

The University of Oxford

104

Botanic Garden & Arboretum

Friends'
newsletter

Spring/
Summer 2020



From the Editor

By Chris Thorogood



© Ian Wallman

Visitors engaging with our carnivorous plants

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Front cover image: shiny-leaf yellowhorn, *Xanthoceras sorbifolium*

We rely on plants in our everyday lives, from the oxygen in the air we breathe, to the food we eat and even the clothes we wear. And yet society is far more attuned to seeing animals than we are plants. This is a phenomenon that has been described as 'plant blindness'. We are very conscious of plant blindness at Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, and the many ways in which we can tackle it in our mission to *share the scientific wonder of plants with the world*. From the education and engagement events we deliver, to the interpretation of our internationally important collections, building awareness about the importance of plants is at the heart of what we do. In this edition you will read about the work we are doing to improve and promote our plant collections to connect them to people. Our Public Education Programme now includes activities such as tree climbing and foraging at the Arboretum, which are effective in engaging younger audiences with the natural heritage of the site. Meanwhile we are extending and augmenting our collections and interpretation to explain the significant historic and literary heritage of the Garden.

In order to engage our public with these collections and interpretation, we need to understand who visits our sites and online spaces, and who is *not* visiting. With the help of interactive 'kiosks' in our Welcome Centres, we gathered data from people visiting our sites last summer. This snapshot of our visitor profile tells us that 42% of visitors to the Arboretum were 'first time

visitors', meanwhile 72% of those visiting the Garden had never been before. We have a slight female gender bias (56%) at the Garden where we engage with more 16-24 year olds (21% of our total demographic) compared with the Arboretum where just 6% of people fall into this category, however 26% of people are 35-44. These data can now inform our marketing strategies across the two sites.

Furthermore, research carried out across the GLAM (Gardens, Libraries and Museums) division with focus groups has identified gaps in our audience profile currently - i.e. who we are *not* engaging with today. This work revealed a perception that the Botanic Garden is for those who have a special interest in the collection, as well as being a place to relax. The Arboretum was considered less specialist than the Garden, however there was a lower level of awareness about the site generally. As we take on ambitious plans to develop both our sites, and with our 400th anniversary on the horizon, these insights will enable us to share the message about the importance of plants with new audiences. We are taking bold steps in our journey towards 'curing' plant blindness.

We would like to thank all the Trusts and individual supporters who make the programme possible. If you would like to set up a regular payment towards the Apprenticeship Scheme please contact Dominique on Dominique.cadiou@devoff.ox.ac.uk

From the Director

By Simon Hiscock

Last year OBG received over 200,000 visitors for the first time in its history, with the Garden setting a new visitor record (~165,000) for the third year running. I am sure this is a reflection of our exciting scientific, horticultural and arboricultural offerings presented with engaging and inspiring interpretation. Indeed, 2019 saw the installation of 30 interpretation boards for the newly configured order beds of the taxonomic collection. This was the most significant interpretation project in the Garden's history and provides a major new learning resource for students and visitors, providing accessible insight into the modern DNA-based classification of flowering plants.

May 2019 saw the timely installation of a sculpture celebrating Philip Pullman's 'His Dark Materials' trilogy behind 'Lyra's bench'. This dramatic piece has proved extremely popular, especially with Pullman fans who now have a unique photo opportunity.

2019 ended with the most successful Christmas Fair yet, welcoming over 5,000 visitors to the Garden - nearly 50% of whom were 'first time visitors'. With a larger marquee it was possible to accommodate 43 stalls, 10 more than previous years, increasing the variety of special Christmas gifts available. More food and drink offerings, and more activities in the Garden were also available, along with free tours by volunteer guides, which proved very popular.

So what lies ahead in 2020? The decade of our 400th anniversary began well with the welcome arrival of Mark Brent, the Garden's new Curator and Head of Horticulture. Mark brings with him over 30 years' experience in collections-based and heritage horticulture, having previously worked at Kew, Wakehurst Place, Waddesdon Manor, and most recently at Walmer Castle.

Already Mark and the team are making great progress with the reconfiguration of the Rock Garden to create a Mediterranean landscape reflecting John Sibthorp's botanical expeditions to Greece. Work on the rockery began by returning part of Rose Cottage garden to the Botanic Garden. This meant the removal of a shed and a number of rain water butts; the shed was donated to Restore's allotment and the water butts shared between Restore and the Osney allotments water conservation project. The Rock Garden is just one of a number of exciting projects that you will see develop during 2020, including the Literary Garden and Heritage Borders at the Garden, and the continued replanting of the Serpentine Ride and creation of a Mount Tateyama landscape at the Arboretum.

2020 will also be a year of progress with capital projects. In March we will submit a Phase 1 funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a Visitor and Education Centre at the Arboretum. This

is linked with the Friends' campaign to raise £750,000 for improvements to the path network - we estimate the overall project will cost in the region of £5 million. At the Garden we will continue working with University Estates and external consultants to finalise a feasibility study for the long anticipated and much-needed new glasshouses. On top of all this, preparation for the Garden's 400th anniversary, in 2021, is proceeding apace - more will be revealed in the next newsletter.



The reconfiguration of the Rock Garden this spring



The Horns of Plenty playing at the Christmas Fair

News from the Glasshouses

By Kate Pritchard

Preparations for the 400th anniversary

In 18 months' time on 25th July 2021, the Botanic Garden will celebrate its 400th anniversary and 400 years of Plant Science at Oxford University. It started life as a physic garden, open to visitors by appointment and providing plant material for those studying Medicine at the University and, later, Botany too.

Happily the Garden and its audiences have flourished during its 399 year history. On any given day, the Garden welcomes visitors from around the world, of all ages and interests. From the curious to the committed plant enthusiast, those seeking a green oasis in the city and those in search of superlatives in plant form!

In preparation for the 2021 celebrations, we have been particularly busy in the glasshouses this spring. With help from our volunteers, colleagues in the collections team and the University Parks staff, we have undertaken several horticultural projects.

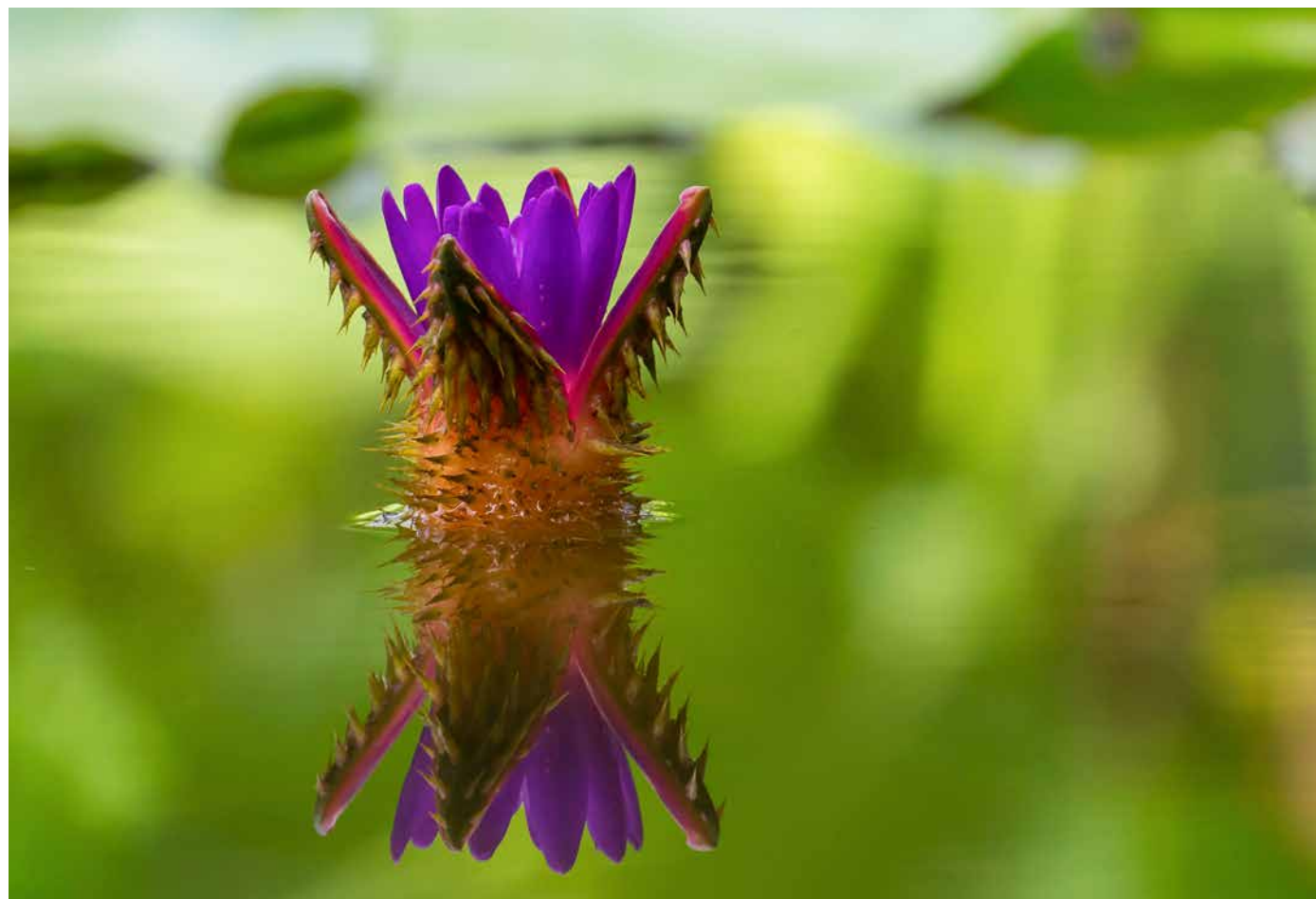
Trials of day-flowering tropical waterlilies have entered their fourth year. This summer we shall be growing *Nymphaea* 'Tina', *N. lotus* and *N. 'Ruby'* alongside other more established waterlilies. We might also be growing the beautiful and barbed *Euryale ferox* this year having found a seedling in the tropical pond in January.

After a wait of more than 20 years, the sub-tropical corridor has had its soil replaced. Fundamental to creating glasshouse displays is providing optimum growing environments with excellent soil conditions.

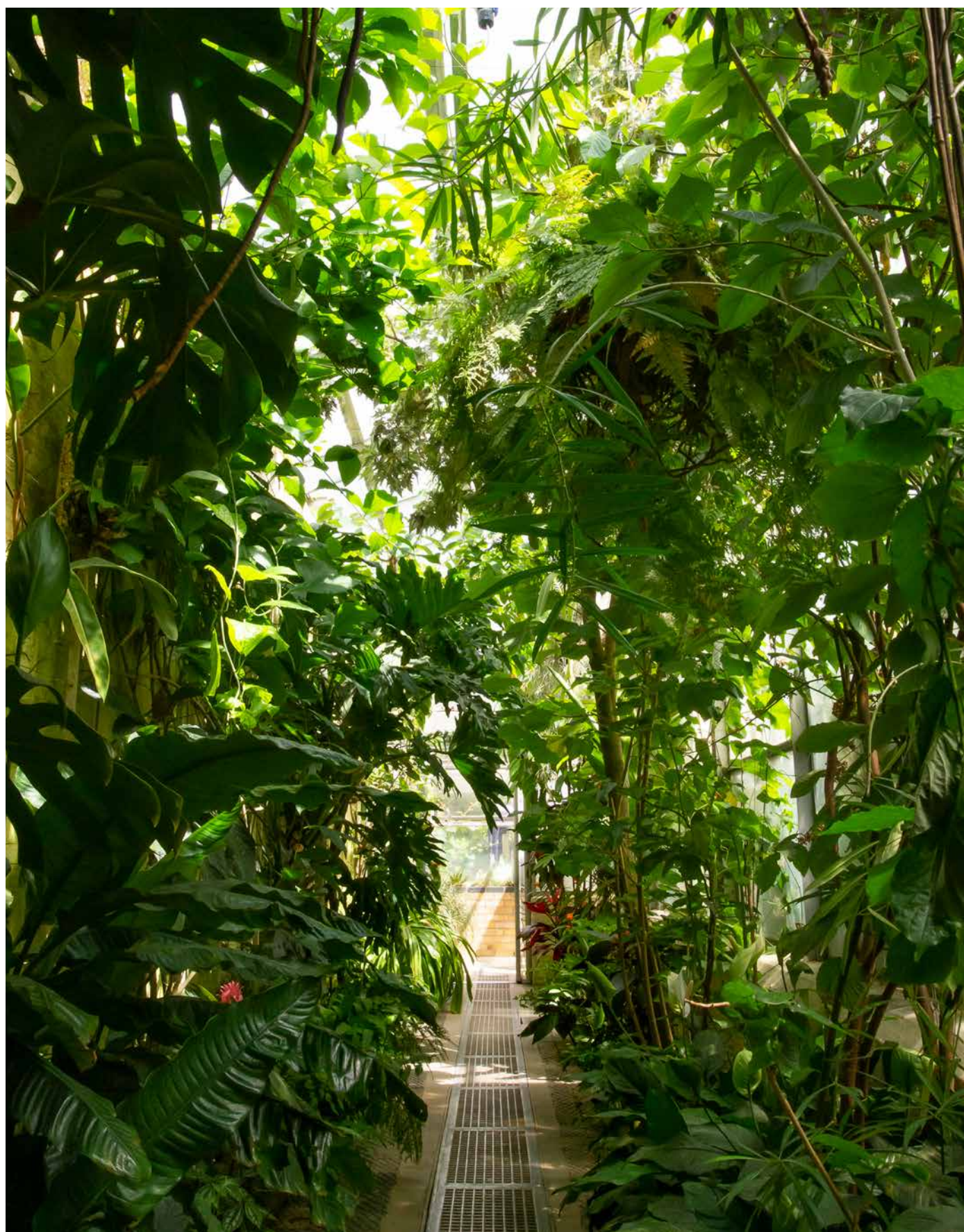
A two-layer substrate, specifically developed for glasshouse display conditions, has been used. We have trialled this elsewhere in the display glasshouses and are delighted with the growth response of the plants. Please do visit the glasshouses to see the results for yourselves.



Nymphaea cultivars trialled in the waterlily house pond



The flower of *Euryale ferox*



The sub-tropical corridor

Arboretum Developments



Serpentine Ride restoration

Restoration of the Serpentine Ride

By Ben Jones

During the winter, work continued on the Serpentine Ride, with a focus on removing the next sections of *Rhododendron ponticum*, ahead of replanting this spring. The restoration of the Serpentine Ride represents one of the many exciting opportunities that the Arboretum provides. The Ride forms part of our heritage landscape and the restoration work is being undertaken for a number of different reasons. Age structure and biosecurity are the two main reasons, but also the

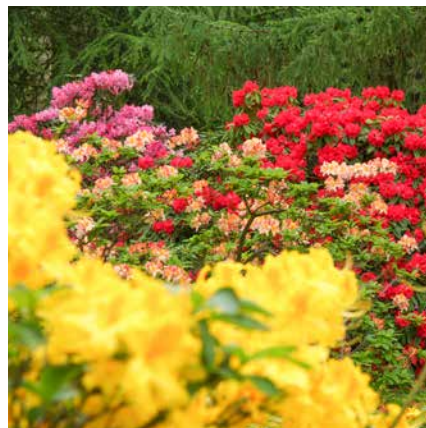
opportunity to enhance the collections by growing horticulturally significant collections of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. These three genera form part of what I refer to as 'signature plants' for the Arboretum, on the basis that they define the landscape, and were widely used alongside conifers when the Harcourt family established the Arboretum.

Apart from the excitement of introducing new plants to the Arboretum, and in particular to the Serpentine Ride,

it's the team of people involved which adds to the restoration work. Working alongside the tree team are our volunteers, without whom such progress would not be possible, and for whose assistance we are very grateful. When I walk along the Serpentine Ride giving a guided tour for example, it is great to be able to speak not just of the exciting plants, which will form the landscape in years to come, but also of the team effort that has gone into this work.



Rhododendron ponticum



Our ambition for the Serpentine Ride



A newly laid hedge at the Arboretum

Arboretum winter projects

By Guy Horwood

The jobs we do at the Arboretum change throughout the year, and the winter months involve some of my favourite ones. At this time of year, we undertake the larger projects as we have a bit of a break from the mowing, brush cutting and weeding, which are important summer tasks to keep the Arboretum looking good.

One of the jobs is focusing a lot more on our managed woodland work. A big part of this is harvesting produce from our coppice, which is utilised at the Arboretum, Botanic Garden and some of the colleges. We are starting this year by running a coppicing course, which gives the public an opportunity to learn about this traditional craft, but also gives the team a head start on the cutting down and processing of the material. We mainly use the hazel on site for hedge-laying which is another traditional craft that is so important in the management of our hedgerows. Hedge-laying is another great opportunity to run a course so that people can get an insight into this dying traditional craft.

A lot of the coppice material goes to the Botanic Garden; they need birch for plant supports and hazel and sweet chestnut for edging material for the Literary Garden. This gives the Hardy team the opportunity to come from the Garden and spend a day working in the woodlands, turning their hand to a bit of coppicing. The Arboretum has always had a good working relationship with the Worcester College Garden team, so every year the team come to join us and, in return for some birch and hazel, they help us for the day.

Another important seasonal job is planting; winter is the best time of year for planting and gives the trees a bit of time to get settled into their new surroundings before the spring. The shade frame is full of exciting plants from all over the world including trees from Japan, North America and other countries. We try to give these trees and shrubs the best chance to grow, and the key to this is not only planting good quality healthy trees, but also to make sure they are safe from pests, such as deer and rabbits. This involves making cages around each tree, which will protect it for at least five years until the tree has matured enough to be self-dependent. This is a very time-consuming task and we will be calling on the help of our volunteers for this process.

News from the Garden

By Mark Brent

Firstly a big thank you to all of my new colleagues at Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum for the unfailingly warm welcome I have received, and to those of you whom I may have met already. Without doubt it is an opportune time to have joined the Botanic Garden with many projects either underway or planned. The dedication, capability and enthusiasm of the Garden team is clear and I look forward to working with everyone concerned to ensure that collectively we maintain high horticultural standards across the site.

In some respects my horticultural journey has brought me somewhere close to home, having spent my early years just across the border in north Buckinghamshire; indeed my entry into the profession was as a young trainee gardener at Waddesdon Manor (just at the time the garden embarked upon its revival). Further time was spent at another Rothschild property, the rather lovely Ascott House and then on to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew for the Kew Diploma course. After nearly 20 years working at Lamorran House, which overlooks the Bay of Falmouth in Cornwall, and another five years by the coast in Kent at Walmer Castle, being landlocked again will take a bit of getting

used to. The River Cherwell will compensate in part, although acclimatising myself to a non-maritime climate might take a while.

The significance and history of Oxford Botanic Garden is clear to me and it is a privilege and responsibility to be a custodian of this wonderful garden. Many of the outside projects in the Hardy plant collection over the next year will focus on emphasising the heritage and legacy of notable individuals such as John Sibthorp. The coming months will see the Rock Garden improved to represent Sibthorp's travels across the eastern Mediterranean and show aspects of the *Flora Graeca* through geographical based plantings. Meanwhile our horticulturalist Ruth has continued to extend the Literary Garden plantings through the winter and developed beds by the Herbarium Room to show the plants originally grown by the Garden's first Keeper, Jacob Bobart the Elder.

I look forward to meeting many of you in due course either in the Botanic Garden or at the various events that take place throughout the year. I would also like to thank you for your valued assistance in supporting the work of my colleagues which enables us to present a wonderful and vibrant plant collection to our visitors.



Mark Brent

News from the Education Team

Nursery Outreach Visits

By Kate Castleden and Emma Williams

This year we were invited to deliver outreach sessions to the University Nurseries.

As part of its commitment to support working parents, Oxford University has a range of childcare services including its five nurseries which are exclusively for the children of University staff. In 2019 the University Nurseries introduced a new STEM programme. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. STEM is important for young children and research shows that there is a positive relationship between early STEM experiences and future success in school. The best way to foster a love of STEM is to encourage curiosity from a young age getting children to question, to explore and to play.

We developed three different sessions for the pre-school children (aged three and four), themed around different topics, which we delivered at each of the nurseries between June and December. The first session was



inspired by *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* by Beatrix Potter. We explored the story using props and puppets while discussing the various fruits, vegetables and salad plants featured in the book. We talked about which ones we like eating, and which ones we thought Peter would like best. We also discussed which other creatures visit Mr MacGregor's garden, and whether they are good for the plants (like ladybirds), or bad for the plants (like snails). We even had a look at some chamomile flowers, both fresh and dried, before smelling the chamomile tea that Peter has at the end of the story to settle his aching tummy!

The next session focussed on exploring the Five Senses. We introduced the topic

by singing 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes' and discussed which parts of our bodies relate to which of our senses. We took in a range of plants and plant materials for the children to investigate, including a selection of members of the cucumber and citrus families, such as the trombone squash and Buddha's hand citron. The rainbow of flowers from the Glasshouse borders provided the springboard for another song 'I can sing a rainbow', and we provided our own percussion by shaking tropical bean pods and rainsticks made from cacti! We also explored a range of tropical plants grown in the Glasshouses, including a giant sugarcane stem and some cotton bolls. We were even able to compare the tastes of various tropical goodies including banana, pineapple and chocolate!

The final session explored the plants associated with Christmas. Firstly we thought about some of the evergreen plants we use to decorate our houses, and played 'spot the difference' with a variety of holly sprigs we'd collected from the Arboretum. Then we looked at a range of evergreen sprigs to decide which would make the best type of Christmas tree. And finally we talked about all the ingredients of Christmas pudding, and had the chance to hold and smell the various spices before adding them all to the pudding bowl before mixing them together and making a Christmas wish.

These sessions went down very well, and feedback we received included:

"The children in our Preschool really enjoyed the activity, engaging well with the story and joining in with the parts that they recognised from reading the story before. The use of the real life props such as the blackberry bush, the salad items like the lettuce, radishes and green beans really captivated the children and they were able to transport themselves into the story setting whilst exploring their sense of smell and the different textures of the plants and other props that were used. Kate was fantastic at incorporating different areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance in everything that she did with the children, using mathematical language relating to size, comparing different vegetables in different ways and talking about the different tastes that each of the foods have too. This also allowed the children to talk about the different foods that they have tasted in the past and share those experiences with their friends too. The story also reinforced the need for our golden rules within our setting as the children were able to see how Peter Rabbit got in to trouble for not listening to what his Mum told him.

All in all, it was a fantastic activity and the children and staff all absolutely loved getting involved.

Thank you so much!"

Education at the Arboretum

By Catherine Vivian

The Arboretum has very strong community roots, and family-friendly craft days and events are always popular with both regular and new families. We held a family-friendly craft session on 30th October, in which visitors could make and take home creations inspired by our colourful autumn display. Our Autumn Fair invited visitors to explore seasonal highlights and discover a programme of related activities such as willow-weaving, nature-themed storytelling and British birds-of-prey displays. The annual Fungi Foray attracted record numbers, with over 100 people coming along to search for a variety of fungi at the Arboretum with the Fungus Survey of Oxfordshire group. These events

take place every year with the generous support of the Friends. Not only do they welcome new visitors through our gates, they also introduce people to our fantastic horticultural collections and research.

This year has seen an expansion of our Public Engagement Programme, with new activities such as tree climbing and foraging. In November we ran a tree climbing course on our black pine (*Pinus nigra*) with experts from the Big Tree Climbing Company. Tree climbing gives people the chance to develop mental and physical skills, build confidence, work as a team and most importantly have fun.

The popular schools programme continued to attract schools from all over Oxfordshire and Berkshire. Classes enjoyed the amazing autumn colours and learned about the changing seasons as we moved into winter, including the differences between evergreen and deciduous trees.

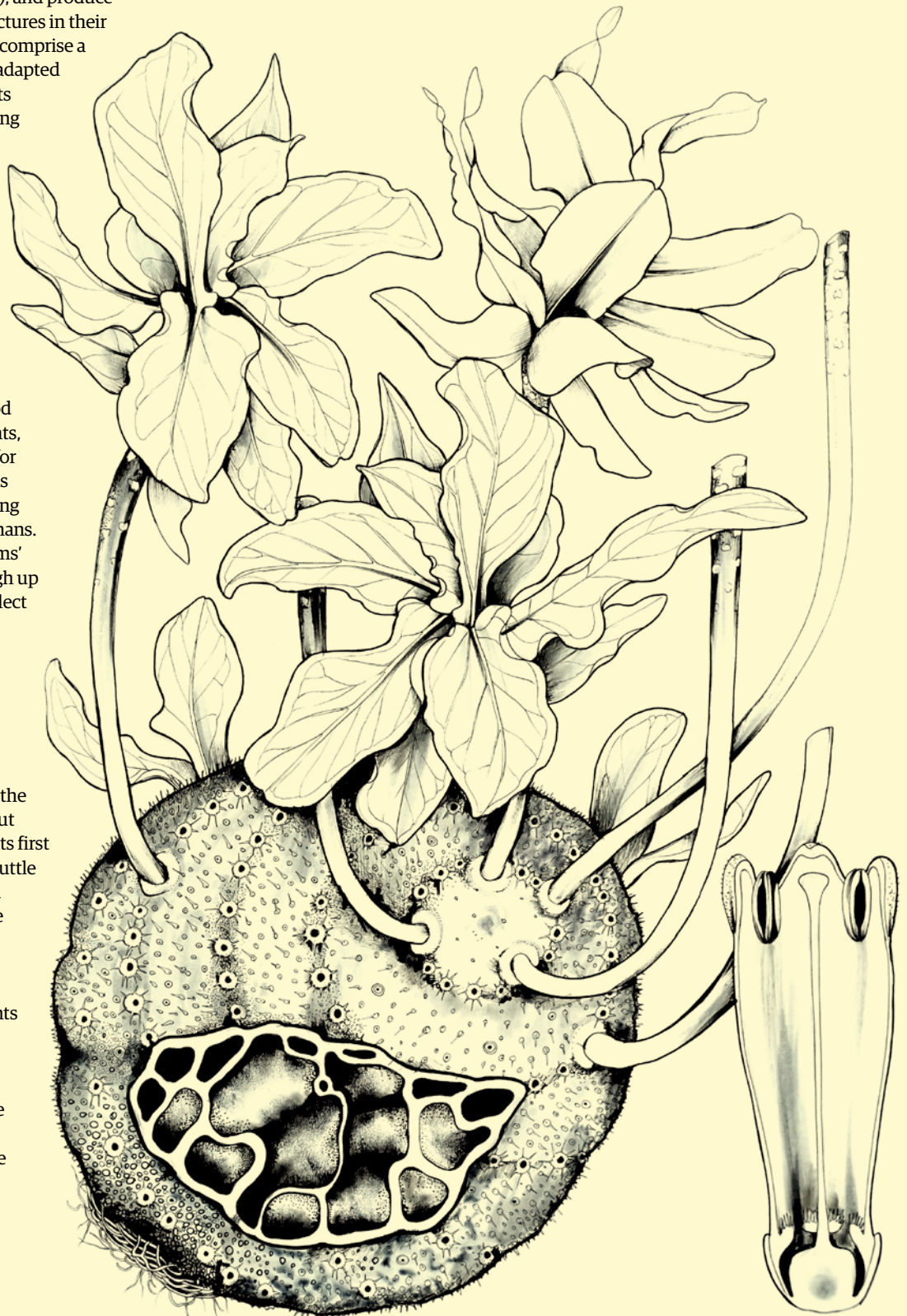
Plants domesticated by ants

By Chris Thorogood

Recently some astounding discoveries have been made in the complex interactions between ants and plants, none more so than in the genus *Squamellaria* which comprises 12 species of so-called 'ant plant' native to Oceania. All are epiphytic (meaning they live perched on tree branches), and produce modified hollow nesting structures in their stems, called domatia, which comprise a labyrinth of hollow passages adapted for habitation by ants. The ants fertilise the plants by defecating inside the domatia and defend them against herbivory by attacking their predators. The symbiosis extends to a 'farming mutualism' in which the ants harvest the ant plants' seeds, plant them beneath tree bark, guard and fertilise them, and defend the seedlings as they mature; they later harvest food rewards produced by the plants, and depend upon the plants for nesting. This can be defined as a form of agriculture, and it long pre-dates any farming by humans. The ants form extensive 'farms' of *Squamellaria* ant plants high up in the forest canopy. They collect seeds from the plants' fruits before they ripen (preventing their removal by birds) and insert them into crevices in the tree bark. A small group of worker ants remains under the bark with them to protect them from being eaten. Once the seedling has a domatium about the size of a thumbnail, with its first entrance hole, ant workers shuttle in and out of the seedling and fertilise it by defecating inside it. This fertilisation process continues throughout the life of the plant. Because young and old *Squamellaria* ant plants are farmed together from the age of a seedling onwards, ants looking for a new home, as well as plants needing to be detected by ants, encounter one another reliably. Sadly the

species illustrated, *Squamellaria major*, is on the verge of extinction, with just 100 individuals or fewer remaining. These exist on large trees standing on cleared land, far apart from one another. Our recent paper on *Squamellaria major*, written in collaboration

with other scientists, seeks to 'put a spotlight' on Fijian rainforests as a place of urgent need for greater conservation focus. You can read more about our recent paper here: <https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ppp3.10072>



Friends' Section

News

From the Friends' Chairman,
Sarah Taylor

Hemlata Bountra

I continue my series of articles about the people who make up the Board and Forum of the Friends, the people who make everything happen.



Hemlata Bountra

Hemlata is arguably the most important person in the Friends, being our Treasurer: she is in charge of the money, which after all is what we exist for. She is uniquely well qualified, being a chartered accountant who has worked in a number of industries, including hospitality, e-commerce and manufacturing but who has more recently specialised in academic institutions, first at Murray Edwards College at The Other Place, then at St Hilda's College just across the river from the Garden, where she is the accountant. That she finds time to do the considerable amount of work involved in running the finances of the Friends as well as holding down a full-time job and being a wife, mother and daughter is a sign of just how efficient and capable she is. On top of all that, she is also the treasurer of Denville Hall, the renowned retirement home for actors. I wonder which are the trickiest to deal with, actors or garden enthusiasts?

For us, she keeps track of money coming in, checks the administrator's workings in the monthly task of claiming direct debits, keeps a strict eye on our expenses, has regular meetings with Garden staff to find out where the money we have raised for them should be allocated (decisions which then have to be ratified at our Board meetings), monitors the paying over of those sums, keeps clear and accurate records of monies received, spent, allocated then given, produces the annual accounts and liaises with our auditors, gives clear presentations at our AGMs of what we have done, using computer slide technology that is way beyond your chairman's capabilities, proposes occasional increases in membership fees, keeps track of cash paid at our biennial plant sale, answers all sorts of queries from Friends: the list is endless.

During the times over the last couple of years that we have had a hiatus in the post of administrator, the bulk of the extra work entailed in 'keeping the show on the road' has landed on Hemlata's shoulders. The Friends quite literally would not have survived without her. She is always measured, sensible, logical and, a commendable trait in a Treasurer, hates extravagance and ruthlessly cross examines all proposals to spend.

As well as all this, Hemlata can often be seen at events, helping out, as for example at last year's Christmas fair when she operated the tombola. She is a true Friend.

Friends' Paths Appeal The 400th Anniversary 'Access for all' at the Arboretum

We launched the appeal at our summer 'An Evening of Delights' party last July, which raised £10,000, then followed up in late November with a direct appeal to all our members. The Friends have been characteristically generous and, so far, we have had donations and pledges from 126 Friends and raised a total of £169,000. Including the party proceeds, we only have £571,000 to go!

We have had enthusiastic feedback on why the paths are needed, with one Friend commenting 'The Harcourt paths appeal is of particular interest to myself and my sister. Last year we remember having a particularly hard time pushing our late father around a small part of the Arboretum in his wheelchair. Dad was his usual uncomplaining self as he was shaken and bounced around. We were exhausted!'

The Arboretum is close to many people's hearts and we are determined to make its beauty and unique living collections accessible

to everyone, whether in wheelchairs, mobility scooters, pushing buggies or even those who are just not as fit as they used to be.

For details on how to donate, please see our website: www.obga.ox.ac.uk/friends-400th-anniversary-appeal.



Shady path at the Arboretum

Events

First Friday of the Month

Coffee Mornings

The Friends' coffee mornings which take place in the Garden and at the Arboretum are on the first Friday of every month (except January and August) and are an opportunity for Friends to get together. See below for the next dates and venues. All Garden coffee mornings begin at 10.30am in the Conservatory followed by a tour at 11.00am. There is no fee and no booking is required, just turn up.

The next dates in the Garden are April 3rd and June 5th. The next dates in the Arboretum are Thursday April 30th and July 3rd (please note the exceptional Thursday!).

Forthcoming events

Friday 1st May, 5.00am to 7.15am

Hail, Hail the First of May

*So, Hail! Hail! The First of May-o!
For it is the first summer's day-o!
Cast your cares and fears away,
Drink to the old horse on the First of May!*

Lyrics: Dave Webber



Join us for the Friends' very special and exclusive event. Experience the Botanic Garden in the beautiful early morning light. Hot drinks and croissants, Morris dancing and of course listening to the choristers sing in the dawn and the bell peal welcoming Spring make this day one of Oxford's most magical moments. One of our very regular May Morning visitors describes the experience:

'Spring starts for me on May Morning: a leisurely 4.30am rise and a gentle stroll through Oxford and the revelry on Magdalen Bridge takes me to the happy haven of the Botanic Garden. Here, a welcoming band of volunteers send a soft aroma of coffee and croissants wafting through the gorgeous greenery as Morris dancers hop and skip; then tinkling bells give way as 6am tolls, heralding Magdalen choir at the top of the Great Tower. All heads turn heavenwards; new sunlight dapples ancient stonework and in the Garden, there is spellbound stillness.' A Friend.

Oxford Botanic Garden by the Rose Lane entrance only

Entry between 5.00 and 5.30am

Cry Havoc, Morris dancers, perform
from 5.15-5.45am

6.00am Magdalen choir sings from Magdalen
College tower followed by bell peal

After singing has finished at about 6.20am,
croissants will be served

- Adults £12.50, guests £16,
children 15 and under, £5
- Hot drinks available and baguettes
for sale from 5.00am
- Ticket includes complimentary
hot drinks and a croissant with
home-made jams
- Bacon and cheese baguettes £2.50,
extra croissants £1.50



Saturday May 23rd
11.00am to 3.00pm

Friends' Giant Plant Sale

Come along to Harcourt Arboretum for our biennial Plant Sale, a wonderful event run by the Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum. Browse plentiful displays of beautiful plants to fill your garden and home. This will include colourful hardy and tender perennials, vegetable and herb plants, shrubs, trees, grasses, ferns and annuals. We will also have a fantastic range of flowering and foliage indoor plants. This is a perfect day out for both beginner gardeners and plant collectors looking for something special, and a great opportunity to explore the Arboretum afterwards.

All plants are donated from a variety of sources - Oxford Botanic Garden, College Head Gardeners, University Parks, local nurseries and of course many generous Friends, all helping to raise money for the Garden and the Arboretum.

Enjoy homemade cakes and bakes from the Friends' Tea Tent and lunch from local vendors selling many delicious types of food.

- This event is free with your Arboretum entry ticket, £5.45 for an adult ticket (£6 with Gift Aid), children under 16 go free with a paying family member.

- Free entry for Friends, annual pass holders, Oxford University and Brookes students and staff and registered disabled. Ample free parking.
- The Arboretum will be open from 10.00am-5.00pm (last entry at 4.15pm), with the Plant Sale open during the hours stated above.
- To volunteer to sort and label plants on Wednesday 20th, Thursday 21st and Friday 22nd or help run stalls on the day (Saturday 23rd) and/or donate cakes or plants, please email Maura Allen at mea@armitstead.com

Sunday 7th June, 2.30pm

Friends' Gardens for Friends

Friends' Gardens for Friends are always very friendly, sociable events and much enjoyed by Friends who visit. It is not intended that the gardens should be a finished product eligible for NGS opening, although those would be welcome, but a garden that reflects your interest in gardening and that you want to share with others. Tea is offered but there are always willing volunteers to provide cakes, make tea and provide extra cups and saucers. I do hope one of you proud gardeners will contact me (Rebecca Mather, rebecca.mather28@gmail.com) about opening your garden in the autumn, spring or next summer!

The visits are only open to Friends and their family and friends and are free. The next visit will be on: **Sunday 7th June, 2.30 - 5.00pm** when Jane Jelley will open her North Oxford garden. It has mixed borders and over 45 fragrant old roses. There is a small formal area with a rose-covered pergola. This is an organic garden and there will be some new planting of native wildflowers.

- Tea and delicious cakes will be available at a small price to raise funds for the Botanic Garden. If you would like to come please email rebecca.mather28@gmail.com, to be given directions.



Jelley garden



Merton Border

Tuesday 23rd June
6.00pm to 8.00pm

Friends' Annual Summer Party

Oxford Botanic Garden

Every year we hold a summer party for the Friends, either at the Garden or the Arboretum, to thank you for supporting us again to raise money and awareness for both sites. We will be back at the Garden this year on the evening of Tuesday 23rd June from 6.00 to 8.00pm. Come and meet our new Garden Curator, Mark Brent, who joined the team this January. Wander the garden in the early evening with a complimentary glass of bubbly and see the Merton and Herbaceous borders in their early summer glory. The volunteer garden guides will be in attendance and scattered around the main garden and glasshouse displays to point out the highlights and to answer questions from the Friends.

Hear all about the ongoing fundraising efforts for new accessible paths at the Arboretum and how they will improve access all year round to the exciting new collections that the Arboretum Curator Ben Jones and his team are building up. Meet other Friends over a glass of sparkling wine and enjoy the wonderful array of canapés and sandwiches made by the Friends' Events Team.

To help us with planning, if you would like to attend please do RSVP either via the website or by mail on the booking form in the newsletter. We are very happy for guests to come along with you to see the delights of the Garden and the benefits of becoming a Friends' member. Due to the popularity of this event, we will be making a small charge to cover the cost of the drinks which has been climbing rather dramatically over the last few years. We know that most members would like to see the maximum amount of funds going into projects in the Garden and Arboretum. The cost will be £5 for a Friend and £10 for a guest.

- Friends £5, guests £10,
children under 16 free

Wednesday 8th July

The Friends' Opera *La Diavolessa* (The She-Devil)

By Baldassare Galuppi

Sung in English by
New Chamber Opera
and The Band of Instruments

At New College, Oxford

5.00pm Pre-Performance talk
by Prof. Michael Burden,
Director of New Chamber Opera

6.30pm Opera performance in the
Warden's Garden (open from 6.00pm)

La Diavolessa (The She-Devil) was composed in 1755 by the Venetian composer Baldassare Galuppi, with a libretto by Carlo Goldoni. Between them they invented *opera buffa* and were hugely popular. It is a tale of two couples – one aristocratic, one penniless, one of whom tries to trick a wealthy man out of his treasure – and the confusion that follows the wrong identity!

The opera will be performed in the lovely surroundings of the Warden's Garden at New College, or in the chapel if wet. There will be a 75-minute interval for picnicking in the cloisters.

- Tickets £44 to include a welcoming glass of sparkling wine in the cloister garden. £3 for the pre-performance talk.
- Tickets are limited, as there are only 200 seats. There is priority booking for Friends up until 30th May 2020.
- Tickets: please use the enclosed booking form and return to: Friends' Opera: Freya Jones, 35 Cuddesdon Road, OX33 1JD

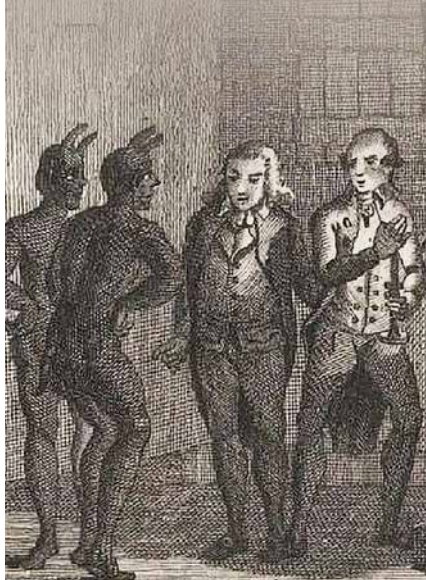


Illustration from the 1795 publication of Goldoni's libretto

Friends' Garden Visits Summer 2020

Thanks to your support for garden visits during 2019, 15% more tickets were sold, and the funds donated by Friends to the Garden and Arboretum were up by 17%.

This next programme is once again exciting and varied with visits on nine days during the summer months. Five are to gardens which Friends haven't visited before. As with all our visits, the owners – to whom we offer many thanks – guide us regarding visitor numbers. So book as many visits as you can before they sell out!

Booking tickets online: We had hoped to offer online booking for 2020. However (fingers crossed), we expect to offer online booking for the 2021 programme.

Booking Form – see enclosed:

Due to tighter banking rules, we are no longer able to accept cheques made out 'to an upper limit/maximum of £X'. Therefore, please send a cheque written out in full for each visit you are booking. Cheques for unsuccessful applications will be destroyed.



© Mary Best

Upton Wold

Thursday 14th May, 2.30pm

Private visit to Upton Wold

Upton Wold, Northwick Estate,
Moreton in Marsh, Glos GL56 9TR

By kind permission of Mr and Mrs Ian Bond

Hidden away in undulating Cotswold landscape, Upton Wold Garden has been created over 45 years, originally with the help of landscape architects Colvin & Moggridge. Head Gardener, Jenny Barnes, tends this private garden with its exceptional collection of trees, shrubs and unusual plants. It also holds the National Collections of *Juglans* (walnut) and of *Pterocarya* (wingnut). Yew hedges, a herbaceous walk, a pond, a canal, vegetable and woodland gardens, the walnut arboretum and the labyrinth, make this a garden of interest for any plantsman. A wonderful opportunity to walk around and enjoy a true gem. Afternoon tea provided.

- Friends £25, guests £30
- Maximum 40

Tuesday 26th May

Private double visit to Morton Hall and Meadow Farm

10.45am: Morton Hall Gardens,
Morton Hall Lane, Redditch B96 6SJ

By kind permission of Mr René and Mrs Anne Olivieri

These are two new gardens for us. The garden at Morton Hall has been extensively renovated to take full advantage of panoramic views. The eight acres of gardens and parkland encircling the house were designed by landscape architect, Charles Chesshire, as a succession of distinct 'garden rooms'. While each room has its individual character, defined by landscape, planting style and colour scheme, there is a strong sense of continuity. We will be given a guided tour by the owner or the Head Gardener. Lunch in the beautiful Orangery included.



© Val Corbett

Morton Hall

**Organised by Harriet Bretherton,
Pauline Coombes, Jane Annett
and Diana Naumann**

1.30pm: Meadow Farm Garden
33 Droitwich Road, Feckenham,
Worcs B96 6RU

By kind permission of Rob and Diane Cole

The owner, Rob Cole, will introduce the garden which is laid out as a blend of formal and informal areas. It includes a natural stream, paved and seating areas, vistas and enclosed spaces, a scree bed and wide borders of herbaceous planting. The remainder of the 2-acre meadow is now managed as a wildlife reserve to encourage native flora and fauna. Refreshments included and plants for sale.

- **Friends £30, guests £35**
- **Maximum 30**



© R. Cole

Meadow Farm

Thursday 4th June, 2.00pm

**Private visit to The Manor
House Gardens**

Perry Lane, Bledlow, Nr Princes Risborough,
Bucks HP27 9PB

By kind permission of Lord and Lady Carrington

The Head Gardener will welcome the group and introduce this wonderful garden, originally created by the late Lord and Lady Carrington. The front lawn is dominated by a large cedar and a beech tree. Other interesting elements are the traditional walled garden, the herbaceous border bounded by a beech hedge, a wrought iron gazebo over which a rose (*R. Phyllis Bide*) is trained, an avenue of *Prunus Lusitanica* leading the eye to a mural of Vertumnus, the god of vegetation, by Owen Turville and a garden, created in memory of Lady Carrington, composed of her favourite flowers and shrubs. The croquet lawn is surrounded by mixed borders and the Coracle Garden, planted with blue, white and yellow flowers has a coracle-shaped fountain by William Pye. There's also a sculpture garden to explore before tea and cake are served in the Summer House.

- **Friends £18, guests £23**
- **Maximum 40**



Bledlow Manor

Friday 12th June, 2.30pm

**A first visit to The Old Rectory,
Quinton**

Deanery Road, Quinton, Northants NN7 2ED

By kind permission of Mr A Kennedy and Emma Wise

A rare opportunity for our Friends to visit this garden shown on Gardener's World as an amazing example of a 21st-century garden. Its three acres were redesigned and recreated over an intense period during 2014-2015. The garden intertwines the historical perspective of a Georgian garden with a modern aesthetic, creating a space that is peaceful and inspiring in equal measure. Formal and informal areas combine through a series of garden rooms which seamlessly blend, with areas dedicated to supporting wildlife, creating a hub for outdoor family living, for reflection, contemplation and growing organic produce. Tea not provided but the owners are happy for you to bring a picnic tea to eat in the garden.

- **Friends £20, guests £25**
- **Maximum 40**



© Clive Nichols

The Old Rectory, Quinton

Sunday 21st June

**Double private visit to St Mary's
Church followed by The Malt
House Garden, Iffley Village**

**2.00pm: St Mary's Church,
Church Way, Iffley Village, Oxford OX4 4EJ**

By kind permission of the Rev'd Andrew McKearney

Our double private visit begins with a guided tour of an architectural gem, notably the Church of St Mary the Virgin, a late Norman and largely unchanged building standing in the heart of Iffley Village. Exquisite stone carvings along with John Piper's 'Nativity Window' and Robert Wagner's 'The Flowering Tree' window are some of its highlights, making for a memorable visit.



© www.britainexpress.com

St Mary's Church, Iffley

**The Malt House, 98 Church Way,
Iffley Village, Oxford OX4 4EF**

By kind permission of Helen Potts

We will then be welcomed by Helen Potts to The Malt House, her secluded delightful 1.8-acre garden of mixed borders, raised vegetable beds, terraces, specimen trees and a water meadow fronting the Isis and Iffley Lock. Please note the garden is on different levels with steps. Refreshments included.

- **Friends £20, guests £25**
- **Maximum 40**



The Malt House



Hill Close Gardens, Warwick

Thursday 9th July, 2.00pm

Private visit to Hill Close Gardens

Hill Close Gardens, Bread and Meat Close, Warwick CV34 6HF

By kind permission of Hill Close Gardens Trust

Another first for our Friends! Set in the heart of Warwick, Hill Close Gardens are rare survivors of Victorian detached, hidden, hedged gardens once used by townsfolk who, living above their businesses, had nowhere to grow flowers, fruit, vegetables, keep a pig or relax. This unique set of 16 gardens, featuring four Grade II Victorian summer-houses, are the only ones now open to the public in England. Your two-hour guided tour outlines their rescue from development in the 1990s, revealing the lives of the garden owners & tenants – auctioneers, drapers, boot-makers. It is a garden visit into another era. Tea, coffee & cake included. Plants and produce from the gardens for sale.

- **Friends £15, guests £20**
- **Maximum 40**



Marbled white butterfly

Sunday 19th July

Coach trip for a safari visit around Knepp Wildland

10.00am: Coach departs Redbridge Park & Ride. **NOTE:** Lewknor pick-up possible.

7.30pm: Approx time back at Park & Ride. Washroom on board.

By kind permission of Isabella Tree and Sir Charles Burrell

Another first, the opportunity to explore the Knepp Wildland either on foot or in a vehicle. Knepp is a 3,500-acre estate known for 'rewilding' what was previously farmed land. Using grazing animals as the drivers of habitat creation, and with the restoration of dynamic, natural water courses, this pioneering project has seen extraordinary increases in wildlife. Extremely rare species like turtle doves, nightingales, peregrine falcons and purple emperor butterflies are now breeding here with populations of more common species rocketing. Guided by expert ecologists and tailored to suit the season and weather conditions, your 'safari' will take you to current 'hot spots' of wildlife interest. Bring a picnic for lunch, sturdy waterproof boots and binoculars. Refreshments provided during the safari. Both safaris are three hours duration. The vehicle safari can be bumpy. A visit not to be missed!

- **Friends Walking Safari: £65. Vehicle Safari: £75**
- **Guests Walking Safari: £70. Vehicle Safari: £80**
- **Maximum Walking Group x 2: Total 29. Vehicle Group x 1: Total 12.**



@John James

Christ Church memorial garden

Thursday 23rd July, 2.00pm

Private visit to the gardens of Christ Church

St Aldates, Oxford OX1 1DP

By kind permission of The Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Christ in Oxford of the Foundation of King Henry VIII

The Gardens and Meadow at Christ Church all lie within a Grade I listed landscape, one of only three in Oxford. With Head Gardener, John James, we'll take a tour of the gardens, visiting Tom Quad, the largest quad in Oxford, and three gardens not normally seen by visitors. The Cathedral Garden lies north of the Cathedral. Recently replanted shrub beds have a medieval medicinal planting scheme combined with old roses and a Harry Potter twist. Next is the Pococke Garden with its magnificent oriental plane tree and subtropical plantings. The Master's Garden has traditional herbaceous borders, a Mediterranean border and extensive lawns. And, if time permits, we'll see some of the Meadow, hear about progress to re-establish lost wildflowers and about the trial of disease-resistant elms. A Cornish tea will be served.

- **Friends £20, guests £25**
- **Maximum 40**

Saturday 1st August

Another first! Double coach trip to Lampport Hall and Kathy Brown's garden

8.45am: Coach departs Oxford Redbridge Park & Ride.

6.30pm: Approx arrival back at Park & Ride. Washroom on board.

Lampport Hall

By kind permission of Lampport Hall Preservation Trust

Lampport Hall (not open) sits in 10 acres of tranquil gardens, surrounded by parkland. Originally laid out in 1655 by Gilbert Clarke, some elements of the original garden layout can still be seen. A box parterre surrounds a central, shaped fountain and

beside the parterre lies one of England's earliest recorded rockeries, created in 1847. We will start our visit with morning coffee followed by a tour of the garden. Light lunch included, served after the tour.



© English Garden Magazine

Lampport Hall

Kathy Brown's Garden

By kind permission of Simon and Kathy Brown

The Manor House Garden (voted in the competition run by *The English Garden* magazine and NGS as the Nation's Favourite Garden in the East of England) is 4.5 acres designed by Simon and Kathy Brown. They will give us a tour of colourful herbaceous borders, idiosyncratic containers, collections of succulents, a lovely wildflower meadow, cottage garden and a formal garden. Topiary is evident in a jury scene and a very long dragon guards the peony beds. Another specialism is edible flowers, used for added flavour in Kathy's scrummy cakes and over 80 late-flowering clematis should be flowering. Other highlights are the naturalistic gardens with large expanses of grasses studded with vibrant echinaceas, verbenas and solidago. Some of these 'prairie gardens' are based on paintings by Monet, Hepworth and Hokusai. Elsewhere the garden draws inspiration from sculpture by Barnett Newman and paintings by Monet and Matisse. Tea and cake included.

- Friends £60, guests £65
- Maximum 46



© Howard Rice

Kathy Brown's garden

The Danby Patrons' Group

By Maura Allen

After a great start to the Danby Patrons' Group in 2020, we have been able to introduce some new extra benefits. Danby members can now bring two guests per member into the Garden and Arboretum for free, receive complimentary tickets to May Morning and also receive the annual copy of 'Oxford Plant Systematics' (news from Oxford University Herbaria & Department of Plant Sciences). This is in addition to all the membership benefits that the Friends and Bobarts group enjoy. The full range of benefits is listed on our website.

We look forward to some interesting events in 2020 starting with an evening in the Herbarium Library with Stephen Harris and Serena Mamer, Herbarium Library manager, viewing specimens mounted in a range of ways, including on rare printers' proofs and manuscripts. The ways in which specimens were mounted allows novel investigations of how the early builders of the Herbaria did their science, identify the people with whom they communicated and get an insight into the life of the Botanic Garden that has otherwise been lost.

A Mediterranean theme runs through other events during the year with a wine tasting exploring ecology and evolution through the glorious wines of Sicily, reflecting local adaptation of unique grape varieties to the terror of the island and a visit to the Mt Etna region of Italy in the company of Simon Hiscock and Chris Thorogood, world leaders in Mediterranean plant ecology, visiting gardens and the slopes of Mt Etna as well as enjoying the wonderful food and wine of the region.



Helichrysum orientale specimen and pen-and-ink sketch used to illustrate Robert Morison's *Plantarum Historiae Universalis Oxoniensis* (1699)

The first donations from the Danby Patrons' group will help kick start the conservation work on the Herbarium of Jacob Bobart the Elder, the founding herbarium of the University and the digitisation to make it available online.

Special message to all gmail users

Gmail has a disconcerting way of filtering messages into different categories. You may miss emails from us because they have been filtered into the Promotions or Update categories. It is advisable to apply a filter to move any emails from Friends' Administrator to force them into your Personal or Primary Inbox. In particular you may not receive your emailed copy of the newsletter magazine that is published three times a year. The dates this is usually sent out are as follows:

Mid-March / Early July / Early November

If you need any help with applying a filter to move our emails into your inbox then do contact Seonaid Danziger at seonaidscd@gmail.com

Don't forget your membership card

when you come to visit the Garden and Arboretum. Our ticket office staff do not have access to the membership database (for data protection reasons) and can't let you in free of charge if you don't have your membership card!

Message to all email users

If you are not receiving regular e-bulletins with news of Friends' events by email, it will be because, for some reason, we do not have your current email address. Please send an email with your name, to the Friends' Administrator at friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk.

The Bobarts Patrons' Group

By Helen Potts
and Jennie Turner

2019 was a very good year for the Bobarts. Our members experienced a wide range of well-attended visits, concluding in October with a return visit to the beautiful garden of Bobarts' Patrons in Adderbury. We explored the extensive arboretum with its many unusual trees and enjoyed other areas planted with a large selection of rare specimens too. The rain obligingly held off for the duration of our visit and, importantly, whilst we had our tea and cake generously provided by the owners.

The Bobarts is a particularly friendly group whose enthusiastic members willingly share their friendship, garden interests, knowledge and expertise during our visits enhancing the whole experience. The group was launched in 2004, as an extra tier for the Friends of the OBGA. Over the years the Bobarts Patrons' Group has helped provide more than £110,000 of extra financial support for the Garden and Arboretum.

Our 2020 programme has been well received with many bookings for our visits which begin in March in Oxford, when we will be looking at selected art from the collections of the Weston Library. Then in April we will explore Green Templeton College gardens

and architecture, led by their extremely knowledgeable head gardener, Michael Pirie.

In May we hope to revel in the late spring colours of azaleas and rhododendrons in the 12-acre gardens at Englefield House during a private visit. The origins of the garden go back 400 years. We are promised glorious planting, long-established trees, stunning views and a tranquil setting.

For 2020 our Bobarts' evening will be held at the Arboretum in early June. It will be an opportunity to enjoy the site after hours, learn more about the new paths' project, relax with fellow Members, the Arboretum Curator, Director and Deputy Director of the OBGA and perhaps introduce your friends to the Bobarts' Group.

In mid-June we have another relatively local visit planned to two gardens in Stanton St John, with lunch included. We hope Woodperry House will be a delightful treat for a small number of our members, but all will appreciate the relaxed setting of College House gardens, thanks to the generosity of Mrs Nicola Mallows and there will be the opportunity to visit the Grade I listed church accessed directly from the garden.

We have been overwhelmed by the numbers wanting to join our exclusive 2-day visit to Norfolk in early September. We hope those on the trip will enjoy our selection of interesting, privately owned gardens around the Blakeney area, taking in Tudor moats, a pelargonium collection, fabulous Dutch-style topiary, a garden with 150 species of hydrangeas and Kew-trained owner, and another designed by Arne Maynard. We will stay at the Blakeney Hotel with its quayside location and views across the salt marshes.

Our members, and now the Danby Patrons' group too, enjoy all the benefits of the Friends plus a programme of small group visits to the University collections and to some of the best gardens and estates in the area. We aim to visit the widest possible range of gardens in terms of style, size and location and we are helped in this by the generosity of the garden owners and those who work in the institutions whose gardens we visit. We are grateful to them for sharing their time and knowledge with us.



Green Templeton College with the Tower of the Winds

By joining this group and by attending our events, Bobarts members provide extra support to the Garden and Arboretum, which is highly appreciated by all who work there. The biennial increase in membership fees will occur this year. The increase in the fee for Bobarts' Patrons will bring it back in line with that of the Friends. Both will have doubled in the period since the Bobarts was first established. As we approach the 400th anniversary of the Garden and University Herbaria your support becomes ever more important. Please consider joining us. You'll be very welcome.

2020

April

Friday April 3rd, 10.30am

Coffee morning, Botanic Garden

THURSDAY April 30th 10.30am

(please note change of day)

Coffee morning, Arboretum

May

Friday 1st May 5.00am

May Morning, Botanic Garden

Thursday 14th May, 2.30pm

Visit to Upton Wold

Saturday May 23rd, 11.00am

Plant Sale, Arboretum

Tuesday 26th May, 10.45am

Double visit to Morton Hall and Meadow Farm

June

Thursday 4th June, 2.00pm

Visit to Bledlow Manor House garden

Friday 5th June, 10.30am

Coffee morning, Botanic Garden

Sunday 7th June, 2.30pm

Friend's Garden for Friends

Friday 12th June, 2.30pm

Visit to The Old Rectory, Quinton

Sunday 21st June, 2.00pm

Double visit to St Mary's Church and The Malt House, Iffley

Tuesday 23rd June, 6.00pm

Friends' Summer Party, Botanic Garden

July

Friday July 3rd, 10.30am

Coffee morning, Arboretum

Wednesday July 8th, 6.30pm

Friends' Opera, New College

Thursday 9th July, 2.00pm

Visit to Hill Close Gardens, Warwick

Sunday 19th July

Coach visit to Knepp Wildland

Thursday 23rd July, 2.00pm

Visit to Christ Church College, Oxford

August

Saturday 1st August

Coach visit to Lamport Hall and Kathy Brown's garden

The Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum,

Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ.

All Friends' enquiries, including those about Friends' events, should be made to the Friends' Administrator.

Tel: 01865 610303

E-mail: friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk

Web: www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk

The Friends Office is staffed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. This Newsletter was edited by Chris Thorogood and Carol Maxwell with help from Isabella Raeburn. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Board of the Friends or the Visitors of Oxford Botanic Garden.

