



**CORNWALL GROUP
NEWSLETTER FOR
July 2017**

Summer has certainly arrived. All year I complain that the garden is getting shadier and shadier. In winter I long for a shaft of sunlight and I have been known to take trees down just because I am missing the light. Suddenly the trees are a refuge from the heat. Everything is looking parched. I saw a herbaceous border this morning that was just on the point of collapse. Impossible to water, it isn't going to make it to the weekend without wilting. I seem to spend half of my life explaining to people that the plants they see popularised from the eastern counties (for example at Chelea) are not going to prosper in the cool moist Cornish summers. Eat those words, fool! I wish I grew more *Salvia*. Quite by accident a couple have arrived in the garden this year, gifts from well-meaning friends. If only I had more sunlight.

I haven't put the saw away just yet!



Paeonia cambessedesii.



Paeonia mlokosewitschii.



Paeonia corsica.

In my stupidity I had imagined that when I moved west I would have to do without peonies. It seems like a small sacrifice but as the garden has developed (my childish garden will never "mature") I have missed the reckless exuberance of their flowers.

I was determined that I would at least grow *P. mlokosewitschii*. Those of us who have spent anxious hours in the bath practising the name will be sticking with it at any cost, but it is now technically *P. daurica* ssp. *mlokosewitschii*. Regardless of the name, it comes from oak and beech forests in the mountains of the Caucasus and is very tolerant of shade. In cultivation we expect it to have pale yellow flowers but white and pale pink forms are known, and generally scorned. I have a couple of young plants in the garden and take great delight in their ruby red spring shoots. I am confident that I will take equal delight in their soft, glowing, bowl shaped flowers - eventually.

Unfortunately peony species are more addictive than chocolate hob-nobs. *P. cambessedesii* rapidly joined it in the garden, though I have it planted in the ground in the greenhouse. It is a rare species in the wild, only known from the cliffs of northern Majorca. I remember a childhood holiday where a mad woman rushed into the hotel swooning "the peonies, the peonies" like a climactic line from an Agatha Christie novel. At least at the time I thought she was mad. Over the years I have changed my opinion and I wish I had gone with her to see them.

The shoots start to grow in January and by March the buds burst into soft pink chalices of fragrant wonder. Every year I am amazed afresh. The deep green leaves have purple backs and a metallic lustre. They shine in the sunlight.

Next to it I grow *P. corsica* from Corsica and Sardinia. Slightly taller and slightly later it has lost the ethereal fragility of *P. cambessedesii* and has become, in peony terms anyway, quite butch.



Paeonia mascula.



***Paeonia daurica ssp.
wittmanniana.***



***Paeonia obovata ssp.
willmottiae.***

Paeonia mascula doesn't have to worry about appearing butch, the name says it all. I planted a seedling in the garden in a moist border that loses the sun around mid-day. I was surprised at how well it has grown, and three years later I had the first flowers. Its natural range is from Spain around the coast of the Mediterranean to Lebanon and Israel. It prefers neutral to acid soils and was introduced to the island of Steep Holm in the Bristol Channel, where it has naturalised.

P. daurica ssp. wittmanniana came from an Alpine Garden Society sale as a seedling in a 2inch pot, but it has grown into a magnificent thing, the large pale flowers are held on strong, wind resisting stems in May. Mine has a pinkish tinge which could hint at hybridity, the subspecies is generally pale yellow. I'm not going to quibble, let the bees do what they will.

I first saw *P.obovata ssp. willmottiae* flowering in a friends garden, the white flowers bobbing like sunbeams in the dappled shade. In the autumn I was presented with a big bag of seed and after a few years in the greenhouse I have a small crop of adult plants to put out. It is a Chinese species and leads me to the Wonders of the East.



Paeonia ludlowii.



Paeonia delavayi.



***Paeonia rockii* at Rosemoor.**

P. ludlowii may be better known under its former name, *P. lutea*. It makes a moderate shrub with yellow flowers in early June but to my eye it commits an unforgivable sin - it is moderate when it had the chance to be excessive! *P. delavayi* is slightly smaller, with blood red flowers. The two hybridise if they get the chance and orange seedlings are possible. I have always thought that it would be worth selecting the hybrid seedlings to pick out the best. Over a few generations it should be possible to get something both tough and wonderful. I haven't had time yet but the Chinese have been selecting *P. delavayi* forms with larger semi-double flowers. I haven't seen them for sale yet but I am sure they will appear. Anybody who went to Rosemoor this spring will have noticed the *P. rockii* flowering by the steps down into the garden. I would love to say something meaningful about it but every time I look at the picture I am speechless. I have some Chinese seedlings growing under cover to mimic the hot dry summers of central China and I am hoping for great things.



Paeonia I don't think it's
'Cora Louise'.



Paeonia 'Julia Rose'.



Paeonia 'Bartzella'.

During the 1940's Toichi Itoh in Japan produced the first hybrids between tree and herbaceous peonies. They were a remarkable breakthrough, combining the size and exotic colours of tree peony flowers with a low, almost herbaceous habit. Unlike the tree peonies they can be propagated by division and don't have to be grafted. The group has come to be referred to as Itoh Peonies to recognise the contribution of the first breeder. They are rapidly becoming popular in gardens.

My first came from a bargain bin at the end of the year. I noted the remarkable divided foliage but couldn't believe my luck. When it flowered I first thought it was 'Cora Louise' but I am less certain now. There are a group of new cultivars that have been micropropagated in the USA which are available worldwide and I think it may be one of those.

My second venture into the world of the Itoh hybrids came with 'Julia Rose', a remarkable salmon pink flower about 15cm in diameter (6 inches). I grow it in a giant pot so that it stays on the dry side and it looks good as a foliage plant throughout the summer.

One of the remarkable achievements of the hybridisers of Itoh peonies is the combination of large yellow flowers with the low, herbaceous habit. 'Bartzella' is one of the best and seems to have a strong constitution. Unfortunately that wasn't enough to save mine but I don't blame the plant - it arrived with no roots and rapidly departed this world in the same state. This one was photographed at Wisley where there is currently a peony trial running.



Paeonia lactiflora 'Alice
Harding'.



Paeonia trial beds at Wisley.



Paeonia lactiflora 'Felix
Crousse'.

It was the peony trial that drew me to Wisley in late May. The trial beds looked marvellous and well worth a visit if you get the chance at the right season. The trial is running for another two years and it is going to get better and better.

Although the trial covers all of the herbaceous peonies I was most interested to see the classic *P. lactiflora* cultivars grown together for comparison. A small number are available commercially as pre-packs in spring, but they never seem to establish well. Large numbers were raised a century ago when the plants were more popular but they have fallen out of favour. Kelways in Somerset raised a great many and I saw the production fields when I was a student but they are all gone now, and most of the cultivars have become difficult or impossible to obtain.

I am sure that it is possible to grow them to the same standard in Cornwall, given an open site and some drainage. I have failed to grow 'Sarah Bernhardt' for many years. She has tall stems and may be better as a cut flower produced under cover. 'Moon of Nippon' is a longtime favourite of mine and with a few other selected cultivars I can see this peony thing

getting out of hand.
Can't wait.



Paeonia lactiflora 'Kelways
Glorious'.



Paeonia lactiflora 'White
Cap'.



Paeonia lactiflora 'Moon of
Nippon'.

LAST MEETING

Visit to Lucie Nottingham's garden at Trenarth.

Rain started the month and our visit to Trenarth didn't escape. A good number of members turned up filled with enthusiasm for a delightful garden.



Hardy Planters.



Trenarth.



**Doorway from the
courtyard to the cellars.**

The property is described as a "Liquorice Allsort" of construction. The site has been occupied for at least 800 years and the current building has additions and modifications from each of the last six centuries. At the base are the 16th century cellars which are now home to nesting swallows and a large colony of Lesser Horseshoe Bats which stream through the doorway at dusk. The property developed an ornamental garden during the last century. The current owner moved in in 1992 and says the garden is now mature, though there are clearly new innovations and additions going on all the time.



The Courtyard .



Yew hedges .



Borders on the north side.

The style of the various parts of the garden varied in keeping with the location. The Courtyard would originally have been a farm yard, a working area behind the house. The window overlooking it in the front wing of the house was filled in when the grand facade was added to focus attention forward to the grand landscape. Borders on the north side of the

building were planted with a very choice selection of woodlanders growing well in the shade and protection of the walls.

On the other side of the house the walled garden is enhanced with some gardens enclosed in formal Yew hedges. The narrow paths and towering hedges reminded me of Hidcote but with a looser, less neurotic feeling.



Wheelwrights fountain .



Charlie.



Crocodile.

The garden is filled with charming and amusing objects. I was very impressed with a fountain made from a wheelwrights form, originally used to shape a wheel but now perfectly levelled to spill water all around the rim.

Wol overlooks The Wolery, a small area of woodland filled with rare shrubs. A beautiful red flowered *Illicium* attracted a lot of attention, as did a wooden crocodile looming out of the undergrowth and keeping a beady eye on the group and the view over the valley.

Charlie stands at the end of an avenue of clipped Holm Oaks and keeps an inscrutable eye on the comings and goings.



Echeveria.



Abelia floribunda.



Banksia grandis.

Most important were the remarkable selection of plants displayed to show their best. An *Echeveria* grown on a pedestal was the most beautiful example of the species I have seen in a garden, the scarlet flower spikes a perfect contrast to the blue-grey rosettes and the deep green and black pedestal.

Abelia floribunda was flowering its heart out against a low wall and drew a lot of attention. It is slightly tender and so it isn't often seen in gardens, but where it is suited it is the most magnificent plant in a genus of good things.

Difficult to pick out another plant from the wonderful things growing, but I am going to choose *Banksia grandis* growing on the slope below the house. A long time ago I tried one against the south wall of my house but it didn't survive the first winter, shedding its long leathery leaves in autumn and never growing any more. I still have one of them that I use as a book mark. At Trenarth it was clearly prospering and it is so distinctive that I think I will have to try again. If it fails I'll just have to read more books.

Many thanks to Lucie Nottingham for welcoming us into her garden with such enthusiasm, for showing us around and especially for warm tea in a warm conservatory when the weather finally encouraged us indoors. It was a very pleasant evening.

Those who didn't manage to make it might like to note that the garden is open again shortly with the NGS. Details below.

**Weather****Warmth****and Wol in the Wolery.**

OTHER EVENTS LAST MONTH

At last, some decent rain for the garden. I planted a dozen young tree ferns in the garden at the end of May and I was starting to worry. I didn't get to as many events as I would have liked this month but I did have a couple of free days to get out. If you get to anything that might be of interest to our members, please let me know. Three "landscape" pictures, a couple of sentences and I will include it here.

**The sales hall.****Derry Watkins and her Special Plants.****The Show hall.*****Adiantum pedatum*
'Imbricatum'*****Rhodohypoxis* 'Orizuru'.*****Salvia aurea* 'Kirstenbosch'.**

Alpine Garden Society Show, Wimborne. 27th May 2017.

I look forward to the AGS show at Wimborne every year. In its glory days it was subtitled "Summer Show, South", an opportunity for growers in the south of England to show off their skills at the culmination of the spring season. A good selection of nurseries keep the visitors happy while the show is being judged and inevitably I found a few things I couldn't resist. Only time will tell how I get on with a Vietnamese epiphytic *Polygonatum* (*P. mengtzensense* f. *tonkinense*). Derry Watkins showed a dark red form of *Antyllis vulneraria*. The species is commonly seen on the cliffs around Cornwall but I have never seen one so close to black.

The show always produces a few new plants. This year there were a surprising number of flowering cacti, mostly alpine species from the Andes suitable for a cold greenhouse but probably not for the open garden.



Lawn art.



Onions and meadow wispiness.



Four "topiary" children and a dog.

Wisley. 27th May 2017.

The AGS show kept me occupied until lunchtime and the volunteers serve a marvellous quiche, but what to do in the afternoon? Wisley is only an hour away as the van drives, it would almost be rude not to visit!

Work has started on the new entrance to the gardens - so far it only seems to involve fencing off a section of the car park and plastering posters on all available surfaces but I'm sure it will all be lovely. Last year the gardeners started experimenting with lawn art and this year it has become larger and more impressive. I'm not sure how they are cutting the patterns or if it has a long term effect on the lawn but I thought it was interesting. This pattern was cut on a lawn with no foot traffic but they are also experimenting on the lawn between the main herbaceous borders. If anybody visits later in the summer, let us know how it stands up to being trampled.

The RHS is trying to use the borders around the greenhouse to represent modern trends in design. The original Piet Oudolf border has been reformulated several times and each time it becomes more effective. There is a great deal to be learnt from close study. Currently it is all onions and meadow wispiness and I'm sure it also develops a late summer crescendo.

I am generally a fan of topiary. The larger and more improbable the better as far as I am concerned, but it has always been controversial. This group of four children and a dog playing with a large *Agave* struck me as the very worst kind of mawkish tosh. I'm sure their mother loved them. I expect she is also made of wire netting and stuffed with green fluff. It was attracting a lot of interest, mostly of the "Ooh look Colin" variety, but there's room for all styles.

Wisley continues to challenge the boudaries of gardening.



Tregrehan Plant Fair. 4th June 2017.

The morning of the Tregrehan Plant Fair dawned, the weather looked ominous but as the nurseries unpacked the drizzle passed over and by the end of the morning almost everybody had dried off. Sunshine in the afternoon was very welcome. As always a remarkable range of unusual plants on offer. It is the place to go for something you have never heard of before and later in the day there was an auction of the rarest specimens.

Hardy Planters turned out in force and some remarkable things will be planted in our members gardens this year. I came away with an *Aristolochia* I have never heard of and an *Asarum* that was popular a decade ago but which seems to have vanished recently. I thought it was an excellent day.



Fox Farm Nursery.
***Neoregelia* and *Dahlia*.**



Shallot bull.



The Millennium Fruit Bat.

Royal Cornwall Show. 8th June 2017.

I have stayed away from the Royal Cornwall Show for several years. I lost interest in the endless queues of traffic but I was encouraged to Wadebridge this year to meet a friend and I'm glad I went, it was bonkers.

A rainy thursday afternoon may not seem ideal but it did ensure there was a good supply of mud to decorate the sheep and tractors strewing the show. It isn't a proper agricultural show without plenty of mud. I always make sure I park facing downhill with a clear run to the exit and it is a policy that has served me well over the years.

I had expected to spend the afternoon drinking takeaway cappuccino and chatting with friends, but in the event the show took all my attention. Who could have imagined that a nursery in Gulval was growing *Neoregelia* in a cold polytunnel?

Lifton Farm Shop stole the show with a vegetable rendition of Shaun the Sheep. Those who know me will tell you that I go weak at the knees over vegetable sculptures. Three Little Piggies in pink chrysanthemums vied with a sunbathing cauliflower sheep in a deck chair for my affection, but in the end I plumped for a shallot bull with crossed eyes and a 'come-and-get-me' grin. Favourite commercial exhibit in a strong competition.

In the childrens classes it is difficult to predict what will catch my eye. Indeed, it is difficult to predict what will be entered, and sometimes it is difficult to tell what the entry is. Mostly I think they were farm machinery reproduced in fruit and vegetables. I am astonished that anyone survives childhood. These competitors will grow up to become doctors and IT consultants. I don't know who submitted this lovely thing, or even what it is. My best guess is that the artist is a Star Wars fan, and this should have been titled "The Millenium Fruit Bat" but I am probably wrong. I loved it and it is probably worth noting, part of your five-a-day.

I am going to pass rapidly over the floral art classes which were rather sensible for June. Sometimes I have to sit down in a corner until I stop laughing. Hurrah for floral artists! In the absence of any budding Salvador Dali's I really enjoyed Ward Alpines display of *Rhodohypoxis* and the perfumed wonder of Kerton Sweet Peas from Bridgwater.

Meadowside Nursery had a beautifully constructed herbaceous border with the colours managed deftly. It was fictional of course, no snails or wind damage, but if you are planning to build a herbaceous border in a tent then this is the way to do it. Impressive Bonsai and some challenging colour combinations among Chrysanthemum's grabbed the eye, but I think my 'Display of the Day' came from Westdale Nursery. I can't grow *Bougainvillea*, even in the greenhouse, so I enjoyed seeing all of these.



Meadowside Nursery.



The flower tent.



***Bougainvillea* from
Westdale Nursery**

Cornwall Hardy Plant Society now has a website containing a welcome page, an introduction for new members, 2017 events, plants at a discount (under development) and the Newsletters since the start of this year.

The address is www.cornwallhardyplantsociety.org.uk .



Pat perkins sent in these pictures of her *Tulipa sprengeri*. The original plants were grown from seed but now they are naturalising in the border.



COMING EVENTS

If you know of events coming up that might be of interest to the members please let me know so that I can include them. cornwallhps@gmail.com

Wildside.

Saturday 24th June to Friday 30th June, 10.00 - 5.00pm every day.

A early summer opening for this remarkable garden.

Further details on the website www.wileyatwildside.com

Trenarth, High Cross, Constantine TR11 5JN.

Sunday 25th June, 2.00 - 5.00pm.

Cream teas. See the write-up above. Admission £4.

More information: www.trenarthgardens.com

Alpine Garden Society Show, Pershore.

Saturday 1st July, 10.00 - 3.30pm.

Pershore College, Avon Bank, Pershore. WR10 3JP.

Well, if you feel like a day out...

RHS Annual General Meeting.

Wednesday 12th July, 2.00pm.

RHS garden, Rosemoor.

This year thre RHS are holding their AGM at Rosemoor, including tours of the garden and other events.

A chance to be involved in the workings of the RHS. See their website for further details.

www.rhs.org.uk (search "Annual General Meeting" rather than "AGM" or you will get lists of their Award of Garden Merit plants!)

19 Meadway, St Austell. PL25 4HT.

Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd July, 1.30 - 5.00pm.

Winner of the 2016 "Glorious Garden" competition in the West Briton/Cornish Guardian.

Admission by donation.

More information: <https://www.cornwallhospicecare.co.uk/open-gardens-2017>

Mivlyn, 2 Sea View, Boiler Works Road, North Roskear, Camborne. TR14 0AP.

Saturday 1st and Saturday 22nd July, 10.00 - 6.00pm.

Described as a "car boot" garden and adapted for wildlife.

Admission by donation.

More information: <https://www.cornwallhospicecare.co.uk/open-gardens-2017>

Tanglewood Wild Garden, Newbridge, Penzance. TR20 8PL.

Sunday 2nd July, 11.00 - 5.00pm.

A 9 acre garden of woodland and ponds. Admission £5.

More information: <https://www.cornwallhospicecare.co.uk/open-gardens-2017>

Flete Estate Gardens.

Sunday 2nd July, 12.00 - 5.00pm.

Ivybridge, Devon, PL21 9NZ.

A beautiful house with diverse gardens set in an elegantly landscaped parkland.

Open to support St.Luke's Hospice. Admission £5.

Carminowe Valley Garden, Mazey Cottage, Tangies, Gunwalloe, Helston. TR12 7PU.

Sunday 9th July, 10.00 - 6.00pm.

3 1/2 acre garden divided by the Carminowe Brook. Admission £5.

More information: <https://www.cornwallhospicecare.co.uk/open-gardens-2017>

Gunnislake Village Walkabout.

Sunday 16th July, 11.00 - 4.00pm.

Catch the train or drive to the centre of Gunnislake and follow the orange arrows.

Open to support St.Luke's Hospice. Admission £5.

Harrowbarrow Village Walkabout.

Sunday 23rd July, 11.00 - 4.00pm.

Open to support St.Luke's Hospice. Admission £5.

Wildside.

Tuesday 26th July to Monday 31st July, 10.00 - 5.00pm every day.

Further details on the website www.wileyatwildside.com

Hidden Valley Gardens, Treemill, Par PL24 2TU.

Friday 28th and Saturday 29th July, 10.00 - 5.00pm.

Tricia's beautiful garden open for the NGS, home made cakes and cream teas.

Admission £4.50.

More information: www.hiddenvalleygardens.co.uk

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.

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

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 5th July 2017. 6.00 for 6.30pm.

A visit to Ric and Helen Reilly's garden at Penvale, Treluswell, nr Penryn.
From Truro take A39 towards Falmouth. At Treluswell roundabout (roadworks in progress) take A393 to Redruth. After 50 yards turn right into the garden and then left to park in the field.

From Redruth take A393 towards Falmouth and Penryn. Just before Treluswell roundabout turn left into the garden and then left again to park in the field. The postcode is TR10 9AN but the owner advises it is not pinpoint accurate for a satnav. The entrance is the only one on the east side of the road, 50 yards north of Treluswell roundabout on the road to Redruth.

If you want to sit down over refreshments, please bring a folding chair!

The garden is a work in progress. Heather and Brian have been working with Ric the owner for 4 to 5 years. It has some well established areas, a wonderful collection of both hardy and tender Fuchsias and new herbaceous borders. It is a challenging site with a vast rabbit problem.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Wednesday 2nd August 2017. 6.00 for 6.30pm.

**A visit to Lady Frances Banham and Pemberth Plants, Pemberth,
West Penwith.**

Wednesday 6th September 2017. 7.00 for 7.30pm.

**A return to Ladock Village Hall.
Judith Plante Cleall from Devizes will be talking on "Wessex
Gardens of the National Trust".**

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.

cornwallhps@gmail.com

Please let me know if I drop any clangers!

John Sirkett