

East Anglian Garden Group

Newsletter 114

Autumn 2017



<http://eastangliangardengroup.onesuffolk.net/>

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President	Mrs Margaret Thorpe
Chairman	Mrs Erica Bolam
Secretary	Mr Matthew Long The Flints, 1&2 Brent Eleigh Road Monks Eleigh, Suffolk IP7 7JG
Treasurer	Mrs Josephine Mitson
Committee	Mrs Isobel Ashton Mr John Dyter Mrs Widget Finn Mr Bob Hardwick Website Co-ordinator Mrs Elaine Overnell

Subscriptions for 2017/2018 are due on 1st November 2017

£12 p.p. by cheque payable to 'The East Anglian Garden Group'

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.

Chairman's Letter

Looking back this year, we have had some excellent speakers. Luci Skinner and her fascinating talk on Auriculas, followed by Dave Ward, with his informative history of Beth Chatto's Garden, and its plans for future development. Simon White brought with him a varied selection of roses from Peter Beales Roses, and gave us a history of Old Roses, and development of the newer varieties. Our celebrity speaker, Matthew Wilson, was entertaining, and gave us lots of ideas for seasonal interest in the garden.

Visits, with varying degrees of 'weather', began with the annual Winter Walk at Angelsey Abbey, a lovely visit to start the season. April's outing, with a visit to Dip on the Hill, and, one of my favourites this year, Ousden House, was followed in June, by a visit to Spencers, at Great Yeldham, and then in July to Cobbs Hall and Paugers Nursery.

Our Summer Social, which was well attended, was held at Stoke Priory, by kind invitation of Victoria and Henry Engleheart, who went to great lengths to make us welcome, showing us round their stunning garden, and opening their home to give us shelter from the rain! My thanks to them, and to the committee for all their hard work to provide such a wonderful supper, and to Jacky Rocker for once again, making the marvellous meringues.

Looking forward, we have a full programme of varied and interesting speakers for the new season. You will find the list in this newsletter, along with the outings for 2018. Could I ask you to put these dates in your diaries, and make definite bookings as soon as possible? It helps the committee to organise transport effectively, particularly if we need coaches.

Barbara Segall will be signing copies of her new book, 'Secret Gardens of East Anglia' on November 4th at the AGM. If you would like to pre-order a copy, please let me know at our meeting on 7th October, and I will organise it for you.

Our celebrity speaker next year is the multiple Chelsea Gold Medalist, Best in Show 2011 and 2012, CLEVE WEST. His Talk 'Healing Gardens' will be about his experiences in creating and working with the Horatio's Garden for the Spinal Injuries Unit at Salisbury Hospital. We anticipate a high demand for tickets and the venue will be announced shortly depending on numbers.

Finally, thank you to all members who contribute so generously to the tea time refreshments, we all appreciate, and enjoy the results. Don't forget to bring plants to the plant stall. Along with the books, we raised in excess of £700 last year, and this all helps towards paying for the outstanding calibre of speakers we can offer at EAGG.

Erica Bolam

Secret Gardens of East Anglia – Barbara Segall

Barbara Segall, a past President and Chairman of our East Anglian Garden Group, has just launched this remarkable book with absolutely sumptuous photographs by Marcus Harpur who sadly died just prior to its publication.

Barbara's words invite us into these fabulous places and the sunlight across the gardens captured by Marcus give them a fairy-tale appearance. But they are real and although 'secret' are known to many of us from private visits to some in the past.

Maggie Thorpe

Visit to Spencers Garden, Great Yeldham

Twenty members enjoyed a perfect day for exploring the garden at Spencers in early June. Our tour began with meeting delightful Lynne Bogie for a brief history of the house and garden. The current house was built by Lady Anne Spencer in 1760, and you can read its history online. Lynne, the current owner, has been there for only six years, and was new to gardening when she arrived, and we admired her enthusiasm and determination to make the garden work.

Walking to the one and a half acre walled garden, Lynne explained that this area retains the grid system laid out in Georgian times, and some of the beds are being systematically restored. Huge lavender hedges, large borders of not uncommon herbaceous planting, and masses of rose bushes, including a circular crossing point surrounded by Rose 'Graham Thomas', make impressive walkways and keep five gardeners very busy.

We were impressed with the old brick built bothy which appeared to have a very large upper storey. This holds a huge tank of (tons of) rain, which still supplies water for the garden, as Lynne demonstrated by opening a huge water pipe into the garden sink. The pretty 18th century greenhouse is under restoration, replacing the woodwork and re-using the original small panes of glass. Lynne took us on a woodland walk beyond the walled garden, where there are two impressive badger setts where the family come and watch. The woodland extends to the River Colne, forming, when we were there, a quiet stream in a deep cutting. Lynne told us that she had been planning to plant the banks, but hastily revised her plans when she realised that the water was inclined to rise in torrents at times in the year. The woodland walk lead us to the restored coach house for tea and cakes, served by family members, and Lynne joined us to share photos of the garden in all the seasons, taken during her time there.

Isobel Ashton

Visit to Ousden House

On 27th April, a stalwart group of members, wrapped up against the rain, were welcomed by Mr and Mrs Alastair Robinson, who have created the stunning garden here. They guided us round the herbaceous borders, rose garden, summerhouse lawn with borders, and an ornamental woodland with lake, beside which was a life- sized sculpture of a mare and foal.

A spectacular long, double crinkle crankle yew hedge, leads from the clock tower; and a moat garden with gentle fountains, was densely planted with moisture loving plants, and had an atmosphere about it that reminded me of part of the garden at Ninfa in Italy. There were so many rambling pathways, leading us through avenues of flowering cherry, with scented flowering shrubs that it was a joy to explore it all, even in the rain. To warm us all up, we were served a wonderful tea in the dining room, with sandwiches and home- made cakes. There was an opportunity to view the photographs taken during the execution of the design, showing the extensive landscaping that took place, in order to create the vistas, woodland and lake, which are an integral part of this lovely garden.

Erica Bolam

Visit to Cobbs Hall, Great Saxham

Twenty two members were met by our hosts Dick and Sue Soper who welcomed us to their NGS private garden on 15th July. We enjoyed Dick's personal stories of the garden creation and growth over 30 years. Many interesting ornamental trees had been planted which envelop different garden areas; near the house a calming formal parterre; a large free-form fish and lily pond lushly surrounded by reeds, ferns and small plants creeping over the stone edges; a colourful herbaceous border (Sue's territory); and a folly, lovingly constructed by Dick over many years, with rooms and a fireplace.

We were all amazed at the variety of produce, veg and many fruits, of the small and perfect walled kitchen garden.

In the prettily enclosed areas close to the kitchen we enjoyed Sue's wonderful cakes with welcome hot drinks while trying to identify the many plants climbing over trellis screens.

Dick and Sue will be leaving Cobbs Hall very soon and 2017 would see their last garden openings. We felt privileged to be allowed to share not only the garden, but some of its personal history.

Some members took the opportunity later of calling in at nearby Paugers nursery; always worth a visit.

Isobel Ashton

The Education of a Gardener - Russell Page

This classic book of garden literature should be on every gardener's bedside table. I re-read it every few years and always enjoy it. Russell Page was a garden designer and landscape artist and he was probably the most influential of his generation. He designed gardens for all the great and the good in his time. (Well, not necessarily the good; he designed one for those well-known Nazi sympathisers, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor). He was heavily influenced by the formality of Eastern and French gardens. He insisted on restraint in planting. He is still so highly regarded that his style of gardening has become the paradigm for good taste. I blame him for the vogue for box hedging and geometric garden designs. He was very aware of his influence and importance and although I love this book, I dislike the way he patronises us and instructs us as to what is tasteful and what not. It is all very well repeating Pope's dictum about consulting the genius of the place and designing a garden that is in keeping with the house, but his commissions were for grand places, not for the 1930s semi.

For instance, to be in keeping with a Victorian house you would have to give your garden over to bedding out which only municipal parks adopt these days. Here is an example of carpet bedding in the Abbey gardens at Bury St Edmunds. What private gardener could or would want to attempt this?

And what about my higgledy piggledy house built in 1500? How should my garden look to be in harmony with an early sixteenth century house with an early Victorian façade? It would have belonged to a yeoman farmer so I suppose I should have chickens and a pig sty and a midden. My front garden should be full of cabbages and herbs of course. Everyone grew herbs, or simples as they were called, for self-medication. I grow culinary herbs but I am not interested in growing herbs to heal the dropsy. I recently bought a Devil's Bit Scabious because it is beautiful and bees love it. I didn't buy it because Gerard tells me that '*Devil's Bit* *'cleanseth away slimie flegme that sticketh in the jaws'*. If I am unfortunate enough to find myself with slimie flegme sticking to my jaws I will go to the doctor. And I will never grow horrible *Hypericum* or '*Saint James his Wort*' as Gerard calls it. Even if a '*decoction of it gargarised*' is a remedy against swellings and '*impostumations*' of the throat.

A friend of mine has a little sixteenth century cottage and she is determined that her garden will be authentic. She only grows sixteenth century plants, preferably ones mentioned by Shakespeare. In her front garden she has a pretty knot garden and she is very proud of that. In fact, it is entirely inappropriate for the garden of a small cottage. A knot garden was the fashion accessory for the rich. Here is one looking just right in the grounds of the Tudor Helmingham Hall.

I really think it is an affectation to grow only the plants that were available in the sixteenth century. I once read a gardening book and I cannot remember who wrote it, where the author objected to eucalyptus trees in an English garden. He said they are as inappropriate as an ostrich on a grouse moor. And I wondered why pick on eucalyptus trees? We grow plants from all over the world and our gardens are enriched by them.

We are so lucky to live in an age when we have plants from all corners of the world and we no longer need to use our gardens to scratch out an existence. Our gardens have a completely different purpose. I have had friendly disagreements with a friend about having a garden in keeping with the period of the house. She thinks that a cottage garden is appropriate for a house like mine. And although my front garden is what you might call a cottage garden, I don't think this is authentic for a sixteenth century house and I am planning on a complete makeover next year. The idea of a picturesque cottage garden is actually a Victorian and early twentieth century construct. It represents an imaginary past seen through the eyes of artists such as Alfred Parsons, Helen Allingham and Earnest Arthur Rowe.

So whenever I read Russell Page, I find myself picking an argument with him. I can't have and do not want a garden that harmonises with my house. And neither do I want it organised on a geometric grid pattern like a Persian carpet. And I don't want box hedges, I loathe the things. I want my garden to take you on a roundabout path that meanders here and there and never in a straight line. I don't want long vistas; I want a surprise round every corner. I don't want blocks of colour or a restricted palette of plants that are repeated. I don't want restraint. I want a rich tapestry of horticultural delights. The question of good taste in the garden is a thorny one and there is much debate in horticultural circles as to whether the garden is an art form. I think most of us object to the implication that our beloved gardens are not aesthetically pleasing. I know Page trained at the Slade under the great Tonks and without doubt he designed beautiful gardens. But the implication that he is the arbiter of good taste in the garden and that any garden that doesn't measure up to his standards is not artistic, is annoying.

I wouldn't want a painting by Mark Rothko or even Mondrian, even if I could afford them. Give me a Breughel scene or a Bosschaert flower painting any time, or even a painting by poor, mad Richard Dadd. Paintings that

you can gaze at for hours and get lost in the detail.

And it's the same with gardens; I don't want broad strokes or geometrical regularity. I want intricacy, a tapestry of beautiful flowers. I believe we should follow our own eyes and create a garden that pleases us without worrying whether it matches Page's criteria. I have to point out that Page didn't even have his own garden. In my book, you can't call yourself a gardener if you don't garden, anymore than you can be an artist if you don't paint, or a writer if you don't write.

I set out to do a book review and end up doing an iconoclastic rant. All the same if you haven't read *The Education of a Gardener*, I do recommend it. It is elegantly written and full of information.

Elizabeth Wells

EAGG Holiday Success

26 members set off by coach to Derbyshire for three days visiting Easton Walled Gardens, Biddulph Grange and Trentham Park.

At Easton we were met by Ursula Cholmeley, a family member and friend of Barbara Segall, who gave us an introductory talk on the history and restoration of the garden followed by refreshments. The pickory (veggies and flowers for cutting) was wonderfully perfumed by alyssum borders round beds which were edged with *Gladiolus* 'flevo laguna', spectacular dahlias, and fruit trees in abundance. Of great interest were the enormous terraces of wild flowers leading up to an avenue of cedars. In one of the shrub borders our eagle-eyed members spied a very unusual shrub (*Genista* x *spachiana*) and the gardener invited us all to help ourselves to some seeds. We did not need much persuasion!

We drove through wonderful scenery over the moors to our hotel in Buxton for a very delicious dinner and very comfortable rooms to refresh us for the next day's visit to Biddulph Grange in Staffordshire. What imagination James Bateman had to build areas depicting different countries including Egypt and best of all, China, which we were told he copied from a Willow Pattern Plate! The huge boulders must have been terribly heavy to put in place without the use of modern cranes.

Day three took us to Trentham, the vast estate previously owned by the Dukes of Sutherland and now owned by a property company, Modwen Estates, who employed Piet Oudolph and Tom Stuart Smith to revitalize the parterre and long borders leading down to the lake. There was great local opposition to the plan in the first place but it is now recognized as one of the four best visitor gardens in the country. The use of grasses, eupatorium, rudbeckias, hydrangeas, selinums and asters created a magical scene and the walk through winding paths was the perfect way to view such autumn glory.

Michael Walker, Head of Garden and Estate, talked us through the flooding problems of the River Trent and hinted at secret ideas for future areas including wild flower edges to the lakeside paths, these to be designed by Nigel Dunnott of Olympic Park fame.

SPEAKERS and VISITS 2017 - 2018

Following the requests which we received earlier this year, we are hoping to have a new loud-speaker system installed in time for the new season, so there will be more volume.

2017

October 7th

HOWARD DRURY ‘Variegated Delights’

(a change from the previously advertised programme)

For ten years Howard presented Central TV’s programme ‘Gardening Time’, and lectures at Ashwood Nurseries. He will talk on variegated plants for the garden, greenhouse and home. They do need a little more care than their all green counterparts do but they are fascinating and are becoming more popular

November 5th

KEN THOMPSON ‘Modern Garden Myths’

Thompson, author of ‘*No Nettles Require’d* and ‘*An Ear to the Ground*’ and a regular columnist as ‘The Sceptical Gardener’ in the Saturday Telegraph, casts a quizzical eye on gardening topics including how bees improve strawberries, the difference between Spanish and English bluebells, compost tea, how plants get sunburn and why planting by the moon is (so he says) utter nonsense.

2018

Saturday January 6th

Anglesey Abbey Our traditional New Year get-together to walk in the Winter Garden. Meet in the lobby at 10.30am

Saturday February 3rd

JULIAN IVES

‘Controlling Garden Pests and Attracting Wildlife’

Julian did his horticultural training at RHS Harlow Carr and Writtle College, then joined the pioneering biological control company Koppert Biological Systems before setting up his own business to advise on natural pest control and how to make gardens a safe environment for wildlife.

Saturday February 17th

CELEBRITY SPEAKER

CLEVE WEST 'Healing Gardens'

Garden designer, Chelsea Gold Medallist, Best in Show 2011/2012

Cleve West will talk from a personal perspective on Healing Gardens, how they can enhance well-being and even serve as a form of therapy. Examples range from private sanctuaries to his own allotment and the much celebrated Horatio's Garden, and Cleve will also touch on broader environmental issues that threaten the biggest garden of all.

Tickets £7.50 (EAGG members) and £12.50 (guests) including tea. Advance booking only.

Contact Matthew Long flagpartnership@btinternet.com

or 01449 741551

*A donation of £2.50 per ticket will go to the charity Horatio's Garden. **Note: Venue Chamberlin Hall, off Wattisham Road, Bildeston IP7 7EZ***

Sunday 25th February

Chippenham Park Gardens. Snowdrop day

Members visit by car. Meet there at 11.00am.

Saturday March 3rd

STEVE EDNEY 'The Delights of Dahlias'

Head gardener, The Salutation Garden, Sandwich

Steve has been a gardener for 23 years, having trained at Hadlow College. He is involved in RHS plant trials and is a member of the RHS Dahlia committee. He has overseen the restoration of the beautiful Lutyens-designed Salutation Gardens not once but twice – in 2007 the property was rescued from years of neglect by new owners, and in 2013 major floods left 5 million litres of water trapped in the gardens.

Saturday April 7th

HARRIET RYCROFT 'Planting exciting container displays'

Harriet was a volunteer at Hidcote Manor Garden then head gardener at Wychford Pottery for fourteen years where she estimates that altogether she planted and maintained 7,000 pots. She now teaches container gardening at 'My Garden School'

Wednesday June 13th

VISIT TO TOM STUART-SMITH'S GARDEN

A private visit by coach to two famous gardens at Serge Hill in Hertfordshire

Both Tom Stuart-Smith's The Barn and his Mother Kate Stuart-Smith's garden Serge Hill House. The price, including tea, will be £45 per person. Please give your name to Erica Bolam if you are interested as there are only 25 places available and will be given on a first come first served basis.

Saturday October 6th

STEPHEN BARSTOW

'Around the World in 80 Plants'

Stephen lives near the Arctic Circle in Norway. Known as 'the Extreme Salad Man' he has devoted 30 years to trialling perennial vegetables from around the world, and his garden contains 2,000 edible plants. He holds the world record for the greatest number of plant varieties in a salad – 363 distinct varieties.

Saturday November 3rd

RAZVAN CHISU - THE TRANSYLVANIAN GARDENER

'Castles and Plants of Transylvania'

Razvan studied horticulture in his native Rumania, and now lives in Cheshire where he is a committee member of the Hardy Plant Society and co-ordinator of its stand at the Tatton Flower Show. He also edits The Saxifrage Society Magazine. He's proud of his Transylvanian heritage, and aims to make the flourishing wildlife, rare plants and fairytale castles in the 'lands beyond the forests' better known to UK audiences.

** We are working on more visits for 2018: details available in the New Year.*

Things to do

- Sep 23/24 Essex Plant Heritage, Plant Fair RHS Hyde Hall
Sep 23/24 Malvern Autumn Show
Sep 30 / Oct 1 Holkham Hall Plant Fair, Wells-next-the Sea
Sep 30 Suffolk Plant Heritage, Graeme Proctor Crown Nursery
Oct 3/4 RHS Harvest Festival, London
Oct 7 HPS Herts, Anna Pavord
Oct 7 AGS Mid-Anglia, Simon Wallis 'Species Tulips at Cambridge Bot
Oct 7/8 Great Dixter Autumn Fair
Oct 14/15 Great Comp Autumn Extravaganza, Sevenoaks
Oct 15 SWLT Lopham Fen Apple Day & Plant Fair
Oct 21 Hattens Farm Nurseries Sale, Metfield
Oct 22 Essex HPS, Beth Chatto Dry Garden Asa Gregers-Warg
Oct 22 Norfolk Plant Heritage, Nick Bailey Chelsea Physic Garden
Oct 25/26 RHS Autumn Garden Show
Oct 29 Suffolk Plant Heritage, Graham Kendall Greece
Nov 2 Suffolk Agric. Assn. Garden Conference, Trinity Park Ipswich
Nov 4 Norfolk Plant Heritage, Richard Hobbs – Seed Workshop
Nov 11 Cambs Plant Heritage, Jan Pennings for Max Walters Lecture
Nov 19 Essex HPS, Tim Upson Morocco
Dec 9 AGS Mid-Anglia, John Amand – The Bulb Trade

Plants for Sale at our Meetings

Plant and loved book sales greatly help in keeping the membership fees low and contribute to the interest of our meetings.

Donations are to be welcomed at Hitcham

.Please think of dividing perennials such as hellebores, aconitums, asters, etc. and ferns and grasses before top growth shows.

Share any left-over seedlings, dig snowdrops 'in the green' Please LABEL CLEARLY or we will have no idea what is on offer!

East Anglian Garden Group



SATURDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2018 at 2.30
Chamberlin Hall, Bildeston IP7 7EZ

Cleve West

Garden designer, 6 Chelsea Gold Medals, 2 Chelsea 'Best in Show'

'HEALING GARDENS'

Cleve will talk from a personal perspective on Healing Gardens, how they can enhance well-being and their therapeutic effect. Examples range from private sanctuaries, his own allotment and the much celebrated Horatio's Garden.

Tickets: £7.50 (EAGG members) and £12.50 (guests) including tea. A donation of £2.50 per ticket will go to the charity Horatio's Garden. Advance booking only:
Matthew Long flagpartnership@btinternet.com
or phone 01449 741551