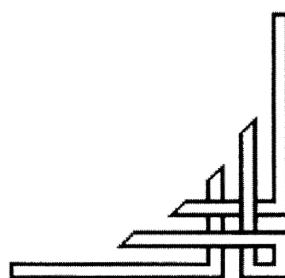
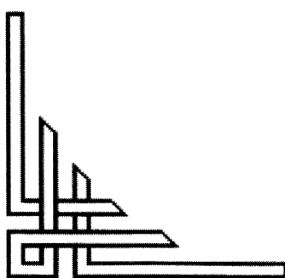




National Sweet Pea Society

Registered Charity No: 226802

2022 Autumn Bulletin





NEWS

NEW WEBSITE

This summer saw the launch of our new website. It is now much easier to search for varieties by flower type, colour or scent value. You also now have the option to pay directly by card. The previous ways to order via our catalogue, email and phone are still available to you.

WWW.RPSWEETPEAS.COM

Instagram Success!

Our Instagram account has gained traction this summer with over 4000 followers. Make sure you follow us for all our latest news, information and top tips for growing success!



2023 Novelties:

- Terry Davey—mauve
- George McAra—crimson
- John Warren—white
- Ian Myers—mauve bicolour

Roger Parsons Sweet Peas

W: rpsweetpeas.com | T: 01243 673770 | E: info@rpsweetpeas.com

NATIONAL SWEET PEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity No: 226802

AUTUMN BULLETIN 2022

Patron

Alan Titchmarsh MBE VMH DL

Editor of the Bulletins and Exhibitions Schedule:

Graeme Hollingdale

graeme@graemehollingdale.com

General Secretary:

Carole Tate

07961 477 137

caroletate10@gmail.com

For all membership related enquiries (including Societies):

Julia Beardmore

07997 950 014

julia.nsps@outlook.com

Website: sweetpeas.org.uk

Facebook: For the Love of Sweet Peas incorporating the National Sweet Pea Society

Twitter: @SweetPeaSociety

The opinions expressed by contributors are their own and may not necessarily coincide with the opinions of either the Society or the Editor

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Notification of an Extraordinary General Meeting of the National Sweet Pea Society, in order to consider two new membership rates for introduction in January 2023

Alison Shreeve, Chair NSPS

Elsewhere in the Bulletin is information about the new website. We will then have the capacity on the site to provide an online only option for membership. This will make it easier for some people, particularly those overseas, to afford to join us, as there will be no mailing costs involved. Your committee are therefore proposing a change to membership rates to accommodate online membership.

With online only membership the publications (Annual and Bulletins, Classification list and for new members, Enjoy Sweet Peas) will only be available digitally.

We are also proposing an increase in Lifetime Membership rates which have not been increased in recent years.

Proposals:

1.	To introduce an online only membership rate	£15.00
2.	To increase Lifetime Membership to	£500

The Extraordinary General Meeting will be held by Zoom on **Thursday 8th December at 4.00pm**

If you would like to take part in this single item, two proposals only EGM, please contact the Secretary, Carole Tate (ideally by seven days in advance) on caroletate10@gmail.com and Carole will send you the link for the meeting.



NSPS Founded 1900

THE NATIONAL SWEET PEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 226802.

www.sweetpeas.org.uk

Patron: ALAN TITCHMARSH MBE VMH DL

Primrose Cottage
2 Clayton Lane
Bracklesham Bay
Chichester PO20 8JQ

9th September 2022

His Majesty King Charles III
Buckingham Palace
London SW1A 1AA

Your Majesty

I write on behalf of our members to express our deep sadness at the loss of your mother, our late dear Queen. Much has already been said about her supreme dedication to a life of service to our nation and commonwealth. It is hard to express this better than you have done yourself. She will be remembered for her grace and humanity by a grateful nation. Our thoughts are with you and your family at this difficult time.

We are encouraged that you have now become our sovereign and wish you a long and happy reign. I hope that in subtle ways you will be able to continue your work on the matters that are dear to your heart, such as improving sustainability.

Please accept our condolences.

Yours sincerely,

Roger Parsons
President

Dates for your 2023 Diary

[correct at the time of editing]

Wednesday 9 November	NSPS Committee meeting	Committee members only
Thursday 8 December	NSPS EGM (via Zoom)	All members
Wednesday 8 February	NSPS Committee meeting	Committee members only
Saturday 4 March	NSPS AGM & Spring Social Chase Hotel, Nuneaton	All paid up members
Wednesday 26 April	NSPS Committee meeting	Committee members only
Sat 1 – Sun 2 July	Early National Exhibition Squires Garden Centre Shepperton	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Suns 18 <u>or</u> 25 June (Tbc)	Chiltern Sweet Pea Society Show Lacey Green Bucks	Members' Competition
Sat 8 – Sun 9 July	Late National Exhibition RHS Bridgewater Gardens Worsley	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Sat 15 – Sun 16 July	Eckford Society of Wem	Open and Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Mon 24 – Thurs 27 July	Royal Welsh Show Buith Wells	National (Open) Sweet Pea Championship of Wales
Fri 28 – Sun 30 July	North West Regional Show Astley Park, Chorley	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Wednesday 6 September	NSPS Committee meeting	Committee members only
Wednesday 8 November	NSPS Committee meeting	Committee members only

Introduction/Editorial

Thank you everyone for your contributions and taking my continued pressing for comments, articles, photos etc for the Bulletins, in the right spirit. These are after all, tried and tested methods of communication, which enable praise, criticism, debate, thanks and many different types of information to be shared amongst all of our members, twice a year. In this edition, not only do we have many positive experiences of staging at shows without Oasis but also great news about our new website, on-line membership, audit results to help you with your cultivar choices for 2023, the many excellent displays and some show news.

In fact, I have ended up with not only a bumper edition this time but I have already started the Spring edition by carrying over several of your lovely articles. Some have also been passed over to Caroline for the 2023 Annual. This will not stop us from getting in touch in a couple of months and asking you for new copy for these publications. Not only that but do please continue to let Darren Myers have a continuing supply of photographs for the Society Instagram account and Caroline for Twitter. Many of us are also part of the Society Facebook group and regularly contribute to that.

Deadline dates:

2023 Spring Bulletin by 31st December please.

2023 ANNUAL by 30th January to Caroline please.

2023 Autumn Bulletin by 4th September please.

What price Sweet Peas?

I can remember quite a few years ago there being a regular sharing of where the best/highest prices for sweet pea stems was. This communication from John Rieley suggests we should start it up again:

As my Sweet Peas started flowering, I was just giving away bunches to my neighbours. However, when I stripped the plants a couple of weeks before the Nationals, I found that I had rather too many, so I took them to the florist at our local station, to see if I could sell them. The Florist was most enthusiastic and bought the lot for 20p a stem. The following day I wandered by to see how well and for how much they were selling; I was astonished to find them being sold (and well) at £5 a bunch...of FIVE! Looked at logically, I suppose the cost is comparable with that for a coffee and the 'peas last a lot longer!

Experiences with ROOTGROW please

Thorold Cox

Have you had any experience of using ROOTGROW mycorrhizal stimulant on sweet peas? I tried some on some of my plants when planting out and there does seem to be a difference in vigour between treated and untreated; I will be trying this again this season and would be interested in comparing notes.

An inexpensive and simple solution to the Oasis ban?

Chris Dale

I've been using an exceptionally fine sand which almost sets, even when over-wet. I cap it with 9–10mm of potato slice, using a shape which holds it securely but permits water to penetrate when topping up. A wire staple pushed through the potato into the sand acts as a spring clip and keeps the cap in contact with the sand and prevents rotation by touching both sides of the vase if shaped properly. A notch cut front and back accommodates the front and rear leaf.



The combined media hold stems very firmly in place. The weight of the wet sand makes the exhibit very stable. I plan my vase, then use a skewer to make holes, starting centre-back, then working left and right. If you're very unlucky and split the potato topper, just pull it out, apply a new one and go again. I try to get the stems just through the topper into the sand, but with care it doesn't seem to matter, and the water is available throughout the vase if kept topped up. If any stems need attention or are a bit bent, ensure that the hole made with the skewer is at the correct angle first time.

All stems 'held' perfectly well for over 2 days, without any problems, and the stability makes for safe moving about of the completed exhibit. Clearing afterwards is easy: pull out the clip and slice, then tap out the sand. It's cheap enough to bin, but just for the heck of it I sterilised some with boiling water after one use, and then re-used it.



Little Elsie (my granddaughter) was so pleased to have 'helped grandad' with my first experimental 15 that she posed to show them off!"

Oasis - "A Woolly Alternative"

Kathy Gray

While discussing possible alternatives to Oasis, it was suggested to me that I try using wool waste. This is wool from New Zealand Romney sheep. The fleece is transported to Yorkshire where it is woven into carpet wool. The offcuts are then sold as wool waste (see photo).

This product meets the latest RHS guide lines, as it is a natural fully biodegradable and recyclable material, if stored dry after use it can be used many times over. The disadvantages are that it takes at least 30 minutes to stage a vase of 15. The resultant display is more bunched up and not so fan shaped. The wool can be used wet or dry in the vase, although I found it easier if I soaked the wool first. When making up a vase, put some wool in then some water and repeat until vase is full. You will then need a knitting needle or similar tool to make a pilot hole for the stems.

After several practice vases I made up a vase of 15 and to test if the if vase was up to the rigors of the show bench, I took the vase for a 20-minute bus ride. We arrived at our destination (*Ed a committee meeting!*) as good as when we started out.

I entered 2 shows using wool this year and won best exhibit at Chipperfield Show against vases using reeds (see photo) and the Early National where I won the Terry Sewell and Clay Cup for a vase of Anniversary from my Daily Mail entry. I was not at either show at the end, so do not know if there were any problems clearing up.



The wool prior to use



Three lovely vases at Chipperfield Show

Finally, suggestions please as to what can I do with half a box of redundant Oasis, please. (*Ed – indeed, we all need suggestions; I have more than a complete box needing a good home!*)

Snapshots on Staging during 2022 without Oasis

(Contributions from various members)

As a member who is eligible to stage in the Division V section, I didn't have too much difficulty in staging seven stems in the Society's vases, using Agrawool, thanks to some very helpful instructions from Darren Myers. However, I fully understand that some members in the higher divisions may have found it more difficult to stage in this material with more stems per vase. However, my bowls were a different matter altogether.

Following a hint seen on Gardeners' World, I decided to obtain some moss which I then wrapped in biodegradable bags. I had to punch slits in the sides with a knife for the foliage and with a knitting needle for the flower stems. The exhibits looked fine for the first day of the Show but by the second day were not looking so good as the stems seemed unable to take up enough water. I certainly cannot recommend this experiment without some further thought.

My main concern on the banning of the use of Oasis on RHS premises is that, sadly, it reduced the number of members exhibiting. As Agrawool is currently only available in packs of 20 (and even then, only from specialist suppliers) would it make sense for the Society to make individual blocks available for purchase when exhibiting at RHS venues? Hopefully, this might encourage more members to experiment with the material and become more adept at using it.

Like so many new things, it all comes down to practice to make them work and if we are to continue having shows then this must be done. I was in 9-stem per vase, Division IV at the Late National and used both rushes(reeds) and Agrawool. Although this produced vases some way from perfect, it still helped to have a show that impressed the visitors. So, if the staging materials can be made available well before a show, I think that this should help to raise the number of entries and exhibitors.

I found Fibre Floral very much like Oasis to use. The big advantage of it is that it is reusable, which Oasis isn't. I found a YouTube video which suggested turning the cut edge through 90 degrees so that the stems were being pushed between the woolly layers rather than through them. Very soft and sappy stems of foliage were more difficult to insert but it still could be done by making a hole with a skewer, otherwise it was not very different from using Oasis and the Sweet Pea stems went in easily. The arrangements lasted well, probably better than with Oasis, because Fibre Floral rewetting properties are superior.

Scrunched up chicken wire is one of the traditional methods used for arrangements before the advent of Oasis. It is very easy to use and I very much liked it for creating table arrangements. I find this method quick to use. My two best exhibits (decorative and in non-Spencers) were both created using Fibre Floral.

It's never been easy staging 15 stems in a standard sweet pea vase. Even though I'm not growing them anymore, I think an ideal substitute to Oasis would be heavy, fine clay. Vases could be made up in advance of the show then the heavy, fine clay would add weight and retain moisture.

Regarding staging without oasis, it wasn't really a big issue for me. As a new member, I had never used oasis so didn't know what I was missing!

At the last North West workshop, the reed (rushes) method was demonstrated. I experimented a few times at home then used reeds for staging at the show. I also found that a junior hacksaw was ideal for cutting the reeds. I was pleased to be able to reposition the stems in the vase several times until I was happy.

I only had a very few vases to stage at Harlow Carr, the peas were poor which always makes it more difficult to stage. I used some reeds that the society supplied. I won't try them again as I really struggled with them. I also used some sand that I had taken along. Again, not that good; maybe it was the wrong type of sand?

I am hoping that a manufacturer can come up with a better alternative.

With regards to the RHS banning the use of Oasis I am all in favour of it – for all the wrong reasons!

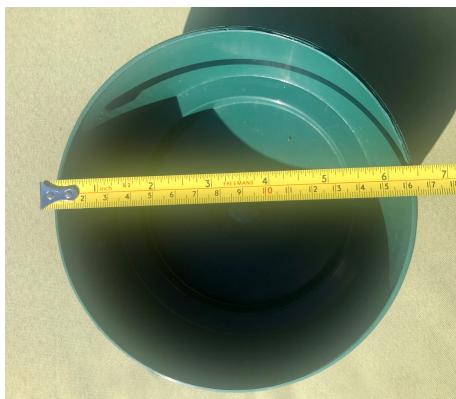
When I read in the Bulletin about which rushes were suitable, I realised that I had my own supply as they are weeds in my garden. Interestingly they are growing, not in marshy ground but in heavy clay which bakes solid in summer. I also had the benefit of watching Keith Brewer use them at my first visit to the Nationals back in 2000 so I had a fair idea of what to do. I found that they were just as easy to use as Oasis and had an advantage in that it was much easier to rearrange stems if needed. Running out of staging time at the recent Nationals I managed to stage two vases, one of 12 and one of 15, in less than 20 minutes although they did show signs of haste.

As for the wrong reasons, I do think that the number of entries was lower due to the banning of Oasis. Out of five class entries that I made, I won four and came away with two 'best vases'. One of them left me with guilty feelings as there were only two entries in the whole division and mine was the hastily staged vase of 12 to which I thought the judges had been very kind in awarding it a first!

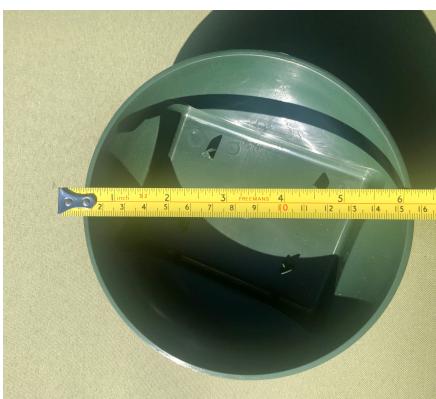
Containers for Decorative Arrangements

Caroline Ball

Sourcing the small green 'bulb' bowls for decorative arrangements at the national shows has become more difficult. Therefore, it has been decided that the bowls will be replaced in some classes at the 2023 nationals with similar sized saucers or trays, as were used for some of the classes at the Early National. The saucers do have the advantage of being less intrusive containers thereby allowing more innovative arranging techniques to be used in the decorative classes.



'bulb' bowl



'saucer' bowl

Saucers are much more suitable containers for smaller flowered species and old fashioned varieties. Of course, more care will be needed in topping up the exhibits in the much shallower saucers during the show, so do please ensure your exhibits are well watered at the point of staging. There is nothing to stop you adding another receptacle inside the saucer to hold water should you be using for example chicken wire as your mechanics.



The exhibits staged in saucers at the Early looked stunning (see photos below) allowing full focus on our beautiful flowers and less on the container.



Early National 2022 example of an arrangement in a saucer adjacent to a bowl



Latifolious exhibit also staged in a saucer

Please be guided by the schedule and the show managers as to which container to use in 2023.

A personal account of staging without Oasis

Darren Myers

In the autumn of 2021, the Society announced that both the Early and Late national shows in 2022 would be held at RHS venues. This decision, which I understand went to a very close committee vote, meant that Oasis/floral foam couldn't be used at either show in 2022.

From people I had spoken with, there was a lot of dismay, with some growers saying that they wouldn't be showing at either show with some deciding not to renew their NSPS membership as a consequence of the decision. I will confess that my initial reaction was also quite negative and resulted in me changing my plans for the forthcoming season.



Tweleve vases of 15 stems, Darren's entry in the Roger Parsons class at the 2022 Late National.

However, as the autumn turned to winter and I commenced sowing my exhibition plants in early January, my stance was softening. I grow to show, and “would I regret not going to a National if I was able to have a good cut?”, was a recurring question I kept asking myself.

February came and I started to experiment with the view that I would endeavour to try and find a suitable staging material, but should I be unable to find anything that would allow me to show my flowers off at their best then I would most likely not enter the Late National. Having read that a lot of growers were looking to use sand as a staging medium. My initial thoughts about the use of sand were questionable. What grade would need to be used? The moisture levels would have to be precise. Moist enough to hold the flowers and to supply enough moisture to the flowers. Too wet and it would be rendered useless. Julia Beardmore had kindly given me a block of Agrawool in the previous October to try, however those who had attempted to use it had reported that it wasn't suitable as it wouldn't hold blooms.

However, I used Agrawool as my starting point. I had concluded that the top ½-1cm was the key component in ensuring the blooms would be held firm. For my first attempt, my vase contained a cone of Agrawool with a polystyrene disc, that I had previously cut into shape, on top. I used a nail to make a guide hole where it was intended that a Sweet Pea stem would sit, once I had some. The result wasn't great, with the polystyrene being too brittle with the additional issue of the Agrawool being pushed down into the vase. I concluded that the nail was too blunt for both materials.

I then went back to the drawing board and gave it some more thought. I was still of the opinion that the top had to be solid enough to give support to the blooms. Having written off the Agrawool, I needed an alternative. Given the reports I had read, I decided that I would actually try the sand method. But to give more rigidity, I created discs made from the expandable foam used by builders and DIY's to fill voids in walls. When dry, it is almost like a dry oasis when cut and easier to make guide holes in.

To replicate Sweet Pea stems, I settled on bamboo skewers. All was going well and I eventually inserted 15 skewers into the vase. I was quite proud of myself and between me finishing the vase and calling my eldest daughter to show her, all 15 stems and the disc of foam decided to fall out of the vase. The stems were too heavy and the sand wasn't able to hold the stems despite pushing them into a depth of a good inch. I concluded that to get the sand absolutely right, it had to be at a precise level of wetness.

At this stage it was April and May and I was running out of ideas. There had been some talk of using vegetable and fruit as a staging material. I was concerned that a potato would turn brown and the starches would colour the water and effect the blooms. I was also concerned about using fruit, because as we know, fruit produce ethylene, more so when cut. Therefore, what would the effect be on the blooms? I was also considering those who would be stripping down the show and what they would encounter in the vases on the second day of the show.

I had dismissed the use of reeds/rushes some time ago. Despite them being the only medium to use several years ago, a lot of practice is required to perfect their use and given the lack of availability of reeds/rushes to practice with, I didn't want to go to the national and be using them for the first time in many, many years. I was running out of ideas, as I had maintained that I would only use a material that could provide me with the ability to stage a vase comparable to oasis.

I went back to the drawing board again and started researching on the internet in the hope that florists had used alternatives. Chicken wire, water retaining beads and moss were frequently recommended. I then, in pure desperation, started contemplating Agrawool again. Why? It wasn't suitable when I trialled it earlier. Others had used it and didn't have a complementary word to say about it.

This time in my research I concentrated on florists who had used it and had given it positive results. The positive results I was seeing didn't correlate with my initial or others experience. From my research I found that the common mistake was people were using it like they would oasis.

Agrawool is formed in layers of basalt that is held together with sugars. When attempting to push anything into it, the layers compress and the fibres around the hole go inward, resulting in a bigger hole being made, but with the layers compressed, there is no ability for it to grip.

Therefore, I concluded that a guide hole, with something sharp had to be made. My thinking was instead of using a nail, I simply make a cut with a sharp paring (sometime known as a peeling) knife, across the Agrawool once it was in the vase, that would represent a row of Sweet Peas. My thinking then went to I've created a 'guide row' but that won't be sufficient as the stems would still cause some of the fibres to go inwards when inserted resulting in a bigger hole. Having had little success with a nail back in February (on the basis it was too blunt) I needed something sharper. I knew my years of watching non-descript mechanical programmes on the Discovery Channel would come in handy one day as I recalled the use of a metal scribe which is a long, sharp, dart like implement, used to mark metal prior to cutting. I went on Amazon and there were several all reasonably priced (less than £5). I duly ordered one priced at £3.99 and it arrived within days. (They are sometimes also known as an engineer's scribe)

My research into the use of Agrawool also recommended the use of a serrated knife to cut it with. That wasn't a problem as we have a couple of bread knives. All I now needed, were flowers! It was May, and my cordons were a little while off from being allowed to flower. It was too early in May to raid my seed plants so practice would have to wait. Or would it?

On the anniversary of my Dad's passing, my sister suggested that we buy our Mum some flowers. I left it entirely to my sister to do so. It transpired that she had conveniently ordered some Dutch hot house grown Sweet Peas. After Mum had had the best from them, I asked if I could take the stems to practice with. By this time the base of the stems were starting to turn brown with little flower left, so I knew I would only get an idea if it would work. Within 5 minutes of getting them home, I had got a vase out and was cutting a cone of Agrawool. I inserted this into the vase and watered it. Unlike Oasis, it requires no pre-soaking and can be placed into the vase dry.

I then proceeded to make the cut where my first row would go, followed by the metal scribe making a guide hole into the cut I had just made. I then cut the stem at an angle, as I always do, which was then inserted into the Agrawool. I repeated the process until I had a vase of 15 staged in the conventional way of 3 rows of stems.

It seemed to work and hold firm. I left it until the following morning and the stems were still holding firm. Had I found my staging material that would allow me to enter the national? I was cautious with my optimism until I had some flowers of my own to practice with.

By the second week of June, my seed plants were in flower and producing several 4's. I decided that now was the time to practice properly. I selected 15 mixed stems and proceeded to use the same method. Cutting a cone of Agrawool, inserting it into the vase then adding water. Make the first cut. Make a guide hole and insert my flower stem. Again, I repeated this process. I also added leaves this time. These were potentially a bit more problematic, but sticking with the same principles, I made a guide hole for each. For the front pair I used the metal scribe, whilst the back pair I used the blade of my knife. The leaves went in with relative ease.



The result, as pictured was more than acceptable to use at a national show. At that point I was relatively settled on its use.

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However, following layering, I allowed my cordons to flower. Some cultivars were producing long stems, thicker than what I had harvested from the seeders. With much larger bloom. I started to doubt whether the Agrawool would work with such larger blooms. So, another practice was required! Again it worked. If the size of bloom was still there at the time of the Late National, then I decided that some further practice would be required.



By this stage it was approaching the date for the Early National; it was at this point I decided to share my results, so I posted a short ditty on the 'For Love of Sweet Peas' Facebook page in the hope it would help others. As it got closer the Late National date, my Sweet Peas were settling down, and the initial size I had experienced was now dissipating and so no further practice would be needed.

At The Late, I eventually staged 21 vases, all in Agrawool. It wasn't without incident, however. Like many growers, I left my mixed vase until last. By this time, it was approaching 9am on the Saturday morning and judging was due to start at 9.30am. I inserted the front leaves, but as soon as I inserted the back leaves, the vase collapsed. The Agrawool had let me down with the very last vase. So, I had to hastily restage it at the 11th hour.

The length of time to stage a vase in Agrawool is comparable to the time it would take to stage a vase in oasis. Whilst I haven't timed how long it takes to stage in either material, my estimate is that at worst, it takes no more than 2 minutes longer to stage a vase in Agrawool than it would to stage a vase in oasis.

My conclusion is that the move away from oasis is going to be the direction of travel over the coming years and so we have to get used to finding alternatives; so far Agrawool would be my recommendation. I still haven't perfected using it. I need to learn to cut cones that sit tightly in the vase, for example. The only additional tool needed, beyond a serrated knife was the metal scribe, but if you have an old dart or something similar, then that is all you need to be added to your existing tool box.

For those who were put off entering the Nationals this year, then I would encourage each and every one of you to make a leap of faith. Why are you growing cordon Sweet Peas if not for exhibition?



Report from the Classification Sub-committee

The sub-committee met at Bracklesham Bay on 13th June 2022. Keith Brewer, Phil Johnson, Jim & Mary McDonald, Roger Parsons were present.

1. 2022 Novelties:

These were inspected and allocated to colour categories as follows:

‘Alec Cave’ 1 white

‘David Tosteven’ 16c fancy (**dappled**) a new category

‘Farmer Reg’ 6 purple (provisional)

‘Heartbeat’ (Kerton) 3b crimson

‘Josie’ 4 magenta

‘Newby Blue’ 16a bicolour

‘Rebecca’ 2 cream

Following discussion about how best to distinguish between Old-fashioned and Modern grandiflora cultivars, it was agreed that three cultivars need further consideration as to type and that this should be done in the wider context of the RHS Trials. A further meeting would be held at Wisley on 16th June 2022. The three are: ‘Our Heroes’, ‘Primrose’ and ‘Three Times As Sweet’.

2. ‘Peter Seabrook’

Blooms of this were compared with ‘Charlies Angel’ and ‘Chris Harrod’ and information considered on the origin of this novelty. The meeting agreed unanimously that ‘Peter Seabrook’ is a synonym of ‘Charlies Angel’.

3. ‘Lynne and Chris’

This 2020 novelty had been provisionally classified unseen during the pandemic as 10c cerise pink. Blooms were now inspected and it has been reclassified as 3b crimson.

4. 2023 classification

‘Farmer Reg’ was described by the raiser as maroon but has been provisionally classified as 6 purple. It is close in colour to ‘Edd Fincham’ which is classified as 5 maroon and the meeting took the view that it might be appropriate to reclassify ‘Edd Fincham’ as 6 purple. It was agreed to make a broader comparison of purple and maroon cultivars in 2023 before agreeing any changes.

Meeting at Wisley on 16th June 2022. Keith Brewer, Phil Johnson, Jim & Mary McDonald, Roger Parsons were present.

1. 68 clamped keel cultivars in the Trials were assessed whether they should be classified as Old-fashioned, Modern grandiflora, or Semi-grandiflora. The following changes were agreed:
‘Juliet’, ‘Memories’ (Unwins) and ‘Valentine’ were moved from Modern grandiflora to Semi-grandiflora on account of wavy petals.
‘Dragonfly’, ‘Violet Wings’, ‘Erewhon’ and ‘High Scent’ were moved from Semi-grandiflora to Modern grandiflora on account of their plain petals.
‘Indigo King’ was moved from Old-fashioned to Modern grandiflora.
2. The three novelties were classified as follows:
‘Our Heroes’ has Modern grandiflora form
‘Primrose’ has Old-fashioned form
‘Three Times As Sweet’ has Modern grandiflora form.

New National Sweet Pea Society Website

Alison Shreeve

The Society has in the last few months been working with a Design Company to create a new website. We expect this site to have more functionality than our old site, which has been supported admirably by our Webmaster, Bob Rishworth and his son Andrew. We would like to take this opportunity to thank both of them for their enthusiasm and support to keep the site working for the NSPS over the past few years.

We are planning that the new website will launch in November and it will offer much of the information we had on the existing site but will have a new look and a log-in area for members only. Through the website we will have an automatic renewal of membership.

From January 2023 all subscriptions will be processed through the website. From that point there will be ongoing subscriptions unless cancelled by the user, or until the membership secretary is notified of cancellation of subscription. Emails will be sent advising when renewal is due and unless we hear from you, membership will be automatically renewed.

There will still be an opportunity to join manually if you do not use email or do not wish to use the website, or if new members join during the year. However, we would encourage you to use the website as it will simplify the work of the membership secretary and will be more streamlined for you as well!

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Initially we will upload all members from our existing database. You will then receive an email with a link you can use to sign up and create your password to use the site.

Your committee has also agreed to provide an ‘online only’ membership at a reduced fee. This will have advantages for overseas members or those who do not wish to receive printed materials. Any changes to membership fees have to be put to an AGM and we will call an Extraordinary General Meeting with this one item only in order to implement the proposed changes in January when subscriptions are due. Please see notification elsewhere in the Bulletin of the process for joining the EGM and the full proposal for voting.

We very much hope you will enjoy using the new website which we consider to be an ongoing project. If you have any thoughts about additional information you think that should be there, the Committee would be happy to hear from you, or any other thoughts concerning the site. For example, elsewhere in this Bulletin you will find a request for someone to manage our merchandising once again, as for the past couple of years this has been on hold. If we are fortunate in finding a person or people to take this on there will be an online shop added to the society’s site.

A Cautionary experience with Compost

Joyce & Phil Kerton

We had a total failure with compost due to the high level of salt. The problem was traced back to compost being bulked up with road sweepings. Still looking for a good blend of compost. If material included in the compost comes from a digester, you will still potentially have problems due to grass clippings having previously been treated with weed killer, plus evidence of plastics and other rubbish.

The problems with the use of Peat Free composts

John Rieley

I germinated my Sweet Pea seeds on tissue and planted them out in peat free compost. As an experiment I used several types of container, my usual plastic growtubes, roottrainers and five-inch pots; I got the same unsatisfactory results with each. The seedlings came through, developed one or two pairs of leaves and then stopped growing. Watering and feeding had no effect and in desperation I planted them out very early on the assumption that they couldn’t do any worse in the garden.

Talking to other gardeners the problem seems to be widespread. My Celeriac seedlings suffered a similar problem but my peas and beans were fine.

I did have an idea that the cause of the problem might be that the compost was not getting wet through when watered and this would mean that the sweet peas with their long root systems would be dry at root but subsequent experiments indicate that this is not the case, certainly with the Melcourt Sylvagrow that I use.

I have recently carried out an experiment with Wallflowers and Cabbages with some sown in Sylvagrow, some in garden compost and some in 50/50 Sylvagrow and Garden compost. All germinated at the same time without any problems but it is too early to say if the seedlings will put the brakes on later. At the time of writing, those in my own compost are starting to pull ahead so I wonder if the Melcourt is starting to run out of nutrients.

My only other idea is that it might be something to do with the age of the compost and that something happens if it is stored for too long.

Letters to the Society

(Please send your correspondence through to Julia [Membership Secretary] Carole [General Secretary] and/or me for this section of the Bulletin. We also welcome follow up answers, suggestions etc from all our members.)

(From a new member)

Dear Julia

I am contacting you if you don't mind, as I need some help with my sweet peas. Sparrows ruined them in my garden last year, but for some reason did not touch my neighbours, our gardens are literally next door to each other. However, I did have sweet pea flowers from my allotment, so it wasn't all too bad.

However, this year I have encountered the same problems in my garden and also to my dismay on the allotment too. I fear I will not have any flowers again; I am lost what to do. I was wondering if you could ask around and see if anybody else has encountered these problems and any solutions would be gratefully received.

Kind regards Mary Griffith

Dear Mary

Thank you for your email, so sorry you are experiencing problems with Sparrows. It is something I have never experienced; I do have plenty of sparrows around, but they seem to leave the sweet peas alone, however I do have bird feeders out.

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If you refer to your Enjoy Sweet Peas book there are a few references in there. Are you in the Facebook group? If so, it would be a good question to ask on there, if you do wish to join, it is named “For the love of Sweet Peas”. I will also ask some of my fellow growers and report back to you. Also, if you are you happy for me to pass your enquiry on to Graeme (who edits the Bulletins) it’s a worthy question for the Autumn Edition.

I have a problem with mice eating my crocus, I had treated myself in the Autumn to some from the RHS, and they were a fabulous display. I watched a mouse digging one up one day, so dug them up and put them in a plant pots with another one covering over the top. I found that mice have chewed a hole in one and devoured the crocus. The trials and tribulations of gardening.

Kind regards Julia Beardmore

Dear Julia

Thank you so much for replying to my email with all your suggestions. Yes, it would be great if you could forward my issues to Graeme to publish in the Autumn Bulletin.

Regarding giving the sparrows food, this is where the issues started. We started feeding the birds a few years ago and it was from then that we had problems with the sweet peas being eaten. I had grown a few sweet peas quite successfully in the garden prior to this and there were no problems. So, I am afraid after a year of feeding the birds I stopped in view of them eating the young plants. Plenty of my neighbours feed the birds so I don’t feel too guilty.

I have now had to net the garden supports and create a taunt tent around them, it has been okay but done reluctantly, I don’t especially like netting and it’s quite intrusive in a very small garden, but it’s the only way. I don’t think I will get many flowers this year as the plants have been attacked and covered in various ways until I had to eventually succumb to netting!!

I am sorry about your crocus bulbs; we have found the only way to stop mice eating anything is to put a wire mesh over things!

But I look forward to seeing if there are any other suggestions out there, the sparrows in our garden are very clever and I need to be one step ahead of them at all times.

Best wishes Mary

To the schedule sub-committee through Nicky Edwards.

One of our new North West members, Stephen Heyward, asked whether it is possible to enter cultivars of sweet pea in NSPS shows which are not listed in the formal classification list.

My interpretation of the Judges' Rules would say that it is certainly possible to enter cultivars other than those in the classification list as long as they fit the colour classification specified (One vase, red or orange-red for example). It is not a requirement to name the cultivar exhibited although it is desirable. It is the interpretation of the colour that is key here so it is not probably as safe as using cultivars from the classification list.

I am passing this on as other new members might find it useful to hear the views.

Hi Nicky and Stephen

Thank you for raising the question which does from time to time crop up.

First of all, there are no reasons to not stage any cultivar not listed in the classification list, which is purely a 'snapshot' in time, of those cultivars which are currently in commerce and therefore the most likely ones to be bought, grown and exhibited in (any) show during the coming season.

The wording in the NSPS Judges' Rules and Stewards' Guide under Trueness of Colour, states "The colour of established cultivars should be true to the current NSPS Classification List. Novelties, seedlings and non-listed cultivars should be exhibited in their appropriate colour classes. Except for mixed colours the colour should be uniform throughout."

If the cultivar is a novelty, then not only is it eligible to be shown in the novelty class(s) but using the raisers description and your own viewpoint, the appropriate classes (if in doubt ask the Show Manager or their representative) If the cultivar is new and not yet in commerce, then it MUST be shown and named only as a "Seedling" (after Judging you may add the name if you wish to) Again, it would be eligible for any class, not just seedling class(es).

If you know that a cultivar you have grown and are planning to exhibit was in commerce and listed in a previous classification, then again do ask, as someone may be able to confirm this for you.

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In all cases, the Judges (and Show Manager, who will act as Ombudsman) have the final say as to whether or not a cultivar is in the correct class or not. This vase may be moved if possible (ie if the exhibitor does not already have an entry in that class and that there is sufficient time during judging before the show opens to facilitate this) into the correct class or could be awarded NAS.

A further point of consideration which I consider worth emphasising and does crop up from time to time, particularly amongst less experienced growers, is that just because the packet of seed is named “xxxxx” does not mean that the flowers you are staging are that cultivar. Many of the older cultivars, which have not been carefully re-selected and rogued during seed production, will revert, break-up, maybe become Grandiflora form for example, when they should be Spencers. These flowers must not be staged as they will definitely be marked NAS.

Finally, show regulation number 11 for exhibitors (see the NSPS Exhibitions 2023 publication) states, “All the sweet peas exhibited should be legibly named on the white cards, which will be supplied by the Show Manager”.

We in the NSPS, especially Judges and Show Managers, do everything possible not to award NAS, hence the word SHOULD is often used in our rules and regulations, which gives some leeway; however, my best advice to every exhibitor is that when you see the word SHOULD, actually read it as MUST! In that way you will always avoid being disqualified! A final reminder for any exhibitor, please always ask first rather than regretting it later.

Yours, Graeme

NSPS Trials

Darren Everest

You may, or not, be aware that I am in the process of taking over the role of Trials co-ordinator from Jim McDonald. Jim has done a sterling job over the years but has decided that it's time to retire from this position. Please bear with me over the coming weeks and months as I find my feet. It's fair to say that I have trouble organising myself let alone anything else so please be patient with me!

I believe Jim used to contact breeders in September re their new raisings. Some of you will know that I grow one or two Dahlias and will be up to my neck in blooms during September so I may have to adjust my correspondence timings accordingly.

If you would like to contact me regarding the trials, please do so on 07808 793 862 or via email, darreneverest@ymail.com

Thoughts on the Early National show

Roger Parsons

As joint show manager with Phil Johnson, I may not have the most objective view on this year's Early show at Wisley but want to publicly thank all those who helped with setting up the show and taking it down. Laurie Burrell, who is due to be joint show manager in 2023, was particularly helpful at all times and in many different ways, enthusiastically learning "on the job". Other helpers included Caroline Ball, Phil Champion, Mary & Jim McDonald, Jen and Lewis Morgan and Alison Shreeve, so thanks to all of them. Julia Beardmore and Carole Tate set up and ran the Society stand and were kept busy throughout the show. More helpers are needed please in future years.

There were two major concerns going into the show. One of these was not being allowed to use Oasis, a situation that nobody wanted but we just had to make the best of the options. Only the most curmudgeonly had peas but were unwilling to stage them. Most brought what they could in a difficult season for growers in the far south. My own season ran two weeks earlier than usual which, coupled with very low rainfall, meant that by then end of June I joined the many who had nothing to show. I have concerns that the 2023 show will simply be too late for members in the far south. I shall try to overcome this with a February sowing.

A remarkable variety of staging materials were found when we emptied vases at the end of the Wisley show. There was no evidence of anyone using apple, potato or other vegetable / fruit alternative. Many used Agrawool and I think this included Robert Read's magnificent winning exhibit in the Daily Mail Cup class. His blooms were presented magnificently and looked as good as anything staged in Oasis. Kathy Gray used strips of knitting wool to stage her blooms. This must have been considerable work and they presented less well than Robert's but she did win the Clay Cup for best vase staged using this medium.

A lot of exhibitors used fine sand and these stood up well throughout the show despite frequent topping up with water. There was one exception with an exhibitor whose blooms moved when watered. This may be due to not packing the sand firmly enough prior to staging or it may be the grade of sand used. At least one exhibitor used coir packed into the vases and this proved successful. Rushes were used quite extensively and proved as successful as they traditionally were.

I had no access to these so the vases I staged for Tom Atherton, who was unable to attend, used the grass Gardener's Gaiters, *Phalaris arundinacea*, as a substitute for Rushes. This worked well enough and I was pleased that the vase of seedling 'Tom Atherton' was sent up the consideration for the Clay. I shall try Agrawool next time, having seen how well it can be used.

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The other major concern as the show approached was how many visitors we might expect. Experience of events in the past at the old Hillside centre at the RHS Wisley Gardens, was that few people visiting the site made it up the hill to the centre. Signage at the entrance to the garden was poor in the past so that most visitors had found us by chance. All our concerns proved un-necessary as the show was thronging with visitors. Signage for the show was good and the new Hilltop centre intrinsically attracts more visitors. The hall is magnificent and has adjacent café, toilets, library, herbarium and science centre.

I set up a loop of about 90 pictures which were displayed on a large screen throughout the show. Fitting a modest size show into a large hall was made easier by two large non-competitive displays of Sweet Peas. One of these was staged by the RHS Garden staff and consisted of blooms from the trial of over 60 Grandiflora varieties taking place in 2022 and 2023. The other was a display of 60 varieties staged by Phil Johnson using blooms from Seedlynx' seed production. Both took considerable effort and caused enormous interest so it was decided that both should receive a Gold Medal Award card. The venue was also excellent for the lighting and temperature in the hall, both overnight and during the day.

Both Committee members and the RHS were absolutely delighted by the success of this show and the RHS would love to have us back. It is not ideal (where is?) but the sheer number of visitors we achieved means this has to be given serious consideration in future.



Some of the benches at the Early National, demonstrating exhibits staged without Oasis

Merchandising Manager

Alison Shreeve

Are you interested in becoming the Merchandising Manager or do you know someone who might be?

Since Jane Atherton stepped down from managing the merchandise for the Society, we have been without someone to organise this for us. The stock has been running down through sales at various shows throughout the country, but unless we can find someone to take on this role, we will not be offering items for sale on the new website or at shows/events in the future.

The income from sales has in the past provided an income of around £500 pa for the Society. This has been a helpful contribution in balancing the books! We hope that someone out there is interested or knows someone who potentially could take on this role.

The role will require marketing Sweet Pea merchandise and may include all or most of the following:

Sourcing and ordering stock of items relating to Sweet Peas. This is currently cards, key rings, books, table mats. We hope to source someone to make the rings for cordon culture shortly and possible the clips for the canes.

Budgeting and Forecasting – pre-approval of spending is required from the General Committee

Monitoring stock and keeping track of items and income

Banking Takings and monitoring direct payments

Distributing stock to key people attending shows across the country (often done through committee meetings) and checking takings through these events

Managing the Online ‘shop’ - Checking stock and sending out orders promptly

Accessing records from the website (with the help of the webmaster if necessary)

Reporting to the treasurer as necessary and to the General Committee when it meets

Any other relevant duties relating to the successful sales of Sweet Pea related items for the society

This may well suit an organised retired person or a couple who would like to support the NSPS in a proactive way. We hope you might consider this role! For further information or to express interest please contact the Chair of the Society.

STAGING RINGS FOR SWEET PEAS?

Neil Hatch

The Royal Horticultural Society decided to ban floral foams containing plastic at all shows held on their premises from 2021¹ (*Ed this wasn't enforced by RHS Harlow Carr on the NSPS, which held its 2021 Late Exhibition there*) This led exhibitors to use some of the newly available 'compostable floral foam' products during the 2021 show season. However, experience gained staging with these new products in 2021, particularly for large flowers such as dahlias and gladioli, led me to think about a reusable vase insert – or ***Staging Ring***. Over the winter of 2021/22, I worked on designs to fit the range of vase sizes I used at shows. I am trying them at various flower shows during 2022 to see if they work.

The *Staging Ring* is inserted into the top of a traditional polypropylene (or metal) exhibition vase. It replaces single-use floral foams (whether containing plastic, or not) or other staging materials. The *Staging Ring* is reusable and should last many years – just as the vases do. The holes are designed for the flower stems to pass through and into the water – so water take-up by the stems ought to be good (a problem reported by some users of the new compostable foams) Stems can be 'locked' firmly in position by using pieces of spare flower stem as wedges – so making the vases easy to handle without dislodging an arrangement.

Different hole sizes and positions are possible within a 'standard' ring shape. I have been experimenting with a range of different designs to accommodate everything from a single giant decorative dahlia or a set of three large gladioli in a large vase to a set of 15 sweet peas in the smallest of the standard vases. It is the sweet pea ***Staging Ring*** that we describe in this article.

The National Sweet Pea Society held its early National Show at RHS Wisley. This would mean using the new compostable floral foam products – or using something else. I decided to dip my toe in the water of Sweet Pea exhibiting (having previously only entered the odd vase at local shows) I decided to grow a small number of cordon sweet peas (just 50!) with the idea of entering the Wisley show as a 'Newbie', using the sweet pea *Staging Rings* I had developed over the winter. These are my reflections on how the sweet pea season went.

¹ See <https://www.dahlia-nds.co.uk/rhs-and-nehs-regulations-on-the-use-of-floral-foam-oasis-at-flower-shows/>

Figure 1 shows a close-up of the Sweet Pea *Staging Ring*. This design has 22 holes – two of which (at the front and back) are slightly larger to accommodate foliage if desired. The remaining holes (approximately 5-6 mm in diameter) can form a fan shape – with the outer holes angled to help make the fan. I have experimented with different angles on the holes. The holes are large enough for most cultivars, although those with noticeably thicker stems can be a little challenging – though I have yet to find a set of stems that I can't fit in! The layout allows many different formations – and so arrangements of 5, 6, 7, 9, 12 & 15 stems can be accommodated. I produced a small number of these rings at home using a 3D printer and used a material called PLA (a bioplastic).

I only had 50 spring-sown cordons so was not able to generate many ‘test’ vases before the day of the show arrived. However, *Staging Rings* proved quick and easy to use when staging and created very little mess when staging or tidying up. The only waste products are the old blooms, water and any paper or other compostable material used (eg to lock the blooms in place).



Figure 1



Figure 2

Figure 2 shows a close-up of a vase of nine stems being staged at home, with four of the back row of five stems in place. The ring is slightly smaller than the typical vase, so a strip of paper/card can be used to raise the height of the ring in the vase if required.

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This photo also shows how offcuts of spare flower stem are used to fine-tune the positioning of stems and to lock the stems in place so they don't move when the vase is carried/moved. The effect of the angled holes is also apparent. I was pleasantly surprised at how much fine-tuning this set-up allowed, after a bit of practice.

And so, to Wisley. Despite wind and rain here in Somerset in the run-up to the show, which bent some stems and marked some of the blooms, I was able to cut enough blooms to stage the three vase Class 35 (Evan Hince Cup) in Division V (for those who do not grow more than 120 cordons) See Figure 3. I was very pleased with the second place and Bronze Card I was awarded for my efforts; I didn't think the *Staging Rings* looked at all out of place on the show bench. I left some *Staging Rings* for others to try.

The new venue at Wisley was fabulous, so light and airy and setting off the exhibits perfectly. It had all the facilities we needed close at hand. This venue seemed to generate a lot of footfall – it is rare to have so many people wanting to see a flower show of any kind these days!



Figure 3

With just 50 cordons in 6 cultivars, I don't have enough blooms to demonstrate a vase of 15 using a single cultivar. Figure 4 however, shows that a mixed vase of 15 stems fit in the *Staging Ring*, despite the stems beginning to shorten by the time I staged this vase (which tends to compress the fan) I'm sure those with a good quantity of first-class blooms would have no trouble using it to good effect.

Any staging technique or media has advantages and disadvantages. *Staging Rings* do not allow the infinite flexibility of positioning afforded by traditional plastic-containing foams but they do allow for repositioning of stems if you don't get the hole exactly in the right place the first time around! They also allow for a surprising degree of fine-tuning, when you use offcut flower stems to lock things in place. They generally seem to hold stems more firmly than the new compostable foams.



Figure 4

The cost of me 3D printing a few at home for my own use was trivially small – a few tens of pence each. The *Staging Rings* would cost more if produced/bought commercially and are likely to be costlier than the floral foam needed to fill a single vase. The aim, however, is to reuse them many times.

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They should eventually work out cheaper than buying new floral foam year after year. *Staging Rings* not only pay for themselves financially after a few years, but also reduce the amount of plastic used, compared with continuing to use 'traditional' floral foam containing in particular, micro-plastics. As others have noted, the reduction in plastic waste and cost of buying foam are small in the context of a few sweet pea vases, certainly less than with the large 12" vases used for, say, gladioli or dahlia showing, but, if everyone were to use them, the environmental and cost savings would build. I find them easy to use and less messy than carving up blocks of floral foams!

Next steps? I am continuing to test different types of *Staging Ring* throughout the show season. I am thinking about a significant expansion of my sweet pea growing for 2023, but need to decide what to stop growing to make more space!

*Ed Thank you Neil for not only coming up with a different way to stage 'peas'** post Oasis but also sharing the process and results so far. I am sure that there are many of us exhibitors who would like to purchase some and do our own trials. Probably not enough for a commercial enterprise but something on a small scale perhaps? If you decide to go down either route, then do make sure that an ad is placed in the Spring Bulletin and on the new NSPS website!*

*** I do remember some exhibitors making a similar disc but out of the old 'dry' floral foam, which was placed on top of the wet product in the vase. It did a good job of holding stems in place but the water penetration (especially topping up during a show held for longer than one day) was not very popular.*



A fragrant and colourful welcome for visitors to this garden (article held over to the Spring Bulletin)

Some Comments from the Districts

Roz Warley (District Rep Coordinator)

Well, here we are in September already. Unfortunately, I've been unable to grow sweet peas this year due to a lack of space. Having to move the contents of 2 allotments, 2 tunnels, 3 sheds and a greenhouse into my garage at home and already full garden has resulted in available space amounting to room for 1 one sardine albeit standing!

My family have already moved to Aberdeenshire so I am juggling work, the house sale and lots of other things frantically with the hope (clinging to a rock here) of moving by November. This is my way of saying that as a District Rep I have not got anywhere near as much done as intended, for which I apologise to the membership over here in North Humberside and Lincolnshire. This will be remedied after the move as we can get back to growing our favourite flower.

Enough waffle about my move, being short of interesting information I can offer the following titbits. Earlier this year I mentioned to the members here that I had successfully overwintered (unwittingly) some sweet peas outside on the deck, and obviously interested to find out if they would come back into flower again this year. They received no protection and did indeed flower, although stems were reduced and not great quality blooms in one tub. The cultivar was Sophisticated Lady, however the other tub was Old Fashioned Mixed which flowered much better. Not sure if this is a good thing in terms of climate change facilitating the over-wintering of annuals but an interesting exercise never the less.

Also, this February I sowed some saved mixed species seed which flowered nicely for about 3 - 4 weeks, but regardless of copious watering and a little feeding they really didn't like the heat. The weather this summer has thrown us some real challenges, and I have to say that given the weather it was amazing to see the fantastic blooms on our various NSPS stands; all the gold medals were absolutely well deserved. What a fantastic job carried out by all those who involved.

Another little tip I would like to share is for anyone who like me has to move many plants and cuttings long distances at the wrong times of the year. We put much thought into how we would do this, and genuinely expected losses. Some plants were young cuttings, others more mature and some quite large trees (around 8 feet tall) In fact one was a 30-year-old contorted hazel! All mature plants were dug up and potted except for perennials which were yet to flower, such as Astrantia. Having kept them fed and watered, the potted plants were ok, although several roses had to be quite heavily pruned in order to get them in pots.

The other plants were cut right back and dug up after flowering, including several large clematis. What I mainly wanted to share was how we packed our plants which with hindsight has proved to be most successful, indeed as I write, all plants are now happily planted in Scotland and are growing back nicely with no outward signs of distress. This includes 130 roses which are now coming into bud for their 2nd flush. Roots were tidied up and lightly pruned, tops quite heavily pruned; we then used either wet kitchen towel to wrap the roots or in the case of very large plants, 'Hello Fresh' - as used to wrap chilled products in transit! This material is also great for lining hanging baskets and several other uses around the garden. We then popped the wrapped roots into a sandwich bag, then wrapped over the top with pallet wrap which was only 6 inches wide. Labelled the plant and laid on their sides in either large cardboard boxes or bale trays. Both methods worked perfectly on arrival the cardboard boxes were opened as planting couldn't be carried out for 4 days and the bale trays were left outside.

What was a really daunting, job due to those plants associated with past memories; some belonging to parents no longer with us for example, turned out to be most successful therefore if you need to carry out a similar task, we can highly recommend this method of packing.

Hopefully everyone will by now be planning which sweet pea cultivars to sow for next year. After such a challenging year and now with the loss of our Queen (it was lovely to see the white sweet peas grown at Balmoral in both the wreath atop the coffin and at the side of King Charles III during his broadcast) Personally, I couldn't believe such beautiful blooms could be cut at such short notice in September, an incredible and a beautiful sight. Let's hope 2023 is a more settled year than this one has been. I am really hoping there will be a beautiful new sweet pea coming along soon (possibly in the form of a lovely white) named Queen Elizabeth II.

Good luck to everyone for the next sweet pea season.

West Midlands

Phillippa Cooper

I am pleased to say that there is quite a lot to report for this bulletin. During the Spring, John and I continued to visit a number of local amateur gardening groups (in the West Midlands, Staffordshire and Shropshire areas) to publicise the upcoming Wem Show and to distribute free old-fashioned seed. With the Platinum Jubilee on the horizon, we concentrated on a mixture of Queen Alexandra, Dorothy Eckford and Lord Nelson! (*Ed – if you do not understand why these particular cultivars, then do have a look at your classification list!!*)

Our plants thrived this year despite the unpredictable weather. We put this down to the use of green manure, sown the previous September which we had not used before. In 2021 the Henry Eckford Centenary display did not include any Henry Eckford blooms as I didn't have 12 stems of sufficient quality to use. This year, Henry Eckford excelled himself and in fact I decided to shade the plants to stop the flowers bleaching. The shading was partially successful but the net curtains (fixed to our neighbours 6-foot fence panel) was too close to the plants and also attracted a lot of insects. I will need to rethink for next year.



Jenny Morgan's Best Vase in Show, Wem

I was particularly thrilled that the Wem Show went ahead on the 25th and 26th June, thanks to a wonderful new committee including the Director of the Wem Town Hall and members of the Eckford Sweet Pea Society. I will write a full report on the Show for the 2023 Annual. It is worth mentioning here that the earlier date of the show didn't suit some of our most loyal exhibitors and we did suffer torrential rain and thunderstorms on the Thursday prior to the show which reduced the number of exhibits.

My attempt at increasing the number of novices exhibiting old fashioned varieties wasn't successful. Although there were visitors from the gardening groups coming along to say that they were delighted with the blooms from the free seed they didn't have the confidence to enter the show. That gives me a target for next year!

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It was very pleasing that our local advertising of the show drew in visitors from our home area on the outskirts of Wolverhampton. Immediately after the show we invited them to visit our garden as a thank you for their support. Our very first visitor arrived at precisely 2pm on the Tuesday following the show. We were most surprised when he came along with a variety of secateurs and a bucket to collect some blooms! He was interested in the difference between the bush and cordon grown plants describing my old-fashioned plants as “a rather tangled mess”.

John, who has more patience than me, spent over an hour with him, supplying tea and allowing him to choose his blooms. He had enough for every room in his bungalow plus lots to give to his neighbours. Hopefully he will exhibit next year. Other neighbours and visitors were happy with a much more modest number of blooms!

During July we were lucky to be able to help out at both the Royal Welsh Show at Builth Wells and also at the RHS Show at Tatton. Two amazing displays and also wonderful groups of people to work alongside.



Val Good MBE presenting the awards



Some of ‘Team Wales’ supporting Wem

Looking ahead to 2023, we are holding the Wem Show on 15th and 16th July. This is back to the traditional dates and hopefully we will have more exhibitors. On a personal note, I hope to have more novice entries. We have been back in touch with the local gardening groups that we visited last year, encouraging them to collect their seed. On 8th September we started promoting the 2023 show with a talk at Malpas in South Cheshire. The next date in the diary is a demonstration evening at Wem Town Hall on 11th October with a number of horticultural groups invited.

We hope for a good attendance. Fingers crossed that the number of entries in the old-fashioned classes at Wem increases next year. (*Ed – there will be more reports from activities around the regions, including various shows and displays in both the Spring Bulletin and of course, the 2023 Annual*)

The Platinum Jubilee at The Royal Welsh Show, 2022

Jen & Lewis Morgan

We thought this may be a suitable moment to recall some happier times of the summer just gone when the Country was celebrating Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, little anticipating more poignant events would occur as soon as they have.

With The Royal Welsh Show returning for the first time since 2019, The Welsh Region once again staged an Exhibition Stand within the Horticultural Marquee.

It was decided to mark the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee with an arrangement of the Platinum Jubilee variety Sweet Pea as one of the focal points on the Stand. A bowl of the blooms was staged together with foliage and accompanied with a copy of the well-known drawing by artist Eleanor Tomlinson of Her Majesty with Paddington Bear and one of her Corgis by her side that perfectly summed up the Celebration Day in June.



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On the Tuesday of the Show Princess Anne was a visitor to the Show and made time to visit the Marquee. The Welsh Region were pleased that Her Royal Highness was guided along the Exhibition Benches where she paused to take in the fragrance and discuss the quality of the blooms with Allan Evans.



Princess Anne stopped to admire the Exhibition Stand and was shown the Platinum Jubilee arrangement, commenting to Jenny Morgan that Her Majesty would just adore the Sweet Peas.

In anticipation of a Royal Visit Jenny Morgan made up button holes with the Platinum Jubilee variety which the Welsh Members wore along with the Television Presenters and Crew that were filming the occasion, one of which was offered to Princess Anne who was pleased to receive it and was later observed to be wearing the button hole as she toured other areas of the Show Ground.



It was noted that as Her Majesty left Balmoral Castle for the final time that Sweet Peas were evident in the floral arrangement. Thank You for your service to the Country.

Comment on the National Exhibitions 2023 Schedule

Graeme Hollingdale (editor)

Many comments and suggestions were brought to the sub-committee again this year, with everything openly discussed. Very few changes were made, reflecting the difficult few years we have experienced recently; however, these are the highlights.

We are of the opinion that as these are NATIONALS, both the standard and visual spectacle (and to some extent the challenge of staging at such prestigious exhibitions) mean that we are not in favour of reducing the number of stems per vase any further. A vase with any less than 9 stems does not make such an impact, although the smallest grower divisions are to be maintained at 7 stems. However, we have agreed to trial two NOVICES classes which will be for non-spencers. The only other additional class to what is an already extensive schedule, is a Petite decorative to include Lathyrus species.

In view of how much harder (and costlier) it is now than in the past to select, collect and deliver the special prizes (glassware) the number of these has again been reduced, with substantial cash prizes replacing them. Prize money has as always been looked at and in many cases increased. You are reminded that what may appear to be anomalies are always due to specific sponsorships. If you have been (or still are) a successful exhibitor, then please consider donating back in the form of new sponsorships. These are warmly received by the Society and exhibitors!

You, as members and exhibitors of the NSPS are invited, via the pages of these Bulletins, to make your views known on which you would prefer; glassware, prize money or something else. If we receive enough feedback, a questionnaire (and democratic vote) will be forthcoming next year!

The wording of eligibility for the Unwin class has taken place following discrepancies between a regularly updating website list and a printed catalogue. You must now refer only to the 2023 Classification list for eligible cultivars. The difficulty one judge referred to in counting the number of stems in bowl/basket classes was dismissed as the alternative was unlimited, which would always favour the larger grower and stifle competition. It was noted that judges are reminded that that they MUST put forward “Best” vases/exhibits from the classes that they have judged, even if they think that there may be a better one elsewhere in the show; other judges are appointed by the Show Manager to take on that responsibility.

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The two Modern Grandiflora bowls (old class numbers 54, 55) will now allow up to 24 stems. Accessories will be only allowed in the Sydenham class; however, bases may be used where appropriate in decorative classes. It is worth remembering we are not a floral art society. Also, a slight revision of award card grades was confirmed.

As the Late show is being held on RHS premises, Oasis is of course forbidden to be used; however, and following many hours of debate and head scratching, because the Early is being held on independently owned premises and the owner (Colin Squires) has no strong views either way, we are allowing Oasis to be used, probably for the last time at any NSPS show; however you are strongly encouraged to use alternatives.

For both shows but in particular the Early, more help during and after is sought from members and their families, to spread the load more fairly. To highlight this, an adjustment to wording on the Entry Form will be made; “I am willing to help with stewarding, judging, the Society stand or bureau.....(Please tick & indicate which)”



Matthewman's Sweet Peas



Summer's Day

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This was the display at Windsor which was created largely without any staging materials at all, using narrow vases and foliage or Sweet Pea stems to hold the Peas in the desired place. This method is simple, very quick to stage and the effect pleasing.

Sweetest Pea

Clare Newton

Oh, how I long for summer's scented days,
When sweet buds uncoil their ringlet fingers
Climbing along their unchartered ways
All laced white with folded petticoats
And wrapped before the warmest rays
Their windy dance as Angels sing
A celebration of flowery blaze
Spilling all sweetness into the air
The Sweet Pea rises above all cabarets.

NATIONAL (& Regional) SHOW AUDITS 2022**Early 29th & 30th July RHS Gardens Wisley**

Roger Parsons

No	Cultivar Name	1st	2nd	3rd	unplaced	Total	Colour	Class
	SPENCERS							
1	Gwendoline	5	3	1		9	Pale magenta	4a
	Sir Jimmy Shand	5	3	1		9	Striped	16
3	Mrs B R Jones	4	1	1		6	Rose pink W G	10b
4	Mary Priestley	4	1			5	White	1
5	Queen Of Hearts	3		1		4	Striped	16
	Anniversary	2	1	1		4	Picotee W G	15
	Eclipse	2	1	1		4	Mauve	7
	Just Julia	2		2		4	Mid blue	16
	Karen Louise	2		2		4	Lavender	8
	Windsor	1	3			4	Maroon	7
11	Honeymoon	2	1			3	Lavender (flush)	8a
	Jilly	2	1			3	Cream	2
	White Frills	2	1			3	White	1
	Valerie Harrod	1	1		1	3	Orange pink	13
15	Dalesman	1	1			2	Mid blue	9a
	Naomi Nazareth	1		1		2	Pale blue	9b
	Somerset Lady	1		1		2	Magenta	4
	Judith Wilkinson		2			2	Magenta	4
	Mumsie		2			2	Crimson	3a
	Daily Mail		1	1		2	Cerise pink	10c
	Esme Rowena		1	1		2	Lavender (flush)	8a
	Millennium		1	1		2	Crimson	3a
	Princess Elizabeth		1	1		2	Salmon pink C G	11a

24	Bridget McAleer	1			1	Mauve	7
	Grandma Butt	1			1	Magenta	4
	Josie	1			1	Magenta	4
	Lady Nicholson	1			1	Striped	16
	Syd Dunscombe	1			1	Orange red	14
	The Princess Royal *	1			1	White	1
	Gilly Norah		1		1	Salmon pink C G	11a
	Ballerina Blue		1		1	Mid blue	9a
	Harrogate Gem		1		1	Scarlet	3a
	Joejess		1		1	Orange	12
	Laila K		1		1	Cerise pink	10c
	Memorial Flight		1		1	White	1
	Olivia Grace		1		1	Dark blue	9
	Pink Ripple		1		1	Striped	16
	Solitude		1		1	Lavender	8
	Southbourne		1		1	Pale pink W G	10
	Clotted Cream		1	1	1	Cream	2
	White Supreme			1	1	White	1
	Linda C				1	Mid blue	9a
	Seedlings	1	1	1	3		
	Total Spencers	47	37	19	2	105	
	* The Princess Royal was exhibited under a trade name as Gardener's Jubilee						

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	NON-SPENCERS						
1	Henry Eckford	2	1			3	Orange scarlet OF
2	Scarlett	2				2	Red MG
	Black Knight	1	1			2	Dark maroon OF
	King Edward VII	1	1			2	Red OF
5	Almost Black	1				1	Dark navy blue MG
	Cupani	1				1	Maroon/violet OF
	Janet Scott	1				1	Pale pink W G OF
	Little Red Riding Hood	1				1	Red/white MG
	Lord Nelson	1				1	Navy blue OF
	Matucana	1				1	Maroon/violet MG
	Prince Edward of York	1				1	Red/pink OF
	Purple Prince	1				1	Maroon/violet OF
	Unique	1				1	Blue flake W G OF
	America		1			1	Red flake OF
	Chrissie		1			1	Marbled lavender MG
	Flora Norton		1			1	Pale blue OF
	Mrs Collier		1			1	Cream OF
	Total Non-Spencers	15	7	0	0	22	
	Mixed vases	6	5	4	6	21	
	Total vases	68	49	23	8	148	
	Decoratives inc Bowls	15	15	5	2	35	
	Total	83	62	28	10	183	

Late 9th & 10th July, RHS Harlow Carr, Harrogate

Carole Tate

No	Name of Cultivar	1st	2nd	3rd	unplaced	Total	Colour	Class
	SPENCERS							
1	Gwendoline	5	1			6	Pale magenta	4a
2	Mary Priestley	5				5	White	1
3	Grandma Butt	4	1			5	Magenta	4
4	Just Julia	3	1			4	Blue	9a
5	Kippen Cream	3				3	Cream	2
6	Karen Louise	2	1			3	Lavender	8
	Route 66	2	1			3	Fancy	16a
8	White Frills	1	2			3	White	1
9	Anniversary	2				2	Picotee	15
	Eclipse	2				2	Mauve	7
	Naomi Nazareth	2				2	Pale blue	9b
	Nora Holman	2				2	Salmon pink	10a
	Pink Pearl	2				2	Pale pink	10
14	Wild Swan	1	1			2	White	1
15	Sir Jimmy Shand	1		1		2	Fancy	16
16	Alec Cave	1				1	White	1
	Alice Hardwicke	1				1	Orange red	14
	Dalesman	1				1	Dark blue	9
	Jilly	1				1	Cream	2
	John William	1				1	Rose Pink W G	10b
	Just Jenny	1				1	Blue	9
	Marjorie Carrier	1				1	Orange pink	13
	Mrs B R Jones	1				1	Rose pink W G	10b
	Parsifal	1				1	Lavender	8
	Ruby Anniversary	1				1	Red (Crimson)	3b
26	Betty Maiden		1			1	Fancy	16
	Len Harrod		1			1	Orange pink	13
	Patricia Marilyn		1			1	Pale pink (white)	10
	Seedlings	3				3		
	Total Spencers	50	11	1		62		

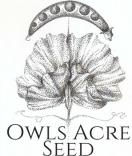
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	NON-SPENCERS						
	Black Knight	2	1			3	Dark maroon
	Cupani	2		1		3	Maroon/violet
	High Scent		1	1		2	Cream, lilac edge
	America	1				1	Red flake
	Flora Norton	1				1	Pale blue
	Henry Eckford	1				1	Orange scarlet
	Lord Nelson	1				1	Navy blue
	Prima Donna	1				1	Light pink
	Romeo	1				1	White, blue picotee edge
	Wretham Pink (syn Janet Scott)	1				1	Pale pink W G
	Total Non-Spencers	11	2	2		15	
	Mixed vases	4	2	1		7	
	Total vases	65	15	4		84	
	Decoratives inc bowls	12	8	4	2	26	
	Total	77	23	8	2	110	

North West Region Show, 29th, 30th, 31st July Chorley
 Carole Tate

No	Name of Cultivar	1st	2nd	3rd	unplaced	Total	Colour	Class
1	White Supreme	3	1			4	White	1
2	Wiltshire Ripple	3				3	Fancy	16
3	Route 66	1	2			3	Fancy	16a
	Elizabeth Shorthouse	2				2	Rose Pink	11b
	Gwendoline	2				2	Pale magenta	4a
	Jilly	2				2	Cream	2
	Promise	2				2	Fancy	16a
	Just Julia	1	1			2	Mid blue	9a
9	Anniversary	1				1	Picotee	15
	Ella Marie	1				1	Fancy	15
	Karen Louise	1				1	Lavender	8
	Mary Priestly	1				1	White	1
	Mumsie	1				1	Red	3b
	Pips Maroon	1				1	Maroon	5
	Sir Jimmy Shand	1				1	Fancy	16
	Total	23	4			27		
	Mixed Vases	5	3	3	2	13		
	Total Vases	28	7	3	2	40		
	Bowls and pots	5	4			9		
	Decorative classes	7	6	6	14	33		
	Total	40	17	8	6	81		

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The NSPS North West Region display