ventnorensis

journal of the ventnor botanic garden friends' society

'We sense the duration of Garden visits has doubled as people are not thinking about parking meters and tickets and are treating us as a Botanic Garden, not a park'

Volume 19 No. 3 Autumn 2012

autumn/winter opening times

10am to 5pm till 1st November 2012
10am to 4pm thereafter for Visitor Centre, Plant Sales and Green House. For extended hours for Plantation Room please call 855397

exhibitions/events

13th - 14th October **11am - 4pm**	HOP FESTIVAL - FREE ADMISSION Launch of our TropicAle, Traditional Music & Dance, Childrens Activities, Traditional Carpentry Skills, Bats from IOW Bat Hospital, Red Squirrel Project, IW Guild of Weavers, Spinners & Dyers
24th October **12.30pm**	HOTELIERS OPEN DAY Open day for hoteliers to view the Botanic Garden; a quality all weather & all season destination for guests.
16th November **1.00pm**	CHAIRMAN'S TEA & HILLIER AWARD PRESENTATION VBG Friend's Society Chairman's Tea & presentation of the Harold Hillier Award for 2012. £3.50
15-16th December **1.00pm**	CHRISTMAS VILLAGE Seasonal fayre and gifts, carols, live music, children's activities, mulled wine and wreath making. *~ MORE EXCITING DETAILS TO FOLLOW ~* Including a matinee production of The Snow Queen, outdoor theatre production by Quantum Theatre.

COURSES

Gardening Club will commence on Tuesday the 23rd October from 2-4pm and again, in the evening from 6-8pm. It will run 10 months of the year. The cost will be £125 per year to include entry to the Garden on the day of the club.

Winter fruit tree pruning workshops. Cost £12 per person. Dates tbc.

ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

Bulbs for Spring and Summer Colour – Thurs 18th October 2-3.30. Cost £6
Wild flowers of the Isle of Wight – Thurs 1st November 2-3.30. Cost £6
Seaside Gardening – Thurs 8th November 2-3.30. Cost £6

WORKSHOPS

Propagation by semi ripe cuttings – Sat 20th October 10-12. Cost £15
Renovation pruning – Sat 3rd November. 10-12. Cost £12
Christmas wreath making will take place during the VBG Christmas Fayre weekend of the 14th/15th December.

For more details on the above courses, illustrated lectures and workshops see P26

Front cover photograph: Salvia uliginosa by Julian Winslow

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Curator's Notes

Enquiries to the Garden are many and varied. Just this morning there were two messages on the answerphone, one from an anonymous caller from Reading with a question about moving an Acer when they retire to the Island. They had already spoken to Irene at some length and wanted a second opinion to confirm that their 15 year old *Acer japonicum* "from Chelsea Flower Show, it's worth thousands" was going to have a difficult time adjusting to the salt laden, wind blown West Wight. The second call was from an exuberant lady who got as far as saying "Hello, I'm very excited about . . ." before cutting herself off in her fervour. These are two challenging examples, but perhaps not as much as: "I've got this plant. It grows this high and it has green leaves." In order to flesh out this query, I asked what the leaves were like. "Ordinary."

Other enquiries can be about plants which are in the Garden here; today two people asked me the name of *Firmiana simplex*. Now, I could remember it was named in honour of the Governor of Lombardy and patron of Padua Botanic Garden; that it is native to Vietnam; that it was planted by Sir Harold Hillier; that Cambridge Botanic Garden made a great fuss when theirs flowered a few years ago unaware that ours had been doing so for years – but we'd not made a song and dance (theirs has now died, I remembered that too); that it has been suggested as a good tree to keep an eye on with climate change and all. But could I remember its name? No. Someone had swiped the label because their memory was as poor as mine. The engraving machine is singing its song as I type.

1. *2.* *3.* *4.* *5.*

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

"I've got this plant. It grows this high and it has green leaves." To flesh out this query, I asked what the leaves were like. "Ordinary."

Some people call or email wanting advice that we simply can't give. For example, I don't know if your neighbour has been spraying weed killer on your hedge. I don't know if your trees have decided to push their roots into your drains, lift your driveway or poison your dog. It's a fair bet that you can indeed cut the overhanging branches from your neighbour's tree, but I won't be drawn on where the cut should be and certainly won't advise on what to do with the prunings (although any fruit certainly continues to belong to him or her: to take it for sale makes you guilty of the ancient crime of conversion). Perhaps the leylandii hedge down the road does indeed block your view across the Solent or encourage moss in your lawn. And how would I know what you think is a nice little tree to plant next to the little pond with the lilies Uncle George left you in his will? I really don't know what the plant you bought from us five years ago was! I don't know why it died either! But I suspect if I'd bought a car five years ago and not put fuel in, it might not go anymore.

Finally, we are sent quite a few pictures of plants to identify, and mindful of the collection I have been keeping I thought it would be fun to share these with you as a little challenge, a competition with a sensational prize*. Simply identify each of the photographs! The winner will be decided and announced in the next Ventnorensis.

*TBA

Chris Kidd
Curator

11.

Living and learning

Irene Fletcher returns to VBG with an action-packed education programme for all ages. She reports on the 'outdoor classroom'

Something exciting is happening at Ventnor Botanic Garden!

I am so happy to be back at VBG and launching a new education programme; some of our old favourites like the Gardening Club have returned and it will be great to relaunch our own, unique Certificate in Plantsmanship which I am hoping to commence in January.

I've started off with some talks and workshops to draw people in again and I have begun the long process of registration as a centre for delivery of the Level 2 RHS Practical Horticulture Certificate. This is quite a different course from the old General Certificate (not so exam based), providing good learning opportunities even if you have completed the previous one. It is likely to commence next September.

Forest School builds confidence and self-esteem

Children's education has kicked off already with the start of our Forest School Programme on a Wednesday morning. Two pre-school groups will benefit from a six-month programme which develops confidence and self esteem as well as enabling children to take managed risks in the outdoors.

A number of schools are booked to return to the Botanic Garden and my trusty helper Beryl will be helping out with the first group in October. Many thanks to all those Friends who have offered to help. As the programme develops I will be contacting you and calling on your valuable services.

Thanks to the grant from the AONB Partnership, mentioned in Ventnorensis previously, I have developed a programme with the local school which kicks off with a wildlife study for every year group. We will be working with the National Trust initially and looking at migratory birds at St Catherine's point. The grant has enabled the purchase of children's binoculars to facilitate this first trip. *Continued on P7 . . .*

Chairman's message

Torrential rain and gale force winds herald in the Autumn, with cyclamen and colchicums poking up their heads around my garden.

On one of the fortnightly Design Walks Chris was talking about inter planting between the existing palms so that the arid garden will have full size replacements in 100 years time. This has got me concentrating on what happens to the Friends over a longer course of time than we have ever thought of before. In the past 20-odd years we were pretty much raising funds for planting and landscape projects. Just recently we have given Chris £1500 to buy more Puya to increase the proposed National Collection.

Watching and listening to John Curtis as he sets about making VBG self sufficient has been inspirational in many ways and brings me back to the question of 'Where do we go in the future?'. I could really do with some ideas from you about making the Friends self sufficient so that we (or those that come after us) are not permanently going cap in hand raising small amounts of money for individual projects. Do we set up an endowment fund for people to leave gratuities to us, safe in the knowledge that their gift supports future generations? Do we have more than one fund, say for plants and another for education? I hope for some interesting winter reading alongside seed lists etc.

Phil LeMay

plemay@ventor.plus.com Please note that it is ventor and not ventnor

Special Offer from the RHS!

I now have all the paper work for anyone who would like to take advantage of membership of the Royal Horticultural Society. **If you join through the Friends and pay by Direct Debit you will save 30% off the cost of membership,** receive a £5 RHS voucher . . . and the Friends get £5 for introducing you.

This offer is until the end of January 2013.

If you would like the forms please contact Rosemary at rosemary@onwight.net or tel: 292107

Twelve into 125

John Curtis describes the extraordinary changes made in the first weeks of the CIC's lease

Recently I meandered up the narrow winding steps to the Medicinal Garden. "It is a great to see you taking a picture from this lookout, because two weeks ago you couldn't do that," I said to a first time VBG visitor charmed by the vista over the Palm Garden and beyond. We sat down to chat on the circular stone benches that a recent Design Walk suggested we reinstate. Our gardening team jumped on it with no more said, pruned low branches off the Holm Oak, found the bench's twin, and placed them both in a pleasing aspect looking out over the Garden. "This place is particularly meaningful for me because my daughter lost a baby two months ago and it was nice to reflect on what we went through."

Friends enjoying the opening of The Plantation Room

I like this story because it captures the way we make the little improvements that create Garden visits that matter. They will add up to an even better VBG to pass to future generations.

We have made some good steps on our mission to deliver: *Something exciting is happening at Ventnor Botanic Garden.* We have more volunteers. We have a cafe. We have an Education Programme Leader. We hosted the Healing Festival, Hop Picking, Design Walks, a 40th Birthday celebration, a staff party, and near daily Tunnel Walks and Garden Tours. We have a new entrance where our meet n' greet volunteers welcome visitors to "our Garden." We have a new Plantation Room. The scaffolding is up on Signal Point as we work to deliver lodgings for our guests and apprentices. Even the entry fees are slowly bedding in and our confidence to "talk" to gatecrashers is growing. Capital spending has topped £100,000 and I would like to think we are staying true to our promise to improve the Garden while adding the entry fees required to save it. We sense the duration

of Garden visits has doubled as people are not thinking about parking meters and tickets and are treating us as a Botanic Garden, not a park.

We should be most proud of our people. "The welcome here has certainly improved," I was told by a long time visitor to the Garden. I take my hat off to our gardeners, waiters, Friends, Volunteers, and shopkeepers who have explained what we are trying to do over and over again with patience and an open smile especially when not reciprocated. The drop-your-tools-and-say-hello approach is paying early dividends. Chris Kidd has demonstrated extraordinary patience in trying to teach me Latin plant names and has joined an elite group of storytellers with his much loved Design Walk tales. He has also made real strides in moving us into position for National Collection Status for Puya with support from the Friends.

"I had the best sandwich I have ever had here the other day," I heard at the Plantation Room opening. Martyn Cutler and team have added more to VBG than we might have imagined. He reports that truffles have been found on the Island, so I am watching his daily menus for the next exciting local ingredient.

As we head into the quiet season we rely more on Island visitors and our Friends to prosper. We are firmly open all year now and will keep adding events, talks, and tastings to keep VBG exciting. Feedback has been really important to date, so please keep it coming – it underpins the little improvements we love. Please come see us, encourage your friends to join the Friends, buy Garden passes, come to our events – your support is critical to ward off the winter blues at VBG.

Living and learning *. . . continued from P4*

There are bird box making classes, mini beast hunts, butterfly study days, rock pooling and art workshops planned. I'm hoping for a similar grant next year for other local schools, with the ultimate aim that VBG is a hub for all sorts of environmental studies and activities, not just related to plants. We have the Downs on our doorstep, Heritage Coast at the bottom of our Garden and Wildlife Trust Woods adjacent, and I'm looking for opportunities to make the most of this and also to work in partnership with other like-minded organisations. Look out also for children's activities in holidays and half terms. Support us by bringing your children and grandchildren along.

I am hoping to establish a new database, preferably on email, so if you would like to hear directly about events, courses etc please ring me on 855397 or email me on irene.fletcher@iow.gov.uk. Also, if you are interested in any of the education above, please contact me.

Irene Fletcher

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How to grow butterflies

John Harrison at Northcourt describes the beauty and benefits to wildlife of rarely seen Escallonia Bifida

A shrub which is rarely seen in full flower today at Northcourt is Escallonia Bifida. Today in the sunshine of September 15th it is covered in at least 87 Red Admirals, three Painted Ladies, a Comma, and some Cabbage White – not to mention hundreds of bees.

The escallonia's flowers are similar to the much earlier white *E.Iveyii,* but it has smaller, less glossy leaves, and more compact flower heads.

Red Admiral, Painted Lady and bee sharing one flower head

This must be the best butterfly bush we can grow in England. It is a native of Uruguay, as suggested by its other name *E.Montevidensis,* with the common name of Box Gum Bush, and believed to be tender in the UK. Here it has coped with −10°C. The evergreen leaves did not look good in February with bitterly cold winds but summer wet has brought it back in profusion. It is the perfect plant for the Isle of Wight, but I have not seen it anywhere else. Local nurseries do not stock it but readers could try the Duchy of Cornwall nursery duchyofcornwallnursery.co.uk and Great Dixter greatdixter.co.uk/nursery who list it. Anyone very keen to take a cutting could contact me on 740415.

The bush has now grown to be about 10 foot by 10 foot, but can be pruned* to size and I would highly recommend it to readers, if they can source it. Flowering so late is an added bonus.

*see *Pruning Workshop at Northcourt, P26*

DISCOUNTS for members

The following suppliers have kindly agreed to give discounts to Friends' Society members. Please be aware that discounts and other benefits of VBGFS membership are subject to change. **Remember to take your membership card with you – a discount will only be given if you show it.**

Eddington House Nursery	Eddington Road, Nettlestone/Seaview: 10% discount
Deacons Nursery	Moor View, Godshill: 10% discount.
Ryde House Nursery	Binstead Road, Ryde: 10% discount.

Do not forget your Membership fee includes **10% off** for the Gift Shop, Cafe, Plants and Seeds. Just show your Membership Card.

Please do visit and show that we appreciate suppliers' support and goodwill.

SEEDS NOTICE: We regret that we can no longer offer free seeds to members. Seeds will still be collected and you can select and buy them via the VBG website Botanic.co.uk , where at the prompt you can enter your Friends code, FRSEED12, and receive your discount of 10%. ***Please note that addresses not matching those of a Friend will NOT receive seeds.***

The executive realised that the cost of printing, postage and packaging had spiralled and was far too expensive.

Membership Renewals

It is that time of year again and I would like to remind you that the current membership year will expire on 31 December 2012. Renewals are due from 1 January 2013. The fees have been held at the current rate of £15 for an individual member and an additional £7 for a second person at the same address.

Please do not delay in sending your membership renewal. You can use the form in the centre of this magazine. You do not need to wait until the end of December to send your renewal.

If you purchased a '5 years for 4' membership five years ago then that will run out this year and you will need to renew with effect from 1 January 2014. You will receive a letter in the few weeks to remind you.

Dear members...

It is a beautiful thing to have the job of editing this magazine. Firstly you get to read the fine writing that emanates from great expertise, such as the rip-roaring comedy of Chris Kidd's Curator's notes, and the heart-to-page enthusiasm of John Curtis's update on what has happened in the first 12 weeks of the 125 year lease the CIC has taken on.

Enthusiasm is the word – new contributor Elizabeth Summers describes her role as a Meeter and Greeter, one of so many innovations which have delighted visitors to VBG this summer.

Secondly, as editor I attend meetings of the Friends' Society Executive, and I wish everyone reading this could be flies on the wall. Because for all the necessary formality of a committee meeting here is a core group of people who are doing all they can to foster the long term interests of Garden and all the implications that entails.

If you would like the chance to be involved, see the 'Job Vacancies' on Page 25. Because Ventnor Botanic Garden is an exciting place to be.

Copy deadline for the Spring Issue: January 12th 2013

Roz Whistance, Editor

Chairman's Tea Party **Friday, 16th November at 2pm**

Phil le May is retiring as Chairman of the Friends at the next AGM and would like to invite **all** Volunteers, Tour Guides, Meet and Greeters, Hop Pickers, Executive Committee etc. plus all those stalwarts who have raised so much money at the NGS Open Gardens this year, to a celebration tea party at VBG. Phil will be paying for you all to say thank you for your hard work and good will.

Any other member of the Friends will also be very welcome with a donation of £3.50 at the door.

We will also be presenting the **Harold Hillier Award** for services to horticulture on the Island. This year's recipient is Keith Brewer, one of the founder gardeners at VBG, National champion Sweet Pea Grower and staunch supporter of local shows.

All those who would like to come please reply to plemay@ventor.plus.com or 01983 853824 so that he can arrange a suitable location and also catering for the right numbers of guests.

Late Flowering Salvia

At the time of writing (19th September) the middle of England has already had its first frost. Hints of autumn can be seen throughout the countryside despite the mild wet summer. Traditional English gardens are already being put to bed, soon all the experts will be telling us to cut down herbaceous plants and do the fork-to-fork splitting manoeuvre so we can have ever more Lungwort. Mercifully we will never need to fear such horror; our precious Undercliff keeps us warm right through to December and hopefully beyond. The very height of the late flowering Salvias begins in September and is at its best in November.

The Salvias I mention are what are known as short day plants. This means their flower cycle is promoted by day length shorter than 12 hours, so all summer they grow vegetatively and begin to flower around the autumn equinox. The flower colour crosses the spectrum from blue to red; some are deliciously furry with a velvety indumentum. Flowers are held in structures called verticillasters. These verticillasters arise as two axillary cymose inflorescences develop at the nodes either side of the stem. The cyme in the axil of each leaf starts as a dichasial cyme but subsequently become monochasial scorpioid cyme, bending around and surrounding the whole stem. In layman's terms, a tier of flowers: think wedding cake.

Salvia 'Black and Blue'

Their countries of origin are the most exotic; *Salvia confertiflora* is from Brazil, *S. involucrata* from Mexico and S. *uliginosa* from Uruguay. My personal favourite, S. *dorisiana,* comes from Honduras, of all places. S. *dorisiana* has a very foreshortened inflorescence, the unopened flowers held within a large red button resembling an exotic boiled sweet, which turns brown at any hint of cold. S. "Black and Blue" is a magnificent plant that can reach over 2m in height, the corolla a dark blue emerging from an almost black calyx.

The best way to describe these plants is with pictures. As ever I am indebted to the hugely talented Julian Winslow for the images.

Chris Kidd

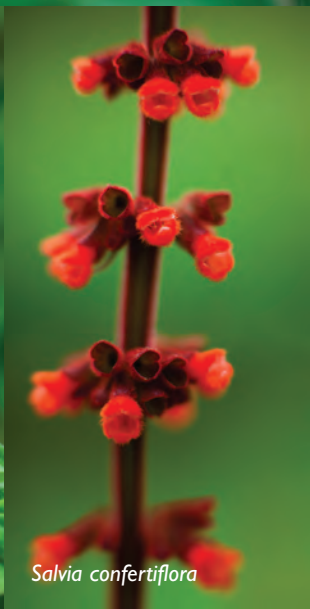
Photographs by Julian Winslow

Salvia uliginosa

Salvia involucrata

Salvia caradonna

Salvia dorisiana



Salvia confertiflora

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION* / RENEWAL* FORM

*Delete as appropriate

Please send to the Membership Secretary with your payment and/or the Standing Order Authority.

TITLE	FIRST NAME	SURNAME
ADDRESS		
E-MAIL		
Telephone		
Name of Second Member at the same address		
Name of Junior member and date of birth		

Membership Rates with effect from 1 January 2011

The Membership year runs from 1st Jan to 31st December.

Individual	2nd at same address	Junior*	Non UK
£15	£7	£2	£18

New Members joining after 1st July pay reduced rates:

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For New Members joining after **1st October** a Full Year subscription covers to 31st December the **following** year

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Optional Donation	£
TOTAL	**£**_____

Signature **Date**

Membership Secretary VBGFS Virginia Newbold 4 Woodland Grove Bembridge PO35 5SG

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Weather in the Garden

(June to August 2012) by Chris Watts

I looked in the dictionary for synonyms of 'awful' and found plenty to describe the weather for June! June was one of the wettest and dullest on record, and it follows that it was also a bit cool; the temperature only twice exceeded 20°C, on the 20th and 28th. A branch of eucalyptus was brought down, and a parasol snapped outside the café in winds on the 7th and 8th; on the 11th 35mm of rainfall was measured, which could easily make it the wettest day of the year. A cover of Saharan dust was evident on the morning of the 28th.

I had hoped that a change of month would bring a change in the weather, but no such luck. The first week of July gave 75mm of rain - 14mm in one hour on the 4th - and by St Swithin the total was over 100mm. The final ten days however saw something resembling summer, and during this spell the temperature managed to reach over 25°C in unbroken sunshine on the 24th and 25th.

Regrettably August was mildly disappointing with only a modest sunshine total, but it was mainly dry and daily temperatures mostly hovered around the 20°C mark - so quite pleasant. A sharp evening shower on the 13th measured 7mm in 16 minutes. What will probably be the warmest day of the year came on the 19th with 26.5°C, but in contrast one of the lowest August temperatures ever recorded was measured on the 31st at 7.5°C.

My thanks go to Kate for keeping me abreast on incidents in the Garden, but its not all bad news: for instance, the wet summer has apparently favoured Canna, which is flourishing. And here is some really good news for all TropicAle lovers: the hop crop this year was very pleasing (hooray), and the only influence the weather had was to delay picking by two weeks (shame)!

	Mean Temp C	Air Frost Duration Hrs (No. of nights)	Sun Hrs	Rain mm	Wet Days (1+ mm)	Rain Duration Hrs
Jan	*14.3–*	*0 (0)*	*89.2—-*	*133.1++*	*14*	*61.9*
Feb	*16.0—-*	*0 (0)*	*166.2—-*	*111.8++*	*13*	*58.0*
Mar	*17.8+*	*0 (0)*	*134.0—-*	*34.5—-*	*7*	*14.8*

Note: Cols 2, 4, 5 *No sign: about average*
++/—- : significantly above/below average
+/– : modestly above/below average

Getting a grip on Meeting and Greeting

If a week is a long time in politics, it is a very short time as a Meet & Greet volunteer, says Elizabeth Summers

Visitors arrive in coaches and cars, and the format for dealing with each differs quite a bit. Coaches with 20-50 passengers can be dealt with as one tidy bundle but each car brings its own variety: Grandma plus two adult children, young parents with small children plus two Grandmas . . .

On Monday I decide that one size does not fit all. To cope with the mix, I create a list of headings and mnemonics – and promptly edit them. My warm and sunny welcome – "How nice to see you! Isn't it a lovely day?" is far too cheesy, so I replace it with: "Welcome to Ventnor Botanic Garden".

'Information', too, went through a few re-writes. Do I tell them what they will enjoy (Heavenly Cakes in the Cafe), what to see (Queen Victoria's palm trees), give them a line or two of VBG History? or Current Flowers in Bloom? By Tuesday my list is flowing nicely and I have blended *'Introduction, Information and Welcome'* with a nice mnemonic (I W I).

By Wednesday, under guidance from our lovely Kate, we discuss whether our first priority should be to charm the coach drivers. This makes a lot of sense so I leave the meeting ready to sharpen my skills on *'Driver Charm Technique'* (DCT). Once again it became necessary to commit a short sequence to memory. Had the driver visited us before? Had a booking been made? How long would their visit be? I planned to follow this with my passenger WI speech *(see above)* before handing out our leaflets. By Thursday I had made a note to add DCT to my repertoire on Friday.

It all went wrong. On Friday two coaches arrived simultaneously and were followed by a third. By the time I was halfway through my first DCT the second load of passengers were already spilling onto the tarmac.

The driver of the second coach had already informed his passengers about VBG and issued leaflets. Bah! My Driver Charm Technique went out the window. Now it was time to use initiative! "Does anyone need assistance?" I asked. This let him know that I do have a purpose in life – look at me, I'm useful!

By Saturday I was able to put all my newfound expertise to good use. Coaches arrived at decent intervals and the priority was speed – to grab a basket of leaflets and reach the coach before passengers disembarked. There was just time to hand out leaflets, smile for the cameras and follow it with my 'Heavenly Cakes' spiel before my mind went blank. Help! "Be careful of the steps!" I said, making it up on the spot, and then trotted out my best punch-lines: "We get more sun here than the Pearl Shop" followed by: "And you should see our Red Squirrels!"

What a privilege it is to entertain lovely people for an hour or two: to watch their mood change from that of escapees from a cramped coach to thoughts of sun shades, canna lilies, latte coffee and majestic trees. Ventnor Botanic Garden – how lucky we are.

And what of our car passengers? They must wait for another time.

On the road again

Chris Kidd dreams of being sponsored to collect plants for VBG from the wilds of Kyrgyzstan. But he'll settle for a white van up the A34

The acquisition of plants is fundamental to a garden and there are many simple ways to do this. Seeds are the perfect package, a small starter pack has all the genetic information required, as long as you have the time and patience and can be sure that the name on the packet will be matched by the plant that eventually emerges from the nursery. When I started at VBG I saw an amazingly rare Iris offered on a seed list and acquired it immediately, even contacting an Iris expert friend of mine about it. He expressed grave doubts about the authenticity of the seed supplier's claim, and sure enough, two years later, I had a frame full of *Iris sibirica* instead of the incredibly rare endemic from Kyrgyzstan. The *Iris sibirica* adorns the Japanese terrace above the tunnel, if you are interested. The seed supplier is still in existence: in fact a great number of people subscribe to them annually. I'll not name them.

'On more than one occasion I've been lured down progressively anorexic lanes in East Anglia to find the promised wares are nasty looking over-potted specimens which are the home to several dozen vine weevils'

Acquiring plants already at a size where they may indeed fulfill their Latin billing seems a safer option, but we know from experience that *caveat emptor* is a rule to be vigorously applied in any nursery. The magnificent Plantfinder is worth its weight in gold when hunting down rare plants, but on more than one occasion I've been lured down progressively anorexic lanes in East Anglia only to find the promised wares conveniently all sold the day previously. Or they are nasty looking over-potted specimens of doubtful authenticity, which are actually the home to several dozen vine weevils who curl in their startled way when you examine the roots – or rather lack of.

Were we a national botanic garden, the simplest way would be to simply pack off to Kyrgyzstan and collect seed of the plant from the wild, with accompanying herbarium vouchers, collection notes, fanfares and National Geographic photographers all bustling along to the amusement of local guides and goat herders –whose charges chomp Iris species, oblivious of the bizarre circus that has descended upon them. Such state sponsored scientific endeavor is a remarkable international concordat between botanic institutions that transcends the madness of political geography and is the highlight of a career in horticulture. Maybe one day VBG will join in, but the suggestion to John at such an early stage of the CIC was deemed inappropriate, so in true VBG fashion, Jason and I hurtled up the A34 in our van.

We had two target nurseries on this occasion, one familiar and one new. The trip would be built around the annual procession to Hereford to dry our hops, then their

transfer to Malvern for analysis and packaging. Our first nursery was, as the crow flies, nearby to Hereford, in Evesham. Keith Richards from the Rolling Stones lamented of the early days of the Stone's touring how agonizing it was to travel west to east in the UK: the best roads run north / south. Jason cut a fair comparator for Keith as we crawled along the A46 in the dark. Humours were hardly raised at our discovery that our hotel rooms had been flooded the previous morning, due to sewage. The nightlife of Evesham in mid September had little to offer, certainly no Rolling Stones; they must have learned their lesson well forty years ago. We retired to digest mysterious cider and inhale disinfectant fumes.

Tight squeeze: Jason has sense of humour failure

Bright and early we arrived at Bob Brown's nursery the following day. Cotswold Garden Flowers, as it is called, seems to be to be an entirely inappropriate name for the nursery of a Plantsman. It seems to me filled with exotic rarities, the result of a lifetimes gleaning from the trade by Bob, alongside some more commercial colourful fodder for mass consumption. I imagine the mass consumptors see it slightly differently. To be fair, even the commercial fodder is remarkably well grown and amongst its ranks are some new and very good cultivars to delight the most conservative cottage gardener. Our main purpose of the visit was to collect some seventeen new accessions of Puya which would complete our own putative National Collection. Bob told us his wife had recently scorned him for growing such esoteric and thus uncommercial plants. And yet here we were, only the next day, buying the lot. Apart from the Puya we hunted through Bob's other pots, a treat in every row. I can't imagine many collectors would want to grow Oemleria, but if anyone did (and they wanted a male plant of it) they'd be delirious to find so many here. We added *Hechtia* spp, Abromeitiella brevifolia (is it *Deuterocochnia brevifolia* now?) and *Dyckia marnier-lapostollei* to our burgeoning Bromeliaceae collection and some Nolina texana before even looking at the Kniphofia species.

With the clock ticking we brought Bob up to date with the news that VBG has been saved (we are asked wherever we go what is happening) and it was time to hit the road. Bob recommended the A46 to Coventry and then the A14 as we were now heading towards a nursery north of Cambridge, then back across to Oxford overnight. It didn't take long for Jason to resemble Keith Richards again. But Wisbech was still a long way off. And so were the endemics of Kyrgyzstan.

Plant names whys and wherefores

As a curious young child, Jan Wyers was told plants had different names in other regions. Her father taught her the Latin names, and now thanks to a tutorial at VBG she is au fait with their formula

Back in the summer Susyn Andrews, Britain's foremost horticultural taxonomist and co-author of *The Genus Lavandula* presented *An Introduction to Botany* at VBG.

Genus with capital letter, species with lowercase letter. Chris Kidd with Salvia uliginosa

We started with some background history of plant names. It was Carolus Linnaeus, a Swedish botanist, who adopted binomial names in his Species Plantarum in 1753. The plant's first name identifies the genus and the second denotes the species within that genus.

Binomial classification is a way of naming a plant by two names, both in Latin.

The genus name starts with a capital letter and the species name with a small letter. An example is *Hemerocallis citrina*.

Genera (the plural for genus) are grouped together into their family. Most family names end in aceae: eight do not, and as they have been in use for a long time they are acceptable. The family name is not needed to make the plant name unique, so it is not part of the plant name. Plants within a family share common characteristics, and the evolution of a plant and the flower structure are an important part of this, but the plants within a family can look very different.

A variety is written with a small letter: *Fagus sylvatica purpurea* is a good example. A bred variety is a cultivar and is written using a capital letter and single quotation marks: *Origanum rotundifolium* 'Kent Beauty'. We also looked at Section, Subspecies, and Forma.

The first description and published name is regarded as being the correct name. It must have been so hard to keep up with all the new plants when they were first discovered!

The really fascinating insights into the problems with plant names covered uncertain names, the synonyms. Which name takes priority? Why are plant names changed? There is much discussion before any changes are made.

We saw that some plant labels had unnecessary information which could be confusing. An accession number in a corner and the plant family and name of the plant is really useful. Some of the labels had initials of the original plant collector. *Continued on P22 …*

VBG CHRISTMAS TREES

This year for the first time VBG will be offering Nordman Spruce (non drop) Christmas Trees

CHOOSE There are two sizes, 4'-5' priced at £32 and 5'6"-7' priced at £40.

PLUS We will deliver to your door (IOW only), at a day of your choice up til Christmas Eve for an extra £6.00 **AND** Collect and dispose at a day of your choice up to 6th January for an extra £6 **OR** elect for delivery and disposal combined for £10!

SPECIAL FRIENDS OFFER **Friends can order trees, delivery and collection online at www.botanic.co.uk in our online shop. Enter Discount Code ABIES24 at the prompt for the 10% discount.** *For 'delivery address' enter the address your Friends membership is registered to, plus the date you require delivery and collection in the instructions. (Non Friends using the code will NOT receive trees.)*

Disposal will be at VBG where the trees will be chipped and used as mulch at the Garden.

All of our Christmas trees are produced to strict environmental and sustainability guidelines laid out by the Christmas Tree Growers Association (BCTA).

CALL US TO RESERVE TODAY! Or book online at www.botanic.co.uk

By purchasing your Christmas Tree from VBG you are helping VBG CIC run the Garden.

Plant names whys and wherefores *. . . continued from P20*

We are so lucky to have *The Plant Finder* now in its 26th edition. Susyn Andrews went through how to use the Plant Finder and since then I have again read the extended glossary.

In the afternoon we had a tour round the Garden like no other. Looking at tiny flowers through lenses was a revelation. Their beauty and structure was seen as never before!

The Carmichaelia which is usually admired for its unusual leaf structure and perfume had a minute but gorgeous little flower. It was a treasured experience, seeing the Garden from a different perspective.

'We saw that some plant labels had unnecessary information which could be confusing'

From a very personal perspective I am very grateful to Susyn Andrews for explaining plant names. As a very young child (pre school) I always asked the name of all the wild flowers, and one day my Dad let slip that they can have different common names in other counties.

At that time I had a jigsaw made up of all the counties in the UK. So I then asked what a primrose was called in Flintshire or Glamorganshire so he taught me the Latin names for the wild plants in the countryside and then the cultivated ones in the garden. He explained that was the language of botanists who study the plants, to avoid confusion between counties or countries. So huge thanks Dad for starting me off with the correct scientific names and to Susyn Andrews who explained them.

Open Gardens 2012

This year a different approach was taken to the Friends' open garden fund raising events. The previous year had not been that successful and it was felt that on occasions we were in competition with other organisations. So contact was made with Jennie Fradgley, the County coordinator for the National Garden Scheme, who kindly agree to let us help support their summer open gardens, with Friends providing plant sales and/or refreshments.

Overall the weather for most of the gardens was not good with temperatures well below normal. The amount raised however, far exceeded last year's total of £707. Plants sales amounted to £849.10 and refreshments £1342.30 making a grand total of £2191.40.

The programme opened early in May with a visit to Blenheim House, Magie Gray and David Roseware's town house in Ryde. This is quite a compact garden full of interest with soft and hard landscaping and lovely views towards Portsmouth. A second visit was made at the end of July to see the transformation from spring to summer.

Early in June we were at historical Nunwell House with its beautiful formal gardens with old-fashioned roses and shrubs and herbaceous borders and sea views towards the Solent.

Susan and Noel Dobbs 1600s Salterns Cottage at Seaview was next. This is a hidden gem full of interesting and unusual plants and a magnificent greenhouse. Its is hard to believe that the garden has been under a foot of water in the past.

We then went on to a new NGS garden at Ashcliff in Bonchurch. Judy and Sid Lines' lovely 1-acre garden has the cliff as a backdrop and far reaching sea views with lots of different areas to explore.

The last event in June was at Tobba and Brian Cole's garden at Wayside, St Helens. The rain did not dampen the spirits of those attending who enjoyed the informal cottage garden with roses, clematis and views towards Culver Downs.

Ashcliff, Bonchurch

Wayside, St Helens

West Meades, St Helens

The season ended in early September with the best weather of all for a visit to Patsy and Jack Thompson's garden at West Meades, St Helens. The garden is full of interesting plants and shrubs with lots of hidden areas to lure you through and it beautifully compliments the Art Deco style house.

I would like to thank all of the hosts for their generosity in letting VBG Friends' Society attend their NGS open gardens.

I would also like to thank all of the volunteers who gave up their time and helped run the refreshment and plant stalls as without their help and support none of this would have been possible.

Vic Hickin

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Your Society needs You!

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

We are looking for a new Membership Secretary. Virginia has been doing the job for the past five years and it is now time for her to change roles. All records are kept on a simple computer system and all equipment is supplied. If you would like to help the Friends in this exciting time please contact Virginia 01983 874246. She will be happy to explain the role to you and to help you through the initial handover stages.

TREASURER

Please contact Jean Kelley for details. Tel 853221 or t.d.kelley@btinternet.com

VBGFS OPEN GARDEN EVENT ORGANISER

We are looking for an enthusiastic person to take over the organising of Open Gardens in 2013. This year the Friends supported seven National Garden Scheme (NGS) open days providing refreshments and /or plant sales and raised over £2000 for the Society. Hopefully we can continue to work with the NGS next year but this has still to be confirmed. To discuss it in more detail you should contact Vic Hickin on 01983 857716. Or see below for further details

The current role involves the following:

- Liaise with the county organiser of the NSG to approach host gardens for 2013
- Contact host garden owners to ascertain if we can assist with their open days
- Visit the owners to check arrangements and layout for refreshments/plant sales
- Draw up schedule of open gardens for advert in Ventnorensis
- Contact each host 1 week before event to confirm details
- Notify VBGFS secretary to advertise event to members by email
- Arrange for delivery of crockery, refreshment and plants to venue prior to event or early on the day
- Have cash float from treasurer available
- Take crockery, plants etc and store for next event

Caption Competition Winner

The winner is Phil LeMay with . . .

Who let Chris loose with a digger again ?

Education Autumn / Winter News

The popular **Gardening Club** will be resurrected and will commence on ***Tuesday 23rd October from 2–4pm*** and again, in the evening from ***6–8pm.*** This will run monthly and is an informal course covering plant identification, propagation, walks and workshops. It will run 10 months of the year. ***The cost will be £125 per year*** to include entry to the Garden on the day of the club.

There will be three **Winter Fruit Tree Pruning Workshops** running in the grounds of the fabulous Northcourt Manor in Shorwell. ***These will cost £12 per person.*** Dates to be confirmed. Likely to be January/ February.

ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

Bulbs for Spring and Summer Colour. Look forward to spring! Start thinking about what you can plant now to provide blocks of colour in your garden; add height and brighten up dark corners.
Thursday 18th October 2–3.30pm. Cost £6

Wild flowers of the Isle of Wight. Banish those dark winter days and dream of summer meadows and long hot summer days.
Thursday 1st November 2–3.30pm. Cost £6

Seaside Gardening. Discover why some plants are more suited than others to life by the sea and which ones will thrive in your garden.
Thursday 8th November 2–3.30pm. Cost £6

If all three lectures are booked, the cost is £15

WORKSHOPS

Propagation by semi ripe cuttings. ***Sat 20th October 10am–12pm. Cost £15***

Renovation pruning. ***Sat 3rd November. 10am–12pm. Cost £12***

Christmas wreath making will take place during the VBG Christmas Fayre weekend of the 14th–15th December.

Friends will receive a 10% discount on all courses/workshops.

Wreath making at the Christmas Fayre

As individual as their makers

Christmas wreath making is one of the stalwarts each year and will be part of this year's Christmas Fayre on the weekend of the 14th/15th December between 11am and 4pm, so come along and make your own individual creation inspired by the exotic plants of VBG

Create . . . .

With a basic wire ring, the trick is to build up the layers to create a festive feast for the eyes. Traditionally, sphagnum moss was used to build up the base. It's now illegal to take this from the wild and at Ventnor Botanic Garden we use any old bendy lengths of conifer: I've even seen one made on a base of cherry laurel. The trick is to keep wiring this in as you wind the lengths through the hoop which makes the base really strong so that it supports the more decorative stuff. Don't worry about wire showing at this stage, it's easily hidden by the later additions. Then, the fun begins . . . .

I'm always amazed when leading these workshops just how differently each wreath turns out. They range from the traditional – a fattish wreath stuffed with berries and pine cones – to something experimental inspired by more unusual plants in the Garden. They may contain purple berries, seed heads, hydrangea heads and sometimes flowers. Some wreath makers go for a simple minimalist look while others go gloriously over the top.

Other great additions include old man's beard plucked from the hedgerows, mahonia heads, and sprays of white Cordyline australis berries – which are found in many Island gardens. Some of the more fragile things and the Cordyline berries benefit from a blast of hairspray to help hold them in place.

Wreathed in smiles: Jane Cheverton

The fun of doing these workshops at VBG is that participants are let loose in our wonderful garden (with some limitations!) to pick and choose their own materials.

Check out our website for details of other seasonal and festive workshops.

Irene Fletcher

New members

A very WARM WELCOME to these friends who have recently joined the Society.

Mrs M and Mr R Ayres ..... Ventnor
Mr R and Mrs P Barnes ..... Ventnor
Ms C Bassindale, Mr I Robertson Finlay and Arthur ..... Ventnor
Mrs C Battison ..... Ventnor
Mrs A Bell-Tromans and Mr N Tromans ..... Wanstead
Mrs J Beven ..... Niton
Mrs J Boyd ..... Whitwell
Mrs A and Mr W Brown ..... Aldbourne Wilts
Mr W Bruce and Mrs V Sharman Freshwater
Mr S and Mrs C Candy ..... Haywards Heath
Mr J Chadwick ..... Nettlestone
Mrs V Chamberlain ..... Thame
Mr A Chilton ..... Ventnor
Mr L Darby ..... Alveston
Mrs S and Mr D Doyle ..... Chesham
Mrs B and Mr H Fabry ..... Ventnor
Mrs V Ford ..... Lake
Mr T and Mrs P Foley ..... St Lawrence
Mrs N and Mr G Green ..... Wroxall
Mr F and Mrs A Hawkins ..... Ventnor
Mrs M and Mr D Herbertson ..... Abingdon
Mrs L and Mr J Holland ..... St Lawrence
Mrs C Hunt-Gouairat ..... Ventnor
Mr P and Mrs A Jefferson-Smith ..... London
Mr M Kane ..... Whitwell
Mrs M Matthews ..... Fordingbridge
Mrs A Moyers ..... Ventnor
Mrs E Nicopoulos and Mr D Dunphy ..... Ventnor
Mr C Odom and Ms H Higton ..... Ventnor
Mr F and Mrs P Murray-Smith ..... Freshwater
Mrs J and Mr J Nash ..... Ventnor
Mr W and Mrs H Palmer ..... Shanklin
Mr P Palmer ..... Shanklin
Mr M and Mrs H Payne ..... Billericay
Mrs J Poyner ..... St Helens
Mrs A Rogers ..... Ventnor
Mrs V Sayle and Elizabeth Betts ..... Shanklin
Mrs B Sleep ..... Cowes
Mrs S Spurling-Purkis ..... Ventnor
Mrs E Summers ..... Ventnor
Mrs K Sweet and Mr A Pannett ... Eastbourne
Mrs A Sykes ..... Godshill
Mrs J and Mr C Terry ..... Niton
Mr A and Mrs S Thatcher ..... Bonchurch
Dr R and Dr S Thompson ..... St Lawrence
Mr R and Mrs M Tomalin ..... St Lawrence
Miss E Tucker ..... Wootton Bridge
Ms E Tozer ..... Bonchurch
Mrs A Ware-White ..... Ventnor
Mr C and Mrs M Wells ..... Ventnor
Mrs C and Mr D West ..... Ventnor
Mrs A White ..... St Lawrence
Mr M and Mrs S White ..... Whitwell
Mrs L Woodford ..... Ryde
Mr M and Mrs R Wootton ..... Lake

Honorary member Alan Titchmarsh

Corporate members

We would like to thank our corporate members for their continued support.

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