



## Spring Newsletter 2026

### Editorial

Barbara Williams, Chair, b\_williams15@hotmail.com

What a winter it has been, with some areas of the UK apparently having had six months' worth of rainfall in the first six weeks of 2026. So, with the even more unpredictable weather that we now experience, I found myself wandering, in the snows of January, into the garden to check for surprises or disasters or both. I was first greeted by *Lewisia cotyledon* hybr. flowering away on January 6th, purchased from Janet Sleep at one of our plant fairs, and although hardy it seemed a joyful surprise in flower, as it was, in January.



*Lewisia cotyledon* hybr.

Some of the snowdrops had come early we had the beginnings in November, and *Galanthus* 'Wasp' arrived as early as December, along with *Galanthus* 'Trumps', while others stayed firmly underground until January. A real favourite for me, perhaps because it was just about the only thing which flowered in our garden for our first winter in Norwich, is *Galanthus flore pleno*, shown here on February 9th.



*Galanthus flore pleno*



*Galanthus* 'Primrose Warburg'

I felt certain *Galanthus* 'Primrose Warburg', purchased at East Ruston last year, would not reappear, it seemed so delicate, and yet it did, so an agreeable surprise...

The *Dicksonia antarctica*, removed from the long-term confines of a pot and planted out in September, is well wrapped up and is likely to make it through, but it is less certain that the *Cyathea cooperi* and *Cyathea tomentosissima* will be as fortunate, even though they have now survived two winters and are

well wrapped up in the greenhouse. Last year's fronds are definitely gone but I think there is evidence of new growth under the half-mile of hessian used to protect them. Losing them would definitely be in the category of disaster so I wait for warmer weather when I can be certain one way or the other.



*Dicksonia antarctica*, in its winter coat, protected by snowdrops

But much seems as it should be after what may still turn out to be a warmer than average winter, but which has on a number of occasions seemed more like a proper winter.

(All photos in this article taken by Barbara Williams)

### Membership Matters

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

Mrs Karen Smith (Hevingham), Mr Kevin Slezacek & Nicky Russell (Thetford), Mrs Angela Henson (Poringland), Miss Sandra Potter (Harleston) and Mrs Sarah Rix (Middleton, King's Lynn) who has rejoined.

Our membership now totals 203.

### Obituary, Brenda Reed 1938-2025

Lesley Cunneen writes here in tribute to Brenda, who was a key figure in NPH and Plant Heritage nationally for many years:

Brenda Reed worked as a senior secretary at Norwich Union, lived with her husband Brian at Buxton and even before retirement was a committed volunteer, involved in numerous charities. I first knew Brenda through the Hardy Plant Society as part of team working on a floral stand for Chelsea 2006. At the same time, she was actively involved with Norfolk Plant Heritage, where from 2003-11 she represented the group on the National Council which brought together representatives from every group in the country.

In 2007 Brenda took over the important role of Norfolk Group Secretary and plant fair organiser. Here she adopted

an innovative approach, trialling differing locations for plant fairs including the now permanent Hethersett site and organising a highly successful Dublin holiday. In 2010 she announced Norfolk was hosting the annual Plant Heritage AGM and plant exchange in 2014; at the following meeting the group discovered it was participating in the Sandringham Show and the Norfolk Show, in rapid succession. Brenda retired from the NPH committee in 2011 after eight whirlwind years but continued volunteering for other charities. She lives on in a delicate chrysanthemum, 'Buxton Ruby' which she discovered in her Buxton garden.



*Chrysanthemum 'Buxton Ruby'*  
© Hardy Plant Society

### Plant Heritage goes to Japan

As many of you know, Daniel Myhill holds the PH National Collection of *Rosa persica* hybrids. Here he writes about a recent visit to a conference in Japan to represent the collection, and the conservation work of Plant Heritage:

I was truly honoured to be invited by the *World Federation of Rose Societies* to give a talk last May 2025, on my National Collection of *Rosa persica* hybrids at the 20th World Rose Convention in Fukuyama, Japan. I am very grateful for the grant provided by Norfolk Plant Heritage to support my attendance at the convention and extol all things Plant Heritage and persica roses! To summarise the trip and the convention in a just a few words – it was truly awe-inspiring.

The convention was located in Fukuyama, "The City of a Million Roses". From the tragedy of WWII, the city planted a thousand roses as a symbol of peace. This has since grown to a million roses planted in public parks, along the streets, in schools and gardens across the city. A rose is also given to every child when they start school. Roses run deep in the culture of Fukuyama, and across wider Japan. Therefore, it was a real privilege to explain what the Plant Heritage National Collection scheme is and demonstrate the importance of conserving *Rosa persica* hybrids, which are relatively unknown in Japan, and indeed across much of the world.

My presentation provided a potted history on National Plant Collections followed by the background on the development of *Rosa persica* hybrids. I showcased the many different cultivars in the collection, which now consists of 81 hybrids, having been formally awarded National Collection status in 2022. I am very thankful for all the rose breeders who have supported, and continue to support, my endeavours.



Daniel Myhill at the conference

Other horticultural highlights from the trip were visits to some exceptional Japanese gardens, including Yuushien Garden, the Adachi Museum of Art, Hiroshima Botanical Garden, Gifu World Rose Garden, Tottori Hanakairo Flower Park and Shukkeien Garden, Hiroshima. The mastery of Japanese gardening is inspirational – I have definitely come home with a hankering for pines and more acers! For those who have been to Japan, I'm sure you would agree with me on the beauty and hospitality of the country. For those who haven't been, I would say go.

And finally... as many of you know, I joined David Austin Roses in January as Senior Head of Breeding. This to me is another great honour to follow in the footsteps of David Austin Snr and to work with Carl Bennett, Hybridist and Breeding Manager, in breeding the finest English Roses, a journey that will certainly be a lifetime's work and passion. Rest assured that *Rosa persica* will remain a personal joy, as I continue to curate the collection. To that end, I am also pleased to be chairing a new RHS AGM trial at Wisley of *Rosa persica* hybrids, with over 60 different persicas having been planted. The trial runs through to 2028, so be sure to check it out at Wisley when you next visit.

### Logan Botanic Garden

Linda Hall, Membership Secretary

In September, I visited Logan Botanic Garden in Dumfries and Galloway – 15 acres of rare plant treasures from South and Central America, Southern Africa and Australasia.

Situated at the southwestern tip of Scotland the garden enjoys maximum benefit from the warm Gulf Stream which permits an array of over 5,000 different species of trees, shrubs, herbs and bulbs from temperate regions of the world. It is idyllic to walk through groves of eucalyptus, bamboo and palm trees or stand in the shade of the giant gunnera.

The gardens also have National Plant Collections of *Cianthus*, *Sutherlandia*, *Griselinia spp.*, *Gunnera*, and *Leptospermum*.

The garden also protects some critically endangered plants, for example *Rhododendron formosum* var. *formosum*.



*Rhododendron formosum* var. *formosum*, photo Linda Hall

The Walled Garden, sheltered by walls which are fifteen feet high, including a fragment of medieval Castle Balzieland, encloses water gardens, groves of tree ferns and palms, a rock gully, terraces and the world's first peat walled garden.

The Woodland Garden has been developed from open fields in the last 40 years. The woodland slopes showcase the Gunnera Bog and Tasmanian Creek. Maturing woodland glades evoke parts of New Zealand, Chile and New South Wales in Australia.

Logan Conservatory, a three-zone glasshouse beside the Walled Garden, is planted with an array of exotic species that need this extra protection. Air source heat pumps help to keep the glasshouse at the right temperature while reducing carbon emissions. They use less power and are less polluting than gas boilers, drawing heat from the outside like an air conditioner in reverse, even when conditions are freezing.

On the Logan website ([www.rbge.org.uk](http://www.rbge.org.uk)) is two-minute video exploring the gardens which I highly recommend.

### Valuing our Rarer Plants

Richard Hobbs muses here on how a visit to Wisley reminded him of the importance of cultivating plants which are harder to grow:

I've visited the RHS gardens at Wisley several times over recent years. The new science and research buildings are surrounded by plantings in the modern manner that is much loved by landscape architects. You will see 58 plants of *Pinus mugo*, over 80 of *Euphorbia martinii* 'Ascot Rainbow' and far too many miscanthus to count. They are all good plants but so little variation.

On our most recent visit we followed a different route and went to the original arboretum with older established plantings by the river ending up by the Stone Pine Café and what a delight it was.



View from the Stone Pine Café, photo Sally Ward

We saw a wonderfully wide range of plants in just a few minutes. There was *Pinus x holfordiana* with 30cm long cones which was magnificent. There was also *Corylus avellana* 'Scooter' - a dwarf form (to 1.5m) of the twisted hazel. E A Bowles referred to it as 'Harry Lauder's walking stick' and grew it in the part of the garden he called "the Lunatic Asylum". We also saw *Ilex verticillata* 'Winter Gold', the deciduous holly covered in bright golden berries, the pretty early flowering *Rhododendron dauricum* 'Hokkaido' and *Salix irrorata* with blue stems covered by a white bloom.

I was reminded that "variety is the spice of life". It is also what Plant Heritage is all about. In the wild all plants vary, if they didn't evolution could not work. The plants I've mentioned are too big for most gardens but we have a huge range of plants to grow thanks to collections from the wild, chance seedlings and plant breeders. In the past, plants were selected simply on their beauty but now factors such as ease of propagation and how many plants you can get in a lorry are driving factors.

We need to look after the many older cultivars, but this cannot be the sole responsibility of National Collection holders. We all need to do our bit by growing some of the less common and more unusual plants to make sure these continue in cultivation. Perhaps we should all follow Bowles' example and have a "Lunatic Asylum" full of oddities and waifs and strays!

## Read all about it

### Norfolk Plant Heritage Annual Meeting, 23/11/2025

Members will notice that our meeting in November is now called the Annual Meeting; Central Office have updated the terms of governance and local associations now have more flexibility about how their local annual meetings are run. The full, formal AGM will be held centrally by Plant Heritage as the overarching charity. There were oral reports from the Chair, Barbara Williams, the Secretary, Nicola Cooke and the Collections Co-ordinator, Anne Ashington. Jon Pickering delivered the Treasurer's Report.

Jon reported that our finances remain stable and our income this year shows a slight increase on last year. However, all our costs have also risen and continue to do so. Jon reported that our main sources of income continue to come from the plant fairs, the gala and from plant sales, using plants propagated by members. Our major outgoings are for venue hire, parking hire, the hire of Hethersett Hall and Field and speakers' fees and expenses, all of which are increasing. This year, as part of our wider work for the charity, we also supported our national collections to the tune of £1500 and awarded the school bursary of £500. Our current reserves total £17000, and most of this is already committed spending to fund our full range of activities.

Elections to our committee were held and the following members were re-elected: Barbara Williams (Chair) Ian Roope (Vice-Chair, Jon Pickering (Treasurer) Nicola Cooke (Secretary) Anne Ashington (Collections Co-ordinator) Kathy Gray (Programme Secretary) Linda Hall (Membership Secretary) Committee Members – Anne Gilbert, Carl Harder, Matthew Ayling and Jon Kelly.

### Jan Paulger Young Gardeners' Award

Every year, as part of our educational brief with Plant Heritage, we award a bursary of £500 to a Norfolk primary school, for a project to develop interest in gardening and plants. Schools are invited to write a short bid outlining what the project is, and what it will cost. The bids are then judged by Kathy Gray and Brian Ellis. This year, the bursary was won by North Elmham Church of England Primary Academy.



Kathy Gray, with pupils from the winning school, photo Barbara Williams

The bid was described by Kathy as "...excellent, with carefully costed ideas for practical items." Kathy Gray, Barbara Williams and Jon Pickering were welcomed by the Headteacher Carol Jeary, KS1 and 2 Teacher Kelly Hunter, who wrote the bid and Teaching Assistant Tracey Boggis, who supports the gardening club. We were also delighted to meet some of the pupils who take part. We hope we'll be invited back to see the garden in progress!

## RHS Sandringham Flower Show 2026

Preparations continue for RHS Sandringham. We have a list of volunteers as well as committee members who are helping at the show. We have visited the participating PH National Collection Holders, some of whom will be attending the show with us. The Committee has agreed the provisional sum of £5000 to support our exhibit. It is still not too late to volunteer, so if you would enjoy being part of this brilliant opportunity, please let Carl Harder know – he is chairing the sub-committee. The three other members of the sub-committee are Barbara Williams, Anne Ashington and Ian Rooft.

## Programme round-up

Kathy Gray, Programme Secretary, [kathygrayc@gmail.com](mailto:kathygrayc@gmail.com)

I'm pleased to say that there is quite a lot to include in this Programme Round-Up – I do hope there will be events that will appeal to you and, as always, look forward to seeing you in the coming months.

### Sunday 12th April from 11am

Another of our day long Galas – if you haven't already booked, there are still some tickets available. We will be welcoming Keith Wiley the creator of that wonderful Devon garden, Wildside. 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 and Daisy Roots. Go to the website – [www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk](http://www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk) for further details and booking form.



Seabrights and cowslips, photo John Grimshaw

### Wednesday 22nd April from 10am

A visit to the gardens of Sandringham House, PE35 6AB for a guided tour with Jack Lindfield, Head Gardener; there will be an emphasis on seeing the Magnolias which will, hopefully, be in bloom. Please see the enclosed letter for more details and the timeline for applying to join the visit.



Head Gardener Jack Lindfield photo Barbara Williams

### Sunday 3rd May 10am to 1pm

Plant Fair at Hethersett Village Hall and field, NR9 3JJ. In the Hall we have Pottertons Nursery, Norfolk Bonsai and Botanico. There will, of course, also be 20 plus stalls on the field, including our own stand. Don't forget to bring cash for buying that special plant or two as not all stallholders can accept cards. Once again, the Plant Doctor will be in attendance and refreshments will be served. Any donations

Cyclamen coum, photo Barbara Williams

of cakes will be gratefully received. Included with this Newsletter are flyers advertising the Plant Fair for you to display in your car etc. Thank you.

### Tuesday 26th May 2.00pm

Another opportunity to join one of Simon Harrap's popular wild flower walks. This time, we will be visiting Ashwellthorpe Lower Wood Wildlife Trust Reserve, NR16 1HB. An interesting reserve and the place where ash dieback was first found. Please see the enclosed letter for further details and booking form.



Hornbeam catkins, photo Simon Harrap

### Sunday 7th June 2.00 - 5.00pm

A visit to the garden of Richard and Katie Darby at Vicarage House, Great Hockham, Thetford, IP24 1PE. This visit is instead of the one originally planned to Yeoman's Cottage which will now take place in August. Vicarage House Garden extends to six acres and has been developed over the last 35 years. There are a number of different areas of interest including a walled garden, gravel garden, sunken garden and cottage style long borders. Something for us all. The charge per person is £15 and this includes refreshments. The photo was taken by Will Twentyman, Head Gardener, who will be there for our visit.



Vicarage House Garden

### Thursday 18th June 6.00 - 8.30pm

Summer Social at the Walled Garden, Little Plumstead, NR13 5FA. Please see enclosed letter for further details.

### Thursday 9th July 10.00 - 1.00pm

Richard Hobbs's workshop this year is entitled *Can't See the Wood for the Trees* and is a tree identification workshop. This will take place at Blacksmiths Cottage Nursery, Langmere Road, Langmere, Dickleborough, IP21 4QA. Please see the enclosed letter for further details.

### Wednesday 22nd - Sunday 26th July

RHS Sandringham Flower Show where we, Norfolk Plant Heritage, have a stand. Wednesday to Saturday 10am to 6pm, Sunday 10am to 5pm

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](http://www.norfolkplantheritage.org.uk)

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