

60th Anniversary Open Gardens celebration

As we go to press, the Open Gardens celebration is drawing to a close. Already by the end of July, 43 gardens had welcomed over 2500 visitors. Quite apart from the enjoyment, the events had raised £2500 for the HPS (mainly to cover the cost of insurance and the booklet) and £6,500 for charities as diverse as the Notts and Lincs Air Ambulance, Great Ormond Street, the Red Cross, a local church and the Friends of Cranleigh Villa.

Enjoying such diverse gardens and meeting fellow enthusiasts has been very enjoyable not only for visitors but also for the open garden hosts and helpers whom we thank most sincerely. Here are some snapshots from across the country – it's been a wonderful way to celebrate!

Ruth Plant

Middle Well Garden, Stoke Gabriel, near Totnes, Devon

Defying the weather pundits who had forecast heavy rain, Neil and Pam Millward's garden attracted 248 visitors over the late May Bank Holiday weekend. The *Totnes Times* published details of the opening prior to the event and a report with photo afterwards; the local radio station gave several mentions.

Middle Well has many *Cornus* varieties and 'Eddie's White Wonder' and *C. kousa* 'Miss Satomi' were looking particularly good, as were *Allium schubertii* and many hardy geraniums including 'Derek Cook', 'Lilac Ice', 'Espresso' and 'Eureka Blue'.

Following the very dry winter, one of the challenges was to maintain the water level in the rill which runs inside the walled area of the garden. Building up the weir outside the wall with removable slabs meant the water level could be kept constant and preserve the all-important watery sounds where people congregate most.

This year has seen (the final) outward expansion and the creation of a new bed along the stream, lined with *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' and leading the way to the 'arboretum'.

All the planting, pruning (and weeding) is done by Pam, while Neil busies himself with hard landscaping and the vegetable garden. A new stone seat, cantilevered out from a wall, was finished the day before the opening!

Teas and a soup lunch proved popular, and over £1300 was raised for Kennedy's Disease UK, a charity funding research into this rare disorder of the motor neurones caused by genetic mutation.



©Neil Millward



Wimbourne Road, Dorset

Marie Fitzwalter opened her garden for the very first time for this HPS anniversary celebration. Assisted by friends and family, 84 visitors were welcomed to her garden on a perfect summer's day.

Marie said, "It was really lovely to have so many people enjoying our garden and taking the time relaxing with a cuppa, a piece of cake and chatting to friends new and old."

In addition many plants were sold, raising funds for the HPS and a local charity.

Tilford House, Hognaston, Ashbourne

It was a day when the rain came down in torrents, but 53 people braved the weather to see a wonderful woodland garden. At first it must have seemed a real challenge to garden 1.5 acres in a very shady area alongside a deep, fast running stream, and certainly the land is very boggy. But **Peter Gardner** provided a masterclass in how to make a shady, wet site colourful and beautiful. There were literally hundreds of primulas, blooming in orange, apricot, pinks and reds and all shades in-between; they were interplanted with shrubs and hostas and at no time did it feel as if one plant was getting the upper hand and crowding out the rest, a real achievement. On top of that the hostas showed no sign of slug damage, causing visitors to wonder again and again 'How does he do that?!'

Out of the deluge, the valiant tea team kept visitors warm with refreshments and despite the weather everyone had a splendid time. A lovely way to celebrate hardy plants, gardening, and the Society. Peter's charity was the local church, St Bartholomew's, who were delighted.

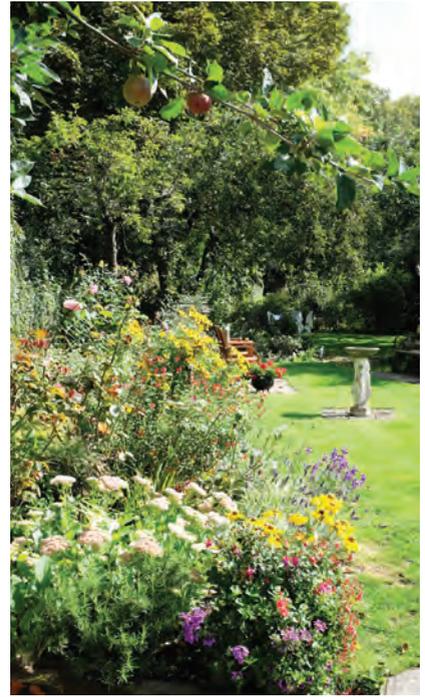


Sapling Cottage, Blandford Forum, Dorset –

Elaine and Mike Lofthouse's garden was open, along with 15 others, for Blandford Hidden Gardens. It was the 10th year for the event and the second time they have opened Sapling Cottage in the 2 years since they moved in. The day was overcast and cooler than earlier in the week but the event proved popular, with 345 visitors during the day. The first visitors were none other than HPS chairman Cathy Rollinson and her husband Graham, who went on to visit all the Hidden Gardens before heading home to Surrey.

Sapling Cottage is situated on one of the few remaining private burgage plots in the town. Many visitors were surprised that there was a garden at all behind the shops and commented on the old brick, flint and dressed-stone boundary wall and the marvellous view from the garden of the parish church tower among the rooftops. Lots of plant names were requested and HPS mentioned frequently.

Teas, plant sales and a donation bucket brought in funds for the Dorset & Somerset Air Ambulance. At the end of an exhausting but enjoyable day Elaine and Mike said it was all worthwhile and they'd enjoyed sharing their garden with so many appreciative visitors.



©Elaine Lofthouse

Yew Tree Cottage, Staffordshire

The weather held fine for **Ruth and Clive Plant's** Garden Open. The country garden of 1/3 acre is split into his (vegetables) and hers (ornamental) and is divided into rooms with yew hedging and plenty of benches which the gardeners never seem to find time to sit on!

The stars of the show were undoubtedly the Angel's Fishing Rods, *Dierama*, as Ruth has over 60 species and cultivars in a National Collection. Ruth's interest started with just a few plants which she popped into a gravelly area when she was tired of falling over them in their pots, and they flourished. The site provides enough water once the plants had their roots down, there was little competition from other plants and, surprisingly, it wasn't particularly sunny.



©Ruth Plant



©Ruth Plant

Dierama pulcherrimum

Having solved the riddle of how to grow them well she was hooked, and before Clive knew it she was asking for shrubs and trees to be removed to make more space for a rapidly increasing number. Most of the species have been grown from seed, sourced from their native habitats across southern Africa. There are a number of cultivars, but Ruth says there isn't room in the garden for the full range.

Visitors spent time chatting in the vinery and choosing which dierama they'd like to take home with them. The funds raised were donated to the Staffordshire HPS Group.

Copper Beeches, Shropshire

"Would anyone like to open their garden to celebrate the HPS 60th anniversary?" we were asked at an HPS meeting last year. Though previously we had shown only groups of fellow HPS or garden club members around our garden, somehow or other my husband and I found ourselves saying we would. We chose to open 'By appointment, June to September' as the summer months should provide the best display.

We moved home in November 2013 and renovating the house came first, so little was done in the garden until summer 2014. I garden with my husband Mike. He does trees, veg, fruit and the heavy stuff, while I do the pretty bits. Half an acre of grass, ancient shrubs and trees had to be tackled, as well as a mammoth rabbit problem.

We now we have a varied, colourful and productive garden we are proud of, with only the occasional rabbit incursion.

We've enjoyed welcoming a number of groups, amongst them a local garden club who brought their own cake to share, arranged by a fellow HPS member, and another SHPS member brought a U3A Garden Group from over the border in Wales.

My biggest worry was how many plant names I would remember as my mind always seems to go blank at such times; also, would it be wet on the day? Thankfully the weather was kind and my memory had help from fellow HPS members!

A bonus has been that opening our garden encouraged me to be more assiduous in dead-heading, which has resulted in many plants giving a second flush of flowers. Our chosen charity was *Dogs for Good* as our lovely golden retriever Charly is always on hand-paw to help us out. It was an enjoyable experience for all three of us. 🐾



Visitors to Mike and Anita Chapman's garden