

## Royal Horticultural Society Workshops

### 4 November 2015: Sharing Our Expertise Workshop

#### Working with Plant Societies in 2016 -Providing help and ideas to:

- Improve membership retention
- Attract new members
- Promote and showcase societies and their plants
- Try to provide increased publicity and footfall for Society Events held at the RHS
- Promote an understanding of Plant Societies and what they do amongst visitors
- Include plant societies in other garden events
- Improve society collaboration

#### Events for 2016

- BUDDING GARDENERS –May 2016
- All About Plants 18 & 19 June 2016
- ARTS FESTIVAL –July 2016

#### Plant Health update –RHS Science Gerard Clover, RHS Head of Plant Health

Gerard showed that over the period since 1900 the arrival of pests and diseases in gardens had increased dramatically, particularly since 1980. The top 10 diseases in 2014 were:

1. Honey fungus
2. Box blight
3. Leaf spots
4. Rusts
5. *Phytophthora* diseases
6. Powdery mildews
7. Pythium diseases
8. Wilts
9. Root and stem rots
10. Viruses

There was a brief discussion on emerging diseases and those that were expected to reach the UK from overseas, such as *Xylella fastidiosa* which attacked Acer, Prunus and Platanus.

#### **The Digital World: Social Media, e-newsletters and Plant Societies/Committees** –Ian Reynolds, Digital Marketing

Ian mentioned that Societies had raised issues about using social media. The main platforms are:

- Facebook
- Twitter

- Pinterest
- Instagram

Ian said do not underestimate the value of photographs and videos for your Society as well as for Press coverage.

### **19 November 2015: Plants for the future**

Initially there was feedback from the 2014 event, which was the first on this topic. It provided a roadmap of bringing new plants to market from initial cultivar or seedling through to naming, marketing and plant variety rights.

#### **Rob & Rosy Hardy – Hardy’s Cottage Garden Plants**

- Agreed that most people go straight for European rather than British PBR. EU Plant Variety Rights covers the whole of the EU.
- The importance of being willing to use an agent to take plants abroad; agents will have contacts everywhere and knowledge of their territories and saleability. You will work out marketing strategy with PB Agent but you still have control of the plant.
- The importance of a name - Gaillardia “St Clements” for example.
- Relationships and the ability to trial all over the country are essential. You must trial material before applying for breeders rights.
- Sometimes just sell on with licensing with stock of about 300. Take a one off payment to supply mother stock to a nursery.
- USA needs plant patents. Based on descriptions and drawings rather than trials.
- When breeding plants don’t always look for the unusual. May look the same but longer/flowering improved varieties could be a USP. Better structure and ability to last longer.

#### **Michael Perry – New Product Development Manager, Thomson & Morgan**

- Michael gave an overview of how T&M works with breeders, as well as some diverse case study success stories.

#### **John & Molly Hall – John Hall Plants Ltd and members of the Heather Society**

The highlight for those THS members present was the talk by John and Molly Hall. John talked about their visit to the heathland around Frensham Common, which is close to John Hall’s heather nursery. Molly discovered a colour variation on the heath, Cutting material

was taken and propagated. Molly's excitement after her initial find grew further when she noticed that the cuttings had rooted.

- John & Molly presented on the discovery and cultivation of *Erica cinerea* 'Molly Rose' and urged people to remember that often financial reward cannot cover the excitement and satisfaction of creating/discovering a new variety.

**Dave Gillam – National Dalia Society Vice Chairman, Champion Exhibitor & Garden Centre General Manager.**

He urged delegates to think about the following:

- We can sometimes overestimate the horticultural knowledge of the general public. The knowledge and interest to get the dream going needs to be addressed. How many people actually know how to or want to grow plants from seed?
- We need to look at connections between breeders/AGMs etc, nurseries and seed distributors.
- What do different groups need from the RHS to keep the initiative moving forward?
- Need to get new plants to the public; they don't know what they want/know it's possible for something to be available.

A summary of the key points and questions from the afternoon session:

- We don't want the tradition of hobby breeding to die out. Getting the potential plant out of the 'test tube' is now so complicated – we want to help people to understand the process.
- European Union Plant Variety Rights are in Euros – at the moment about as cheap as they're going to get. UK PVR about 90% of EPVR. Costs might double if we leave the EU.
- When you introduce a new plant you need to weigh up expected royalties against how many you're likely to sell. Need to sell in bulk to reach breakeven point and pay for licence renewal.
- Chelsea Flower Show and the interest around Plant of the Year have proved you need a story to tell about a plant. An interesting new plant can be a story in itself and will sell the plant.
- Naming of plants is key – if a plant has a female name it sells 2-3 times better than plants with a male name.