



Oxenhope

Gardening Club News

May 2024

Welcome to the May newsletter.



Erythroniums

Earlier this month, while visiting my daughter in Aberdeen, I made a visit to Cluny House Gardens in the heart of Scotland near Aberfeldy in Perth and Kinross and what I discovered was a beautiful Himalayan/North American woodland garden. The garden had been originally planted and developed in the 1950's by owners who knew that Perthshire had been recognised in the 18th and 19th centuries as a place where North American and Himalayan tree species could thrive, due to the similarity of conditions in their native regions. As a result, Cluny had already received a number of tree species from 19th century plant hunters, and later

had benefitted from the Himalayan plant hunting expeditions by Ludlow and Sherriff in the 1930s and 1940s. Many of the plants in the garden at Cluny are derived directly from seed collected during Ludlow and Sherriff's final expedition.



Arisaemas (Cobra lily)

The gardens feature many woodland plants including Giant Himalayan lilies, Himalayan blue poppies, exotic arisaemas, erythroniums and large numbers of candelabra primulas, all of which regenerate and expand freely in the marvellous leaf litter and acidic soil. As well as the woodland plants, there are also ornamental apple and cherry trees and many gloriously scented rhododendrons and azaleas, which were in flower when I was there. No chemicals are used in the garden and weeding is carried out by hand to avoid disturbing interesting seedlings and allowing some native plants their place in the garden. **Sandra**



Trilliums

While I was there I saw huge drifts of erythroniums and some of the 18 varieties of white, red and maroon trilliums that grow there amongst the Asiatic primulas and candelabra primulas. The Himalayan poppies were just coming into flower and the arisaemas (Cobra lilies), with their amazing spathes and long tongues were literally rising out of the ground all over the garden. It would be wonderful to return in summer to see the martagon lilies and the stunning Giant Himalayan Lily in flower. I can only hope that in the next two years, I get to see the flowering of the Giant Himalayan Lily I bought, if indeed it survives, in my son's garden! If you find yourselves in the area, do not miss this garden.

Speaker for May: Jason Williams. Cloud Gardener



Jason is a garden designer based in Manchester. Jason became known as The Cloud Gardener after deciding to share the highs and lows of creating a wildlife garden on the 18th floor balcony of a Manchester tower block during lockdown. He explains the mental health boost that reconnecting with nature's tiniest things can produce – and the surprising benefits of walking round towns.

“The thing I love most about gardening has been seeing the wildlife it's attracted to my balcony,” says Jason. “You wouldn't think that 18 floors up you would get so many different creatures. But I've got pond flies, moths, caterpillars, ladybirds, bees and even worms and slugs.” His experimental gardening for nature has drawn many followers to his social media channels – which focuses on horticulture and mental health. He's recently walked round Cleethorpes, Barrow-in-Furness and parts of the Lake District, and live-streamed a walk in Todmorden, Yorkshire. His commentaries are delivered with his trademark gentle amusement and honesty, which is probably one of the reasons his career as a gardening influencer has taken off so spectacularly.

A lilac for May: *Syringa pinnatifolia*. Mongolian Lilac



While I was in Aberdeenshire, helping my daughter in her weeding duties in the gardens at Crathes Castle, I noticed a lovely shrub with which I wasn't familiar. Although its label identified it as *Syringa pinnatifolia*, a lilac, it had leaves that more closely resembled a dwarf ash species than a lilac but it did have small bunches of lilac-like scented white flowers. As it was unfamiliar to me, and growing happily in Aberdeenshire, I decided it might do well in Yorkshire.

This rare lilac has only been known since 1904 when E.H. Wilson collected a specimen from West Sichuan where it was growing at altitudes of 7–9,000 ft. In the wild this shrubby tree still grows in the western part of China where it is an endangered and protected tree. Apparently, this ornamentally distinctive lilac is both elusive in its native China and unjustly rare in cultivation here. It was also widely used in traditional Mongolian herbal medicine and its bark is now used to treat cardiovascular diseases. It is the only lilac with a pinnate leaf, combining fragrant, creamy white flowers in May with graceful leaves. It grows slowly and does not get much higher than three metres. The leaves turn a pretty colour in autumn. It is a deciduous shrub, and has an elegant bushy habit. It likes a sunny position and is very hardy..

Plant Sale. Thursday June 6th

We hope you have all been sowing seeds and dividing and splitting plants to donate to our plant sale that takes place on Thursday June 6th at 7.30. Please can our lovely members who are donating plants arrive by 7pm and have their plants labelled. The selling of plants will begin, and definitely not before, 7.30. We are always grateful to members who make cakes for the sale, they are always delicious!

Garden visits.

Visits to Gresgarth in June and Goldsborough Hall in July. A final reminder that those members who want to come to the private tour of Goldsborough Hall need to pay the £22 fee by the May meeting.

We would like members to arrange car sharing. At the May meeting, can members who are willing to share, make themselves known and thereafter make their own arrangements.

Garden Events

Shipley Open Gardens: June 8 and 9 June

Midgley Open Gardens: 15 and 16 June

Baildon Open Gardens: Sunday June 23

Harlow Carr Bath House Gift Shop. Northern Soul:
Handmade items from Northern Makers June 13-July 14

September's speaker: Katy Merrington.

Tea and Coffee: We always welcome volunteers to help with teas and coffees!

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