



**CORNWALL GROUP  
NEWSLETTER FOR  
November 2020**

*Dear all*

*As you are no doubt aware we are in the grip of a second wave of the virus across the Country and restrictions are being reimposed in certain regions. You would have heard that a three tier system of restrictions has been introduced and the current good news is that our region is in the medium tier, which is the lowest of the three.*

*So, you won't be surprised to hear that the November meeting has been cancelled.*

*Now let me give you some good news. This time of year we remind you that your subscription will soon be due as it runs from 1st January each year. You will be pleased to hear that this year we will not be chasing you for your subscription as has been decided by the committee, with unanimous agreement, that subscriptions for the coming year should be set at £0.00, so you will all automatically remain members of the Cornwall Hardy Plant Society until 31st December 2021.*

*We will continue to review the Covid 19 situation on a monthly basis. Your health and wellbeing remain our primary considerations.*

*Remember we have both a website (<http://cornwallhardyplantsociety.org.uk/>) and facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/333068437419161/>) to keep in touch.*

*Kind regards*

**Phil Gadd.**

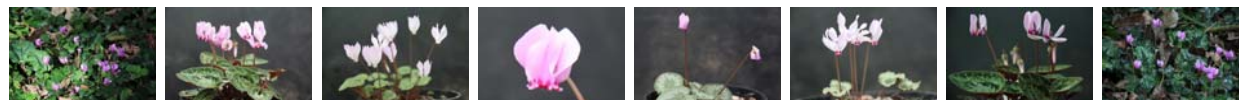
*Chair*

Storms and autumn weather have started to sweep across the county, the clocks have gone back and the dark winter evenings have returned. I have been surprised at the autumn colour on show in the garden. I have a few Japanese Maples that might be expected to produce some scarlet tints, but there has also been a show on *Hamamlis*. *Cornus kousa* has made a brave attempt to join in, turning brown with a russet enthusiasm that even the beech trees around here could envy.

However it has been the weeds that have been most impressive. The boundaries of the garden are laced with the barbed wire of brambles and spaced along the prickly stems the old leaves have turned scarlet and orange. Herb Robert runs rampant around the edges of my greenhouse and the leaves have turned to a pure cerise where the patchy sunshine can fall on them.

Naturally, leaving some of these weeds was part of a cunning plan ...

Flowers are not so visible for the most part. The last *Colchicum* have toppled to the ground, the fragile stems too thin to support the flowers through bad weather. The last herbaceous *Anemone* are scattering petals in every breeze and the asters are soaked with rain and dew every night, barely having time to dry before nightfall. I once had a spaniel that looked bedraggled when she got wet but she would curl up by the fire until she dried out, the asters don't have that option. A single spike of flowers on *Aconitum carmichaelii* has brought a welcome hint of blue to the herbaceous border but the overwhelming shade of autumn has been pink.



When the skies are heavy with dark clouds and the night seem to start before the day is done, *Nerine bowdenii* bursts from the ground, the naked stems arising in a matter of days sometimes. Once they are established they can be relied on to shatter the dread silence of autumn with unruly pink squawking. It isn't a subtle colour, it is a reckless, riotous revolution against the oppression of drear winter. I am a fan.

The cheapest way to acquire *Nerine bowdenii* is to buy the dry bulbs when they appear in garden centres in late summer. Unfortunately, *Nerine* do not appreciate being dried off. They will flower in the first year but will then spend three, possibly even four years establishing before they will flower again. The best way to get stock is to beg a division from an established clump, moved in August or September. As long as they aren't allowed to dry out they will flower a month later as though nothing had happened.

It doesn't take long for a small clump to become a large clump if they are grown in a sunny position. They will tolerate some light shade but it isn't ideal. Clumps of *Nerine* are not particularly good looking for eleven months of the year but for a few spectacular weeks in October they will challenge the autumn leaves to match their finery.

The National Collection of *Nerine bowdenii* has just been relocated to the RHS gardens at Rosemoor, I can't imagine a better reason for an autumn visit.



**Classic pink *Nerine bowdenii* .**

**An assortment of new colours .**

**A breeders seedling selection beds.**

**Established bed of mixed modern cultivars.**

In the last couple of decades Dutch breeders have been working to increase the colour range in hardy *Nerine* and to improve the blooms for the cut flower trade. Early work resulted in a number of pale pink cultivars being introduced and a couple that were pure white. *N. b.* 'Ella K' has been available for about 15 years and has proved to be a reliable garden plant. Newer varieties like 'Edelweiss' and 'Gletsjer' are more recent with more compact flower heads and broader tepals however they have not yet been proven under garden conditions. The early pale pink varieties like 'Vesta K' are being replaced by cultivars such as 'Lipstick' that show darker pink tips to the tepals.

British breeders have added plants in the middle of the pink range that were developed for garden conditions in the UK. 'Angel's Tears' and 'Ellex' both performed well in the recent RHS trial of hardy *Nerine* and will become commercially available in the next few years.

In addition to the paler colours, the Dutch have been striving to extend the colour range in the other direction. So far the best of these for garden use has been 'Isabel', a good dark pink. It stands out strongly against the mid pink cultivars we are accustomed to seeing and although the shade of pink is darker, it is also a little kinder in the garden. Last year an improvement called 'Lady Cerise' was introduced. It is still too early to judge its garden performance but the depth of colour is a significant step forward.



*Nerine bowdenii* 'Ella K' .



*Nerine bowdenii* 'Angel's Tears' .



*Nerine bowdenii* 'Lipstick' .



*Nerine bowdenii* 'Isabel' .



*Nerine bowdenii* 'Ellex' .



*Nerine bowdenii* 'Lady Cerise' .

In the search for richer colours among *Nerine*, breeders have raised hybrids using the less hardy *Nerine sarniensis*. It is not very successful in gardens because the leaves grow through the winter and they are damaged by cold weather. The plants slowly fade away as a result. It was hoped that hybrids using *N. sarniensis* as one parent would have a wider colour range and also inherit some winter tolerance from the hardy *Nerine*.

The former objective has undoubtedly been achieved. *N.* 'Mr John' was introduced more than a decade ago and has the richest and darkest flowers of any *Nerine* available as dry bulbs. Unfortunately it has not made a great name for itself as a hardy cultivar. Early plantings did not establish well and it did not survive in the RHS trial. In the last year I have started to hear reports of plants flowering outside in sheltered spots and it could be that the cultivar simply takes a long time to establish however it has yet to prove itself in the garden. Its parentage is very uncertain.

Other plants are also available with similar problems. The Elegance Series of hybrids seems to include three or four clones. 'Elegance Gem' and 'Elegance Red' are occasionally available by name but not yet widespread. The parentage of the Elegance series is very obscure, however they make large plants with strong stems and large heads of flower. If you are planning to grow one of them under cover, it is also worth noting that they are the favourite food of mealy bugs! You may also see plants labelled Fireworks Fusion sold in pre-packs in the garden centres. It doesn't seem to be a cultivar name but the mixed bulbs in the packs seem to be hybrids of one sort or another. I have only grown one of them, a sturdy mid pink flower with a dark centre. It is obviously a hybrid of some sort but any further comment is just speculation. Somebody probably knows the answers, but it certainly isn't me!



*Nerine* 'Mr John' .



*Nerine* Elegance Group .



*Nerine* Fireworks Fusion .

The Dutch were not the first to attempt to breed hardy *Nerine* hybrids in a wider colour range. In Devon the late Terry Jones raised a number of hybrids between *N. bowdenii* and *N. sarniensis*,

using the hardier parent to carry the seed. He found that the first generation hybrids were almost completely sterile, but that occasionally he could get seed by back-crossing onto *N. bowdenii*. He also found that the hybrids varied in their growing season. Those that produced leaves in late autumn suffered through the winter but by repeating the cross with *N. bowdenii* he got some hybrids that produced their leaves in spring and were much hardier.

The best of these for garden use has been 'Zeal Giant' with large heads of bright pink flowers on strong stems. It has grown well enough to mean that it is fairly easily available commercially. Some of the other named clones are still in the hands of specialist growers however they are slowly becoming available to gardeners.

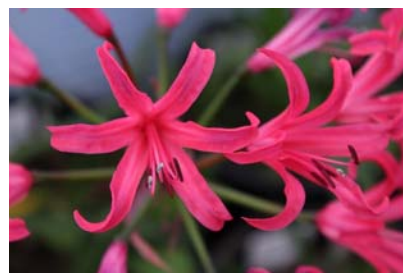
The later hybrids successfully introduced new colours to the range of hybrid *Nerine*. 'Zeal Salmon' is a tall growing plant with rich salmon pink flowers and 'Zeal Purple Stripe' shows the hint of purple that was later developed more fully in 'Zeal Damson' and 'Zeal Plum'.



*Nerine* 'Zeal Salmon'.



*Nerine* 'Zeal Giant'.



*Nerine* 'Zeal Purple Stripe'.

These are not the only hybrids that are making an impact in late summer gardens. More than a century ago pollen from *Nerine bowdenii* was placed on a flower of *Amaryllis belladonna* to produce a seedling that is now known as *x Amarine tubergenii*. It is still occasionally seen in gardens but in recent years the Dutch have repeated the cross and produced a range of plants that are being sold as *x Amarine Belladiva*. Initially they were only available as a mixture but in the last couple of years the clones have been given individual names. Colours range from the palest pink of *x Amarine* 'Emmanuelle' to the deep magenta of *x Amarine* 'Tomoko'. The new cultivars have proven to be hardy and easy to establish and they are rapidly becoming a striking presence in autumn gardens.



*x Amarine* Belladiva (mixed).



*x Amarine x tubergenii* .



*x Amarine* 'Tomoko'.

With Halloween approaching pumpkins are being carved and gusty dark weather emphasises the pleasures of a warm hearth. However there is still brightness in the garden. The shrill flowers of *Nerine bowdenii* will enliven any quiet corner in autumn, and recent developments have broadened the colour range to suit all tastes. A sunny flower bed in Cornwall is the perfect place to appreciate their floral delights.

## Results of the THREE STEMS competition for September.

The warmth of September feels very distant as the winds whip around the house. Thanks to Phil and Jean Gadd for judging the Three Stems competition.



**Peter Howard came first with his three remarkable vegetables. Corgette, Sweetcorn and Runner Bean.**



**Second went to John Sirkett with *Nerine* 'Mrs Goldsmith' .**



**Tricia Howard came third. Dahlias 'Abridge Primrose', Yellow Bird' and 'Promise'.**

Why not enter the competition next month? The rules are very simple, pick three stems that you like from your own garden and present them in a container of some sort. It doesn't matter what you choose as long as there are only three stems in the container. Take a photograph and post it on the Cornwall Hardy Plant Society facebook page or e-mail it to the newsletter (address at the bottom) and I will include it here.

**The THREE STEMS competition for October.**



**Chris Sullivan's entry of *Rhodochiton atrosanguineus* , *Abutilon* and *Ipomoea lobata* .**



**Joanna Holah has entered *Clerodendrum trichotomum* , *Nerine bowdenii* 'Stephani' and an English shrub rose.**



**Peter Howard has submitted *Dahlia coccinea* var. *palmeri* and two seedling dahlias.**



**Tricia Howard posted *Rudbeckia triloba* 'Prairie Glow', *Dahlia* 'David Howard' and *Chrysanthemum* 'Dixter Orange'.**



Trish Wilson picked *Salvia guaranitica* 'Black and Blue', *Salvia uliginosa* and *Salvia patens* .



Adrienne Lloyd has entered *Salvia involucrata* 'Bethellii' , *Penstemon* 'Plum Jerkin' and *Symphytum ibericum*.



Pam Dormand has submitted three Sweet Peas.



John Sirkett posted *Galanthus* 'Autumn Beauty' .

I don't know who is going to judge it yet but the results will appear in next months newsletter!

**Cornwall Hardy Plant Society on Facebook.**



Pam Dormand started the month off with pictures of her *Sinningia tubiflora* in flower. She said that it had taken a long time for the flowers to open and that has also been my experience. It isn't one of the *Sinningia* that do well in a moist, shaded spot. This one seems to need full sun and a warm summer to flower well. As Martin Pallett commented "The scent is lovely". As always, Pam's delightful dog was keen to get into the picture. At least this time we have the right end of him!



Martin followed with a post about his walk along the coast. "Plenty to enjoy on our coastal walk to Spit Beach from home at the weekend. Lots still flowering with plenty of Hawthorn berries,

Blackberries & Sloes still looking good along the hedges." He found a beautiful day, the pictures are idyllic.



*Hedychium gardnerianum*  
BSWJ.2524.



*Hedychium gardnerianum*  
'Keneggy'



*Hedychium gardnerianum*  
'Pallidum'

The *Hedychium* season is well underway so I posted a picture of *Hedychium gardnerianum* 'Keneggy'. It is a charming little thing raised by Stephen Mules at Lower Keneggy nursery. It has typical flowers for the species and a lovely scent, but the important thing is that it only grows to about 40cm (18 inches) tall.

I grow several other selections of *Hedychium gardnerianum* because it is a spectacular plant for the end of summer. It seems to be perfectly hardy in Cornwall and will make a bold clump. BSWJ.2524 collected by Bleddyn Wynn-Jones at Crug Farm Plants is fairly standard, growing to about 1.2m (4 feet) tall. The flowers don't last long but they are spectacular. 'Pallidum' is a selection with paler flowers (I can't see it myself but I'll take their word for it) and 'St Martins' is a slightly darker form with very long heads of flowers introduced from the Scilly Isles.



Last of the summer flowers . Autumn hedgerow arrangement.



Autumn colours from  
Chris Sullivan.

The rich colours of autumn have dominated gardens this month. Tricia Howard made an arrangement using the "last of the summer flowers at Hidden Valley Gardens". She followed it with an autumn hedgerow arrangement. "Lovely sunny day, so went for a walk across our local fields and made this little arrangement from the autumn hedge rows."

Chris Sullivan made an arrangement of bright flowers and autumn leaves "picked before they get blown to pieces", anticipating the winds that have blown through the last couple of weeks.



Dry weather in autumn produces ideal conditions for working in the garden. Pam Dormand set to work on a garden copse.

"Reclaiming my White woodland copse.

Years ago I planted three Silver Birch trees & most of the under planting was white. Over the years, with neglect it has become very overgrown, mainly with Vinca (nightmare) . I've recently had some of the branches removed from the trees giving me encouragement to start again. Even the old hedgehog box has survived, just. For the moment, in the middle of the trees I have put a white Epimedium (Egret) some white cyclamen hederifolium & some mixed white Narcissus. In the past I had it planted with lots of little treasures, will be interesting to see if any show themselves."



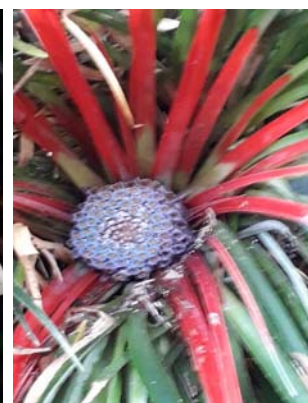
*Oxalis bowiei* .



*Watsonia 'Beatrice'* .



*Dietes bicolor* .



*Fascicularia pitcairniifolia* .

Martin Pallett took us on a tour of his garden in Carlyon Bay to find the flowers that were still looking good - and there were plenty.



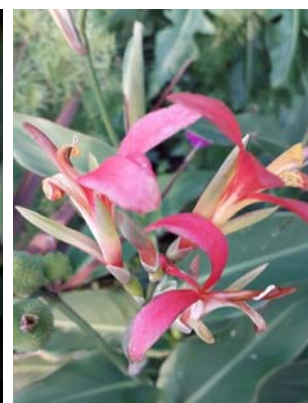
*Rosa 'De Rescht'* .



*Astrantia major* .



*Stylophorum diphyllum* .



*Canna indica* .





With Halloween approaching, Pam Dormand took us on a terrifying tour of her garden with the comment "I need a pumpkin or two - Spooky colours!"

If you see any good Halloween gardens, pumpkins, ghosts or ghouls please send in the pictures, we would love to see them. (Pictures of dressed up dogs, cobwebby gardens or the chair of CHPS dressed as Frankenstein's Monster are especially welcome).

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting which would have been on Wednesday 4th November 2020 has been cancelled as a result of the Corona virus lockdown.

## NEWSLETTER EDITOR

As you will know I am standing down as editor of the Newsletter after the December edition. It has been a delight to produce the newsletter for the last five years but it is time for a new pair of hands to take over and make the job their own. It is a simple matter of putting together a monthly email to members to remind them of the date of the next meeting and circulating any notices or important news.

The new editor may choose to keep the task simple, or may add more material, entirely at their own discretion.

Cornwall Hardy Plant Society is looking for a volunteer prepared to take over and keep the membership informed about upcoming events.

Please consider helping. It isn't a high profile job but it makes a great contribution to communication in this friendly group.

John Sirkett. x

## ADVANCE NOTICE

It is difficult to know when it will be possible to resume meetings, you will be informed as soon as we can bring you any news.

**Please let me have any items that may be of interest to the members so that I can include them in the next newsletter. Please let me know if I drop any clangers!**

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

