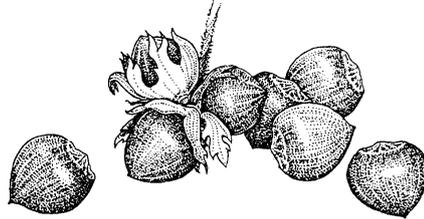


In a Nutshell

THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE FRIENDS OF STANDEN ESTATE:

NUTS ABOUT STANDEN!



No 22 September 2014

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Standen Revival - 'The Rosery'

[f. ROSE *sb* + -ERY.] A portion of a garden set apart for growing roses; a rosarium; a plantation of rose-bushes (OED)

The focus for the current phase of the Standen Revival is Mrs Beale's Rose Garden. In her original planting scheme, there was a sundial in the centre of the space, with concentric rings of rose bushes surrounding it. Behind this was a bank planted with a number of different iris varieties, and beyond the bank (just visible in the photo) was a solidly constructed wooden structure supporting climbing roses. The Beale children, who frequented the area to swim in the pond, humorously nicknamed this edifice 'The Gallows'.



The roses were removed in the 1940s and the area then became a garden of azaleas - there wasn't another proper rose garden until the Trust created one in what is now kitchen garden in the 1980s. The lone gardener employed by the Trust planted a Weeping Aspen at the centre of what became known as the Bamboo Garden, but as it was grafted to a more upright Poplar root stock, it never 'wept' effectively, although its two-bark trunk excited much comment from visitors. He also planted bamboos, which quickly marched over the azaleas, obscuring the pond completely. Around 10 years ago, the volunteers began clearing the area and put it down to grass, which was regularly mowed to deter the bamboo.



Much soul-searching, and possibly bickering, went on amongst the garden staff over whether the tree should be kept, but the weather solved the problem by felling it during a recent storm. So it was that Harry Green, our newly appointed and appropriately named restoration gardener, had a blank canvas on which to begin the work of creating the new Rosery.

The bank and beds behind it have now been cleared of Pampas Grass and tall, bushy specimens (including palm trees) which obscured the views, and turf has been stripped away to create the rose beds. Volunteers have been busy recently digging these over and removing the maze of roots created by the fallen Aspen, which had sent out suckers in all directions in a desperate bid for survival. Steps will be put in place in the middle of the bank, where the old path was a little on the precipitous side, and a retaining wall to stop the bank moving has also been begun.

Mrs Beale always wanted to find a pink China rose which would provide suitable flowers to cut for the house. In this she was ultimately unsuccessful, but James is hopeful that he will be able to find a more modern variety which will fit the bill. Negotiations with an Essex rose grower are in hand in the hope of acquiring a new cultivar which will bear an appropriately 'Standenian' name. The iris will be chosen from Mrs Beale's list and from a planting plan for an iris border by William Robinson, all of which are old Victorian varieties. The excitement of choosing the rose specimens is still to come. The main bulk of planting round the outside is going to be Pieris with a few other shrubs to create a contained view towards Hollybush Wood. Hopefully, by October the Rosery will be ready for a grand opening to the public.

Know your motorways!

Having angsted over the weather forecast during the chilly spell in mid-August, the committee decided to bring the FoSE Quiz Night indoors. In the event this worked perfectly, as we had a full house inside, and by the time the quiz ended it would have been too dark outside to mark the sheets. (Keith is talking of reducing the number of rounds to eight next time.) Teams arrived complete with picnics, and having eaten, settled down to answer questions on topics as varied as motorways, popular literature and events which took place during the second 'Elizabethan' era. Keith and Caroline kept order and moved things along in their usual efficient manner, and there was much cudgelling of brain cells - as well as jubilation when people who had insisted they had nothing to offer came up with answers that the rest of their team didn't know. As always, we all learnt a lot. I know now which motorway has both the highest and lowest elevations in the country and where the most southerly motorway services are to be found. If you don't know the answers, you should have come to the quiz! The event raised £372 for the greenhouse fund, so thanks to all those who participated, as well as to those who helped organise.

Flower Time



The Standen gardeners have chosen a range of plants to celebrate the late summer, starting with the **Hollyhock, *Alcea rosea* 'Nigra'** (i.e. red-black), a member of the **Malvaceae** or **Mallow** family. Carolyn chose this hardy, classic English cottage garden plant from the Kitchen Garden. It is often planted as a biennial, and flowers from June to September. It can reach a height of 2m and spread of 60 cms.

Hollyhock flowers are highly attractive to butterflies and bees, and great for adding height to the back of a border. The flowers of Hollyhocks are edible and can be crystallised to decorate cakes, mousses and roulades or mixed with salad leaves for a stunning dish. Before eating, remove the centre stamen and any green bits.

Holly is thought to be a corruption from holy. The plant is said to have been brought back with the Crusades and in medieval times the hollyhock was known as "St. Joseph's Staff". It is referred to in 1548 as holy-hoke, an adaptation of the Welsh name. It may also have been called Hock Leaf because it was used to reduce the swelling in horses' hocks. It is sometimes known by the Greek name *Althea* which means healing. The seeds have been called "cheeses" because the pod is shaped like a wheel of cheese.

A very old plant, Hollyhock has been found in the grave of a 50,000 year old Neanderthal man. No longer used medicinally, plants were once used as an emollient, a minor pain reliever, and as a diuretic. The black flowers can also be used to produce a purple dye.

Ben chose a more humble flower. **Scarlet Pimpernel** - otherwise known as **Red Pimpernel**, **Red Chickweed**, **Poor man's Barometer** or **Shepherd's Sundial** - is more properly called **Anagallis arvensis** and belongs to the family **Myrsinaceae**. It is a low-growing annual plant native to Europe and North and Western Africa. It has small egg-shaped leaves, and grows with a weak creeping nature, its square stems reaching 50cm in length. The five petalled flowers (approximately 10-14mm across), which come out in May and persist until late August, are a distinct orange/red (scarlet) colour in Britain; however a subspecies found in the Mediterranean can have blue flowers.



Scarlet Pimpernel - often seen as a weed in arable agriculture and in the gardens - can be found throughout Standen estate in short grassland. It is currently also particularly prevalent on the Top Terrace amongst the new Birch and Pine saplings.

The plant's weather-related names are due to its behaviour. The flower will be open in sunny, dry weather, but close up for the night and also when the weather is wet or humid. It was once used extensively in herbal medicine - as a universal panacea or antidote to any problem.



Buddleja davidii from the **Scrophulariaceae** family was chosen by Elaine. It is a hardy shrub that bears flowers in summer on long arching branches. These are particularly attractive to butterflies and other pollinating insects; hence the common name of **Butterfly Bush**. It is named after Adam Buddle, a botanist and rector, born 1662. The first plants were sent to Britain from China and Japan and became popular in gardens during the 1880s.

Flowers are borne on new wood and the shrub should be hard-pruned in Spring after the risk of hard frosts has passed. They can become a nuisance if left to

seed; evidence of this is seen along many a railway embankment and it has been classed as a noxious weed in some US states. If the spent flower panicles are removed the plant cannot seed around, and, if kept regularly pruned, it is a beautiful and colourful addition to the borders providing height at the back. It is generally propagated by cuttings taken in summer and grown on for a year. Modern cultivars are available in all shades of pink, purple and lilac-blue; some have multiple heads. There are many plants at Standen along the Butterfly Border (part of the top of the Farm Track) and also in the Lower Terrace and Croquet Lawn border.

James plumped for a tree again; this time he picked **Catalpa bignonioides**, the **Indian Bean Tree** (family: **Bignoniaceae**), victim of a botanist's bureaucratic error in terms of its name. This is a summer-flowering tree growing to about 50' tall although seldom reaching this height unless in a very sheltered position. It has very large leaves - commonly to 1' across - which have a foul smell when bruised. The tree has very impressive foxglove-like flowers in summer, followed by bean-pod-like fruit particularly in hot years; these start a strong purple colour, but fade



to brown. This tree prefers a sheltered position, and does not like to sit in wet ground. It is moderately hardy and does best when it receives full sun. Despite its name, this tree comes from the south-eastern United States and was introduced to Britain in 1726. The best example at Standen is on the Farm Track by the Kitchen Garden, although this specimen leans quite severely. We also have other bean trees around the garden, including the Western Catalpa.

The name derives from the Catawba Native American name *catawba* for these trees (the tribal totem), with the spelling *catalpa* being due to a transcription error on the part of the describing botanist (Scopoli) making the first formal scientific description of the genus. The rules of botanical naming state that the spelling used in the formal scientific description has to be retained for the scientific name. The name in vernacular use has very largely (though not completely) followed Scopoli's erroneous transcription, although *catawba* is still in use in some areas of the United States, most particularly within the trees' native range.

Not surprisingly, Nick chose a plant from the Courtyard Garden: **Tithonia rotundiflora** 'Torch' or **Mexican sunflower** which is a half-hardy annual. It has superb orange flowers from June to the first frosts in autumn. It has a branching



habit, reaching a height of 1.2m and may require some support as it establishes itself. It can be propagated by seed in spring, prefers full sun in a sheltered site and will grow in any free-draining soil type. However, watch out for slugs and snails, which also like it. In the Courtyard at Standen it combines well with dahlias, salvias, cosmos, cleome and calamagrostis.

Selfheal - *Prunella vulgaris* - bears some delightful folk names including **Blue curls**, **All-heal** and **Heart of the Earth**. Trudie describes it as a common plant of grass and wastelands often considered a weed in lawns and flower beds. It is a low-growing, rapidly-spreading plant found throughout the Northern hemisphere (Holarctic distribution). It is a food plant for many species of butterflies and moths but it is pollinated by bees. A member of the dead-nettle family, it is also related to mint and can be identified by its square stem. A long-flowering plant, the individual blue/mauve flowers open in turn along the flower spikes from June to October. The leaves can be eaten in salads, and have a mildly bitter taste. The name is thought to be derived from its healing qualities on sore throats, internal bleeding, cuts and inflammations.



It can be found all around the estate, mainly on the path edges and meadows; however it may often also be seen in the weeding buckets and wheelbarrows of the gardeners!



Carolyn's next choice showed solidarity to her last one, being another member of the **Mallow** family: **Althaea officinalis** or **Marsh-mallow**. It has a string of interesting alternative names, including **Mortification Root**, **Sweet Weed**, **Wymote**, **March Malice**, **Mesh-Mellice**, **Wimote**, **Althea**. This is a hardy herbaceous perennial, and like its cousin the Hollyhock, its name derives from the Greek and Latin words for curing. It grows to 2m and has pink or white flowers and grey-green, velvety leaves.

The Romans used it in Barley soup and in stuffing for

suckling pigs. In the Renaissance era it was used by herbalists to cure sore throats, stomach trouble and toothache. Because it has a high mucilage content in roots and leaves, herbalists use it to soothe or cure inflammation, ulceration of the stomach and small intestine, throat soreness and cystitis pain. An infusion of the leaves or flowers can be used as a soothing gargle. An infusion of the root can be used for coughs, diarrhoea and insomnia. The pulverised roots can be applied warm as a healing and drawing poultice. The leaves can be boiled, or the root steeped in cold water for many hours, and used for dry hands and hair, and for sunburn. The root was also originally used to flavour marshmallow. The mucilage in the powdered root was thickened in water and heated with sugar to create a soothing sweet paste. Both flowers and leaves can be added to salads, and leaves can also be added to oil and vinegar or steamed as a vegetable.

Marsh-mallow likes a site in full sun in moderately fertile, moist or wet soil, so is happy in the Kitchen Garden. It needs to be cut back after flowering to encourage new leaves. It is highly attractive to butterflies and a good seaside plant. It is generally free of pests and diseases and can be propagated by seed in the autumn or through division of established plants in spring or autumn.

Darielle's choice was the intriguingly named **Chaste tree - Vitex agnus-castus**, also known as **Abraham's Balm** or **Monks Pepper**, and from the **Lamiaceae** family. It is a deciduous shrub native of the Mediterranean region and is widely cultivated for its aromatic foliage and its lavender spike flowers. It grows to a height of 2.5m and requires full sun or partial shade and well-drained soil.



In ancient times it was believed to be an anaphrodisiac (as opposed to an aphrodisiac): hence the name Chaste Tree. The stems and leaves of the plant were used by women as bedding "to cool the heat of lust". More recently it was called Monks Pepper as it was used as an anti-libido medicine by monks to help them remain chaste. The Chaste tree can be found around the bench situated under the Acer bed.

Poppies galore

Thanks to Bleau's suggestion, FoSE was able to raise a little money at the Standen Summer Party by selling beautifully crafted poppies. We had to share takings with *Help for Heroes*, which was the chosen charity for the event, but we didn't begrudge that, and even £21.50 helps. There are still a number of poppies

available, ranging in price from £2 - 6, so if you would like to buy one, please see Carolyn.

Shop for FoSE!

At the risk of being lynched for mentioning the 'C' word, now we're in September, we will soon be having to think about the dreaded Christmas shopping. Many of us find it easier these days to shop on line, and if you do so through the FoSe website



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you can help us to raise much-needed funds. It's easy to do; just go to <http://www.fose.org.uk/>, click on the Easy Fundraising logo and follow the instructions. The site allows you to shop at Amazon, Ebay, M & S, Tesco, Expedia, Waitrose - and hundreds of other retailers. You pay no more, but for everything you buy this way, the retailer makes a donation to your chosen charity.

Calling Standen's photographers...

Once again, if you have taken pictures at Standen that you think we could use for either cards or calendar (these would need to be landscape), please share them with Carolyn at support@fose.org.uk. Many thanks.

We're growing fast!

FoSE membership is now up to 107, which I think is a record. Our thanks go to Roy Page, membership secretary, for achieving and exceeding the targets he set himself.

And finally...

Someone has given Tully the tractor a licence to drive on the road, so, if you are meandering along the lanes around Standen and see something large, red and shiny coming towards you, don't panic; just wave.