



Cornwall Plant Heritage

Newsletter. April 2017

Spring has heated up and the early spring flowers are fading by the day. A week of dry weather and already the lawns are firming up and the Camellias are wilting. A few of the latest species are in flower. *Camellia rosthorniana* 'Elina' has just opened here, the tiny white flowers hang from the tips of delicate weeping branches and once it has finished the bright scarlet new growth bursts from the buds. It is currently being marketed as CUPIDO and is my favourite of recent introductions in the genus. It flowers at the same time as *Geranium phaeum* and marks the transition from spring shrubs to the early herbaceous border.

Last Meeting: Lamorran Gardens.

Such divisions between spring and summer are less well marked in the mildest parts of the county.

At the end of March we visited Lamorran Garden in St Mawes. The house sits on the ridge of a small peninsula jutting out into Carrick Roads, surrounded by the sea on three sides. The garden flows down the steep hillside from the house towards the sea. We were very lucky to be shown around by the owner, Robert Dudley-Cooke and his new head gardener Jack Clutterbuck.

Robert started gardening on the site in 1982 when it was just an overgrown slope below the house. He has taken full advantage of the mild microclimate, planting a large collection of Rhododendrons along with exotic plants from both hemispheres. The garden has been inspired by the style of Japanese and Italian gardens and now houses a remarkable collection of palms, tree ferns and other tender exotics.



The entrance garden and Koi pond.



Palms and Azaleas near the house.



The new rose garden.

The entrance to the garden passes a charming koi pond with some of the nicest fish I have seen in a garden setting. It also houses the best *Araucaria heterophylla* I have seen growing outdoors in Cornwall. It is a Monkey-puzzle tree at the very limit of cultivation in the south-west. It was well shaped and seemed undamaged. Robert said that the last frost in the garden was in 1987 so it has had plenty of time to develop a strong trunk and a good shape. There is one in Fox Rosehill Gardens in Falmouth, on the other side of Carrick Roads, but it hasn't achieved this level of magnificence. Above the house a small terraced area has been cleared and re-designed as a rose garden which will provide a remarkable new sensation in the flowering season.



Lawns at the top of the garden.



Tree ferns and palms.



View through the garden to the sea.

At the top of the garden the flattest ground has been used to create a series of rounded lawns giving super views of the mature palms and tree ferns. This area provides a natural home for the large collection of rhododendrons and azaleas, the latter trimmed into rounded shapes in the Japanese style.

As the flat ground approaches the edge of the slope a series of wonderful views are revealed over the river and out to sea.



Garden buildings.



Exotic planting on the slope.



Narrow path weaves through the planting.

The slope and the exposed rock are well suited to the construction of small terraces and romantic garden buildings. Stone steps run down the garden and narrow gravel paths thread a zig-zag path to the lowest levels passing through plantings of the world's flora, from Mexican *Agave* to the strange and rubbery leaves of *Exbucklandia*, a small Indonesian tree that is prospering here.



Exbucklandia populnea.



Dryandra formosa.



Scarlet flowered *Cestrum.*

Nearer to the house the remarkable flowers of *Dryandra formosa* were beautifully displayed against the warm beige colour of the walled garden. A scarlet flowered *Cestrum* skipping in a lively fashion through the tree canopy attracted a lot of attention. It is too rich in colour to be *Cestrum* 'Newellii' which has pinkish red flowers rather than the orange-scarlet we saw. It is still looking for a name, so if anyone has any ideas let me know!

We had a wonderful and very informative afternoon in this remarkable garden thanks to the kindness of Robert Dudley-Cooke who showed us around and made sure we saw all the best things and heard the stories behind them. Jack Clutterbuck came around with us and claimed to be learning about the garden, having only just taken over, but in the process he imparted a great deal of knowledge and gave us an insight into the practical issues facing this remarkable garden.

I am immensely grateful to both of them for their time and kindness which turned a beautiful spring afternoon into a magical garden visit.

Trouble with Celandines.

The Lesser Celandine, *Ficaria verna*, is one of the delights of spring. In a mild year the first buds will form in November and a sunny day in winter will usually find a Celandine or two in golden celebration. The leaves are delightful, patterned with green and silver often speckled with brown dots and splashes. No two plants are the same and a bed of Celandine leaves can show as much beauty in the foliage as a bed of *Cyclamen*. I accept that I won't convince many of you. Celandine fanciers are an odd lot, we skulk around in the spring peering at our feet and take delight in little scraps of green springing up from the bare ground before the rest of the undergrowth wakes up. It is true that they are impossible to eradicate but why would you want to? They don't compete with anything, they add cheer to the winter garden and by May they have gone.



Ficaria verna 'Bregover White'.



Ficaria verna 'Pulla Cross Primrose'.



Ficaria verna 'Aurantiacus'.

As with so many small spring flowers, variations have been collected in gardens, though without the single-minded zeal that the snowdrop has attracted. A good new snowdrop can be worth hundreds of pounds. A good new Celandine - well, you might not be able to give it away.

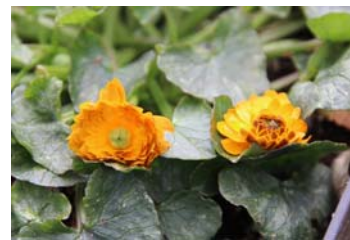
White and primrose flowered forms are fairly common in wild populations, the orange form less so and until recently only two or three clones were known.



Ficaria verna 'Flore Plena'.



Ficaria verna 'Double Mud'.



Ficaria verna 'Nathalie'.

Double flowered forms are first recorded in the 17th century but were probably known before then. *Ficaria verna* 'Flore Plena' is sterile, which overcomes the problem of seeding but it reproduces equally vigorously by bulbils. However it is distinctive, easy to grow and harmless. Other doubles may produce some seed. The white form 'Double Mud' is a charming plant. 'Ken Aslett' is a more recent pale discovery and is also sterile.

In the last couple of years there has been some deliberate breeding of Celandines and very recently the double orange *F.v.* 'Nathalie' has been introduced.



Ficaria verna 'Brazen Hussey'.



Ficaria verna 'Mr. Brown'.



Ficaria verna 'Brambling'.

Foliage colour also varies. Christopher Lloyd discovered and named the wonderful 'Brazen Hussey'. I have always wondered if he had anyone particular in mind. 'Brazen Hussey' seeds like mad, and the offspring are usually dark leaved. The best are almost purple-black and shiny but duller brown leaved forms can also be found. A great many have been named and it raises a difficult conservation question. Which of them are worth saving?

Brown mottled forms also abound. They can have beautiful leaves but are they worth naming? I am not entirely convinced. I have a compost pile where I throw all the also-rans and I could find a hundred distinctive ones there if I looked.

I'm sure many holders of the various National Collections have asked themselves the same question. Is it worth the effort of keeping?

When it comes to Lesser Celandines with single yellow flowers I have decided to rationalise. Unless I am particularly fond of them, or they are of historical significance, I'm not going to keep them (so if anybody wants an assortment of pretty leaved variants, let me know, they are about to be returned to the wild).



Ficaria verna 'Diane Rowe'.



Ficaria verna 'Witchampton'.



Ficaria verna 'Budgerigar'.

The point of this note is to ask your opinion. Among the cultivars that are named, what is worth saving? My particular problem at present is the green leaved cultivars of *Ficaria verna* with single yellow flowers. I'm not sure why they were ever named and I think they are headed for the compost.

'Diane Rowe' and 'Little Southey' are an easy pair. Diane Rowe denies all knowledge of them and they didn't originate in her garden. She would rather they weren't linked to her. I can't think of a single good reason to keep them.

'Witchampton' is just a dull green thing. I expect it was lovely growing under a hedge somewhere. I am planning to return it. 'Budgerigar' is another. Green with a yellow face, is that really the only reason it was named?

One of the dangers in collecting plants is that you acquire the rubbish as well as the good things. Is it reasonable to be discriminating? What do other people think and more importantly, what do other people do?

Next Meeting: The Lost Gardens of Heligan.

Tuesday 25th April, 2.00pm.

Our next meeting is a visit to the Lost Gardens of Heligan which, despite their name, are surprisingly easy to find. From St. Austell take the B3273 towards Mevagissey and follow the brown signs to Heligan. Meet at the main entrance at 2.00pm, I'm afraid you will have to pay for admission but Alistair knows the garden well and will show us around.

I look forward to seeing you there and to seeing the garden.

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY SPRING SALE

**Truro Livestock Market, Newquay Road, Truro.
Saturday 6th May, 10.00 - 2.00pm.**

Once again we have a sales table at the Hardy Plant Society Spring Sale. This is one of the major fundraisers of our year and we need your help to make it a success.

Please look through your gardens and collections for plants you could donate to us and bring them along on the day. There are always a good selection of nurseries and other growers with stands, so it is worth bringing some cash as well!

The money we raise helps to support our local activities and also the work of head office. Plants that are distributed all help to achieve Plant Heritage's aim of conservation through cultivation. So (at the risk of sounding desperate) do please see if you have something you could donate and come over on the day to say hello!

Hope to see you soon.
John Sirkett.

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