

Issue No. 53

August 2019

Friends of Thwaite Gardens Newsletter



Friends of Thwaite Gardens

AGM Tuesday 9th October 2019 7.45pm

(Methodist Hall, Hallgate, Cottingham)

AGENDA

- 1 Welcome
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 To approve the minutes of the AGM 2018
- 4 Matters Arising
- 5 Treasurer's Annual Report
- 6 Election of Chairman
- 7 Election of Committee Members
- 8 Any Other Business

N.B. If anyone wishes to nominate anyone, or stand themselves, for any position on the Committee, please let the secretary Dr Lindsey Atkinson know.

Contact details Telephone 07736423159

Email l.j.atkinson@hull.ac.uk

Diary DATES

AGM, Tuesday 8th October, 7.45 at Cottingham Methodist Hall. Speaker Bob Hall, who will give a talk entitled “Bobbing about – a walk on the wild side”

Meeting, Tuesday 24th March 2020 at Cottingham Methodist Hall There will be a talk on the subject if bees

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### **TREASURER’S REPORT**

Once more we have had a successful year at Thwaite Gardens, despite the upsetting vandalism. Open Day was amazing and we took more money than ever before – my thanks to everyone’s sterling efforts and to the many people who donated cakes and scones.

The income/ expenditure sheet is fairly self-explanatory. Our income has been up, but so has our expenditure on plants and gardening materials. It is interesting to note that while the bank account usually looks healthy, over the course of the year we spend almost as much as we take in.

We have missed having the university staff gardeners based on site so the Friday volunteers – and also Vic Swetez - have had to undertake some extra tasks. The committee has recently agreed to fund the purchase of stone chippings as the university estates department was planning to grass over the paths. Our opinion was that this could make access very muddy at times and even more difficult for wheelchair users.

Our membership fees remain an important source of our income, so my thanks to all of you who continue to support us, and to enjoy our lovely gardens. With the rumours about the sale of the hall and woodland and rumours of

uncertainty about the future (unfounded, we have been assured the Botanic Gardens will continue for the foreseeable future), the actual numbers of members has dropped, so please do encourage friends and family to join or to continue their membership.

May I take this opportunity to thank all the Friday volunteers. They apply themselves with energy and cheerfulness. There are now over 20 of us.

I must also thank Mr Martyn Bishop for once more examining our accounts and making constructive suggestions.

Annie Bourton Card

Treasurer

14.8.19

**Income / Expenditure**  
**FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS**  
**YEAR: - 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019**

| <b><u>INCOME</u></b>             | <b>£</b>        |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Membership fees                  | 1,346.00        |
| Donations                        | 108.00          |
| Open Day                         | 4,520.50        |
| Sundries/Miscellaneous           | 361.25          |
| Entrance Fees ( except Open Day) | 24.00           |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>              | <b>6,359.75</b> |
| <br><b><u>EXPENDITURE</u></b>    | <br><b>£</b>    |
| Hall/Room Hire                   | 60.00           |
| Speakers                         | 162.20          |
| Plants and Gardening Materials   | 5,254.30        |
| Sundries                         | 272.54          |

£

|                                                       |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------|
| Refreshments (evening meeting and meals for speakers) | 70.24 |
| Printing                                              | 11.00 |
| Donations and Gifts for Services                      | 9.80  |

**TOTAL OUTGOINGS** **5,840.08**

**EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE** **519.67**

**BANK (no CASH) at 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018:-** **5,777.45**

**BANK (no CASH) at 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019:-** **6,297.12**

Signed: Annie Bourton Card

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### **Starting a cut flower patch**



Cut flowers are on many people's weekly shopping list as they enhance the homes of gardeners and non - gardeners alike. However the flowers which are available in supermarkets have often been flown many miles from where they are grown, so are not a particularly good choice from an environmental point of view. Varieties grown are chosen because they last well when cut, and can cope with the rigours of the journey, and are not necessarily chosen for the reasons the buyer may prefer. Fragrance, for example, is not an important factor to the grower, and many

varieties, such as sweet peas, are seldom available because they are short lived in a vase. This applies to many of the typical English garden flowers such as cornflowers, larkspur and calendula. Although there is a growing movement in this country to grow and sell these traditional flowers, small growers inevitably struggle against the competitive prices of the supermarkets. How much better, cheaper and more Eco - friendly to grow your own cut flowers in your own garden. The only distance they have to travel is up the garden path!

It always seems like sacrilege to cut existing flowers from the beds and borders, as they are such an integral part of the garden as a whole. The answer to having armfuls of flowers for months is to start a cutting patch of your own. Just utilising a relatively small patch will give you enough flowers for yourself, family and friends, for the cost of a few packets of seed. Saving the seed every year makes it even cheaper, and better for the environment.

There are few more pleasurable garden jobs than sitting in front of the fire on a cold winter's day, browsing the seed catalogues for varieties to grow in the following spring. The joy is that you can select using your own criteria, if fragrance is important to you then there are many choices giving just that. You can also select your own colour palette, if pastels appeal, then you can choose pinks, mauves and creams which blend together well. If your preference is for more bold and contemporary colours, then you can choose strong reds, purples, oranges and blues for punchy displays.

Site your cutting patch so that it gets lots of sun, in a sheltered part of the garden. It can be integrated into your veg plot or as a separate bed. The size will be determined by how much garden you can spare and, of course, by how many flowers you want.



The soil should be prepared as for vegetables, so that you have a weed free plot, worked into a fine tilth. Many of the best flowers

for cutting are annuals and they can be grown in two different ways. To get an early start, many varieties can be germinated with heat, either in a propagator or on a sunny windowsill. Beware of starting too early however, as this can result in sickly, leggy seedlings, due to the lack of light. Some varieties of annuals can be sown direct, and, to be honest, this is the quickest and easiest way. Annual seeds are sown in March/April when the soil has warmed up enough for the seeds to germinate, and this obviously varies from year to year . Allegedly, Lincolnshire farmers used to test the temperature of the soil before planting seed potatoes by sitting on it with bottoms bared ! If it felt cold, then it was too early to plant ! For those not wanting to use that particular method, look at the growth of annual weeds as a guide. If they are growing strongly then it is time to plant.

Sowing guides are given on each packet of seed and planting depths can vary, but seeds planted too near the surface are tempting morsels for birds and mice. Sweet pea seeds seem to be especially tasty, so it is worth sowing these inside, in late autumn or early spring, for planting out as small plants. Ensure that the newly sown seeds are well watered in, and, once they have germinated, keep hoeing between the rows so that seedlings do not have to compete with weeds. Most seedlings, other than those from large seeds, will need thinning out if they are to grow well. The 'thinnings' will often transplant successfully to other spots around the garden, if they are planted immediately and not allowed to dry out. Within a matter of weeks the first blooms will appear, and will keep appearing for months, often until the first frosts. Regular deadheading is absolutely vital, as flowering quickly ceases if seed heads start to form. Watering will be necessary during dry spells, and weeds will become less of an issue as the plants grow to a good size.

Through trial and error over the years, I have my own favourites, which I grow every year and they have to be reliable (whatever the weather), easy to grow and prolific. Top of this list are cosmos - an absolute stalwart every year. I usually grow a mix of dark colours and the foliage is invaluable for arrangements too. Cosmos come in a variety of colours and sizes, and the tallest will need staking. Cerinthe are next on my list - unusual and easy to grow as they are hardy annuals and can be sown direct. The foliage is a beautiful silvery grey and the flowers are purple /



blue. Their pendulous habit means that they look very well in a vase with other varieties.



Cornflowers are also very reliable and although small, make an eye catching pop of colour in a vase. I prefer the traditional blue, but there are many colours to choose from, and packets of seeds are often mixed. Calendula is another hardy annual and is one of the most floriferous plants in the cutting patch - often the first and the last to flower. 'Art shades' is a good mix to try, with a good mix of colours from orange through to yellow.

Dahlias flower well from seed in their first year and I think there is nothing better than 'Bishop's children' as the foliage is always

very dark, while the flowers vary in colour. They can either be well mulched and left in the ground over winter, or dug up and overwintered in a frost free place, ready for replanting after all danger of frosts has passed. Sweet peas are the king of the cut flower, and would deserve a place for their fragrance alone, never mind the fantastic flowers. I grow dark blues, purples and lilacs but the range of colours is very large. Those are my stalwarts grown every year, but I like to try something different every year. Last year I grew sunflowers which looked dramatic in a vase but, for me, there was a lot of plant for very few actual flowers!

There are so many cut flowers to choose from, and the joy of having your own cutting patch is that you can tailor what you grow to your individual taste and requirements. You can also grow them with the knowledge that the only journey they have to make is up the garden path!

Jane Scorer

## **OPEN GARDENS 19<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019**

Our Open Gardens this year was a great success. Thanks to all of you who came along.

Fortunately the weather was kind to us, not blue sky all day but bright and warm and certainly some sunshine. There was only the slightest smattering of rain at about 3.30 pm.

Every year we have made slightly more money than the year before, but this year we were astounded to take almost £1700 more than on previous years.

We had lots of people who just paid on the gate, and, as usual, there was at least one person who remarked that they had lived in Cottingham for over 60 years but did not know the gardens existed. There were also a great many members who came to help us enjoy and celebrate our lovely botanic gardens.

The choir sang enthusiastically and were greatly enjoyed. Their music was varied, something for everyone. They made for a grand garden party atmosphere. There was much clapping and many smiley faces.

The plant stall was constantly crowded , requiring relentless work from the volunteers who staffed it. Ditto the refreshments in the classroom, at times the queue snaked out of the door and past the corner of the greenhouses. Our huge thanks to all the people who donated cakes and buns, scones and shortcake. At the very end there was only one fairy cake left (which we donated to the gentleman who had bought two of the remaining three). Phew!

These are the figures:

Gate: £1,580

New Members: £340

Plant stall: £1,220

Tombola: £180

Craft stall: £20

Cacti percentage: £25

Refreshments: £996

**TOTAL: £4,241**

This will enable us to have a healthy bank account and provide resources to purchase plants, compost, bark, garden tools and all the things we need to maintain and expand our botanic gardens. In the near future we hope to resurface the paths, a major undertaking.

The day required an enormous effort by all the Friday volunteers, wives and husbands, a neice who became our scone fairy for the day, and a few others who turn up cheerfully each year to give us much needed help. You know who you are. Thank you.

Annie Bourton Card

19.9.19

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## TAKING PART IN COTTINGHAM OPEN GARDENS

Last year , after our Open Day, we donated all our remaining, unsold plants to the organisers of Cottingham Open Gardens which is a fund raiser for Dove House Hospice. This year, we were asked to take part, which we did.

For us it was on an altogether different scale from our own Open Day, but we were glad to participate, support the cause and maybe introduce some other people to the existence of the botanic gardens. We worked out a rota so that over the two Sundays (16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June) the volunteers could work a shift or two, either on the front gate or on the plant stall, or being around to advise and assist. This meant the volunteers had the opportunity to visit some of the other open gardens.

We raised £455.15, contributing to the grand total which I understand to be just under £11,000.

Annie Bourton Card 19.7.19

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### Gardens Opening Times Reminder

Monday to Thursday 10am to 3.30 pm  
Fridays 10am to 3pm except on Bank Holidays and at  
other times when the University is closed

## PLANT OF THE MONTH – HARDY HIBISCUS (*Hibiscus syriacus*)



This late summer flowering shrub is sometimes known as the ‘Tree Hollyhock’ because of the resemblance of the flowers to that plant. It is also in the same family (*Malvaceae*). It has been bred into a number of colour forms as well as double varieties, though at Thwaite we have only one, with violet flowers, growing against the wall by the main entrance path.

*Hibiscus syriacus* is one of the few types of Hibiscus that could be regarded as fully hardy here and the only one grown with any frequency, as the majority of the genus are semi tropical. Although fairly frequent, it might still be regarded by some British gardeners as being a bit ‘unusual’. It is perhaps rather more popular in continental European countries and parts of America where it forms a mainstay of gardens and parks. This is because, although very winter cold hardy, it is undeniably happier in climates with a hot sunny summer.

This climatic preference greatly affects the quality of *Hibiscus syriacus* as a garden plant and its management. In Britain, particularly in the north, it tends to be rather tardy into leaf in spring and somewhat slow growing compared to many other shrubs. It also starts to flower rather late in the summer as a rule, although this in itself is not a problem given that it may be at its best in August or September when many other species are in decline. Flowering is also quite

profuse. Here in Britain it tends to form a dense gradually enlarging shrub eventually of fair size, which does not need much regular pruning, although it can be cut hard if necessary.

In more continental climates it is far more vigorous and longer flowering. Because the flowers are produced on the current year's wood, it can even be cut back quite hard from time to time (a bit like a Buddleia) to produce strong flushes of growth and flowers through the summer. This is an accepted method of management in countries with the right conditions and is even worth trying here on a specimen that becomes too congested.

To ensure best results here, *Hibiscus* is best grown in a warm sunny position. Good soil will also encourage more vigorous growth, though drought tolerance is good, so too of chalk so long as it is fertile. When happy it can be really quite spectacular. Training in a fan against a warm wall is also a possibility though rarely seems to be practiced. Even as a subject for a large unheated greenhouse is not out of the question, if one has nothing else to fill the space and it is planted into the ground.

*Hibiscus syriacus* has a number of differently coloured varieties, though almost all have a similar pattern of ground colour with a darker central eye. My particular favourite is 'Oiseau Bleu' (Blue Bird) – a lovely deep lavender blue. 'Russian Violet' is a similar colour. There are reds including the old variety 'Woodbridge' which is possibly the most popular of all. Whites include pure 'Diana' or red eyed 'Red Heart'. There are also a few doubles like white 'Lady Stanley' though to my mind the doubles lose the considerable charm of the eyed trumpet effect provided by the singles.

Pests and diseases do not seem to be much of a problem with this plant, though prolonged chilly wet conditions may spoil the flowers and even cause bud drop. It is easily available in most Garden Centres.

John Killingbeck, Aug 2019

## TREES OF THWAITE: CAPPADOCIAN MAPLE (*Acer cappadocicum*)



I have chosen this tree on this occasion because it can have superb autumn colour – generally a clear golden yellow. Our Thwaite tree is found in the north east corner of the garden, not far from the lake outlet, among other trees. It has been recorded as a ‘Yorkshire Champion’.

*Acer cappadocicum* is perhaps everyone’s idea of what a maple should look like. Of usually moderate and rarely large size, it is graceful in habit and elegant in structure. The leaves too are almost the perfect ideal of what a maple leaf should be – around five or so finely pointed lobes which give it a somewhat star-like appearance as it falls to the ground in autumn. Falling golden stars – utterly charming! The bark is quite smooth and clean looking.

Cappadocian Maple is a fairly frequent tree in East Yorkshire, quite often seen as a street tree in Hull and adjacent suburbs, as well as parks and occasionally large private gardens generally, though it may be overlooked. It has quite a wide distribution in the wild and is native to the Caucasus Mountains and eastward into Asia and seems very adaptable.

It does not seem to reproduce by seed here. However it can regenerate by suckers which is very unusual in maples and so characteristic of it that ‘suckering maple’ is a pretty failsafe method of identifying it from any other

tree. Usually the suckering is only a minor nuisance in cultivation. In neglected or abandoned places however, the tree will make itself at home and generate a thicket of young trees around it and become more or less naturalised. This condition can be seen, for example along the boundaries of Castle Hill Hospital, Cottingham and also the wild end of Western Cemetery in Hull.

Those who venture to examine our Thwaite tree, though, might be puzzled to note that no suckering is present, although conditions might seem to be ideal. This is due to the very good reason that ours is grafted onto the stock of Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), and careful examination of the trunk will reveal that it is rather more rugged than it should be for Cappadocian Maple and also that there is a clear 'join' at the graft union. One suspects that this grafting was purposely undertaken to avoid the suckering problem. It is however, according to TROBI experts who have seen it, a very unusual feature rarely seen in others.

As stated, perhaps the finest feature of Cappadocian Maple is the yellow autumn colour and for most of the growing season the foliage is generally an unremarkable green shade, even if of attractive texture. There is however a golden form of the tree, *A. c. 'Aurea'*, which is outstandingly lovely in spring. Indeed it might be ranked as one of the finest of golden trees being a soft lemon yellow when fresh, tinged pink in the youngest leaves. Those who enjoy golden foliage should certainly consider this one. Although it turns rather greener in summer, this is also true of many other golden foliage trees and, at least when young, '*Aurea*' resembles a rather robust Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*) in character. There is also a red form available – '*Rubrum*' - which has red young leaves. Both can be encountered in ordinary garden centres from time to time, in fact perhaps more often than the type tree.

Another tree at Thwaite closely resembling Cappadocian Maple is Lobel's Maple (*Acer lobelii*). Some authorities consider the latter to be a variant of the main species. Our specimen grows in a group of trees, just east of the western woods and is also a Yorkshire Champion. Though the similarity in the leaf is obvious, the habit of Lobel's is strikingly vertical. It is an example of the relatively rare phenomenon of a naturally fastigate tree – that is, it grows this



way in the wild. Most fastigate trees are products of artificial selection. Although potentially ideal for street planting, I only know of a couple of local examples of any size outside Thwaite. One, oddly enough is in Cottingham, the other in Beverley. . Our Lobel's is grafted onto the rootstock of ordinary *A. cappadocicum*, which is obvious from the dense ring of shoots at the base. This is standard practice, it seems, though of course this will result in the suckering problem as noted above.

Cappadocian Maple is very hardy in many situations and rarely troubled by pests or disease. Like many maples though, it is very vulnerable to attack by grey squirrels, which can severely strip the bark and lead to die back. This should be borne in mind if intending to plant the tree in a district were grey squirrels are very common.

John Killingbeck August 2019

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## Friday Volunteers have a Summer Lunch





## **Contact Details**

### **Chairman**

Vacancy

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