

Keeping in Touch, September 6th 2020

Hello again,

As our gardens start to run out of steam I suspect I'll receive less photos, so I've decided pause the weekly KITS after the 19th Sept (get your final 2020 pics in to tonifrascina@outlook.com before 18th Sept hint, hint), then we've got the usual October Newsletter to look forward to. After that, I'll move to a monthly newsletter. So you can still send me photos of late season colour and activity and I'll feature them in November.

KITBITS

- **Ordering seeds** – I expect some of you already know this company, but I've just discovered a seed supplier called Jelitto. They are based in Germany, have a huge range of very interesting seeds, a downloadable catalogue containing great advice and I have it on authority that the seed germination rate is really good. They are mainly focused on commercial growers, but sell seeds in small quantities (generally enough for 50 plants). They aren't cheap, but the catalogue is worth a browse for the info alone www.jelitto.com.
- **Eucomis** – we have a couple of photos of lovely specimens below, but I have a question. Does anyone know what could stop them from flowering? – mine have plenty of leaf, but only E. 'Sparkling Burgudy' has produced a flower, the E. autumnalis are all blind.
- **Windfall apples** – Barbara Dygnas asks if anyone (preferably Sheffield based) can supply her with any of these. COVID is preventing her from accessing her usual supply. She's going to make apple, date and cinnamon jam. Free jar to any donors.

PHOTOS FROM OUR GARDENS

Don Witton sent in a number of pics demonstrating that there is still plenty of colour on his patch at this time of year.

He bought these two *Sanguisorbas* from Avondale nursery down near Coventry which has the National Collection. First *S. obtusa* 'Good Form'. He says he doesn't know what the 'Not So Good Form' looks like but this plant has wonderful dangling pink inflorescences. It's currently growing into a big sprawling clump which needs staking and may soon outgrow its allowed space.



Then *S. canadensis* which Don points out, tells us loud and clear that these plants come from N America. The white inflorescences are bolt upright and the highest are approaching prairie sized 8ft tall! I have this plant in my own garden, but it hasn't reached those lofty heights.



Don grows *Eucomis* in different patio pots. He's never grown these South African bulbs in the garden as he doesn't think they are fully hardy up north. 'Every year at the end of October I cut away all the top growth and put them under the bench of a cold unheated greenhouse. They can cope with minus temperatures so long as they are dry.'



E. bicolor (left), white flowered and much smaller *E. autumnalis* (right) and dark *E. comosa* Sparkling Burgundy still in bud in the centre.

Don reckons that Hylotelephium (Sedum) Lajos is the best variegated form he's come across being very handsome for months before the flowers (white in bud ageing to pale pink) appear. He bought it from Breezy Knees on one of the few occasions when he'd seen a plant in the garden he liked and they actually had one for sale in the nursery. This plant has had the Chelsea Chop, consequently he has about a dozen cuttings with roots in a glass of water if anyone wants one. donthardyeuphorbias@btopenworld.com

From interesting individual flowers of Crocosmia from Tricia Fraser last week, to a mass of Crocosmia flowers looking wonderful in nursery trays on Don's drive.

Bottom right – C. 'George Davidson', top right C. 'Emberglow', centre C. 'Harlequin', top left C. 'Severn Sunrise'. C. 'Lucifer' and C. 'Gerbe D'Or' have finished flowering.



Tricia Fraser sent in this intriguing mix of three Eucomis, They are E. 'Zulu Flame' (back left) which is the largest Eucomis she has, E. 'Sparkling Burgundy' back right and E. 'Cherry Blossom' at the front.



Now from the sublime to the unfinished. This is my, at the moment, rather unsightly front area. We've had to have some new stormwater drainage put in, shored up a wall at the bottom of a slope and replaced a very ugly breeze block wall at the top of the slope in front of the house. Because access is tight and it's so sloped, everything has been done by hand. Not my hand I hasten to add! Buckets full of rubble have been carried down the slope to a skip, and buckets full of stone, gravel and hard core up the hill by a gang of young cheery fellows.



Fortunately in the main garden I do have some colour to look at. This is *Hedychium densiflorum* 'Assam Orange', bought some years ago from Sue Stockdale at one of our sales. A ginger lily, the flower spikes smell quite strongly of ginger, more so just before they flower. They seem to deal with dry cold pretty well, so I treat them very much like Don treats his *Eucomis* in winter. The pots are full to bursting though so I'm going to split and try a few bits in various well drained areas of the garden. Anyone got any experience of planting these in open ground?



I don't have many plants which flower in that 'special' yellow best associated with weeds such as dandelions, sowthistle and ragwort, it just doesn't float my boat. So why I bought this one, I'm not entirely sure. Its Helium 'Bressingham Gold', from Andrew Ward. About 4 foot high, this one has been a bit battered by recent windy weather, but considering it went in last November as a little plant in a 9cm pot it's done well.....shame it looks like the distant cousin of Weedy McWeedy. A Sanguisorba canadensis in the background.



See you next week for the penultimate weekly edition, Toni