



Alpine Garden Society Norfolk Group Summer 2022 Newsletter

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Lecture Programme Autumn/early winter 2022-3 Diane Blyth

Sat Sep 24	Kit Grey-Wilson	The 3 Mountains - from Picos in Spain to the French Alps and onto the Transylvanian Alps.
Sat Oct 22	Ray Drew	Cypripediums
Sat Nov 26	Tim Lever	Jewels in the Rain
Wed Dec 21		Annual General Meeting
2023		
Wed Jan 18	Bob Wallis	Fritillaries on Four Continents (Zoom meeting 7.30pm)

Please note: Saturday meetings commence 2pm for 2.30. AGM commences 1pm - 4pm

We return to Hethersett Village Hall in September 2022 with our speaker Kit Grey-Wilson who is a retired editor of the Alpine Gardener magazine. He was Principal Scientific Officer at the Royal Botanic Garden Kew. His travels have taken him throughout the world examining plants and collecting herbarium specimens and seeds. He is the author of many books and a judge at the AGS shows around the country.

Ray Drew is a past director of AGS shows and worked closely with Kath Dryden for many years. He has travelled extensively photographing plants and collecting seeds for the AGS. Ray has been involved in the garden entry for the Chelsea flower show which has won many gold medals.

We close the 2022 lecture season with a visit from Tim Lever from Aberconwy nursery in North Wales. A young man following in his parents footsteps running the famous alpine nursery with his wife Rachael. Several years ago Tim took us on an epic trip in the Himalayas.

Heading in that direction again he tells us about walking the mountains of the Arunachal Pradesh in his talk 'Jewels in the Rain'.

We begin 2023 with our first Zoom talk by Bob Wallis. Bob and Rannveig live in Carmarthen, South Wales. Members of the AGS for over 50 years. They specialise in growing and showing dwarf bulbs. They have travelled in many areas where these grow. Rannveig runs a small mail order nursery supplying rare bulbs.

Norfolk AGS Show 2023 Peter Lyle

For the first time since 2019 we will be holding an AGS Show. It will be held on Saturday, 13th May 2023 at a new venue, Morley Village and Sports Hall. This is conveniently located half a mile off the A11, four miles south of Wymondham. It has a large main hall, suitable for the show benches, a smaller room for the judges' lunch, a kitchen, a large balcony which can be used for the plant stalls and refreshment area, and plenty of parking.



The show, however, will not be a success without your help. There are lots of jobs that need doing and I would be very grateful if you would consider helping out in whatever way you can. We will be setting up on the Friday from 4pm and this should not take more than two or three hours, though the more helpers we have, the quicker it will get done. As usual, we will be collecting tables from the Norfolk Showground and we will need a team of four or five for this.

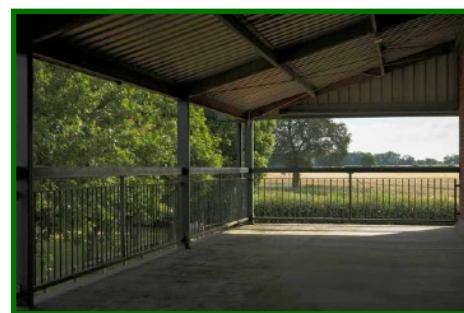
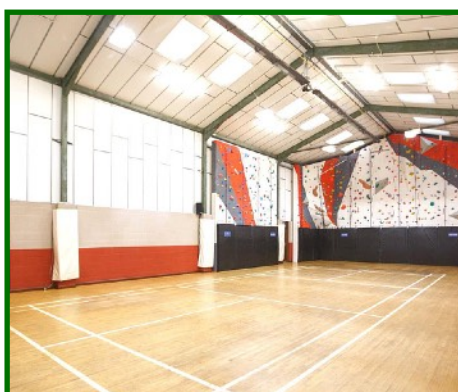
There are a number of roles that will need to be filled on the day itself - entrance desk, serving refreshments, taking refreshment monies, members' plant stall, preparing and serving the judges' lunch, stewarding, operating the AGS computer and clearing up afterwards.

During the autumn and winter group meetings, I will be producing various rotas for some of these roles and I do hope that you will consider signing up for some of these or being involved in some other way.



Included here pictures of some of the wonderful plants that were displayed the last time we held a show and which make the event such a worthwhile and inspiring occasion to take part in.

The Morley Village and Sports Hall:



Penelope Ann Borrill 1936-2022 Brian Ellis and Diane Blyth

The youngest of four girls Penelope Ann Smyth was born in Cardiff, her father was a medical practitioner and did not approve of young ladies entering further education. After her divorce she moved and was left to raise three young children, but still decided to study, first for her A levels and then for a degree in Biology at the UEA gaining a 2.1 which enabled her to teach biology at Wymondham College.



Ann was an active member of the Norfolk AGS group joining soon after it was formed 50 years ago and had a complete run of the AGS Journal from issue 1. For over 20 years Ann hosted the monthly speakers for the group, giving them a meal before the meeting and a bed for the night. She often visited interesting places and gardens with them the next day, and made very many friends in the

alpine groups. She was also a member of the Cottage Garden Society and Norfolk Plant Heritage and had many other interests including an abiding passion for ornithology.

For several years she was a great help at the East Anglian Show in Wymondham, laying out the show cards and acting as chief steward on show day. Ann also helped in the kitchen preparing food for visitors and hosted some of the nurseries - Tim Lever of Aberconwy said “I always very much enjoyed staying with Anne when visiting the East Anglia Show, as did my father and grandfather before that. I think we originally got to know Anne when my grandfather Jim met her up at the Scottish Rock Garden autumn conference many years ago. We still have so many plants that Anne gave us over the years. Even the last time I visited we walked around her garden and she gave me a little iris called *Iris henryii*.”



Several times she judged our group show, talking about the plants exhibited, explaining her decisions and giving advice on showing. She also gave illustrated talks to other groups with her very extensive slide collection as she had travelled to many parts of the world and was always interested to study the endemic flora and fauna.

She was very well known in the snowdrop and crocus world and always enjoyed having visitors to her jewel box of a garden, whether friends, members of other AGS groups, coach trips from abroad or at her Garden Open during the snowdrop season when she raised considerable amounts for various charities. It was seldom that you came away from her garden without the gift of a plant. Ann was always willing to help anyone with advice and excellent with the names of plants. Ann was very precise on the pronunciation of names and she was not afraid of putting you right!

She is commemorated in the snowdrop *Galanthus elwesii* ‘Penelope Ann’ which she got from Colin Mason in the 1990s as a seed raised ‘*G. caucasicus* - all green inner’ which is still treasured by many. *Galanthus reginae-olgae* ssp *vernalis* ‘Kudos’ also arose as a seedling in her garden and was spotted by Matt Bishop. The family wished her snowdrops to be passed on so that they could still be seen by the public and to this end they have been split between the Walled Garden at Little Plumstead and Fullers Mill, the Perennial garden in Suffolk.

She wished her ashes to be scattered somewhere wild and rugged and to this end the family took them to the High Alps at Vons, near Grenoble.

She will be greatly missed by many of us in the group.

Opening your garden. Is it worth it? Ray Michell

Have you ever thought of opening your garden to visitors other than friends or family? We had no thoughts about it until we were persuaded to visit a much lauded group of gardens in a nearby town, mainly because the money raised went to a local charity.

I am not going to criticise any of them, gardens are a very personal thing and each was certainly different. None were to my taste but each had at least one interesting or different set of plants.

At this time we had been AGS members for a few years, before websites, and one could get a printed list of members' gardens who were happy for you to visit whilst on holiday, some with surplus plants for sale. In March the following year we visited Matlock in Derbyshire as our daughter had moved there.

Looking at the list we found two quite close to our daughter so contacted the members for a convenient time. Both had made good use of local stone and one had several stone sinks with tufa filled with saxifraga and alpine campanulas. Neither garden was big but so full of interesting plants we came away with a box full of goodies from each.

On our return we added our names to the list, sadly no longer being produced, but we had a lot of like minded visitors to share our garden with. We met some really nice folk from all over the country and got invitations to visit their gardens when in the area. Unfortunately, the powers that be decided to discontinue the list about five years ago.

About the same time our village elders decided to have a 'Village Open Gardens Weekend' and asked if we would we open ours? Of course we said yes as the money raised was to help our self-funded group for less able and older folk to meet, have a meal and socialise weekly.

The weekend went well and we had almost 200 people through the gate, it funded the group all the following year. We were fortunate as the weekend was the start of a horrible drought, a fortnight later and the garden was a shrivelled up dry mess !

What a difference 4 years makes, because of Covid and other commitments we put off opening our village gardens until this year, deciding on Saturday and Sunday of the Queen's jubilee. The gardens looked good again but the forecast was for cloud and showers.

Very few of the 120 visitors this year were local coming from Ipswich, Lowestoft, Cambridge, Holt, Norwich and further away. A couple from Holt told us that they had 'done 2 lots in Essex' the previous weekend. Apparently there is a website to advertise open gardens but I have to say a lot had the same attitude as the Holt visitors, not looking properly and just ticking us off a list like horticultural twitchers.

Not many stayed longer than 20 minutes as opposed to the previous time when many made a real social event of the 2 days. Most of the visitors then were from our village or surrounding villages so didn't have to travel far.

It must have been reasonably interesting that year as at least 3 couples came back the next day, one lady bringing her parents to see our 'unusual' plants. We don't regard many of our plants as unusual but because you don't find them in B+Q or other large outlets, they do.

Most of our favourites are grown from AGS seed lists or given or exchanged with some of the great friends we have made in this and other societies.

Our main concerns were would people be looking for weeds or untidiness, neither bother us but no one seemed to notice the nettles which are there for the butterflies. Honest! Another niggle was theft so we put up signs saying please ask if you want cuttings and we will give them to you at the optimum time. No one asked and I'm sure nothing was taken as we had removed the 'challenge'.

All in all it has been a good experience, interesting people to talk to and raising money for charity. A big bonus was that it has made us look properly at what is important, to take time and enjoy our garden and plants. Opening is not for everyone but we enjoy it.

Growing favourite plants from seed Ray Michell

Cyclamen and Hepatica are in the top 10 of the must have small plants that I like to grow from seed as, the way I grow them, both need similar treatment and composts. Both should be sown as fresh as possible I have found. I have, however, had reasonable success from the AGS seed exchange with cyclamen, so far I have been unable to get Hepatica from said exchange as so little has been donated.



I grow Cyclamen every year if I can. As there is so much leaf variation you never know what might come up. Hepatica (I have it on good authority it is pronounced HEP-A-T-KA) once again have many leaf shapes, forms and colours plus flowers of different colours and petal arrangements, ie. single, double and anemone to mention a few.

A friend sent me Hepatica seeds as soon as they were ripe with instructions to SOW IMMEDIATELY ! I also got a few packets from an online supplier with the same instructions, in fact I had to pre-order, with hope rather than expectation and send no payment until received.

Both seeds are treated the same, as soon as I receive them I put them in plastic specimen tubes, you could use egg cups or similar, covered with warm water to which I add a drop of

washing up liquid to break surface tension and leave overnight. Each tube is numbered and a label prepared with the corresponding number and name of the seed ready for sowing.

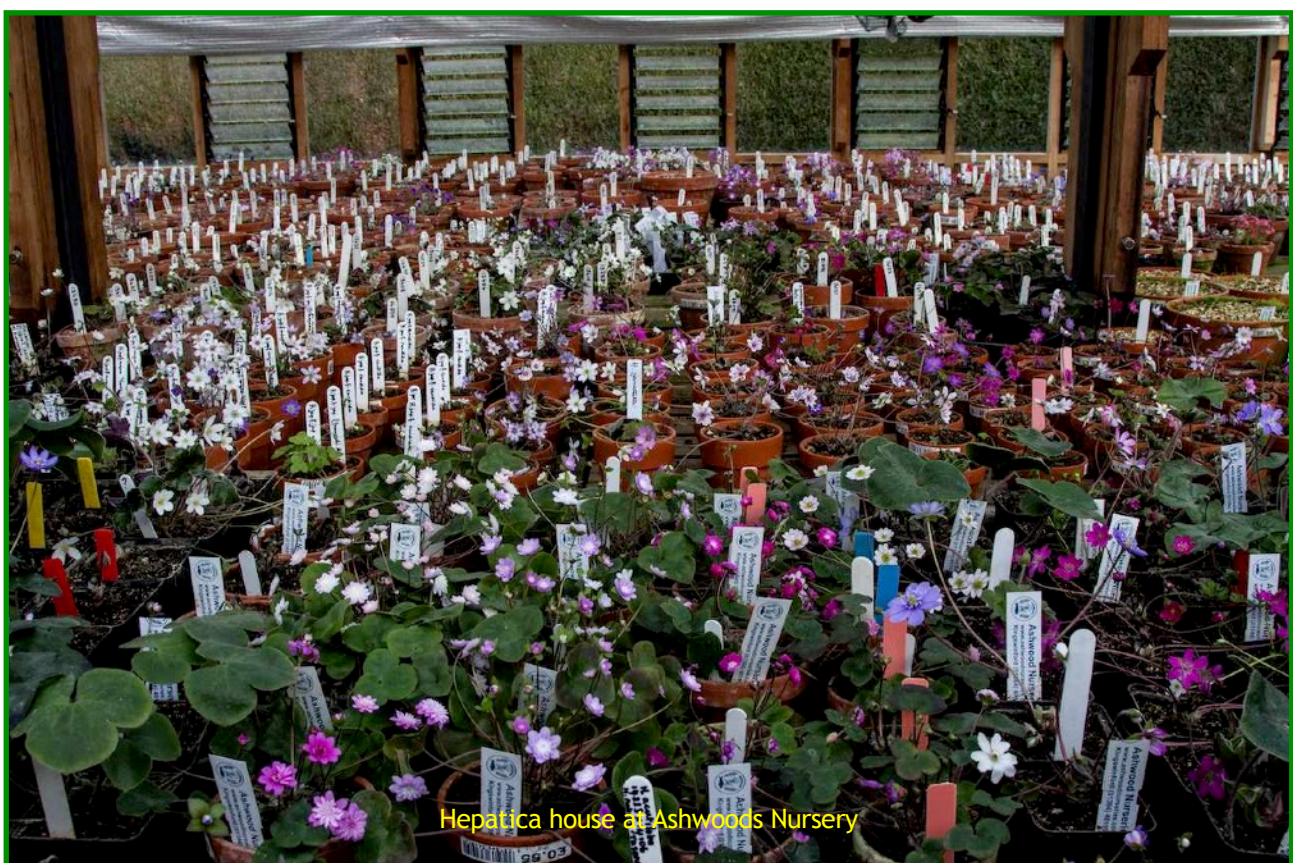
The next day they are sown in a mix of 1 part J1 3, 1 part leaf mould or general purpose compost plus 1 part perlite. I cover them with grit, label and stand the pots in a tray of water until the grit is wet, then take them out to drain and stand them somewhere in the shade outside. You might need to cover with mesh to prevent birds, mice and squirrels from rooting them out - we have to.



Cyclamen can start to germinate from about 3 weeks but Hepaticas do not normally appear until the following year. I leave them in the seed pots for a further year after germination before pricking them out but give them a weak liquid feed monthly after they start into growth.

After twelve months I carefully take the bigger seedlings and pot them up, leaving the seed pot for another year removing the bigger seedling plants as they grow. It seems some are slower to germinate than others.

Fortunately, both lots of seeds are large enough to count so you would know how many to expect. I am not saying this is the best way but it's the way I do it and it works for me, then it's just a question of waiting to see what leaves and flowers you are going to get, exciting!



Hepatica house at Ashwoods Nursery

Mid -Anglia AGS Group Plant and Bulb Sale

The Mid Anglia AGS Group Plant and Bulb Sale will be held at Fullers Mill on **Saturday, September 3rd from 2:00pm until 4:00pm**. The seven-acre garden will be full of interest and will remain open until 5:00pm.

Hartside nursery, a family run nursery that sells a wide range of Alpines, Primulas, Spring and Autumn flowering Gentians, Rock garden plants, Dwarf conifers, Dwarf rhododendrons and Hardy ferns will attend.

Also selling will be The Plantsman's Preference who sell a wide range of hardy geraniums and ornamental grasses as well as many new, rare and unusual perennials. Also, there will be usual stalls from Witton Lane Seeds, Riverside Bulbs, Veronica and Alan Munson's card stall plus the Members Plant and Bulb stall. There will also be a raffle, auction and free refreshments.

Fullers Mill,
West Stow,
Bury St Edmunds,
IP28 6HD

Fullers Mill Garden is 5 miles north-west of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. Turn off the A1101 (Bury to Mildenhall road) signposted West Stow Anglo Saxon Village. Continue for 1.5 miles and the entrance is clearly marked. There is parking available on site.

