



## EAGG Committee

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## **Chairman's letter - Autumn 2021**

Well the optimism of the Spring newsletter was perhaps a little misguided. It has been a dispiriting summer, weather wise and lockdown wise with zoom meetings replacing live talks and private garden visits cancelled due to owners falling ill; generally a difficult time for everyone.

However, having had three weeks of wonderful September weather, cyclamen and colchicums better than I can ever remember, an exciting Chelsea Flower Show for those of us lucky to be able to visit, and excellent BBC coverage for those who couldn't and now a new season of fascinating talks about to start back at Chamberlin Hall, we really can be optimistic.

We have had several Committee Meetings, mulling over ideas and improvements to our group and we now have a full programme of talks - Jimi Blake of Hunting Brook, our 2021 Celebrity Speaker event on the 6<sup>th</sup> November, and Lucy Skellorn talking about her family-introduced Iris collection, which will be combined with the AGM on the 4th December. We thought that on this occasion we would have some early festive fare to make up for the lack of a Summer Social for two years running. And of course there will be plants for sale at all these talks. And there is an exciting collection of speakers booked for 2022.

Our website is continually being updated, and please do book your tickets for Jimi Blake, and register for the other talks and AGM so we have an idea of numbers.

We produced a new EAGG pamphlet recently, to display at plant fairs, NGS garden openings and anywhere where there are likely new members. This has resulted in a gratifying number and we very much look forward to welcoming them, and seeing existing members and friends again, after so long.

***Sue de Sabata***

***Joint Chairman*** October 2021

## **Speakers Programme 2022**

### **February 5**

#### **TIMOTHY WALKER 'THE SUBTLE ART AND EXACT SCIENCE OF PRUNING'**

For many people pruning is a bewildering garden task. Armed with the 10 principles in this talk you will never fear pruning again. In addition to these principles Timothy Walker looks at the various classes of pruning with many examples of trees and shrubs commonly found in gardens. Timothy is a botanist who was director of the Oxford University Botanic Gardens for twelve years, winning four Chelsea gold medals.

### **March 5 CELEBRITY SPEAKER**

#### **ANNA PAVORD 'BULBS FOR ALL SEASONS'**

We're delighted to welcome back Anna Pavord who is one of the nation's best-loved garden writers. Her books include the best-seller 'The Tulip', and she was gardening correspondent for The Independent for over twenty years. Anna believes that bulbs mark the seasons in a garden more beautifully than any other plant. She describes how to choose them carefully to brighten summer and autumn as well as spring, revealing some of her own favourites.

### **April 2**

#### **ANDREW WARD 'PLANTS AND PREJUDICE'**

Do you loathe lupins? Hate hebes? We all have prejudices against certain plants. Andrew Ward challenges our prejudices and offer alternatives. He owns Norwell Nurseries which specialises in rare and unusual herbaceous perennials, woodland plants and shade lovers, and will bring plants for sale.

## **October 1**

### **ELLIE BISHOP 'LEARN TO LOVE HOUSE PLANTS'**

There's more to house plants than aspidistras and begonias. Ellie to enhance our homes with an exciting range of plants from the rare and unusual to the classic favourites. Lots of advice too on how to choose and nurture them! Bishop, co-owner of Nell and Green Botanics in Sudbury, shows us how

## **November 5th**

### **EDWARD BERGER 'HERBS FOR HEALTH'**

We all know the soothing benefits of chamomile tea, and the digestive properties of mint. Herbal medicine is the most ancient form of healing, and there are many common garden plants which are appropriate for medicinal use. Edward is a herbalist and naturopath, lecturer in herbal medicine and columnist for Healthy magazine. He also advises charities and garden projects on the cultivation and use of medicinal plants.

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## **AGM December 4th 2021**

### **Lucy Skellorn 'My Family and Other Irises'**

Lucy holds the National Collection of Foster Irises. We're very pleased to welcome her to our AGM to talk about these irises which were introduced by her great-great-grandfather over 100 years ago and describe how she established the National Collection. Lucy is also a researcher at Benton End House, home of the late Cedric Morris, artist and plantsman, and she will update us on plans for this historic property. It will be a fascinating talk with strong local interest, and a great way to round off the season of EAGG's return to 'live' talks.

## Pruning

We all grow many different plants, but how should we prune them? Not all the same way or at the same time. Timothy Walker is coming to talk to us February 5th on ‘The Subtle Art and Exact Science of Pruning’

This piece, is a tiny taster of what’s to come.

Not everything needs pruning every year, some things never need pruning, other need pruning annually to get the best flower and fruit production.

Pruning is the art of removing limbs, branches and twigs from a shrub or tree to maximise its flowering and fruiting capacity. It is not clipping, nor is it cutting down herbaceous material in the autumn or winter.

So before heading out with sharpened secateurs at the ready it worth working out what needs pruning. Looking sounds like the oddball when it comes to pruning, but it is one of the more important aspects of a successful outcome. You are looking for the oldest limbs, dead branches, diseased material, all to be removed from as low down on the plant as possible. Tools must be sharp, and kept sharp. All cuts should be sloping and just above a bud.

Rather than trying to remember pruning schedules for all the shrubs you grow, group the shrubs into when they flower, or what age of wood they flower on. Plants that flower before the middle of the year flower on wood the plant grew in the previous season. These plants should be pruned as soon as flowering is over. Plants that flower after the middle of the year should be pruned in early Spring, last year’s flowering shoots being removed.

Pruning of roses depends on which group the rose falls into. It also depends on how well the rose grows for you. Special plants like wisteria and figs which can so easily get too big and out of control have their own regime .

You the pruner are in control. Try to gather together, in your head, all your shrubs that flower at similar times of the year. This way you can successfully prune shrubs you grow even if don’t know what they are called.

I am looking forward to hearing what Timothy Walker has to say about pruning. It should be an excellent talk.

*Anne Tweddle*

## Chelsea in September

So much has been written about the rescheduled Chelsea Flower Show and with the usual comprehensive BBC coverage, I am struggling to write something original, but it was so wonderful I want to share it with you.



The Chelsea Plant of the Year 2021 summed up the season and the mood in a way I cannot match.

*Cercis Canadensis*  
'Eternal Flame'

With some trepidation, venturing into crowds after so long, the overwhelming impression was one

of joy, and relief. The first positive was no plane tree pollen. The weather was glorious with a lovely limpid light highlighting the seasonal colours. The crowds were markedly less and crowd control efficiently managed. Many show gardens were using apps for plant lists to avoid handling leaflets and once a kind person had explained to this dinosaur how to access them, there they are in my phone, and no aching shoulders lugging all the free bags and weight around all day. Yeo Valley, the first organic, Soil Association approved, garden at the show, had a clever seed filled little card with the bar code to scan at home and then plant!

There were several RHS gardens to fill in the gaps, which were charming and colourful, particularly the sanctuary gardens.

Two artisan gardens by the food stalls were moving in their attention to detail and message. The old forge looked as if it had been there for centuries surrounded by gently unkempt planting in reds and golds;

not just late season colours but signifying fire. The adjacent Guide Dog's 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Garden with a heart breaking soldier fashioned in rusty barbed wire, in a dark fern filled corner with head in hands, a picture of despair, morphed into a joyous bright steel fellow walking confidently with his guide dog amid sensory and colourful plants, and visiting guide dogs and their owners coming and going and posing for the cameras and film crews. A poignant lesson in gratitude.

I loved the Bodmin Gaol garden, 60 degrees East, inspired by the Ural Mountains where Europe and Asia meet. The plantings of *Thalictrum* 'Hewitts Double', *Gypsophilla* 'paniculata' and 'rosenschlier', *Anemone x hybrid* 'September Charm', *Astrantia major* and Hydrangea and *Veronica longifolia* were quite beautiful and surprisingly relevant to our East Anglian gardens. With the sound of the waterfall and a recording of what I think was a nightingale but it seemed to have a slightly different accent from our now rare Suffolk nightingales, the contrast of the huge jagged rocks, cloud pruned pines and soft glowing colours of the plants was heart lifting.

Being East Anglian born and bred, I tend to be drawn to schemes that resonate with my Suffolk garden, but some made me yearn to move to Yorkshire or even Russia or the Himalayas. The Trailfinder Nepal garden was another stunningly beautifully planted and executed exhibit. I was invited by Mark Richardson, Landscape Construction Contractor, who also lives in Suffolk, (perhaps another possible speaker for EAGG?) up to the beautiful oak shelter with prayer wheels operated by flowing water on either side, to look down on the magical, lush green, fat budded rhododendrons, (planned to be in flower in



May) giving a promise of next year's glorious flowering, under planted with Kahili ginger (*Hedychium Gardnerianum*), *Aconitum arendsii*, *Persicaria Amplexicaulis*, *Hypericum*, *potentilla*, ferns and rheums and many more familiar garden plants sufficiently hardy to be grown in East Anglia, despite being indigenous to the Himalayan foothills.

My hero, Suffolk Designer Tom Hoblyn, took me from the naturalistic planting in the outer beds, inside his Secret Garden to the lush, peaceful, safe and sheltered space with the green of ferns, white flowering hostas and astrantia and subtle pale pinks of a beautiful female *Rhus typhina*, and abutilon. We talked about EAGG and he has agreed to come and give us a talk. He certainly deserved a gold.

I didn't do justice to the marquee as it was so beautiful outside. There was an air of understandable hesitancy and it must have been so difficult to plan. Pheasant Nurseries had a magnificent stand of dahlias and of course the other September staple, Michaelmas daisies, were well represented.

James Wong's master class in house plants covered the different studios, and I would love a steamy jungle of a bathroom as displayed by Conservatory Archives' .And Plant Heritage won a well deserved gold medal.

Environmentally friendly messages and inventions inevitably abounded, including plastic pots made from old fishing nets and rope. Ocean Plastic Pots won the first ever sustainable product award.

And finally, the NHS Tribute garden 'Finding our Way' was full of primary colours and optimism, and as perfect as the Chelsea Plant of the Year 2021 in summing up this difficult period, by bringing the joy of the season, gratitude for the NHS, and optimism for the future.

I would love to come to Chelsea in September again.

*Susan de Sabata*

## Spindles.

*Euonymus europaeus* is one of our few native shrubs. In autumn it looks dramatic with its brightly coloured leaves and vivid, lobed fruits with bright orange seeds. It can be grown as a hedge plant or as a small tree. Wildlife will appreciate its insignificant green flowers as they attract aphids and their predators such as hoverflies, ladybirds and lacewings. Bees love them too. In June you might have seen hedges of it enshrouded in webbing which gives them an unseasonal Halloween look. This is caused by the beautiful Ermine Moth which creates nurseries of web for its caterpillars. This little moth is white with black spots. Although the leaves are stripped by hungry caterpillars this doesn't seem to cause permanent harm to the bushes. In autumn birds love the seeds which are poisonous to humans.



*Euonymus europaeus* 'Thornhayes'

As with all native plants, myths and superstitions have become part of its story. The name *Euonymus* comes from the Greek; 'eu' means lucky and 'onama' is Greek for name. I don't know why it was called lucky because in some areas if it flowered early then plague was supposed to be on the way. But the wood which is hard and dense was useful for spindles and hence its name. It was also useful for tooth picks and knitting needles. The toxic berries were ground to treat head lice, or alarmingly as a laxative. Today, the wood is still used to make excellent artist's charcoal. There are plenty of spindles to choose from with gorgeous fruits and many of them have fabulous autumn colour too. If you like the idea of growing varieties of our native *Euonymus europaeus*, then 'Red Cascade' or 'Thornhayes' are good choices; they are both lovely with masses of fruit and bright red autumn foliage.

But there are many other varieties from other parts of the world which are just as eye-catching. Some of them have red berries, others are pink or white. I love *Euonymus cornutus* var. *quinquecornutus* which comes from China. Its pink berries have curious horns which make them look just like jesters' hats. The berries are orange. Or another 'Jester's Hat' variety is *Euonymus clivicola* var. *rongchuensis* which comes from Nepal and Bhutan. This is an elegant shrub with narrow leaves.

*Euonymus oxyphyllus* 'Angyo Elegant' the Korean euonymus is just as striking but with long stalked, dangling fruit like Edwardian ear rings. The autumn leaves turn reddish purple.

*Euonymus hamiltonianus* comes from Asia and is sometimes known as the Himalayan spindle. There are several beautiful cultivars of this variety; one of my favourites is 'Koi Boy' which has white fruits with bright red seeds which are supposed to look like Koi carp because of their striking colour. The leaves turn butter-yellow in autumn.

Similar to 'Koi Boy' is *Euonymus hamiltonianus* Pop Corn.'

I love all the varieties of *Euonymus hamiltonianus*, but if I had to choose just one it would probably be 'Miss Pinkie' because it is compact and has yellow autumn leaves and masses of pale pink fruit with bright red seeds.

But then I really covet a variety of the flat-stalked *Euonymus planipes* which comes from Japan. The one I would go for is a Dutch selection called 'Sancho'; this one looks as if it is dressed for the carnival with showy fruit and lovely, bright red leaves.

Many varieties of euonymus have striking autumn leaves but I think the winged euonymus, *Euonymus alatus* 'Rudy Haag' is probably the most vibrant. It's sometimes known as the Burning Bush and it certainly lives up to its name. You don't need Acers when you have this beauty lighting up your garden.

If you would like to see a range of spindle trees in all their vibrant autumn dress then we are lucky here in Suffolk. Rupert Ely at The Place for Plants, East Bergholt has the National Collection. Now is the time to go and admire them.

*Liz Wells*

**You can see more of Liz's pictures of Euonymus on our website.**

*Euonymus hamiltonianus* 'Koi Boy'



## **Cedric Morris and Benton End**

When Sir Cedric Morris died in 1982, the garden he had created at Benton End, on the southern edge of Hadleigh,



went into decline, and his plant collection, many of them cultivars bred by himself – notably the “Benton” irises – was dispersed. The East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing, which he and his lifelong partner, Arthur Lett Haines, had established there during the War, had by then long been closed. The garden and the school were in their time a magnet for many distinguished people – Lucian Freud and Maggi Hambling were art students there, while gardeners such as Vita Sackville-West

were regular visitors, although she herself would not stay there as she found the accommodation too basic. Lett’s cooking, however, was sufficiently good – when garlic was still anathema to most people in this country – for Elizabeth David to visit a number of times.

For some 40 years, the house and its once famous and highly influential garden languished in obscurity, until, through the astonishing generosity of Rob and Bridget Pinchbeck and their family trust, the custodianship of the whole property was

passed to the Garden Museum, which has established itself as one of the foremost small museums in the UK in less than 15 years since its remarkable modernisation. The house's future purpose is still under discussion, and the garden in the very early stages of being brought back to life. A large number of Benton irises have been planted in hamiltonianuse woodland a broad swath of Nectaroscordum siculum, which has naturalised and self-sown in huge numbers. The resurrected garden plan is not likely to involve a plant-by-plant recreation of what was there before, but a reimagining of it. Benton End has the potential to be a magnet which will draw many people to this part of Suffolk, and the project will be a fitting tribute and memorial to the finest gardener to make his home in this part of Suffolk.

*FrankMinns*

## **Book Reviews and Favourite Garden Reading**

This is not a book review but a glance to the past. I was lucky enough to inherit from my Father-in-law and my husband's uncle, Compton Pearson, both of whom were avid and knowledgeable gardeners, a wonderful collection of old gardening books. I dip into these books from time to time.

The two I have taken off the shelf are 'The Book of Climbing Plants' by S Arnott which is Volume X from the series 'Handbooks of Practical Gardening'. It is printed on lovely thick paper and the language is a delight. This is a small example: - "Objection is taken to the growth of Ivy on the walls of dwellings by some on the alleged ground that it renders them damp and that the shoots enter any crevices and destroy the walls. The former is a fallacy, and Ivy has the opposite effect, not only throwing off the rain, but drawing the moisture out by its aerial rootlets which cling to the wall. Nor is there any danger of it entering the joints of the wall if this has been properly built and pointed, as all walls should be."

Not to be argued with.

The other book is 'Bulbs and their Cultivation' by T.W.Sanders F.L.S. F R.H.S. Again this is printed to lovely thick paper and the language is enticingly old fashioned. The first page after the forward gives one a taste with the heading WHAT IS A BULB?-"A bulb may be defined as a modified underground stem surrounded at its base with fleshy scales rolled around each other, as in the case of the hyacinth, or overlapping, as in a lily bulb. The scales are really modified leaves, and their office is to hold food." This book has wonderful tables of what, when, where and how to plant bulbs, and diagrams.

I always have a look in charity shops and junk shops just in case I am able to pick up another gem. It is a good winter pastime

*Fiona Pearson*

'The Morville Hours' by Katherine Swift. I can't do better than repeat the Independent Book of the Year review - 'Written with as much love and thought and detail as she clearly gives to her gardening'. Intensely moving and inspirational.

'Merry Hall' by Beverley Nichols - this account of the restoration of a house and garden in post war England is undoubtedly a serious horticultural undertaking but written in a high-spirited, riotously funny and at times deliciously malicious prose.

*Sue de Sabata*

## Winter Walk – Anglesea Abbey 22<sup>nd</sup> January

Our traditional opportunity to meet and greet members in the New Year. Please make your own arrangements and we hope to meet you there around 11am.

## Holiday 2022 !!

Erica is putting the last information together for our 2022 Holiday in early June. We will let you know when booking is available.



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### Payment information

The preferred way for payment is via our website:

[www.eastangliangardengroup.co.uk](http://www.eastangliangardengroup.co.uk)

But if you need to pay by cheque, make them out to EAGG and include a note to say what the payment is for. Send them to

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