

Issue No. 64

September 2024

Friends of Thwaite Gardens Newsletter



Diary Dates

AGM-Sunday 20th October 1.00 pm.

As last year the AGM will be held in the classroom at the Botanic Gardens.

Members will be able to walk around the gardens prior to and after the meeting.

**The AGM will be followed by a talk given by Bob Hall entitled
“Wild orchids and other things”**

**Membership renewal reminder. Renewals were due on the
1st of August 2024**

A renewal form is attached

Please check the expiry date on your membership card

AGM of the Friends of Thwaite Gardens

To be held at the Botanic Gardens on Sunday 20th October 2024 at
1pm

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Minutes of the last AGM (22.10.23)**
- 3. Matters arising**
- 4. Chair's report**
- 5. Treasurer's report**
- 6. Election of Chair**
- 7. Election of Committee members**
- 8. Subscriptions**
- 9. Events**
- 10. AOB**
- 11. Date of next AGM**

Should anyone want to stand for any position or nominate anyone for the committee please let our secretary Dr Lindsey Atkinson know by email l.j.atkinson@hull.ac.uk or respond to this email

Income/Expenditure

FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS YEAR: 1st Aug 2023 to 31st July 2024

INCOME

	£
Membership Fees	1,556.00
Donations	51.00
Open Day	7,388.31
Sundries/Miscellaneous	364.30
Entrance Fees (except Open Day)	182.00
Interest received from Bank	-
TOTAL INCOME	9,541.61

EXPENDITURE

	£
Hall / Room Hire	63.00
Speakers	-
Plants & Gardening Materials	8,266.43
<u>Sundries</u>	1,241.38

Refreshments (evening meetings & meals for speakers)	34.12	
Printing	61.89	
Donations & Gifts for Services		-
TOTAL OUTGOINGS	9,666.82	
EXCESS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	-125.21	
BANK (no CASH) at 31st July 2023	8,340.69	
BANK (no cash) at 31st July 2024	8,215.48	
Difference	-125.21	

As usual our thanks to Mr Martyn Bishop, BA Hons, Business Studies, who has examined our accounts and who has advised me when I have needed help with the spreadsheet.

Signed Annie Bourton Card

Minutes of the AGM held at the Botanic Gardens on 22.10.23

The AGM was attended by 30 members of the Friends

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jane and Allan Scorer, Lyndsey Atkinson, Ann Lowry, Pam Dimishky, Elaine Moll, Sue Swetez, John and Tricia Sharp, Jane Lander.

2. Minutes of the last AGM (18.10.22)

These were accepted as a true record.

3. Matters arising

None

4. Chair's report

This is appended

5. Treasurer's report

This was circulated to members prior to the meeting. A copy is appended. Essentially, we have about £8,000 in the bank at today's date. Our income was £8,715.45 and our expenditure was £8,8271.83, giving us an excess of income over expenditure of £443.62.

6. Election of Chair

Steve Howe was proposed and seconded and therefore re-elected.

7. Election of Committee

All committee members were prepared to stand again. They were proposed and seconded and therefore re-elected:

Treasurer; Annie Bourton Card

Secretary- Dr Lindsey Atkinson

Committee members: Lyn Jones, Jane Scorer, Vic Swetez (membership secretary), Jeremy Hartley (University).

8. Events

It was agreed that a daytime meeting on a Sunday was a good idea and so we will do this next year too.

The Spring meeting will be in March, date to be confirmed.

We have had a series of lectures, given by volunteers, and plan to continue with this as it brings different people into the gardens as well as recruiting new members.

We sold plants in aid of Dove House during Cottingham Open Gardens and opened to the public on one of the Sundays.

We took part in the local Green Fair in the Cottingham Civic Hall and will do so again on 4.11.23.

Steve Howe took plants to the Scorer's Open Garden in Winterton and sold these in aid of Thwaite Gardens.

Our next Open Day will be on Sunday 19th May 2024.

9. AOB

Brief question about access to Thwaite Hall and woodland, it was confirmed that we have no access to the part of the estate which was sold three years ago.

10. Date of next AGM

The next AGM will be in October 2024, date to be confirmed.

Annie Bourton Card, 22.10.23

PLANT OF THE MONTH – PAMPAS GRASS (*Cortaderia selloana*)



Grasses are quite fashionable these days – though perhaps with many people never have been. Whether you like them or not, there is a huge range to choose from nowadays. This was not always the case and if you travelled back in time to the 1960s or '70s you would find that pampas grass was one of the very few grasses widely available commercially. In fact, in those decades of tidy hybrid tea rose beds and bedding plants it might have seemed quite sophisticated to plant it. It became a bit of a symbol of aspirational suburbia. As is the case with most fashion statements, however, it eventually became a cliché. Having a big clump of pampas grass in the middle of your front lawn started to become unoriginal, then eventually a bit of a joke or a sign of poor aesthetic taste. Such are the perils of all fashions I suppose.

But let's not condemn plants on the basis of human folly. We should see them in terms of their own merits, and I suppose pampas grass is one of those plants whose qualities have become under-appreciated due to over familiarity. It really is quite a splendid thing with a very long season of interest. The flower heads renew each late summer and last into winter until gradually being beaten down by bad weather or snow. These plumes, resembling great ostrich feathers may exceed 2.5m in height and like most grasses look particularly fine swept by a strong breeze. The plant can have an extraordinary and atmospheric visual impact planted in large drifts, if you have space. The grassy evergreen leaves gradually form a substantial clump that eventually becomes

rather invincible. This is not only because the clump becomes large and dense but also because the leaves are very tough and sharply serrated making them quite daunting to control; and indeed, many people seem to give up trying. If you have enough space this is no problem because the size of the clump will increase only slowly and is not invasive. However, one technique of management, if safe, is to set fire to the plant some time in late winter or early spring. This burns away most of the dense dead material and the new leaves sprout soon after. Don't do this in autumn though, because if the crown is exposed to heavy frost without the insulating leaves, it may be killed.

Although grasses are commonly thought of as flourishing in dry soil, pampas grass in the wild is often associated with marshy conditions, and it seemed not to enjoy the exceptional drought of 2022. Though putting it in wet ground in the chilly UK is a bit of a risk, in warmer countries it can become invasive in these conditions. In the rice fields of southern Spain for example, it has spread everywhere in the surrounding ditches.

There are a number of selected forms of pampas grass. 'Sunningdale Silver' is the best known. There is at least one dwarf form, 'Pumila' and several with pinkish plumes. 'Aureolineata' and 'Albolineata' are variegated forms that are also smaller, though not particularly impactful.

Cortaderia selloana is from temperate South America (Argentina) but there is another species fairly commonly seen from New Zealand, *C. richardii* (Toe toe – in Maori). Also big, but it has more slender arching plumes and is perhaps more at home in Britain because, more frequently than *C. selloana*, it seems to naturalise here in wet ground, even in the wild.

Pampas grass can be very long lived. I have a memory from very early childhood of a big clump growing on the corner of Westella Rd., Kirkella. It is still there, bigger than ever over sixty years later. It impressed me greatly at the time and is my first memory of the plant. I longed for one at home, but my mother wouldn't have it!

John Killingbeck August 2024

TREES OF THWAITE -----BEECH (*Fagus sylvatica*)



There are several beech trees in Thwaite, though I think only one or two of them are the natural wild form and they grow near the railway boundary. All the others are variations, of which beech has a great many all told, of which Thwaite garden has four visible today.

Beech is a common native tree, though there has been quite a bit of debate about this. Beginning with the translation of Julius Caesar's somewhat enigmatic remarks on landing in Britain over 2000 years ago, stating that there was all sorts of timber here – except beech, various theories have been put forward as to how it might otherwise have arrived on British shores with or without human agency (seeds in the stomachs of bears swimming the English Channel is my favourite!). But the dominant view is that Julius Caesar either didn't know much about trees or notice that it is genuinely native to southern England (though nowhere else further north in Britain). Be that as it may, the species has been planted throughout the UK and is widely self-sown and naturalised at least as far north as Aberdeen and Morayshire and from southern England, in time could probably have made its own way that far north without human intervention.

Beech is one of the UK's best loved trees famous for its luminously green spring growth, rich autumn colour of gold tinged with burnt copper and its graceful smooth grey trunk, the woods of which are claimed by some to have inspired the columns of cathedral knaves. The seeds, known as 'beech mast' are edible. Though mainly used only as famine food for humans, they were once extensively used for fattening livestock. Beech grows on many soil types as long as it is well drained though is especially associated with chalk. For that reason, big beech shelterbelts are common on the Yorkshire Wolds, aping the famous beech 'hangers' of southern down land, so much so that they seem entirely part of the natural order. However, many of these woods were planted only in the c18 -c19 by land improvers like the Sykes dynasty at Sledmere.

Planting of beech still goes on today because it is a good timber crop on poor chalky slopes and tops. Particularly since the problem of ash die back disease, beech is one of a shrinking number of options for such planting. It has its own vulnerabilities though. Other than specific diseases it is easily de barked by grey squirrels, deer and even hares and in terms of climate change, is more vulnerable to drought than many trees. If summers do become hotter and drier, it is likely to suffer. In many parts of Europe, particularly the south, beech is only found in cool moist mountain regions.

Beech has proved a prolific producer of abnormal varieties, many of which are highly ornamental. Of those seen at Thwaite the best known is copper beech (*F.s. f. purpurea*), one of the most easily identified trees anywhere and undoubtedly the best 'purple' in terms of aesthetic grandeur. Sometimes found in the wild, the colour is simply an excess of xanthocyanin pigment in the leaves. Selected forms are very dark and usually grafted, others less so may be chance seedlings. Otherwise, it looks and grows like normal beech.

Two other varieties at Thwaite with entirely different shapes are Weeping Beech (*F.s. f. pendula*) and Dawyck Beech (*F.s. 'Dawyck'*). Weeping Beech is perhaps the grandest of all weeping trees with massive grey sinuous branches that look impressive all year round. It has been fancifully likened to a 'vegetable elephant' with its great curving trunk-like limbs! Thwaite's specimen is one of the best in East Yorkshire. Dawyck Beech is entirely

different being the shape and size of a Lombardy poplar, though more wavy in structure; also pretty big. About as common generally as the Weeping Beech, it is named after the garden in the Scottish borders – Dawyck, Peebleshire. Both these trees can be seen in the upper part of Thwaite, near the Secret Garden.

Our fourth variety is rarer though less so than it used to be and is becoming more widely planted. This is Purple Dawyck Beech, (*F.s.* 'Dawyck Purple'). It grows near the car park at the corner of the Winter Border. Being one of the earliest planted in East Yorkshire ours is probably the biggest locally. Though still young it is already quite an eye-catching landmark in the garden and in the future will be a stunner. It is very deep purple and is grafted at the base.

Had we still had access to Thwaite Hall grounds, we could also see several young trees of Fern-leaved Beech (*F.s.* 'Aspleniifolia'). This grows into arguably the most elegant and attractive of beeches with delicately serrated foliage and graceful habit. Similar but rarer, there is one purple beech which also has cut-leaved foliage (*F.s.* 'Rohanii') which hopefully still grows near Thwaite Hall. The woods here also have a young specimen of Oriental Beech (*F. orientalis*) an entirely different species.

Over the road, at Cleminson, also once owned by the university, lurk two variegated beeches: 'Purpurea Tricolor' which has purple leaves with pinkish edging and a creamy edged variegated form next to it – probably 'Luteovariegata'. In both cases these are rather subtle details and are not very eye catching but interesting, nevertheless. These last two were probably planted by the late Fred Fletcher, who was once in charge of grounds at the university.

This completes our tour of Thwaite beeches, though there are plenty more varieties to be seen elsewhere including golden forms of most of the above and others with differently shaped leaves.

John Killingbeck August 2024

OPEN GARDENS 2024

We were delighted that once again we had good weather for our Open Day. Around 850 came and lots of children. Olive had hidden lots of stuffed toy animals in the woods and this proved very popular with our young visitors, who ticked off what they had seen. Only one animal escaped.

We had the usual stalls – refreshments and plants. Our friends the Cactus Society brought their stall again. Also, this year we had a book stall (thank you, Olive) and a lucky dip, which replaced tombola. This was organised by Bob and Ann (thanks to you, too).

In all we took over £7000 which was amazing. This, of course, is not all profit: as usual there has been a considerable outlay on compost, plants to grow on for Open Day and preparation for the refreshments stall. We had organised three portaloos in addition to our own toilets. This avoided having the long queues of previous years, especially after the choir stopped singing. In any event, we can rest assured that the money is there to continue extending and developing our lovely gardens.

It was all a great success and has replenished our funds.

A big thank you to the All For One choir who were much appreciated and who bought lots of cake. This year more of them came so the local populace were also entertained.

Another big thank you to all the volunteers who, along with their families and friends, provided lots of scrumptious cake and dozens and dozens of scones. We got through 6 jars of strawberry jam and several tubs of double cream. We had enough cake this year, although there were only a few slices left at the end!

All 28 volunteers were on duty, many of them all day. Also: our annual volunteers who turn up once a year, work flat out for 6 hours and then disappear. Thank you, one and all. You know who you are. We couldn't manage without you.

We had more canvas pergolas this year and a sunshade parasol umbrella. Some we had bought, some we borrowed. All were appreciated by the volunteers. No complaints about the sunshine, but it is hard to stand, or sit, in it for hours on end.

Also, our thanks to you: for coming along, supporting us, buying cake, books and plants, etc.

Our Open day is the big event of our year, but we plan to open on other weekend days in a more low-key way to give extra access to members. Our March and October meetings, including the AGM, are now held at the gardens on a Sunday afternoon, with time available to wander round before and after.

Annie Bourton Card

Cottingham Open Gardens in aid of Dove House Hospice

In July we opened for the second Sunday of Cottingham Open Gardens, staffed once more by our willing volunteers. We took over £840 for Dove House via entrance fees, our plant stall, our book stall and donations. We were very happy to contribute to this event and it was clearly well worthwhile. Between 100 and 200 people visited, quite a few of whom commented that they did not know about our existence.

Annie Bourton Card

Hours worked by volunteers

As part of someone else's request for information we added up the hours worked by our volunteers, contributing to maintaining and developing Thwaite Gardens. We currently have 28 volunteers. On Fridays there are usually between 17 and 24 people in, some contributing two or three hours, some six or seven. On Tuesdays the number is smaller, between 5 and 9 for two to four hours. People stay different lengths of time and they cannot come every week, but:

****** If all the volunteers were in, in any one week, working their individual "normal" hours (ie the time they normally spend there) we would be contributing 117 hours, nearly the equivalent of three full time staff.

Annie Bourton Card

Volunteers Working at The Gardens



Volunteers Ann, Gill and Roger "The Grafters" working on the Herbaceous border at the rear of Green Wickets.

Bob.

***Diascia* cultivar Appleblossum**



Just a quick mention of *Diascia* Cultivar Appleblossum. This is one of my favourite and most reliable summer bedding plants that I have been growing for many years.

Diascia is a genus of many species of herbaceous annuals and perennial flowering plants in the Scrophulariaceae family.

Diascia Appleblossum is hardy and forms neat clumps 9-12in in height and produces a mass of pink tinted flowers throughout summer and autumn.

They are very versatile and can be used in hanging baskets, containers and can also be planted at the front of borders and in rockeries. I often plant up a whole basket with them which looks superb in the summer.

It was well over 10 years ago when I bought several plants costing about £5, I think. Since then, from those few plants and their subsequent progeny I have produced about 3000 plants. Not a bad return from my initial outlay.

Although hardy I over-winter some plants in an unheated greenhouse to encourage early growth.

I normally start to take cuttings at the end of February and early March or as soon as there is sufficient young growth.

There is no need for fancy rooting aids. I use a peat based or equivalent compost with added horticultural silver sand and root them in a propagating case with bottom heat.

VS

Keep in touch.

It's easy to keep up with all the Thwaite Gardens news! As well as all the info in this newsletter we have a website, a Facebook page, and a Twitter feed. All are regularly updated to give you news and upcoming events as well as photos of plants and projects. We welcome your comments and questions and try to get back to you as promptly as we can.

Website

<https://thwaite-gardens.hull.ac.uk>

Facebook

Friends of Thwaite Gardens

<https://www.facebook.com/FOThwaitegardens>

X (Twitter)

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Gardens Opening Times

Gardens opening times are 1pm to 3pm on Tuesdays, and 9.30am to 2pm on Fridays.

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