

## HPS Photographic Competition 2019

*Matthias Dejaegher, photo librarian*

This was my first year as photo librarian so I can't really compare with previous years; but I was pleased with the number of entries this year, which amounted to 98 pictures in total.

There were some truly impressive entries and we could have easily chosen many more beautiful pictures in each category, but all three judges had to agree (that was the hard part), and we eventually came up with our top three in each category for this year.



Category one: individual hardy perennial – whole plant or close-up

Winner: Emily Blackmore –  
*Eryngium yuccifolium*

We absolutely loved this photograph for its purity. Emily took this picture at Curtis Prairie, Wisconsin, USA, during her travel scholarship. It's a real art to make a simple plant stand out like that. What got our attention immediately is that the plant is perfectly focused; in contrast, the background is blurred, so apart from a few of the same heads, there's nothing to distract you. The colours are limited to varying shades of green.



**2<sup>nd</sup> Place: Karin**

**Proudfoot –  
*Eranthis hyemalis***

Karin took this picture of a group of *Eranthis hyemalis* at home. It's one of those photographs that makes the ordinary look very special. We especially liked the composition: had she taken just one plant, it would have looked like an ordinary picture of an ordinary plant; if she had taken dozens together (as they often appear), you

wouldn't have been able to see the detail. We liked its natural setting, and the low sun accentuates the colours.

**3<sup>rd</sup> place: Robert Hinchcliffe –  
*Lonicera periclymenum*  
'Serotina', leaf detail in spring**

Of all the photographs, this is the one we had the most discussion about, and to say it was slightly controversial is probably an understatement. But some of us were absolutely passionate about this picture, and the fact we had that much discussion about it made it clear that it had to be in the top three. The very narrow focus and detail of the photograph are excellent. The colour, lighting and contrast draw you in each time you see it.



**Category two: a plant grouping, border, garden view or HPS event**

**Winner: Ruth Plant – Yew Tree Garden**

We went through all the entries a number of times, and this one grew on us more and more each time. You do need to look at it a few times to absorb it all. We admired the 'homely' feeling of the picture. The path that takes you away towards unknown places; the showy perennials in the foreground and the tree at the back which give you a sense of depth; the hedge which provides a feeling of seclusion; the wonderful combination of colours – all of these together make for a beautiful composition.

**Winner: Ruth Plant – Yew Tree Garden**



**2<sup>nd</sup> place: Louise Sims –  
Summer group in pots by our  
front door**

This was an easy one to judge: it absolutely had to be in our top three. The blend of blue and purple shades is amazing. But it's not just about the colour, it's also the texture of plants: the smaller flowers in the background, the purple flowers with a pink outline, and then the alliums and grass in the foreground which look like fireworks going off.



**3<sup>rd</sup> place: Robert Hinchcliffe –  
Euan Greig – Echinops and fennel**

There were a number of things we really liked about this picture: the contrast between the blue and yellow flowers, the difference in texture between the plants, the warm light of the sun and the understated, overgrown wall in the background which complements the flowers.



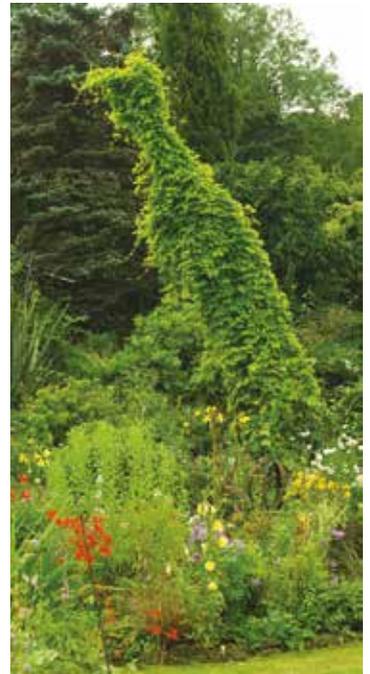
**Category three: a photograph taken by members' children or grandchildren (16 or under) on any garden subject.**

**Winner: Tom Martin (14) – Fern**

We were most impressed by the fact that Tom had the presence of mind to actually see this composition. It's not easy to 'see' macro pictures. It was also the slow transition from light at the top down to dark at the bottom, which suits ferns so well. The variation in focus from front to back draws you in. Then there's the contrast between the green leaves and the nearly black stem.

**2<sup>nd</sup> place: Mya Jassim (6) – Dinosaur gramps garden**

This picture is all about fantasy, and is exactly why we like judging this category. It's not something you generally see in pictures taken by adults. Even before I saw the title of the picture, my thoughts were immediately 'hey, this looks like a dinosaur!' One of the judges even saw a rabbit in it. The big trees at the back, and the border in the front make the dinosaur stand out even more; so well done too for taking this picture from a great angle.



**3<sup>rd</sup> place: Francesca Vaughan (7) –  
Butterfly on Nana’s geranium**

If any of you have ever tried taking a photograph of a butterfly on a flower then you’ll probably think ‘this is the picture I never quite managed to take’. The patience exercised to take a photograph like this is impressive – and all that at seven years old! But there’s more to this picture: the focus is sharp all the way from the flower to the butterfly (just look at the striped antennae!), and the background complements rather than distracts from the main characters.



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Congratulations to the winners of the 2019 photographic competition and thank you to everyone who sent us pictures.

As this was my first year as the photo librarian, I also had to choose new judges. The three of us come from different continents and different backgrounds; we’re passionate about plants and flowers, but our specific plant interests are quite different, so we look at plants (and pictures of plants) in different ways, which I think is important for a panel of judges. But above all, I knew the other two would not shy away from voicing their opinion. And they didn’t disappoint! They have enjoyed this year’s competition so much that they have already asked to do it again next year. Thank you Winsome Muir and Jianhua Liu!

Before I finish, one word about how we judged (and maybe a tip or two to help you with your entries for next year). We must judge the picture based on exactly what you send us. We often looked at pictures and thought ‘if only the picture didn’t have that distracting branch on the side’ or ‘if only the picture was zoomed in a little bit more, the composition and balance would have been so much better’. But unfortunately, we cannot judge on the potential of a picture, just the photograph itself.

So next time, before you send your picture, have a good look and see if the picture can be improved. It usually doesn’t take much more than cropping it a bit here and there. Also, while we judge based on the merit of the picture itself, it’s nice for the judges to know some background information as well. So maybe add one or two lines with your entry about when and where you took the picture, the weather, particular circumstances etc ...

**Please send in your photographs for next year’s competition!** The email address for your competition entries is [photo.comp@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:photo.comp@hardy-plant.org.uk). Note: if your images are too large for email, please send them via [www.wetransfer.com](http://www.wetransfer.com) (free and very simple to use).

**No need to wait** – you can send them in anytime from now until the closing date, which will appear in the July newsletter, and also on the HPS website under the images dropdown, where you can also enjoy this year’s entries.