



# The Heather Society

## Newsletter

### Summer 2018



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### **Diary 2018/19**

12th September RHS Harlow Carr  
22nd-23rd September THS Annual Gathering  
17th February 2019 Sir Harold Hillier Gardens



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## ***Foreword***

Welcome to the Summer 2018 newsletter. For this issue the front cover is a combination of the following heather photos taken by myself. Centre *Erica cerinthoides*, bottom left *Erica cinerea* 'Celebration' and bottom right *Erica spiculifolia*. A beautiful summery array of colour! Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue. Any contributions to the Autumn newsletter need to be sent to me by October 1st. Happy reading!

***Samantha Barnes***

## ***Chairman's Piece***

With the driest Summer in many regions of the UK as reported since 1976 and following on from a very wet Spring our heathers, amongst other plants, have been bearing the brunt of the extreme conditions. Many plants have suffered and even died in the current conditions and often it is the older plantings that appear more vulnerable and in conjunction these are often the older varieties that are irreplaceable.

Moving on to Heather Society activities and events it is with regret that I and Council have received the resignation from Council member and Nurseryman John Hall. John and I have known each other for many years and I have always admired his enthusiasm for promoting the plant and getting mention of it in front of the public. John has in the past steered the British Heather Grower's garden at Hampton court, displays at Wisley and undertaken the responsibility of supplying the replacement stock for the Wisley heather planting, a momentous undertaking.

In accordance with the member's agreement at the 2017 AGM the assets of the Society are now being liquidated and made more easily accessible for consideration and or benefit of 'heather orientated projects'.

Council has decided that the future formation of the Society, following its dissolution as a Charity, should be in the form of an Unincorporated Association. This will be a simpler arrangement and with a reduced workload for Council members will hopefully allow the continuation of the Society for the foreseeable future.

***David Edge***

## ***Society events & news***

### **THS Annual Gathering**

The Heather Society Annual Gathering will focus on the weekend of 22nd and 23rd September with activity focussed on Saturday 22nd with an all day visit to RHS Wisley and on Sunday 23rd a visit to Champs Hill and Savill Garden Windsor is planned; and the heather garden at the Valley Garden is also possible for keen walkers.

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. Some members may wish to make their own hotel arrangements. Hotel prices will be around £150-£200 per night from enquiries made. A coach will be hired to take members from a hotel to each venue, or if numbers are small we will arrange lifts with members cars. Please let Barry Sellers know if you need transport from your hotel.

#### **Saturday 22nd 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. This will include demonstration of propagation of seed of European and South African species of Erica by Barry Sellers.

There will be Heathers for sale provided by David Edge.

#### **Sunday 23rd September**

10.30-12.00 Visit to Champs Hill, Pulborough, Sussex  
12.00-1.15 Travel to Savill Garden, Windsor  
1.15-2.00 Lunch at Savill Garden  
2.00-5.00 Savill Garden and Valley Garden though some walking is involved if members are interested to visit the heather garden.

Please note that members purchase their own lunches.

Please email to Barry Sellers [sellersbarry@aol.com](mailto:sellersbarry@aol.com) if you are interested in attending.

For those wanting to stay at a hotel the nearest recommended to RHS Wisley is  
The Talbot Ripley  
High Street  
Ripley  
Woking  
Surrey, England GU23 6BB  
Reservations 0844 8159833  
Tel . 01483 211332  
Email: [info@thetalbotripley.com](mailto: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***

## ***Group News***

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

### **Home Counties/ South West Group: Joint Event**

A joint Home Counties & South West Group has been arranged for a visit to the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Jermyns Lane, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0QA. Please arrive by 11 am on 17th February 2019  
<https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/hilliergardens/explorethegardens>

Entry to the gardens to be advised later. We will visit the collection of winter flowering heathers in the gardens as well as explore the gardens. There is a restaurant at the gardens so lunch can be purchased. Access to the gardens is from Jermyns Lane off the A3090, Romsey to Winchester Road.

***Barry Sellers***

### **North East Group**

Again the weather played up after Christmas and we had spells of dry and sunny days and I did manage to see and admire the garden even though I was still in a wheelchair due to another fall.

Our two gardeners have kept the garden tidy all winter and the lawn has had its first cut.

I'm sorry this bulletin news sounds more like a medical report, but the 6 members that are left up here send every best wishes for a good heather garden season and happy holidays.

**Dorothy M. Warner**

### **Yorkshire group**

On Maundy Thursday, 29th March eight of us met in the Jubilee Room at RHS Harlow Carr to talk about heathers, heather gardening and visit the superb display of winter heathers particularly those by the entrance steps.

We were then entertained to a generous display of slides of heathers and an explanation of them by David Plumridge.

The RHS allows us a free room at their educational centre on two occasions per year so I have booked a room for a second meeting on Wednesday, 12th September 2018 at 2.30 pm at RHS Harlow Carr when hopefully the *Calluna* will be looking good.

The small group of us will probably meet up in July at one or others homes just to have a friendly get together and a cup of tea. Normally we would have gone visiting a garden but I am not strong enough to walk round one this year.

**Jean preston**

### **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 12 for contact details.

### **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](mailto: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**

### **Heathers at Compton Acres**

I'm a regular listener to "Gardener's Question Time" on BBC Radio 4. Over the years I have been in despair by the learned team's lack of knowledge and interest in heathers. Typically, when asked for a list of plants to attract bees and butterflies, heather doesn't get a mention. I can't believe that they have never heard of heather honey!

Imagine my surprise, when on April 1<sup>st</sup> (of all days!), in response to a question about dealing with overgrown heathers, I heard chairman Peter Gibbs say: "Here at Compton Acres we are surrounded by Gloriously Flowering Heathers". I was even more taken aback when Anne Swithinbank said: "It makes me want to plant heathers again". And then Christine Walkden added: "They give a burst of colour at a difficult time of year". Even Bob Flowerdew also spoke favourably. No, surprisingly, it wasn't an April Fool joke!

Should you think I have been dreaming, go to the BBC iPlayer, select "Radio", enter "Gardener's Question Time" in the search box, select "Episodes", then scroll down to "Compton Acres". The heather section is five minutes in. It also includes propagation advice. Enjoy!

There are heather garden photos on the Compton Acres web site: [www.comptonacres.co.uk](http://www.comptonacres.co.uk).

**David Plumridge**

### **Mycorrhizal Fungi for Heathers**

While I have been familiar with *empathy Rootgrow mycorrhizal fungi* for a while, I have only recently become aware of *Rootgrow ericoid mycorrhizal fungi*.

This is sold as being suitable for acid loving plants, so I thought that I must see if it helps. This was despite my previous experience with the original product. It was said to prevent replant problems, but replaced raspberries did not thrive...

Rita has recently planted several new heathers of various varieties using the *ericoid fungi* on half. In addition, I have potted on two *Erica cinerea* 'Hardwick's Rose' rooted cuttings – one with, one without. Sadly, I had a poor take with only two out of six rooting. A larger sample would have been more meaningful!

I will report back to the next 'Bulletin', maybe with magical results? We shall see. It would be interesting to hear if any members have had success with this medium.

Product information is readily available on the internet.

**David Plumridge**

### **In Memory**

I purchased a selection of heathers from David Edge, which he kindly brought to the last AGM held in North Petherton, Somerset in 2017 for me to take back to Scotland.

Finally, this year I have knocked my garden into shape and made my planned memory bed of heathers for JJ (Julian), my husband, 4 years after his passing.

I am delighted with the result and amazingly after spending a year on my patio table, the heathers are looking great. Testimony to David's quality plants.

The selection I chose were 3 of each of : *Calluna vulgaris* 'Highland Rose' and 'Kinlochruel'; *Daboecia cantabrica* 'Waley's Red'; *Erica cinerea* 'John Ardron' *Erica carnea* 'Bell's Extra Special', 'Myretoun Ruby' and 'Isabell' ; *Erica x darleyensis* 'Eva Gold'; *Erica vagans* 'Mrs D F Maxwell' and 'Yellow John' and 1

each of *Erica australis* 'Polar Express' and 'Trisha'.

I particularly like *Erica cinerea* 'John Ardron' at the moment how pretty it looks.

Please also note the beautiful blue sky, for all you non-believers that it always rains in Scotland. We are having a glorious summer heatwave!



**Allison  
Fitz-  
Earle**

**"Passing the peak"**

**A wander through my Heather Garden**

A light hearted trek through adversity met in 41 years of Heather Growing.

Wading through my records, I find that I went into print in 1998 and again in 2009 - just about ten years apart. To await another full ten years before commenting again would, I feel, be tempting providence.

I came into heather growing almost by chance, in the search for a garden that required minimum maintenance, for with two lusty children to attend to, there would be scant opportunity to give the garden much attention.

Coming into heather growing as an innocent cherub humbly endeavouring to grasp the elements of what I was trying to do, my determination was considerably lifted by my introduction to Diane and Bert Jones, a mere ten miles or so to the North of me.

Certainly another break through was the acquisition of David and Anne Small's "Handy Guide to Heathers". This magnificent "Bible" was to set me on the right path, and a succession of chats with Bert provided me with a background of soil chemistry that would guide me onwards.

Soon after embarking on my new aspirations, by 1985 I felt it prudent to make a sketch of what I was mentally proposing, supported by my intentions and subsequent actions. Within a year or two, I could see that chaos was looming, and being an Engineer at heart decided to tackle the job as one would designing an aeroplane.

Accordingly, and spread over several A4 sheets, I drew up a "general arrangement" drawing of the site, indicating accurately the position of each cultivar, adding date of planting, and a letter code. The page would then be provided with a table, decoding the cypher, and indicating the identity of the plant in full. This recourse prevented the drawing becoming cluttered.

In addition to this, and a step that might, by some be considered somewhat "over the top", I decided to initiate a running log of my additions, transfers, alterations and disasters. Of late, this log has been somewhat spasmodic due to my heart condition, and other indispositions.

Nevertheless I am able to look back with some precision to Dec 5th 1993, where significant improvements in the garden layout were in operation.

The Bungalow is awkwardly placed in a triangular parcel of land, being a corner plot at a T junction on a cul-de-sac. Unfortunately the road had been dug out several feet, for some reason, and the "spoil" merely thrown on to the frontages of the gardens to be. We have a seam of solid clay about twenty inches below the natural surface, the soil above the seam being rich in clay. I had often mused why a near neighbour a few doors down had imported forty tons of topsoil. I was soon to learn why.

The immediate area being heavily "urbanised", it is vital to provide the garden with some personality, and clearly several what are called "statements" would have to be planted to provide pleasing pictorial aspects.

Not well versed in the art of tree growing, I ordered without advice, a line of trees for the front which I described to the nurseryman as "Tall, thin, and evergreen" Much later I learned that these people will sell you what they mostly have in stock, in spite of what you asked for. Having failed to do my homework I did not know that the correct title was "Italian Cypress".

In the event I was supplied with the common Lawson 'Ellwoodii' Fifteen years later it cost me £400 to have all but one removed. This survivor stands triumphantly at forty feet or more, and is a sight to behold.

Following the same philosophy, a feature of the back garden was more successful, for after twenty three years, the planting of a single *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glaucua' had produced a tree of outstanding beauty, admired by all, neighbours included.

However, quite inexplicably, and incredibly quickly, this tree died in a catastrophic manner, and was lifted a year later. The problem was revealed. All the roots were heavily infested with Honey Fungus. Two more attempts to have a replacement were made in quick succession, using varieties allegedly resistant, or immune to Honey Fungus. These replacement attempts were of no avail, and the site has been converted into a heather bed, surrounded by a ring of ornamental stones. The space inside the stones was about three feet diameter.

A trio of *Erica x arendsiana* 'Charnwood Pink' was planted, interspersed with a trio of *E. carnea* 'Claribelle'. The result has been most rewarding, for the 'Charnwood Pink' seems to flower almost continuously, and has spread so rapidly that after four years, the three 'Claribelle' are almost eclipsed.



*Erica x arendsiana*  
'Charnwood Pink'

No such luck with my "Fairy Ring", much larger and more centrally placed in my lawn at the back. Here, as indicated in a previous write up, I had arranged in this 12ft diameter stone circle, concentric rings of cultivars, each with their differing flowering periods, to provide all year colour.

With a soil pH. of 6.9, it would mean an acid drench to keep some of them prospering.

Two years was sufficient to realise that this was not going to work, and the whole bed was written off, considerably enlarged, and now described as my "Kidney Bed"

Whilst all this was going on, the long bed against a south facing fence was quickly progressing. Here we have a 3+3 arrangement with a contrasting set fronting appropriately. This "back" arrangement gave three *E. erigena* 'Irish Dusk' (gap) then three *E. erigena* 'Irish Silver' (gap). The gaps were filled with *E. carnea* 'Eva'. The whole arrangement ran for some fifty feet. Along the whole length, the *E. erigena*'s were fronted by a continuous row of *E. carnea*'s, laid out in similar fashion, thus three *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes' then three *E. carnea* 'Isabell' the groups being separated by a single *E. carnea* 'Eva'. The space available was thus completely filled.

The arrangement as a whole was a magnificent spectacle for years, with one or two humorous elements. Typically, one of the 'Irish Silver' as it matured suspiciously vigorously, turned out to be *E. erigena* 'Glaucia', but I do not have the heart to take it out.

Another suspicious situation transpired where all three 'Irish Silver' died simultaneously, and had to

be replaced. No other cultivars were affected. Here I have to assume that an over generous application of Glyphosate or similar, had leaked through the fence from my neighbour.

The long line of *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes' detailed above are worth a mention at this point. Of the whole consignment, I only had one failure, and this was quickly replaced. However, the sideways growth of 'Ann Sparkes' has been alarming, producing, in eight or nine cases, a six or seven inch "leggy" centre, with the flowering being confined to the top two inches. The scheme of lifting the whole plant, then burying it in a deep hole was considered, but a decision was made to replace them, only to find that this one is no longer available. Only one avenue remains, to replace with *E. carnea* 'Bell's Extra Special'.

This long bed has undoubtedly been a success, it is finished off at both ends with a bold terminator. At the far end a good specimen of *E. erigena* 'W. T. Rackliff' now at its glorious best, but at the house end another 'W. T. Rackliff' backed up by an even taller *E. erigena* 'Superba'.



The end shot of the long bed, with the 3+3 system.

The house end of the 3+3 system.



Well into 1995, and full of confidence, I tackled the new "Kidney Bed" full of enthusiasm. Looking at "issue one" of my drawing, it was clearly too ambitious, with small separate areas for widely differing cultivars, totaling an unbelievable 159 plants. In appearance, this enormous bed looked untidy. Effort to do something about the matter was reflected in the number of reissues of my basic scheme, being redrawn twice in

1995, again in 96 and 97, 2004, and finally abandoned in 2009.

A fresh start then, with a different approach. First, two hybrid Yews trees set in appropriate positions, these are *Taxus baccata* 'Aureomarginata', a shrewd choice, never more than ten inches in diameter, but sprouting up to six feet tall.

The bed, now cleared, was divided into just three sections, all *E. carnea*, in quite separate areas. Near the house, *E. carnea* 'Eva', mid position *E. carnea* 'Isabell', and to the right *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes'. These proved to be an excellent choice, and all have progressed steadily to this day. One or two of the 'Ann Sparkes' became unduly "leggy" as previously revealed, and have been replaced with *E. carnea* 'Bell's Extra Special'. This bed viewed as a whole is magnificent in early spring, and much admired by my visitors for the colour and simplicity of the layout. Incidentally, the two yews are now 5ft.7in. tall, and a little wider than when they were first planted.



An end view of the 'Kidney bed'

Little needs be said of the North facing bed on the left hand side of the garden. Several attempts were made to conquer this area, but the "opposition" coming through underneath the fence made any advance impossible. My neighbours "lawn" edged right up to the fence on the other side, and as most of his lawn was couchgrass, I gave up.

The bed was flattened, faced with black plastic, and covered from end to end with washed gravel, seriously plain in aspect of course, but at least I was in control. The garage wall, also North facing, is ugly, and it seemed propitious to cover it up. The answer, initially was a yellow conifer, narrow in habit named 'Skyrocket' by my Nurseryman. All went well until we had a drought some years later, when the presence of the tree roots caused the clay sub soil to shrink, threatening the garage foundations. A quick panic removal with some effort, then a substitution

with something spreading. The garage wall was quickly faced with two lattice panels, about four feet square, and two Passion flowers introduced into the now vacated bed. Quite innocent of the nature of these flowers, I watched their progress with interest. Although eminently successful, there was no stopping them, finally starting to cover the garage roof, and coming into the house via the electrical connections.

I shed a tear here, for the flowers are so beautiful, but they had to come out, and currently I have two splendid standard roses 'Harlow Carr' doing well and covered in buds in front of my trellis, the rest of the bed being filled with *E. vagans* 'Mrs D. F. Maxwell' Peace at last!

A tiny narrow bed at the side of the garage drive is divided into two parts by a chimney breast. The longer of these two beds can only house a neat variety, as anything sprawling over the edge is bound to be trodden underfoot by people getting in and out of the car on the offside. Here, my judgment was swayed by the attraction of *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes', I planted a line of about a dozen, but quickly realised that they were getting trampled badly. Clearly I needed cultivars that would remain a nice tight "bun". A few for every season seemed a good idea, and a line of *E. carnea* 'Claribelle' followed by a few *E. vagans* 'Summertime', always very shy. During the first year one of the 'Summertime' expired, and all I could get locally was *E. carnea* 'Tanja'. What an eye opener! I had never seen such a captivating colour, and I wished my garden could be full of them!

The last two feet of this bed is taken up by just one *E. carnea* 'Isabell', and beside it, my stalwart, *E. erigena* 'W. T. Rackliff'. 'Isabell' was planted in Oct 2008, obviously replacing something I had not recorded. 'W. T. Rackliff' was planted in Sept 2001, and has blossomed into the most beautiful shape and size to be proud of. It is easily seen from road, and when at it's best, causes outbursts of admiration from passers by. Measured earlier this year, this specimen stands 44 inches tall, and 47 inches in diameter. It is pleasantly scented.



*Erica erigena*  
'W. T. Rackliff'

The front garden can only be described as an almost continuous upheaval for years, until the inevitable, namely to sit down with a clean sheet of paper and start again. Removal of all but one of the huge 'Ellwoodii' trees at the front provided immense freedom, although the whole front bed is at a 30 degree angle, which in itself incurs difficulties. My approach was to be simple, but with an area as small as this "Statements" are necessary.

The lone 'Ellwoodii' was augmented by two traditional yew trees, well spaced and immensely slow growing, but at the corner by the street, one *Thuya orientalis* 'Rheingold'. To break up the stretch from the corner to the front door, just one *E. erigena* 'Superba' then spaced away a foot or so, a *Juniperus communis* 'Sentinel'. Yet another mistake here, and after two years the 'Sentinel' was cropped to ground level.

The area by the front door was filled with a broad swathe of *E. carnea* 'Tybesta Gold', replaced by *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes'. The sloping run down to the drive was filled in three major areas, with *E. carnea* 'Eva', *E. carnea* 'Nathalie', and finally, to cover the summer months, *E. vagans* 'Summertime'. The bare patch around the stump of 'Sentinel' proved to be a problem, as nothing seemed to settle in. *E. erigena* 'Irish Silver', *E. erigena* 'Irish Dusk', and even *E. carnea* 'Challenger' came and went, even *E. carnea* 'March Seedling' so successful elsewhere. Quite a large patch of 'Ann Sparkes' survived however, and any of the open patches remaining, filled with *E. carnea* 'Eva' and a batch of curiosities, sold to me as *E. carnea* 'Eileen Porter', which proved to be nothing of the sort. All the plants in this immediate location have been reluctant to say the least, and leeching of the ground by the removed 'Sentinel' is the suspected culprit.

The 'Rheingold' tree settled in comfortably, and is now large enough to be quite eye catching. Usually, this particular variant is heavily trimmed into fancy shapes, but here it has been untouched, and in consequence has rewarded me.



The space between this tree and the road well deserved a *E. erigena* 'W. T. Rackliff', and a single specimen was planted in March 2000. It has proved to be a bold splash of colour which improves the pictorial aspect of the corner.

Now was the time to get expansive in the main front bed. Taking advice, I planted a row of 'W. T. rackliff' at the top of the bed, thus backing on to the front lawn. A row of twelve planted in March 2000 have now formed an excellent hedge, and provide an excellent backdrop of white for what lies before them.

To liven up the summer display, I planted four well spaced *E. vagans* 'Pyrenees Pink', then to the side, a further twenty *E. carnea* 'Eva'.

Adjacent to the now giant trunk of the lonely 'Ellwoodii' is a cat run, which I am trying to close. A line of *E. x darleyensis* 'White perfection' planted here do not fare well for obvious reasons, and there have been frequent replacements. North of the giant conifer, a huge clump of *E. vagans* 'Yellow John' has expanded splendidly. Although offering good ground cover, this only flowers sparingly, and is something of a disappointment. Various odd singles have been planted in this area experimentally, but most quickly disappear, although *E. carnea* 'Schneekuppe' has held its own.

Standing proud, the 'Yellow John', and then, the now vast *E. carnea* 'March Seedling' offers a magnificent bank of colour, breaking though into the lawn behind. This plant has thrived throughout its life, showing evidence of flower as early as October, and patches can be found still in colour as late as early June.

The area from the second traditional yew to the fence can be serviced (with difficulty) either from the road (for there is no pavement), or by crouching down from the lawn above. The area provided an opportunity to plant 18 *E. carnea* 'Isabell' all of which have prospered without exception. Against the wooden buttress for the lawn, six *E. carnea* 'Rosalie' rallied after planting, and make a nice backdrop for the square of brilliant white.

The tiny gap to the neighbours fence was filled with a further six 'Rosalie', and my little joke, a miniature 'Compacta' conifer I picked up for 50p over a garden fence, whilst on one of my cycle trips down a leafy lane, so prevalent in Somerset. That was some 12 years ago, and it has only grown four inches since planting.

In the spring, it stands impudently amongst a sea of colour.



Two aspects of the front garden including the well established *E. erigena* 'W. T. Rackliff' hedge.

The small garden in an urban area needs to imply precision, and also suggest a measure of privacy. Accordingly, a line of five dwarf yews *Taxus Baccata* 'Aureomarginata' were planted as a screen for the front door, for the latter is glazed from top to bottom, and the existing *Thuja orientalis* 'Aurea Nana' was insufficient to do the job. The overall effect is very appealing, for all these trees, remaining quite dainty, stand in a sea of *E. carnea* 'Rosantha' and the contrast of colour does the trick. Originally a row of *E. x darleyensis* 'Kramers Rote' had been planted here, but had become untidy. The move to 'Rosantha' meant a tighter configuration, essential in a position so close to a footpath, with less chance of being trampled.



The front lawn deserved to be broken up, and a circular bed, ringed with stones was erected, somewhat "off centre". Here, with a free hand, but limited sun due to the adjacent tree, the centre piece is a single *E. erigena* 'Irish Dusk', tightly surrounded by a ring of *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes'. This bed has not been entirely successful due to lack of sun.

The second bed was made up to commemorate the passing of Bert Jones, and consists of a triangle of three *E. x griffithsii* 'Jacqueline', which have grown to such an extent, that at its peak in 2017, it presented a huge bush of bright colour, raising no end of comment from passers by.



The small bed against the fence bordering the end of the lawn has been a constant problem, as it is against a neighbour's area of total neglect, and invasions of almost anything occur regularly. Brambles are not uncommon, and of course the ubiquitous ground ivy. Hopefully, I planted a dozen or so *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes', replacing them with *E. carnea* 'Bell's Extra Special' here and there where they became "leggy".

In the corner (now no longer a corner) I took a chance with another hybrid yew identical to that at the front door. At one time, for a year, this was seemingly dead, but thankfully it rallied, perhaps due to the extra light provided by the major landscape revision to follow. In this tiny, now crowded bed three or four *E. terminalis* 'Thelma Woolner' and two *E. erigena* 'Rosslare' were set, finally squeezing in a new discovery *E. x darleyensis* 'Eva Gold'. This is under scrutiny, for it may have potential, all other spare space had been filled with *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes'.

Against the house wall at the front, extensive experiments were carried out, at first with evergreen shrubs, then a mixture of *E. x griffithsii* 'Heaven Scent', *E. x oldenburgensis* and *E. x griffithsii* 'Valerie Griffiths'.

All these seemed to demand constant attention

as they developed varying properties. Eventually, the whole bed was cleared, and has finished up in a very neat and orderly manner with a line of *E. erigena* 'Glauc', with a single *E. erigena* 'W. T. Rackliff' in the middle, and two *E. erigena* 'Rosslare' as terminators at the ends. This has proved outstandingly successful. Just here and then, between the *E. erigenas*, I slipped in a few *E. vagans* 'Summertime'. As always, these are very shy and will take several years to develop.

In 2016 I took an extremely bold step. As previously indicated, my dwelling sits rather awkwardly on the site due to the shape, and there has been an unused triangular patch to the north. Initially, I was using the area to grow vegetables, but this was abandoned due to other pressures. For some years, this patch had remained virtually derelict, except for the planting of a pair of conifers which I had picked up at a sale.

In the January of that year, I had the conifers removed, and the whole area rustic paved, except for four "D" shaped beds against the boundary. On completion, I planted in each "D" an Italian Cyprus 'Pencil' tree, bounded each side by a single *E. vagans* 'Mrs D. F. Maxwell'. The appropriate illustration shows the current progress. From waist height to over 6 feet in just two and a half years.



Whilst this new Italian style patio was being completed, I felt that an area of grass at the back would stand another bed. Prompted by the sight of *E. x darleyensis* 'Rubina' at Perth, I erected a sausage shaped bed with edging stones, and planted four of this cultivar with great success, for even after two years, they are quite splendid.

On a final note, the "revelation" of my "WT Corner"! Bordering on a tiny triangular section of the back lawn, is a bed with enough room to take half a dozen of so of my "Little Darlings". The position is not ideal, as no sun is afforded until late in the day. Development has been slow, and the line is somewhat ragged. The loss of three together in the middle of the row was not really compensated for by *E. erigena* 'Rosslare', regrettably further "WT's" are no longer being available.

The garden as a whole, pictorially peaked in 2016 in the new less ambitious configuration, and although there are no obvious signs of neglect, the garden as a whole tends to look somewhat untidy here and there.



A penetrating shot from the street towards the new patio. Including *E. carnea* 'Isabell', 'Rosalie' and 'Ann sparkes' with *E. erigena* 'Rosslare' in the background.

I always joke that I am dreading getting old, but in spite of this optimistic note, at 94, I do feel infirmity creeping up on me. Difficult to reach areas become neglected, and the results are inevitable.

My favourite Cultivar?- well, it *has* to be *E. erigena* 'W. T. Rackliff', for it's supreme configuration and subtle scent. However, having taken samples of both *E. x darleyensis* 'Eva Gold' and *E. carnea* 'Tanja', I may review that decision later.

**John Plowman**

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