



Autumn Newsletter 2025



Editorial

Barbara Williams, Chair, b_williams15@hotmail.com

We now know that this August has been one of the driest since records began, so time to take stock of what has thrived, what has survived and what is just about hanging on. First on the list of plants that thrived in our garden has to be *Salvia* 'Nachtvlinder'. It didn't do very well to start with, and I think we had simply enriched the soil too much, but five years down the line, we have a wonderful skirt of it round the front of the house. With a gravel drive, the *Rudbeckia triloba* and *Gaura lindheimeri*, completely of their own accord, have decided that is where they would rather be, and so we now have dozens of them growing in gravel along the path, much happier than those in the flower bed.



Self-seeded *Rudbeckia triloba* (left) and *Gaura lindheimeri*, photos Barbara Williams

A few days in Scotland in June meant that all our pots of ferns and hostas got moved from around the garden into some fairly deep shade at the bottom of our sloping garden, where it is probably about 2-3 degrees cooler than at the top. Of course, they loved it, so as much as I might want to grow them in different places, they know where they are happy and never was right plant, right place more true than this summer. They have had to be watered much less often than before and look better in every way!

Anything that likes a moist soil has pretty much given up the ghost, and our *Darmera peltata* was an early casualty. Planted by the pond, but not in boggy-enough ground, that is without question our fault, or perhaps it was our sense of optimism that we could make it work? But more plants have survived this hot summer than we might have thought, so in

these days of climate breakdown, we continue to learn how to deal with what will grow and what won't.

Seemingly able to survive with almost no watering at all, are pelargoniums, of which we bought quite a few after Luci Skinner's talk in January, which brings me to Woottens of Wenhaston. The nursery is run by Gill and Jen Stafford, who hold a PH National Collection of Pelargoniums. They faced a crisis recently when the farmer whose bore hole they shared decided to sell the farm which meant their use of the bore hole was stopped. No water supply, no nursery; so, with enough water left in their tank to supply the nursery for maybe a month, they put out an appeal to raise the money - £20,000 needed to drill a bore hole on their property. It is a wonderful and inspiring story, because while our committee was discussing how we could help, the money was raised within a *single day*. Digging started in September. I visited the nursery with Anne Ashington, our Collections Co-ordinator, with a view to seeing how we might offer some support



Jen (left) and Gill Stafford, photo ©BBC

and while it is not a Norfolk collection, the committee felt that it was such an important nursery in East Anglia, that we would want to offer some assistance to ensure its future.

So with great appreciation of the kindness and dedication of plant lovers everywhere, enjoy working in your gardens and preparing for who-knows-what this winter!

Membership Matters

Linda Hall, Membership Secretary
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A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Mr Mark Lane (Walcot Green, Diss) has moved from London and transferred his membership to Norfolk. Ms Melanie Williams (Aylmerton), Ms Kate Lyons (Brampton) Ms Karen Smith (Hevingham) and Ms Naomi Jackson (Norwich) all joined online through the national website. Mrs Alexandra Everington (Reymerston) joined our group at the August Plant Fair

Our membership now totals 206.

The National Collection of *Salvia microphylla* cvs and Relatives

Graham Last, PH National Collection holder, writes about the collection and about some of the joys of this beautiful and varied plant – all photos in this article were taken by Josh Craske, Graham's son-in-law:

I never tire of looking out of our upstairs window down upon the gardens at Highview House. At the time of writing (July) and after one of the driest springs ever, the colours in the flowers are beginning to return. We are very fortunate to have over 12,000 shrubs and perennials here and by far the largest group is salvias. These long-flowering plants are distributed throughout the gardens and are a part of the lamiaceae family. They are all perennial varieties and one of their biggest attributes as a group is their ability to flower from May until the first frosts. We split our over 200 salvia varieties into five different collections:



Salvia 'Amistad'

The *Salvia guaranitica* and Relatives collection are large-leaved and their native regions are Brazil, Paraguay and northern Argentina. One of the best known is *Salvia* 'Amistad', growing to over a metre in height, a beautiful purple long-flower spiked variety. *Salvia guaranitica*'s various shades of reds, blues, and purples provide an abundance of colour from June through to October.

The *Salvia nemorosa* and Relatives consist mainly of varieties from Europe and Western Asia and consist of both *nemorosa* and *x sylvestris* varieties. They are more compact in blue, pink, purple and white in colour and flower from May through to July providing lots of early spring colour.

The *Salvia patens* collection, our smallest collection is often referred to as Gentian Sage and native to the dry parts of central and southern Mexico. They have the most amazing claw-like flowers, the largest of which is *Salvia patens* 'Guanajuato' growing to over a metre tall with beautiful mid-blue flower spikes.



Salvia patens 'Guanajuato'

Our Salvia Tender Collections are all held in pots and come from across the globe. They are overwintered in dry, cool shade and require little water or attention during their dormant winter period. Many are late flowering with some not appearing until early October.

Finally, The National Collection of *Salvia microphylla* and Relatives is our biggest group by far, with over 100 different *microphylla*, *greggii* and *x jamensis*, varieties originally discovered in the 1990s in southeastern Arizona and the mountainous regions of eastern, western and southern Mexico. The word *microphylla* comes from the Greek words for small-leaved. These fantastic shrubby salvias are the most reliable of the groups for their hardiness, coming back from year to year. Growing between 40 and 60cm tall, they come in a magnitude of colours - pinks, oranges, yellows, whites, purples, reds, blues and beyond. Over recent years many exciting bi-colour varieties have been introduced including probably the most popular 'Hot Lips'. This has recently been joined by 'Amethyst Lips' a blackcurrant and white bi-colour variety and 'Cherry Lips' a cherry red and white bi-colour combination.



Salvia 'Amethyst Lips'



Salvia 'Cherry Lips'

Read all about it

National Collections News

Anne Ashington, NPH National Collections Co-ordinator

Members will be pleased to note that there is a new PH National Collection of *Sarracenia purpurea* and *Sarracenia rosea* (species, subspecies, hybrids & cultivars) in Norfolk.

This collection is held by Paul Katz in Caister-on-Sea, near Great Yarmouth. These carnivorous plants are temperate bog plants found across Canada and the USA. They are hardy in our UK climate. Paul is particularly interested in collecting "location plants", which refers to plants from specific places. Many of their natural habitats are fast disappearing so it is important to ensure their future in any way we can.

Paul has only been collecting these hardy *Sarracenia* for about three years and has amassed around two hundred plants which are kept in his 2 x 3.5m glasshouse and around his garden in containers. Like all carnivorous plants they require acid conditions and only rainwater. Congratulations to Paul and we look forward to hearing more about this new collection.

RHS Sandringham Flower Show, 2026

You will be delighted to know that Plant Heritage have asked us to exhibit at the RHS Sandringham Flower Show



next year (21 – 26 July) and the committee members have agreed that we should participate. Plant Heritage Head Office completed the Expression of Interest Form for us and will support us throughout. At the September committee meeting, we began considering the next steps and have now formed a sub-committee, chaired by Carl Harder, with Anne Ashington and Barbara Williams supporting. It will be an enjoyable and challenging venture, and volunteer support will definitely be needed. We will keep members informed in the coming months.

Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society Archive Group

Sandra Potter has asked for information for a celebration of the above group:

The Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society was founded in 1829 and is already looking forward to its bicentennial. The Archive Group is appealing for any artefacts, documents or memories from former or current members to add to the archives and/or feature in a commemorative booklet to be published in 2029. If you are able to help, please contact Liz Brown (lizden144@btinternet.com) or Sue Brown (susanbrown902@gmail.com).

Summer Social, July 2025

Linda Hall, Membership Secretary

This year our Summer Social was held at The Walled Garden, Little Plumstead on Thursday 24th July, 6pm-8.30pm.

The walled garden was part of Little Plumstead Hospital from the 1930s onwards. Prior to the sale of the hospital to developers in the 1990s it was a garden of shrubs, flowers and a grassed area used by patients, staff and visitors. A group was formed in 2018, led by Richard and Sally Hobbs, to work on a plan to restore the garden from its neglected state to its former glory – quite a project for volunteers.

The walls are planted with fruit trees most of which date from around the time the garden was created. The area is divided into four sections with two cutting beds containing a range of flowers including many old-fashioned annuals and perennials. An orchard/meadow contains orchids and meadow cranesbill together with medlar, crab apple and quince.



The Walled Garden, photo Linda Hall

The final section is a mixed bed of shrubs and herbaceous planting with a Mediterranean-style area in the southwest corner. There is a fine mixture of familiar and less well-known plants.

NPH were last there for a garden visit in June 2023, when already the hard work of the team of volunteers had made a significant difference.

This year the continued development of the garden was exceptional, particularly the glass house, now full-to-bursting with cuttings and new plants.

We were also fortunate to be taken into the so-called Paupers' Graveyard. There is one communal headstone, but the graveyard has been substantially restored and cleared of weed trees to be a tranquil and respectful place of rest.



The glass house, photo Barbara Williams

Hethersett Plant Fair, August 2025

Barbara Williams, Chair

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of our Plant Fair. Interestingly, although the fair seemed quieter this year, the attendance was similar to previous August fairs, and the income from our plant and refreshment sales actually increased. We did find that our visitors to



Some of the outdoor volunteers, l-r Carl, Ian, Matthew, Jon, Felix, Ahsan

the 2025 fair came steadily throughout the morning, rather than the usual surge at the start – not a bad thing either.

The success of events such as this does not come easily and I asked Kathy Gray how it all began. Our Plant Fairs began around 2003, started by Brenda Reed, with one fair a year, moving to two fairs a year in 2006. For several years, the fairs were held at a variety of venues, settling at Hethersett Village Hall and Field in 2012. At this time, Janet Sleep was Collections Co-ordinator (and about to become Chair) and Nick Broughton was Membership Secretary. They both became involved in the planning and organisation of our fairs and it was at this point, with a stable venue and a sub-committee formed of Janet Sleep, Linda Hall and Kathy Gray that the fairs really began to take off. Since Janet stepped down from her role as Chair last year, Anne Gilbert has taken her place on the sub-committee. According to Kathy, the fairs were always worthwhile in terms of numbers, but "It's certainly true that Janet and Nick have been responsible for elevating the events." But it has to be said that our Plant Fairs are also successful because of the number of volunteers and committee members who contribute in a variety of ways. This is really appreciated, and the committee would like to thank everyone for their contribution. Without the volunteers there simply wouldn't be a plant fair.

Programme round-up

Kathy Gray, Programme Secretary, kathygrayc@gmail.com

The last newsletter of the year and a final 2025 Programme Round-Up to keep you up-to-date with what we have planned for the coming months. You will also find your event card for 2026 – I'd like to think we have some engaging and knowledgeable speakers booked, along with workshops, walks and garden visits. I do hope you will enjoy the programme.

Sunday 23rd November, at 2pm:

AGM at Bawburgh Village Hall, Stocks Hill, Bawburgh, NR9 3LL. As is our usual practice, this is where we address the formal business of Norfolk Plant Heritage by holding our Annual General Meeting. The relevant papers are included with this newsletter. There will be plants for sale and, after the AGM, we will have a chance to chat and catch up with other members. There will also be one of Linda's entertaining quizzes and we plan to offer wine and soft drinks. We kindly ask everyone to bring along a savoury or sweet dish where possible. NPH will provide drinks.

Sunday 18th January, at 2pm:



Tony Kirkham

At the first of our three spring lectures, all at Bawburgh Village Hall, I am very pleased to say that our speaker will be Tony Kirkham, MBE, VMH. Tony was the Head of the Arboretum, Gardens and Horticultural Services at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew before his retirement. His talk is entitled *My Passion for Remarkable Trees* when he will tell us about his life with trees and some of the amazing trees he has met at home and around the world during the last decade. There will be plants for sale.

Sunday 15th February, at 2pm:

In February we will welcome James Horner, Head Gardener at Benton End – the home of artist and gardener Cedric Morris. A number of us were able to visit the house and garden



Benton End Garden, June 2025, photo ©David King

earlier this year but those who went were aware that the garden is far from finished. So, today, we have the chance to hear from James about the plans for the future with a talk entitled *Reviving Cedric Morris's Garden*. There will be plants for sale.

Dahlias, Plant Fair August 2025, photos ©David King

Sunday 15th March, at 2pm:

For our third spring lecture, Advolly Richmond, garden writer, historian and television presenter will be our speaker. Many of you may have seen her as a presenter on *Gardeners' World*. Her lecture is entitled *A Short History of Flowers* and is about the stories that make our gardens. Advolly has written a book of the same name and will be bringing copies to sell.



Advolly Richmond

So...something a bit different this time. There will be plants for sale.

Sunday 12th April, from 11am:

Another of our day long Galas. This time we will be welcoming Keith Wiley – the creator of that wonderful Devon garden, Wildside.



Photo ©Wildside Garden

With a talk entitled *Spring at Wildside* Keith will talk about the massive reimagining of the landscape in the garden which provides opportunities to grow and see plants in new and unexpected ways. Keith will concentrate on spring bulbs, especially erythroniums. We will also welcome John Grimshaw who is a well-known botanist, author and former director of the Yorkshire Arboretum. He is currently the Editor-in-Chief of *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* and his talk is entitled *Rites of Spring* - a look at the pains and pleasures of gardening in the spring. There will be plants for sale from Twelve Nunns Nursery. See the enclosed letter for further details and how to book for what promises to be a very special day.



John Grimshaw

As ever, I look forward to seeing you over the coming months.

Happy Gardening.

**Plants are our passion
but people make us successful -
our thanks to all who help and support us.**

Norfolk Plant Heritage

www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk

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