

Letters

THIRD TIME LUCKY?

Back in the 1980s, I developed a new interest: ornamental grasses. A little later, I was delighted to see that the HPS had set up a new specialist group, the Grasses Group; and I joined. Its first modest newsletter was issued in spring 1992, and by spring 2000 there were seven of them.

But the group wasn't viable, and it was disbanded. The group's chairman, John Trinder, wrote: 'This is perhaps the most difficult and the saddest letter I have needed to write in my short time as chairman. This is the last issue of 'The Spikelet' and we apologise for the long delay in getting it to you ... It is something of a paradox, grasses have become one of the 'in' groups of plants, and the interest and availability has never been as high.' Nonetheless, the band of pioneers (or whatever we were) was closed down, and there has been very little mention of the group, or of 'The Spikelet', since.

John Trinder ends his final chairman's letter with 'Perhaps when gardeners have become familiar with the use of grasses and can provide a larger catchment of enthusiasm, a third and viable Grasses Group will come into being'. Is there any sign of it?

Grasses are not as flamboyant or as conventionally beautiful as (say) peonies, geraniums, or the buttercup family; but they have charm that has provoked a plethora of books, web notes and images, nursery lists, and magazine articles. In contrast, recent issues of 'The Hardy Plant' have carried less than a handful of items dealing solely or predominantly with grasses – or even graminoids. Is that an indication that the subject is not of interest to us? I would much like to see a 'third and viable' grasses group within the Society, but not if it will just fizzle out again.

I wonder what thoughts other members have on all this.

Martin Spray, Forest of Dean

ECOSIA

I am writing to the Journal to inform everyone about the ECOSIA internet browser. It is an alternative to the big internet browsers such as Google, and its huge advantage is that for every 45 clicks it receives, it plants a tree. You can easily upload (download) it and make it your default browser on any phone, tablet or computer which you use. I have done so and use it all the time. An additional advantage is that the big browsers are no longer collecting scary detailed data on you every time you go on their sites.

Do at least have a look. I am sure as HPS members you must thoroughly approve of tree planting.

Sue Rowles, Southern Counties Group member

Editor's note: The internet browser industry is highly complex and rather opaque. There are claims and counter-claims about ECOSIA among many other things. But a brief review on the web does suggest they are a legitimate enterprise and trees do get planted.