

In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 23 November 2014

In this edition of In a Nutshell:
A NEW WINTER GARDEN
VISITOR IMPACT
PLANT OF THE WEEK
BLACK MONDAY BEETLE DRIVE
FORWARD PLANNING
CHICKENS AHOY
CALENDARS FOR SALE
AND FINALLY

New viewpoints

In recent weeks, heavy plant and heavy boots have been seen where they have never been seen before, in the woodland between the Top Terrace and the top of the rocks beside the drive. Originally planted with trees by the Beales to protect the house from northerly winds, this area was known to them as The Plantation, and has always been wooded, though many years ago the family did have a walk which partly came this way. Now, much of the scrub which had grown up there has been cleared, exposing, amongst others, a Holm Oak, a Douglas Fir and a Sequoia giganteum, as well as several beautiful Beech trees, some of which were originally Beale plantings.



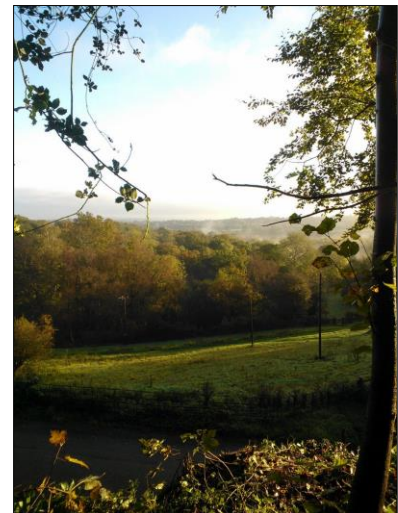


Also rediscovered were two water reservoirs. The metal one holds around 500 gallons of water, and served the household before mains water was put in in 1984. It is hoped this can be moved elsewhere in the garden and put to use again. The other is a brick-lined tank which holds around 14,000 gallons. This will stay where it is, but hopefully will have water pumped into it by

windmill. Those of you who have seen old pictures of the garden will know that one used to stand on the brick plinth in the Kitchen Garden. Once the brick reservoir is being filled again, it can be used as a water source by the gardeners.

James' plans for space as a whole are even more exciting. The path along the Top Terrace will split by the hornbeam tree, with one part following its current route but a new section winding its way through the trees eventually to join the steps which descend behind the Stable Yard. More clearing needs to be done, but the plan is to create two viewpoints along the top of the rocks, set back sufficiently to be safe, with decking and fencing, but offering superb views over the Medway valley and surrounding area. One of these will face due south, and the other will look back towards East Grinstead. Both will be particularly stunning in the early morning.

Spring bulbs will be planted either side of the path, but the main aim will be to provide winter interest when other parts of the garden are dormant, so many of the specimen trees and shrubs will be chosen specifically to provide winter colour and scent. This will open up a whole new section of the garden to visitors, offering an alternative walk in the garden and a new space to explore.



Victims of our success?

With all that has been going on in the gardens recently and possibly helped by parking fees at Wakehurst Place, visitor numbers have been booming at Standen. Tim Roberson noticed that the issue of visitor impact was discussed in the recent *My Volunteering* newsletter, along with a promise of a more consistent allocation of Trust resources between properties. In case you haven't seen it, an extract is printed below:

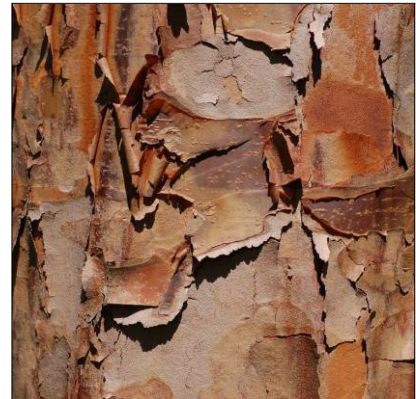
...a new tool ... will allow properties to analyse where members are visiting from, how often and much more so that property offers can be much more focused. Growing numbers of visitors mean the potential to cause permanent damage, significantly lower their enjoyment and have an impact on staff and volunteers. It may be that knowing more about them will enable properties and regions to spread the load and broaden members' knowledge of all our special places.

Autumn colours

The plants chosen by our gardeners recently have shown a wide variety. James chose a tree from the beautiful Acer family, in this instance **Acer griseum**, the **Paperbark Maple** (family **Aceraceae**). As its name suggests, the bark peels as it ages into thin,



paper-like sheets, revealing cinnamon-coloured underbark.



The tree, which grows to around 20', has trifoliate leaves which colour very well in the autumn to a good red or scarlet. It has separate male and female flowers and very hairy winged fruit. Standen boasts two specimens of this tree, which was introduced by Ernest Wilson from China in 1901 and received an Award of Garden Merit in 1936.

It grows well in all but the most exposed of positions, but does require some moisture around the roots all year round. It does well in semi-shade under larger trees, but does not always produce the best autumn colour in these situations.

Nick chose **Ageratum houstonianum 'Blue Horizon'**, the **Mexican Paintbrush**. This is a mound-forming half-hardy annual reaching a height and spread of 50cm. It has long-stemmed violet-blue flower-heads, which bloom throughout the summer and autumn, and it prefers full sun in a sheltered site in any free-draining soil type. 'Blue Horizon' can be propagated by seed in spring, and is generally disease and pest free.



Trudie chose a perennial favourite - **Honeysuckle** - *Lonicera periclymenum*, which can be found in many parts of the Standen estate in hedges and woodlands. One of 20 native species in Europe it has now been transformed into a common garden climber. The flowers are often hard to spot in spring but provide a valuable nectar source, and they have a strong scent. The mildly poisonous berries glisten with a jewel-like red at this time of year. The honeysuckle used to be called **Woodbine**.



Ben's choice is another plant which has bright red Autumn berries, the **Dog Rose**, *Rosa canina*, (family **Rosaceae**) also known as **Bird Briar**, **Canker Flower**, **Choop Tree** and **Wild Rose**. It is thought that the name could come from its suggested use as a treatment for bites from rabid dogs.

Dog Rose is one of the most common wild roses found in Southern England. Appearing similar to Field Rose (*Rosa arvensis*) it can be distinguished by its distinctly hooked thorns (where as Field Rose has much straight thorns). It is classified as a shrub, around 1-5 metres in height;

however it is usually seen with a more 'climber-type' behaviour as it claws its way through our native species hedgerows. The rose can have a green stem on younger growth or a woody brown stem on older plants, but always with the aforementioned overly hooked thorns.

Dog Rose will have fairly large white/pink 5-petalled flowers with a pale yellow centre. The flowers appear in summer. These will turn into the very recognisable Rose Hips - which can be used to make syrup, tea, marmalade, and a sweet wine - in autumn, which are very popular amongst birds.



Carolyn has included a recipe for *Pyrus communis*, '**Black Worcester**' or **Warden Pear** which grows in the Kitchen Garden, in the centre of the vegetable beds.

It may originally have been introduced into the country by the Romans and was first recorded from Warden Abbey in Bedfordshire in the 13th Century. It is the oldest surviving cultivar of pears of its type, and is possibly the same cultivar as the French pear 'de Livre'.

A culinary pear, oval and irregular in shape; individual fruits can weigh as much as 260g. They are dark mahogany (not true black) with russet freckles and small areas of rough skin. The flesh is a pale yellow or cream, tinged green under the skin. A common mistake is to try to use the fruit immediately after harvest, when it is crisp, hard and gritty. It should be stored until January and will keep until April. It was its keeping quality that once made it so valuable. Various varieties of Warden pear were supposedly transported with the troops as part of their provisions because of their long lasting properties. As far back as the 13th Century the Warden pear was a baking pear of great repute and was for centuries a favourite in pies and pastries.



How to cook: Hot Baked Wardens

6 large firm pears

$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ pint / 300 - 450ml red wine

1oz / 28g brown sugar

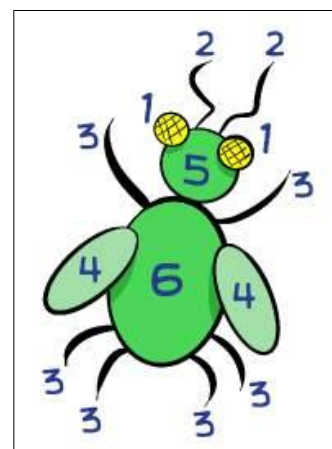
Pinch of ground cinnamon, ginger and saffron

Peel the pears and place in an oven proof dish.

Mix the red wine with the brown sugar and spices and pour over the pears. Bake in the oven at 180 C / 350 F / Gas Mark 4 until tender (up to 2 hours in the case of black pears).

Chase away the January Blues

The next FoSE fund-raising event will be our **Black Monday Beetle Drive**, and will take place in the **Barn Café** on **Monday 26th January**. This is the day which traditionally is supposed to be the most depressing of the year; Christmas and New Year celebrations are over, but there is still a full month of winter to face. So we thought this fun event might help to cheer people up and give them something to look forward to.



As the days are at their shortest then, we aim to start at **4.30** in the afternoon and be finished by around **6.30**, so that people can get home before the night-time chill sets in properly. To secure a place for yourself, your family and friends,

please email newsletter@fose.org.uk in the usual way. Numbers of course are limited to 80, so although people will pay on the door it's as well to reserve ahead. Posters will be sent out shortly and also appear in the tea rooms. Entry will cost £5 per head to include tea and cake on arrival. Mulled wine (and a non-alcoholic version) will also be available, but at £1 a glass.

For those of you who have forgotten the rules or have never participated in one of these events, the game works as follows:

There are four people at each table, which has its own die. Everyone is given a beetle card, and throws the die in turn. Once you have thrown a 6 to draw the body, and a 5 for the head, you then add the other body parts according to the number rolled. The first person to complete their card calls out 'Beetle' and so ends the round. The highest scorer in each four moves tables in one direction and the lowest in the other, so it's a good chance to get to know people working in other areas of Standen. At the end of the game, scores are added up to find an overall winner, but there will also be a prize for the competitor who has moved 'up' most often, and a booby prize for whoever has moved furthest in the opposite direction.

Date for your Diary

Please make a note of **Thursday 21st May 2015** in your diary. This is the date for the **FoSE AGM**, and the committee is giving plenty of notice this year in the hope of a good turn-out. Information about the guest speaker will appear in the next newsletter.

Fluttering in the hen coop

Chickens have returned to Standen after an absence of several years. Whilst designing the layout of the extended Kitchen Garden last year, Carolyn, our Kitchen Gardener, made sure there was space to have a chicken run.

This has been situated under one of the old apple trees in the area just below Goose Green. With help from the woodland volunteers, the area was fenced and fitted with lovely new oak gates during the summer. Then everyone sat back to wait expectantly. The chickens - eight Light Sussex - arrived from Martins Wood Farm near Ripe a few weeks ago. The Light Sussex has a white body with a black tail and black wing tips; its neck is white striped with black and has a very striking appearance. It is an alert, docile



breed that can adapt to any surrounding; it is comfortable in both free range or confined spaces. Needless to say, the hens settled in straight away and became a hit with the visitors from the moment they arrived.



The Sussex was bred to be a dual purpose bird and is one of the most productive breeds of poultry. They lay large eggs that are cream to light brown in colour and we have just started getting our first eggs; these are now available for sale to staff and volunteers.

The chickens have been named Amy, Dorothy, Helen & Maggie - after the Beale daughters, Agnes & Rhoda - after the Garrett cousins who made items of furniture in the house, May - after May Morris who made one of the embroideries in the house and Bluebell - after the Bluebell Railway. This last has perhaps the prettiest name when you think of Rockinghill Wood in the spring, but I hope she doesn't get a complex about having been named after a railway. Each of the hens has a coloured leg ring to indicate which is which and there is a blackboard on the gate to show which colour relates to which hen.

Get ready for 2015

Next year's FoSE calendars are now on sale. They are still a bargain at £5 - excellent value for money - and for those based in the house, copies are available in the tea-room. If they have all gone, ask someone to radio a member of the garden staff who will be pleased to find you one. FoSE members can speak to committee members in the stable tea room to place orders and buy in the usual way.

And finally...

Where has all the wildlife gone? I noticed from one of Helen Beale's letters in the World War I exhibition in the house that she regularly heard nightingales at Standen. I was also told recently that there used to be a large colony of dormice living in the bamboos. Does anyone remember either of these?