

Keeping in Touch, December 2020

Hello again and season's greetings to you all. Lots of information in this edition and a few photos to brighten up your dark December day.

PLANS TO KEEP EVERYONE IN TOUCH DURING 2021

I don't think any of us quite expected this COVID situation to go on as long as it has, and there is little promise of things easing before spring, if then. So, we've come up with 3 ways of keeping you all engaged and in touch. They are:

1. Zoom Talks in 2021

As we can't meet in person for now, Tricia Fraser has been hard at work booking speakers willing to give talks via Zoom. The first three of these Zoom talks are:

January 6th, 7.30 pm. Razvan Chisu will give his talk on "Fifty Shades of Green – Versatile Foliage Plants and the Diversity of Leaves".

February 3rd, 7.30pm. Hilary Hutson will give her latest talk on "Sheffield Botanical Gardens – Twelve Months of Colour".

March 3rd, 7.30pm. Don Witton will give the talk he had prepared for this year's Lecture Day, "The Creation and Evolution of the English Herbaceous Border".

These talks replace the ones listed in the programme you were sent with your newsletter.

Tricia will be contacting our other 2021 speakers about Zoom talks and booking a replacement zoom speaker if necessary. It may be sometime before we can return to normal meetings.

Don't worry if you've not used Zoom before. All members with an email address will be sent an invite to the meeting, which will take place at the usual time of the first Wednesday of the month at 7:30. You don't have to download anything, pay for anything or take a degree in computing to access the Zoom talks. But you will need a smart phone, PC or laptop (with speakers or headphones) which has a stable internet connection. Detailed instructions to follow.

2. Keeping In Touch (KIT) emails

Until September I was sending out a weekly KIT email, but from January it will be monthly, about 2 weeks after our meeting. This means that we can include a piece about the most recent Zoom talk for those members unable to attend or without the technology.

For those members who do not have access to email or the internet, our membership secretary Judy Coulson will post a paper copy of the KIT, but I'm afraid it will be text only.

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

We need some volunteers to write our Zoom talks up. We are not asking for a 2000 word essay, writing fit for a Booker Prize or great repartis. Just a few paragraphs giving a brief summary of content and any gems of advice. We'll feature this each month in the KIT. Volunteers, let me tonifrascina@outlook.com know if you can cover one or more of the talks asap.

3. Buddy Scheme

Many of you will be missing the social side of our meetings and trips etc. For those who wish to participate, Barbara Dygnas has suggested that we develop a buddy scheme. Pairing members up who live close to one another so they could chat over the phone during periods of lockdown, or visit each others gardens when rules permit. If you are interested in participating please phone or email Barbara (bcdygnas@gmail.com Tel: 07814456148).

MAY PLANT SALE

The Committee met in November and discussed the likelihood of being able to run the plant sale next May. Unfortunately without a crystal ball it is impossible to know the answer to this question and there are many variables.

- All Sheffield City Council buildings are out of use at the moment including the Dorothy Fox Centre. There is no indication of when this might change, I suspect it will be once the risks to the public has reduced significantly.
- It has been suggested that we might run a one day outdoor event (on the grass outside the DFC), but SCC have made it clear any such proposal would have to be accompanied by a fully worked out risk assessment. This would need to include queue management, one way systems, hygiene relating to customers picking up plant pots to examine goods, protection of our helpers etc. As plant sale organiser I have to admit to finding this somewhat daunting.
- Growers having to second guess how much to grow and probably erring on the cautious side
- Whether our third party insurance (supplied through our membership of the national HPS) would cover us in the circumstances.

Following our discussion, the Committee decided that:

- we should provisionally book the DFC anyway
- if permitted, we would probably only run a one day event
- the Committee will meet in early March, when there might be more clarity, and we will reconsider the options make a decision and let everyone know

Sorry this isn't more definitive, but I'm not sure what else we can do in the circumstances. If you have any other ideas, feel free to let me know.

COACH TRIP ASHWOOD NURSERIES MARCH 2021

Given the current situation the Committee agreed to cancel the proposed Ashwood trip which had already been moved to March 2021. We hope to rebook at some stage but for now, we are not running any coach trips.

GARDEN SCULPTURE

Barbara Dygnas commissioned a piece from her son-in-law artist metalworker. If you look on his website <https://johnmallett.co.uk/> you'll see one which involves foxgloves, the photo was taken in Barbara's garden.

YOUR PHOTOS

Interest in the garden isn't of course restricted to flowers, even for us hardy planters. Berries are really important for the winter garden.

Janet Boulding sent in a couple of hollies, *Ilex aquifolium* 'Handsworth Silver' in front of *I. aquifolium* 'Jan van Tol'. Janet has observed that the berries are eaten in sequence each year. The JVT (where have I heard that before??) was planted especially for berries at Christmas, but Janet says they never last that long as blackbirds devour them first.



Janet's daughter, in Surrey, inherited three apple trees which all bear mistletoe. Janet reckons there will soon be more mistletoe than tree! Two of the trees have the female form and one, the male. Janet has tried for years to get it to grow on any number of hosts in her garden but all of efforts have been in vain. Anyone know the secret to success?



There is still some flower power in your gardens, this is from Judy Coulson



It's an HPS conservation plant *Chrysanthemum* 'Dulwich Pink'. Norwell Nursery's website sings the praises of this plant. Apparently Andrew Ward had a letter from a customer who described it as '1m across and a dome of flowers for two months'.

David Andrews has Hesperantha 'Pink Princess' still in flower



I reckon a lot of plants haven't realised its winter. When I looked around my garden the other day, I noticed Crocosmia 'Emily Mackenzie' still showing colour along with an alpine Campanula and Penstemon 'Firebird' still has flowers on the tips. This plant has been in flower since July. I hate to say this but I'm almost sick of it! I'm sure it will collapse from sheer exhaustion rather than cold or wet, so I've got several insurance cuttings in the cold frame.

As the year draws to a close, here's a pic to raise the spirits. David Andrews took this at Temple Newsom, pelargoniums growing up strings.



Janet and Richard Lister have been taking drastic action recently. Here's a before and after of their much loved monkey puzzle tree. Sadly it was too tall, close to the house and had been struck by lightning causing a lot of damage. What a space it leaves behind.



Whatever 2021 brings, we all know that at least as gardeners we have plenty to look forward to; plant catalogues to browse, watching our bulbs poke their heads above ground, and HPS Zoom talks.

Until then, whatever you are doing, mixing or not, have a healthy and enjoyable festive season. See you in 2021 and don't forget to send your January contributions to tonifascina@shu.ac.uk by Saturday 10th Jan.

Warmest Christmas Wishes, Toni