

Lavant Horticultural Society

October Meeting 2015 – ‘Autumn Plants’

Notes from talk given by Rosy Hardy (*far from complete - any additions or errors please contact webmaster@lavanthortsoc.org.uk*)

Aster name changes: The single flowered European species that are not day length sensitive and do not get mildew are still classified as asters, e.g. *Aster amellus* (incl. ‘King George’) and *Aster frikartii* (incl. ‘Mönch’).

The day length sensitive North American Michaelmas daisies have now been reclassified as *Symphotrichum*:

Symphotrichum novae-angliae – clump forming - hairy leaves and stems – happier in sun but need good soil – get mildew if not fed enough.

Symphotrichum novii-belgii – spread by runners - smooth leaves and stems – happy with lighter soils – get mildew if they get dry.

Recommendations: *Symphotrichum ericoides* ‘Pink Cloud’ – very pale pink – masses of flower;

Symphotrichum oblongifolium ‘October Skies’ – relatively low, bushy habit with profusion of flowers.

Hardy chrysanthemums: Split clumps every 2 – 3 years. Particular recommendation for *C.* ‘Innocence’.

Rehmannia ‘Walberton’s Magic Dragon’ (sometimes known as Chinese foxglove, although it is not related to foxgloves). It repeat blooms throughout the year. It likes part shade – i.e. sun for part of the day and shade for the rest, not constant dappled shade. Is sterile so cannot be propagated from seed, but it does spread. Hardy down to minus 8/9°C.

Hesperantha (formerly known as *Schizostylis*) *coccinea* ‘Major’. Although each shoot goes down to little bulblet, it likes to grow in colonies. It can be divided, providing that it is split into large clumps, otherwise it will just sulk and not flower for a couple of years. Go for taller cultivars that hold the flower spikes above the leaves. The shorter ones mask the flowers with the foliage.

Sedums: it is worthwhile giving the Chelsea chop to the taller sedums, such as *S.* ‘Herbstfreude’ (‘Autumn Joy’), or *S.* ‘Purple Emperor’. The stems will then be shorter, but with more flower heads and more robustly upright - less likely to flop away from the centre of the plant.

Amarine belladiva – looks like a *Nerine* with the stature of an *Amaryllis* and is, indeed, cross between the two

Verbena rigida: Likes sun & free draining, poor soil; hardy and reliably perennial, unlike *V. bonariensis*. Purple flowers throughout summer.

Serratula seoanei: day length sensitive, pink thistle like flowers, but with no spines. Likes full sun and well-drained poor soil. Very hardy. Propagate in spring by division.

Penstemon: Do not be tempted to cut down *penstemon* at the end of the season – leave them to die back naturally, even if it does not look very tidy – the dead top growth will help protect the crown of the plant over winter. In April cut back the previous year’s top growth to 2 inches above the ground, to allow the new growth to come through. In general, do not cut back hollow stems before winter as this gives rain an easy way into the plant to cause rotting and frost damage.

Rob Hardy suggested some places of interest that could be added to a visit to Hardy’s Cottage Garden Plants nursery at Freefolk Priors, Hampshire:

Bere Mill garden (Hampshire NGS); Spring Pond Garden, Laverstoke;

Watership Down Inn, Freefolk; Bombay Sapphire Gin Factory; Whitchurch Silk Mill

Lavant Horticultural Society