



# HOVE GARDENING CLUB

Issue 61

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2025



## PRAIRIE PLANTS AND POLLINATORS



"Sunny spells and scattered showers". Do you remember a time when weather forecasters often described summer days thus? Winters seemed colder back then and snow was a much more common occurrence. Climate change has resulted in heatwave summers with hosepipe bans and milder but much wetter winters. As a result, perennials we grow are changing in favour of North American prairie planting, especially late summer flowering plants that flourish in well-drained soil.

Our July speaker Marina Christopher of Phoenix Perennial Plants (Alton) treated Club members to a fascinating and educational talk centred on the use of late flowering perennials and the ways in which flowers are pollinated by different insects. Here are four ways to achieve colour and interest in late summer:

Using plants that normally flower in late summer. For example Asters, Rudbeckias, Heleniums and Ratabidas (Prairie Coneflowers).

Manipulating growth, for example *No-mow May* for lawns and grass. Deadheading Phlox and cutting back Nepeta after their first flowering will result in a second burst of blooms later in the summer. Sowing seeds of annuals like Cosmos and Echim vulgare (Viper's Bugloss) later than usual will encourage later flowering.

All-year-round (except winter) blooms of perennials such as Diascias and Penstemons can be achieved with a *Chelsea Chop* after their first flowering.

Some of Marina's tips included:

- Pinch out growing tips of Veronicastrum and Echinacea if the tips show fasciation (see page 3)
- Rabbit-proof plants include varieties of Lavender, Phlomis, Nepeta, Teucrium and Salvia.
- Verbena x baileyana (a cross between V. hastata and V. Bampton) is a hybrid that doesn't self seed.
- Night-scented, white flowers are especially attractive to night-flying moths.
- To prevent Sedum (Hylotelephium) stems from spreading out, in spring slide a spade underneath the plant. Lift up the root ball slightly and then return the plant to its original position.
- Any insect with hairy legs can act as a pollinator.

*Clockwise from top left: Prairie planting, Ratabida pinnata, Verbena x baileyana, White night-scented Nicotiana*



## MARION'S QUIZ

- 1) What 3 plant nutrients do the letters NPK represent?
- 2) What makes leaves of houseplants sticky?
- 3) Should carrots be grown in freshly manured ground?

Newsletter Editor  
Marilyn High

Sub-editor  
Pat Winter



Our group of twenty Club members were warmly welcomed by Malthouse Farm's owner Helen, after which we had plenty of time to explore the five acre garden at our leisure. Graham and I had visited the garden in 2019 and were keen to discover how the "wilder" areas had developed, in particular the willow tunnel, snail mound and birch copse. All these features had grown substantially! Malthouse grows a lot of willow, from which Helen has woven several plant supports and decorative objects including a pair of giant tennis rackets and an oversized apple sculpture. Twenty-five years ago Malthouse Farm was a stud farm with a sand school that is now the tennis court. Much of the sand has been mixed with the heavy blue clay of the wildflower meadows. Amazingly the herbaceous borders showed hardly any slug and snail damage, unlike our own garden. Helen recommended the use of *Strulch* as a mulch on the beds about every two years, saying she thinks this product really does deter gastropods.

After our extensive wanderings taking in the beauty of this stunning garden, our group settled on the spacious patio for tea and a variety of delicious cakes. Helen then gave a short talk about her garden followed by Question Time.



**CAR SHARE OUTING TO CUPANI GARDEN** by Wendy McCarthy  
Monday 28 July



Twelve Club members set out on a visit to Cupani Garden in Seaford. The weather was lovely and we were warmly welcomed by Aideen Jones and her husband Dennis to their compact but very well stocked garden. Aideen delivered an informative talk, explaining the development of the garden, ongoing maintenance including the soil they use for planting and the irrigation system in place to keep the plants healthy. After a stroll around the garden through beautiful flower borders, following the paths to secret seating areas and water features, we were treated to a wonderful tea of scones and cake while sitting together chatting. Several members purchased plants and jam before heading home after a very enjoyable afternoon.



There are lots more photos at: <https://hovegardeningclub.co.uk/gallery/>

**CHRIS REDKNAP**



We are very sad to report that one of our longest serving Club members, Chris Redknapp passed away peacefully at home just a week short of his 86th Birthday. Chris had an extensive horticultural knowledge and his Hove garden was crammed full of plants, many of which he grew from seed or cuttings. As a tribute to this "Gentle Giant", a full Obituary will be published on the Club website. He will be sorely missed.

*Chris with Fergus Garrett of Great Dixter*



Fasciation, also known as crestring, refers to relatively unusual growth in plants. You may have discovered a foxglove flower spike that looks almost comically distorted, like the one pictured. A plant's growing tip often expands or becomes elongated at right angles to its direction of growth. If elongated, you get a flattened, ribbon-like contorted tissue similar to the pictured examples.

Left to right:  
Foxglove,  
Daisy and  
Verbena at  
Gravetye Manor



### FIELD OF VISION

Birds, butterflies and bees see different parts of the colour spectrum. Birds see red, blue, green and ultraviolet but not yellow. Butterflies see red, green, blue and ultraviolet. Bees see yellow, green, blue and ultraviolet but not red. So, in a field of native red poppies, you may see butterflies but no bees.



### AUTUMN 2025 EVENTS

Ideas for a day out

Saturday 13 September  
from 10am

#### Findon Sheep Fair

Nepcote Green, Findon  
BN14 0SD

Free entry to the fair.

Parking nearby £6 cash

only. A traditional funfair, sheep judging and farmyard circus. Dogs welcome.



**Middle Farm** Firle, Lewes, BN8 6LJ Entry £10  
Open weekdays 9.30-4.30 Weekends 9.30-5pm  
Farm shop, cider barn, gift shop and tearoom.  
See farm animals such as pigs, llamas, horses,  
donkeys as well as small animals in the barn.  
Email [info@middlefarm.com](mailto:info@middlefarm.com) or phone 01323  
811411 to buy tickets in advance and check out  
special seasonal events.

### NYMANS AND THE GARDEN IN THE RUINS

Our August speaker Joe Whelan explored the history of Nymans from its purchase by Ludwig Messel in 1890 to the present day. A catastrophic fire in 1947 resulted in Nymans' library being destroyed, along with manuscripts relating to the garden's history. Fortunately for us there are a few photographs showing the house and garden during the lifetimes of the older members of the Messel family. Joe described some of the significant changes made to the garden since the great storm of 1987, during which eighty percent of all Nymans' trees came down in one night and many significant plants were lost. It took nearly five years to clear up after this damage and a propagation



*The Garden in the Ruins*

project was initiated in order to replace and re-stock the garden with new plants. Twenty-first century projects include redesigning the Rock Garden and Rose Garden. Also an exciting new project entitled "The Garden in the Ruins" is underway. Based on an original concept by Oliver Messel, grandson of Ludwig Messel, the ruins of the billiard room are being transformed to showcase a collection of ferns and visually stunning container planting. Guided tours of "The Garden in the Ruins" can be booked on arrival, so hopefully we'll be able to see this brand new creation at one of our region's most popular historic properties.



Left: The Rose Garden in July 2025 (no roses yet!)

## Speakers' Corner

Advice from our Experts

**Caroline Ikin** (June) traced the history of Gertrude Jekyll's home Munstead Wood, from the purchase in 1882 of a 15 acre field situated opposite her parents' house to the design of her own house and garden. Jekyll trained at the South Kensington School of Art (now the Royal College of Art) and was a talented painter and designer, specialising in subjects including photography, textiles, gesso (a kind of textured primer used to create a three-dimensional quality in designs) and floristry. After Jekyll's death in 1932 Munstead Wood garden became overgrown and neglected until 1990, when a new owner partially restored the garden. In 2023 the National Trust purchased Munstead Wood house and ornamental garden but not the plant nursery, which was sold to a private buyer. The National Trust are currently planning a complete restoration of both house and garden following Jekyll's original designs but it will be several years before we are able to visit Munstead Wood. Caroline told us that:

- Although not really a fan of topiary, Jekyll transformed a group of yew trees at Munstead Wood into a topiary reclining cat that she named "Posy", after her own much loved pet.
- Jekyll conducted research into colours that looked best under electric light, by making different flower arrangements in her workshop and then photographing them.
- A pebblework floor in the Munstead Wood summerhouse was designed and made by Jekyll herself.
- Finally, two of her most famous quotes: "It has taken me half a lifetime merely to find out what is most worth doing and a good slice of the other half to puzzle out the ways of doing it." "The love of gardening is a seed that once sown never dies, but grows to the enduring happiness that the love of gardening gives."



*Planting design from Jekyll's sketchbook*

*Aster border at Munstead Wood*



### JANUARY PARTY 2026

#### Photographic Competition Categories



- A) Beach Plants
- B) Carpet of Flowers

### QUIZ ANSWERS

- 1) Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium
- 2) A pest infestation sucking the sap from the plants and secreting honeydew.
- 3) No, carrots dislike freshly manured soil. The ground should be prepared well in advance of sowing, removing any stones.

### HOVE GARDENING CLUB

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VICE PRESIDENT: Ken Norman

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