



**CORNWALL GROUP  
NEWSLETTER FOR  
September 2019**

I hope nobody has been washed away?

I don't really prosper in hot weather. Like the garden, I start to flag after a while in the sunshine. The arrival of rain in August suited me very well and we were lucky with the visit to Gardens Cottage, a cloudy afternoon gave way to a gorgeous sunny evening. Whenever the weather performs perfectly I get the strange feeling that this might be the last of it, but summer isn't over. Even the flattened dahlias have time to bounce back. Torrential rain at the end of August could well set the scene for an Indian Summer that lasts until ... later (I can't bear to say the "C" word just yet). A few years ago I had dahlias flowering through the first snowfall along with the early snowdrops. In short, it's too early to write off the summer, anything could happen.

Just to remind myself of that, I planted out some *Canna* this morning. I wouldn't have tried it if the weather was still hot and dry, but I think they have time to establish before the frosts arrive.

## Sussex Prairie Gardens.

Perhaps it wasn't the best idea for someone who wilts in the heat to spend the August Bank Holiday weekend in Surrey but I wanted to see the Sussex Prairie Garden at its peak. I was staying with a friend and a surprisingly short journey took us to Henfield in West Sussex where Paul and Pauline McBride have planted an 8 acre prairie garden. The planting is a rich mixture of grasses and late season perennials, particularly emphasising the various "daisies" from the dry, sunny North American prairies and equivalent habitats in central Europe. The garden is certainly dry, they haven't had any significant rain since the spring and the temperature bounced playfully up to 32degC during my visit. The option of lying under an umbrella and listening to the buzzing of bees all afternoon had its appeal but instead I donned a sun hat and braved the blistering (and very photogenic) sunshine.

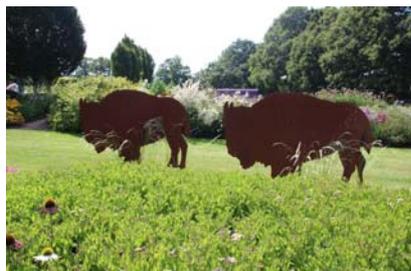


**Sussex Prairie Garden.**

The garden is built on almost perfectly flat ground. It is laid out as a series of wide, sweeping beds arranged loosely around the centre. The beds are twenty or thirty feet wide, and smaller mulched paths run through them allowing visitors to explore the contents in detail. As a result there is the sensation of being immersed in the planting. The middle of the garden is bisected by a pair of formal hedges with clipped standard horbeams growing through it at intervals adding a structural backbone to the flowing shapes.

There were plenty of seed heads on show, particularly *Allium*, so the garden had clearly been

performing well earlier in the year. There was also a fair bit still to come, including most of the asters, however I was there at the height of summer and I had the feeling that the garden was at its very best.



**American Bison.**



**The formal "backbone" of the garden.**



**Birds on the wire.**

The wide open space of the garden made it a fantastic location for sculpture. The strong sunlight added crispness to the shapes and there was an interesting interplay between pieces that were opaque and pieces that were translucent, all set among the gently waving growth of grasses and perennials. I liked a small herd of American Bison wandering along the immaculate lawns. They were cut shapes made of sheet iron, casting two dimensional shadows from two dimensional bodies.

Much freer and looser in effect was a flock of white plastic birds fixed to a fence of sheep netting where the sun illuminated them and the fence kept the sheep out. I thought it was a very playful and attractive piece, brought to life by the echo of white cosmos in front of them.



***Aster x frikartii* and  
*Foeniculum vulgare*.**



***Echinacea* surrounding a  
seat.**



**Grasses in the light.**

The late summer herbaceous border is dominated by *Helenium*, *Helianthemum*, *Rudbeckia* and all the other big yellow daisies. Beside them there is a tide of dusty reds and lilac from asters, *Eupatorium*, *Veronicastrum* and the like. The two colour groups do not always meet in mellow harmony like combined choirs in a cathedral. Sometimes they clash angrily, shouting a rainbow of obscenities at each other across the garden. Fortunately their season is shared by a selection of gold and silver hued grasses that whisper soft compromises to the wind. It doesn't always work in Cornwall, but we're a feisty lot. Where the low sun shines through the golden grasses, harmony emerges.

The combination of *Aster x frikartii* and bronze fennel appealed to me. The lavender *Aster* is on the bright side of delicate and the fennel is a subdued thug, together they seemed to work very well. A number of grasses tied the compositions together. My favourite was a red flowered *Miscanthus*, standing up well. They seem to survive the gales of Cornwall with equal dignity and they make useful garden plants for us all. I was also attracted by the faded burgundy of *Echinacea purpurea* coupled with the bleached, silvery timber of a seat. I couldn't grow the *Echinacea* and the seat would get covered in lichen and then rot. I couldn't repeat the combination in my own garden but I could enjoy it in Sussex. On balance I enjoyed the seat more than the *Echinacea*, but it was a very hot day.



*Phlomis tuberosa* and  
*Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm'*.



*Sanguisorba 'Red Thunder'*.



*Veronicastrum virginicum*.

A garden like this depends on the strength of the planting, in more ways than one. Good plants give a long season of interest and *Phlomis tuberosa* was an excellent example. The lilac flowers in early summer are followed by the sculptural seedheads which last until they are removed in winter. At this season they were partnered by a flood of *Rudbeckia 'Goldsturm'*, the dark eyes matching the dark flower heads of the *Phlomis*. I haven't found *P. tuberosa* very successful in my garden, but *P. russeliana* does exactly the same job with primrose yellow flowers and it is almost dangerously vigorous. It will also resist a summer gale, if the need should arise.

I am very fond of *Sanguisorba* and they are very fashionable at the moment. They are also almost impossible to remove once established so I think they will be remaining with us for a long time, fashionable or not. *S. 'Red Thunder'* is one of the newer ones, it does well locally, growing to about four feet of mulberry magnificence. Beside it the stately towers of *Veronicastrum virginicum* look down with pale aloofness but, like the lady and the tramp, the two work well together.

On a scorching hot day I wasn't sure what to expect from the Prairie Gardens but I came away exhausted and invigorated, ready to stretch my own garden to its summery limits. Even ready to plant out those Cannas.

## LAST MEETING

### Gardens Cottage, Prideaux. 7th August 2019

We have been very lucky with the weather this year for our garden visits. Cool and overcast spells preceded our visit to Gardens Cottage but we arrived on a bright, warm evening with the low sunshine sparkling around the garden. The weather could hardly have been better. The following morning I awoke to fog and was then treated to torrential rain. As I say, we have been very lucky with the weather for our garden visits.



*Leucadendron*.



Gardens Cottage, Prideaux.



*Banksia blechnifolia*.

Sue and Roger Paine moved into Gardens Cottage at the end of 2014. At the time the 1 1/2 acre garden was almost entirely grass with a small section of rough woodland at the top of the slope.

In the spring of 2015 they were ready to start work in the garden and in the 4 1/2 years that have followed they have transformed the plot. Sue had a background working with colour and admits to a passion for herbaceous planting and a determination to have colour in the garden throughout the summer. Together they have brought other features into the garden, including the Peace Cairn and two caravans. The gypsy caravan was bought at auction and stands as charming decorative feature under the trees. The second caravan is more modern and serves as a restful retreat for Roger.

We met by the house for a brief introduction to the garden. The south facing slope that runs down to the house was one of the first parts of the garden to be created. The soil is very poor and stony but Sue has not tried to improve it. Instead she has chosen to grow species that will perform on a well-drained slope including a number of South African plants. She is trialling some members of the Proteaceae recommended by Penberth Plants, including a *Protea* and some *Leucadendron*. At present they are looking well suited to the site, the couple are waiting to see how they stand up to the winter. Above them are some new rock gardens, enlivened at this season by a number of plants of *Kniphofia pauciflora*, the short yellow spikes of flowers in perfect proportion to the alpines surrounding them.



**Formal Garden. .**



***Kniphofia pauciflora* .**



**The Orchard .**

Further up in the garden Sue has developed a rectangular formal garden with purple foliage acting as a foil to the white, pink and lilac flowering plants. The entrance to the formal garden is through an elegant metal archway over which a *Clematis viticella* form grows exuberantly, forming a thin screen of blooms. Above this a pair of linear herbaceous beds sweep across the width of the site, the colour effect changing as you walk between them. They are home to a range of *Dahlia*, one of Roger's loves, and included the remarkable flowers of 'Blue Bayou' growing among *Crocasmia*. Further along the bed, I particularly liked the way that the *Crocasmia* seed heads were forming, arching strings of bobbles punctuated by the last few orange flowers.

Beyond this, at the top of the garden, the space under the trees has been formed into beds, edged with granite. The stone was found on-site when Sue and Roger moved in, and as well as using it to create the beds, it has been used to build a number of cairns and other shapes that echo the Peace Cairn by the entrance. The two caravans also stand under the trees, the Gypsy Caravan still looking as though the resident has only just left for a moment.



***Clematis viticella* .**



***Dahlia* 'Blue Bayou'.**



**Herbaceous borders.**

The orchard contained a number of productive apple trees, a few of them trained as "step-over" cordons little more than 40 cm tall. The productive aspect of the garden continued at the rear of the house where an immaculate vegetable garden will soon be producing sweetcorn, courgettes

and a wide range of other vegetables. The rhubarb looked lusty, as rhubarb always should, and the runner beans were producing in abundance from the salmon pink flowers. The rear of the house also has a small courtyard garden and a seating area sheltered by a semi-circle of *Wisteria* growing on supports with orange *Begonia* dangling between them in hanging baskets. A small greenhouse was filled with tender flowering plants including a particularly lovely pale blue *Plumbago*. Above it a small poly-tunnel was producing vegetable seedlings for planting out as well as giving space for propagation and acting as a horticultural power house for the rest of the garden.



**The Gypsy Caravan .**



**The poly-tunnel .**



**The Peace Cairn.**

It was quite amazing to see how much Sue and Roger had achieved in the short time they have lived in the house. The garden certainly shows the great value of herbaceous borders in extending the gardening season in Cornwall where so many of the spring gardens have finished by June. At the start of August it felt like a garden at its peak, seen in the perfect golden light of evening. The garden is open again at the start of September under the National Gardens Scheme and is well worth a return visit!



**Gardens Cottage.**



**Crocosmia seed heads forming .**



**Gardens Cottage.**

## OTHER EVENTS LAST MONTH

The hot weather finally ended with the risk of wind and rain at garden events. Fortunately gardens also looked refreshed and there have only been a few unlucky days.

### **Rosemoor Plant Fair. 17th August 2019.**

Unfortunately for the exhibitors and the RHS, some of the worst weather arrived on the first day of the Rosemoor Plant Fair. Friday 16th will be remembered for many years by exhibitors. The rain started before breakfast time and continued until the evening with barely a break through the day. A few hardy souls visited and got very wet. The show stayed open all day, everybody concerned was heroic. I waited until Saturday.

The morning dawned bright and clear, some dark puffs of cloud through the morning rapidly passed overhead and the sun came out. Some of the outdoor exhibits were looking a bit bedraggled but it was surprising how little damage had been done and displays dried out rapidly through the morning. The "best exhibit" award went to Millwood Plants from Devon and their beautiful display of herbaceous plants was looking bright and fresh.

Andy's Airplants from Penzance had staged a spectacular display of *Tillandsia* growing on

branches and underplanted with terrestrial bromeliads. The National Collection of Cyclamen were featured in the Plant Heritage tent with a variety of colour forms from four species in flower already. My favourite plant of the day was *Heuchera* 'Wildberry' with shining metallic mauve leaves but a display of *Allium* by W. S. Warmenhoven from the Netherlands was remarkable and undamaged. The two things might have worked well together!



**Rosemoor Plant Fair.**



**Millwood Plants exhibit .**



***Allium* from W. S. Warmenhoven.**



***Dahlia* 'Cheyenne'**



**Cornish Dahlia Society Show .**



***Dahlia* 'Hillcrest Candy'**

### **Cornish Dahlia Society Show, Egloshayle. 18th August 2019.**

Every year the Cornish Dahlia Society mount an exhibition at Heligan over the bank holiday weekend. The weekend before they hold their own members show in Egloshayle (Wadebridge), a more intimate and informative affair. They are very friendly and serve a pretty good cream tea if you're in the mood. This year the flowers were amazing, exhibitors had searched to find blooms undamaged by rain on the Friday and although there were tales of the desolation and destruction at home, it wasn't to be seen on the show bench.

The spectacular colours of the dahlias are well displayed in the small hall, all the major flower forms were well represented though numbers were perhaps a little down for the really large flowered forms. My favourites were the astonishing range of collarette seedlings raised by Mike Bryant from Stithians so I have included far too many pictures. They were amazing.



## **Dyffryn Fernant. by Marilyn and Dave Mayhew.**

Recently, whilst on a short break in Pembrokeshire, we discovered an unusual garden close to Fishguard called Dyffryn Fernant. For those of you who may not have heard of it, it is certainly worth a visit if you happen to be in the area. It's a RHS Partner Garden created by its owners around a quarry on the one side and a bog on the other with distant views across the mountains.

Whilst there we noticed a couple of print-outs of reviews, one by Deborah Wilson and the other by a journalist

writing for The Times. We decided that the following two descriptions were far better than anything we could write!

Chosen by The Times: "Dyffryn Fernant, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire. Beautifully conceived small gardens brimming with rich, contemporary planting surround a glowing raspberry-fool coloured house, while a bog garden subtly gives way to a wetland valley floor. The best domestic garden in Wales".

Dyffryn Fernant reviewed by Deborah Wilson: "A sense of place. We love to pay lip service to this important idea. We like to open our gardens to the surrounding landscape so lawns morph into meadow and then into grassland (the real meadow) beyond. Or our planting mimics the way plants grow in the wild. But how often do you see a garden that really sits naturally and comfortably in its place?"

Dyffryn Fernant began as a small garden between a rocky quarry and a bog on the west coast of Wales and it has grown outwards to embrace them both. Not conventional gardening terrain.

But the challenges of the terrain mean that parts of the garden have not been spoiled by too much interference and the parts that have been partially or intensively gardened show the care and determination that has been taken.

I prefer gardens that have grown and developed as opposed to being designed all at once, and that have been thought about and cared about over the years. And I don't mean the manicuring sort of caring. Dyffryn Fernant is a bit scruffy in places. There are some neglected areas and abandoned design inspirations sitting around. I like that. Gardens are not about perfection. It's reassuring to feel that there are bits they haven't got round to or have lost interest in. A garden that is gardened by its owner(s) over the years shows evidence of them responding to how the garden changes as it grows and accommodating to the strengths and weaknesses of their particular site. It develops a personality that leaches away when you have a designer and a team of professionals working to achieve a preconceived plan.

At Dyffryn Fernant there is plenty of evidence of choices being made and jobs being done. I like to see how a garden is being gardened. Here the potting area and the greenhouses are not hidden away but at the centre of things."

If you are interested, their website is: [www.dyffrynfernant.co.uk](http://www.dyffrynfernant.co.uk).

## British Iris Society Open Day. Rosemoor. 21st september 2019, 2.00pm.

The British Iris Society is holding their AGM and Lecture day at RHS Rosemoor on 21st September 2019 and as the lecture is open to all, we thought it might be of interest to some of your members. This year we are delighted to welcome Sarah Cook who has the National Collection of Sir Cedric Morris irises in Suffolk and you may well have read her article in a recent edition of The Garden magazine. Perhaps you would be kind enough to circulate the details to any interested members, they would be more than welcome. Although the lecture is free, normal admission applies to Rosemoor unless they are RHS members.

The details are:

RHS Rosemoor, Devon EX38 8PH - Saturday 21st September.

Lecture at 2pm Sarah Cook - 'Sir Cedric Morris - art, irises, gardening and friends'

Most plants tell a story - Morris' irises and his other plants are no exception. Sarah will weave these stories through her talk, she will look at his art, introduce us to some of his friends and take us through some of the other aspects that her research has taken her.

## COMING EVENTS

**The county is buzzing with events in the coming weeks, please let me know if you hear of anything I should know about and I will add it to the list. If you go to anything interesting please consider sending in some pictures so that we can all enjoy it. Many thanks.**

**South Bosent, Dobwalls, nr Liskeard PL14 4LX.**

Sunday 1st September, 2.00 - 5.00pm .

Open for Cornwall Wildlife Trust.

Check website for details: [www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk)

**Hotel Endsleigh Gardens, Milton Abbot, Devon PL19 0PQ.**

Wednesday 4th September, 11 - 4pm .

Open for St. Lukes Hospice.

Check website for details: [www.stlukes-hospice.org.uk](http://www.stlukes-hospice.org.uk)

**Trebartha, Launceston PL15 7PD.**

Sunday 8th September, 2.00 - 5.00pm .

Open under the National Gardens Scheme.

Check website for details: [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

**Tregonhayne, Truro TR2 5SE.**

Sunday 8th September, 2.00 - 5.00pm .

Open under the National Gardens Scheme.

Check website for details: [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

**British Iris Society Open Day, Rosemoor.**

Saturday 21st September, 2.00pm .

(See details above).

**National Dahlia Collection, Penzance TR20 8AQ.**

Sunday 22nd September, 10.00 - 4.00pm .

Open under the National Gardens Scheme.

Check website for details: [www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)

**If you go to any of these events, please would you take some pictures for the newsletter! Three "landscape" (broad and low) pictures fit the page perfectly. "Portrait" (narrow and upright) pictures may have to be cropped to fit them in. Add some words if you like. Thanks.**

**Please would you let me know of any garden shows, open days or other events that may be of interest to our members so that I can include them in the next newsletter.**

**If you are planning to attend an event please check the details for yourself. I try to verify them all, but I might make mistakes!**

**All other content gratefully received.**

**[cornwallhps@gmail.com](mailto:cornwallhps@gmail.com)**

## NEXT MEETING

Next month sees us return to Ladock Village Hall for the first of our Autumn meetings.

Wednesday 4th September 2019 .

Marina Christopher from Phoenix Perennials will bring plants and talk to us about Autumn Colour.

7.00 for 7.30pm, Ladock Village Hall.

Nina has very kindly agreed to get tea and coffee ready for us at the start of the evening, available from ther kitchen at the front of the hall. Rumours are there might even be biscuits!

Please consider bringing in something from your garden for the "3 stems" competition, three stems of anything you like from the garden, to show to members. Judged by the speaker on the night. There is also a display table at the front of the hall for the members, please bring along anything of interest you have. There is a members sales table if you have surplus plants you would like to sell, please include a second label with the price and your name so that we can work out who gets the money (the society takes a small percentage of the price).

Finally, good raffle prizes are always very welcome. The raffle is one of the fundraisers that keeps us afloat!

## **ADVANCE NOTICE**

**Wednesday 2nd October .**

**Dr Julian Sutton from Desirable Plants will say "I believe in the Western Cape".  
7 for 7.30pm, Ladock Village Hall.**

**Wednesday 6th November 2019 .**

**John Amand from the bulb company Jacques Amand will talk about "Unusual Bulbs  
and how they get to your garden".  
7 for 7.30pm, Ladock Village Hall.**

## **Cornwall HPS Posters.**

**Attached is a poster for the next meeting. Please print it out and display it somewhere so that we can attract new members.**

**Many Thanks.**

**Please let me have any items that may be of interest to the members so that I can include them in the next newsletter. News items, visits, photographs and upcoming events especially welcome. Please let me know if I drop any clangers!**

*John Sirkett* [cornwallhps@gmail.com](mailto:cornwallhps@gmail.com)