



Newsletter

AUGUST 2020 Number 522

Once again Ray has been working hard to organise the Group Picnic, details as below.

Sadly there will be no more indoor meetings for the rest of the year and I have heard from Kit that all Epping Group meetings are also cancelled until 2021. You will be informed of any updates or changes as and when conditions allow, in the meantime take care and stay safe.

Picnic at the forge

With no end in sight of the Covid-19 situation, we have decided to arrange a very informal get-together for local members of the AGS ie Essex and Epping groups.

We will hold the picnic at noon on the 12th September 2020 at the Forge Nurseries, Church Road, Rawreth, Wickford, Essex. SS11 8SH., on their extensive field at the bottom end of their property.

There will be no charge for the day. Bring your own food/drink/chair/table etc., as you see fit. We will have to take names and contact details on arrival - just in case.

It would be great if people could bring along plants of interest to help trigger an informal Q&A session. There will be a raffle (just like at a group meeting, so donations would be greatly appreciated) and a chance to buy plants from the beds at the Forge Nursery, whilst fully observing social distancing. This will also be a chance to just chat with like-minded people in a safe open-air environment.

If the weather takes a turn for the worse, we can all get under the hanger roof, which has open sides allowing for good air movement and social distancing.

Toilet facilities (you may like to bring your own cleaning material) and adequate car parking space (use same entrance as for plant exchange and drive down to the bottom field) is available.

Obviously, with rules and regulations changing on a day-to-day basis, we will endeavour to fall in line with whatever the government are demanding or suggesting at the time. We do not see the need to insist on people wearing facemasks.

It is important that people realise that this is an event being run by our local group, with no control of people's actions - we rely on attendees doing the right thing.

Hope to see you there. Ray.

A Trip to the Picos de Europa Mountains, Barry Hennessey.

This is a very short overview of the talk I was to have given to the Group in September. Unfortunately, Mr. CV intervened and so it will have to wait for another day.

Many people ask, "where is that?" when I say that we went to the Picos de Europa. For those of you who don't know it lies just inland of the northern coast of Spain almost as a continuation of the Pyrenees and is to my mind more dramatic than its better known neighbour.

Sally and I visited the mountains in June 2019 with a group of 12 others organised by Honeyguide our favourite wildlife holiday company. We stayed at the Hotel Tierra de la Reina in Boca Huergano as our base for day trips around the Picos. You will have to wait for a comprehensive account of the holiday but needless to say the mountain flowers and other wildlife were magnificent. As an example, stand out flowers were the many orchids, Gentians and *Androsace villosa* (Below).



A former member, Vivienne Hills, has a number of Alpine books for sale. These include the Encyclopaedia, Farrers Rock Garden, Cyclamen by Kit G-W and the Alpine House by R. Rolfe.

If anyone is interested please contact Vivienne by email, Vivienne.hills@sky.com

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Having had a complete change around this year I have put the 3 Year old primula in the new greenhouse with heavy shading they usually spend the summer under the bench but I thought it was more likely that the leaves that die back would be removed a job that tends to be forgotten I always take cuttings in spring straight after flowering but have found that if done earlier January or February will get away much better the androsace sarmons don't seem to respond but start well from layers. The plants normally look terrible during the winter leaving the decision of when to water very difficult then burst into life February looking great and it's water all the time.



Also my Cyclamen confusum have been flowering continuously from 5th July.

Brian Baker.

The must-do excursion is to Fuente De where you are whisked by cable car to a famous walk along the base of a cliff where, apart from looking at the many "alpines", bird watchers look for the elusive Wallcreeper. We were lucky and spotted one after an hour of looking. We were also chuffed to see Alpine Choughs who equate walkers with food and descend mob-handed like Trafalgar Square pigeons to give everyone very close views of these beautiful birds.



Well this is just a glimpse of the wonderful things we saw on this trip and I hope to show you more sometime in the future at an Essex Group Meeting.

Also, there must have been a baby boom in the Picos judging by the number of White Storks we saw.

Reading in the latest Alpine Gardener about AGS Heroes by Robert Rolfe he speaks of Michael Upward. I first met Michael in the mid 1990's when someone from the Group found out I was a plumber and asked if I would assist with the water feature at Chelsea. I turned up to find him standing amongst a pile of rocks and bags of compost and a 20ft diameter platform raised 18ins. off the ground.

After introductions Michael produced a 40 gallon water tank and a pump, (the type I used to pump out flooded boiler houses) and said I want water in 2 places, a waterfall and a stream, there were no plans it was all in his head. I told him I didn't think this would work, anyway we filled the tank dropped in the pump and within 30seconds the tank was empty and the water hit the other side of the tent, I can't remember what was said at the time.

Anyway, with a pump, some piping, a few jubilee clips and other bits I had in my van, as the stand was built we got the water where Michael wanted it. I then became a member of the Chelsea Team for the next 7 years.

More to follow next month and somewhere in my archives I have some pictures. Ed.

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