

The University of Oxford

102

# Botanic Garden & Arboretum

Friends'  
newsletter

Summer/  
Autumn 2019





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**Front cover: The new sculpture in the Garden, commissioned from Julian Warren, depicting Daemons of the main characters in Philip Pullman's 'His Dark Materials' trilogy.**

Over 300 million people visit botanic gardens globally. So the opportunities for communicating messages about plant diversity and conservation are endless. Research shows that interpretation panels are a powerful and effective means of changing people's opinions on the importance of plants. This spring has seen the completion of OBGA's most extensive interpretation project. In an enormous undertaking by our horticulturalists that has taken several years to carry out, several thousand flowering plants that make up the taxonomic beds have been reorganised according to their genetic relatedness. The classification system used (see p. 7) is explained across thirty interpretation panels, designed beautifully by Pia Östlund, and funded by the Friends. Less than an hour after their installation, a visitor to the Garden said to me 'I never would have guessed that these plants were related'.

The importance of plants to people has been a focus of our education team's activities this spring. In partnership with Fusion Arts and funded by Children in Need, the Education Team welcomed local schools to the Garden to find out how plants are used by people (see p. 10), and led 'family workshops' in collaboration with Science Oxford to examine plant pigments. The team also took part in a public engagement activity in the

## From the Editor

By Chris Thorogood

Westgate Centre, alongside research students from the Department of Plant Sciences.

Under glass, our horticulturalists have been busy augmenting the 'Plants that Changed the World' collection with economically important plants including jojoba in the Arid House, and lentils in the Rainforest House (see p. 4). Close by, the Cloud Forest House has become a thriving thicket of pitcher plants, ferns and orchids, and is truly evocative of Borneo's Mount Kinabalu, which was the inspiration for the display. Our conservation collection has expanded to include plants that have never been grown outside of their native range in tropical Japan, as well as some very curious leafless, parasitic plants. We look forward to sharing updates on these in a future edition of the newsletter. Meanwhile, closer to home, our project to propagate and reintroduce rare plants from Oxfordshire continues to prosper (see p. 7).

Do come along to our exhibition in the Herbarium Room themed 'Flower to Frame' this summer which explores how botanical illustrators have grappled with the challenge of capturing accurately the complicated dimensional features of plants in two

dimensions. It features some exquisite work by Rosemary Wise. Finally our new guide book to the Botanic Garden, published by the Bodleian, will be launched this summer. The guide explores the Garden's many historic and innovative features, as well as the work we do today, and features photographs taken throughout the seasons by the garden photographer Alexandra Davies.

Distilling everything we do - much of it with generous support from the Friends - into these few pages is always a challenge. I hope you enjoy reading this brief snapshot from our team as much as I have enjoyed compiling it.



**New interpretation boards for the taxonomic beds**



# From the Director

By Simon Hiscock



*Prunus x yedoensis* avenue Toyama BG

Much has been happening at the Garden and Arboretum since the last Newsletter. Those of you who visited the Garden over the Whitsun Bank Holiday will have seen the newly installed interpretation boards for the APG order beds in the Walled Garden. The 30 boards, designed by Pia Östlund and written by Chris Thorogood and me, explain the most current DNA-based classification of the Garden's taxonomic collection of flowering plants. This is the most significant interpretation project in the Garden's history, and provides an engaging teaching and public engagement resource for all ages. The project was made possible by generous funding from the Friends.

The latter part of May saw the installation of a new piece of 'literary sculpture' in the Lower Garden that celebrates the Garden's connection with Philip Pullman's 'His Dark Materials' trilogy. The sculpture, situated behind 'Lyra's bench' was commissioned from artist Julian Warren with funding largely from the Friends. The piece depicting the Daemons of the trilogy's two main characters, Lyra and Will, watched by the Daemon of the author, was 'unveiled' metaphorically by Philip Pullman at a small informal gathering on May 22nd. It forms an important element of the evolving 'Literary Garden' that connects plants with literature, and especially Oxford's rich literary heritage.

Back in April, the third annual Spring Fair took place on a windy Saturday (April 27th) at the Arboretum and despite the unsettled weather it once again proved a great success. The baby farm animals (especially lambs and goats) and education activities are especially popular with families and just short of 1,400 people braved the weather to enjoy the spring flowers, particularly the bluebells,

and the varied offering of local crafts, food and drink.

Earlier in the spring Ben Jones and I had the privilege of experiencing the start of the cherry blossom (Sakura) festival in Japan. I was invited to attend the Oxford Alumni Weekend, 'Meeting Minds', in Tokyo from March 21-23 where I joined the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and senior academics to engage with over 500 alumni from Japan and across the Far East. The weekend was organized by the Alumni Relations Team and Development Office to present a flavour of the wide spectrum of University activities in research, teaching and engagement. I gave an overview of OBG's ambitious development plans framed around

the story of 'Physic Gin'. This presentation, which concluded with a tasting of Physic Gin, proved extremely popular, generating much interest in how this unique University product can be exported to this region of the world. Following the event I was joined by Ben Jones ahead of a planned visit to our partner botanic garden in Toyama. There we discussed collaborative plans for 2019/20 and progress with our cherry 'repatriation' project, which has involved the export of 17 lost varieties of cherry from the UK to Japan via Toyama. Ben has coordinated this important project so it was highly fitting that we were there at the beginning of Sakura to celebrate this achievement.



Professor Simon Hiscock and Philip Pullman



# News from the Glasshouses

## New species for the Glasshouse collections

By Kate Pritchard

The majority of seed propagation for the glasshouse collections is carried out in the spring. We grow a large range of plants across the six different environments which we are able to create with the protection of the glasshouses.

For display in the Rainforest House (née Palm House) this summer there are two notable species of economic plant. From the Legume family (Fabaceae), *Lens culinaris*, is the cultivated variety of lentil. It is an upright bush which grows to around 50 cm and is covered in delicate bluish flowers resembling small sweet peas. *Lens culinaris* is cultivated on a global scale with more than 4 million tonnes produced annually. Lentil is among the most ancient cultivated crops, thought to have been farmed for more than 7,000 years.

Another plant that has been cultivated for millennia is the legume *Glycine max*, the soybean or soya bean. Today, human meat consumption is increasing and to satisfy demand, *G. max* is grown on an enormous commercial scale to provide cheap protein-rich animal feed. Current estimates place annual production at more than 250 million tonnes.

A plant whose history of cultivation is entwined with that of ancient civilisations is *Eragrostis tef* or teff. Originating from the Horn of Africa and farmed for more than 6000 years, 60% of the population of Ethiopia depends on this grain. It is an

important staple crop and a rich source of protein, iron and amino acids. It is very adaptable and is cultivated across an altitudinal range of 500 to 2,400 metres. At the Botanic Garden we will trial *E. tef* in the Rainforest House and in the Arid House. The teff genome was mapped in 2014 and this species of love grass is now a focus for research into improving yields and resistance to drought stress.

Other economically significant plants worth visiting in the glasshouses are *Aloe vera* and *Simmondsia chinensis*. Both of these can be found in the Arid House as part of our expanding 'Plants that Changed the World' display.



*Aloe vera* in the Arid House



The Rainforest House landscape



The Arid House landscape



# Arboretum Developments

## Japan in the spring

By Ben Jones

Spring in the UK is always welcome after the cold winter months, but this year I was fortunate enough to enjoy three weeks of spring in Japan. As part of the Garden and Arboretum's ongoing Japan project, Simon Hiscock and I travelled to Tokyo for a meeting with the Ministry for Environment to discuss our existing work and future collaborations. I have been very privileged to work in Japan during summer and autumn months in previous years, but this was my

first time visiting in the spring. Nothing could have prepared me for the sheer beauty and magnitude of the cherry blossom. *Prunus x yedoensis* or Yoshino cherry filled the streets and parks in Tokyo, with Shinjuku Gyoen National Garden receiving in excess of 70,000 visitors daily for 'Hanami', the Japanese traditional custom of enjoying the transient beauty of flowers.

We left Tokyo to head to the Botanical Gardens of Toyama (BGT). Travelling across Japan from Tokyo to Toyama on the bullet train, the countryside was awash with colour. Cherry blossom cascading down mountain forests, and colourful new growth of the newly emerging foliage on a wide range of trees and shrubs was an incredible

sight. In its own way, springtime in Japan is just as colourful as the autumn. Having signed an MOU with us in June 2018, BGT are planning an English garden to celebrate Oxford Botanic Garden's 400th anniversary in July 2021. During the visit to Toyama, we spent time planning future fieldwork, which will involve collecting new plant material for our Mount Tateyama collection at the Arboretum. Some of the many highlights that will feature in this new collection will include *Acer caudatum*, *Kalopanax septemlobus*, *Lysichiton camtschatcensis*, *Magnolia obovata*, *Magnolia salicifolia*, *Rhododendron albrechtii* to name but a few.

I left Toyama, to travel to the island of Shikoku to conduct fieldwork with the Kochi Prefectural Makino Botanical Garden (MBK) and the Shikoku Regional Office, Forestry Agency (SROFA). The main aims of this fieldwork were to verify occurrence information and conduct botanic surveys in populations of *Pseudotsuga japonica* (Togosawara) and *Sciadopitys verticillata* (Koyamaki), currently assessed as Endangered and Near Threatened respectively, on the IUCN Red List. This was also carried out as a precursor to fieldwork planned for this autumn. Discussions were held with partners, and it was agreed that with a collaborative approach between OBGA, MBK and SROFA, it will be possible to establish a species recovery project for both of these species. This will involve rapid botanic surveys, the collection of plant material, and the establishment of living conservation collections, both *in situ* and *ex situ*.



*Prunus* 'Sendaiya' Makino Botanical Garden

## Spring Fair at the Arboretum

By Tegan Bennett

Despite the weather the Spring Fair proved to be another successful event, attracting nearly 1,500 people. The animals were a popular attraction as always, with baby goats, goslings, chick and ponies to keep children and adults entertained. Music from Oxford Drum Troop, Horns of Plenty and the Hurdy Gurdy man gave the event a lively feel, and an array of local stall holders providing food and drinks, art, soaps and Arboretum honey meant there was plenty for our visitors to see and do. This year we welcomed some new stalls including Happy Panda - who sell bamboo straws, the Oxfordshire Mammals Group, and new food stalls Veni and Sons - who specialise in venison, and Green Box - whose vegetarian and vegan burgers proved to be very popular. It was busy all day down at the Woodland Barn where Jackie Singer told stories and the Arborists put on a display of their machinery. We look forward to our next event on 29th June which will coincide with our wildflower meadow looking at its best.



The Spring Fair



# News from the Garden

## News from our trainee horticulturalists

By Robert Taite and Emma McFarlane



The Carnivorous Plant House

**Robert** I have completed my project on a border themed around a catalogue of plants made by the Garden's first keeper, Bobart the Elder, in 1648. The border will be planted outside the Herbarium Room. I have used plants that featured in the 1648 catalogue in my designs, and I have tried to incorporate species that are of particular historic interest

to the Botanic Garden, such as *Primula auricula* - an example of a plant cultivated by Bobart in the seventeenth century.

**Emma** My current project is an ongoing growth trial of a selection of temperate carnivorous plants such as pitcher plants (*Sarracenia purpurea*), cobra lilies (*Darlingtonia californica*) and Venus flytraps

(*Dionaea muscipula*). The aim of this project is to determine whether any of the peat-free substrate mixtures I am trialling will serve as a viable future alternative to the peat-inclusive mixture that we use currently to grow our carnivorous plant collection. This will enable us to reduce the use of peat in the Botanic Garden further.

## The Literary Garden

By Ruth Calder

This spring we began work on the next stages of the woodland walk, planting trees to provide shade. These include the foxglove tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), to replace the specimen recently felled in the Lower Garden, and hawthorn (*Crataegus x lavalleyi* 'Carrieri'). Planting semi-mature trees enables us to achieve canopy cover more quickly, and they should establish well with regular watering. The understorey will be planted up this autumn and the following spring, and will include an assortment of species that have literary connections to Oxford Botanic Garden.



Newly planted trees by the Literary Garden



## The rare plants of Oxfordshire in our Conservation Collection

By Jim Penny and Chris Thorogood

Conservation of local flora is one of OBG's strategic priorities. We are continuing this important work this year with the greater water parsnip (*Sium latifolium*) and fen violet (*Viola persicifolia*). Greater water parsnip has suffered a substantial decline which was apparent in 1962, and has continued since then, largely due to the effects of habitat destruction, drainage and changes in the management of water levels. Fen violet was lost from many sites in Great Britain before 1930 and was thought to be extinct at Otmoor but a small population was found in 1997. Plants of both species raised at the Garden, will be re-introduced at suitable local sites, boosting the populations of these very rare plants in Oxfordshire. They also form a valuable part of our teaching collection - last year, an undergraduate student carried out her research project on our collection of fen violets.



Greater water parsnip (*Sium latifolium*) in cultivation at the Garden

## The flowering plant family tree - a new living display at Oxford Botanic Garden,

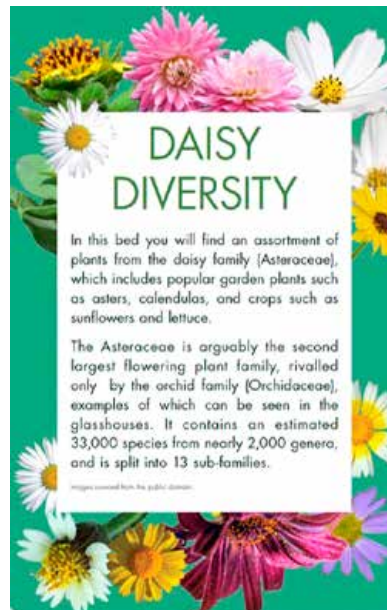
By Chris Thorogood

OBGA holds a collection of some 5,000 different types of plant. Many of this very diverse collection of plants can be seen growing in the taxonomic beds, which make up much of the historic Walled Garden. In an enormous collaborative effort that has taken many years to complete, our horticulturalists have transplanted all the plants in these beds to conform to the most objective APG (Angiosperm Phylogeny Group) system of classification. The first APG display was

pioneered at Bristol Botanic Garden in 2005 and many science-led botanic gardens around the world have introduced similar plantings since. These represent invaluable teaching and research resources.

The evolution and diversity of flowering plants has long fascinated scientists, including Charles Darwin, who described their origin and early evolution as 'an abominable mystery'. Flowers are variable in shape, size and appearance (their morphology). For centuries, the classification of living organisms relied on morphology to group related species into the hierarchy of orders, families and genera. Such classifications were subjective and sometimes false. Today, flowering plants (scientifically known as the angiosperms) - which make up the majority of land plants - are classified objectively using DNA analysis. Analysing the differences in sequences of DNA has enabled scientists to identify the relationships between all major groups of flowering plants which share a common ancestor. These groups, known as clades, show their evolutionary history. All of the specimens in the replanted beds have been chosen carefully to represent the diversity of the different clades.

Do come along and walk through this living display to see several thousand angiosperms from around the world grouped, for the first time, by their genetic relatedness.



An example of the new interpretation boards for the taxonomic beds



New interpretation boards for the taxonomic beds



# Plant hunting in Israel and Palestine

By Chris Thorogood

In collaboration with the University of Reading and Jerusalem Botanical Gardens, OBGA is researching the taxonomic complexity of a group of curious parasitic plants called *Cistanche*. The Middle East is the centre of diversity for the genus and is the area of focus of our work. This spring I was fortunate to accompany botanists Dr Ori Fragman-Sapir from the Jerusalem Botanical Gardens, and Dar Ben-Natan, on a *Cistanche* 'plant hunt' across Israel and Palestine, to examine cryptic populations and collect samples for DNA analysis.

We began our journey travelling across the Palestinian West Bank. Soon after setting off we came across a large stand of *C. tubulosa*, with muscular yellow stems bursting through the bare desert earth. Close by, we combed a stony amber slope overlooking the glimmering Dead Sea, in search of a solitary specimen of the very rare, milky-blue flowered *Trichodesma boissieri*. A lucky encounter along the way was the scarce desert succulent *Caralluma judaica*. Pleased with the botanical treasure we had seen already, we headed south for the hot, dry Arava Valley. After a two hour drive across barren sands and shales, we picked our way along a steep, rocky embankment of a partially dry reservoir

where purple specimens of *Cistanche* had been seen in previous years. To our surprise, we found purple, yellow, *and* cream specimens growing side by side. The purple specimens seemed to correspond well with the species *C. violacea*, a predominantly North African plant. It seems possible that at the east of its range *C. violacea* hybridises with yellow *C. tubulosa* where these two species come into contact in the Israel-Palestine region. We collected samples to test this hypothesis in the future. On the way to our overnight accommodation near Hatzeva, we headed to the Jordan Border

to see a population of *Allium sinaiticum*. To see this little white allium in flower was a privilege - it had not been seen in flower here for about twenty years.

The following morning we stopped at a roadside south of Tzofar after spotting a robust, violet spike of *Cistanche* from the car. We parked next to a fine patch of desert henbane (*Hyoscyamus desertorum*) and immediately stumbled across amethyst blue broomrapes jutting out from the bare earth. We identified these to be *Phelipanche daninii* - a rare species that none of us had seen before. A few metres away, fat,



*Allium sinaiticum*



A specimen of putative *Cistanche violacea*





*Cistanche tubulosa* in the Dead Sea Valley

burgeoning spikes of *C. violacea* were also sprouting through the desert clay. Most of those in full bloom were whitish, tinted with bright purple, whilst some were fuchsia-pink. Content with our samples and pressed floral dissections, we continued on our descent to Eilat at the very south of the country, by the Red Sea, to continue with our hunt for *C. tubulosa*.

On our ascent north of Eilat, we trekked across the Negev Desert. Our aim was to find an intriguing population of *Cistanche* that Dar had encountered previously which we suspected might be referable to *C. salsa* - a species widely recorded in the region in error for *C. violacea*. The plants were closer to 'bona fide' *C. salsa* (distinguished by its hairy bracts) than any of the plants we had seen on the excursion so far. However consultation with other

botanists suggests that our plants match better the poorly known species *C. fissa*, which is similar to *C. salsa*, but has pale flowers with woolly hairs on the inner surface of the lobes. This is interesting because until our apparent discovery *C. fissa* was known only (with certainty) to grow in Turkmenistan - some 2,400 kilometres away. Our future work using DNA analysis, will confirm whether the populations in Israel are indeed consistent with *C. fissa* collected by botanists in Turkmenistan.

After sampling our last population of *C. violacea* of the day, we stopped to admire a bank of wild irises (*Iris mariae*). The mauve flowers swaying gently in the breeze, backlit by sunset-orange sand, are a jewel among the desert flora: the perfect end to such a rich botanical adventure.



*Trichodesma boissieri*



A specimen of putative *Cistanche fissa*



*Iris mariae*



# News from the Education Team

## Story Makers at the Botanic Garden

Story Makers was a truly collaborative project that we have enjoyed participating in. It was run in partnership with Fusion Arts, based in Cowley, and local integrative arts psychotherapist Helen Edwards, and was funded by Children in Need. The Education Team welcomed groups of pupils from three local schools to the Garden, to find out about the relationship that plants have with one another and how plants are used by people. Pupils participating in the project had the chance to engage with our plant collection on physical and creative levels, and to articulate thoughts and emotions, develop self-reflection, and enrich their speech and language. The pupils have been working with Helen every week to create an impressive display of art work, written work and dance and movement. These were all showcased at a celebratory event where family, friends, pupils and teachers came to the Garden to view the artwork displayed among our collections. As well as being an enriching project for the pupils, building their confidence and developing their identities as creative individuals, the project has also enabled the Education Team to observe and learn from Helen's practice; it has also enabled Helen to gain insight and knowledge about the Garden and the educational activities we run. The project which has been running in other University collections since 2010 will hold a symposium about the project, process and outcomes, offering learning opportunities for other artists and educators this summer in Oxford. It was a pleasure to be a participant in the Story Makers project.

## Public Engagement in the City Centre

The Education Team have been training keen D.Phil. research students from the Department of Plant Sciences in the art of public engagement. To test all our learning we set up 'shop' at the Westgate Centre in Oxford to see if we could entice casual shoppers to engage with botany! The students showcased a short but punchy animation about their research into altering plants to make them more resistant to drought and salt stress. The Garden hooked younger visitors with some practical gardening and an investigation into the pigments in flowers; the Arboretum was represented by seeds



Public engagement work at Westgate. Inset: The OBG team at Westgate



Exploring plant pigments

collected by OBG's staff in Japan. All involved were pleasantly surprised by how open people were to finding out more about the research and activities of the University.

## Science Club

Colour with Nature was the most recent family workshop in a series designed and delivered jointly by the Garden and Science Oxford. Families took part in a set of pacy experiments and activities that explored the colourful world of plant pigments. Everyone left with a goody bag containing a picture made with plant dyes, botanic bookmarks and beautiful Easter eggs dyed with onion skins and leaf silhouettes. Look out for future workshops in the autumn at the Arboretum!



# Elusive Forest Flowers

By Chris Thorogood

*Oxygyne* is a rare and poorly known genus occurring in just a few remote tracts of rainforest in southern Japan and west-central Africa. Only six species are known to science, of which two are believed to be extinct, and the remaining four Critically Endangered. They look quite unique among flowering plants. Some are blue and all lack functional leaves and chlorophyll and so do not photosynthesise. Remarkably little is known about the biology of these ethereal-looking 'botanical curiosities' and they are completely unknown in cultivation. They grow in deep shade on the forest floor, often under leaf litter, where they are overlooked easily and so seldom seen. All species of *Oxygyne* are mycoheterotrophic which means that they obtain their nutrition, in the form of carbon, from other green (photosynthetic) plants through a shared mycorrhizal fungal network. Thus, broadly speaking, they can be considered to be parasitic plants similar to *Hydnora*, described in the previous edition of the Newsletter. Find out more about these curious plants in our latest scientific paper, written for the journal *Plants People Planet*:

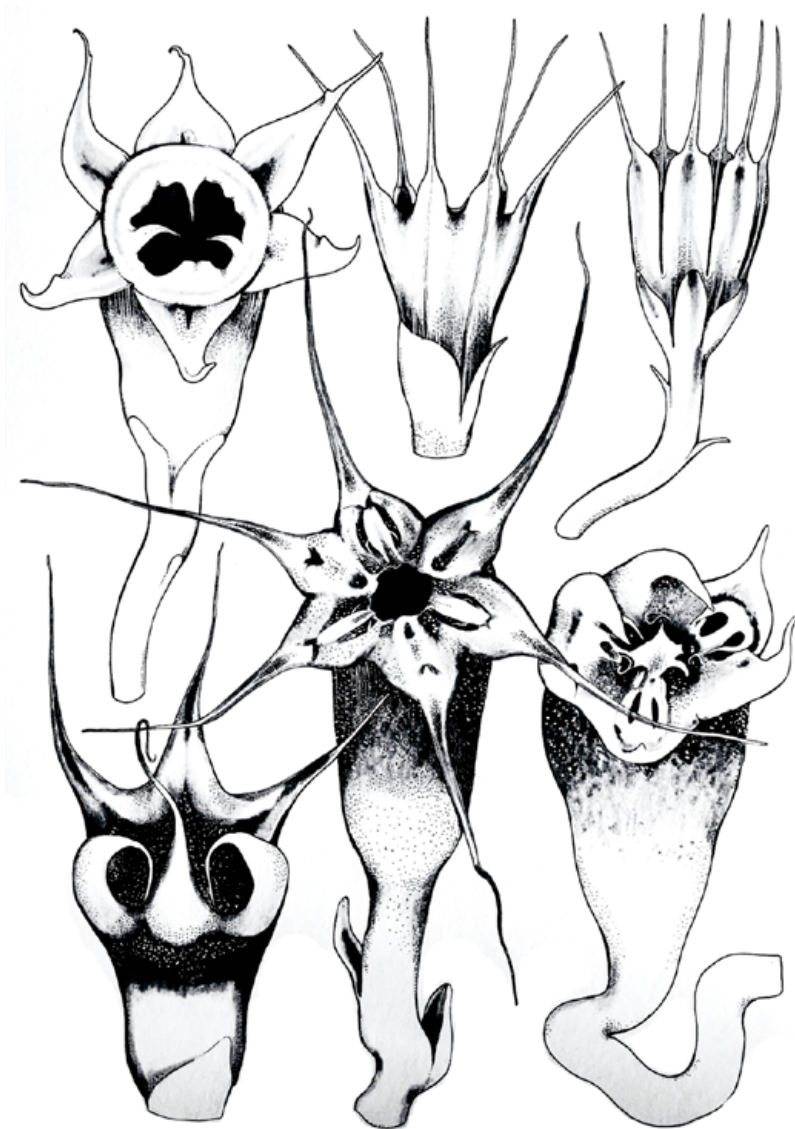
<https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/ppp3.26>



*Oxygyne shinzatoi* (a species from southern Japan)



*Oxygyne duncanii* (a species from west-central Africa)



Illustrations of the genus *Oxygyne* by Chris Thorogood



# Friends' Section News

From the Friends' Chairman, Sarah Taylor

## Seonaid Danziger

In the latest of my series of articles about the Friends' volunteers who make our organisation the success it is, I am focussing on Seonaid Danziger. She is to be seen at many Friends' events, behind her camera, snapping away, trying to capture everything that happens. She is always on the look out for photographs to build up a library of images for all our publications and, most particularly, to illustrate the electronic bulletin for which she is responsible: an invaluable job and one which she does with quiet enthusiasm and to great effect.

For those of you who have not yet signed up to our electronic communications, the e-bulletin is an adjunct to our excellent Friends' Newsletter. It appears in between newsletters, to alert you to anything of interest going on in the Garden, and to promote the many events we and the Garden put on. Seonaid has built it up into a high-quality publication, informative, well laid out, well written and beautifully illustrated: I commend it to you all.

Seonaid studied mathematics and started her working life teaching Maths and Science. Curiosity led her to computers and stints first with IBM then Kodak, where she trained the annual graduate intake. She then went on to teach the very new subject, Computer Science, at A level. She found that IT fitted in better with her burgeoning family than teaching and so continued with it in a number of capacities. She has found it to stand her in very good stead, particularly when doing the e-bulletin. When we had a hiatus between administrators, Seonaid even sat down and taught herself to use Mailchimp, which we use to distribute the e-bulletin: remarkable, to me at least!

It was in 2012 that Seonaid, already a volunteer for us, first met Richard Mayou in the striped money collecting tent at the biennial plant sale. Richard was for many



Seonaid Danziger

years Chairman of the Friends and in addition produced the e-bulletin. That very summer he talked Seonaid into taking it over. Seonaid also then joined the Friends' Forum and Events committee, so that she was au fait with all the activities of the Friends and could be present to report on them and of course take the photographs. She has seen many changes, in Friends' Administrators, in University computer systems, University rules and latterly GDPR requirements: all developments that have had to be adapted to and taken account of, as well illustrated by her aforementioned mastery of Mailchimp.

In addition to her involvement with us, Seonaid has for many years been a lay magistrate in Oxford, sitting on the youth bench. This led her to becoming a governor at Northbrook House, a very special school in every sense, for children with social, emotional and mental health difficulties - and thence onto the board of a Multi Academy Trust.

Seonaid's husband is an historian, so they travel in pursuit of Napoleon and the Romanoffs. This, combined with her interest in the Botanic Garden and Arboretum and all her other activities, means that Seonaid leads a full and varied life. We are very grateful to benefit from it.

## Sally Orriss

I also want to thank Sally Orriss, who is leaving us temporarily (I hope) to go and live in France for a few months. She has been the bedrock of Friends' events for many years: she it is who has organised the rotas for the tea tent on virtually every occasion, as well as baking the most delicious cakes and encouraging others to do so too. In addition, whenever we have needed to embellish tables, tents or rooms, Sally has produced the most beautiful flower arrangements. Her talent and organisational skills are going to be much missed.



Sally Orriss

# Events

## First Friday of the Month

### Coffee Mornings

Friends' coffee mornings are on the first Friday of every month (except January and August) and are an opportunity for Friends to get together. All coffee mornings begin at 10.30am in the Garden's Conservatory followed by a tour at 11.00am. There is no fee and no booking is required, just turn up. The next dates in the Garden are: September 6th and November 1st. On Friday October 4th, the coffee morning will be at the Arboretum.

### Forthcoming events

## Thursday 3rd October, 7.30pm

### 14th Annual General Meeting

Jacqueline du Pré Building,  
St Hilda's College, OX4 1DY

### Professor Liam Dolan to give Friends' AGM lecture in October

Liam Dolan, Sherardian Professor of Botany, will give the lecture this year at the end of the Friends' Annual General Meeting. It is entitled *Discovery in the Garden: the science of plants in Oxford*.

These lectures have become one of the highlights on the Friends' calendar. Last year, Chris Thorogood and Kate Pritchard gave inspired talks about the glasshouse plants, illustrated in part by Chris's extraordinary paintings; in 2017, Chris took us on a whirlwind tour of modern-day plant hunting in Japan; and in 2016 Simon Hiscock and Ben Jones shared their vision for the future of the Garden and Arboretum.

We keep the business of the AGM to an absolute minimum, to allow plenty of time for the talks and the drinks reception afterwards. If you haven't been recently, do come along to this most enjoyable evening.

Save the Date  
**Friends'  
Biennial  
Giant Plant  
Sale**

Sunday May 24th 2020



# Friends' Autumn Garden Visits

By Harriet Bretherton, Pauline Coombes,  
Jane Annett and Diana Naumann

We hope you'll want to join us during the autumn at one of the following garden visits we've organised for you, ranging from a coach visit to RHS Wisley (let the coach take the strain and bring home the plants!) and at the end of October, a visit to Thenford Gardens and Arboretum.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank all those Friends and their guests who've come on visits throughout this year. Also thanks to our Ticketing Administrator, Freya Jones, for the support we've all received. And, most importantly, we express our gratitude to the owners who have welcomed us most generously into their gardens and homes.

Don't forget, if you have any ideas for future garden visits, please email Harriet Bretherton: Email: [harriet@brethertonfamily.com](mailto:harriet@brethertonfamily.com)

## Friday 6th September, 2.30pm

### Private visit to Steane Park Garden

Steane Park Garden, Brackley,  
Northamptonshire NN13 6DP

By kind permission of Lady Connell

When Sir Michael and Lady Connell moved to Steane Park in 1990, the garden was in an extremely dilapidated and overgrown



Wisley - the Rock Garden at sunset

state. Over the past 29 years they have tried to capture the original glory of the garden with the fishponds being enhanced by the addition of a jetty. The area between the fishponds, where the previous owner grew potatoes, is now planted with trees and wild flowers, so potatoes are now grown in the newly renovated 17th century vegetable garden. Sadly, Sir Michael passed away in 2013, but Lady Connell remains passionate about the garden and, with the help of her

gardeners, continues to add enhancements each year. The Head Gardener will give a guided tour. Cream tea included.

- Friends £15, guests £20
- Maximum 40

## Sunday 22nd September

### Coach visit to RHS Wisley

9.00am Coach departs Oxford  
Redbridge Park & Ride.

NOTE: Lewknor pick-up possible.

5.30pm: Approx arrival time back  
at Park & Ride. Washroom on board.

By kind permission of RHS Wisley

The first thing you see when you arrive at Wisley is the brand new Welcome Building. After a stop for coffee, your visit begins with a tour lead by one of Wisley's specialist Tour Guides, lasting approximately 1.5 hours. Things to look out for are the Equinox Border with its vast swathe of Michaelmas daisies; Nerines all over the garden and in the Glasshouse the new Exotic Garden with Cannas galore. Hydrangeas, especially on Battleston Hill; the Mixed Borders are still looking good and if you have the time, the Cyclamen in Howards Field always look lovely. The Bird Hide is also in this area. The rest of the day is free for Friends to explore by themselves. Refreshments not included but there are cafés or bring a picnic.

- Friends £35, guests £40
- Maximum 48



Monet Bridge through the meadow

© RHS, Joanna Kossak



# Autumn Garden Visits

**Saturday 5th October, 10.00am**

## **Private visit to Wytham Woods, the Laboratory with Leaves**

**Wytham Woods, University of Oxford,  
Sawmill Yard, Wytham, Oxford OX2 8QQ**

By kind permission of Nigel Fisher, Conservator of Wytham Woods

A special opportunity for a private guided walk through Wytham Woods with the Conservator, Nigel Fisher. A chance to learn about the plants, ecology and research activities located within this 1000 acre woodland. The Woods are one of the most researched areas of woodland in the world with projects dating back to 1947. The walk will take a maximum of two hours. The terrain is hilly in places but our visit will be taken at a slow pace. Refreshments provided.

- Friends £15, guests £20
- Maximum 30

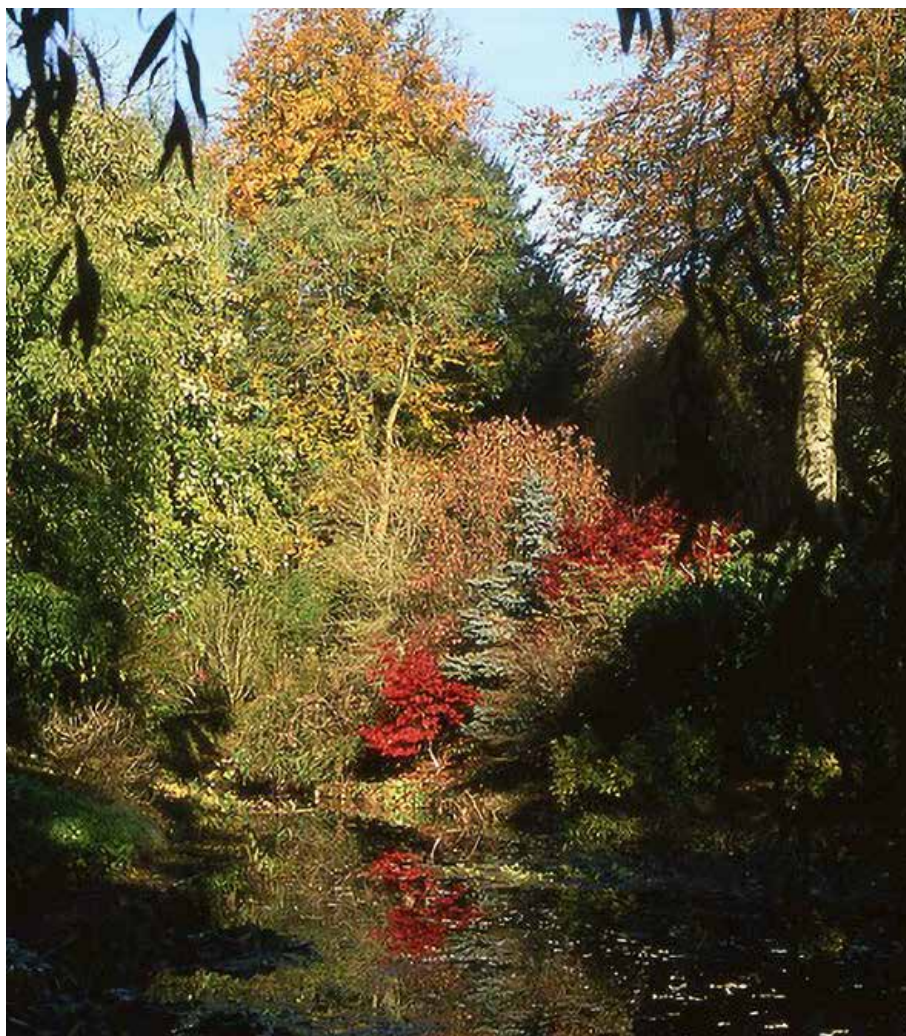
**Friday 25th October, 2.30pm**

## **Thenford Gardens and Arboretum**

**Thenford Gardens and Arboretum,  
Thenford, Nr Banbury, Oxon OX17 2BX**

By kind permission of Lord and Lady Heseltine

Autumn colours should be at their best for a rare chance to visit this wonderful garden and arboretum, featuring a collection of about 3,000 different trees and shrubs, together with extensive herbaceous borders, water



**Thenford Gardens**



**Wytham Woods**

gardens, an alpine trough garden, rose garden, sculpture garden and a rill. The medieval fish ponds, their interconnecting canal and existing lake have been restored with two new ones being added. An 18th century avenue of mature yews has been cleared of self-seeded shrubs and saplings, returning it to its former grandeur. Quite a bit of walking so sensible footwear suggested. Refreshments (at extra cost in aid of the Church) available in the Church Barn.

- Friends £20, guests £25
- Maximum 50

**STOP PRESS** We have arranged a visit to the Japanese Garden in Milton under Wychwood for Saturday 19th October at 2.30 pm. Details will be available soon on the website.



# The Danby Patron Group

By Maura Allen

The new Danby Patron Group has enjoyed two events so far this year, our fascinating look at the 'un-collectable' in the Oxford Herbaria with Stephen Harris and a presentation of the new Herbarium room with Stephen Harris, Simon Hiscock and Pia Östlund, the designer of the room, and the fabric and products it has generated which are now available in the Botanic Garden Boutique. We are looking forward to our guest night in early June with a barbecue in the woods at the Arboretum and a presentation by Ben Jones on the preservation of rare trees. At the end of August, we will have an evening in the Garden's glasshouses, with Chris Thorogood, for a chance to see the nighttime flowering of water lilies and cacti accompanied by a Japanese meal prepared by our Events Team member Taeko Sakai. In September Liam Dolan and Stephen Harris will be presenting 'Herbaria and Modern Plant Sciences' in the Department of Plant Sciences.

Danby members have unparalleled access to the most knowledgeable leaders in plant research and history in our intimate and informal events. If you would like to know more about our future events please contact

Maura Allen on [mea@armitstead.com](mailto:mea@armitstead.com) or 07772127029

## Patrons' benefits

Members will receive all the benefits of being Friends of OBG and of the Bobarts Patron Group. In addition, they will enjoy special opportunities such as:

- Invitation to a future presentation in London giving a unique insight into the fascinating work of the Department of Plant Sciences
- Exclusive biennial overseas tours with Simon Hiscock and Chris Thorogood, the first one, provisionally, a botanical excursion to Sicily
- Further events will be organised giving special access to the unique, world-class collections and work of the Garden, the Arboretum and Oxford University's plant scientists

The Group is administered by FOBGA and the money raised will be divided equally for the benefit of OBG, and the Department of Plant Sciences, for the benefit of the Oxford University Herbaria.

## Special message to all gmail users

Gmail has a disconcerting way of filtering messages into different categories. You may miss emails from us because they have been filtered into the Promotions or Update categories. It is advisable to apply a filter to move any emails from Friends' Administrator to force them into your Personal or Primary Inbox. In particular you may not receive your emailed copy of the newsletter magazine that is published three times a year. The dates this is usually sent out are as follows:

Mid-March / Early July / Early November

If you need any help with applying a filter to move our emails into your inbox then do contact Seonaid Danziger at [seonaidscd@gmail.com](mailto:seonaidscd@gmail.com)

## Don't forget your membership card

when you come to visit the Garden and Arboretum. Our ticket office staff do not have access to the membership database (for data protection reasons) and can't let you in free of charge if you don't have your membership card!

## Message to all email users

If you are not receiving regular e-bulletins with news of Friends' events by email, it will be because, for some reason, we do not have your current email address. Please send an email with your name, to the Friends' Administrator at [friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk).

## Reciprocal arrangement for Friends of Kew and Oxford Botanic Garden

### "Two-for-one" discount for members

- Two-for-one discount applies on entry to Kew Gardens and Wakehurst only (no discount on events, car parking, food, retail, etc.).
- The offer is only available for full-paying adults. When an adult member/staff/trustee/student wishes to enter with a child over four, a concession, a student, or another guest, the full adult entry fee must be paid, and the guest, child, concession, or student enters for free.
- The member must present their membership card to claim their two-for-one discount.
- Joint members who each hold a membership card are both entitled to bring in a second person on the two-for-one discount, with two paying adults.
- All additional children over four pay full child's price at Kew Gardens (currently £5). At Wakehurst children under the age of 16 can enter for free.
- This offer is only available at the gates, therefore no pre-booking online.
- This offer cannot be used with any other discount or offer.

- The scheme takes effect 1 June 2019.
- Terms and conditions will be reviewed annually.
- This offer is reciprocal, meaning Friends of Kew and Wakehurst receive the same offer upon visiting Oxford Botanic Gardens.

### Free entry for staff, trustees and Horticultural Trainees

- The reciprocal arrangement for staff, trustees, and students (including Horticultural Trainees) remains unchanged.
- To gain free entry into Kew Gardens and Wakehurst, staff, trustees, and students will need to bring their relevant pass with Oxford Botanic Garden's name on it or some other proof of identity such as a letter confirming their status on headed paper.

### Free entry for Bobart and Danby Patrons

- To gain free entry into Kew Gardens and Wakehurst, Bobart and Danby Patrons will need to present their relevant Patrons Card.
- This offer is valid as long as Richard Deverell, the Director of Kew is a Visitor of Oxford Botanic Gardens.



# The Bobarts Patron Group

By Helen Potts  
and Jennie Turner

Planning the Bobarts programme each year is an exciting task for us. It is fantastic that the Bobarts Group continues to grow from strength to strength and has given extra financial support to the Garden and Arboretum for 15 years now. Our members and those of the Danby Patrons' Group enjoy all the benefits of the Friends plus a programme of small group visits to the University collections and to some of the best gardens and estates in the area. Our aim is to visit the widest possible range of gardens in terms of style, size and location and we are helped in this by the generosity of the garden owners and those who work in the institutions whose gardens we visit. We are grateful to them for their time and the knowledge they share with us.

We divide our programme for the year into two. We have already had three successful visits, all unusually for us based in Oxford, two to see botanical art in the Ashmolean Museum and The Queen's College and a visit to the beautiful gardens of Worcester College.

As we write, we have just returned from a three-night stay trip to Cornwall visiting four wonderful gardens: Tregrehan, Enys, Tremenheere and a private one near Falmouth.



The Old Rectory, Quinton

In the second booking period, recently sent out, we shall have a full day in London, beginning at the Aga Khan gardens at Kings Cross, with a view to discovering and understanding more of the history and culture of the Muslim world. We will go on to Cannon Bridge House roof garden, the vision of Paul Burnage who will introduce the garden. Later in July we look forward to visiting Eastleach House which stands high on the plateau that marks the end of the Cotswold scarp and with a rill, walled gardens, parkland and arboretum.

The Old Rectory in Quinton in September is a beautiful 3-acre contemporary garden designed by Anoushka Feiler and divided into six parts. Eighteenth century elements are given a distinctly twenty-first century twist with the inclusion of living walls and other modern features. Our Bobarts' evening this year will take place in early October in the Garden with the Director Simon Hiscock and other Curators of the Garden present. We end the year's programme in October returning to visit the garden of another Bobarts member, who has created a beautiful garden with many rare and unfamiliar plants and a huge diversity of unusual trees, including a Japanese maple plantation.



The Aga Khan Centre

By joining this group and by attending our events, Bobarts members provide extra support to the Garden and Arboretum, which is highly appreciated by all who work there. As we approach the 400th anniversary of the Garden and University Herbaria this becomes ever more important. Please consider joining this friendly garden loving group.

## Calendar

### 2019 September

Friday September 6th, 10.30am

**Coffee morning, Botanic Garden**

Friday September 6th, 2.30pm

**Private visit to Steane Park Garden**

Sunday September 22nd

**Coach visit to RHS Wisley**

### October

Thursday October 3rd, 7.30pm

**Annual General Meeting, St Hilda's**

Friday October 4th, 10.30am

**Coffee morning, Arboretum**

Saturday October 5th, 10.00am

**Visit to Wytham Woods**

Saturday October 19th, 2.30pm

**Private visit to Japanese Garden, Milton under Wychwood**

Friday October 25th, 2.30pm

**Private visit to Thenford Gardens and Arboretum**

### November

Friday November 1st, 10.30am

**Coffee morning, Botanic Garden**

### The Friends of Oxford Botanic Garden and Arboretum

Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ.

All Friends' enquiries, including those about Friends' events, should be made to the Friends' Administrator.  
Tel: 01865 610303

E-mail: [friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk](mailto:friends.administrator@obg.ox.ac.uk)

Web: [www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk](http://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk)

The Friends Office is staffed on Wednesdays and Fridays. This Newsletter was edited by Chris Thorogood and Carol Maxwell. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Board of the Friends or the Visitors of Oxford Botanic Garden.

