

# East Anglian Garden Group

Newsletter 107

Summer 2013



<http://eastangliangardengroup.onesuffolk.net>

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# WEBSITE

Don't forget to visit EAGG on the web  
<http://eastangliangardengroup.onesuffolk.net/>

Here we have the latest news and additional information about upcoming events. There are also articles written by members and monthly 'Seasonal Treasures' featuring articles on plants or groups of plants of seasonal interest.

# 2013 Autumn PROGRAMME

## Saturday 5th October 2.30pm Hitcham

### Bob Brown on “60 years of Gardening”

Owner of the specialist nurseries Cotswold Garden Flowers at Badsey near Evesham and Just Must Perennials and lead contributor to Which Gardening, Bob Brown is renowned as a plantsman/ introducer of new varieties, speaker and garden writer and well known for his strong opinions. See [www.cgf.net](http://www.cgf.net)

## Saturday 2nd November 2.30pm Hitcham

### AGM

And 'a chance to look at a specialist area of plant enjoyment' with Bill Haldane, a member of the group and a British and European Orchid Council Judge.

### AGM Business

**Vice-Chair** – the group is looking for a vice-chair, someone who is potentially a future chair.

**Committee** – there are two committee member places that need filling, that of the late Maureen Thompson and that of Jackie Smythe, who is retiring by rotation.

**Catering** - our wonderful Catering Officer, Daphne Godfrey, is retiring after twenty years making our renowned teas at every meeting. We offer her our heartfelt thanks for such unstinting service. Her retirement does mean, however, that we are looking for someone or a group of people to take on this role, commencing with the AGM.

**AOB** - if there are things the membership would like to raise, please could they make them known to a member of the Committee.

There is a Committee meeting October 9

### Visits

## Saturday 21st September 10 am

Car visit to Bures, to visit Colin and Ruth Lorking's 1/3rd acre plantsman's garden at Rosedale, 40 Colchester Rd, Bures CO8 5AE For NGS, the cost is £6.50 for entry, tea and cake.

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**POSTSCRIPT** With regret it has not been possible to organise the proposed trip to French gardens in May 2014.

## **Chairman's Report**

2013 has been a good year for EAGG with some very interesting talks and some wonderful garden visits. We were delighted with the success of the Plant Sale in Sudbury in May and we were lucky to have beautiful weather and lots of lovely plants to sell. Jackie Rocker and I were grateful on the day to be helped by Barbara Segall, Heather Pickard and Judy Summers. Matthew Long and his trailer were invaluable for transport.

The other highlight of the year was the party we had in Oswald and Janet Simpson's garden in July. The sun shone for us and everyone had a wonderful time. Jackie Rocker and Jackie Smythe worked very hard and made some delicious meringues. Graham Smythe was invaluable in helping us to get ready too. Oswald provided many wonderful plants both for this occasion and for our Plant Sale in May.

Our secretary, Matthew Long has worked hard throughout the year and we are grateful to him for all he has done for us. We are sorry to be losing Jackie Smythe from the committee; in fact I'm not sure how we will manage without her. She has worked very hard for EAGG and we are enormously in her debt.

Daphne Godfrey, our Catering Officer is giving up after 20 years of making our teas for us and we give her a heartfelt thank you too. Of course she will still be a member but from now on she will be able to sit back and enjoy our talks without worrying about the urn.

I hope all our members have had a wonderful summer in their gardens and I look forward to seeing you all in October when Bob Brown will be entertaining and educating us in his own inimitable fashion.

Liz Wells

## **2014 dates for the Diary**

January 4 Saturday - Anglesey Abbey Winter Walk

February 1 Saturday - Hitcham meeting. Speaker Kathy Brown

February 22 Saturday - Car trip. Snowdrops details TBA

March 1 Saturday - Hitcham meeting. Speaker Julian Sutton, Desirable Plants

April 5 Saturday - Hitcham meeting. Speaker Nick Dunn

April 29 Tuesday - Coach trip. Ulting Wick Tulips and Snares Hill Cottage, Essex

May 5 - Bank Holiday Plant Fair Sudbury

June 28 Saturday - Coach trip. Abbots Ripton Hall Garden Show

July 26 Saturday - Coach trip. TBA

# What have we been doing?

## January

### Anglesey Abbey

What a lucky break in the weather, chilly but bright and not so cold.

Anglesey Abbey's 'Winter Walk' was in full splendour, with the scent of *Sarcococca* 'The Winter Box', underplantings of hellebores and *Cyclamen coum*, and the colour from Cornus stems. And at the end...the fantastical silver birches *Betula jacquemontii* (made ghostly white by a thorough power washing), evoking ideas of Pre-Raphaelite maidens or mad March hares tripping through.

## February

### Ian Christie, Alpines and Snowdrops

Ben Potterton of Blacksmiths Cottage Nursery at Langmere was kind enough to organise Ian Christie's trip down south. A whole three days of snowdrop visits, shows and lectures. A boost to the numbers at Hitcham from old friends and snowdrop enthusiasts, gave Ian a great reception to his wide-ranging and well-illustrated talk.

### Chippenham Park

With the responsibility for the garden being passed to a younger generation, it was good to see the cars queuing up along the driveway to Chippenham Park, the beginning to the best weekend of visiting they have ever had. We were blessed with good weather from start to finish.

## March

### Richard Ford, Hostas

Although a 'Marmite' group of plants for many group members, nonetheless, Richard gave us the benefit of all his experience of growing, showing and selling hostas, and winning. An extensively-illustrated talk, confidently presented and with all questions comprehensively covered. Something for everyone, even those who expressed a dislike of hostas.

## April

### Val Bourne, Garden Colour (see page 11)

A full house with extra seats required, listened to a very engaging talk from Val Bourne, who peppered her talk with lively anecdotes.

A lot of note-taking should bring forth a greater planned use and extension of colour across the seasons. We look forward to seeing and comparing results.

### Wickham Place Farm, Wickham Bishops

What a late start to the gardening year! Very little colour was showing in Judith Wilson's walled garden, now separated from the big house Wickham

Place. Plenty of green shoots and structure that give a clue to the feast of plants that would normally have been seen, and that have Gardeners World TV crews and other visitors touring the seven acres of woodland and walled gardens throughout the year. The 'biggest' wisteria in the UK had only just been pruned (see photo below). only a glimpse of it's glory in May some three weeks later than usual and better than ever. A very welcome tea and fabulous cake was enjoyed by all, some of whom had been hiding in the 'Summer' house against the wind.



### Woodpeckers, Mangapp Chase, Burnham

Linda Holdaway and her husband Ian, stalwarts of the Essex NGS, have a very pretty, feminine garden surrounding their Arts and Crafts style house.

*Tulipa* 'Ballerina', 'Ronaldo' and 'Queen of Night' and *Narcissus* 'Thalia' and 'Segovia' were some of the spot plants at their peak

## **May**

### Sudbury, Quay Theatre Plant Fair

Encouraged by Maggie Thorpe and Barbara Segall, Liz Wells, Jackie Rocker and Jackie Smythe responded to the invitation to take a stall at the annual plant fair on Market Hill Sudbury, in aid of the Quay Theatre. Oswald's exhaustive supply of Bishop's Children dahlias were grown on, and a surprisingly large and interesting range of plants were collected, despite the usual concerns and a very slow start to the year. And a surplus of nearly £400 was raised for group funds, more than making up for any anticipated deficit in sales at the Hitcham meeting plant stall. Congratulations to all involved, they know who they were.

A decision whether to repeat the exercise in 2014 has yet to be taken, but successful fund raising does help limit any increase in subscriptions that might be required.

## June

### NT Mottisfont Abbey

An early start and works on the M25 meant a longer journey than planned, the weather forecast was patchy and numbers were down. Those who made it were rewarded with sunshine, unbelievable scents and the best collection of roses in the UK in peak condition (700 varieties in three gardens covering four acres), and relatively uncrowded compared with the 20,000 visitors on the following Saturday.



Developed since 1975 from the collection of old roses amassed by Graham Stuart Thomas, and planned and underplanted to his design.

## July

### Beeches Nursery, Ashdon

A good start to a day out, an hour and a half of looking at some of the claimed 2,500 varieties offered from an enormous range of plants, all grown and presented exceedingly well, many of them choice and rare raised from wild-collected seed, raising frequent murmurs of delight as yet another long-sought treasure was spotted. And an ever-longer queue to pay before getting back on the coach.

### Kathy Brown's Garden, Stevington, Beds

Familiar to many EAGG members for the talk she gave to Plant Heritage, we had come to see Kathy's late-flowering clematis. Clouds of blue, purple, white and red viticellas on the arches and pergolas, pink texensis on the south front of the house, and many orientalis types on the wisteria arches, together with various species clematis too. Glorious though they are there is much, much more to this garden than just clematis.



The garden is a challenging mix of all that is traditionally English - rambling roses, over a hundred late-flowering clematis (a list provided) wisteria arches and wild flower meadow – with in-your-face container planting (begonias and fuchsias in head-spinning colour combinations) and thought-provoking takes on modern art. Quirky touches – houseleeks growing in and round an old-fashioned telephone, succulents planted in eggshells – reflect Kathy's sense of humour. Keenly interested in modern art, the former fishpond is Kathy's dramatic homage to Kandinsky. Its sides

painted blue, it sports a seemingly random display of railways sleepers, brightly painted ladders and vibrant pot plants. Kathy instructs us to half-close our eyes to see the artist's abstract forms emerge.

The garden is fashionably a series of rooms, each one a surprise. Modern art is again the inspiration for a garden room recalling Mark Rothko's paintings with purple and bronze-coloured hedges of berberis, prunus and fagus. Probably the area nearest to Kathy's heart is the edible flower border. At 14 metres long, it contains highly scented roses including 'Roseaie de l'Haÿ' and 'Gertrude Jekyll', a frontage of pink, white and blue lavenders, rosemary, sages, marigolds and much more. Kathy is almost as renowned for her wonderful teas featuring lavender flapjacks, marigold carrot cakes and rose petal sponges as she is for her garden – and she's written several books on baking with edible flowers.

At the end of our visit, as we sat on the lawn, enjoying raspberry and elderflower cake and Kathy's classic rose cream sponge we agreed that, like Beeches Nursery, this was definitely a place to return to. We look forward to her talk next February.

*Text and Photo Widget Finn*

## **August**

### **EAGG Party**

On Thursday, 25 July Oswald and Janet Simpson opened their charming garden to the group. The weather was idyllic and 65 members and guests



were greeted on arrival with an impressive array of plants to buy. The invitation stated that there would be drinks and light refreshments and what a feast this turned out to be! There were several cheeses and pâtés with biscuits followed by strawberries, meringues and cream.

This was a rare opportunity to buy some of Oswald's magnificent hostas and agapanthus. The proceeds from the sale were donated to the group. Thank you, Patrick for doing the selling.

The sub-committee did a commendable job of organising the evening and our Chairman, Liz Wells presented flowers to Janet to show the Group's appreciation of the hospitality shown.

*Jackie Smythe*



## Garden Musings

In the eighteenth Century William Kent and Capability Browns' designs for gardens swept away the formality of the Dutch style with its canals, parterres and box hedges. In fact, sometimes they swept away villages which were inconveniently in the way. Then Romantic gardens became fashionable and mountains, which had always been terrifying, were admired. People wanted precipices and grottos and places to be melancholy in. Rockeries were built on a monumental scale to represent actual mountain ranges. Victorians stripped the countryside of ferns to fill their ferneries. Greenhouses were heated and rich people spent fortunes on new exotics planted out each year to look like oriental carpets.

Since then fashions have come and gone with new designers reviling the taste of those who went before despite the fact that they shamelessly plundered gardening motifs of previous generations.

Alexander Pope said 'Consult the genius of the place' when gardening and this was probably the best horticultural advice ever. But of course it has usually been ignored because time and again the craze for exotic foreign ideas sweeps the country. The craze for Chinoiserie left us with an incongruous Chinese Pagoda in Kew gardens. Everybody wanted their garden to look like a willow pattern plate. The Edwardians admired Japanese gardens and suddenly there were tea houses, raked gravel and tortured trees everywhere. Italian influences have never really left us and many designers still think that our gardens should be mostly green and resemble the Boboli Gardens with box, topiary, and long vistas.

William Robinson and Gertrude Jekyll ushered in the Golden Age for English gardening with its naturalism and subtle colour schemes. Cottage gardens became all the vogue and paintings showed rural idylls of cottage gardens complete with picturesque peasants. Of course the whole idea of a cottage garden is an artificial construct because they never were or could have been beautiful. Peasants needed their land to grow vegetables.

For many years plants in pastel colours were the only sort to grow and gardens up and down the country were made insipid with monochrome plantings in white or blue. Anything in red, orange or yellow was terribly vulgar. Foliage became important but it had to be grey. (Except it was called silver.) There was even a nursery devoted to it. Mrs Desmond Allwood sold silver plants and pinks. Yellow which was eschewed in flowers was embraced in foliage because it wasn't called yellow it was called gold.

In the 1970s people decided that gardens should be labour-saving and designed for people who couldn't be bothered to garden. Herbaceous plants were no longer grown because it was felt that staking your delphiniums is too much of a chore. The awful concept of ground cover

plants became popular and people were encouraged to plant such horrors as vinca, lamium, symphoricarpos and hypericum.

Then there was the craze for island beds of heather and dwarf conifers made popular by Adrian Bloom. This has left the suburbs full of huge conifers which turned out not to be dwarf after all. Fashion quickly changed again and you still hear people coming out with that old cliché: 'the only place for heather is on the moors'. (This is almost as annoying as people saying 'the garden just grewed like Topsy'.) Anyway *Erica carnea* doesn't grow on the moors and there is nothing like it for winter colour.

Now perennials are making a comeback and also at last we can have colour without being considered vulgar. Dahlias have been reinstated; for a long time it was only considered acceptable to grow the 'Bishop of Llandaff' but now people are not ashamed to plant brightly coloured ones with green leaves. You can even grow *Kniphofia*, and not only the tasteful 'Jenny Bloom'. Sarah Raven has done a lot to encourage adventurous colour schemes.

This is all very liberating but of course there are voices saying that our tradition of English country garden is reactionary and old-fashioned. I have read that some designers say that we cram too many flowers into our gardens and we should restrict our palettes to broad sheets of colour. I feel very strongly that people should be free to make of their gardens what they will without arbiters of taste telling them that they are vulgar or old-fashioned.

I sincerely hope that the cult for prairie gardening is on its way out now. We couldn't have come further from Pope's advice to consult the genius of the place than this weird idea that to create an American prairie is a naturalistic way of gardening in the UK. It is a good idea to plant flowers in a matrix of grasses, in other words create a meadow. After all, meadows have been constantly reinvented since the Elizabethan flowery mead. But the style promoted by Piet Oudolf and Noel Kingsbury looks good only for a couple of months in late summer. After that you have to content yourself with dead seed heads and pretend you like looking at them. There are signs though that people feel that the English flower meadow is the sort we should be encouraging; suddenly cow parsley is the in thing.

I have been a member of EAGG for more than 15 years now and I have seen many of our members' gardens. Fashions and trends come and go but what I think unites all our members is a love of plants and a desire to learn how we can grow them well and in pleasing combinations. I think that our imperviousness to trends and gimmicks is one of our great strengths as a group. I love it that we all sit politely as speakers tell us what we should be growing. Then we go home and create our own visions of beauty.

*Liz Wells*

## Val Bourne Colour in the Garden. 6th April

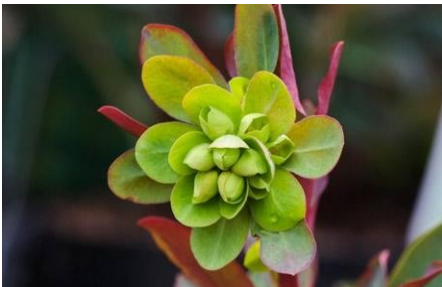
We had a full house for the fascinating talk by the well-known writer and plantswoman, Val Bourne. She gave us all sorts of ideas for zingy seasonal colour combinations. She is a great advocate of orange which



many people banish from their gardens as being vulgar. She loves the luminous orange *Kniphofia* 'Prince Igor' and suggested planting the gorgeous black *Tulip* 'Queen of Night' with orange geums, or if these flower too late; orange wallflowers. For spring, she suggested acid green *Smyrniium perfoliatum* growing with blue *Brunnera*.

Val loves to weave umbellifers such as *Selinum wallichianum* with its lacy foliage and cream flowers amongst stronger colours. Bowles called this plant 'the cream of all umbellifers'. Val also loves the annual

wild carrot look-alike *Amni visnaga* which is larger and chunkier than the usually seen *Ammi majus*.



I have never heard of two of the Euphorbias she recommended, *Euphorbia* 'Craigieburn' and *Euphorbia* 'Whistleberry Garnet', but I shall certainly seek them out.

For a summer idea people were impressed by the dusky two-tone *Origanum laevigatum* 'Herrenhausen' which is beloved by butterflies, bees

and hoverflies. Val's picture showed it growing with the Rose 'Rhapsody in Blue' and it was a perfect match.

For high summer Val grows lots of daisy flowers. *Echinacea pallida*, (grown from seed), looked good with orange eschscholzias. More daisy flowers are provided by heliopsis, heleniums and *Ratibida pinnata*, growing with the gorgeous grass *Molinia caerulea* subsp 'Transparent'.



I have never seen the lovely *Helenium* 'Sahin's Early Flowered' which is two-tone; orange and yellow with a centre of chocolate-brown. This plant was made available by Bob Brown of Cotswold Garden Flowers. Val mentioned Bob quite a lot and we are looking forward to his talk in October.



Val stressed the importance of resisting the urge to buy one of everything, which leads to a bitty picture. Plants look better planted in groups rather than dotted about. As plants lovers we are all guilty of impulse- buying and popping yet another treasure in wherever there is a space. She also told us how she values foliage. When asked about her favourite plants she suggested a grass - the brown *Carex buchananii* - and the little-

used shrub *Bupleurum fruticosum* which is an evergreen with blue green leaves.

We all had a great afternoon and came away with lots of ideas from an interesting talk delivered with great humour and enthusiasm.

*Liz Wells*

## **BOOK and PLANT stalls at Hitcham Meetings**

**Plant and book sales contribute greatly to keeping the membership fees low and enabling the group to book more costly speakers without additional charges.**

**So donations are to be encouraged**

**Please label plants clearly.**

**Pricing of books in pencil on inside front cover.**

**The committee can price up books if advised in advance.**

**Unsold books or plants must be taken back or donated.**