

The Heather Society

Newsletter

Spring 2018



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Diary 2018

22nd-23rd September THS Annual Gathering



Find us on Facebook

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For contact details of the Society's Officers,

Editors, Group Organizers, see page 14

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Foreword

Dear members, welcome to the spring 2018 newsletter.

Working at Forest Edge Nurseries allows me to see a wide variety of heathers flowering all year round. David Edge has a lovely selection of Cape heaths, so I decided to use them as a front cover for this edition. The two species used were *Erica melanthera* (top) and *Erica bauera* (bottom left).

They are truly stunning and on a beautiful sunny day who could resist taking a few snaps!

Also see bottom right a photo of the new heather registration *Erica verticillata* 'Dresden'. See page 9 for more information.

You may be interested to know that there have been some very good heather articles published lately. Maybe give them a read!

Gardeners' World January 2018

Modern Gardens January 2018

Samantha Barnes

Chairman's Piece

I note that in 2014 I mentioned the wettest year on record, I am now aware of February 2018 having the coldest night on record. The variation in weather conditions will, at the least, not be detrimental to our heathers in comparison to many other garden centre plants.

Your Council at the March 2018 meeting is to consider, and come to a definitive conclusion, as to the future role and structure of the Society as directed by the membership at the 2017 AGM. In its existing format as a registered charity, the Charity Commissioners require the submission of a trustees annual report, annual accounts and depending on the income be **independently examined** or **audited**. This work requires the time and effort of a diminishing number of volunteering Council members.

In order to simplify the structure, time and effort in maintaining the Society's role Council will consider the reform of The Society to one of the following;

Unincorporated association

An unincorporated association is a membership organisation. It can be whatever its members want it to be and carry out whatever activity you choose. It is the easiest, quickest and cheapest way for a group to set itself up. This structure is suitable for groups such as tenants' associations, film clubs, arts groups and campaigning groups. Many groups fall into this category

Charitable unincorporated association

A charitable unincorporated association is a type of charity. It is just the same as a non-charitable unincorporated association except that its aims are legally charitable and it can demonstrate that its work benefits the public.

Charitable unincorporated associations with annual income over £5,000 are required to register with the Charity Commission and submit information to them each year.

Third option

An organisation that has minimal administrative requirements. This would be an organisation that has no members paying subscriptions but instead is funded by good will (donations?), internet based (no printing or postal overheads) and have a name that associates it with the legacy of The Heather Society.

My personal ambition is for a Heather Society in one form or another to continue its functions for the benefit of its members, this is however reliant on the continuing interest and efforts of its membership.

David Edge

Society events & news

THS Annual Gathering

The Heather Society Annual Gathering will focus on the weekend of 22 and 23 September with activity focused on Saturday 22 with an all day visit to RHS Wisley and on Sunday 23 a visit to Champs Hill and Saville Garden Windsor is planned. We need to know numbers of members who are interested in attending as soon as possible so that those who wish to stay at a hotel can be accommodated. Members should make their own hotel arrangements. Hotel prices will be around £150-£200 per night from enquiries made. A mini bus will be hired to take members from a hotel to each venue.

Saturday 22 September

10.15-10.30 Meet at entrance to RHS Wisley
10.30-12.30 New RHS Wisley National Collection of heathers
12.30 -1.30 lunch @ Wisley Garden
1.30-3.00 AGM @ Hillside Centre
3.00 -5.00 The Heather Show @ Hillside Centre

Sunday 23 September

10.30-12.00 Visit to Champs Hill, Pulborough, Sussex
12.00-1.15 Travel to Saville Garden, Windsor
1.15-2.00 Lunch at Saville Garden
2.00-5.00 Saville Garden

Please email to Barry Sellers sellersbarry@aol.com if you are interested in attending
For those wanting to stay at a hotel the nearest recommended to RHS Wisley is

Suggested Hotel

The Talbot Ripley, High Street, Ripley, Woking Surrey, England GU23 6BB

Reservations 0844 8159833

Tel . 01483 211332

Email: info@thetalbotripley.com

<https://www.thetalbotripley.com/pages/contact>

Other hotels include

The Harbour Hotel, 3 Alexandra Terrace, High Street, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4DA

<https://www.guildford-harbour-hotel.co.uk/Reservations> Tel. 01483 792 300

For those staying at the Talbot Hotel The Heather Society will arrange a mini bus to RHS Wisley and Champs Hill and Saville Garden. Reservations should be made as soon as possible.

Barry Sellers

GDPR, you and the Heather Society

Some of you may be aware of a new piece of EU regulation that comes into effect on the 25th of May 2018. The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) replaces the Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC and UK Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). It was designed to harmonize data privacy laws across Europe, to protect and empower all EU citizens data privacy and to reshape the way organizations across the region approach data privacy. E.g. Stop unwanted emails or other correspondence as a result of being a member of the Heather Society. As matter of principle, we have never given your information to anyone else in the past, nor will we do so in the future.

Under the regulation, you have the right to know and change any personal data the Heather Society keeps about you. This includes Name, address, telephone and email id. The Heather Society has moved all of this information to an online database accessed via the website. You will see, and can change, any of the personal information we hold about you, when you login to the members area. To protect this data we ensure that all of the latest updates to our website servers and code are installed. We also have additional checks and software to stop malicious access to the website database.

If you do not want us to keep the personal information about you in the online database, please let our Membership Secretary know asap. You should be aware that this will mean that you can no longer be a member of the Heather Society, with its privileges, but you could just donate if you wish.

David Brown

Important

For those members who are on-line and who haven't provided an email address or have recently updated their e-mail address then please provide the Society with a valid e-mail address so that access to the members only area of the website can be made possible allowing future newsletters and other paperwork to be made available electronically.

See the website or page 14 for contact details.

Group News

All members are welcome to attend any of the local group events

Home Counties Group

Sadly the visit to view the Heather Trials at John Hall's nursery was cancelled due to bad weather conditions. The next visit will not be announced until 2019.

Barry Sellers

North East Group

Our *Erica carneas* and *E. x darleyensis* gave us a wonderful show in spite of Geoff having to "hand them over" to the two gardeners who now keep the garden tidy.

We had a mild but wet start to the winter with quite a lot of wind, but since christmas it has been very cold with heavy frosts and snow showers. The heathers just shook their heads in disdain!!

Just before christmas I fell in the house and broke my ankle and chipped a bone in the knee so now I am in plaster from my toes to my hip and will be until the end of april. Fat chance of me seeing any heathers as I just move from bed to wheelchair!

Wishing all our members a happy new year with successful gardening.

Dorothy M. Warner

Cuttings Exchange Scheme

This scheme is a unique facility for those members who are interested in propagating their heathers from cuttings. It is a golden opportunity to obtain cultivars which are only very rarely found in garden centres and nurseries these days, and, at the same time, helps to preserve some of these lovely plants for posterity.

For more details - you can phone me on 01885 482206, email me at dandmeverett@gmail.com or fill in the form in the 'members' section of the website.

We regret that the Cuttings Exchange Scheme applies to UK members only.

Daphne Everett

If you have unwanted items such as books, catalogues, brochures that you would like to donate to The Heather Society send them to Forest Edge Nurseries, Woodlands, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 8LJ, where they will be stored and made available to members by request.



Mane Chance Sanctuary is a horse sanctuary situated just outside Guildford in Surrey. But we are a horse sanctuary with a difference. It's true that we rescue and rehabilitate old, abused and abandoned horses or ponies and we work tirelessly to regain their health and trust; two things often destroyed as a result of their previous suffering. But it's what we then do that makes us a little different from most. We work with our horses in welcoming less privileged adults and children, those with additional needs, terminal illness or simply those who would benefit from time spent with our horses. Horses have an incredible emotional capacity to interact calmly with compassion and a few minutes spent quietly with our herd gives so much pleasure and moments of respite to those who have struggles to face in their everyday lives.

The quality of the environment we provide for our ponies always comes first and is essential for the work that we do with our visitors. Our horses give best when they are themselves calm, comfortable and secure. So the site itself and the area in which our horses reside is of paramount importance. Within our herd we have a number of Shetland ponies who historically are used to quite sparse conditions in their original habitat. Over time, they have been introduced throughout the UK and to areas which do not provide the correct type of grassland to keep them in optimum health. The lush grass found in many of the Home Counties is too rich for them and can result in weight problems and health conditions such as laminitis which can cause crippling pain if not spotted and treated early.

At Mane Chance, we wish to provide an area of our site where we can ensure our Shetland ponies have the optimum type of habitat suitable for their particular diets, which in turn will help the prevention of such health complications. We plan to create an area, similar to the rough, open pasture of the Shetland Isles, with a coarser grass and some natural heath land. The vegetation that we provide will be crucial. Heathers, gorse, hawthorn and more will be grown

and established to provide suitable forage opportunities, much more suited to the breed. In addition, we will provide seating, fencing and handrails, allowing access to the herd for our many visitors.

It's an adventurous project and one that is receiving great interest from the equine welfare industry. The health complications that we face with our Shetlands are common for many and if we can achieve our plan, we know that it will be seen as a method of good practice that we can share with others. By bringing the premise of the habitat of the Shetland Isles to the South of England, we believe we can hugely benefit not only our little herd of ponies, but also encourage others to do the same. We are very grateful to Forest Edge Nurseries in Dorset and Highland Heathers in Perthshire for their advice and support in providing us with the first few hundred of our heathers to grow. We have had our Duke of Edinburgh volunteer students planting them out, knowing that this is the first step on what will become a very exciting journey and we are delighted to share that project and vision with you. Our heathers will become the centrepiece of a unique project for all to enjoy.

For more information about Mane Chance Sanctuary or to follow progress of the project, please visit

www.manechancesanctuary.org

Abi Smart

Erica gracilis

When we visited my cousin before Christmas, he mentioned that he had *Erica gracilis* growing in the garden successfully for the past three years. I have always thought that they would not survive a British winter. It would be interesting to hear about members experiences with growing this heather.



David Plumridge

RHS Trial of winter-flowering Erica

On Tuesday 23rd January 2018 eight professionals from the Horticultural Industry met at Whitehall Nursery, Hampshire, to assess the ninety-one winter-flowering *Erica* on trial. These were first assessed in March 2017. This was the first of two assessments being made this year (January & March). The trial will receive final assessments in January, February & March 2019. The Award of Garden Merit will be assigned to those that have performed well over the three years, at both Whitehall Nursery, Hampshire, as well as Threave Gardens (NTS), Dumfries & Galloway.

The forum members doing the assessment at Whitehall Nursery this visit were from the RHS Woody committee, three Specialist Heather Growers, a Hardy Nursery Stock Consultant and an invited expert.

Forum members scored individually before group discussion and voting. Numerical scores 1-3 were given to cultivars for overall impact, accounting for hardiness, resistance to P&D, flower colour (quality, density and period), foliage colour, spring tip colour, habit and vigour. These scores were converted to the equivalent A to AGM (1=A, 2=AG, 3=AGM). On this occasion 4 cultivars were voted AGM and a further 39 were voted AG, to be considered.

There was another assessment here at Whitehall Nursery this year on 13th March, as expected the *Erica carnea* were looking at their very best. The trial at Threave Gardens was assessed on 16th January this year and will be assessed yet again on 28th March. It is good to see that some new introductions are proving to be real contenders, and some of the old varieties are still good enough to retain their AGM. I'm sure there will be a few casualties along the way, but that is the idea of holding a trial.

I'm not going to mention any contenders by name, as that would be presumptuous, but I have been pleasantly surprised by how strong some of the old campaigners are (I've been growing them for over forty years and they are still great performers) and how good some of the new varieties are proving themselves to be.

THS members are always welcome to visit the trial, by appointment please (0771 4344327 or info@johnhallplants.com).

John Hall Plants Ltd, Whitehall Nursery, Red Lane, off Churt Road, Headley Down, Hampshire, GU35 8SR.

PS – the road from the village of Churt (Barford Lane leading into Churt Road) is closed until mid-April. Access to the Nursery can only be made from Grayshot or Bordon i.e. from the west.

John Hall

Projects

After reaching out to members for content to help me fill the newsletter I was pleased to hear about heather planting schemes in local communities and members starting their own heather gardens. Maybe they will inspire you .

Sheila Jelley
Budleigh Salterton, Devon

Below 2014

Below 2018



Peter Watts
The Chilterns



Above Castleside Cemetary
Below Consett, Co. Durham



David Plumridge

Plantings at Consett, Co. Durham and two from Castleside Cemetery. This cemetery is opposite our house. The bed was designed by Rita and planted by Castleside school children. She kept to winter/spring heathers because of the shady location due to the silver birches.



New Heather Registration

***Erica verticillata* 'Dresden'**

Bushy, medium-sized, erect shrub growing to an average height of 1.6m, but old specimens may reach up to 1.8m tall; 1-1.5m broad. The flowers are medium to dark pink (darker pink than 'Tresco' lighter than 'Adonis'), tubular, 15mm long, 3mm diameter; umbellately arranged (3, mainly 4 flowered), on very short (3mm) lateral branches arising from the main stem, arranged in dense, whorled, pseudo-racemes below the ends of flowering branches. (Normally 3, occasionally 4 verticels per synflorescence)

The external morphology of the Dresden form is marginally different from the other *Erica verticillata* forms. The flowers are smaller and more congested, verticels fewer; non-flowering lateral branches are less ordered, normally arranged in single whorls or dispersed up the main stems and only a few are arranged in whorls of three (3-5) on the upper third of the stems.

Origins: This specimen comes from a small market garden nursery, Heidegartnerei Grunberg in Dresden, specializing in *Erica*. It is recorded at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens with the accession number, 14/2012 and cultivar 'Dresden'. Herr Hemut Heidl bought it at a market in Berlin many years ago when Dresden was in East Germany. Cuttings were donated by Helmut Heidl GbR Wasserschwenden 3.87452 Altusried / Krugzell. Fax 0049 (0) 8374 - 23435 Web: www.hiedl-gbr.de. Landowner: N/A: Mail: hiedl-gbr@t-online.de. Landowner org: Heidegartnerei Grunberg. Landowner ph: 49 (03523) 71130

Eight clones or forms of *Erica verticillata* have been previously registered being extinct in the wild species. Anthony has identified a ninth form that originated from a Nursery in Dresden. It shows marked variances from the other forms, but is nevertheless a sound species.

Erica verticillata has become a flagship for conservation in South Africa and he has recently written up 'The Restoration Case Study of *Erica verticillata*' which has been published in *Sibbaldia*. We are happy to make cutting (rooted or unrooted) material available should there be interest.

Anthony Hitchcock



I'm inspired!
Samantha Barnes

Albert Turner
June 1916 – January 2018



The Society is sad to announce the passing of Albert S. Turner, during January, at the age of 101.

Albert discovered the popular yellow foliated tree heath *Erica arborea* 'Albert's Gold' (see photograph). The plant was propagated, by him, from cuttings taken in 1971 from a sport on an *Erica arborea* 'Alpina' growing in his Birmingham garden. The cultivar was subsequently introduced into cultivation by Denbeigh Heather Nurseries (Creting St Mary, Ipswich, Suffolk) by 1975. Albert had an avid interest in heathers as shown by an article written by him, published in the 1973 Yearbook (page 37), on his experiments in growing heathers from seed.

With the knowledge that Albert was celebrating his 100th birthday, during June 2016, the Society was delighted to send him an 'Albert's Gold' themed card and to follow it up with a "news" item on the website. In the 2016 Autumn Bulletin a photograph of Albert is featured on the front cover and a few words from Albert's grandson are included within that Bulletin.

The Heather Society extends sincere condolences to Albert's family, for their sad loss.

World News

Heathers in the Morvan, Burgundy, France



15 years ago, we purchased a field in the Morvan(a national park rising from 1,200-3,500 feet), our intention being to build a new house designed by our son with a blank canvas for a garden.

As a trial, we dug a small piece of ground and covered it with plastic, through which we planted a selection of heathers, all of which prospered; the ground was essentially a granitic clay and as such retains humidity and is predominately acidic.



After the construction of the house we enjoyed landscaping with the topsoil which had been piled to one side during the build.

Bought as plugs the plants are grown on before putting out in spring. The choice is largely self-selecting as the climate is challenging temperatures ranging from -15° - +40°C.

Drought conditions prevail for much of the summer, with most of the rain falling in the winter months. Over time we have established an extensive heather garden with some 80 varieties, mostly replicated 2 or 3 times.

It's been relatively successful, there have been losses amongst those not tolerant of the conditions and created an interest amongst our friends in our departmental horticultural society (Société de Horticulture de l'Yonne) such that they persuaded us to mount a display in the triannual exhibition, which was scheduled for 3 days at the end of September 2016. Our intention was to generate interest amongst the wider public and to increase awareness of the diversity of heathers available.

Given the depth of planting available and the need to include over 300 plants we again focussed on developing a first-year planting scheme. The pot plants to be submerged in peat on 2 levels with a stream simulation of blue marble chips traversing the exhibit. Time constraints meant that the whole exhibit had to be mounted and removed at the end in 2/3 hours. The construct was to be trialled in our own garden initially and then fitted into our trailer.



As well as laying out the exhibit we also made up stands which explained in French the nature of the exhibit. Our hosts in the town of Migennes kindly set off the presentation by laying turfs around the border.



The exhibit was well received and interest extended to local municipal parks and gardens. To gain an extra flower emblem for your town your display must be sustainable, in other words permanent; heathers fit the bill well.

If you would like to view our garden whilst passing through Burgundy, please do not hesitate to give us a call on 0033386344638 or e-mail jefcoate.ann@orange



We have varieties of the following in our garden which were used for the display;

Calluna vulgaris

Daboecia cantabrica

Erica arborea

Erica carnea

Erica ciliaris

Erica cinerea

Erica x darleyensis

Erica erigena

Erica tetralix

Erica vagans

Erica x veitchii

Two examples were;

Erica arborea 'Estrella Gold'

Calluna vulgaris 'Darkness'

Trevor Jefcoate

Members Choice

In this section we would like to encourage members to tell us all about their favourite heather.

If you would like to be included in the next issue please send your article to
admin@heathersociety.org

I am certain we have all been asked what our favorite heather might be, I know that many times the question has come my way. In the early days of growing plants at our nursery it seemed an easy answer, especially when standing next to rows of flowering *Calluna* on a sunny autumn day, the dark red of 'Allegra' glowing between the bright white of 'Mair's Variety' and the deepening copper tones of 'Cuprea', all good choices. In early spring with the busy season approaching faster than much needed dry weather, the dark flowering *Erica carnea* 'Vivellii' and the golden-bronze foliage of its sport *Erica carnea* 'Ann Sparkes' looked so wonderful snuggling together, they too hoping for warmer days ahead.

As the nursery thrived and production grew into the hundreds of cultivars and tens of thousands of plants the 'favorite' question became more difficult to answer. It was now necessary to go through a process of elimination, a journey, taking steps little by little to determine just what category a favorite might be drawn from. We were now growing more species and within each an increasing number of cultivars displaying the many different colors of flower and foliage, growth habits, the forms and quirks that we are all familiar with, the things that make these plants so much fun to grow, so rewarding.

Now in the later stages of a career built by these delightful plants the question is a little easier to deal with, even though the selection continues to grow. Breeding has created new hybrids and large flowering *Erica* as well as bud flowering *Calluna* grown in intoxicating numbers that now include brilliant foliage forms of non flowering cultivars, many grown together in combinations for seasonal color displays. Today so many of these heathers go into the shops without specific or complete names that people really don't bother to ask about favorites anymore. But I do have favorites and prefer now to think of those plants whose names are of the people, places and events that they belong to, that bring them to life for me.

Heather talk in the cluttered sitting room of 'Dorothy Metheny' (*E.x watsonii*). The cheerful unwavering

support of 'Alice Knight' (*Calluna vulgaris*). The tireless pushing of my dad 'Ken Wilson' (*E. x williamsii*) to keep me going and stick with it. 'Ellen Norris' (*Daboecia x scotia*) and 'Mick Jamieson' (*Calluna vulgaris*) two heather growing friends now passed on. However these are North American names, so in keeping with the knowledge that many of you have in a place eight time zones ahead of British Columbia here are three of my favorite favorites.

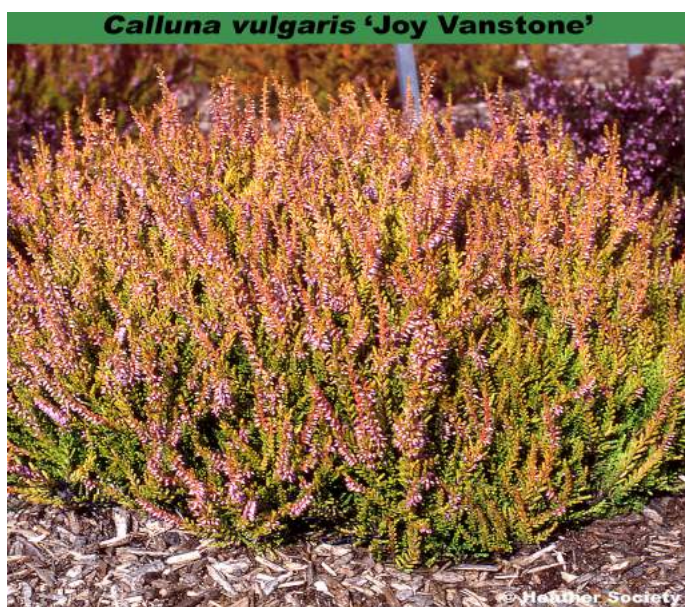
In about 1980 we received a call from a lady in Vancouver, her visitor from Scotland wished to visit the nursery. That afternoon Robert J. Brien, a large, tall man with heavy white beard struggled to lift himself from a dainty compact car as delicately and discreetly as possible while dressed in full Scots regalia. We had a lovely time, a turn through the heather beds then tea and tales of St. Kilda in the shade of a large King apple tree. He admired a group of Juniper we were growing, *J. communis* 'Compressa' and thought it to be a very good form. He asked to take one as a gift for his Canadian host and in exchange he unfurled from a napkin a small plant of *C. vulgaris* 'Soay'. To be forever my most favorite of all the St. Kilda heathers.

In 1973 while working in the village of Shackleford near Godalming in Surrey my Wednesday 'half day off' was usually spent touring the countryside on an old Raleigh bicycle, which must have weighed 100 pounds. On this day I was off to Windlesham and Westwood Road to find the heather specialist John F. Letts but when I arrived the gate was closed. I lingered and peaked in as best I could but there was no sign of life beyond the teasings of the plants along the drive, no shears clipping, no hoe clicking. But I was there! The *Calluna* 'John F. Letts', though not the most remarkable plant to many is still an absolute favorite.

The nursery at Shackleford was named "Stonescapes" and Geff Trotman had developed a business selling stone for rockeries and walls that were displayed in a two hectare highly manicured and creative garden. During my two years there Geff began to warm to the idea of creating two island heather beds, especially as heathers were rocketing to the top of the plant sales charts. So off we went on a tour of local nurseries to acquire a selection of about 100 plants for the newly prepared beds. Near Eashing we entered a heavily shaded drive beside the simple sign "Heathers Open" and made our way to a weathered but tidy work shed where a slight elderly man was taking *Calluna* cuttings. As he put wet newspaper

over his partially completed flat we could tell that he was blind, or nearly so. He had a cane of *Erica arborea* with a metal tip that he tapped as he walked on the boardwalk paths layed between rows of cold frames filled with beautiful plants. On the edges of the frames were little blocks of wood at irregular spacing that he would run the cane along, using them as a guide or some sort of code to 'see' what was inside.

Geff was wanting more foliage forms to complete our shopping day so this gentleman took us from one frame to the next until he got down to reach in and held up a fine pot of *C. vulgaris* 'Joy Vanstone'. He smiled as he brought it within an inch of his eyes while telling us how much we would enjoy growing this heather. I have not seen 'Joy Vanstone' again since I left England in late 73 but it is my most absolute favorite.



David Wilson

Nursery Adverts



The Heather Garden, a retail division of Forest Edge Nurseries offering mail order and connoisseur's choice of over 400 varieties.

www.theheathergarden.co.uk

email...

info@theheathergarden.co.uk

Forest Edge Nurseries

Woodlands. Wimborne. Dorset. BH21 8LJ

10% Discount to Heather Society members on plant sales.

John Hall Plants

Specialist Heather Grower for over 40 years



We can supply over 1000 heather varieties, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Daboecia* and *Erica*, as large plugs, as well as finished plants in 9cm, 13cm and 19cm diameter pots. We are open 9am – 4pm each day Monday – Saturday (please call 0771 4344327 prior to your visit). We also do mail order and are pleased to quote for this service. The Heather Society members receive a 10% discount.

Whitehall Nursery, Red Lane, off Churt Road, Headley Down, Hampshire, GU35 8SR.

Tel: 01428 715505

Mob: 0771 4344327

Email: info@johnhallplants.com

web: www.johnhallplants.com

Perthshire
Heathers
Specialist Growers and Suppliers



PERTSHIRE HEATHERS is a small family run horticultural nursery specialising in growing hardy Scottish grown heathers and heaths. We sell mainly wholesale and deliver free within a 50 mile radius. Open for retail by prior appointment. We grow top quality plants in 8cm, 1 litre and 2 litre pots and can usually supply varieties for all year round colour.

**If you would like to arrange a visit
please give me a call 07734 175937
or email me at irene@perthshireheathers.com**

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