

Issue No. 35

August 2013

Friends of Thwaite Gardens Newsletter



SECRETARY'S REPORT 2012/2013

With signs of Autumn in the air already, I look back at another successful year in the garden.

A slow start with a late Spring merging in with a cool damp start to early Summer and then wham, the long awaited hot spell of Summer at last. However despite the cold spell the volunteers started early on raising plants for sale at Open Day.

On Sunday May 19th the weather was on our side and it was the busiest day ever. With the highest number of visitors, sale of plants, refreshments and enquiries about new membership were high, making Open Day a huge success.

Thank you again to all of our dedicated volunteers, who work all throughout the year to develop and maintain the garden projects. Also thanks go to the people who help in many ways on Open Day itself. As has been said many times before, we could not do it without you and we are very grateful.

Open Evening 22nd June unfortunately, as last year, it was a wash out. However to the people who did visit the gardens, thank you for your support.

A special highlight of our year was the very kind support given by M.K.M. Building Supplies Ltd., in the form of sponsorship of materials needed to develop the new Alpine House. Our appreciation is vast and it also endorses our belief in what we are doing and achieving. Thank you.

Also this year the volunteers were privileged to assist during a visit by a very organised and polite group of school children. We were able to answer their many questions and show them some very interesting plants. They particularly enjoyed the Evolution House. It was a pleasure to see their enthusiasm and interest and to share their enjoyment.

Enjoy the gardens!

Pam Bailey, Secretary, Friends of Thwaite Gardens

15/08/2013

TEL 01482 843304

~~~~~

## **FRIENDS OF THWAITE GARDENS**

### **A G M OCTOBER 2013**

#### **Agenda**

- 1. Apologies for absence.**
- 2. Chairman's welcome and report.**
- 3. Treasurers Reports.**
- 4. Election of Chairman & Officers:**
  - a. Secretary to begin by asking for a proposer and seconder to re-elect current chairman and treasurer if there are no other candidates.**
  - b. Chairman to request the re-election of current committee members willing to stand for a further year.**

**Pam Bailey ,Secretary, Pat Foreman Events Secretary,  
Norman Buck, John Killingbeck, Jean Major, Vic Swetez**

- 5. Any Other Business**

## TREES OF THWAITE No. 16 EVERGREEN MAGNOLIA (*Magnolia grandiflora*)



As the great American plantsman Michael Dirr once wrote – “Yankees would kill to be able to grow this species”. This is because, as well as being of extraordinary beauty, it was only dubiously hardy much north of the Mason – Dixon line and a hopeless case in the colder northern states. It is a native tree to the south eastern United States and in fact is THE emblematic magnolia of the Deep South with its hot steamy climate and old plantation culture. In effect, it is nominally a sub-tropical species.

How then does *Magnolia grandiflora* survive in Britain and even more so East Yorkshire? If one were to see it growing in its native country reaching perhaps 20 or more metres in height then the description “survive” in Britain would certainly seem apt. Here it is of far more modest proportions and clearly gains from being planted in as warm and sheltered a locality as possible (traditionally trained on a south facing wall in fact). But such is the quality of its beauty and exotic ambience that even far short of its potential it is a very garden-worthy plant and well worth the effort. The secret of its endurance is that, although clearly adapted to a far hotter climate than ours, its native southern states are subject on occasions to frosts which are severe even by British standards (even Miami can touch freezing level) to which of course, it must be adapted. So having the toughness to survive the winter in Britain, it makes what it can of the remainder of the year.

Even if *M. grandiflora* never flowered, it would be worth growing for its superb evergreen foliage which consists of lustrous laurel sized leaves that on the lower surface are covered with a dense ginger brown felt. This combination is very appealing. When well sited, growth is reasonably vigorous.

In its native land, *M. grandiflora* begins flowering, like most magnolias, in the spring. But in chilly Britain it takes far longer for the tree to get going and by the time it has become convinced that spring has finally arrived, the summer solstice is upon it and actual flowering rarely occurs before July. Once started however, blooming will continue well in to the autumn until the first hard frost. And what flowers they are! Great ivory white waxen bowls with a red central boss deep inside. This is not all – enticed to press ones nose into the flower, ones senses are thoroughly overwhelmed by a cool purifying lemon perfume with perhaps just a touch of decadent creaminess.

For many years the only form of *M. grandiflora* widely available in Britain was 'Exmouth'. Dating from the eighteenth century this old variety has fine foliage and magnificent flowers but has a somewhat lax habit, making it very suitable for traditional wall training but less satisfactory as a free standing tree. Nor is it outstandingly hardy and may suffer damage in bad winters.

However, in part no doubt due to "Yankee envy" much work has gone on in America to find ever hardier varieties – such as the dreadfully named '24 Below' (Fahrenheit, that is) which are claimed to survive to minus 30c. Some of these varieties are available in Britain. Toughest of all is said to be 'Edith Bogue' - though its leaves are less felted and duller than average. In my own garden I have 'Victoria', raised in British Columbia, Canada, which has the closest climate to Britain in the Americas. It has done well so far even as a free standing tree and survived the severe December 2010 with fairly minor damage.

Thwaite has several free standing *M. grandiflora*. The oldest is in the "secret garden" and is of indeterminate type and of unenthusiastic though reasonably tree-like growth. Another of similar age by Thwaite Hall entrance

is more bushy. Both betray a hankering for greater summer heat. Both may have been planted originally by Fred Fletcher – one time garden manager. He also had one in his own garden which grew, after his death, to be perhaps the finest specimen in the region. Sadly it has been destroyed by recent occupants of the house. A third younger tree in Green Wickets is the clone 'Exmouth' and also, I notice, trees have been planted recently on the main University campus.

To see better specimens one needs to travel south. In southern England, size and vigour improves. The tree is quite popular in France growing even better but still compact enough for a reasonably modest garden. Not until one reaches northern Italy (from whence many sold in Britain originate) do really majestic specimens become widespread and here growth begins to rival that of the southern states.

Still, even back here in East Yorkshire, few other trees have such style..... and one can dream!

John Killingbeck 2013



### **PLANT OF THE MONTH - *Inula hookeri***



One of the most frequently asked horticultural questions is about the best plants to choose if one wishes to attract butterflies to the garden. Well, one of the “top twenty” is probably the herbaceous plant *Inula hookeri*. Its open large flowers seem particularly attractive to colourful butterfly species such as the peacock and small tortoiseshell.

*Inula hookeri* does not seem to have a common name, or at least not one that is widely used. This is surprising because it is by no means a rare plant and may be encountered almost anywhere in cultivation. In fact it is one of those plants that once acquired is rarely lost and is able to persist in quite neglected gardens. Unlike many plants of this sort however, it could not really be described as invasive but is certainly able to take care of itself. At the same time, it is also sufficiently elegant in form to be encountered in quite sophisticated plantings on occasions.

The foliage of the plant is fairly unremarkable and unobtrusive and borne on reasonably sturdy stems which are usually self-supporting without recourse to staking. These reach a height of about two feet or so before flower buds appear. Blooming occurs in late summer peaking perhaps in August, drifting on into September. The flowers are good sized yellow daisies which have particularly slender but very numerous petals in a dense crown around the central boss. People with an eye for delicate and understated beauty may particularly admire the unopened flower buds. These are buttons formed of an intricate filigree of bracts which create an effect almost of cob webbing over the bud surface.

*Inula hookeri* rarely seems to suffer from pest or disease problems – even slugs seem to leave it unharmed. Equally it seems totally resilient to frost, with only severe drought and starvation holding any significant terrors for the plant. Though fairly unfussy as to soils it thrives most strongly in moist fertile conditions including clay. Here it will steadily form substantial clumps if undisturbed. Propagation is easy by division sometime between autumn and mid spring and makes a ready source of material for local plant fairs and suchlike.

John Killingbeck



## **A Visit to the International Garden Show in Hamburg**

Sue and I were lucky enough to be able to visit this show in early July. It is held only once every ten years and runs from 26<sup>th</sup> April to 13<sup>th</sup> October this year. It takes place on an island in Wilhelmsburg, an area close to the centre of Hamburg, between the north and south branches of the river Elbe.

The theme this year is “Around the World in 80 Gardens” and there are 100 hectares of garden designs and large exhibition halls, with different themes each month.

In July the competition hall concentrated on roses and bonsai trees, which were both absolutely spectacular as you can see in the photographs. Some of the bonsai were over 100 years old and the roses were of every colour and size imaginable.

Outside, in addition to wonderful bedding schemes and rose beds, there are areas dedicated to different cultures and subjects. There is a World of Nature, World of Activity, World of Water, World of Ports, World of Religion, World of Continents and a World of Cultural Diversity.

There is also a cultural heritage region, where fruit, vegetables, plants, honey and meat are produced and sold in the central market place

The weather when we visited was lovely, so everything was at its best and we spent a whole day walking round and enjoying the sights and sounds. There are various food halls on site and also some lovely seating areas in the shade outside, but the best bit is the overhead railway which traverses the site and takes you around so you can see everything from above.

With typical German efficiency, there is a very good shuttle service from Hamburg central station to the island, so getting there is very easy. We would highly recommend a visit to anyone who enjoys plants and nature.

***For more information, visit the website :- [www.igs-hamburg.de](http://www.igs-hamburg.de)***

Vic Swetez (who doesn't work for the German Tourist Board!)



Roses and Bonsai at the IGS, Hamburg

## Thanks from the Cactus and Succulent Society

On behalf of the Hull Branch of the British Cactus and Succulent Society I'd like to thank the Friends of Thwaite Gardens for giving us the opportunity to put on a display at their Open Day on 19<sup>th</sup> May in the beautiful setting of the Gardens.

We thoroughly enjoyed the whole day. It gave us a chance to speak about our hobby to people who are interested in plants and gardening, to show some of the variety of cacti and succulents, give advice on cultivation, demonstrate how we pot-on the plants and sell some of our spares and seedlings to boost Branch funds. We donated 10% of our takings to the Friends to say "thank you".

Our members were impressed with the quality of plants in the Desert House which the Friends have set up and we donated some more plants for this on the day. We were also impressed with both the quality of the garden plants for sale - and that of the catering.

Thank you again for such an enjoyable day, especially to Vic Swetez for all his help and John Killingbeck who was our initial contact.



*Expert cactus grower Colin Norton manning the display*

Ann Lowry, Chairman, Hull Branch BCSS.

## **Thank you from The Red Cross**

Thank you to all the members of the Friends who supported the recent Red Cross Open Day, which went very well thanks to all the lovely people who donated cakes, plants and their time to help.

Particular thanks to Jenny and Marilyn (an honorary friend!) for all the lovely cakes and scones and to “Annie the Scone Lady” who stayed all day on the teas and who is always cheerful and enthusiastic and a joy to work with.

It's great that we can support each other in this way to enhance the gardens and make sure more people from the area know about this lovely facility. You may be interested to know we got lots of enquiries about joining the Friends on the day, so it was to the benefit of both organisations!

## ***Diary Date***

**AGM** Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October, 7.30 Methodist Hall, Cottingham

Guest speaker - Bob from Cath's Garden Plants

to talk on “Behind the Scenes at the Shows”

Plants available for sale

## ***MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER***

**Annual subscriptions are due on 1st November 2013.**

**They remain at £7 per person or £10 for two people living at the same address. There is a membership renewal form enclosed with this Newsletter.**

**Anyone who has not paid by the Open Day 2014 will be removed from the database.**

**Cheques should be made payable to “The Friends of Thwaite Gardens” and sent to the treasurer, whose contact details are on the last page of this Newsletter.**

**PLEASE NOTE: new members who have joined on, or after, the Open Day in May 2013 do not have to renew their subscriptions until November 2014.**



## Contact Details

### Chairman and Treasurer

Douglas James  
25 Stephenson's Walk  
Endyke Lane  
Cottingham  
HU16 4QG

Tel: 01482 840250  
moanddoug@hotmail.co.uk

### Secretary

Pamela Bailey  
39 Priory Road  
Cottingham  
HU16 4RR

Tel: 01482 843304

### Newsletter Editor

Sue Swetez  
141 Mill Rise  
Skidby  
Cottingham  
HU16 5UA

Tel 01482 846487  
s.swetez@hull.ac.uk

### Events Secretary

Pat Foreman  
12 East Mount  
North Ferriby  
HU14 3BX

Tel: 01482 634091  
patforeman@hotmail.com





