Hebe albicans Red Edge is a good plant for pots or as a low, informal hedge. The grey leaves have a small red edge to them and again, as the weather turns cold it changes to a dark red. The improved form called "Super Red" has slightly larger leaves and will grow 10cms bigger than Red Edge (60 x 60 cms). I grow Red Edge in a blue glazed pot underplanted with mixed Crocus.

The "Wiri" series of Hebe are a must have. Even if you only grow a couple of plants, I recommend "Wiri Mist" and "Wiri Charm". "Mist" is a compact, low growing plant with green leaves and lovely white flowers in late spring. It has an arching habit and grows to 30 cms tall and 45cms wide. It looks good edging a border or trailing over a pot.

"Charm" is one of my personal favourites (I was one of the first nurserymen to introduce it to the UK). It makes a dome of green leaves 90cms high and wide. In mid summer it is swayed in magenta flowers, and repeat flowers in November.

Hebe speciosa has produced many cultivars over the years. It hails from the North Island of New Zealand and has glossy green leaves with deep red flowers. This plant needs protection from cold winds to flourish but my plants are in the open and if they do drop leaves in a prolonged cold spell, they soon recover and by mid summer you would never know they had caught a cold. It grows into a rounded bush 1 metre tall and wide and gets smothered in butterflies and bees each year.

Nothofagus dombeyii and *Azara microphylla* were complimented by the planting of three plants kindly donated to MSDC by Gary, *Luma apiculata*, *Luma chequen* and the tongue twister *Blepharocalyx cruckshankii*, representing the region of Chile and Argentina.

Several existing Giant Redwoods have been teamed up with several interesting evergreen South American tree species including *Pinus Patula*, *Maytenus boaria* and *Pinus montezumae* - of which there is the most impressive example at Sheffield Park and Gardens. So impressive, rumour has it, that Roy Lancaster suggests that all those who come face to face with the specimen should 'bow' down to it.



Inspiration - *Pinus montezumae*, Sheffield Park

The arboretum aims to teach people where plants come from and how they came to be here through telling the story of the plant hunters. It offers the opportunity to engage and educate school children as well as the wider public as to the importance of the conservation of plants, their natural habitats and the benefits to be sought from planting trees.

The project seeks to encourage the use of species not usually seen in parks, gardens and landscaping schemes within the District through the promotion of a diverse range of plants that are hardy in the south east. The issue of climate change can be raised and plants suitable for a changing climate put on display.



Wollemia nobilis & grove of Eucalyptus

Book Review: Apples and Orchards in Sussex
Brian Short with Peter May, Gail Vines and Anne-Marie Bur
Action in Rural Sussex and Brighton Permaculture Trust, 2012,
£9.00 ISBN 978-1-873850-32-7
Maddy Ward

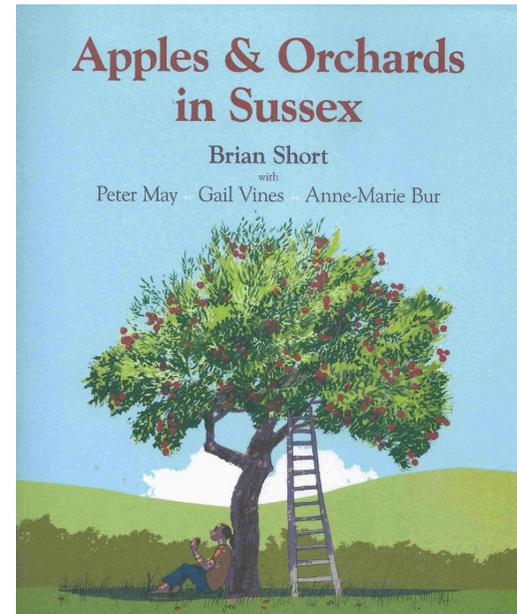
This book reflects a new enthusiasm for making fruit-growing in Sussex commonplace once more.

The Romans arrived in Sussex with the horticultural skills to grow domesticated apples trees, whilst the Saxons gave us the word ‘orchard,’ from the old English *ortgeard*. The Normans then encouraged apple cultivation for cider making.

This book demonstrates the work that is being undertaken in creating schools of orchard husbandry and teaching children how to plant fruit trees. Following investigation of local Sussex varieties, the authors began to plan a community-run orchard in Stammer Park outside Brighton, to research the cultivation of apple orchards in Sussex.

The book is a nostalgic journey through the past, drawing upon local archives, early text books, ordnance survey maps, Water colour paintings and black and white photographs of cider making in the mid twentieth century. The authors have found nearly a thousand old orchards which can still be found in Sussex today. It describes how orchards can help fight climate change, boost social well-being, and provide a green place for folk to enjoy.

Sussex now has a National Collection of Sussex Apple Cultivars in Stanmer Park, Brighton under the care of the Brighton Permaculture Trust. It is well worth a visit and enjoy the book.



Tree Tomato Peter Ward

In Ecuador in 2007, amongst many other sights, on several occasions groves of 'tomato trees' were pointed out to us. These were shrubs, six to ten feet high grown as 'standards' on valley floors at an elevation of some 2000 metres in the Andes. Although we were near the equator the climate was therefore more temperate than tropical. As we were not close we could not see the fruit.

Last year we were in Madeira when 'tomato trees' were again pointed out. We were now close enough to see that neither plant nor fruit looked like a true tomato. It is sometimes referred to locally as the 'English Tomato' as it was the British that introduced it to the island. We subsequently bought a couple in the local market. They do not taste like a true tomato and although edible we did not really like them as they were rather 'taniny'. Only after we had eaten them (as we would have a true tomato) did we discover that it is usual to discard the skin and only eat the inner flesh. Apparently when ripe the yellow and orange fruit are sweeter than the red (the ones we bought).

The Tamarillo (*Solanum betaceum*) is classified in the family Solanaceae, as are the true tomato (*S. lycopersicum*), potato (*S. tuberosum*) and deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*). It will grow rapidly into a small tree but may only live for a few years. It is shallow rooted so needs shelter from winds and does not tolerate drought. It is not completely frost hardy but apparently fruit set is aided by cool nights. It is native to Ecuador and the neighbouring countries but is now grown as a commercial crop round the world. The fruits are high in vitamins A & C, Calcium, Magnesium and Iron but low in calories (40).

The fruit is imported to Europe as an exotic although I have not personally seen it in Britain.. Seeds are commercially available in Britain. I plan to try growing one this year.



With local authorities (LA's) facing a looming central government funding cut in 2020. At a time when LA's are under pressure to sell and/or free up land for development. At a time when the future of our public parks, gardens and open spaces are uncertain, the importance of plants and collections such as those with 'National collection' and 'Plant Guardian' status within the public realm are more important than ever before. They may be used as valid reasons to hold authorities accountable for their actions or inactions.

I was fortunate to mark the end of 2017 by planting amongst a grove of Eucalyptus another unusual tree, *Acacia melanoxylon*, Blackwood. Native of Tasmania and South East Australia, the tree can reach up to 60 - 80ft. I was interested to learn that what I had considered to be the leaves turned out to be 'phyllodes' and what I took at first sight to be some sort of flower structure the 'true leaves'. True leaves are rarely present on old trees, but in the juvenile state they are quite frequently mixed up with phyllodes as seen in the picture.

In many Acacias, the leaf blade is small or absent and photosynthesis is carried out by broad flattened petioles (phyllodes). The part of the leaf that loses most water is shed, allowing the plant to continue to function in the dry sunny conditions.

The Acacia tree, donated to MSDC by Gary, featured in the Australasian plant society's display at RHS Hampton Court Flower show 2017. It now forms part of the initial structure I have laid down for the arboretum at Beechurst Gardens.

I would like to thank Gary and Maria for their understanding, support and encouragement. I took the opportunity to plant the Acacia tree with my son (the young gardener) and my wife. I am looking forward to watching it grow with them. Engaging 'the little ones' is key in our success at leaving the environment in a better state than we found it!



Acacia melanoxylon
- The leaves being doubly pinnate and the phyllodes scimitar shaped, tapered at both ends

Dates for Your Diary 2018

Saturday 10th March	Sussex Group Spring Lecture, Haywards Heath Town Hall
Fri 27th—Sun 29th April	Plant Heritage members weekend and AGM, Dorset
Saturday 12th May	Plumpton College Open Day. See www.plumpton.ac.uk for details
Thursday 17th May	Garden and Local Produce Fair, Cuckfield Park. See page 26
Mon 2nd—Sun 8th July	RHS Hampton Court Show
Sat 7th—Sun 8th July	Parham Garden Weekend. See www.parhaminsussex.co.uk
Sat 1st September	Andrew Gaunt's National Collection of Hedychium Open Day
Sunday 2nd September	Sussex Prairies Plant Fair. www.sussexprairies.co.uk

The following was received from the Sussex Gardens Trust. If you wish to book please contact Jim Stockwell at <membersinformation@sussexgardenstrust.org.uk>

Dear Friend

I'm contacting you to let you know about a winter lecture series organised by Sussex Gardens Trust taking place at Clair Hall, Haywards Heath on various Saturday afternoons in Mar 2018. Clair Hall is opposite Haywards Heath Railway Station and has free car parking.

Details are shown below and on our website

<http://www.sussexgardenstrust.org.uk/events/lecture-series>

The winter lectures will explore the relationship between writers and their gardens. The lectures will consider the importance of the garden in the author's life, aspects of the design and how the garden influenced their writing. We have chosen speakers who are experts in their field and have included some local gardens. The series will appeal to people at all levels of interest, and will cover subjects from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

Tea, coffee and cake provided - 30 minute interval.

Cost £15 for individual lectures

Sat 3 March, 2-4 pm. Virginia Woolf at Monk's House

Dr Nuala Hancock, garden historian and author

Sat 24 March 2-4 pm. William Shenstone at The Leasowes

Michael Symes, garden historian, author and lecturer

PLANT HERITAGE, SUSSEX GROUP SPRING LECTURE

WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY 10th March 2018
COMMENCING AT 2.00PM (doors open 1.30pm)

AT HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN HALL
(BOLTRO ROAD, HAYWARDS HEATH, RH16 1BA)

SPECIAL LECTURE: **FERGUS GARRETT**

HEAD GARDENER AT GREAT DIXTER

WILL BE TALKING ON 'DESIGNING WITH PLANTS AT GREAT DIXTER'

TEA/CAKES

PLANT SALES

RAFFLE

