

Oxenhope gardening club

Newsletter
2011

September

Club visit:

Jacqueline Iddon's hardy perennial nursery and garden

In June 2011 Oxenhope gardening club visited Jacqueline Iddon's garden and hardy perennial nursery, near Leyland in Lancashire.

One of our newer members, Jenny Hakney, wrote this account.

As our coach driver expertly reversed through the awkward entrance to Jacqueline Iddon's garden and nursery, I craned my neck to glimpse what might lie beyond those narrow gates.

A long gravel path led down to wide lawns and there was a small greenhouse in the shade of some large trees. Apart from the rambling red-brick house next to us I couldn't see much else.

Jacqueline herself greeted us on the gravel and her welcome was as expansive as her gates were narrow. Setting the tone for the day, she treated us as family friends and invited us in to the converted barn for coffee and shortbread.

As Jacqueline talked us through the plan for the day I realised I was somewhere quite special. We were to have guided tours, talks and time to ourselves to enjoy the surroundings.

Very much a family enterprise the gardens and nursery are all Jacqueline's work. Husband and sculptor, Thompson Dagnall, does the

hard landscaping and building work,

her son had excavated the stream and pond 'with his first JCB' and their daughter served cakes she had made herself.

None of this is to say there was anything homespun about it.



Throughout the day Jacqueline spoke with energy and humour about how she and Tom had designed and created the garden and built up the business. As we took in the colours and scents she explained how from a rectangle of gently sloping land they have carved out a varied landscape encompassing a secluded courtyard, a stream-fed lake and shady woodland walk.

Tom's mighty sculptures gave the garden extra visual impact. His

phenomenal wood and stone carvings are made to order for large parks and gardens, but some have found their way back to him. We saw him chiselling the final touches to a larger-than-life sheep that was a wedding present commission.

Time for two-course lunch with more cake.

The couple then sprang a post-prandial glass of Pimms on us as they are celebrating 10 years of running the garden. Steve and I sipped ours overlooking the stream where we watched damselflies glittering amongst lushly planted hostas, primulas and *Gunnera*.

Others in our group wandered around the lawns, sat in a shady arbour or browsed plants to take home from the nursery.

I am new to gardening so it's exciting discovering different plant varieties to try and I love taking home ideas that might work on a smaller scale in my own modest garden. Jacqueline had nestled an elegant pitcher, or amphora, on its side amongst a bed of frothy *Alchemilla mollis*.

The effect was enchanting and I am looking out for a suitable terracotta pot.



I am learning how plants like different environments. When her son excavated the pond Jacqueline got him to make a raised bank with the displaced earth. On the sunless side she had made a woodland walk with shade loving plants.

The idea of micro-climate gardening is one I am trying out under my kitchen window – a tiny north-west facing oblong in the shadow of my conservatory. The dull concrete paving is steadily being softened by my small but growing collection of ferns and hostas. I'm calling it my hostarea!

I brought home three treasures from Jacqueline's nursery: a tiny *Rosa glauca* which I had never heard of but has beautiful duck-egg blue-tinged foliage and simple starry pink flowers which produce maroon hips; a chocolate cosmos which has produced endless cocoa-scented flowers of the most amazing brownish red when backlit by the sun; and a *Heuchera* 'Georgia Peach' whose, well, peachy leaves set off the chocolate coloured cosmos flowers.

To round the day off we were treated to a flower arranging demonstration while we refreshed ourselves with – you guessed it – more tea and cakes!

As she trimmed stems and coaxed the flowers into position Jacqueline regaled us with amusing family anecdotes. Even while passing on tips about all the flowers she had chosen, her hands never faltered whilst a beautiful terracotta pot bursting with freshly cut blooms and foliage emerged.

I am certainly looking forward to hearing Jacqueline's talk on Shady Plants at our September meeting.

Thoughts from the Chair

Where has the summer gone?

Since our last meeting we have visited three gardens and enjoyed the Summer Lunch and plant swap.

I had thought about saying what I had thought about the three gardens – and then thought against it. If you went to them you will know what they were like, and if you didn't I can commend them to you as gardens to visit in the future.

Our Summer Lunch was held this year at the Community Centre and the committee would like to hear your views about how you felt it went.

Just to let you know we have a possible venue for next year's lunch already!

Richard



Tea and coffee rota

We need helpers to sign up for the October and November meetings. Please contact a committee member if you can help out.

Events and meetings

October 20

Ruth Wild of Daisy Days Haworth: *Autumn Flower Arranging*. Ruth favours the use of British-grown flowers.

November 17

Linda Smith. Linda and her husband run Leicestershire Waterside Nursery which won a gold medal at Chelsea Flower Show this year.

Linda's talk is called *Water Gardens*.

December 15

Christmas Party and Annual General Meeting.

And finally...



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