

# Bulletin of The Heather Society



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Vol. 7 No. 9

Spring 2010

## DIARY OF EVENTS

2010

13 March                      Yorkshire                      Harlow Carr 'The World of Flowers'

**Closing Date for the Summer Bulletin**

29 May	Yorkshire	Harlow Carr - to be decided
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10-13 September 2010 Conference Kings Lynn

15 September **Closing Date for the Autumn Bulletin**

19 September	Yorkshire	Harlow Carr - to be decided
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25 September	Home Counties	RHS, Wisley Gardens - to be decided
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## HEATHER SOCIETY PLANT-ORDERING SERVICE



Please see [www.plant-orderingservice.co.uk](http://www.plant-orderingservice.co.uk)  
for full cultivar list

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Cover illustration Erica Carnea by Brita Johansson

*It sometimes doesn't do to be a good Samaritan!*

*Most years we have one or two pheasants that escape the shooters and come and join the wild birds around the bird table – they often become old friends that visit us regularly for several years. But, just after Christmas, when the snow was thick on the ground, thirteen (nine hens and two cocks) arrived, searching for food. Feeling sorry for them, I started throwing out extra corn every morning. Big mistake! They (now fourteen in number) have become permanent unwelcome guests, chasing the wild birds away, gobbling all the food I put out, and trampling all the plants in the border. Anyone fancy a well-fed pheasant?*

**Please note the new email addresses:**

**Bulletin editor:** [everett@bannut.co.uk](mailto:everett@bannut.co.uk)

**Administrator:** [theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop](mailto:theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop)

## 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering & Conference 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2010, RAMADA HOTEL, KINGS LYNN, NORFOLK

It is that time of year again, when you need to be thinking about this event. Not only thinking, but deciding, that this is the year you will attend and meet like-minded Erica people. Bookings have already been coming in and we need to know if you wish to reserve a place.

Our programme will start on Friday evening with a speaker on foreign plant hunting in Bolivia.

On Saturday we shall visit Kingfisher Nurseries near Spalding. This is a large wholesale nursery owned by one of our members, Peter Bingham, and his wife Maggie. After lunch we go to Peckover House & Garden in Wisbech. Then, an early return to the hotel, where we hope to have a presentation on Breckland. The Brecks area is famous for its dry heaths. They are the nearest thing in Britain to continental heaths and steppes.

Sunday morning will kick off with the A.G.M., followed by a trip to Foggy Bottom & Bressingham Gardens. There is something here for everybody, including any steam train enthusiasts. On the way we will visit one of the many sites in the Brecks.

In the evening we will have a programme allowing attendees to share

information, photographs & views and hopefully a book auction.

A plant sale will be running throughout the weekend, which enables members to acquire rare and special plants.

The cost will be £285 for the weekend, and this includes bed, breakfast and dinner each night. It also includes lunch on Saturday & Sunday and all entrance fees to gardens, coach ride and tips. There will be no single supplement for attending this conference.

Should you choose to stay in alternative accommodation you will be very welcome to join us as a day visitor. Appropriate fees for this can be obtained from Susie Kay at [susiek@gofree.indigo.ie](mailto:susiek@gofree.indigo.ie). Phone 00353 95 43575

## **How to book?**

By filling in the enclosed form and sending it to The Administrator at The Heather Society, Tippetwitchet Cottage, Hall Road, Outwell, PE14 8PE, Cambridgeshire as soon as possible. For those of you who have already booked, your places are already reserved and all you have to do is send your final payment by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010.

So having filled in your form and sent it to Charles, the next thing is to start some propagation and bring along one or two of your favourite heathers to share with other members. All monies raised from this sale will go to The Heather Society.

Council is hoping you will attend and spend a weekend with heathery friends.

*Susie Kay*

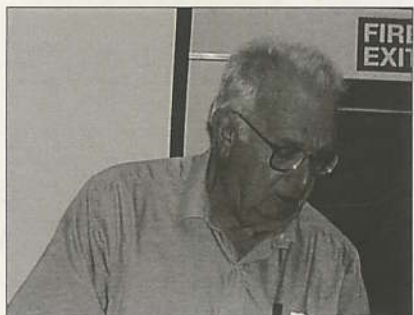
## **Chairman's Message**

The winter of 2008/09 was, we were told, an exceptional one with temperatures down to -10° C and now with another one upon us I have felt somewhat smug that our heathers, compared to many modern introduced shrubs, can manage to endure these conditions quite happily without damage. The Cape Heath collection in the nursery polythene tunnel, having grown in variety and numbers, gained a new heater this year and these plants are looking well for the benefit of frost protection.

Following on from the Hampton Court Garden in 2009, this year The Heather Society (THS) has agreed to display in the Plant Society's marquee at the Gardener's World Live Show to be held at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham from the 16-20<sup>th</sup> June 2010. The heathers on display, which as 'enthusiasts' we know so well, will show the range of flower, foliage and habit to the gardening public and provide the opportunity to recruit additional members. We welcome your help at this event to help design, construct and attend to advise the public so please make a note of the date and give us your support.

The British Heather Growers Association will be designing and planning a garden for the Hampton Court Show in 2011 with a further display of heathers and associated plants and THS will undoubtedly provide support again for this successful event.

## Arnold Stow



It is with great sorrow that I have to report that Arnold Stow, the Society's Chairman from 2000 to 2008, passed away on 2 November 2009.

The funeral was held at the Chilterns Crematorium, Amersham, and the large number of people (over 150) who attended the service were a reflection of the great affection and esteem that Arnold was held in, by all those who knew him

An old school friend gave a moving account of their friendship over many years and Josey and Arnold's two granddaughters read a touching poem. At Josey's suggestion, some heathers had been incorporated into the family's floral tribute.

There will be a full obituary in the 2010 *Yearbook*.

*Daphne Everett*

## **Tippitiwitchet Corner: Administrator's Log no. 8**

**Email: [theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop](mailto:theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop)**

### **Subscription Renewals**

As I write in mid-January, more than 150 members have renewed their subscriptions, and that number will certainly have increased substantially by the time you read this. Thank you to all those members who have established standing orders, and to all the others who have paid promptly by cheque. We continue to investigate ways and means of enabling people to pay subscriptions, through the Society's website.

### **The 2010 CD**

The 2009 CD was very well received - we hope everyone had a chance to view it. I am aware of one faulty CD, which I was pleased to replace promptly.

There is never a best time to begin taking pictures for the next one. Given recent weather in Britain and Ireland I expect a few under-snow photographs of your favourite heaths! I will be very pleased to receive photographs at any time, but do bear in mind that for best quality a digital image needs to be reasonable size, although perhaps not the largest your camera can take. Low-resolution images can be sent easily by email but will not give a crisp image when enlarged. On the other hand, the best higher resolution ones can clog up the email systems so, please, burn these on to a CD and send by mail.

Slides, which can be scanned, are also acceptable and will be returned. Older photographs, illustrating the Society's past, are valuable and interesting and a few could be included in each CD.

## Offer to members

Pamela Harper (219 Robanna Drive, Seaford, VA 23696, USA) sent me an email offering a set of the Society's yearbooks from 1963 (the first) through 1986. They are available to any member, and postage only is requested. Please contact Pamela at the address given or by email at [pamharper@mindspring.com](mailto:pamharper@mindspring.com)

Pamela was a leading member of The Heather Society in the sixties before moving from Gerrards Cross in Buckinghamshire where she had a garden with around one hundred heathers, to the eastern USA. She became Assistant Editor and, as a consequence of P. S. Patrick's sudden ill-health, was Editor of the 1966 and 1967 Yearbooks. She also subsequently contributed articles about her American experiences.

## Sweatshirt sale

This continues as long as there are sweatshirts left to sell. Quite a few have been sold but there is remaining stock of all three sizes in both colours [green and maroon]. The offers remains £7, £10 or US\$15 (postage and packing included). More details are in the Autumn 2009 *Bulletin*, p. 6.

## Heathers 7 (2010)

The 2010 yearbook is being designed, and the text and images laid out ready for printing. At the time of writing the printing schedule is not known. If the issue is not included with this *Bulletin* it will be posted with the Summer 2010 issue.

The issue includes the usual mixture of articles: Bryon Roberts tells us about his unique lowland heath garden; Ted Oliver describes two recent finds in South Africa of long-lost heathers (the Kays are seen admiring one of these); Allen Hall has "reviewed" Champs Hill; a tale of ling (*Calluna*) in Newfoundland is told. Appreciations of Arnold Stow, Geoffrey Smith, Jack Platt and Don Richards pay tribute to their work for the Society. The cover is a striking series of precise illustrations of the individual flowers of eight cultivars of *Erica carnea*, in watercolour, by Brita Johansson. Books reviews and the supplement to the register of heather names conclude the issue.

## ....and finally

I had a very short and very unexpected trip to New York and New Haven at the beginning of December, by courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art. The purpose of the visit was to see the exhibition on Mrs Mary Delany and her circle that YCBA staged - a scaled-down version will be on display in the Sir John Sloane's Museum (13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London) from 19 February to 1 May 2010. The range of items was astonishing, from the embroidered skirts of her court dresses to her collages, including one showing a Cape heath (complete with a real, not paper, pressed shoot and a flower). (A splendid book has been issued by Yale University Press as a companion to the exhibition, with many illustrations of Mrs Delany's famous collages.)

By chance I decided to spend one day in New York to visit The Cloisters Museum. To my surprise, the way to the museum from the subway station

was through the Fort Tryon Heather Garden. Several *Erica x darleyensis* were beginning to show colour. I took a few photographs, which may find a space in the 2010 Society's life CD.

Charles Nelson

## Gold Medal for Ted Oliver



On 5 November last, Honorary Member, Dr E.G.H. Oliver, received another accolade. As he wrote: "Last night I had to go to a do in the lovely old colonial Town House in the centre of Cape Town. It was the annual awards ceremony of the Cape Tercentenary Foundation. They gave out 6 gold medals for lifetime achievements in the performing arts, culture, literature and environment. I got one for 50 years work in *Erica*!"

The Molteno Gold Medal is minted to honour distinguished contributions made by Cape citizens to literature, the visual and performing arts and the natural and cultural environment. It is an initiative of the Cape Tercentenary Foundation, which aims to preserve, promote and these pursuits within the Western, Eastern and Northern Cape Provinces. The other 2009 recipients were illustrator and author Niki Daly, actress Diane Wilson, organist, choirmaster and conductor Barry Smith, director and playwright Roy Sargeant, and ballet dancer and choreographer Eduard Greyling.

Professor Sophi  Reinecke, executive head of the Department of Botany and Zoology in Stellenbosch University, in which Ted is an Honorary Research Associate and Acting Curator of the herbarium, congratulating him said: "We wish him all the best and hope we will still be honoured by his presence amongst us for many years to come. May he discover many more new beautiful *Erica* species."

Charles Nelson

## Hampton Court Palace Flower Show Talks

Supported by Claire and Jackie from 'Down To Earth Designs', two talks entitled 'Behind the Scenes at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show' were held at local venues last Autumn. At the first event 35 attended and the funds raised went to Cancer Research. It was agreed that the second event at which 45 attended would be held in memory of Arnold Stow and we were able to raise £75, which was sent to the Wycombe Hospital Scanner Appeal.

Grateful thanks goes to all those who participated and contributed to the successful events.

*Julian Fitz-Earle*

## Plant-Ordering Service Website

Please note there is now a website: [www.plant-orderingservice.co.uk](http://www.plant-orderingservice.co.uk), providing useful information on the service which will be updated from time to time. See also the Plant-Ordering Service advertisement in this *Bulletin*.

### Plant costs

It is with regret that as a result of production and delivery cost increases the price of plants has had to be increased to £3.00 each for those obtained from Holland and £2.25 each for those sourced from within the UK. These prices do not include postage and packing but are still good value for obtaining 1000+ cultivars including the excellent \*NEW\* *Erica x darleyensis* 'Phoebe' (£2.25 each or £1.99 each for 10+)

*Allison Fitz-Earle*

## Philomath Frolickings Ella May Wulff

Western Oregon's relatively benign climate is one of the reasons we moved back here after living 23 years in Connecticut. We were tired of the miserably hot, humid summers and frigid winters (with lots of snow to shovel) of the north-eastern United States. If you don't mind nearly constant rain from November through April, Oregon's Willamette Valley, with its cool Mediterranean climate, is a great place to live. Winter temperatures rarely get below freezing, and except for a week or two in late July, the cloudless summer days are followed by nights cool enough for sleeping under a blanket. Except in 2009.

This past year brought us both record high and record low temperatures. A dreadful summer heat wave tested the survival abilities of both humans and heathers. Daytime temperatures stayed above 90°F (32°C) for about two weeks, with some daytime highs reaching 105° F (41° C). Night temperatures were in the 70° F (20°C) instead of the usual 50sF (teens). The parts of my heather garden that were receiving insufficient water quickly became obvious.

I knew that there were a few places where the soaker hoses didn't quite

reach, but occasional overhead watering had kept the heathers in those spots alive for seven years. Unfortunately, overhead watering in this heat would be counterproductive, inviting fungal diseases, so I stuck with water from the soakers. They were simply inadequate.

The heathers that succumbed first were plants of *Erica carnea*. I guess the heat was more than these alpine natives could take without a constant water supply. Wherever a *carnea* was too far from the nearest soaker hose, it quickly turned light brown. Because this species often self-layers, rooting from the lower branches as the plants creep across the ground, sometimes only parts of the affected plants died, the parts furthest from the water source. The heat wave clearly showed where my hoses were not watering.

A few *Callunas* and some plants of *E. cinerea* also died from the heat. In these cases, I already knew that the plants were getting less than ideal watering. The *carneas* were the unexpected casualties. Until the 2009 heat wave, they had shown no signs of stress. None.

What about the new heathers at the Philomath Community Library? A combination of circumstances affecting site preparation had delayed our planting for so long that we finally decided to postpone the planting session until fall, at the beginning of the rainy season. So the heathers in the library garden were fine — because there weren't any.

Of course, all Pacific Northwest gardeners were struggling to keep their plants alive in the extreme heat. The Oregon Heather Society had scheduled a meeting for early August, when there would be plenty of heather flowers available for a program on flower arranging. Our speaker, a flower show judge, asked us to please reschedule her talk. She had a bonsai collection and needed to spend all of her time watering these living sculptures, which have very limited root systems. We were happy to accede to her request, as nobody wanted to go anywhere!

We finally planted the library garden in mid-October, all but a few cultivars that weren't available then. It is amazing how one can envision from very small plants how good the garden will look in a few years if all goes well, but I'm still concerned about the soil.

The entire garden is surrounded by concrete, either sidewalk or driveway kerbing. The native clay was removed to a depth of about six inches. We then piled a special soil mix on top of the clay, raising the soil level well above the concrete to ensure drainage from run-off, as water would not drain through the clay base. I hope that by removing the clay we haven't simply created a pool that will wick water up to the heathers during the rainy season, when they already have sufficient. I was so unhappy about some parts of the garden that were staying wet long after a rain, that I requested that a layer of quarter-ton gravel (crushed rock with particle sizes between 0.25 and 0.1 inches) several inches thick be spread over the garden and tilled into the planting mix. Paul Dickey, whose idea this garden was, graciously did the hauling, spreading, and tilling-in required. We of the Oregon Heather Society all have our fingers crossed that this added grit will do the trick.

The library garden has several grade changes, created both to give the garden interest and to provide as much drainage as possible. The challenge

has always been to ensure adequate drainage while at the same time ensuring an adequate summer water supply. Soaker hoses are to be installed in this garden as in my own, but after my experience in my own garden during the summer heat wave, I am fine-tuning placement of the soakers to be sure that all plants at the library will have sufficient water, no matter how hot it gets.

Because the location of the hose bibs necessitated some extra fittings on the soaker hoses, we were unable to install them immediately after planting, as we had hoped to do. Rather than mulch the garden and then have to scoop mulch out of the way to install the soakers, we decided to delay mulching until after the hoses were installed. This turned out to be a big mistake.

Early in December, the northwest was hit by the coldest weather in decades, setting new low temperature records for the dates in many places. How were our newly planted heathers going to survive having their root balls frozen? They hadn't been in the ground long enough for their roots to have grown very far. In fact, nine plants had been added to the garden in mid-November, and I'd recently planted a new small section of my own garden and had not had time to install its soaker or mulch it, either.

Normal winter heather planting advice to Pacific Northwest gardeners is: if the soil isn't frozen, you can plant. This usually means that you can plant all winter long, because below freezing temperatures are usually not much below freezing, and they rarely last more than a few days. This time, we were being threatened with many degrees of frost, and the cold was predicted to last more than a week. How would we protect our newly planted babies at the library garden? We were all scrambling to protect our own plants, especially those in pots, guaranteed to freeze solid without insulation.

We didn't have time to mulch the entire library garden, so we hit upon the idea of giving each plant a protective collar of mulch a few inches deep and about 6" wide. There was a big pile of bark mulch that had been scraped off the garden site before the clay was removed. It had been stored near the garden so that we could replace it after planting the heathers. At least we didn't have to waste time buying and hauling mulch to the garden. Short walks with wheelbarrow loads of mulch from the pile would suffice.

I had saved all of the pots the heathers had been grown in. We placed a gallon-sized pot over each small heather plant and dumped a couple of shovelfuls of mulch on top of each pot. Most fell around the pot. We could then lift the pot off the plant and tuck mulch up under its foliage. This technique saved considerable time, as it avoided our having to worry about burying the plants under the mulch. One person could place pots over the heathers, another fetch mulch from the pile, a third shovel mulch over the pots, while the last lifted off pots and tucked in mulch around the plants. Four of us managed to mulch all 93 plants in less than two hours. We then rushed home to rescue our own gardens.

This time, the weather forecasters got it right. We had more than a week of bright sunny weather, with afternoon temperatures slightly above freezing, but night-time lows well below freezing. Four mornings in a row, the thermometer outside our kitchen window recorded 10°F (-12°C) at 7:30 am, and the rest of the week wasn't much warmer.

Amazingly, now that our weather has returned to its normal rainfall pattern, there is little damage from the cold apparent in either my own garden or in the new garden at the library. Our saving grace was probably the lack of wind during the cold spell. At the library, the only plants to look really bad after the cold are the plants of *Calluna* 'Angela Wain' that were in questionable health when planted. These will almost certainly have to be replaced, but come early spring, I'll prune off the dead parts (most of the plant) and give them a chance to recover with the spring growth spurt.

There is only one cultivar of *Daboecia* planted at the library, and those three plants are mostly brown. But some bright green lingers in places, so they may survive. A few of my *Daboecias* also took a hit from the cold, with parts of the plant turning brown, but others were completely unaffected. After looking at all of the *Daboecias*, I can report that without exception, the damaged plants sustained damage only on the parts of the plants facing due south, where they would have been exposed to full sunlight on those bright afternoons that followed the abnormally cold nights. I'll be comparing notes with other Oregon heather gardeners to learn if they had the same pattern of damage. In general, the *Daboecias* with no apparent damage were those in partly shaded locations, such as on the north side of the berm.

One other lesson learned from effects of the December freeze is that it is not safe to prune *Callunas* in late fall. The plants that I pruned in early fall are fine. Those that I pruned a week or two before the cold spell have turned brown on the cut tips, especially on the south side of the plants, just like the *Daboecias* (which were not pruned). They will need to be pruned again in March. There is always something more to learn about heathers.

*There are some photographs of Ella May's lovely garden on the centre pages. Ed*

## Peter Sparkes Daphne Everett



During the Summer of 2009, Gill and Don Glenwright from Tanworth in Arden, visited our garden. Tanworth in Arden is close to Beoley, where Joe Sparkes had his heather nursery and, in the course of chatting about heathers, they passed on the sad news that Joe's son Peter, of *Calluna vulgaris* 'Peter Sparkes' fame, had died, in April 2007, aged eighty seven.

I was privileged to meet Joe and Peter not long before Joe's death in 1981. Joe was then 85 and had given up growing heathers commercially by that time, but he was still riding his old bike with a carrier on the front, that he had used as a young man to take his plants to sell at Birmingham's Wholesale Market. They were living in a rather primitive wooden bungalow (down a

very difficult-to-find track) which Joe's father had bought as a holiday home for his family back in 1924. It was on the land around this bungalow that Joe's many outstanding heathers were produced.

At no time did the nursery have mains water – all domestic and horticultural needs were met by a well, which had been sunk at random, and all watering was by can.

Peter told the Glenwrights how, when his father wished to register 'Peter Sparkes' as a separate cultivar (a sport of 'H.E Beale'), The Royal Horticultural Society refused to issue a certificate, declaring that it was too much like its parent. This was because "Peter Sparkes" tended to be paler in a dry year. The plant was the subject of trials at Wisley for some years, before it was recognised as a separate cultivar some shades darker than 'H. E. Beale'.

Peter was a quiet and gentle man and after his father's death he continued to live at Beoley. Although his life was almost that of a recluse, he did enjoy company. Gill and Don often passed the time of day when they met and were invited to walk through the woods with him on Summer evenings to hear the birdsong.

A few years before his death, Peter sold the land and moved into a prefabricated dwelling on the site. A modern house, appropriately named 'Heather House', has since been built on the land that was once a famous heather nursery. As Gill and Don put it so succinctly – "The end of an era"!

## **The Cornish Rambler**

### **Steve Yandall**

Living in Cornwall for several years has given me regular access to places that would normally only be found by ericaphile visitors either accidentally or through the good grace of locals. I hope to write now and in the future of heaths that I find interesting, magical and scenic. Heaths that fulfill both holiday needs and which feed your own passion for that most British environment - the moor!

My first walk starts at St Agnes Head. I found this walk some time ago and it has several unique features. Access by car is excellent (the only place of this kind I know of with a tarmac road of several hundred metres which runs along within a short distance of the cliffs—VERY good for the elderly or infirm). The road is a private National Trust (NT) access route and is very quiet, with adequate car parks. To find this, head for St Agnes Beacon where you will find a tarmac entrance opposite. Enter this lane and you will cross what was Cameron camp. This ex MoD property is covered in Shasta daisies and montbretia, a few remnants of human occupation (one sentry post), one or two roses, etc. but as you approach the coast heather starts to dominate. If you are at all nervous there you have the assurance of the coastguard watch and their emergency telephone! You approach the coast at right angles and if you were to turn right through what appears to be a car park you go to Newland Head, but I generally follow the road left and park above the coastguard station or go to the car park on what were the gun enplacements.

So I have covered access, parking and security. Once parked you need to know history, alignment and environment. The whole site is NT and covers an ex. industrial landscape (tin mining) which has been reclaimed by our much respected heather. You will see to the West of you the engine house - Wheal Coates - which has been renovated, the quintessential Cornish landscape feature, which you will be visiting in the course of your walk. Wheal Coates stands above Chapel Porth which will be the subject of a future ramble. Slightly to the right of the engine stack and 2 miles further is Porthtowan, with St Ives several miles West.

Looking over the sea you are looking directly ahead towards Wales over the Bristol Channel. You may be fortunate enough to see seals, dolphins or basking sharks in the sea directly below you, but regardless of this you will see almost tropical hues of blue and green to contrast the patchwork of grasses, thyme, gorse, heather and lichen-covered granite. Looking east you face St Agnes, with Newquay several miles further on. You must judge your walk according to ability but always be mindful of weather. It is not how far you are going that is critical, it is the distance back! I always target the engine house at Wheal Coates for my return, however there is a seasonal cafe at Chapel Porth as a reward for those fitter individuals who go a little further.

On your walk to Wheal Coates keep your eyes open for the resident Peregrine Falcons and the many small heathland birds which frequent the whole area - their presence and song are a real joy. To your right, the shale slope to the cliffs are home to lizards and adders and, with patience, I am sure you will spot a few. *Calluna* and *Erica cinerea* dominate the heath on the cliff side with odd plants of *Genista pilosa* (hairy greenweed) and *Rosa pimpinellifolia* (burnet rose) weaving amongst other plants whose multiple hips and beautiful single cream flowers seem almost incongruous against the multiple small blooms of all else.

You will by now be on Tubby Head - a real hunters Paradise\*. I have found many varied forms of both *Calluna* and *Erica cinerea* - prostrate, bushy, lanky, white, pink, purple flowers and gold and silver foliage. Looking east you face St Agnes with Newquay several miles further on. HERE I MAKE A PLEA - if any super-keen members make a find either here or anywhere else and feel it worth naming and releasing please ensure the find location is recorded, to avoid a plant being registered twice through multiple discovery.

Rabbits are abundant here and if you look to the left you will see areas of *Ulex gallii* (western gorse) which are used as a lawn by them. Their seating areas are easily visible on the top of the gorse and the gorse is nibbled flat. How do they get comfortable?

You will note on your walk the importance of this area, as witnessed by varied memorials - "his favourite place in the world." Or the poignant discovery I made one day near the Coastguard watch, of a horizontal gravestone dedicated to Stephen Penaluna in the heather a long way off the track. That neither the NT nor the Coastguard know anything of it, this just adds to the romance to me. The seats, both actual and natural, along the

*continued on page 15*



*Picture 1, details on page 14*



*Picture 2, details on page 14*

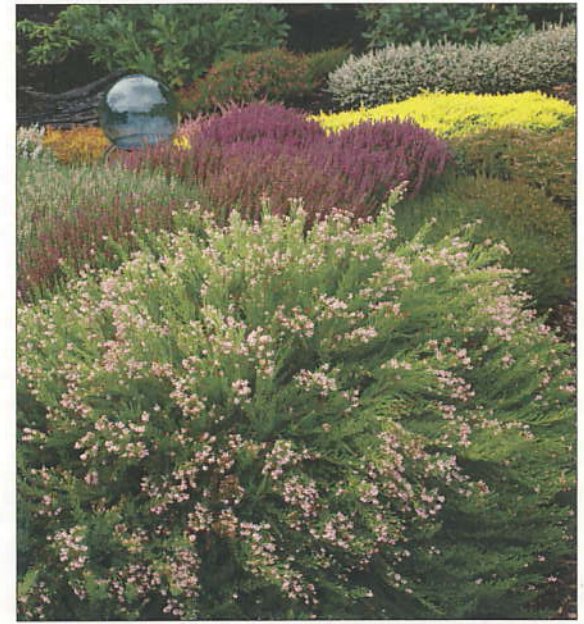
**Ella May Wulff's lovely Garden in Oregon - Photographs by Barry Wulff**



*Picture 3, details on page 14*



*Picture 4, details on page 14*



*Picture 5, details on page 14*

## Ella May Wulff's lovely Garden in Oregon Photograph Details

**Picture 1.** *Erica erigena* 'Brian Proudley' lower left foreground. *E. x stuartii* 'Irish Lemon' pink in foreground, with *C. 'Emerald Jock'* (finished flowering) to its right. Behind them the large red is *C. 'Carmen'*. *E. ciliaris* 'Corfe Castle' behind Brian Proudley, *E. erigena* 'Maxima' - dark green bush on left edge. 'Estrella Gold' behind Carmen.

*Helictotrichon sempervirens* is the grass to right. *Quercus garryana* in centre rear is probably hundreds of years old.

**Picture 2.** *C. 'Devon'*, centre foreground, with *C. 'Highland Rose'* and *E. cinerea* 'Knap Hill Pink' behind it. *Kniphofia* 'Little Maid' flowering beside bench. Golden foliage near bench is *E. cinerea* 'Fiddlestone' and *C. 'Gold Charm'*. The white flowers are 'Ruby Slinger'.

Large green mounds are *E. erigena* 'Brian Proudley', which was supposed to be 5 plants forming a hedge. However, plant 4 refuses to cooperate. You can't even see it in this photo, it is so small compared to the others. Only two have grown together adequately so far.

Centre of photo is *Picea* 'Gold Traum'.

**Picture 3.** Foreground left is *Calluna vulgaris* 'Gold Kup'. Behind it *Daboecia* 'Silversmith', behind that *E. x watsonii* 'Pearly Pink' and to its right *C. 'Mrs Pat'*. To its left is *C. 'Crinkly Tuft'*. Behind that *E. ciliaris* 'Corfe Castle' and the sedge *Carex flagellifera*. To its right is *E. x williamsii* 'Gwavas'. Behind the sedge are *C. 'Highland Rose'* and to its left *E. cinerea* 'Knap Hill Pink'.

**Picture 4.** Left foreground: 'Battle of Arnhem', then 'Christina', then J.H. Hamilton' with *Daboecia* 'Cupido', below it, a *darleyensis*, then 'Spook'. The Grass is *Festuca glauca* and the blue pine in the centre is *Pinus parviflora* 'Aoba Jo'.

Right foreground is 'Spring Torch', then 'Christina' again, then *Erica vagans* 'Carnea', then 'Marion Blum', then 'Arabella'.

The pine I can never remember, though EVERYONE asks me its name. Just beyond the pine is 'Spring Glow', and then 'Jimmy Dyce'. The beautiful orange foliage belongs to 'Foya'.

Big foliage by lamp-post is *Iris spuria* that was supposed to have been dug out, as it is too big and flops down the hill. However, it regenerated very well from a few pieces left behind. Must remove again.

**Picture 5.** Foreground, *Erica x gaudiflora* 'Edeweicht Blush'. Behind it is *C. 'Allegretto'* (about gone over) and behind that is *C. 'Roter Oktober'*. The golden foliage is *E. cinerea* 'Celebration'.

To left behind Japanese fishing float (Barry found it on a beach in Panama the summer we met and carried it home on his lap in the airplane) is *E. cinerea* 'Golden Sport'.

Edging the rhododendrons at rear are *Daboecia* 'Waley's Red' and *C. 'Snowflake'*, going over.

from page 11

route, allow for rest and view enjoyment, but beware the downhill outward trip as the reverse is true on return.

When you reach Wheal Coates there is an information board to give a more detailed picture of its use. There are easily 30 minutes of interest here. See if you can find the *Erica cinerea* with the thyme-like habit or the crystal clear, coral pink *cinerea*! The journey back will be good for the soul and waistline whilst, of course, giving you a real taste for Cornish fare.

If you do have the energy left look on St Agnes Head for *Erica ciliaris*. It was recorded here many years ago and I have looked frequently but never found it. You may be the one to rediscover it!

I hope I have sparked your interest in this magical place. The only way to turn the illusion into reality is to visit it yourself. You will find that my description has failed to do the area justice, but I know that I can close my eyes and smell the sea air with honey tones on it, feel the balmy air on my face and visualise a carpet of greens and purples, but most of all feel a genuine freedom, not experienced elsewhere.

\* I have a collectors' licence within which I agreed to take no more than 2 cuttings per plant. If members do see any likely looking plants check with me, as it is likely that I have already propagated plants, and I am more than willing to share.

## United by a Common Cause

Jack Watkins

**With acknowledgments to the Daily Telegraph, Saturday  
September 26 2009**

Did the 16th-century herbalist John Gerard write in praise of marsh gentians after seeing them grow on Catherton Common? As a Londoner happiest cultivating the borders in his Holborn garden, perhaps not. But since he urged the planting of the flower on grounds of its delicate beauty alone, he would have been delighted that the nationally scarce species still forms a colony in this esteemed corner of Shropshire.

Catherton Common is special for so many things. If its status as heathland does not make it important enough, it also has areas of wet heath, a type of habitat that is rarer still. As such it contains a litany of plants - bog asphodel, bog pimpernel, marsh lousewort and sundews among them - that has vanished across vast swathes of Britain as marshy areas are drained for cultivation. The bogs and streams inevitably attract keeled skimmers and golden ringed dragonflies. The bell heather and areas of grassland draw birds of the open country - meadow pipits with their curious "bouncing bomb" flight patterns, flocks of chattering linnets and the much-loved summer songster, the yellowhammer.

When you add in the views across to the Clee Hills, and areas of rocky upland pasture, it is little surprise that its designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest is accompanied by inclusion within the Shropshire Hills

### Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Ian Trueman, retired professor of ecology at Wolverhampton University, calls it "an enchanted landscape of great tranquillity and power". He got to know it when working on a distinguished publication, the 'Ecological Flora of the Shropshire Region', which he co-authored in 1985. "It feels such a remote place, different to the usual English countryside and yet untypical of the Welsh border country too. For much of the year it seems rather dour, but you get this intense colour in late August and September when the gorse, ling, and bell and cross-leaved heather flower together to form sheets of purple and gold".

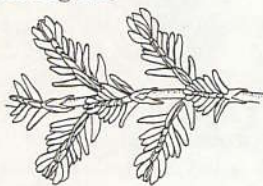
He says the Common has scarcely changed in thousands of years. "Commons such as this, with vast tracts of heath, are often the places where we are closest to nature, because they missed out on the agricultural revolutions, and date back to medieval patterns of farming. Catherton seems unsullied and unimproved because it's been shaped by the grazing of cattle and sheep, because the soils were too poor to be ploughed or fertilised". The Common is also a place of mystery, for it is peppered with bell pits, thought to have been sunk by independent coal miners. No one knows when they ceased to be worked.

The miners lived in the houses that dot the Common, forming small farmsteads, surrounded by pasture. Tenancy of these properties brings with it livestock grazing rights, but increasingly they are being bought by those who see them as desirable retirement properties. Trueman describes the situation as the tragedy of the commons. "The fact is that the wildlife thriving here owes its existence to the pattern of grazing over the centuries, but many of the incoming residents use the common for recreation alone, and even dislike stock. In the long term it means the land will become covered in scrub, and lose what makes it special".

In a bid to save the Common, the Shropshire Wildlife Trust is trying to raise funds to acquire a 527 acre tract that has been put up for sale. It is vital it succeeds argues John Hughes, the Trust's development manager. "The land was owned by a company which had acquired it to extract the coal. It's unlikely that permission would be given for that in the current situation, but who knows about the future? My biggest fear is death by attrition".

If the campaign succeeds, he hopes it will mean more cattle and ponies, which will help to keep the scrub in check. "Catherton is bleak, difficult terrain and supports a way of life unchanged in centuries that we may soon lose. It is also one of those places that makes it worth getting up in the morning".

*For more information on the campaign, contact 01743 284280 or visit [www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk)*



## From the *Bulletin's* Archives

### Snippets Of News From Members

On November 22nd [1993], with about 1 inch of snow on the ground, the brightest spot in my garden is a group of about five *Calluna vulgaris* 'Marleen' — standing up in full splendour, many inches above the snow. This bud-bloomer (or is it bud-flowerer?) is certainly worth growing. Also, as directed by most good authors, I have two groups of *Erica vagans* 'Valerie Proudley' growing in full sun, proudly (excuse the pun) showing off their golden foliage and sparse white flowers. I like the shrub so much, and, as it doesn't always do only to do as one is told, I have two more groups in a border at the foot of a north-facing, four feet high, panel fence. Here, all the shrubs are more lime green in colour but the flowers show up more. I wonder — does 'Valerie Proudley' only flower sparsely, or does the brilliant golden foliage hide its many white flowers?

Norman Taylor

### More from the Archives

#### White *Calluna* And Snow

*It all started with this note by David McClintock in the Spring of 1992.*

In volume 2 p. 350 of the magnificent new "Farn- und Blütenpflanzen" BadenWurttembergs (Ulmer) is a glorious photograph of *Calluna* in full flower. But this note concerns what is written on the previous page "An lange schneebedeckten Stellen des Feldberg-Gebietes oft weissblühend" ("Where the snow lies longest on the Feldberg, often with white flowers"). At the back of my mind I think I have heard the idea before. Does anyone recollect it or can guess if or why it is true?

*There were two follow-up commentaries, one from Donald Mackay and one from Brita Johansson, as follows:*

#### **"An Lange Schneebedeckten Stellen Des Feldberg-Gebietes Oft Weissblühend"**

In the Spring 1992 *Bulletin*, David McClintock quoted a passage, from a German publication, which he then translated as "Where the snow lies longest on the Feldberg, often with white flowers". He then asked if anyone has heard the idea before or could guess if, or why it might be true. Donald Mackay, [then] President of the North American Heather Society and Acting Editor of their Newsletter *Heather News* proposed to put the question to North American members who, he says, should be in a far better position than UK members to answer it and in the meantime has responded with some thoughts of his own - which he has entitled:

## **Snow White & White Dwarfs - Donald MacKay's response**

In Scotland I've never seen any hint of such an association, such as white heather being found higher on the mountainside than purple, but white heather occurs very rarely in the wild. I've never found it, in spite of looking for years on moor and mountain, especially where dwarf forms might be expected, since there have been several finds of white heathers dwarfed by exposure to the elements — but they have eluded me. I've read that white heather is common on certain Hebridean islands, suggesting that geographical isolation tends to preserve a genetic aberration, but the Hebrides are rarely snow covered.

What I have seen many times here in the American North-East, especially in Vermont where snow covers my heathers until April in some years, is that the purple varieties of *Erica carnea* are often bleached white or a pale pink as they emerge from the snow. The picture, so beloved by garden catalogues, of purple "Scotch heather" blooms, peeping above the snow is achieved (in my experience) only when a late dusting of snow covers plants already in full bloom. Flowers that emerge from old snow, or are found under mats of sodden leaves in early spring, are usually an unattractive greenish-white, though rarely a pleasing bicolour pink-white effect is found.

But this refers only to *Erica carnea*, not to *Calluna*. All I can say is I've never seen an effect of snow cover on wild *Calluna*, which in my garden in Vermont, is always the usual pink-purple in summer, in spite of three feet of snow cover over four to five months of winter. The obvious snow-cover effect I see, is in years of poor snow when the centre of the clumps above the snow get badly frost-bitten from exposure to near zero temperatures. In that unhappy case I get no flowers of any colour. I don't doubt that the observation made in Feldberg is correct and that heathers found in snow-covered areas happen to be white. But, that doesn't mean that snow cover in winter necessarily caused white blooms in summer, or even that dependable annual snow cover tends to favour the survival of white blooming forms, which is a slightly more likely explanation if we think snow would help vegetative growth instead of seedling germination, or that the normal pollination vectors are inoperative in snowfield areas.

All I can say is, I haven't seen any effect in my garden. Flower colour doesn't seem to affect winter survival, though foliage colour might, as I think yellow-foliaged plants are at a constitutional disadvantage. My white heathers are all cultivars, but genetically they should be the same as the wild white heathers first collected and named. Thus, garden observations could be valid.

## **"Where The Snow Lies Longest" - Brita Johansson's response**

I would like to make a comment on "white flowers where the snow lasts longest" ('Farn und Blütenpflanzen', *Bulletins* 15 & 18 [quoted above]).

At first I was inclined to regard the statement that *Calluna* often has white flowers where the snow lies longest as pure nonsense. A publication of good repute however shouldn't publish rubbish should it? Having accepted the statement as true, thoughts on a possible explanation turn up immediately.

Feldberg is an area of south-west Germany, bordering both France and Switzerland. It is highland, the highest summit 1,484m according to my world atlas. On north-facing slopes the snow can certainly lie for a considerably longer time than the 4-5 months, which are usual in Donald Mackay's garden.

It is known that plants can change their chemistry under influence from the environment. White is not a colour, but is a manifestation of a lack of the substances that give colour to flowers. I think it is possible that the plants, under extreme conditions, can stop the production of these substances. In that case, a plant moved to a more normal place, should turn to normal heather colour.

*Magnolia stellata* flowers on bare branches early in the spring and, as we all know, the flowers are white. Quite often a few flowers appear later in the summer, and they are more or less pink. This is another manifestation of the same phenomenon, which is called in Swedish *edafisk* difference. Plant chemistry is complex and I am no chemist, but there are people who can explain what I have touched on here. Whether this is the reason why *Calluna* on Feldberg has white flowers is another question, but at least it is a theory.

## Questions & Answers

**Q** Dear Heather Society:

We thoroughly enjoy your website and all the information it provides. We are getting ready to plant a heather garden in the spring with approximately 120 heather plants. We needed to acidify our soil but through an accident we are afraid that we may have put too much sulfur. We now need to wait until Spring to recheck the soil pH. Once we do, if it is too low, how can we raise it quickly and safely enough to plant the heathers? We are afraid that it may be down to pH 4.0.

Is there anything we should be doing now? Or is it better to just wait until Spring to check the pH (it may be 4.5 but it's so hard to tell)? I have read that bone meal should be used in the hole when planting heathers. Would this help to raise the pH a little bit immediately upon planting? I would appreciate your advice. Thank you.

Susan Gilissen, (Connecticut, USA)

**A** Heathers do not need fertilizer in most circumstances. Yes, some bone meal in the planting hole can be beneficial, but if you are leaving the garden fallow until spring it might be wiser to try to incorporate some organic material now - some very well rotted compost.

Charles Nelson

**A** I doubt if you have over acidified your soil. It needs 4oz per sq. yard and that is a lot of sulphur. It is also very difficult to put on as it will not break up and often sits there in lumps. The trial beds at Harlow Carr had pH 4.5 and they were magnificent. If the pH is not low enough the only fast way to acidify is 2% sulphuric acid but "Health and Safety" will not allow it.

Jean Julian

**A** The question was also copied to Ella May Wulff, who responded as follows:

I'm a bit puzzled as to why you needed to acidify your soil. I used to live in North Windham, Connecticut, and my soil there was definitely acidic.

Do be sure that you test your pH in spring, and be sure that your soil is thoroughly mixed before testing. Sample several different places in the new garden. If your pH is above 5, the heathers should survive. If not, I'd counterbalance the excess sulfur by adding a SMALL amount of dolomitic limestone. The amount of lime to add will depend upon the results of your pH test. Mix it thoroughly with the soil and allow a couple of weeks before planting the heathers.

Right now this fall, you can mix lots and lots of chopped leaves into your soil so that they can decompose over the winter. In Windham, we were able to catch the town trucks that vacuumed up leaves from the street and get them to dump a load in front of our house. The leaves were chopped as they were sucked into the truck, so they were ideal for use as mulch. Just be sure that there are no walnuts, butternuts or hickories growing in the neighborhood the leaves came from. Oaks, maples and birches are fine.

Bone meal won't change soil pH much, so don't count on it to raise the pH. You can safely add it for slow release of nutrients to get the heathers off to a good start. If your soil has lots of organic matter in it, the heathers will probably soon have good mycorrhizal relationships established and won't need any additional fertilizing.

Good luck. And please let us know how things go in the spring.

*Ella May Wulff*

### **In response to a request for more information Susan Gilissen added this.**

To give you some background, we have been doing a lot of construction around our house. The first bit of soil that I had tested in the area was the first 4 inches of soil (taken from 3 different places) which came up to be pH 5.5. I thought that was great, but then I realized that I really should have gone down deeper for the pH test as the heather roots would be more like 8 inches down, so I had another test done which came up pH 6.9. (The first soil was some topsoil that we recently had put down because of the construction, so that's why it was different). The soil is definitely not clay, but not really sandy either (I think it's a kind of loam). It has quite a few rocks in it.

Because I knew that the heathers' roots would be in the deeper part of the soil, I thought it best to lower the pH by about 1.5 points. However, we accidentally put down and tilled in too much sulfur. So who knows exactly what the pH will end up being if you think about combining the 2 kinds of soils, but we think that we have lowered it by approximately 4 points (meaning we may be down to pH 4).

Regarding the kinds of heathers we are going to plant, they are mainly *Calluna vulgaris* with some *Erica carnea* and a few *Erica x oldenburgensis*.

We can certainly add some ground up leaves now so that they can decompose. Please let us know approximately how much we should put (the area for the heather garden is approximately 400 square feet). Do you think

it would be helpful to also add some wood ashes from a fireplace?

If for some reason, when we test the pH again in the Spring and it is still too low, is there anything we can do close to the time we plant the heathers to help them? It is my understanding that the pH should be between 4.5 and 5.5, is that correct?

**A** You are very thorough. Good for you, though your diligence seems to have gotten you into trouble. You could probably have gotten away with planting heathers in your original soil by just mixing the two soil layers thoroughly to a depth of 12-18 inches. With the way Connecticut grows rocks, tilling to that depth might not be too easy, but it would probably do the trick. Then adding lots of organic matter would keep the heathers happy.

Anyway, now that you have added the sulfur, you certainly would be safe in lightly sprinkling some wood ashes over the bed and turning them in along with the chopped leaves. The key word is LIGHTLY. Just a dusting. You don't want to find yourself in the position of swinging the pH too far one way, then too far the other. So go easy with the wood ashes until you have another soil test next spring. I wouldn't aim for pH 5, but if it is at least as high as 5, I wouldn't mess with amending the soil any more to raise the pH, except with organic matter such as the chopped leaves or compost.

One inch of leaves is not enough. You could safely turn in a four to six inch layer, and a rake won't do the job. If digging them in with a shovel is too difficult, I'd rent a rototiller (or better yet, hire someone with a rototiller to do it for you). You can then top your amended soil with another couple inches of leaves and let it sit that way all winter.

*Erica carnea* did very well for me in North Windham, and I had callunas, too. Once you have that pH adjusted properly, you could try *Erica tetralix*. I was just experimenting with *Erica x watsonii* when we moved back west. You will probably be all right with the *Erica x oldenburgensis*. They do well in northwestern Germany.

You will not regret putting a lot of effort into soil preparation. Once you get the soil right, the rest is easy.

Ella May

**A** from the Chairman, The Heather Society - David Edge  
The pH can be quickly raised by the addition of calcium carbonate (chalk) or magnesian [or dolomitic] limestone if there is a magnesium deficiency suspected. The pH of some of the native heathlands can be down around pH 4.4 in extreme cases but I would suggest that the ideal should be around pH 5.8. I would have doubts about any useful benefit the addition of bonemeal would have to alter the pH. Lime/chalk would be the easiest and cheapest method of application to rectify the situation.

My suggestion would be not to add bonemeal or any fertilizer in the hole when planting, as this will be directly in contact with young delicate roots. Most pot-grown heathers will have a slow release fertilizer compound incorporated at potting in the compost. I prefer any feeding to be done during the first half of the year as one or two very light top dressings with a general fertilizer.

## Group News

### North East

As I was unable to contribute to the 'Group News' in the Autumn *Bulletin* I will give you a brief account of what should have appeared.

On Saturday, September 12th, the Ponteland Flower Show held its Annual event. The Show itself was well supported and attended, but, sadly, the Heather Classes only attracted three participants. Two *Heather Society* members and one 'outsider'. I was delighted when I saw the 'outsider' had taken a very worthy 2nd Prize in one of the Classes. Who knows, "from little acorns...." We live in hope.

Like everyone in the UK we have experienced one of the worst winters for many years, but as I write, the heather beds have emerged from their thick snowy duvets and look rarein' to go!!

May I just end with my thanks to the members who sent "Get Well" wishes when I had my fall resulting in a broken hip and wrist. I have made an excellent recovery and am almost as good as new.

Wasn't I lucky this happened the day after the show and not the day before?

*Dorothy M. Warner.*

### Yorkshire

The Study Centre at Harlow Carr has been booked for three meetings: 13th March, 29th May and 19th September 2010. At our first meeting in March we have some DVDs to play of heathers and we shall discuss these as we progress with the showing. We shall plan our further two meetings at this March meeting.

*Jean Julian*

### Home Counties

It is planned to have a Home Counties Group meeting at the RHS, Wisley Gardens, on Saturday 25th September 2010. Details will be announced in the Summer edition of the *Heather Society Bulletin*.

*Derek Millis*

## A Bottle Of Wine

Sally was driving home from one of her business trips in Northern Arizona when she saw an elderly Navajo woman walking on the side of the road. As the trip was a long and quiet one, she stopped the car and asked the Navajo woman if she would like a ride.

With a silent nod of thanks, the woman got into the car. Resuming the journey, Sally tried in vain to make a bit of small talk with the Navajo woman. The old woman just sat silently, looking intently at everything she saw, studying every little detail, until she noticed a brown bag on the seat next to Sally.

"What in the bag"" asked the old woman. Sally looked down at the brown bag and said, "It's a bottle of wine. I got it for my husband." The Navajo woman was silent for another moment or two. Then speaking with the quiet wisdom of an elder. she said. "Good trade."

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

**Society's Website:** [www.heathersociety.org.uk](http://www.heathersociety.org.uk)

- Chairman & Steering Committee** *Policy matters, major events etc.*  
Mr. D. Edge, Forest Edge Nursery, Verwood Road, Woodlands, Wimborne, BH21 8LJ.
- Treasurer** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN. *e-mail:* philjoyner@btinternet.com *Tel:* (02380) 864336
- Secretary & Slide Librarian** *Council Matters/Hire of slides*  
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[www.plant-orderingservice.co.uk](http://www.plant-orderingservice.co.uk) 0790 582 5818 (Mobile)

**Group Organisers** (*Remember, you will be very welcome at any local meeting or visit!*)

- East Midlands** Mr. A. Hall, 10, Upper Green, Nanpantan, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3SG.  
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- Home Counties** Mr. D. Millis, 18, The Horseshoe, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 8QW  
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