

WEST YORKSHIRE AGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 62 FEBRUARY 2016



Iris 'Eyecatcher'

NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

I use Facebook to keep in touch with far flung friends and family. Obviously I am very careful, have a limited number of 'friends', display no personal information and guard my privacy.

Having spent years observing posts by others I was recently challenged to put photos on to share. But what? I do not have a life of travel, have no pets, so adoring eyes of a pet dog or antics of a favourite cat were out. I have set myself a challenge of posting at least one new flower from the garden every week for a year, starting last September. So far so good. Last week it was an *Iris reticulata* 'Pauline', photographed before the gales. It survived storm force winds, rain, wintry showers and is still almost pristine after another couple of days of gales.

This week it will be the newly out Iris 'Sheila Ann Germaney'. Photographed that on Monday before the wind really got going. It has delicate pale blue flowers that look so frail. After two days of gales it still looks as good as new.



Iris 'Sheila Ann Germaney'

Aren't we lucky to enjoy such plants!

The dark days this winter have been lightened by each new shoot, each new flower and a dark corner is now shining with my, very late, *Hamamelis mollis* 'Pallida'. I'm not sure what my facebook friends make of the snowdrops, though! I am rationing them as I realise that, even though I know they are different, in the photos they all look ... well like snowdrops!

Rosemary Cox

Trillium grandiflorum

I was given my first trillium by an old university friend about ten years ago. It was a small specimen of *Trillium grandiflorum* and I planted it on the shady northern side of a woodland bed with dwarf azaleas, rhododendrons and various small bulbs. The plant grew away well in my sandy acid soil and over the next few years developed into a lovely clump producing at least 20 flowers each year. As the plant expanded, I started to think about propagation because the idea of a drift of trilliums really excited me. I read that division was the easiest way forward and that it should be attempted just when the flowers have faded. On a couple of occasions I actually approached the plant, fork and spade in hand as the flowers finished, but I could not bring myself to 'do the deed' in case I killed it. The decision to go ahead and divide the plant came after I noticed that there were numerous trillium seedlings surrounding the parent.

I lifted the plant and put it in a wheelbarrow and hosed off the soil. I was expecting to be able to split the plant easily into separate divisions each with a growing point but was alarmed to find a central mass of undifferentiated tissue the size of a small football with the growing points arranged around the periphery. This was the moment when I thought, "Why did I do it, how could I have been so foolish?"

I cut the mass into two equal parts and replanted one. From the other, I cut 12 sections from the outside edge, each with leaves and the old flowering stems attached. I potted each division into a 1 litre deep pot with my usual woodland compost made up of 3 parts coarse peat: 2 parts leaf mould and 1 part gravel plus 3 grams per litre of 12-14 month slow-release fertiliser. The



newly potted plants looked horrible with broken old flower stems and leaves, and I was convinced all would die. The residual mass of tissue had just a couple of damaged growing points and I replanted it near its original spot. I honestly thought that all was lost and felt quite fed up about the situation for few days.

The following year I was surprised and truly delighted when all the potted



trilliums started into growth. I was even more surprised to find that they all flowered. The undivided half that I replanted was slow to shoot and I really thought that it had perished. However, it reappeared about a month later than usual, as did the ‘butchered’ section, and once more, both flowered. I now realise that *T. grandiflorum* is a very easy species to propagate vegetatively and I now routinely split plants when the flowers have faded. They invariably survive and flower the next season.

Many of the seedlings that I noted around the original parent plant have now reached flowering size and have been moved to new locations in the garden. I have also been surprised when trillium flowers open on young plants in totally unexpected places. The seed has probably been dispersed by ants, that are very numerous in my soil, and the seedlings have grown unnoticed until flowering. I have also observed trillium seedlings appearing in pots of other species in my glasshouse and polytunnel – all are most welcome because it is impossible to have too many trilliums!

Expert trillium growers do not appear to rate *T. grandiflorum* very highly. It might be because the leaves are not well-marked or because it is just so easy to grow that it does not present enough of a challenge. Whatever the reason, it is still my favourite and my dream of having a drift of trilliums is becoming a reality. I have now acquired a small collection of other trillium species that also appear to like my conditions. None have yet reached the size when I might consider splitting them but I expect that when the moment for lifting and dividing these arise, I will probably be just as apprehensive as I was with my original *T. grandiflorum*.

Peter Williams

Where Have You been?

“Where have you been, I haven’t seen you for ages?” That’s what someone asked me at the A.G.M. of our Local Group in May. I told them that we had been to the National Shows on most Saturdays from March until May. It is something we enjoy doing, in a strange sort of way.

Strange, because we spend most Fridays washing plant pots, dead heading/leafing the plants to be shown or maybe repotting if a pot breaks or is the wrong size/ colour. We have been very fortunate in that the weather has usually been kind to us, as it can be quite cold and wet in the early part of the year.

There is usually part of the day which is dry enough for us to work outside but odd times we have had to move into the garage to get the plants ready.

It all starts on a Tuesday when we go out into the garden and look around to see which plants would fit in to the show schedule. It might be something for foliage or from a particular continent or plant family but usually we need to find something full of flowers. The problem is we do not have a crystal ball to tell us which plants will be in best condition for the show on the Saturday and because of this, some plants do not make it into the car. When we have checked through everything to see what would be suitable, the list of entries is emailed to the Show Secretary. This helps with staging the plants on the day ensuring that there will be enough room for everyone's plants on the show bench.

The next time slot is Friday, preferably in the morning as we get carried away and involve ourselves with irrelevant jobs which need doing in the garden. First we gather together all the plants and check them over for dead or damaged leaves or flowers. Next the pots are cleaned to remove sand or soil splashes, sometimes lime scale or algae if the plant has not been shown for a while. This is usually my job and then Ian takes most of the pots from the back garden to the front of the house ready for the next stage.

We pack the car as late as possible, especially if it is a hot day, as the plants are going to be in the car until next morning, then in the show hall all day and back into the car to come home. Ian has devised a wonderful way of stacking the plants into the car so we can take as many as we both want. We show as individuals so compete against each other at times. Usually we each have just the right number of plants to fit into the car without any problems. We enjoy doing jigsaws so fitting the plants in the space is not too much of a problem. Any plants which are not too tall or don't need daylight to open the flowers go underneath into the base of the boot space. The shelves and bread trays are balanced on top of the frame and the taller plants are put in place along with ones which need the daylight to keep the flowers open. The boxes carrying the smaller plants destined for the sales area are put in last with the biggest pot which might be a miniature garden or something else in a 36 centimetre pot.

The next important thing to do is get to bed early as we have an early start in the morning. This is not as easy as it sounds as we both find other things to do rather than go to bed so we usually wake up bleary-eyed in the morning when the alarm goes off. We try to arrive at the show around 8.30 am to give

us enough time to take all the plants from the car to the show bench without having to rush too much, mind you Ian does tend to run about and get a sweat on as he panics about getting everything done on time. The name cards are placed on the show bench in numbered class order so all we have to do is find our name card, turn it over and put the appropriate plant on top. When all the plants are in place and the sale plants are in the sales hall, the rest of



the day is ours to do whatever we like. Usually we wander round the sales hall to look for the next plant to add to our collection and follow this with a coffee and a bite to eat from the kitchen; this could be toast or bacon butty. Then it's out for a look round the area in which the show is located, maybe a bit of shopping –not that we can buy much as there is no room in the car- and look round for somewhere to have a nice lunch. I don't cook anything on show day so we have a good meal at lunchtime and snack when we get home. We have been to some interesting places we would not have bothered with if it hadn't been for going there for a show.

After our wander round we return to the show hall to see the wonderful display of plants and see which plant has been given a Best in Show or better still a Farrer Medal. Sometimes one of us might get a red sticker for a first in a class but not always.

At 3.30pm the Trophies and other awards are given out to those who have done well at the show, the

raffle is drawn and at 4pm we go into reverse and stack everything back into the car, drive home and put everything back in its place in the garden. We then go into the house for our snack, worn out but already thinking what we could take to the next show.

At the Harlow Carr show at Harrogate this year one of our members decided at the very last minute to enter some plants in the novice section, something he had never done before. He, along with another of our members who decided to bring along some “last minute” plants to enter in the show, was rewarded with a first place red sticker and they were both thrilled to bits. Hopefully they will have another go next year. You could also do the same if you are a member of the Alpine Garden Society. You don't have to go mad like us and do it every week but if you've got a plant you would like to share with others bring it along to the show and let us have a look.

Georgina Instone

Harlow Carr Gardens National Alpine Flower Show 15 October 2015

When I took on the the responsibility for what was then Summer Show North at St Chads, little did I know what the future was to hold.

The first thing to contend with was a change of venue from St Chads to Pudsey Civic Hall, a venue we had used previously and then dismissed due to high costs, but that's where the AGS shows director wanted it to take place. After a number of years this venue was again dismissed due to high costs. After a year without a show another venue was found at Featherstone. Two years later this venue did not meet the criterion of a SUPER VENUE the AGS was looking for and we lost out to a new location at Bakewell Show Ground. However the AGS did not want to lose another show in the North, we therefore hurriedly put on an Autumn show at Featherstone, which I believe to have been a great success - the exhibitors thought the venue offered was great and all that was required of a show venue.

I had been in discussions with Harlow Carr with regard to putting on an AGS Alpine Show for a couple of years but they could not accommodate us during the summer months.

I organized a meeting for the then AGS shows director Ray Drew and Harlow Carr with regard to putting on an Autumn Show as a Super Venue - all seemed to be going well until Ray resigned as shows director. I therefore took it upon myself to push forward and to my amazement the AGS agreed.

Many of the exhibitors welcomed this new venue as did the Management of Harlow Carr. 1876 people visited the gardens that day and that figure excluded AGS members, it seems that this venue is going to be on the show calendar as a future venue for many years to come.

I would like to thank all those West Yorkshire Group members who gave up their free time to make this show a success that it undoubtedly was and without them this show would not have taken place.

Eric Rainford

Show Secretary.

Local Show Next Year

It is proposed to have our local group Autumn show on Sunday 16 October 2016 at Harlow Carr Gardens Harrogate, which is the day after the National Alpine Flower Show. The show would be from 11.00am to 15.00pm. With our members plant stall and an opportunity to get new members for the West Yorkshire group.

We have a speaker booked for our September meeting which has been in the past our local group show day, it would therefore not be difficult to move to the 16 October date. I am also aware that a number of members will have given up a great deal of their spare time in the run up to the National Alpine Show and would ask members to assist on the day with as many as possible bringing along plants for the general public to admire. Please let me know your views.

Eric Rainford

Show Secretary.

ED - Our heartfelt thanks to Eric for the huge efforts he makes on behalf of us all as show secretary.

Alpine newts

A couple of years ago at our Christmas social, Alan Newton showed us a slide of newts in his garden, which we all thought were Great Crested Newts – not so! Alan has the much rarer Alpine Newts in his garden. He carries on the story:

Having discovered them about to enter hibernation in October 2001, next spring they were in the pond, along with Smooth Newts. From photographs taken in 2013, I estimate at least 20 Alpine Newts were living happily with



the rest of pondlife – toads, frogs, newts, dragonflies etc. Even though the pond is only small – 2.5m x 2m x 0.8m deep, we do very well for wildlife.

In 2014, I took drastic action to remove about 60% of the vegetation, mainly water lily roots as thick as my arm, enough to fill four barrowloads.

I hoped that not too much was removed and in a few months the wildlife would be back in pre-cleanup numbers. The newts spend winter in the garden hibernating hidden in vegetation before returning to the pond in March-April.



Where did they come from?

Normally at home in the Alps, they have been recorded in Southern England for many years, and may have been introduced as eggs on pond vegetation. They are now recorded in the Burley-in-Wharfedale

area. When will I see Great Crested Newts in my pond? They have been introduced 5-6 miles away – will a pair walk to us in Otley one day? It's not as far as my Alpine Newts have travelled!

Alpine Newts *Mesotriton alpestris*:

A medium sized newt. Males Blue-black with spotted flanks, females less colourful with grey marbling on flanks, back and tail. Both sexes yellow-orange underneath with few or no spots, colours darken when terrestrial and skin appears granular.

Alan Wilson

THOSE PRECIOUS RARITIES

Hast thou plants in plenty say
Of a species rich and rare
Don't forget to give away
Those thine affluence can spare

And should any evil chance
Your garden of its pets bereave
You are no slave of circumstance
A thought will bid you cease to grieve

For it you gave, you will be given
The plant you lost and you'll perceive
It is the rule of Heaven
That he who giveth shall receive.



George Yeld (1845–1938) was a schoolmaster, climber, explorer and hybridiser of daylilies and irises.

Website reminder

The West Yorkshire AGS Group have their own mini website hosted on the main AGS website. It has recently been updated a bit and should continue to develop. If you have any contributions that you think would be suitable for the website or any suggestions about it please speak to Matthew Childs or Rosemary Cox.

To find the website:

main AGS website > Groups > Group Websites > West Yorkshire AGS Group

Editor's Note

Many thanks to all the contributors to *this* newsletter.

The editor, Anne Wright is VERY keen to receive articles, news items, tips etc., for inclusion in future issues.

All it takes is a paragraph, or a photograph, or both. Have you visited an interesting place or nursery?

Have you grown an unusual plant - or one which you particularly like and want to recommend? How did you grow it?

Have you got a tip to share? News about an upcoming event or open garden?

Are you looking for a plant you can't find anywhere?

You don't have to be a literary genius, or even to be able to spell (because I can..)

This is not just the committee's newsletter! Have your say too! **PLEASE** give your contributions to Anne at the meetings or post to Mrs A. Wright, 130, Prince Rupert Drive, Tockwith, York, YO26 7PU, **to arrive before end JULY 2016** (e-mail attachments or CDs preferred but not essential). Articles via E-mail to be sent to anneswright@hotmail.co.uk

Most formats accepted, e.g., Microsoft Word/Works and graphic formats like BMP, TIF, JPG. You can even hand write it, and I can manage!

CALENDAR

13 FEB	Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - Diane Clement - A Seedy Business
5 MAR	Loughborough Show
12 MAR	Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - Vic Aspland - Valleys of Andorra
19 MAR	East Lancs Show
26 MAR	Cleveland Show
2 APR	Hexham Show
9 APR	Chesterfield Show
9 APR	Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - Jean Vincent - Flora of Madagascar
7 MAY	Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - AGM , ***LOCAL SHOW*** , quiz and cake.
14 MAY	Southport Show
5 JUN	Bakewell Show
10 SEP	Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - Prof John Good - Making the best of the site

PLEASE support our local shows - just one plant will help - we need entries, not just winners!

P S - Did I mention I need articles for the next newsletter?

DAFF DAY at DRYAD NURSERY

Anne Wright is having a Daff Day at 130 Prince Rupert Drive, Tockwith, York, YO26 7PU on March 13, 2016 (1-4 pm) in support of the Marie Curie Daffodil Appeal. You will be able to see the Dryad collection of daffodils, get expert advice, and also the garden should be full of interest with early bulbs, hellebores etc. Places are limited to 30, so if you would like to come please ring to let Anne know on 01423 358791. Entry is a donation of £5 to the appeal, and includes refreshments.