



Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

*To record and conserve the gardens and parks of historic Buckinghamshire.
To aid in the research and conservation of gardens, parks and green spaces within the historic county and
campaign for their protection.*

The Newsletter of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust

Spring 2025



Adwell Manor Water Garden © Claire de Carle

Dear Members

As I write on yet another January day of anti-cyclonic gloom, we can be reassured that the days are getting longer, and spring is just around the corner. My events team have organised an amazing programme of visits for you to enjoy, so please book early to avoid disappointment.

I would also like to draw your attention to all the wonderful events that are organised by our umbrella organisation the Gardens Trust (GT). Many of these are open to non-members and members can buy tickets at a discount. While we are closely linked to the Gardens Trust who fully support our work, by offering training and advice on planning and other areas, the County Gardens Trusts (CGTs) are all independent and therefore are run slightly differently according to their local needs and membership demographic. The CGTs contribute a small amount to the GT each year according to the number of members on their books.

The GT is currently in the process of recruiting a new chairman/woman and the day-to-day running of the trust is being managed by the ten trustees ably led by Linden Groves, head of Operations and Strategy, and other members of staff, who are all part time. As well as running events the GT publishes an academic journal *Garden History* twice a year plus the GT News and monthly e-bulletins. We also highlight GT and other neighbouring CGT events on our website.

If you are not already a member you might like to consider becoming one and support them so that they can continue to support us! Of course, I don't want to discourage you from being a member of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust because your support is much valued in order that we can continue to protect locally important gardens in our historic county: <https://thegardenstrust.org/what-we-do/>

Claire de Carle

Since writing this introduction there have been some government announcements:

10th March 2025: *The government has announced its intention to make changes to the statutory consultee system, including a consultation into the impact of removing the statutory consultee role from the Gardens Trust, Sports England and the Theatres Trust. We do not currently know how the consultation will be framed or when it will start, but will keep you informed.*

11th March 2025: *The Garden Trust Council response: The Gardens Trust is dismayed to learn that the government intends to consider removing it as a statutory consultee within the English planning system.*

We don't recognise ourselves in the government's characterisation of statutory consultees. We only rarely miss the 21-day response deadline (remarkable given that we work closely with local volunteers in forming our responses), and last year objected to less than 10% of our consultations, with the remainder of our responses being simply supportive advice.

We are passionate about the role that the UK's world-famous historic parks and gardens can play in supporting positive economic growth and healthy cohesive societies, and eager to continue helping this in our role as statutory consultee. For the full response please link to the Gardens Trust website: <https://thegardenstrust.org/the-gardens-trusts-response-to-the-governments-intention-to-consult-on-removing-it-as-a-statutory-consultee/>



Broadwater Park, Preben Jakobsen © Kay Fitzsimmons

Planning Report

Apologies as it has been some time since a detailed planning report has been available and, in fact, this is also a quick whizz through some of the matters we have dealt with. As has been previously stated, the changes to the way the Gardens Trust (TGT) notifies us has caused a few issues in addition to both of our Planning Advisors being extremely busy in their day jobs. Nonetheless, we hope this update gives you some flavour of what we have been dealing with.

Firstly though, both Dr Sarah Rutherford and Jo Mirzoeff wanted to say a huge thank you to the Gardens Trust for their recognition of our work by nominating us for the 2024 Gardens Trust Volunteer of the Year. Whilst we did not win, it is a tremendous boost to know that our efforts are appreciated and acknowledged!

So let's start with the Wycombe area and here proposals for Wycombe Abbey continue to arrive, including the creation of a proper entrance/exit with new hard landscaping, proposed works to the forecourt area in front of the school and solar panels to the roof on the sports building. We cautiously welcomed improvements to the forecourt and entrance area but expressed concern about solar panels. Whilst we continue to support the need for sustainable technologies, we are also obliged to consider the impact on the designated landscape and, unfortunately, where solar panels are proposed for tall structures in the heart of historic parks and gardens, the potential impact can be extremely detrimental. It really is a challenge to the manufacturers of sustainable technologies to develop designs which would fit more appropriately in such locations – the advancements will surely come but, in the meantime, the impact of the current clunky and visually unattractive panels is very damaging to these sites.

At Fawley Court we were concerned about recent proposals to remove a large greenhouse and replace it with a warehouse-style shed which would be more visually intrusive in the landscape.

In the Aylesbury area, we remain extremely concerned about Stowe Landscape Gardens which have previously seen a number of applications that we have challenged but were successful in securing planning consent. The most recent application is the proposed construction of new sports facilities to help

the school balance their provision of sports to both girls and boys. We await the formal proposals and note that the applicant states that they are seeking to improve the setting of the key landscape areas.

The Chilterns and South Bucks area remains busy. The development proposals at Broadwater Park (Grade II registered landscape designed in 1982–1984 by Preben Jakobsen) are still being discussed, following on from a site visit in early December by one of our representatives and the leading expert on Jakobsen's work. Our recommendations during the visit were that the applicants should commission a landscape historian to produce a comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CMP) to provide a thorough understanding of the site, which would help them develop proposals more appropriate to the site and would allow for better protection and recognition of the Jakobsen design. As we have mentioned before in our planning reports, a CMP by a reputable landscape historian is always the best way to collate the historic understanding and inform the development of plans. Unfortunately, too many applicants romp ahead with planning applications without this thorough understanding, which only serves to delay their application further when they need to go through this process retrospectively. In this instance, the applicants engaged their contemporary landscape design company to produce a plan which has not delivered the required comprehensive understanding of the site and, thus, delayed the process further.



Stoke Park © BGT

You will also recall that we had recently dealt with a number of retrospective applications relating to Grade II registered park and garden (RPG) Stoke Park – many of which we formally objected to given the scale of development without consultation. We are pleased to report that we have now made a number of site visits to Stoke Park and engaged directly with senior representatives for the site who have indicated to us that further consultation will be forthcoming before new plans are submitted.

At Missenden Abbey, an application to create a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) was submitted. A SANG is a local planning authority

requirement to mitigate for new residential development plans which potentially impact on Special Areas of Conservation. Furthermore, some developers seek to use the SANG as a means of providing their Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) delivery.



Missenden Abbey © Wikipedia

Missenden Abbey is a Grade II RPG with a late C18/early C19 park, woodland, lake and pleasure ground, laid out around a country house on the site of a medieval Augustinian Abbey. The motivation behind the application was that two proposed new residential developments in Great Missenden may result in increased visitor numbers to the nearby Chiltern Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation which would potentially result in an increase in ecologically adverse activities such as trampling and dog walking. As part of its consideration of the planning applications, the local planning authority (LPA) requires a SANG which the residents and their pets of the new homes could utilise instead of the Chiltern Beechwoods.

These cases are always difficult as we, obviously, support the need to protect special areas of conservation as well as providing open space for all. However, we were greatly concerned at the scale of this proposal in relation to the new housing being proposed, particularly given that the new car park was proposed to be within the registered landscape. We were also concerned at the plethora of clutter (bins, seats, signs etc) that the proposal would include and the reduction in tranquillity which had the potential for permanent detrimental impact on the significance of these designated heritage assets. We particularly felt that the site had been selected as 'easy pickings' for a SANG due to its unspoilt condition which comes from its protected position within an RPG. We were very encouraged that the Chiltern Society, the local Parish Council and the local authority all objected to the proposals.

Finally, you will all be aware that, with a change in government, there is always an expectation for a change in planning policy. We will wait to see how this impacts on our role as a statutory consultee.

Jo Mirzoeff

International Women's Day

International Women's Day: 8th March 2025

Once again, BGT is marking International Women's Day by celebrating women's contributions to a particular aspect of horticulture. This year, when the theme is '**Accelerate Action**', we are looking at women's contributions to plant conservation, from Australia to Scotland via South-East Asia, Central Asia and Scandinavia.

'Accelerate Action' is a worldwide call to acknowledge strategies, resources and activity that positively impact women's advancement, and to support and elevate their implementation.

Significant barriers to gender equality remain, yet with the right action and support, positive progress can be made for women everywhere.

In 2022 we featured *Forgotten Buckinghamshire Women in Gardening*: Margaret Ursula Mee (1909–1988), Alice de Rothschild (1847–1922) and Kay Naylor Sanecki (1922–2005).

In 2023, with the foundation of the Buckinghamshire Gardens Trust Gardeners Network, we realised that more than 50% of the Head Gardeners/Managers were women, as is still the case. So to celebrate 2023 we focused on three *Women Head Gardeners in Buckinghamshire*: Franzi Cheeseman at Stoke Poges Memorial Gardens, Jackie Hunt at Turn End, Haddenham, and Anna Tolfree, Senior Gardener at Stowe and Claydon.

For 2024 the theme was 'Inspire Inclusion' and we asked five C21st women landscape architects and garden designers to contribute. Their work and practices are truly inspiring, and certainly international. They shared their experiences and thought it was an 'honour' to be invited; with contributions coming from Marian Boswell, Charlotte Harris, Arabella Lennox-Boyd, Jo Thompson and Xa Tollemache, who are continuing Lancelot Brown's legacy with modern innovations, improved representation and diversity in the sector.

Researching active C21st women botanists, conservationists, plant collectors, explorers and ethnobotanists is the focus for 2025 and Clare Butler and Louise Keil drew up a list of women's contributions to plant conservation, from Australia to Scotland via South-East Asia, Central Asia and Scandinavia. The five contributors represent all parts of the UK and are:

Margaux Apple, Cambridge University Botanic Garden

Elinor Berman, Millennium Seed Bank, Kew

Rebecca Drew Galloway, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh

Dr Sarah Edwards, Oxford University

Sue Wynn-Jones, Crûg Farm Plants



Margaux Apple

Margaux Apple

Cambridge University Botanic Garden

For centuries, botanic gardens have been growing, cataloguing and collecting plants, with evolving technologies, objectives and practices shaping this work. In 2019, Cambridge University Botanic Garden (CUBG) introduced its Living Collections Strategy, a comprehensive plan that evaluated the current state of its collection and outlined opportunities to increase, as well as refine and grow, its value. This strategy focused on targeting key temperate regions for plants that would thrive in both current and future climates; support ongoing research and conservation efforts; increase the proportion of wild-origin plants; and expand the representation of species rare in cultivation. These goals have been achieved in part by CUBG-led seed-collecting expeditions. As Assistant Curator, part of my role has been to contribute to the organisation and execution of expeditions in Kyrgyzstan [in Central Asia].

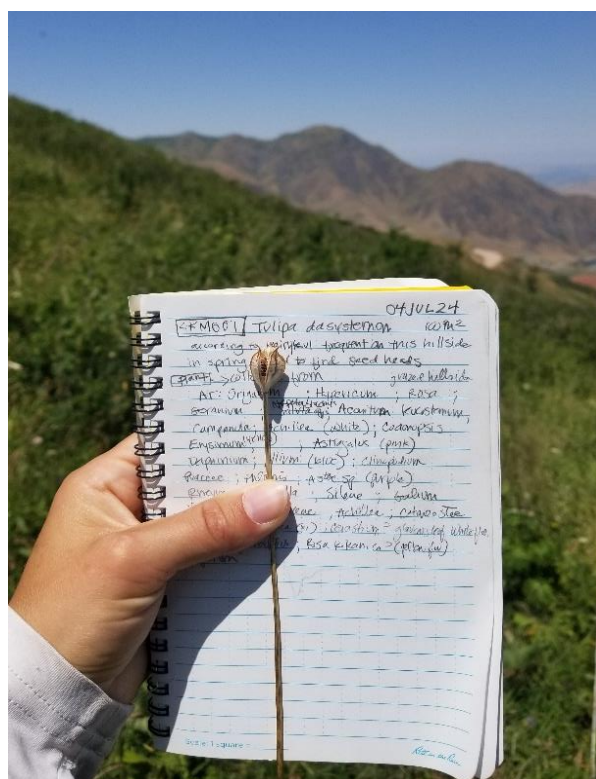


Batken Region, Kyrgyzstan, July 2024

An expedition in Kyrgyzstan is as full-on as one might venture to guess! Last July, 2024, our month-long expedition took us to the far reaches of this mountainous country. We camped in remote locations, ate many instant noodles and hiked for up to ten hours to seek out species of interest. We partnered with the Kyrgyz National Academy of Sciences and the Gareev Botanic Garden, the sole botanic garden in Kyrgyzstan. We were joined by

horticultural staff members from Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and Missouri Botanical Garden. Three members of staff from CUBG participated: one being myself acting as team leader, one horticulturist with expertise in alpine plants and one with curatorial expertise and fluency in Russian (one of the two official languages of Kyrgyzstan).

This expedition resulted in the collection of seed and herbarium vouchers [dried plant specimens] from 169 taxa of 44 plant families. The seed, vouchers and associated data (e.g. GPS co-ordinates, habitat type, population dynamics, soil characteristics) were shared among all partner gardens and, following successful propagation, will be incorporated into the respective collections. Expedition work is rigorous, and the days are long, but the rewards of international collaboration for the sake of contributing to plant knowledge, education and *ex situ* conservation are well worth it.



Collecting wild tulip (*Tulipa dasystemon*) Chuy Region, Kyrgyzstan, July 2024

This expedition marks CUBG's third in the past two years to Kyrgyzstan. I've had the privilege to have been a contributing member, and at times team leader, to all three expeditions. With each expedition comes new collaborators, landscapes and plants. We work with expert botanists from the region who give invaluable insight into plant identification, permitting processes, ecological context and historical insights. One historical insight that piqued my interest was that of the array of species we collected: many had a similar name – *Festuca olgae*, *Gentiana olgae*, *Linum olgae*, etc. These plants were not at all closely related (all members of different plant families) yet were seemingly linked by their specific epithet *olgae*. As it turns out, this specific epithet was ascribed to these plants to honour Olga Fedchenko (1845–1921),

a Russian botanist known for her extensive explorations and botanising in the region. At a time when many women were excluded from scientific endeavours or unacknowledged for their work, here is a woman who over a century and a half later is memorialised amongst the flowering alpine meadows of Central Asia.



Acantholimon alberti in situ, Batken Region, Kyrgyzstan, July 2024

I am deeply grateful for my experiences working in Kyrgyzstan; for the work carried out by those historical figures seeking to interpret the world around them and the contemporary botanists sharing the stories and diversity of the land for the sake of preserving it for generations of botanists to come.

All photos © Margeaux Apple

Science on Sunday – 13th April at 2.30pm

Join Margeaux Apple, Assistant Curator at Cambridge University Botanic Gardens, as she discusses the exciting work to bring wild collected plants into CUBG's collection. Learn about what drives these expeditions and meet Margeaux Apple, Assistant Curator of the Living Collection, in person.

Elinor Breman Millennium Seed Bank, Kew



Elinor at the MSB © Jeff Eden, RBG Kew

Dr Elinor Breman (MA Cantab, MSc and DPhil Oxon) has been working in seed conservation at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew's Millennium Seed Bank in Wakehurst, Sussex since 2013. During this time, she has been instrumental in the development of the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership, managing the seed bank's huge breadth of international partnerships.

The Millennium Seed Bank (MSB) was established in 2000 and is the world's largest seed bank for wild plant species. By collecting seeds, drying and freezing them, you can extend their lifespan for tens to hundreds of years – making seed banking a very effective conservation method for plants with seeds that can withstand this process (80–90% of flowering plants). “My favourite definition of a seed is that it's a tiny plant sent out in the world with a packed lunch and a coat,” says Elinor, “the seed is designed to give the new plant the best start in life”. The MSB is a Noah's Ark for plant life – making sure plants are safe and available to future generations.



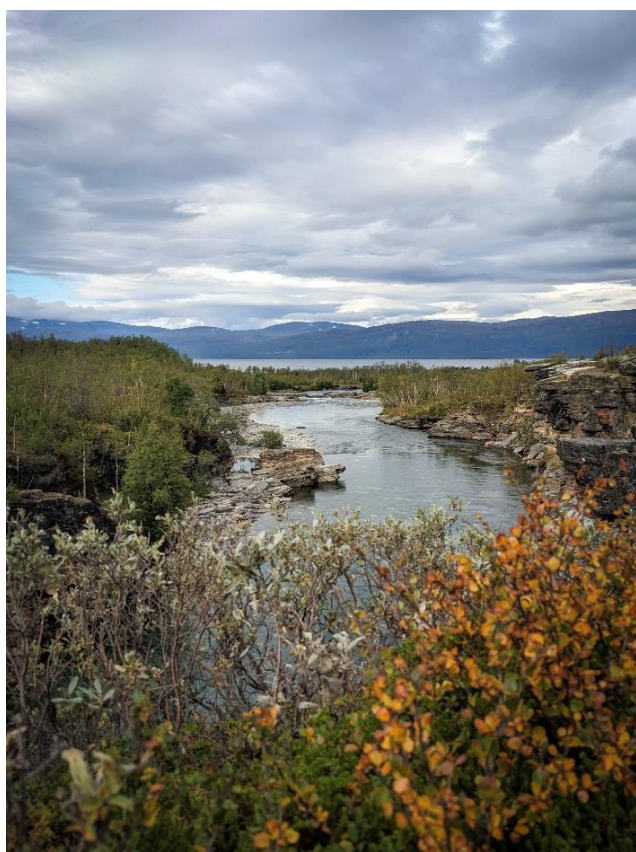
Collecting seeds © Lydia Shellien-Walker, RBG Kew

Over the past 25 years the partnership team has worked with around 100 countries and territories to conserve their native flora and increase the capacity in-country for conservation. Overall, the partnership aims to elevate the status of seed conservation and seed-based restoration as methods for conserving plants, and to support partners in their conservation efforts. It is usually Kew's partners who are the ones out in the field, making the collections for

conservation; however, the MSB team are often lucky enough to join them.

Elinor has previously led several expeditions – both for Kew and in previous roles. In Autumn 2023, Elinor embarked on an expedition to Arctic Sweden during which she and fellow scientists from Kew and RBG Gothenburg collected 300,000 seeds from arctic and alpine species.

Arctic plants are a focus of conservation as climate change and warming are happening faster in the Arctic than any other part of the world – nearly four times as fast as the rest of the planet – and another 4–7°C of warming is predicted by the end of this century. Arctic plants are unique, having evolved to survive in a narrow range of conditions, making them very vulnerable to any change in the environment. Other plants cope with climate warming by moving to higher altitudes or latitudes, but arctic plants have reached the limits. Studying how arctic plants cope with a changing environment is helping efforts to improve species' survival in this region.



Arctic Sweden © Lydia Shellien-Walker, RBG Kew

Target species lists are developed prior to fieldwork, and the best sites for collecting the species are identified. Each seed collection aims to have 10,000 seeds (although smaller collections for threatened and endemic plants are common), and checks are made prior to collection to ensure there will be no impact on the natural regeneration of the population, with no more than 20% of the available seed being harvested. Seeds are then stored in the country of origin, with part of the collection duplicated to the MSB as a safety measure.



Tea break on the Arctic Sweden field trip © Lydia Shellien-Walker, RBG Kew

This year, the MSB celebrates 25 years. Since its inception, nearly 2.5 billion seeds from more than 40,000 wild plant species have been banked and Elinor and colleagues are now looking ahead to the next 25 years. With the future of the planet in crisis, it will be important not only to safeguard seeds but to use them to restore habitats.

A day in the life of an Arctic seed collector

<https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/arctic-seed-film>

‘A typical day in the field would see us set out with rucksacks full of field kit’, said Elinor.

‘Depending on the day, we would hike, take a boat, or jump on a chairlift to reach our collecting sites. Once there, populations would be assessed: were there enough seeds available to make a collection without impacting natural regeneration, and what was the quality of the seed?’

The team would then stick sample of seeds to Sellotape to prevent the wind blowing them away, and scissors would be used to perform cut-tests – cutting the seed in half to check that it was fully developed and at the point of dispersal.

‘As we hiked, we surveyed plant populations, gathering information as we went’, Elinor explained. ‘Then, over coffee or lunch, we would review our collecting options, making a plan for the rest of the day.’

The team then divided up for collecting. As well as aiming to collect 10,000 seeds from each species, they also collect data such as location, other plants in the area, and land use, along with a herbarium specimen – representative plant material that would be dried and pressed to form a permanent record of the species collected.

Rebecca Drew Galloway
Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh



Rebecca Drew Galloway planting *Cicerbita alpina* in Arkaig, October 2024 © A. Finger, RBGE

In Scotland, recent extinction rates of native flora are estimated to be 100 to 1,000 times higher than pre-industrial levels. Entire habitats, many of which are unique to Scotland, are at risk. Various organisations across the country are collaborating to restore our natural wilderness. At the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (RBGE), we are actively developing scientific and horticultural approaches to species recovery via a three-year Scottish Plant Recovery project.

Many of the species we focus on are endangered due to various negative human impacts such as changes in land management, overgrazing, climate change and overcollection. These factors have led to fragmented populations that are subjected to continual inbreeding, often pushing them to the brink of their ecological tolerance.

At RBGE, our science and horticulture departments work closely together. Through research, horticultural trials and DNA mapping we deepen our understanding of these plants. This knowledge informs the development of protocols that help us learn how to grow these species and create new populations, thereby safeguarding them for the future.

As a conservation horticulturist, I specialise in restoring these species by creating extensive ex-situ collections. These collections consist of materials collected from the wild, through either vegetative methods or propagules (seeds and spores). Given that the populations we draw from are vulnerable, we are

committed to collecting responsibly to limit any negative impacts on their sustainability. We then propagate and grow this material at RBGE, with the intent of reintroducing it to the wild to establish new populations and ensure the survival of these species.

Each plant presents its own unique challenges, including very specific individual requirements that are not yet fully understood. My role is to cultivate these plants in large numbers to learn about their needs and ensure they thrive. This understanding informs our search for suitable planting sites and habitats. I develop protocols based on research and intuition, sometimes creating complex artificial structures, such as the 'cascade', which replicates a highland fen. This provides the ideal conditions for *Saxifraga hirculus* (Yellow Marsh Saxifrage), a species that has struggled to survive in cultivation for more than two years. Fortunately, we currently have 500 healthy plants entering their third year.



Saxifraga hirculus cascade in the RBGE nursery © R.D. Galloway, RBGE

By maintaining a large ex-situ collection, we can diversify and strengthen population genetics. By preserving stocks from varying populations at our nursery we can cross-pollinate them, thereby enhancing the genetic diversity of depleted species like *Cicerbita alpina* (Alpine Blue Sowthistle), which has dwindled to just four populations in Scotland. These remaining populations are so inbred that they can no longer produce viable seeds independently. Without our intervention, this species could disappear from our hillsides within the next 10 to 15 years.



Cicerbita alpina seedlings produced and propagated in the RBGE nursery, ready for planting © R.D. Galloway, RBGE

We have successfully produced and propagated many *Cicerbita alpina* seedlings in the RBGE nursery, which are now ready for planting. Using this method, we have already established multiple new populations, including four that were completed in October 2024, where over 1,000 genetically robust individuals were planted. This initiative not only creates self-sustaining populations but also lays the groundwork for additional projects throughout Scotland.



Cicerbita alpina planting in Glen Feshie © S. Jones, RBGE

Scottish Plant Recovery Project

To follow the progress of this project, you can keep up to date with the project posts on Botanics Stories. <https://stories.rbge.org.uk/archives/category/science/scottish-plant-recovery>

Sarah Edwards
University of Oxford



Dr Sarah Edwards FLS

Dr Sarah Edwards FLS is an ethnobotanist at the University of Oxford, where she teaches ethnobotany and biological conservation. Referred to as the ‘science of survival’, ethnobotany explores the intricate relationships between people and plants, shaped by culture across time and space. Ethnobotany examines how plants are perceived, used, and valued – for essentials like food, medicine, and materials, as well as their cultural significance in rituals and ceremonies.



Nymphaea violacea – the waterlily flower is the emblem of Aurukun. Once a staple food source, the seeds were ground into a flour and used to bake damper bread in earth oven

Sarah’s passion for plants began in childhood. As a Bucks schoolgirl, she volunteered at the Physic Garden at Chenies Manor House, where she encountered the fascinating ‘Doctrine of Signatures’,

a belief linking a plant's physical traits to its healing properties. Today, her career has come full circle: Sarah serves as Plant Records Officer at Oxford Botanic Garden, Britain's oldest botanic garden, established in 1621 as a Physic Garden. She curates digital records that ensure the scientific integrity of the Garden's living collections, supporting research, education, and conservation.

After graduating in botany, Sarah began her career at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, deepening her plant knowledge. A vivid dream led her to Australia, where she collaborated with First Nations communities in the Northern Territory and Cape York Peninsula. Working with Wik and Kugu Elders in Aurukun, Far North Queensland, Sarah helped document traditional plant knowledge and promote its intergenerational transmission. She partnered with the local school, allowing students to learn directly from Elders while respecting cultural protocols that protect sacred and secret plant knowledge. Sarah adhered to the principle that only Traditional Owners may discuss plants from their clan estates, listening and learning with humility.



Waterlilies growing in an Aurukun billabong



Fruit of *Syzygium* sp., a traditional bush food

Sarah was honoured to be adopted as a daughter by the Kugu Songman, Joe Ngallametta, a profound gesture of trust and responsibility. Songmen are ceremonial custodians, preserving ancient songs and

stories passed down since the Dreaming, when Creation Ancestors sang life into being. Joe, the last person in his community raised traditionally in the bush, was brought to the then Presbyterian Mission of Aurukun as a teenager in exchange for rations of tea, flour, sugar and tobacco. He was also the last native speaker of Kugu-Uwanh, his language going extinct on his passing, six months after Sarah returned to the UK from the field. His knowledge and wisdom profoundly shaped Sarah's understanding of plants, culture and storytelling.

In 2003, Sarah received the Lawrence Memorial Award from the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation at Carnegie Mellon University. She earned a PhD in Medical Ethnobotany from the London School of Pharmacy (now UCL) in 2006. Her academic journey continued with two postdoctoral research fellowships at UCL, including investigating the scientific evidence underpinning herbal medicines. She later returned to Kew to contribute to the Medicinal Plant Names Services project, improving access to medicinal plant data.

More recently, Sarah has collaborated with artists and farmers in South Wales and the London Borough of Richmond Arts Service on the Cultural Reforesting programme, encouraging deeper connections to nature. She also serves on the board of the British Herbal Medicine Association (BHMA), promoting responsible herbal medicine use.

Her work emphasises the importance of fostering a love for plants – because, as Sarah believes, 'to know them is to love them'. With 45% of flowering plants estimated to be threatened with extinction, as reported by Kew's *State of the World's Plants and Fungi*, she champions plant conservation.

Sarah is the author of several publications, including *Phytopharmacy: An Evidence-Based Guide to Herbal Medicinal Products* (Wiley, 2015) and the beautifully illustrated *The Ethnobotanical* (Kew Publishing, 2023). She has also appeared on podcasts, including the BBC Gardeners' World Magazine episode on Plants that Kill and Cure with Frances Tophill.

All photos © Dr Sarah Edwards

Dr Sarah Edwards is Plant Records Officer at the University of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum, and teaches Ethnobiology and Biological Conservation at the Institute of Human Sciences, University of Oxford. She is also an Honorary Research Fellow at UCL School of Pharmacy and a Board member of the British Herbal Medicine Association. Her research interests include understanding sociocultural aspects of medicinal plant use within different societies and biocultural diversity conservation in northern Australia. Her latest work collaborating with farmers and artists in South Wales has focused on using a multispecies ethnographic approach to re-evaluating human-plant interrelationships.

Sue Wynn-Jones Crûg Farm Plants



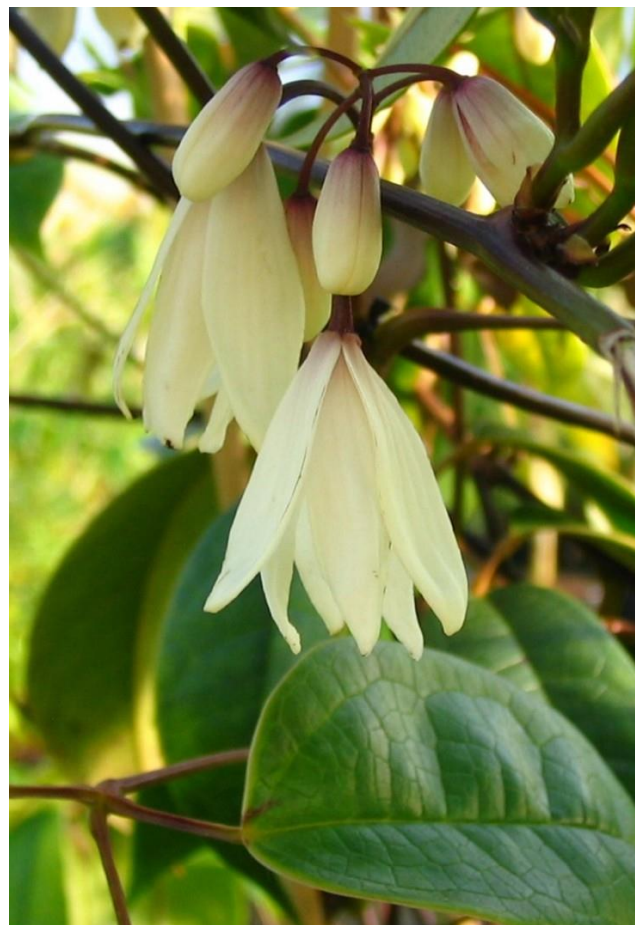
Sue, Bleddyn, American plantsman Dan Hinkley and members of Taiwan's Museum of Natural Science team collecting in Dasyueshan Forest, Taiwan

Along with her husband Bleddyn, Sue Wynn-Jones owns the remarkable and unique 20-acre Crûg Farm Plants nursery overlooking the Menai Strait near Caernarfon. Struggling to make a living from beef farming, over 30 years ago the couple looked into diversifying into growing, especially exploiting their 4-acre garden. Finding little to inspire them in UK nurseries, they decided to go and collect plants for themselves, mounting their first expedition to Taiwan in 1991. Apart from during the Covid pandemic they have been out collecting several times every year since, visiting every continent apart from Australia.

That first trip was planned by visiting Kew, looking things up in the herbarium and compiling a 'hit list' of plants to look for. They were able to make contact with people in Taiwan who could give them permission to collect plants, and from there they were able to work with the authorities in training local students to collect and re-establish rare and threatened plants. (Apart from Kew, they are the only people in England and Wales to hold a collecting licence.) They found that many countries they visited lack the UK's scientific resources, but are nonetheless generous with their information and material, while in contrast pharmaceutical companies default on their duty to compensate countries whose plant material they collect and exploit.

They chose areas with a similar climate to the UK to increase their chances of success, but Sue admitted

that Bleddyn gets fixated on particular genera, for instance *Sarcococca*, *Schefflera* and *Hydrangea*. (Despite having no horticultural qualifications, he is now a world expert and has species named after him.) They focus on collecting seed, because of the obvious practical and legal difficulties of transporting plants, but are finding that climate change has made this more difficult, meaning it's become even more important to work closely with the authorities and institutes around the world. Moreover Brexit has had devastating effects, wiping out a large proportion of their previous business in Europe and having a hugely detrimental effect on botanic gardens and other research institutions worldwide.



The largest flowered *Holboellia*, *H. brachyandra* from Vietnam
Photos © Bleddyn Wynn-Jones

Brexit has thus meant scaling back on propagation, but it is still done on a huge scale although in a quite 'low-tech' way (margarine tubs with clear lids are the only satisfactory container for germinating seeds). Naturally, biosecurity has to be very tight. As far as possible they grow plants outside, and that way designers who visit can see what they will look like in a realistic setting. Because so many plants are new, a comprehensive cataloguing system is needed. Containerised plants are kept under cover in winter to protect from wet – the old cattle sheds being pressed into service – but the frequency of storms and extreme heat are still proving challenging for growers on an exposed North Wales hilltop.



H. chartacea, a newly described semi-evergreen species of *Holboellia* from high altitudes in the eastern Himalayas

What of the future? Like many in the industry, Sue sees a poor outlook for horticulture generally, with nurseries having suffered huge weather-related losses in 2024, RHS Wisley visitor numbers devastated owing to long-term major roadworks, and – unlike in Europe – the profession not attracting young people. Fortunately Sue and Bleddyn have been able to establish close contacts with the National Trust who are employing a lot of new young head gardeners. Whether any future horticulturalists or scientists will have the Wynn-Jones' good fortune in gaining permission to continue their plant-hunting work remains to be seen.

Read more about the plants and collecting trips at <https://www.crug-farm.co.uk/>. Crûg Farm Plants is open by appointment, and mail order is available at <https://mailorder.crug-farm.co.uk/>



Crûg Farm

https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/garden/10426/crug_farm

Renowned plant collectors' garden of three acres which are grounds to old country house (not open). Explore different areas including walled, woodland and Crûg gardens which are filled with unusual and shade-loving plants and trees, many not seen in cultivation before. Chelsea Gold Medallists and winners of the President's Award.

NGS: Crûg Farm openings

14th June 2025 Pre-booking available

For this open day you can book your tickets in advance or you can just turn up and pay on the day.

Refreshments: Tea, coffee and cake in aid of Parkinson's Cymru.

Admission Adult: £5.00 Child: £0.00

Opening times 11:00-16:00

Talk: Evenley Wood Garden by Dan Winter, Head Gardener, 26th October 2024

Dan has been Head Gardener at Evenley Wood Garden near Brackley for only three years, having moved from Waterperry, but is clearly deeply attached to this hidden gem.

The 60-acre site was bought by Tim Whiteley, a passionate plantsman and collector, in 1980, and laid out to take advantage of its band of acid soil, unusual for the area, enabling him to nurture ericaceous plants which would otherwise have struggled. Mr Whiteley passed away in 2017 at the age of 85.



Tim Whiteley © DW

Not a conventional garden but more of a wild garden or arboretum, Evenley is well known for its spring bulbs, especially swathes of named snowdrops, daffodils, the famous 'scilla stream', crocuses and cyclamen. To name but a few, hellebores, camellias, azaleas, rhododendrons and magnolias are all worth seeking out, with climbing and rambling roses and lilies notable in summer, and in autumn the colourful displays of acers and euonymous are spectacular. It's a place you could never tire of.



Evenley Wood Garden has produced nine new plants, some of which are commercially available. They include a maple, *Acer campestre* 'Evenley Red', and *Lilium* 'Evenley Jane', named after Mr Whiteley's wife.

As the website says, "It is a wonderful and beautiful place which is constantly changing with the seasons but is also of great importance and significance to many botanists, plantsmen and women and gardeners throughout the world."



It has also recorded 90 species of birds, something like 240 moth species, numerous butterflies and dragonflies and over 70 liverworts and mosses.

Visitors in earlier years will be pleased to learn that one of Dan's initial tasks was to tackle the paths and drainage. With the help of about 20 volunteers, many woodland areas have been opened up where tree growth had started to affect the conditions for the spring bulbs. Dan has begun to introduce more perennials, and annual wildflower areas.

Other developments have been the improved café and the introduction of a wide range of events and activities for both adults and children.

As well as the year-round interest of the plants and trees, my personal favourite has always been the guinea fowl on their perambulations (last time I went they were actually perching in the trees), so although Dan didn't mention them, I hope they're still flourishing.

Evenley Wood Garden, Evenley, NN13 5SH

<https://www.evenleywoodgarden.co.uk/>

Clare Butler

Visit: Stowe with guided walk by Kathy Jackson, 23rd October 2024



It was a great joy to be invited by the Bucks Gardens Trust to revisit Stowe Landscape Gardens in October. Our team had managed to pick a wonderful day for our excursion, and it was great to reconnect with friends old and new after an absence of some years. We started out after meeting up at the New Inn, with some suitable refreshments, for an excursion into

parts of the gardens which to some might have seemed unfamiliar. Our guide for the afternoon was Stowe Gardens Guide and Bucks Gardens Trust researcher and honorary secretary Kathy Jackson who represented the new generation of NT guides. On the now familiar walk down to the Bell Gate entrance, we encountered two nurses, some of the 'Standing with Giants' installation which was our ultimate objective for the afternoon. We initially turned right along the south bank of the Octagon Lake and enjoyed the views up to Stowe House, across lawns now stripped of their golf overlay, though I hope they continue to play cricket there as was the habit long before the school arrived. Looking back we were able to see the north face of the Corinthian Arch, which we had passed on entering the car parks, which were all in use today.

We now turned back south-east below a spreading London plane avenue towards the Temple of Friendship, which although in ruins today represents the friendship and 'cousinage' that Lord Cobham surrounded himself with, above the wine cellars which fuelled their parties there. The women of the family had another 'Temple' visible over the 'river' and fields beyond, from where they could keep an eye on their menfolk. Claire de Carle had a very helpful list of some of the more interesting specimen trees we were to encounter along the way, prepared by member Michael Hunt, which added yet another layer to the journey.



Chinese house © SM

Turning off the very well beaten track we headed down towards the William Kent designed 'Chinese House', so long a part of Stowe's sister garden at

Wotton. It was beautifully restored some years ago, and thanks to the NT it remains in extraordinary condition, a true rarity. We now headed into Lamport Gardens, the last part of the estate to be bought in, and originally screened off from the rest of the gardens by sculpted panels on the Palladian Bridge. This has much more a Victorian feel, with an arboretum overlay with some fascinating specimen trees, including a lovely Cut Leafed Beech which puzzled some of our group. It has a more intimate feel than much of the rest of the Pleasure Gardens with its winding pathways and shrubberies, spring and small waterways, and is much improved from the scene of near-dereliction I remember from many years ago. From the far end we could catch a glimpse of golfers enjoying the new course laid out by garden historian and friend Dr Sarah Rutherford.



Returning to the 'main drag' we encountered that Palladian Bridge again, its sculptural screen now reassigned to the Temple of Concord and Victory. But I'm getting ahead of ourselves. Kathy set the scene for the rest of our visit, telling the story of the Gothic Temple and Lord Cobham's Column glimpsed far in the distance. Crossing a field of grazing sheep, a reminder of where the Temples' fortune had first come from, we paused on the wooden bridge with its views across the 'river' and its islands. We entered perhaps more familiar territory heading up the eastern edge of the mostly William Kent-designed Elysian Fields, with its political collection of buildings and monuments. The direct meaning of some of these is now lost on most of us, but with a bit of help from Kathy we were reminded of the stories behind them.

And now the end was in sight. As we entered the lower end of the Grecian Valley we paused to take in the view of the massive Cedar of Lebanon which dominates the path from this direction.



Beyond it we had our first glimpse of the bulk of the 'Giants', representing those British forces that died on the first day of D-day. Looking down from the steps of the Temple it was painful to see so many, but given the machine guns and other weaponry available to the German forces and the strength of their defensive position it was also amazing to think how comparatively 'Few' fell. I visited those beaches as a child when the events were much closer, only 40 years earlier, and remember the feelings seeing the rows and rows of graves in the cemeteries. Our nearest green space was London's Brompton Cemetery, then a much less orderly affair. Seeing these soldiers, sailors and airmen as silhouettes really gave an idea of the loss. I really have to thank the NT for allowing the display, and Bucks Gardens Trust for enabling us to see it.

Some of us were delighted to take the journey back by land train past the north front of the House and some of the school's newer buildings, which I have to admit are now being screened off quite well thanks to new planting along the North Drive. As we turned through the Boycott Pavilions, once home to a young Mr Brown and his growing family, and out onto the Queen's Drive at a simulated horse's pace, we were able to get an idea of the scale of this 'wundergarten'. And so we returned to the New Inn and home, with much food for thought. Another huge thanks for all involved in preparing this special event, and indeed to all who attended and shared their various viewpoints and knowledge.

Charles Boot

Talk: The Great Geranium Robbery by Dr David Marsh, 8th February 2025



The first talk of the year saw the welcome return of David Marsh, who had a couple of days earlier returned from a trip to India, where the temperature had been about 25 degrees warmer than chilly Aylesbury. There was a good turnout despite the weather, and we welcomed some members of the Fairford Leys WI, who had discovered our website while googling snowdrop walks.

David's talk introduced us to a number of characters who were involved in the nursery trade during the late C18th, producing new and exotic plants, including Daniel Grimwood of Kensington. This important era of plant introductions was illustrated by several early catalogues, some with beautiful drawings of the flowers and long lists of all the plants available.

The robbery that we were intrigued to find out about was the theft in 1795 of rare plants from Grimwood's nursery grounds including some newly introduced geraniums and ericas from South Africa. A suspect was quickly identified and arrested but strongly protested his innocence. The case ended up at the Old Bailey and pitted Grimwood against the plant collector who was accused of the theft.

The details of the case provoked much discussion amongst the audience and at the end of the talk David asked us to give our verdict. It was a unanimous guilty verdict, as compared with the verdict at the time of not guilty which again produced further discussion including from our member Richard Mawrey KC, who was able to add interesting details about court cases during the C18.

If you did not make it to the talk you can catch up on David's blog (please note it is in two parts) [The Great Geranium Robbery](#) see also [The Garden History Blog](#). You can find out more information about plant catalogues at the RHS website, where over 28,000 digitised items are available. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/education-learning/libraries-at-rhs/news-projects/digital-dig>

If you have enjoyed one of our talks, do write a review and we will include it in our newsletter, e-news and post it on our social media.

Claire de Carle

Talk: The Gardens and Wildflowers of Corfu by Jackie Hunt, 8th March 2025

Jackie Hunt, Turn End's Head Gardener, shared her photographs and research from a study trip to the Greek island of Corfu in April 2024.



Jackie talked about the stunning gardens and landscapes she saw and how gardens are managed including plant selection, pruning and irrigation. She also highlighted particular plants of interest, including spring-flowering orchids, for which the island is famous, alongside a range of plants she is interested in growing at Turn End.



Rothschild cascade and pool



Agnos house and pool

Jackie explained the aim was to learn more about Mediterranean wild flora and cultivated plants grown in gardens. Corfu is the wettest of the Greek islands and the tours were led by expert local guides, head gardeners, garden designers and owners. Additional knowledge from fellow travellers helped add unique detail to investigate plants potentially suitable for UK. We were all very envious of the beautiful pools but unfortunately the group were not allowed to use them! The tour was organised by the international plant and garden specialists *Mediterranean Plants and Gardens*. MPG provided a bursary. **Gwen Miles**

Great Houses and Gardens of Moravia and Bohemia

In May 2024 a group of garden history enthusiasts, some from the Birbeck Garden History Group and others from County Gardens Trusts, set off on a trip to the Czech Republic. The tour was led by Barbara Peacock of Wessex Fine Arts Tours, who was accompanied by Martina Hinks-Edwards, an expert on the country's cultural history. The eight-day programme started in Prague and took us in a loop around the country through Moravia and Bohemia. It was a packed itinerary, and we visited about 20 sites which included castles, country houses and many parks and gardens. While we were on the coach Barbara and Martina told us about the places we were visiting and gave us a comprehensive history of the country. Very little has been written about gardens in the Czech Republic so on our return I decided to write a paper about these wonderful gardens, which in general are not widely visited, but have been the subject of recent restoration and several of them are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

I have selected two of my favourite gardens to describe in this short introduction to the gardens, one Baroque and one dating from the late C18th/C19th.



The flower garden of Kromeriz



The conservatory at Kromeriz

The 'Libosad' or Flower Garden at **Kromeriz** (in the south-east of the country) is a Baroque garden, situated outside the city walls, dating back to the

Middle Ages. The most important character in the story of Kromeriz is Bishop Karl von Lichtenstein-Castelcorn (1624–95). Elected bishop in 1664, he was from a branch of one of the richest families in Moravia and was one of the great Baroque princely patrons. He was passionate about architecture, but his other interests were gardening, painting and music and he owned a notable collection of rare books. The garden flourished and gradually expanded during his time with the creation of the chateau gardens and the flower garden. The central feature of the Libosad is a rotunda designed by Giovanni Pietra Tencalla (1629–1703). Profusely decorated with sculpture, stucco and painting, and housing a Foucault pendulum, it originally contained fountains, grottoes and water jokes. The impressive 230m colonnade closing off one end of the garden was constructed in 1846 and is decorated with sculptures. High hedges divide the garden into a series of rooms, a Dutch garden with a parterre, and an orange garden and a mount. Other notable features are a rabbit hill (reconstructed from a 1691 engraving) and the aviary in the centre of an ornamental pond.



The Minaret at Lednice



Three Graces Temple at Lednice

The second, dating from the late C18th/C19th is the 200-hectare park of **Lednice/Valtice**, one of the largest cultural landscapes in Central Europe. The site is located next to the Austrian border and forms an extensive territory of natural landscape including forests, meadows, fields and water. The Lednice

estate belonged to the Liechtensteins, the wealthiest landowners in Moravia, from the C13 until 1945. The former Baroque chateau, dating from the 1620s, was remodelled 1845–56 and today is one of the most important examples of Romantic Gothic Revival in the Czech Republic. The vast and magnificent park is one of the largest cultural landscapes in Central Europe, becoming a UNESCO world heritage site in 1996.

A key figure in the history of Lednice is Karl Eusebius Leichtenstein (1611–84) who inherited the estate at the age of 16. He was inspired by his extensive travels in Europe, acquainting himself with the art, architecture and gardens. Another is Joseph Hardtmuth (1758–1816, inventor of the modern pencil) commissioned by Johann Josef I to create the romantic park with its monuments; his designs included the Minaret and the obelisk. The landscape gardeners Bernard Petri (1767–1853), who studied in England for four years, and Josef van der Schot (1763–1819) formerly of the Vienna botanic garden, collaborated on the garden and filled it with the latest plant introductions.

The landscape is dotted with follies connected by their vistas, small chateaux and temples. Lancelot Brown and Sir William Chambers were thought to have been influences on the park, but there is little evidence of any Brownian features. The most impressive building is the Minaret, situated on the edge of a lake. It was a considerable feat of engineering in 1795 and from the top it is possible to see St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna.

If you are interested in the full report (7,500 words, plus photographs) please email me at claire@decarle.plus.com and I will send it to you electronically.

Photographs by Claire de Carle

Clare de Carle

Reminder:

A gentle reminder that membership subscriptions are due 1st April 2025.

If you pay by Go Cardless, Direct Debit or have a Standing Order then you have nothing to do.

If you pay via BACS then you will need to action this: Lloyds 30-96-54 A/c 00912179. Include reference e.g. surname and initial.

If paying by cheque we have put a renewal form and envelope in with this Newsletter.

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Copy Date for next Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 5th October

Email to newsletter@bucksgardenstrust.org.uk

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New Leaflet

We have designed a new leaflet which is enclosed with your Spring 2025 Newsletter.

The leaflet gives a brief outline of the programme for 2025, future events and details of membership.

We shall be handing these out at meetings, the outreach roadshows and in the museums. If you would like some to distribute to friends, neighbours please contact enquiries@bucksgardens.trust.org.uk

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