

In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



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Tulip fever at Standen

Tulips originated in Turkey, and were the darlings of the Ottoman Empire for a long time before they arrived in Vienna in the middle of the 16th century. From there, they spread west, especially to Holland, where, by the end of the century tulip-growing had taken off in earnest. Because of their vibrant colours and distinctive petal shapes, tulips soon became the 'must-have' flower for an increasingly wealthy and status-conscious merchant class. When tulip virus added to the excitement by producing specimens which had flame-like streaks on the petals, the desire to be part of the tulip craze knew no bounds, and so Tulipomania was born.



In the early years of the 17th century, the price of tulips and the trade in them went up and up and up, with tulips eventually becoming Holland's fourth biggest export - after gin, herring and cheese. Inevitably, by 1637, the speculators in their greed had over-reached themselves and the bubble burst, with many investors losing the fortunes they had earlier so easily made.



Nick Delves seems to be on a one-man mission to reintroduce Tulip fever, and is clearly set to take on rival local establishments such as Great Dixter and Pashley Manor. Hundreds of bulbs which were planted at Standen in the late autumn and winter of 2012 bloomed beautifully last Spring. Flushed with success, the following year Nick decided to excel himself. Nearly 8,000 tulips were planted along the two

terraces at the back of the house, in the new beds and pots in the Courtyard Garden, and in front of the barn on Goose Green. This Spring they have created a spectacular display delighting staff, volunteers and visitors alike. Nick's choices ranged from doubles like **Angelique**, **Blue Heron** and **Mount Tacoma**, to lily-flowered varieties such as **Ballerina**, **Maytime** and **West Point**. More conventionally-shaped flowers were represented by **Barcelona**, **Queen of the Night** and **Appledoorn**, along with dual-coloured blooms such as **Olympic Flame** and **Raspberry Ripple**. I'm not surprised that he chose **TULIP** as his plant of the week, but am slightly concerned about how long the Garden Group volunteers will be spending on their hands and knees this winter.

Bluebell barbecue - take three

While we may not have been as lucky with the weather as we were last year, someone up there must be looking out for us as, although it was raining as the committee arrived to set up at Hollybush Barn, the weather actually stayed dry for the BBQ until we cleared away at the end of the day. The poor forecast, combined with the fact that surrounding areas were apparently subject to heavy showers, no doubt kept some people away, but nevertheless the many who did come had an enjoyable and relaxing day, and helped *FoSE* to raise £614. 10% of this will go to the Woods Group towards materials for additional boardwalk, while the rest will go into the greenhouse fund.

It was good to see a range of people attending, including representatives from the town council. The burgers and sausages were cooked to perfection and there was a range of cakes to tempt all but the strongest-willed. The craft and plant stalls,

along with the tombola, also did well. Thank you both to those who made it happen and to those who came along to enjoy the day.

Taking Wisley by storm



After their first tentative foray into the world of Royal Horticultural Shows last year proved so successful, Standen's gardeners entered with much greater confidence this year, and their faith in their plants paid off. James and his team won a combined haul of five first places, four seconds, three thirds and a fourth. Better still, they walked

off with the **Marigold Assinder Challenge Cup**, which is awarded to:

any camellia, one bloom, shown by an exhibitor who has not won a First Prize within the last 5 years at a previous RHS Camellia Competition.

James received the following e-mail from Sally Hayward of the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group:

Thank you so much for contributing so many entries to the three competitions at last week's Wisley Show. You have certainly put Standen on the map now as a garden of interest for our members to visit. I don't know if you were able to get back to the Show over the weekend to see your results, but you did really well. In the Camellia classes you received two firsts, one second and one third. You were also awarded the Marigold Assinder Challenge Cup by the ICS for winning a first in Class 33. As there was no-one from Standen available to receive the cup, I took the attached photograph of Pat Short, the President of the ICS, holding your cup. In the Spring Ornamental classes you received three firsts, three seconds, two thirds and a



fourth. I am sorry that we didn't get chance to have a chat, but I hope that you really enjoyed the experience and will come again next year.

I suspect they will. To paraphrase Colin Welland's famous, 'The British are coming,' line at the Oscars: 'The Gardeners are coming.'

Sally closed her e-mail with an invitation to join the RHS group - recognition indeed! For those who don't know, ICS stands for the International Camellia Society. Let's hope that this success does indeed encourage members of the Royal Horticultural Society to visit the gardens at Standen.

Plant of the week - all the rest

Nick's tulips seemed to deserve an article all of their own but there are other plants which have also earned a mention. Carolyn has received a number of queries from visitors about a plant she has been using in the kitchen garden and so chose hardy annual **Phacelia tanacetifolia**, also known as Lady Phacelia or Scorpionweed,



as her March plant of the week. Used as a green manure, it will fit anywhere in the crop rotation cycle, and is sown from March to September. It should be sown broadcast at a rate of 1 gram per square metre and raked in. Quick to mature, it has dense fern-like foliage up to one metre in height and may survive mild winters. It smothers weeds and has an extensive root system that improves the soil structure but should be dug in prior to flowering as it can self-seed freely. If allowed to flower, however, it develops pretty blue blooms which make

a good cut flower as they have strong stems and a good vase life. They also attract many beneficial insects and pollinators. Phacelia is often planted in vineyards and alongside crops and does best in full sun or partial shade. It will cope with most soils types, especially dry ones.

Unsurprisingly, given the Wisley successes, Elaine chose **Camellia japonica 'Brushfield's Yellow'**, of the family **Theaceae** as her plant of the week at the end of March. This can be found just to the right of the Summerhouse on the Top Terrace at Standen, and has a height and spread of 2.5 to 4 metres by 1.5 to 2.5 metres.

To describe this exquisite specimen as having dark, glossy foliage and showy double,



anemone centred flowers seems almost an understatement, especially as it is a creamy-white, shading delicately to pale yellow in the centre. The flowers appear early in the year - from March in a mild winter - but can be damaged on cold mornings if planted where the morning sun strikes the frosted flowers. A more sheltered position under trees avoids this problem common to all Camellias. It thrives in part to full shade in a North, East or West aspect and will grow on Acid to Neutral soil types and in Sand, Clay or Loam based soils. This camellia is generally healthy but may be attacked by aphids, scale insect or vine weevil.



For the end of March, James chose **Prunus 'Hilling's Weeping'** from the extensive **Rosaceae** family. The common name for this variety is **Weeping Fuji cherry**, reminding us of its Japanese origin. It is a medium-sized weeping version of the Mount Fuji cherry - **Prunus shirotae** (which was recently planted at the end of the Drive). This cultivar will grow to 10' tall with pendulous stems covered with white flowers reaching down to the ground in March and early April. In a good year it will also have autumn leaf colours of red and burgundy. It needs

full sun and can be pruned in early summer to keep it to shape - it generally flowers on the current year's growth. At Standen this plant grows in the Tea Garden near to the Ticket Office - and was planted to commemorate John Simmonds who used to work in visitor reception and passed away a few years ago.

Trudie chose the **Early Purple Orchid - Orchis mascula** - as her plant of the week. A member of one of the world's biggest plant families, this orchid is one of the first to flower in this country, and can be found in Hollybush Wood just beyond the bridge from the field. It starts as a rosette of long tapering glossy green leaves with dark spots from January onwards. The spike of up to 50 dark purple flowers is arranged in a cone-shaped cluster on an upright stalk and appears from April to June. It's widespread across Europe and survives in shade or full sun in meadows and woodlands.



As it doesn't produce nectar it fools insects into pollinating it by mimicking other flowers that do. Maybe it's this cunning behaviour that led to magical traditions calling it Adam and Eve root, and its reputation for being used by witches to make love potions.

Ben's choice was the more down-to-earth. **Garlic Mustard** or, to give its scientific name, **Alliaria petiolata**. A member of the **Brassicaceae** family, it is also known as Jack by the Hedge, Garlic Root, Hedge Garlic, Sauce-alone, Jack-in-the-bush, Penny Hedge and Poor Man's Mustard. At Standen, Garlic Mustard can be found right across the estate, in hedges and on verges, particularly on the edges of the drive.



Garlic Mustard is a common hedgerow biennial plant which produces just a rosette of the leaves close to the ground in its first year, staying green through the winter. In its second year it grows into a tall thin plant (around 18-36 inches high) which has bright green 'nettle-like' leaves and small clusters of tiny white flowers appearing around April and May. When crushed, the leaves give off a smell of garlic, and their peppery taste makes them an interesting salad choice. The seeds are one of the oldest recorded spices and the plant was once used as a disinfectant for wounds. Garlic mustard is also a food plant for a recorded 69 different insects and 7 species of fungi.

Shopping for FoSE-wear and....

Elaine Boot is currently taking orders for FoSEwear. In addition to the usual range in black, there is a new, summer polo in grey, which will be cooler to wear on hot days. Please see Elaine by the end of May if you wish to place an order.



....Wildlife Cards

Lesley Goodwin of the Woods Group has taken some stunning close-up photos of bees and butterflies on flowers, which have now been turned into a set of cards you can buy. Packs cost £5 for 5 different pictures and the photography is truly professional. These make an excellent complement to recent sets of cards, (some of which are still available) and are suitable for birthdays or indeed for any occasion. Please see a member of the committee if you wish to buy a set.

Summer Quiz Night

Following the success of November's event, we decided that 13 was our lucky number, so the next **Quiz Night** will be held on **Wednesday 13th August**, 7 o'clock for a **7.30 start**. We are hoping for a balmy summer's evening, and to hold the quiz on **Goose Green**. With this in mind, we hope that teams will bring their own picnics, but *FoSE* will provide each team with a bowl of nibbles or sweets to munch on while working out the answers, and tea, coffee and cakes will be available to purchase in the interval. The questions will be set and presented by Keith and Caroline Rogers, as before, and although there will be a picture round, we promise it will be easier than the last one, and not totally National Trust-centred.

As before, teams can be of up to **6** people, but this time entry will be **£3 per person for a team with a *FoSE* captain, and £4 per person for teams without**. There will be a raffle, and opportunities to buy *FoSE* goods. Should the weather prove unkind, we will decamp into the Barn Restaurant for the evening. With this in mind, places will be reserved on a first-come, first served basis, with the first 80 being assured of a place, and the rest on a reserved list. If one more person had turned up last time, they would have had to be sent away, as we would have been over capacity. So please reserve your places early, even if you don't have your team finalised - there are already two teams on the list - and that's before the publicity has even gone out. Look out for the posters which will appear on the tea-room walls at Standen and in your in-boxes, and reserve your place by emailing newsletter@fose.org.uk with your team name, *FoSE* status and approximate number of team members. Tickets and payment will be organised nearer the time.

Gazebos to go

After receiving a cheque for £250 from the Waitrose Community Matters initiative in January, the *FoSE* committee has decided to put this money to the purchase of some gazebos which will ensure we all stay dry regardless of the weather at *FoSE* outdoor events. We may even splash out (no pun intended) and have *Friends of Standen Estate* emblazoned on the fabric.

Feeling crafty?

One suggestion that has been mooted as a fundraiser is a craft fair. The idea would be for people who have a particular skill which results in items to sell, to bring their artefacts to Standen on a given day and set up a stall. The event would be coordinated by *FoSE*, and the money raised split between the *Friends of Standen Estate* and those who had created the items. Several people have already expressed an interest in this, and if you think you might want to be involved, please contact me at newsletter@fose.org.uk. We don't have a date yet; it would depend on when would be suitable to most exhibitors.

Annual General Meeting

Please do join us for the *FoSE* AGM on Thursday 22nd May at 7.30 at the Barn Café. Who knows, the *Volunteer of the Year* could be you.

And finally...

Can I add a warm welcome to all new members of the *Friends of Standen Estate*. Thank you for helping us to support the garden team and work around the estate. I hope you find your membership *FoSE* worthwhile.

I have updated my mailing list to reflect the new membership. If anyone hears of someone I have deleted by accident or missed off, please let me know at newsletter@fose.org.uk. Thank you.

Don't forget to visit our website at <http://www.fose.org.uk/> which, along with all kinds of information about the *Friends of Standen Estate*, you can find a link to our *Friends of Standen Estate* Facebook page.