

PLANT HERITAGE

National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens



# North East Group



*Newsletter 2012*



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## Editorial

Another interesting year of unusual weather conditions testing the mettle and gardening spirit of everyone, both amateur and professional.

The unseasonal warmth early in the spring encouraged plants into growth only to set them back (or kill them) when the heavy rain arrived along with a drop in temperature. Only towards the end of May did the weather seem to get back on track, but was followed by heavy rains and for much of the time temperatures that were barely warm enough for many plants.

Our specialist plant feature is on *Philadelphus*, a genus that seems to be growing in popularity as gardeners look increasingly for scent in their gardens and plants to attract bees.

The featured Nursery is Halls of Heddon, a well established nursery already in its third generation.

The Group's display at Gateshead Flower Show is the inspiration for an article on Euphorbia.

Veronica has written a lovely obituary for Lord Ridley. We have missed his enthusiastic encouragement already but are delighted to keep the contact with Blagdon for our Plant Fair next year.

Plant Heritage North East was delighted to hear that this Region had been chosen to recommend a student for the Plant Heritage Prize. Find out about the award winner in this issue.

There are the usual domestic articles on trips and visits, worth reading for either the memories or to experience it through others.

Finally we feel you may appreciate a list of dates for the coming year. Keep your Newsletter in a safe place to keep yourself aware of what is happening in our Region and don't miss the opportunity to be involved.

On behalf of the committee we wish you Happy Christmas and a healthy gardening season for both you and your plants.

## From the Chair

Most of you will know by now that Veronica has been struggling health-wise for some time. To enable her to recover without the stress of chairing the group, the committee has reluctantly accepted her resignation, although they hope it will only be a temporary measure. As Vice Chairman, David has picked up the reins and will continue until the AGM when new arrangements are made.

Veronica has sent the following message of encouragement.

Plant Heritage as a national organisation is something to be proud of particularly if you value the importance of our British gardening heritage. We have all been given a great fillip by the recent official recognition of the importance of cultivated plants by the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is part of the United Nations Environment Programme. Plant Heritage is now striving hard to become the recognized 'first stop' for all information on these plants in this country and further afield.

This endorsement gives the work of the Threatened Plant Project (TPP) even more relevance and further enhances the already great importance of National Plant Collections.

There are members in our Group who have been working through some plant families, as instructed by the TPP leader, Kalani Seymour, adding to the database of knowledge that will enable Plant Heritage to make much more clearly directed decisions about the plants that do need conserving.

A plea now that is coming straight from the heart. We have a splendid Group and one that is thought very highly of by other Groups and the National Office. We have a wonderful reputation for support and encouragement of the ideals of PH and have often been praised for all that we do. BUT for this to continue is going to need some greater involvement by some/all of you. At this moment we need volunteers to help with Show Organisation, Public Relations and Newsletters, and especially some real man/women Fridays who can help with some of the many jobs that we

try to do. So please do give some thought to stepping forward and lending a hand. Get in touch with a committee member or David Goodchild on 01661 823145 ([david@potentilla.org.uk](mailto:david@potentilla.org.uk)) if you would like to chat about what is to be done.

David writes:

I'm sure everyone will join me in wishing Veronica a swift recovery. We miss her boundless enthusiasm and hard work in support of the Group. She has a new Boxer puppy much given to rushing about and tail wagging which I think is helping Veronica to keep positive, even if a lot of her time is spent cleaning up what all very young animals do.

I'm hugely grateful to all of the Committee but especially Sue and Val who have been helping me to keep things going. Together we've put together what I hope you will find to be an interesting and varied programme for next year. I'm particularly looking forward to next December when our President, Lord Howick, has agreed to recount some of his plant hunting adventures.

This would seem to be the era of change. We are delighted that Faith Williams has taken on the role of N P C Co-ordinator for the whole of the group. Contact between collection holders is a good way of sharing problems and encouraging each other in this valuable role. Many collection holders complain that their open days are not too well attended, so please try to visit and show your support. Collection Holders are very knowledgeable about their genus, they are also passionate plants people in general and love to share their passion.

We are looking for new ideas for the Plant Fair. It's becoming more and more difficult to find enough specialist nurseries who are able to come and although those who do come seem to have a successful day, we need a wider range of attractions for the public. We made a tentative step this year towards making it more of a family day but let us have your thoughts.

## Philadelphus

Not an Egyptian genus, but named for the Egyptian King Ptolemy Philadelphus who reigned from 285 to 247 BC. It has a chequered history of naming: syringa and mock syringa, mock orange and even jasmine. All of which are logical as the flowers have the scented qualities of lilac and the same style of flower and scent of jasmine. It has also jumped about in the family classification: *Philadelphaceae*, *Saxifragaceae*, *Hydrangeaceae*.

The use of syringa was common to both lilac and philadelphus. This comes about through John Gerrard in his herbal. His name for *Philadelphus coronarius* was *Syringa alba*, 'White Pipe'. He called *Syringa vulgaris* (lilac) *Syringa caerulea*, 'Blue Pipe'. Jasmine he named *Syringa arabica*, 'Arabian Pipe.' Linnaeus chose to allocate syringa to the lilac and philadelphus was given a genus name of its own.

To appreciate a genus, with over 60 species, it is helpful to consider the natural habitat and *Philadelphus* are found mainly in the northern hemisphere, essentially North America and Asia, namely the West Coast of North America, the South East States of North America, and across Tibet, China and Japan. There are some species growing wild in Italy and the Caucasus but it is uncertain whether these are native or escapees from cultivation. They are found in open sunny positions on screes and rocky hillsides, at the edge of and in open woodland and sometimes by streams. In cultivation the species seem tolerant of any soil conditions and whilst preferring sunny sites will grow well in semi shade. The same can be said of the cultivars, although they respond better to a richer soil. The exceptions to this are the golden leaved cultivars whose leaves get burnt if exposed to too much sun. All are hardy down to at least minus 15C some to minus 25C the exception being *P. mexicanus* which enjoys the warmth of the Mexican climate.

In cultivation, *Philadelphus* are grown for their ornamental quality especially their scented flowers. The scent varies from the citrus scents of orange or lemon to pineapple and the degree of scent varies from

species to species. The species vary in appearance, differing in height and spread and flower form. Whilst all have 4 petals and sepals they do vary in size and the configuration on the stems - some singly, others in clusters or racemes. The flowers too vary from cup shape to flat or reflexed petals. Further variation comes with the cultivars when semi double and fully double flowers have been introduced and the weight of these double flowers gives the branches an arched appearance. The flowers are remarkably consistent in their flowering period both in the wild and in cultivation. The range is from the end of May to the end of July regardless of climate and local weather conditions with June being the peak.

Apart from their physical attraction, they are also valuable to regenerate unstable screes and in America land managers use natural species to plant such sites and *P. microphyllus* and *P. lewisii*, both small dense shrubs, are also used to colonise dried up river valleys.

The habit of the genus is also variable according to the species. Some are very open, with strong sparse elongated growth, others are dense and twiggy. Consequently there can be no general rule for pruning. The best advice is to prune out some of the older wood, cutting back to new growth, and to keep the shrub to a sensible size by pruning back the flower stems immediately after flowering. The flowers are produced on the previous season's growth so the shrub needs time to make this growth before the autumn and leaf fall or there will be few flowers the following season. With some species a major problem for gardeners is the tendency to produce suckers which makes for even more congestion. They do respond well to really drastic pruning if they become too big.

This genus has few pest problems. In a dry season aphid infestation may be found in cultivation and in the wild they are browsed by deer and elk. Quail and squirrels will eat the seeds but do no other damage.

Species can be easily propagated by seed, but a sizeable plant is more readily achieved by either soft wood or semi ripe cuttings, hardwood cuttings, suckers, divisions or by layering. Cultivars must be propagated vegetatively.

Many of the hybrids in cultivation were raised by the French nurseryman Victor Lemoine in Nancy during the early 1900s. His original hybrid was between *P. coronarius* and *P. microphyllus* and this crossing produced a number of clones which he also introduced. *P. coronarius* is the most commonly grown *Philadelphus*. It is strong growing, of medium height and spread and quite tolerant of dry soils. It has been in cultivation a long time and its origin is obscure, although certainly European. It is found in southern Italy, Austria and Romania and it is probably because they grew well in Europe that Lemoine chose *P. coronarius* for one of his hybrid partners. *P. microphyllus* has small leaves and is a small twiggy shrub seldom more than a meter high. The flowers too are small and dainty.

He named this original hybrid *P. x lemoinei* and introduced it to the public in 1884. It is a small shrub with many of the characteristics of *P. microphyllus* and *P. coronarius* but the flowers are much larger, 2.5 cm across and very fragrant. They are produced in clusters of 3-7 on the short side branches. Of the clones, 'Avalanche,' 'Coupe d'Argent', 'Erectus', 'Innocence' and 'Manteau d'Hermine' are probably the best known and still available.

These clones show different degrees of characteristics from both parents. 'Erectus' and 'Avalanche' are very similar, both upright with long slender branches which arch beautifully under the weight of the flowers, as these 2 cultivars are very floriferous despite being single. The flowers are 2.4 cm across and in racemes of 7 flowers. The shrubs reach at least 2 m in height. By contrast 'Manteau D'Hermine' is dwarf and compact reaching a maximum of 1.2 m with double creamy white flowers. The single flowered 'Innocence' has touches of white in the green leaves. 'Coupe d'Argent' has large single flowers, almost square in form, placed individually at intervals along the stem.

There followed many introductions across the world: singles, doubles, large or small flowered, tall, medium or small shrub habit and all claiming to be the most heavily scented. 'Belle Etoile' is a very compact shrub, albeit vigorous, with large single flowers flushed maroon at the base of the petals. It is a triploid hybrid and sterile so needs to be propagated vegetatively. 'Boule d'Argent' has large double flowers in dense clusters.

'Bicolore' has a wide spread, often over a meter. Its flowers are solitary and cup shaped occasionally appearing in clusters of three. Also with a wide spread is 'Conquete' a 1903 Lemoine introduction. It is variably double with long pointed petals interspersed with shorter petaloid stamens. Another almost square shaped flower is 'Sybille', introduced by Lemoine in 1913. The single flower is quite flat. 'Burkwoodii' also has a distinctive petal arrangement, the long narrow petals are arranged like windmill sails and slightly on an angle.

'Virginal' is probably the best double flowered cultivar 4 to 5 cm across. It is a strong grower and can reach 2.5m in height. It is heavily scented. 'Burfordensis', a sport from 'Virginal', was introduced by Sir William Lawrence of Burford Court, Surrey. This too is a tall robust shrub up to 3 m. It has dense columns of flowers 7.5 cm across with conspicuous yellow stamens. The Hon. Lewis Palmer introduced a hybrid of 'Sybille' and 'Burfordensis' pollen. He named it 'Beauclerc'. It has a spreading habit with broad reflexed petalled flowers about 7.5 cm across. They are a milky white with a touch of pink at the base.

The purple stain either at the base of the petal or through the petal veins is most noticeable in the *purpureo maculata* group. *P. purpurascens*, a native of Western China also has a purple calyx. *P. delavayi*, discovered by Abbé Delavay in 1889, has a purple form (*P. delavayi f. purpurascens*) where both twigs and calyx are purple.

There are other distinctive species. *P. tomentosus*, native to Kashmir and China is an upright shrub with hairy leaves, densely grey on the underside. *P. coronarius* 'Aureus' is a golden leaved form of *P. coronarius*, similar in habit and flower to the parent as is the variegated leaf form *P. coronarius* 'Variegatus' which has been around since 1770.

Many more have been introduced but like other genera, cultivars have been lost in cultivation. I would challenge you to find the following. P.'Monster', a vigorous shrub which quickly gets to 4.5m with flowers 4 to 5 cm across, P.'Favourite' growing to 2 m with single large cupped flowers, pure white with serrated petals and a central cluster of stamens and P. 'Velleda' whose petals are crimped at the edges.

There seems to be a current revival of interest in *Philadelphus*, as with many summer scented shrubs which are also attractive to pollinators. Nurseries which at one time stocked no more than five are now offering ten or more. Larch Cottage in Cumbria has 24 in the catalogue.

Leeds City Council have one National Collection at The Hollies Park, where apart from a dedicated bed they display the shrubs around the park. Entrance is free.

The other National Collection is at Pershore College in Worcestershire.

## **Halls of Heddon**

Think of dahlia and chrysanthemum suppliers and you will almost certainly think of Halls of Heddon. It is one of the oldest Nurseries in the North East, established at the Heddon on the Wall site in 1921 by William Nicholson Hall. Their first catalogue list was printed in 1923 listing pansies, violas, dahlias and chrysanthemums. In the early years plants were taken to the markets in Newcastle by horse and cart and also sent by post and rail around the country. In the 30's the Ovington site was purchased. The production of dahlias and chrysanthemums was the major interest at Heddon but with an increasing range of cottage garden plants which proved popular with customers. They exhibited in various Flower Shows around the area - sometimes at peak season staging 2 shows a week. The shows, and the outlet in the Newcastle Plant and Produce Market, provided the main access for customers with plant orders being taken and posted out in the appropriate season.

Halls of Heddon is still regarded as being the leading supplier of dahlia and chrysanthemum plants in the country sending out over 5,000 orders a year to all parts of the UK and overseas. Each year several varieties raised by amateur growers are selected for trial at the Heddon nursery with the aim of including them in Hall's catalogue should they prove good enough.

Halls of Heddon is still very much a growing nursery with an increasing range of the many garden plants now being produced at the Heddon Nursery. Meanwhile at the Ovington Nursery, bedding, alpines, cottage garden plants and primroses are grown as well as over 2000 cyclamen in season. Young tomato and vegetable plants are very popular in the Spring along with a wide range of hanging basket and patio plants. Using a quality compost and a slow release fertiliser in all their potting-on helps to ensure that plants get away to a really good start for long season performance.

The most spectacular time to visit is in September when the dahlia and chrysanthemum fields at Heddon are open for viewing with people visiting from all over the country to see more than 15,000 plants in full flower.

With hundreds of varieties to enjoy, we can also see that this nursery is conserving as well as providing excellent plants for sale and the annual Autumn delight for the visitor.

## **Propagation Day**

May 14th was a warm day but overcast, so a good day for taking cuttings. Fourteen enthusiastic members gathered in David Goodchild's garden to find out about propagation in general but specifically to take cuttings.

After a short explanation about how cuttings create new roots, everyone toured the garden armed with the basics of secateurs, pencils and labels taking suitable shoots. They then prepared them and planted them into a cuttings compost based on Perlite or Vermiculite. Some left their pots of cuttings in David's mist unit, some took them home.

The success rate was pretty good and augers well for future plant sales. The more people get involved in propagating: the more income we should get from the Plant Sale. Further propagation days are planned for 2013.



*Philadelphus* 'Minnesota Snowflake'



*Philadelphus purpurascens*



Gateshead Flower Show 2012



Blagdon Plant Fair 2012



## Euphorbias

Top: *E. polychroma* 'Lacy May'

Left: *E. characias* 'Black Pearl'

Below: *E. glauca*





Viscount Ridley



Jenny Lamb receiving Plant Heritage Award

**4<sup>TH</sup> VISCOUNT RIDLEY KG GCVO**  
**1925--- 2012**

As you will all know, after a long illness Lord Ridley died at home on March 22 2012.

His long association with Plant Heritage, both as a National Vice President and as the North East Group President will be sadly missed.

As our Group President for over 15 years he was tireless in his support of the Group and in his enthusiasm for it. He was never too busy to turn his attention to what he might do to help and was always guaranteed to be full of gratitude and praise for what we were doing.

It has been the greatest of pleasures to be able to hold our autumn plant fair at Blagdon Hall, by his invitation, over many years. It has become such an event in the local horticultural calendar and so raised the profile of Plant Heritage very much through the ambience and uniqueness of Blagdon.

As a plantsman he was also unique. It became a firm expectation that a planned short walk to see a particular tree or shrub would turn into many happy hours stumping through much loved gardens, during which the tales that would be told about virtually every plant would be full of knowledge and even more full of wonderful anecdotes.

How I wish over the years I had transcribed all those conversations! It would make an encyclopaedia of plant lore. He was always so happy to share his knowledge and enthusiasm especially about those plants in his National Collections.

Veronica Goulty

## Summer Outing

### Four Reminiscences

**Broughton House**, in the heart of Kirkcudbright, looks as tidy and peaceful as all the other townhouses on the street. But it takes no time at all to realise there are hidden secrets behind the facade.

Besides the fact that it was home to artist E A Hornel - an important member of The Glasgow Boys - there is a wonderful garden kept true to the era Hornell lived in. From the dining room window I was lured into the garden by the enormous blooms of a tree paeony and a glorious wisteria in full bloom.

Closer inspection revealed a rock garden with ponds and rills. Further down was a large lawned area bordered by colourful perennials and shrubs. And when I reached the furthest reaches of the garden there was another surprise in store - the sea! Lovely views across the estuary with a marina made comfortable by seating perfectly positioned. I thoroughly enjoyed our short visit and hope to get back one day.

The first visit on the Monday was to **Elizabeth MacGregor's nursery** just outside Kirkcudbright. The plant nursery has a wide range of cottage garden plants including a wide selection of violas, iris and clematis. Many of the plants for sale in the nursery were planted in the half acre walled garden which is situated next to the nursery.

You entered the wall garden through a gate in the south wall and you were greeted with your first glimpse of the garden. The formal layout which has some beds edged in box, contains an informal exuberance of herbaceous plants. A stunning display of poppies, hardy geraniums and *Anemone trullifolia*. I just had to buy a *Anemone trullifolia* for its very pretty blue flower.

A nursery well worth a visit.

## **Dunskey Gardens**

The walled garden at Dunskey, on the headland above Portpatrick, was created to serve a country house as part of a pleasure park which extended the grounds to the coast. In its heyday a staff of thirteen cared for the garden but today there are only two gardeners.

The head gardener, Gaby Reynolds, explained that the renovation of the garden has taken place over the last ten years and is divided into a scented garden, a hot garden with mainly orange and yellow flowers, as the situation lacks sun during April and September, and an ornamental garden.

The eighteenth century glasshouses were restored and are used today to grow peaches, nectarines, grapes and some exotic plants. The wide gravel paths made it easy to explore and the expanse of lawn gave an open view.

Beyond the walled garden the woodland gardens are being developed with walks and views over small lakes and out to the coast.

Dunskey Gardens has National Collections of *Clianthus* and *Sutherlandia* and it is hoped to add a collection of *Nicotiana*.

A recent addition is a maze. At least two of our group ventured in and found their way out again! I would also recommend the tearoom.

## **Claymoddie**

We spent Wednesday morning at Claymoddie Garden near Whithorn and were shown round the garden by the owners, Robin and Mary Nicholson. The garden was begun in the 1970s in what was the most sheltered part of the farm, but stone walls and buckthorn hedges were needed because of the exposed site near the sea. Luckily we had a hot cloudless day.

First the area had to be cleared of woodland section by section between 1970 and 2000 and although the rhododendrons and azaleas were very colourful the garden specializes in southern hemisphere plants. Examples of plants we saw in flower were *Rubus tridel*, *Euphorbia stygiana* and *Lobelia tupa*. Particularly spectacular were the red *Embothrium norquince* and *Crinodendron hookerianum*.

There are three large polytunnels at Galloway Plants on the other side of the farm road, where members were able to buy many of the plants we had seen in the garden. We then had lunch by the harbour in an Isle of Whithorn pub.

Marion Lumsden

### **Euphorbia- a wide ranging genus**

Seeking a different looking display for Gateshead Flower Show we came up with the idea of representing a single genus. We have already displayed plants from the local National Plant Collections so we looked further afield. The chosen genus was *Euphorbia* because of its very wide range of different types of plants - shrubs, herbaceous plants and succulents, some of which resemble cacti. There are annuals, biennials and perennials. Many are evergreen and for the gardener this can provide winter interest in the garden.

*Euphorbiaceae* is the largest plant family in the world with the genus *Euphorbia* being the largest proportion of the family (2160 species). They are found on every continent except Antarctica. They tolerate a variety of conditions and providing the soil is moderately friable will grow in the poorest of soils. They prefer sun and good drainage so heavy clay is not very acceptable, although many people report success.

*Euphorbia* have unique flowers. They have neither petals nor sepals. The colour comes from the bracts which work like petals attracting insect pollinators. The bracts come in a variety of colours - lime green, yellow,

gold, orange or red. Many fade to a more subtle shade but as they remain on the plant for a long time this is added colour in the garden situation. The very small flowers within the bracts are mostly seen from April to June but many flower throughout the summer.

For the garden situation there are some lovely foliage colours and textures from the velvety green of *E. 'Portuguese Velvet'* to the rich red of *E polychroma 'Bonfire'* and all the shades in between. There have been many new introductions over the last few years including the small white-bracted *E. 'Gloria'*, which is a tender perennial treated as an annual and used in hanging baskets.

Maintenance in the garden is relatively easy. They need no regular pruning, just a tidy up when they start to look tatty. Deciduous plants can be cut to ground level in the autumn and new shoots will appear in the spring. A few species can be invasive if allowed to put out too many suckers, but the suckers are easily removed once the clump size you need has been achieved. They can be propagated by division or cuttings.

WARNING. This is one of those plants that exude a toxic white milky sap if the stem is damaged. This sap can irritate the skin causing a rash. Getting the sap into the eye will damage the eye. To stop the flow of the sap from a cut stem, the stem should be stood in water or sealed over a flame and of course hands should be thoroughly washed afterwards.

There are two National Plant Collections of Euphorbia held by Oxford Botanic Garden and Don Witton in Sheffield. Both are often open to the public and worth a visit.

As with all National Collections, the question most asked is “Why are you conserving these plants?” Of course, to start with, there is so much research to be done on all plants to understand their essential qualities and why they may be of greater use in the future. Who knows what value they may have? We can only look at existing findings to anticipate the future.

In the case of *Euphorbia* we can quote the fact that it is one of the fifty fundamental herbs of Chinese medicine. There is ongoing research to discover more medicinal uses of *Euphorbia*.

Few plants survive in poor dry soil in shade but *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae* will. In the future we may be glad of this plant, if global warming brings droughts.

Surfactants are compounds that change the surface tension of materials. As ingredients in soaps they increase the wetting ability of water so that it can more easily penetrate the fabric and remove dirt particles. *Euphorbia* can be used in the manufacture of surfactants. What other undiscovered industrial uses might there be?

*Euphorbia palustris* 'Wallenberg's Glorie' is supposedly deer proof, rabbit proof and slug proof- say no more!

Our display at Gateshead Flower Show was much admired and the public in general were appreciative of both the display and our conservation aims. We talked to some amazing people, signed up a few as members and as a bonus we got a Silver medal!

### **September Plant Fair at Blagdon**

The weather was fine as we have come to expect at Blagdon, which was a bonus considering the less than average summer weather. A good number of members and the general public came along and found some really interesting plants to buy.

There were some last minute cancellations by the invited nurseries but there was still a range of plants and bulbs to tempt us all. Also tempting us all were the home made teas in the Clock House, the food for which was supplied by members-truly delicious and very good value.

This year there was a corner for family entertainment where visitors were challenged to guide remote controlled small vehicles around a set course.

This was originally intended to be a diversion for children but appealed to adults and children alike until having been so well used the batteries ran out towards the end of the day.

The usual plant crèche was well used too because many visitors got what they came for early and went for a walk around the grounds. The Plant Heritage stand also attracted a lot of interest, alongside a display similar to the Gateshead Flower Show stand, albeit smaller.

We were delighted to raise over £ 1.500.

The group now has to think about 2013. Blagdon is already booked for 8th September and nurseries will be approached. Small nurseries that we want to help often find it difficult to commit themselves to a day away from their business, needing to have someone in both places. Are you aware of any small nurseries that we have missed, who would like to come?

This year you will have read that the committee organised a family fun area, which was well supported. Please think about other attractions that can sensibly be run alongside the sale of plants and which would not need a lot of organising. More attractions may require more help.

A small core of members have become regular helpers but more volunteers are always welcome. Entrance for members is free.

### **The Threatened Plants Project (TPP)**

This project is for hardy and tender plants, trees, ferns, fruit and seeds which come true to name; across England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Guernsey and Jersey.

The TPP aims to identify all known cultivars in British and Irish horticulture, with volunteer help, starting with Plant Finder data since 1987. The NE Group is currently working on the genus *Rosa*.

The next step will be to calculate which have become rare and threatened today and then develop conservation plans with partner organisations for the most worthy cultivars.

## Garden Party August 4th 2012

The 2012 garden party was hosted by Joan Barber. The last time Joan hosted the garden party she was resident at the farm. Now that she has downsized in both house and garden we went to see her new creation. Sadly it was one of the wettest Sunday mornings of the year and many members didn't get there because by two o'clock some roads were impassable, but for those who did it was a real treat. The sun eventually appeared and we were able to explore.

A luxuriant herbaceous border along the drive gives a great welcome, with an interesting shrub border on the opposite side.

In the herbaceous border are several interesting trees including *Eucalyptus* which show signs of damage after the last two winters and which Joan is considering drastically pruning to new growth at ground level. The front lawn is terraced and surrounded by more colourful herbaceous perennials. There are also rock plants growing in the wall which divides the levels.

An archway leads to the side garden where the rockery also has some wonderful *Watsonia* and *Dierama*. The path alongside leads to the back of the house where David has his prolific vegetable garden. Making the full circle we come to the sheltered part, where the greenhouse is sited.

The garden truly reflects the knowledge and experience of an enthusiastic and expert plantswoman. Our thanks to Joan for a lovely afternoon.

Oh and by the way, as usual we had a delicious afternoon tea.

## **Plant Heritage Prize 2012**

This is intended to be an annual award made to an educational establishment in three Plant Heritage regions, selected in rotation. Each of the three chosen colleges is approached in November/December to recommend a suitable student who will receive the prize of £100 before the end of the following year, so giving the tutors a chance to assess the suitability of a candidate. The prize is open to students undertaking studies from NVQ to post graduate levels. The three winning students, full or part time, will have demonstrated an awareness of cultivated plant conservation relevant to their studies taking into account the progress and abilities made commensurate with the level of study.

In November 2011, the North East was chosen as one of the regions and Kirkley Hall selected as the college to nominate the prizewinner.

In October 2012 Plant Heritage NE was told that the prize winner was Jenny Lamb. Jenny had just completed a Level 3 Extended Diploma in Horticulture. During her two year course she spent time at Logan Botanic Garden on work experience and also had regular involvement in local community gardens. Whilst at Kirkley Hall Jenny took an active interest in the *Fagus* collection, becoming involved with on going maintenance and development. She was the most highly commended student in Horticulture in her year group receiving that prize at the college's prize giving evening.

At the same time on behalf of Plant Heritage David Goodchild presented her with the Plant Heritage Prize. The award was in the form of a framed certificate and a cheque for £100. It also included a year's membership of Plant Heritage. Jenny has said how much she appreciates this as she has already visited our monthly meeting as a visitor.

## **North East National Collections' Open Days**

In the North East we have 24 National Collections held by 14 Collection Holders. One of the responsibilities of being a collection holder is to make it accessible to the public, either by open days or by appointment. Please support the following Collections' Open Days this year

31st March -1st April CORYDALIS Brian Whitton  
74 Archery Rise, Durham DH1 4LA (after 2pm)

26th May POLEMONIUM D & D Nichol-Brown 2-5pm  
Also 25th August 2-5pm  
28 Sunnyside Terrace, Trimdon Grange, Trimdon Station TS29 6HF

16th June 2-5pm POTENTILLA (herbaceous)  
David Goodchild at 66 Darras Road Ponteland NE20 9PG

30th June - SEDUM Ray Stephenson  
8 Percy Gardens, Choppington, Northumberland NE62 5YH

June 11-5pm GERANIUM Rachel Etheridge  
Frosterly House, Frosterly, Durham DL13 2RF

The following collections can be seen whenever the property is open.

IRIS series spuriae at Belsay Hall NE20 0DX

FAGUS at Kirkley Hall NE20 0AQ

SORBUS at Houghall East Durham College DH1 3SG

CENTAUREA at Bide a Wee Cottage, Stanton. NE65 8PR

ACER ALNUS SORBUS at Blagdon, Seaton Burn NE13 6DB

## **2013 Dates for your diary**

January 12th AGM and Gardening Questions Panel  
Lunch beforehand at 1pm. Soup provided. Other contributions welcome.

February 9th Beth Tilling 'Orchids'

March 9th Prof. Phil Gates 'Every flower tells a story'

April 13th Teresa Clements 'A brief history of English tulips'

May 11th Sinclair Williamson of National Trust for Scotland

June Plant Sale at Kirkley Hall

July 26-28th Gateshead Flower Show

September 8th Great North Plant Fair at Blagdon

October 12th Simon Thompson of Northern Ark

November 9th Martin Walker of PH Yorkshire Group

December 14th Members Christmas Meeting  
Lord Howick-Plant Hunting

Indoor meetings at Durant Hall start at 2.30pm but the hall is open from 2pm. Time to meet up with friends, buy raffle tickets, browse the sales tables etc. Bring a friend as a visitor, they may decide to join.

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