



Alpine Garden Society Norfolk Group Winter 2020 Newsletter

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Chairman's Report Ian Black

As another year comes to an end, and we reach the 2019 AGM, we reflect on the full programme of events in which the Norfolk Group has been involved during the past year.

With thanks to Tony Goode, we have enjoyed a further wide-ranging programme of topics from some exceptional speakers. Without a doubt, there is something of interest for each and every member of our Group. It is particularly gratifying to welcome speakers from within the ranks of the Norfolk Group.

One of our key in-house events is the Spring Show when we have a chance to view and admire plants and photographs produced by our Group members. The Show is a great learning experience for many of those attending. Just understanding the components of the many classes and the criteria used by our judges when separating a 2nd from a 1st are lessons which benefit even the most decorated of show specialists.

We are, however, always in search of new exhibitors, whether to the photographic competition or, perhaps, modest gardeners offering up plants for the Show bench. Once again, the Committee gave a lot of thought as to how we could simplify the ways of producing and entering photographs; the main aim being to allow all entrants to compete, whether operating with 'point and shoot' compacts or state of the art digital SLRs. Numbers of entrants, sadly, remained low but the standard of this year's entries was exceptional. Perhaps we should rethink our photographic schedule to further encourage participants.

With changes on the horizon, the East Anglia Show at Wymondham was a massive success. Having completed a probationary period in 2018, Peter Lyle took a leading role in managing the event with, of course, continuing support from Brenda and John Foster. There is always the massive effort on the Friday afternoon to get trestle tables from the Showground to the venue, to get them set up and to check that they will not collapse under the weight of some undoubtedly valuable exhibits. Thanks must go to the teams responsible for all elements of the Friday and Saturday set-up and breakdown; including of course the catering team which annually seems to materialise at just the right moment. The Norfolk Group is rightly praised by both the AGS and the Judges for the continuing high standard of 'our' Show.

I mentioned 'changes', what changes? The venue for the past several years has been the school in Wymondham but major structural work planned for the coming 12 months has meant a change of scene.

Sadly, shortly after signing up to alternative accommodation at Hethersett Old Hall School, news came through that they were in administration, so where to now? Our search and rescue team soon alighted on an admirable alternative which we have now booked, namely Framingham Earl High School. The Show must go on - and now it can.

In the world of gardens and gardening, there are always so many events going on and venues to visit. This year, in mid-April, a coachload visited two sites in the south of East Anglia. Firstly, our trip took in Beth Chatto's gardens and nursery. Whether you had been there before or this was a first-time visit, the gardens were truly inspiring and, but for our time constraints, could have kept us busy for the entire day. We had, however, chosen to take in a second venue - A Place for Plants. A family run business, it has seen an exceptional nursery being developed in conjunction with acres of wild and formal gardens. Most of the group chose to take in the guided walk, led by one of the owners who, due to her intimate association with the evolution of the place, was able to give the most fascinating and informative appraisal of her wonderful property.

There followed a more local visit to the gardens of John and Suzanne Clarke at Tivetshall. Though I was unable to join this trip, I had very positive feedback on the visit.

During the year we had a series of book sales - one running into the next and, onwards, into the next and so on, to the point where I thought that we should, perhaps, base ourselves in Hay-on-Wye. Following the disposal of our own Group library, we found ourselves as the beneficiaries of two bequests from the estates of two late members of the Group. Both Norman Read and Mike Smith had significant personal collections of books, including some very sought-after editions. Through our monthly meetings and the Wymondham Show, we have now managed to sell the last of these publications and we are, of course, grateful for the generosity of the two estates concerned.

I have mentioned a few names on my way through writing this report. There is always a danger of missing out a key name on the way. I must, however, mention your Committee. Emails, phone calls and committee meetings pull the ideas together, help to manage the events and the annual programme and ensure that the Group is able to function as an active part of the AGS. Two key officers of the Committee are Diane Blyth, Secretary and Roy Mellor, Treasurer whom I thank, sincerely, for keeping us running efficiently and operating the Group as required by AGS HQ.

Before I conclude, there are a couple of special comments I must make. At the AGS Conference in November, Brenda and John Foster received The Local Group Award with a trophy and certificate and, in addition, John was awarded a certificate for his contribution, over many years, to the running of the East Anglia Show - Congratulations.

From the time I re-joined the Norfolk Group to the present, Tony Goode has been a key member of the Group and its committee. Sometimes running more than one role at a time, Tony has been Chair, Treasurer and Programme Secretary. Major changes in Tony's life will see him disappearing from Norfolk as he moves to the wilds of Wales. Clearly, alpines will remain one of his passions and much discussion has taken place as to how he would 'move' his garden from Hellesdon to the far west - I'm sure it will all happen in time. Tony's other passion, narrow gauge railways, will now be more easily fulfilled as he'll be within easy range of his beloved Talylyn Railway in Snowdonia. We will continue to benefit from Tony's infinite knowledge of the UK alpine scene for, as we move into 2020, we will be working off his speaker programme for the year. We wish Tony and his family well in their new endeavours and the new challenges in an area, potentially, far more suited to alpine interests than East Anglia could ever be.

A final thanks to all other Committee Members and Group members who respond so willingly to the call i.e. the Group Show, The East Anglia Show, the refreshments and raffle at meetings and so much more.

Looking forward to another great year in 2020.

Introducing the Lecture Programme for Autumn 2020 Tony Goode

Feb 19	Jon Evans	The gardens at Blackthorn Nursery - late summer & autumn
Mar 18		Show
Apr 15	Cliff Booker	Creating an alpine haven
May 20	Peter Mallett	Norfolk Wildlife through the lens
Jun 17	Kit Strange	Alpines of the Western Pacific Coast of the USA
Jul 15		Summer visit to Severals Grange (see below for more information)
Sep 16	Robert Rolfe	Some favourite genera - from Androsace to Viola
Oct 21	Simon Harrap	British alpines
Nov 18	Tim Lever	Jewels in the rain - walking the mountains Arunachal Pradesh
Dec 16	AGM	

It is with great pleasure that I present the 2020 Programme of Lectures, the final one that I will be responsible for. I have always strived to find speakers of quality and variety from far and wide. I like to think that the standard has always been high but the new year will bring one of the best line-ups I have delivered.

Jon Evans kicks off with the final part of his trilogy of talks on Robin and Sue White's remarkable garden around and on the site of the formerly world renowned Blackthorn nursery. Jon has had unprecedented access over the years and used his expertise as one of the AGS leading photographers to record many of the plants that Robin and Sue have grown so well.

Cliff Booker, from Lancashire, will bring his unique style to bear on the creating of an Alpine Haven. Gardening in the Pennines brings challenges a little different to those we face in Norfolk but I am sure there will be ideas for all of us to take away.

Peter Mallett, our own expert photographer, will share photos and stories from his many years photographing the wildlife around our county and beyond. Expect remarkable pictures from this dedicated naturalist.

Kit Strange, from Kew and well known to many of you, will take us across the pond and share her experiences of Alpines on the Western Pacific Coast of the USA. Kit has an enthusiastic and engaging style which encourages the audience to interact with her during the lectures which I am sure you will.

After the summer break we welcome Robert Rolfe to our group for the first time. Robert says of himself "I've never pretended to be a lecturer of any consequence: writing is what I'm (supposed to be) focussed upon." Well, whatever he thinks, as well as being an assistant Editor of *The Alpine Gardener*, the AGS quarterly magazine, he is one of the most enthusiastic and knowledgeable alpine experts you will ever meet and much in demand to talk to AGS groups and at conferences. With a unique outlook, he is one of a kind.

Simon Harrap, a Norfolk based botanist and author, is known to some of you as amongst other things he has been Chairman of Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists. His talk is on British Alpines, a subject that I don't think has featured here before although it has been touched upon.

We close the lecture season with a visit from Tim Lever from Aberconwy Nursery in North Wales. A young man following in his parents footsteps he now runs the famous alpine nursery alongside his mother, Rachel, after Dad Keith passed away. Some of you will remember Tim's last visit when he took us on an epic trek in the Himalayas. This year we will venture in that direction again as he talks about walking the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh in his talk, *Jewels in the Rain* bring a waterproof coat along in November.

I hope you all enjoy the lectures as much as I have enjoyed organising them or perhaps even more!

Summer Visit to Severals Grange 5.30pm on 15th July 2020

The garden formerly attached to Hoecroft Plants has now been developed to include the areas which used to be the nursery sales area. Planting is already quite established and is laid out in a formal design. These new areas are at their best from early summer to late autumn with an abundant use of Jane Lister's herbaceous plants. 2 new additional borders elsewhere in the garden have continued with the main garden theme of providing all year round interest and colour by using a backbone of coloured foliage shrubs as well as herbaceous plants.

Jane has agreed we can all take a plate of food to share and have supper in the garden. She will provide drinks. We must have at least 20 people in the group and the cost to visit the garden and drinks will be £6 per person. Please put this date in your diary. We usually have a very enjoyable evening.

East Anglia Show 2020: Saturday 2nd May 2020 from 10am to 3:30pm

Please note new venue:
Framingham Earl High School,
Norwich Road,
Framingham Earl,
Norwich, NR14 7QP

Directions: Exit from A47 at junction with A146. Turn south, direction Beccles/Lowestoft. At second set of lights take right filter and turn right on to B1332, direction Poringland and Bungay. After you enter the village (about 2 miles after turn off) the entrance to the school is on the left just before a set of traffic lights. (If you mistakingly go through the traffic lights beware of the speed camera!)

Entries to: Show Secretary, Peter Lyle
on Tel: 01508 480164 or Email: Peter.Lyle@agsgroups.org
by Wednesday before the show.
Novice Section entries at any time.

Staging: 7.15 am to 9.40 am on Saturday only.
Judging begins at 9:45 am and Trophy Presentation is at 3.15 pm.

Please make your friends and local communities aware of the date and particularly the new venue of the show.

Ed: As Ian said, in his comment on page 2 of this newsletter, at the AGS Conference in November 2019 Brenda and John Foster received The Local Group Award with a trophy and certificate and, in addition, John was awarded a certificate for his contribution, over many years, to the running of the East Anglia Show. The picture to the right shows John and Brenda with their awards which they received from AGS President Christopher Bailes.



AGS Norfolk group show 2020 - March 18

Beginners section 19cm pot maximum:

- Class 1 3 pans rock plants distinct
- Class 2 1 pan rock plant in flower
- Class 3 1 pan foliage plant, sempervivum or cushion plant (not in flower)
- Class 4 1 pan bulbous plants
- Class 5 1 pan rock plant from seed or cutting (date of propagation to be stated)

Open section 36cm pot maximum:

- Class 6 3 pans rock plants distinct
- Class 7 1 pan rock plant in flower
- Class 8 1 pan dwarf shrub (includes conifers)
- Class 9 1 pan bulbous plant
- Class 10 1 pan foliage plant
- Class 11 1 pan primulaceae
- Class 12 1 pan cushion plant
- Class 13 A display of one or more cut alpine flowers not to exceed 20cm square

Exhibitors are allowed 2 entries in each class. Exhibitors cease to be eligible for the Beginners section if they have won the beginners section on 2 occasions or have won the Open section at the group spring show.

Photographic Competition

Category 1: Large Format Photographs (12"x8" or larger)

- Class 1 Portrait of an Alpine plant in the wild
- Class 2 Portrait of an Alpine plant in cultivation
- Class 3 Alpine plant(s) in a wild landscape
- Class 4 Alpine plant(s) in a garden setting
- Class 5 A close-up or detail of an Alpine plant in its natural habitat or in cultivation

Category 2: Smaller Format Photographs (smaller than 12"x8")

- Class 1 Portrait of an Alpine plant in the wild
- Class 2 Portrait of an Alpine plant in cultivation
- Class 3 Alpine plant(s) in a wild landscape
- Class 4 Alpine plant(s) in a garden setting
- Class 5 A close-up or detail of an Alpine plant in its natural habitat or in cultivation

Members may submit up to two entries per class. They may enter either Category 1 or Category 2 but not both.

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION FOR PHOTOGRAPHS THAT ARE TO BE PRINTED BY ROY MELLOR (SEE EMAIL ADDRESS BELOW FOR WHERE TO SEND THEM) IS FRIDAY, 6TH MARCH

Definitions:

For the purposes of the competition an "Alpine Plant" is any type of plant that might be seen in an AGS Show or in the Bulletin. Lack of altitude is no bar!

A "portrait" has the whole, or most of a plant(s) as its main subject.

Photographs in Category 1 must be printed by the member submitting them. Photographs may be mounted or unmounted. The pictures will be judged solely on their photographic merit within the class description.

Photographs in Category 2 may either be printed by the member or sent to Roy Mellor by email at roymellor@icloud.com who will arrange for them to be printed. Members printing their own photographs may submit them either mounted or unmounted. Photographs printed by the club will be unmounted.

Please do submit entries, as with the plant show, the more the merrier!

And it's Goodnight from Him Tony Goode

I joined the Norfolk AGS Group thirty years ago when we met in the basement lecture theatre at the old Central Library in Norwich. Working on the premise that the more you put in to things the more you get out, I soon found myself helping out in the background ie washing up! In time this willingness led to an invite to join the committee and some time later I took over from Ann Borrill as Programme Secretary. A lengthy spell as Chairman and a short turn as Treasurer are both history and now, as I am leaving Norfolk for pastures new, I am relinquishing the role of Programme Secretary. It's been the job best suited to my resources as it is mostly done by email which is bound neither by time or place! An occasional phone call to speed things along usually sees the job completed over a few weeks although the actual time involved is very little. Am I selling the job to you? 😊 Whoever my successor is I wish them well.

Over the years many of the members have supported my gardening and growing aspirations and I thank them for it. It's been a great pleasure to be part of such a friendly and easygoing group. I pay particular regard to those members who, as part of the committee, have done such an excellent job in organising all the activities. I hope that others will come forward and support the work of the group in the same way.

I am moving to Tywyn, a town on the Cardigan Bay coast of Wales where I have holidayed for fifty years. Long involved with the Talylyn Railway, I have many friends (and some family) there and will be working for the railway in both paid and voluntary capacity whilst also having care of my disabled teenage son. Alpine Gardening will continue. I wonder what challenges the move from East to West will bring. One thing will change - my nearest AGS groups (Shropshire or N Wales) both involve a 140 mile plus round trip to meetings!



I hope it will be possible to occasionally make visits back to Norfolk that coincide with Norfolk AGS meetings so that I can catch up with my many friends in the group. It's been a pleasure being part of it. Best wishes to all.

Tony Goode: thealpinehouse@hotmail.co.uk Flat 1, Ty Arfon, Tywyn, Gwynedd. LL36 0TA

Follow my Photo Journal at <https://www.blipfoto.com/TonyG>

Fritillaria Group meeting at Birmingham Botanic Gardens Phill Webdale

Having recently joined the Fritillaria Group (currently a sub-group of the Alpine Garden Society), I thought it would be good to attend their next meeting at the Birmingham Botanic Gardens on 23rd November, 2019. With NNHS making this their first stop on their February 2020 holiday, it was also a good opportunity to check out the venue!

It was a full day of talks and an opportunity to meet other fritillaria enthusiasts. I am new to growing fritillarias, so the first talk was of most interest to me - How to grow and why by Colin Everett. For those who do not know the name, he currently has around 110 varieties of fritillaria grown in pots at his place out of the 140+ known varieties. Full details of his talk will be available in the fritillaria group newsletter later next year, so join up to get it.

There were three points I particularly liked:

1. compost mix. This was made of two parts John Innes no3, two parts grit and one part sanicat cat litter. (This cat litter is clay based and just gives a little more moisture retention to compost; therefore, the small bulbs suffer less desiccation during the summer dormancy.
2. When growing from seed, our winter/spring is generally not cold enough for fritillaria to germinate reliably. Put your pots in a fridge set at 4°C straight after planting around October time. Check weekly as most will germinate in the fridge within 1-2 months, some in a week or two.
3. Place plastic mesh in the bottom of pots - not crocks. Greenhouse shade netting is ideal. Reason for this is small fritillaria bulbs go surprisingly deep and can escape through the crocks and holes in the bottom of the pot. Colin said until he did this he regularly thought he had lost his seedling bulbs, only to find them shooting out of the sand in the bottom of the plunge beds the following year!

The next two talks were "Growing a Farrer Medal winning Rhinopetalum" by George Elder and "The Rhinopetalums" by Rannveig Wallis. For me these were new as well. Rhinopetalums are a group of five species of fritillaria which have a bump on the base of a petal for the nectaries. They come from northern Iran and Turkmenistan and neighbouring countries.

The day was concluded with a raffle and a wet, rainy journey home, but for me it was a day full of information which both a novice and experienced grower could use.

Weeding, do you love it? Ray Mitchell

Believe it or not, I really enjoy hand weeding, but, before anyone offers me a job, I only like pulling weeds in my own garden, as I can take care of three objectives at once and I find it exceedingly therapeutic. The first, most obvious task is to tidy things up and stop weeds seeding everywhere, have you noticed how the little devils always come up in the middle of the most choice plants?

I've found the only way to deal with these is to dig the whole plant up, after having given it a good watering the night before, remove the offender and replant after cleaning any weed roots out. A bonus in this is more often than not, pieces, sometimes rooted, will fall off to be potted for the group raffle or another part of the garden.

My second objective is to find self sown seedlings, usually easily grown stuff, so I have a tray of pots filled with moist compost and I can carefully dig the little plants and put them straight into a decent bed. Once again, when grown on, these are just right to plant out elsewhere, be given to friends or sent to the group raffle or in the members sales bench at the show. If nothing else that should keep the treasurer happy. Last year I had an extra bonus doing the weeding, I thought I had taken all the seed off a *Daphne mezereum*, to send to the AGS seed exchange but underneath the said bush were five lovely, not so little plants, ready to pot up.

I sometimes put a stall at the bottom of our driveway with surplus eggs, vegetables and plants for sale and in no time the five plants had found new homes and we had a bit of extra cash to buy compost. We don't get a lot of passing trade but folk soon learn where they might buy fresh eggs, veg and less common plants.

The last objective with hand weeding is looking for pernicious weeds, several years ago I made a big mistake. We wanted a bigger raised bed in the front garden, I had some ex railway sleepers, bought a quantity of decent lumps of limestone at a bargain price but needed a couple of cubic yards of topsoil. I was prepared to pay for decent sterilized loam and rang round several local suppliers and found one that would be happy to try his best to tip it where I wanted it. It arrived within two days and it looked really good, friable, weed free and supposedly sterilized, I don't know how they do that last process. He was as good as his word and the whole lot was tipped expertly into the area I had placed the sleepers. I dug in loads of different grades of grit and shingle and it was nice and free draining, the limestone was placed carefully and once the soil was tamped down and settled, planting commenced.

All was well for a couple of years then I noticed the dreaded Mare's Tail poking through, the trouble was I had forgotten the topsoil suppliers name, so couldn't complain. It's taken nearly four years to, hopefully, get rid of it, although I really hate using weed killer I am afraid I resorted to it, so far it hasn't shown this year.

Last year we went away for a short break at the end of September, because we have a lot of poultry, budgies, canaries, rabbits and a parrot, we prefer someone to house and pet sit. We joined a group where participants look after all your livestock in return for living in your house free of charge. A couple from Australia contacted us and were keen to come to look after the animals and house, he said he helped elderly neighbours with their gardens in the village they lived.

Obviously we tidied the house and garden before we went but he said he would be happy to mow the lawn and trim the edges, I agreed with trepidation. I was not wrong in my concerns, when we returned he had decided to 'help me', by weeding the other two raised beds until his wife reminded him, 'they have some Old English cottage garden plants on there'.

He had dug out and thrown away a three year old *Clematis* 'Hythe Egret', several *Corydalis solida*, a well established *Salix hylematica*, several hepaticas and a cushion dianthus, plus others. After she had pointed out the error of his ways he found what he thought were proper alpiners in the herbaceous bed and planted them in the raised bed. Fortunately he hadn't been thorough in the job and it was easy to remove the offending young dandelions.

A younger couple came to look after things this year and I was adamant they were not to do any weeding. They were so pleased we had told them to use any of the veg including lettuce, radish, beetroot and jerusalem artichokes, they wanted, he asked if he could dig anywhere for us, he made a very good job of the uncultivated part of the veg patch so I was able to plant, runner beans, leeks and courgettes on our return. Needless to say, future house sitters will be told in no uncertain terms to leave the weeding to me.

Weeds aren't wasted with us, they get thrown in to the poultry who scratch them around and eat them, leading to tasty eggs and happy ducks and chickens. Another bonus is the manure goes on the compost heap to eventually be put back on the garden. Needless to say, Mare's Tail, bindweed and couch grass etc. go on the bonfire, ashes on the compost heap.

We usually have spare's of alpine and perennial plants if any body cares to visit they are most welcome to have some free of charge for most.

Member's Gardens Open

Ann Borrill
3, Limetree Avenue
Wymondham
Norfolk
NR18 0TG

Snowdrops and other spring flowers
Saturday February 8th and Sunday February 9th
10am to 3.30pm
£3 entrance in aid of Charity



John and Judy Wilson
Chestnut Farm
West Beckham
Norfolk
NR25 6NX

Sundays February 23rd, February 27th and March 1st
11am to 4pm
£5 entrance in aid of National Garden Scheme
Refreshments
Tel: 01263 822241 for further information



John and Brenda Foster
Gable House
Halesworth Road
Redisham
Beccles
Suffolk
NR34 8NE

Snowdrop Day
Sunday February 16th
11am to 4pm
£4.50 entrance

Garden open and autumn bulb sale
Sunday September 6th
11am to 5pm
Free entrance
Tel: 01502 575298 for further information