



NATIONAL
Sweet Pea Society

SPRING
BULLETIN



— 2024 —

Registered Charity No: 226802



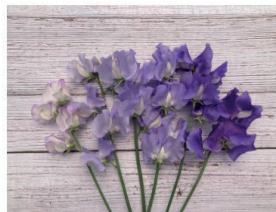
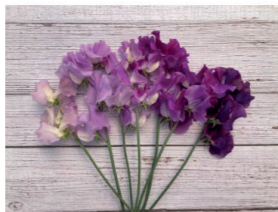
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NATIONAL SWEET PEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity No: 226802

SPRING BULLETIN 2024

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The opinions expressed by contributors are their own and may not
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Dates for your Diary

[correct at the time of editing]

Thursday 15 February	Committee meeting via Zoom	Committee members
Saturday 2 March	NSPS AGM & Spring Social Via Zoom	All paid up members
Wednesday 24 April	NSPS Committee meeting Face to face meeting, venue tbc	Committee members
Sunday 23 June	Chiltern Sweet Pea Society Show Lacey Green Bucks	Members' Competition
Weds 26 – Thurs 27 June	Early National Exhibition RHS Hilltop, Wisley	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Sat 13 – Sun 14 July	Late National Exhibition RHS Bridgewater Gardens Worsley	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Weds 19 – Sun 23 July	RHS Tatton Park	Display & Bureau
Fri 26 – Sun 28 July	North West Regional Show At Chorley Flower Show	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Thurs 15 – Sun 18 Aug	Southport Show	Display & Bureau
Wednesday 11 September	Committee meeting via Zoom	Committee members
Wednesday 13 November	Committee meeting via Zoom	Committee members

Introduction/Editorial

Once again, thank you very much to everyone who has contributed to this edition; be it with fully illustrated articles, scraps of information, questions, comments, photos, proof reading or indeed the collation, distribution and postage.

2024/25 Deadline dates for copy:

Autumn Bulletin	by 8 September 2024 please.
Spring Bulletin	by 31 December please.
ANNUAL	by 30 January 2025 to <u>Caroline</u> please.

Errata in the 2023 Autumn Bulletin

First of all, apologies to all (but especially Roger Parsons Sweet Peas) that due to a technical reason beyond my control, some of the embedded text in the advertisement on page 2 was corrupted. This was particularly annoying to me as not only did it not show up on my screen (nor that of my proof-readers) but also a similar issue had occurred a few years ago. The technical explanation (for those who understand) is that the font used had a TrueType source problem when used in conjunction with RIP software; apparently Adobe are closing down on all TrueType fonts to OpenType for this exact problem.

If you go to the resources page in the members' area of the website, you will find the digital PDF version of the Autumn Bulletin, where the text is correct and exactly as it appears on my desktop because it hasn't gone through the printing system.

The second collection of typos appeared within the Audit section, which are all down to me. I was unable to directly copy and paste the excel file to fit the page sizes of the Bulletin, so I retyped, which is where the errors crept in. The Audits were of course for 2023 (not 2022) and the location of the Early was Squires and not Wisley. The actual list was accurate except that the top 9 cultivars should not be showing any 3rd place awards. The amounts in the total column, then makes sense.

The purpose of including the Audits in the Autumn edition is simply to help potential exhibitors to choose possible cultivars to order seed for the coming season, having seen how they performed the previous season. The corrected Audits will appear in the Annual as usual. You will also find that Julia's phone number on page 3 has now been corrected!

Erratum in the 2024 NW Regional Show Schedule

Carole Tate

Class 32 should read:

One vase, any one cultivar from any classification.

Exhibitors may make more than one entry (of a different cultivar)

There are stickers being used to cover the original, which refers in error to a bowl, however just in case there are any misunderstandings, the above is the correct wording.

Congratulations to the 2023 AGM Award winners
from the RHS Wisley Trials

Lathyrus odoratus	‘Alisa’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Cedric Morris’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Chrissie’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Fire and Ice’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Lady Grisell Hamilton’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Marseilles’ (Riviera Series)	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Miss Willmott’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Mrs Collier’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Prima Donna’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus × hammettii	‘Primrose’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Queen Alexandra’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Sweet Caroline’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus × hammettii	‘Three Times As Sweet’	AGM (H3) 2023
Lathyrus odoratus	‘Valentine’	AGM (H3) 2023



Sweet Peas including ‘Chrissie’, ‘Sweet Caroline’, ‘Painted Lady’, ‘America’, Cupani

Annual General Meeting 2024

Notice is hereby given that the ONE HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Members of the National Sweet Pea Society which will be held on Saturday 2nd March 2024, **online, starting at 10.30am** for the purpose of receiving Reports and the Balance Sheet as of 31st October 2023.

Mrs Carole Tate
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AGENDA

1. Chairman's welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of meeting held on Saturday 4th March 2023
4. Matters arising
5. Committee Reports (the Chairman's and Secretary's Reports are printed in the Spring 2024 Bulletin) and Trials Reports
6. Election of Office Bearers and Members of the Committee
7. Election of Independent Examiner
8. Any Other Business (that has been sent, in advance, to the Chairman and Secretary)

Janet Bulstrode has resigned from the committee. It is to be noted that all remaining office holders are willing to continue in office for another twelve months. In the event that one or more of the officer positions are contested, the Committee will conduct an election.

The following Members of the General Committee retire under the three-year rule and are eligible for re-election:

Phil Johnson, Darren Everest and Nicky Edwards

There is currently one vacancy on the General Committee and nominations please must reach the General Secretary by Saturday 24th February 2024.

The Society's accounts will be published on the website by 24th February and any questions or representation on them must be received by the General Secretary by 5pm on Thursday 29th February 2024.

Annual presentation of the Jack Davis Award (and any other relevant awards) which normally occur at the AGM will be postponed until a suitable occasion when members have the opportunity to assemble. It is hoped that this can be done (as in 2023) at the 2024 National Exhibitions.

PROGRAMME

- 10.15. Registration
- 10.30. AGM
- 11.30. Questions (submitted in advance)

To join the meeting, fully paid-up members only must email the General Secretary on caroletate10@gmail.com well in advance of 2nd March, and the Zoom registration details will be sent to you. (It is important to keep this email to hand) You need to already have the Zoom software (application) downloaded and installed on your internet enabled device.

All attendees will remain muted unless invited to speak by the Chair or Secretary.

If you wish to speak, please raise your hand, either physically or by using the Zoom icon.

All questions to be sent in advance to the General Secretary by 24th February 2024.

NSPS Chairman's report 2023-24

Alison Shreeve

2023 was another challenging year weatherwise with a long hot dry spell which almost brought my plants to an end, until the weather broke and heavy downpours stimulated a whole new growth spurt! This fortunately provided blooms for a couple of talks which Graeme Hollingdale and I did for local horticultural societies. I hope that the interest shown by their members results in a few more people growing for shows as we certainly need to gain more participants as experienced growers are retiring from the show bench.

Having said all of that, there was good representation at the Early National at Squires Garden Centre despite the really challenging growing conditions that many of us faced. We had an excellent team in new managers Laurie Burrell and Roger Dix who managed the show plus Roger Dix's team of helpers, essential to any well organised show! Similarly, the Late National managed by Carole Tate also had a fantastic group of supporters, setting up, breaking down and selling flowers. Thank you to everyone who made these shows a success behind the scenes and of course to all those who showed and made a great display for the general public.

It cannot be stressed firmly enough that the Society needs good networks of people willing to give their time and expertise to promote Sweet Peas and how to grow them. It is so much easier to put on a public face when you have a couple of friends to help and to provide the blooms for displays. You don't even need to be an expert; bodies are needed for all kinds of little jobs like manning the stands, selling seeds and blooms or just fetching the tea! Thank you again to those new and old hands who have helped with the flower shows where we make a big presence each year with the display and bureau.

It was also comforting to know that there are willing helpers out there who do read the Bulletins! Following the plea in the Autumn Bulletin for someone to run a YouTube channel to support the website I am delighted to say that Stephen Marsland has come forward and we have put up a few video links in the members resources area. These will be added to over the years, as we get talks videoed. If you have anything which you think would be of interest to our members, please do get in touch. Also, please spend a little time looking at the website now and then as we do put up news items and will add to the resources. Thank you, Stephen, we are very grateful.

If you have any ideas about what you would like to see in the resources section please do get in touch, either directly with one of the committee or through your District Representative. Don't be shy; do think about getting practically involved with the Society, it's a lot of fun and you meet some very interesting people whilst learning along the way!

Sadly, the Society has lost some very experienced and well-known enthusiasts this year. Our condolences go out to all who have lost loved ones and thank you to those who remembered the society in the midst of their loss.

However, as always, we look forward to the New Year with hope and sowing reminds us that there is another year of challenges to look forward to with our blooms.

As I write my seedlings are already looking too leggy, though only recently sown and put straight into a cold greenhouse on germinating. I put it down to my location, the greenhouse is on a west-facing slope with some trees nearby and to the dreadful weather we have been experiencing – very dark and rainy days when we have to have the lights on in the house. Perhaps I will have to resort to a lighting system for the greenhouse! I sincerely hope not. I might try sowing again as it's not too late here in the Chilterns.

I wish everyone a very enjoyable and successful growing season and for those willing to have a go, a great year exhibiting too.

General Secretary's Report AGM 2024

Carole Tate

2023 has again been a challenging year, with hot sunshine in May and June then rain July and August. The peas were as confused as I was and flowered their socks off at least 4 weeks earlier than normal, then they curled up their toes and gave up! However, not to be beaten, the spare Old Fashioned seedlings which I planted on the north side of the garden came into their own, giving me the opportunity to enter some of the decorative and non-Spencer classes at various shows.

I am sure you all have similar tales to tell, and for whatever reason, the weather does throw out challenges to us all. As I sit writing this, the sky is grey, the ground wet and straggly remnants of flowers are looking at me balefully. No way am I going out in that! The garden can wait 'till another day. It does, however, give me time to reflect on the season and to plan for next year.

2024 will see me eagerly digging over my beds, sorting out the pots and setting up my watering system. Seed varieties have been already chosen, using recommendations from friends and my old, tested favourites. Gwendoline is always a good exhibition plant, and Sir Jimmy Shand did well for me last season. Cupani is always a strong Old Fashioned, I also like Black Knight and Flora Norton. Throw in a pink, white and a few mixed and I will have enough to make a vase and bowl at the National. I am also going to try some of the dwarf varieties in pots, then I can move them about the garden to take advantage of the weather.

I grow species in large pots and will be planting enough cultivars to give me a succession of colours and choice throughout the season. These gorgeous, delicate, thumb nail sized plants are so pretty. I love them and they look great in vases around the house. Please have a look back at the Autumn Bulletin to see hints and tips on growing in pots.

It's not just the physical exercise I enjoy, but the mental health benefits of preparing and nurturing the seedlings and carefree pottering about the garden. The joy of smelling the fragrance of the first flowering sweet pea is hard to beat. Let's hope the weather is kind to us and the pests are kept at bay.

If you would like more information on how to grow and the activities for 2024, please go to our website www.sweetpeas.org or join our Facebook page "For the Love of Sweet Peas". You can also contact your local District Representative (details in the Annual or on the website)

This year's AGM will again be held via Zoom, which will eliminate geographical constraints, so please feel free to join us. Details of how are in the AGM Notice in this Bulletin or on the website.

I hope you all have a successful and enjoyable flowering season.

Fragrant Bricks

Roger Parsons

Our publications are wonderful, and I hope people won't be offended by my remarks but there is one aspect which I have always found very irritating so have decided to get it off my chest.

What concerns me is the occasional reference in our publications to bricks, in particular fragrant bricks. If I write the word "bath" a reader will understand that I am referring to a container for immersing in a liquid, usually water. If I write the word "Bath", it will be understood that I am referring to a city in Somerset. So it is with the Sweet Pea. If I write the word "lathyrus", I am using the Latin word for a brick. If I write the word "Lathyrus", I am referring to a genus of plants which includes the Sweet Pea. A translation of *lathyrus odoratus* is fragrant brick. A translation of *Lathyrus odoratus* is the Sweet Pea.

So, my plea to all authors, editors and proof-readers is that *Lathyrus* used as a botanical name ALWAYS begins with a capital L. There was a time when all serious gardeners took for granted that a genus name began with a capital letter and a species name with a small letter (it is never *Odoratus*). Those days appear to have gone but to many people in the world of horticulture a reference to *lathyrus odoratus* simply detracts from the professionalism of our publications.

Another aspect is that botanical names should always be written in italics but that might be too much to hope for.

There, I feel better now.

Ed. Thank you very much for this Roger; as someone who has not studied Latin or botany, the correct use of capitals has always been a mystery and I am certain that I have been getting many uses incorrect over the years. I will try harder now that I have a [simple] to remember system.

I suppose in many ways, different things annoy different people, depending on their specialisms/knowledge. For me, as a musician, I cringe every time the word crescendo is used by those who have no idea as to what it actually means. Most use it in sentences like "it reached a crescendo", meaning that whatever the subject matter, it has reached it's maximum (highest/loudest). Just so as you all now know, the term crescendo is the actual act of enlarging. For example, travelling from soft to loud, small to large. The opposite is de-crescendo or diminuendo!

I look forward to editing more of these in the future – every day is a learning day after all!



Nicely layered Spencers just coming back into full bloom

RHS Chelsea Flower Show

Darren Everest

We have been doing Sweet Pea displays for a number of years now. Starting at the Kent County Show in 2014 to 2019 until Covid came along. With the Kent show scrapping its floral marquee it allowed me to explore the possibility of exhibiting elsewhere. Hampton Court Flower Festival was a distinct possibility.

Having moved to the Isle of Wight in 2019 it opened up some new options. With more polytunnel space available I could grow some more plants undercover and extend my flowering season. However, Hampton Court is the first week of July, and over the last few years I have struggled to keep my plants going long enough due to some extremely hot weeks. We had been to the show in 2018 and 2019 and seen for ourselves how the peas in other displays had suffered after just two or three days. I therefore decided to put my efforts into another show. But not any old show, just probably the most prestigious show in the world! The Chelsea Flower Show, the flagship event by the Royal Horticultural Society.

Now this show is the last week of May, just a month before we would expect our outdoor plants to begin flowering. You would think that by growing them undercover, to get them out just four weeks earlier would be simple. Unfortunately, it isn't that straight forward. First of all, you need to be able to work the ground in the depths of winter. My ground is very heavy and has a tendency to flood during heavy or extended periods of rain; something that is becoming more prevalent, this winter being no exception. Secondly, bud drop. As we all know, low night time and extreme fluctuating temperatures result in the buds falling off. This often happens in early May. It's often the case that we still see a few light frosts at this time of the year which is why we never plant out anything tender until the end of May.

Growing in the relative safety of the polytunnel does offer protection from a light frost but it will still get cold at night and anything below eight degrees Celsius would have me very concerned. Trying to heat a large polytunnel to above eight degrees is hard on the bank balance!

I started experimenting back in 2020, growing two or three rows in the tunnel just in the open ground. I planted out in mid-February and on the Monday of what would have been Chelsea week, had it not been for Covid, I was able to pick a small bunch. As the days passed, I was able to pick some lovely blooms and it got me thinking, maybe I could grow enough to do a display, albeit a small one.

The following year I extended the amount I grew to five rows, however, much of the ground was still saturated at planting time, not ideal for the plants. I couldn't plant out early enough so I knew that I would have to install some raised beds. In 2022 I entered the National Garden Show at Hylands House in Essex. This was the weekend just prior to Chelsea week. I thought this would give me some idea as to whether my plan would work. I planted out in the new raised beds at the beginning of February.

I had hardly a bloom leading up to the show but by some stroke of luck I was able to pick just about enough on the day. My display was okay for a first attempt and I received a Silver Gilt certificate. What I needed were more blooms.

I did exhibit at Hampton Court but with my other flower, the Dahlia. I thought that they might cope with the hot weather better. Alas, I was wrong and we had to refresh them twice during the week. However, the show manager was impressed enough by what I had done there, and what they had seen from Hylands, that they asked me to apply to do Chelsea.



The pressure was now on. I knew I could grow the plants. I had plenty of seeds, but would they bloom in time. I made sure that I had enough plants, the beds were prepared, and I planted out at the end of January. I thought if I could just give them an extra week then that should give them a better chance of making it on time. What I hadn't anticipated was being visited by mice. They managed to nibble away at several plants and it took a while to eliminate the problem. Fortunately, most plants were left untouched but it did leave me a little short on a few cultivars.

We had a very cold spring but the plants still got away ok, in fact almost too well. By the time Chelsea arrived the plants were some six feet tall. I only bush grow them indoors up pea and bean netting, as they are only grown for the one show.

The logistics involved with exhibiting at Chelsea are immense. I won't bore you with the whole saga, but needless to say that by the end of the Monday, which was the media, invited guests and royal visit day, we could have quite easily driven home. Up until this point it is fair to say that we had enjoyed very little of it. There were just two highlights from Monday; first we were awarded a Silver Gilt medal (we both knew our display wasn't as good as it could be). Not being able to use floral foam was a contributing factor and something I've got to learn from, and quickly. So, we were both thrilled with the result. The other highlight was showcasing two new varieties, Lizanne Davies and Dawn Everest. It was this one, Dawn Everest, raised by the late Frank Verge, that I had also entered into the plant of the year competition. It had been shortlisted into the top ten and so I had to go and give a presentation in the afternoon to a large audience comprising of judges, media and other entrants. Dawn may not have got in the top three but my presentation did achieve the biggest round of applause. Job done!



However, after a good night's sleep we returned on the Tuesday, and what a day it was. It was amazing, the reaction from the visitors was incredible. It was like they hadn't seen Sweet Peas before. I know there hadn't been a Sweet Pea display for a few years at Chelsea so they were thrilled to see them back again. It's a long day, you have to be on your stand from 8am until 8pm every day. From 9am until 7pm we were inundated with visitors and purchasers, even if we wanted a break, opportunities were hard to come by. Any brief lull offered a rare chance to nip off to spend a penny or grab a bite of a sandwich.

There were some amazing moments such as having the BBC film crew descend upon us to film a short piece for the television coverage. Being interviewed by Frances Tophill, who I had met several years ago, so that was nice to chat with her again. Then there was a surprise visit from the family of the late Lizanne Davies. This variety, another from Frank Verge, was named after one of my Dad's customers who had sadly died young from cancer about twenty years ago. We have been growing it ever since but this was the first time that it had been made available to purchase along with Dawn Everest.



I was having a short break when Dawn (the lady not the ‘pea) came rushing around to the back of the stand where I was scoffing a quick sandwich to tell me I had an important visitor that wanted to see me. I swallowed my mouthful down and headed around to the stand. The gentleman introduced himself as Tom Davies. It took me moment to realise who it was, it was Lizanne’s son. I was bowled over. I had no idea that he would be there. He was so thrilled to see, not only his mum’s flower but also her name up on the display.

As if that wasn’t enough, the next day, having heard about it from her brother, Lizanne’s daughter came along too. She was just as thrilled and we had multiple photos taken. I don’t mind admitting that my emotions got the better of me that day. It was such joy to be able to honour their mother’s memory in this way.

The rest of the week was just as busy and by the last day we had all but sold out of packets of seeds. The big question was, do we apply again? Despite all the initial headache of the logistics, now that we know what to expect and what we need to do to make things better, of course we applied again!

So, roll-on 2024 and hopefully we’ll see one or two of you there.

NSPS Late Show **RHS Bridgewater 13 & 14 July 2024**

Carole Tate Show Manager

I am very honoured to have again been asked to manage the 2024 late show at RHS Bridgewater Gardens, Worsley. We will be holding this event in the Show Marquee, as we did in 2023, which has a large display area and plenty of room for the public.

To gain access to the Marquee for staging, on arrival at Bridgewater, pass through the green gate and take the first left. You will come to a coded gate (code will be provided with confirmation of entry)

Follow the road down and to the left, parking next to the Volunteers' facilities. There is a gate out of the car park to the marquee; help will be provided to carry exhibits the short distance if required. Access for direct unloading in front of the marquee will only be available before 10am and after 6pm.

I would appreciate if entries could be sent, as early as possible, by email to caroletate10@gmail.com and I will then confirm receipt of your entry. If you send your entry by post, I will ring or email to confirm receipt. If you are late entering, please do not post your entries; email them if at all if possible, phoning as a last resort only.

Bridgewater, along with other RHS venues, do have the "no Oasis" policy in place. Please respect this, which is out of our hands. I plan on having a supply of Rushes available, locally sourced, for use in our NSPS vases. If a suitable Oasis alternative (other than those previously discussed in our publications) can be sourced, we will offer it for sale on the day.

If you have any suggestions to make our show better for 2024 or you want further details, please don't hesitate to contact me. I am looking forward to lots of entries, which I know are always weather dependant but if you can't manage to enter Class 1, don't worry, just bring what you've got. One vase is better than nothing. Don't forget staging this year is up to 9.15am on Saturday 13th July, this gives members with fewer entries, the time to stage on Saturday morning. We will be presenting the awards at 1pm on Saturday.

As always, we need volunteer helpers to ensure a well organised show. Please consider offering yourselves to be either a Judge or Steward and let me know if you can assist in other ways on the day.

We plan on holding a Members' Stand and Information Bureau for visitors where we can exchange hints and tips on growing sweet peas and lathyrus species. We are also looking to add a "Planting for Children" feature and a "How to arrange a Buttonhole" demonstration. The small Lecture Theatre at the rear of the Marquee will host a series of talks and slide shows throughout.

This is an excellent venue for our Exhibition and I am sure it will be a sight not to be missed. We have good lighting and tables for staging, catering in the marquee and use of the volunteers' facilities. All members can access the gardens during the weekend on production of your pink membership card at the entrance.

Good luck growing your sweet peas this season. I look forward to seeing you in July 2024 if not as a competitor, then as a visitor.



Henry Eckford Bowl (class 50 in your 2024 schedule)

NSPS Early Show **RHS Wisley Gardens 26 & 27 June 2024**

Roger Parsons, joint Show Manager

Following the very successful show held in 2002, the Early Show returns to Wisley Gardens in 2024. Phil Johnson and I return as joint show managers and we look forward to welcoming members to the show.

Access to the gardens for exhibitors will be via the blue gate, as it was in 2022. The main gate into Wisley will be closed overnight so I will send a map of the access route to exhibitors nearer the time.

Please note that staging does not begin until 6.30pm on the Tuesday evening. The major road works at the junction of the M25 and A3 delays traffic leaving Wisley at the end of the afternoon so the later start should help exhibitors avoid long delays.

The 2022 was enormously successful for the quality of the venue, its excellent facilities and the number of visitors the show attracted. The one problem Phil and I had as show managers was insufficient helpers at the build-up and breakdown of the show. If anyone is able to help with the build-up on the Tuesday afternoon, it would be very much appreciated, similarly with the breakdown on the Thursday afternoon. Helping with the build-up gives you free access to the gardens on the Tuesday and early access for staging.

As an RHS venue, many of the comments Carole has written about the Late Show also apply to this show so I won't repeat her comments. Please note however that use of Oasis is not permitted and that we will not be able to provide Rushes at this show (unless someone arrives from Lancashire with a bundle).

District Reps Update - including information about **the new private, members only Facebook group**

Roz Warley

Did you know that the NSPS has a growing network of great District Representatives?

A significant part of my role as DR Co-ordinator, is to ensure that information from the society gets to the reps and in turn out to their local membership. Just as importantly, information and feedback from our members needs to have a route back to the society, in order for it to be able to move forward with events, changes, decisions, all influenced by the people at its heart - you the membership.

It was decided a year or so ago that in order to keep pace with other societies and in order to turn around the steady decline in membership renewals, we needed amongst other things, to embrace technology and get the NSPS 'out there', by adding the use of social media to expand our network. Not least of all to connect with younger generations, our successors, who will hopefully continue the great work already being done by many within the society.

Currently work is going on behind the scenes on the website, there are still a few issues, particularly within the members and membership sections which hopefully will be resolved very soon (The automatic renewal system for 2024 memberships, now seems to be working well) If you have any questions about the website, then please initially ask your DR, who, if they cannot answer your question, will submit to those you hopefully can!

In addition to the popular, but public (which by its very nature, is all encompassing and has had issues with spam) Facebook group, "For the love of sweet peas INC The National Sweet Pea Society", we now have a totally separate new private group page. This is called the "National Sweet Peas Society Members Only Chat Room".

Within this group, which is **strictly members only** (all requests to join and post articles have to be approved by one of the admins, which should alleviate any fears you have about privacy and spam) you will find resident experts to answer all of your sweet pea related questions. District Reps are very much at the forefront of this group, who will via this very easy to use method of communication, be able to keep you informed of events, talks, members' open gardens and shows in your area, plus be your direct contact for any questions or suggestions you may wish to put to the committee. Lots (and numbers are growing) of members from all areas are already there and chatting. With the sweet pea nearly always coming out on top in the UKs favourite flower vote most people who enjoy gardening love the sweet pea, but aren't all aware of the NSPS, our job is to change this and through the network of DRs is just one way that we are going about it.

If you would like to join, then once you have located the group via your Facebook account, you will be asked to respond to a couple of simple questions, with your membership status (ie active or lapsed) being checked against the list held by the NSPS and only then will you be allowed to join. This system works very well, with some of us having experience with other private groups and also the responsibility of being admins.

We love to hear feedback from our membership, for example, how you are getting on with your sweet peas, any tips you would like to share. We also thoroughly enjoy your photos that you post, which incidentally, so do the wider readership of our Bulletins and the Annuals. The editors are always pleased to receive more for consideration to be transferred into print.



Chrissie – Modern Semi-grandiflora

Although we are making what we consider to be the best use of Social Media for our purpose (we are also still visible on X [formerly Twitter] and Instagram) however we are also mindful that not all of our members either have access to the Internet (or indeed, wish to have). This is why your District Rep's details are published in the Annual, should you prefer a telephone chat, and maybe even a garden visit. Your DR is still available to contact using the more traditional routes, so nobody should feel left out or isolated. In season, they or indeed you, may be willing to open their/your garden for other members to enjoy!

We think there is already a lot of information and events available to our members for a reasonable yearly subscription, however if you feel there is something lacking, then please do direct that question to the committee through your DR or, perhaps discuss it further with other members in our private Facebook group. We are always striving to improve the network across the UK (and beyond) for members to access information, but we also need your help and input to make it really successful!

As Graeme mentions, every year the Bulletins and Annual need your articles and feedback; all publications are welcomed with relish at the times of the year they are published (ie out of flowering season) please send him every piece of news you have from your area or use your DR to help facilitate this for you.

Through sadly losing some District Reps this last year we are aware of several areas require a new rep to take over. Until a replacement is found, often a caretaker will look after those areas, possibly from an adjoining county. In fact, some areas are larger than others, often encompassing several counties.

If you don't know who your rep is, please contact me on rwarley5@gmail.com or 07307 867512. Equally if you would like to put your name forward for a role in your area please let me know. It is what you make of it, and very enjoyable, so please consider giving the role of District Rep for your area, or if presently filled, a neighbouring vacant one.

Wishing everyone a great growing season for 2024, but most of all simply enjoy your sweet peas!

Ed. Don't forget that if the District Rep role isn't for you, then other very important and valuable volunteering spaces always need filling. For instance, when displays and other events are organised, people are required to help set up, take down and run the stands. Once again, contact your local rep or Roz for more information.

2024 Trials

The National Sweet Pea Society has held annual trials of new Sweet Peas for about 120 years. The 2024 Trials will be held at Askham Bryan College, York, and West Dean Gardens, Chichester. These trials are currently restricted to new cultivars, mostly un-named, which have not yet been sold commercially. Entries are judged on their performance and awards are given for garden decoration, exhibition and floristry qualities. A report of the annual trials is published for members each year in the Sweet Pea Annual.

Entries for the 2024 trials are now closed but anyone wishing to submit a cultivar for future trials should contact the Trials Co-ordinator, Roger Parsons, at: roger@rpsweetpeas.com. Entries are normally invited in August each year and the seeds must be submitted by the end of September.

From 1930 to 2015, the Society held trials jointly with the Royal Horticultural Society, which still holds occasional trials at RHS garden Wisley. A trial of modern grandiflora cultivars in commerce took place at Wisley in 2022 and 2023 and a report of this should be published on the RHS website soon.



The 2022 trials at RHS Wisley gardens

A New Plot in Scotland

Roz Warley

Well, 2023 has been a very interesting season for me.

It all started back in December when I asked Roger Parsons what date he thought I should sow my sweet peas being this far North (NE Aberdeenshire) because I hadn't a clue! Thankfully Roger duly advised me that Valentine's Day would be a good place to start. Having also purchased my seed from Roger, February 14th it was, sowing 10 seeds of 10 cultivars in trays.

My next conundrum was somewhere to keep them sheltered in an Aberdonian winter (we were snowed in twice after sowing) this was a little tricky!

Fortunately, we had a concrete base where a feed silo had been demolished and there was just room to concrete 2 x polytunnel hoops to the concrete base, and fix a ramshackle cover to it, fastened down with a batten on the timber building at the back of it; we also put some windbreak fencing in front of it. Lovingly known as 'two hoops' this became home to the peas until things warmed up. It was noticeable how the 'peas were slow growing away though.

We then set about preparing the beds from scratch. With a spade in hand, using Postcrete, 8ft canes, and large posts, washing line and cable ties, the supports were made ready.

The flowers were ready to show by September, which was a bit later than I'm used to but we were able to enter two local shows. The first in Stuartfield, then on to New Pitsligo two weeks later.

The peas were at the tops of the canes for the first show (as you can see in the photos) and with only two weeks till the second there was no point in layering them. In order to give them a chance, I put in some extra canes and dropped them by 3 feet (90cm) They had just re-organised themselves in time for cutting for the show.

The results were: "Best in the sweet pea section" and also "Best in the flower section", which obviously I was absolutely delighted with. We were warmly welcomed by everyone at both shows, which were very well organised and thoroughly enjoyable to take part in.

At the moment of writing this article (early October) the peas are going to seed. Although I had marked the best plant of each variety to save seed from, thanks to an email from Geoff Freeman telling me he gives out mixed packets of his seed away to help spread the word, I've decided to do the same. So, in order to give to the local gardening club members, I will organise some mixed packets for them to try.



The cultivars that I grew this year were: Mary Priestley, Mrs Bernard Jones, Solitude, Our Harry, Bills Choice, Lilac Romance, Eclipse, Rebecca, Platinum Jubilee and Enchanté. All of which grew and bloomed very well, the only downside was the spotting on the darker blooms from the rainfall just before the shows.



The first year in Scotland which could have been a disaster, was in fact a very good one though. So now I am looking forward to the 2024 season but am still a little unsure as to whether to try sowing this month or wait until February again. Decisions!

Feedback, comments and thoughts on the National Exhibitions 2024 Schedule

Ed. As you know, your committee are always asking for feedback from the wider membership on the decisions we have taken (sometimes difficult but always with the history, aims and objectives of the Society along with the need to 'move with the times'). The publication of the 2024 Exhibitions Schedules and subsequent article in the Autumn 2023 Bulletin, highlighting and explaining the (in some cases quite radical) changes, didn't result in a significant amount of correspondence, which we take to mean that most are happy to see how the changes work this year.

However, there follows three articles from the only members to have sent their thoughts, opinions, questions (for which we are very grateful) directly to me. Although they highlight similar concerns, there are some differences. I deliberately have not attached their names. The committee's responses and rationale then follow.

Please remember that a full revision will be made (initially by a sub-committee, before being discussed and final decisions made by the full committee) after the shows and further changes will be put in place, as deemed appropriate, for the 2025 schedules.

2024 Exhibitions Schedule

Member one

Members have been invited to make comments with regards to changes for the forthcoming exhibitions and my thoughts are expressed below.

The most obvious change is of course the drastic reduction in the number of single vase classes – quite understandable that some change is justified due to the significant smaller number of entries in recent years. However, I feel that the extent of reduction is excessive, particularly due to the unfair advantage that, in my opinion, will be given to those cultivars previously within the white/cream class. In both the two 2023 National Exhibitions the top 2 cultivars were Gwendoline and Anniversary. What are the chances of this being the case in 2024?

My suggestion would have been to reduce the number of classes for single cultivars to three, white/cream, red/pink/magenta, blue lilac etc. incorporating fancies within their appropriate colour band, plus a mixed cultivar class. Of course, the schedules committee will review the situation when they meet to review the 2024 results and will include these and other considerations.

A further point that I had asked the committee to look at was the wording for Class 70, the Pedestal Class.

This states that “additional flowers other than Lathyrus may be purchased”. Had I broken this rule because in years previous to 2023 I had obtained additional flowers, without payment, from a Community Garden where I volunteered? To avoid confusion, I suggested that the qualification should be changed to “may be obtained”. My suggestion was not actioned.

Further with regard to Class 70, I suggested that in order to avoid further possible confusion, particularly with regard to new members that “Attention is drawn to Rule 2 that all Sweet Peas should be grown by the exhibitor”. To my amazement the committee has decided that “Any member can contribute material to an exhibit”. This means, to my interpretation, that we now have a class where the exhibitor does not have to have grown any of the material themselves. They can purchase other flowers and foliage from their local supermarket and purchase or otherwise obtain their Lathyrus from another Society member – or members. Surely this was not the intention of the committee!

I trust that my thoughts will be taken into account when the review is made.

2024 Exhibitions Schedule

Member two

In your article in the recent Bulletin, you requested observations on the schedule changes and whilst most of them seem sensible I regard the reduction in single vase classes to be a retrograde step for a national show. This measure will certainly lead to increased entries in the one class remaining but also to the loss of others if the full range of single vase classes were retained. It is hardly an encouragement to exhibitors, particularly new people if you reduce the classes they can enter and also diminishes the show.

Regardless of the merits or otherwise of reducing the number of single vase classes it is unbelievable that a decision has been taken to allow multiple entries in the same class from an exhibitor at a national show. This could lead to one person winning all the prizes which is unacceptable and will certainly not encourage competition particularly from potential new entrants. *(Ed – it has always been the case that some exhibitors are more successful than others at specific shows)*

I notice that these changes have been made after consulting the data but it might have been a good idea to also consult exhibitors, past, present and future. *(Ed – apart from having many exhibitors on the committee [who enter different divisions] this is why we have the Bulletins and invite feedback)*

The Society has chosen to take a different path, which I believe it is in the wrong direction.

2024 Exhibitions Schedule

Member three

Whilst I appreciate some classes at the National shows are not very well supported and changes to the schedule were going to be made at some point, I'd like to highlight some of my opinions / concerns about the changes that have been made to the 2024 schedule.

The removal of the 9 vase class from the 400 plants division has rendered the whole division pointless. *(Ed - every year the lack of entries in this class is discussed and almost removed on many occasions. The decision to retain, until this year, has been taken because of the history and significance; it has been a difficult decision to make)*

Yes, I can appreciate that this class hasn't been entered for some time however, in the two years I've been showing in that division, I've grown intending to stage the 9 vase. With the top class now being 6 vases a grower would only need to grow 7 or 8 varieties which would result in excess of 50 plants of each variety. A grower with these numbers would be better suited to the 6 vase class in division 1. The other option is to grow less plants and go in the 200 plant division.

The removal of the single vase classes is also a concern to me. This is from both an exhibitor's and a judge's perspective. I agree with condensing the colours, but I feel there should still be a split. For example, a vase of white and a vase of striped cannot be judged under the same merit in the same class. I would have preferred to see white/cream, reds/pinks etc., blue/lavender/maroon etc., and fancy classes.

As I said earlier this is only my opinion but I feel like it's an opinion that should be raised as it has changed my growing plans for next season significantly.

2024 Exhibitions Schedule

Responses from the committee, through the editor

As mentioned elsewhere and especially in the extensive article which appeared in the Autumn Bulletin, all changes have been discussed in depth and in most cases are as a result of discussions over many years. Data is always scrutinised and decisions are never implemented based on one year's results. Schedules have to be ever evolving as nothing, even flower shows, stays the same for ever.

The committee acknowledges that some decisions (having been put off for many years) taken for 2024, were difficult and potentially controversial, however they are reversible. In the end, it is up to you, our exhibitors, to show us what classes are popular and then they will be expanded (look at the Old Fashioned and Modern Grandiflora sections for instance).

In the following response covering the three main areas of concern from the above communications; single vases (less variety of colours being grown, potential winners and fair judging) the loss of the 9 vase distinct class from division II (400 cordons) and class 70 (the pedestal display class). I will (as editor and committee member) attempt to explain the rationale behind the committee's decisions, along with my personal insight as an exhibitor, schedule writer, judge, and above all lover of sweet peas, this great Society and its membership.

Single vases classes

Although reference was made in the autumn article, it is a good opportunity to emphasise that the judges not only have permission to but will be actively encouraged to split the classes if sufficient entries are made. For instance, if there are several whites, then they will be judged and prizes awarded as if they constitute a separate (or sub) class. It could be that we end up with more sub-classes than we had in last year's schedule (unlikely given recent entry numbers but perfectly possible).

The judging of single vases must be done according to the NSPS judges' rules, which means that it is perfectly possible to fairly judge cultivars against each other. This supports our ideal of having 2 or 3 judges for each class, thus ensuring that personal preference and fair judging according to our rules, is met.

To counter the possible criticism that by reducing the numbers of single vase classes, which would be stopping a larger grower from entering so many vases, it was decided to allow multiple entries (providing they were of different cultivars) so, growers can enter just as many as they previously did. In the past this meant that said grower could win every class they entered due to a combination of good blooms and little (or no) competition, now they will have competition and will either (if they have better quality blooms than everyone else) win, or because there is more competition, most likely not win. If the class is popular and is sub-divided along colour lines, then nothing will have changed from previous years, except with regard to greater competition.

Please remember that there are plenty of multi-vase classes to stage your blooms in, along with decoratives (including the new open bowl). If you are a smaller grower who has a great cut for the show and feel you have more good quality blooms than classes, then you can enter in higher divisions and special classes as well. Some members routinely do this already.

The committee also hope that rather than reducing the colour pallet of the cultivars that are shown, by allowing multiple entries this actually encourages more variety. Most, if not all, exhibitors would prefer competitive classes rather than no competition, which was the prime motivation for the change.

If you are really concerned about specific cultivars and/or colour types falling out of favour because of schedule changes, then why not do what some members have done and either sponsor specific classes or awards. At the moment apart from Best Vase in Show (and one for each of the smaller divisions) there is one for Best Anniversary and Best Lavender; also, the Hammett class (no 6) for Fancy cultivars is retained. If you sponsor, you get to choose the requirements!

Division II (not more than 400 cordons)

As has been mentioned, every year the lack of entries (mostly zero) in the nine-vase class is discussed with all the options considered; inevitably the status quo is left unaltered, hoping that the next season might be different. Since Covid, this class has been under notice and with another blank year in 2023, the decision was finally taken to remove it from the schedules.

The point is taken from member three above, that a 400 grower might start the year planning to enter that class, with the need to plant 10 or 11 cultivars to hopefully obtain 9 good enough to stage on show day.

This means you will be planting out between 36 and 40 plants of each cultivar, for a vase of 12 stems – the old rule of x 3 just about works. The point though is that we suspect the reality is that most growers are planning for the 6-vase class, possibly planting 7 or 8 cultivars, which means up to 57 plants of each can be planted, vastly improving your chances of staging quality blooms.

As an aside and a compromise, a suggestion of changing the class requirements to perhaps 7 and 5 vases rather than 9 and 6 was discussed. What would members think about that? Just because we have never had those numbers for multi-vase classes does not mean that they can't happen!

As grower three mentions, possibly entering vases of 15 stems (division I) might be one option; which begs the question, should division II be for 300 (or 350) cordons rather than 400? It all comes down to the fact that if the Society caters for every individual requirement, then there will be very little competition (which is what we are seeing in some areas of the schedule)

Class 70 the Pedestal

The committee understand that this is an unique class which requires its own rules. The pedestal has always been a “display” class that more than one member could stage and contribute to, also that apart from the fact that Lathyrus must predominate, any other flowers could be used. Rather like in any floral art competition, this means that flowers can be purchased if you wish.

In line with other classes and divisions, the committee, whilst outlining a set of rules (which with any competitive class, have to exist) wish them to be as all-inclusive and unrestrictive as possible. This is where over several years and the wish not to restrict those who might stage an entry, where member one feels aggrieved as they have followed every rule to the letter.

To recap, due to space and fairness, no member can work on more than one exhibit, and not more than two can work on any one exhibit. However, any member can provide Lathyrus that they have grown, to any number of exhibits (*Ed. This reminds me of the lovely situation at the ‘old’ Wem show, whereby growers would donate sweet peas [Spencers or Old Fashioneds] for the floral art section entrants to use, who would normally turn up on the Friday afternoon to claim their ‘peas, not knowing beforehand, what might be available and relishing the challenge!*) Additional flowers may be obtained (this might be a better word to use than purchased!)

What must be remembered is that this is a large display class which should be a showcase and very different to any other exhibit in the show, this is what the committee's intention has always been and the fine tweaking is ongoing. Perhaps if members who either enjoy staging this exhibit or viewing it at our shows, would like to suggest alternative wordings for the committee to consider. The sub-committee meets during August after the shows having taken place.

The interesting point to which this member eludes (ie entering a class without actually having grown anything yourself) is worth putting into context.

There has always been amongst what members have always referred to as "The Friendly Society", the not uncommon situation of getting a friend (who is also a member) to stage exhibits for them. This could be for any number of reasons; time, health, work shifts, travel issues, the stager not growing that particular year but still wanting to be involved for instance. The entry is always in the name of the grower, not the assistant. The committee feels this would be a backward step if this is not just allowed but emphasised (particularly when it comes to less experienced growers) but acknowledges the need for the wording to be correct in order to get the balance right; we do not want to encourage people to buy or beg their exhibits!

Once again, we thank the above members for raising valid concerns.

Please submit your responses following the summer shows, to me graeme@graemehollingdale.com for discussion at committee level by August and publication in the Autumn Bulletin (by early September).

Seed planting

Caroline Ball

Not having planted Sweet Pea seeds in any number for the last 20 years or so the arrival of a new greenhouse encouraged me do it in 2023. I followed the RHS Trials timing (early November), deciding to sow my main plants then after seeing the significant difference in the size and robustness of the Autumn sown plants at the Wisley Trials in 2023. In 2022 the difference between the plants for the two planting times was significantly less marked. In 2023 the Spring sown plants never caught up in terms of size but of course the Spring sown clumps started flowering later and continued flowering later too. Therefore, I plan to sow a second crop in 2024 to extend the season.



2023 Wisley Trials, showing the difference between Autumn (foreground) and Spring (background) sown

I tried the airing cupboard method expounded by Jim McDonald at his talk at the Chiltern Sweet Pea Society AGM in October 2023 and Phil Johnson on his English Sweet Peas blog. The seeds were pre-swollen on wet kitchen roll within Tupperware containers in my airing cupboard. I found this worked really well and had to chit very few seed. After 24-48 hours or so the seed was sown in root trainers in the cold greenhouse and covered with newspaper to exclude light. I checked them daily for shoots with much anticipation.

The seedlings started popping through after about 2-3 weeks and the rate of germination was good (mainly 97-100%) though it did vary a little between cultivars - I found 'Karen Louise' to be the worst germinator for me at around 80%, though seeds are still germinating. It has been suggested to me that I could dig out the non-germinated seed and chit them again.



I used a nail file and not too aggressively, so the very hardest coats may well benefit from this. I might do it when I have a moment but at the time of writing (during a cold snap in January) I am still finding that some of the slow coaches are still germinating, even with no heat. Sowing seed never ceases to fill me with joy and the excitement when the first tiny shoot appears never lessens.



I have the rest of my *Lathyrus* - Modern Grandiflora, Old Fashioneds and Species - yet to plant and I intend to do so in the next few weeks when time allows and will definitely try the wet kitchen roll method, but this time I will germinate indoors as it is so cold at the moment (last night my greenhouse went down to minus 9) and report on progress in a subsequent publication.



Well grown seedlings after germination

Good News regarding Wem 2024

Phillippa Cooper

The Open Classes are reinstated for the July 2024 show. Please see the paragraph from the show manager below!

Wem Sweet Pea Show, 20 and 21 July 2024

Rose Horner, Show Manager

The show organisers are happy to confirm there will be an open division (15 stems) for Spencer varieties at the 2024 show. There will be both six and three vase distinct classes along with single vase classes (including one for mixed blooms).

There will also be the full division dedicated to the old-fashioned varieties celebrating the life and work of Henry Eckford. We are a very friendly show and would love to hear from anyone interested in exhibiting or visiting.

For all enquiries including how to obtain a schedule, please contact Show Manager Rose Horner sweetpeas@wemtownhall.co.uk

Royal Windsor Flower Show, Saturday 8 June 2024

Alexandra Denman Show Director

Ed - In 2023, the NSPS staged a display via local Chiltern members, at this event. It was a challenge to have sufficient blooms available at such an early date, however, enough were sourced from various members to provide a colourful and very different style of display to what many were used to. The use of pre-loved glass and no Oasis was the guiding basis. Although there are no current plans for a display to be undertaken again in 2024 (largely due to the unavailability of enough personnel to set-up and down and be present throughout) the organisers are keen to retain, what is, a very long connection with the sweet pea and our Society. Hopefully there are some exhibitors who will be interested in taking part in their competitive classes.

The above is a one-day boutique show set in the prestigious grounds of the Windsor Great Park with a large competition marquee at the heart of a show ground that celebrates gardening, nature and traditional crafts.

In the Talks Theatre we have guest speakers including (NSPS Patron) Alan Titchmarsh, Andre Tranquilini and a question time for gardeners; you'll find inspiration from spectacular showcase gardens by Alan Williams of Landform Consultants, as well as those by Lush Landscapes and Form Plants; along with fabulous British nurseries such as Harkness Roses, Tynings, Plantagogo and the Kitchen Garden Plant Centre.

In the Craft Marquee you can learn how to make beautiful buttonholes, floral headdresses, or develop your calligraphy skills. And as always, at the heart of the show we have the delights of the Competition Marquee where you will find entries for the many categories including flowers, vegetables, baking and crafts. There will also be multiple artisan producers and craftspeople that visitors can buy some truly unique gifts from.

It's a wonderful day out for all ages and we have a dedicated children's area featuring gardening with Little Muddy Boots and crafting with Busy Buttons CORE Charity as well as Berkshire Birds of Prey, Punch & Judy and a Circus training camp.

We would especially love all growers of sweet peas, beginners and experts alike to come - there will be a very warm welcome.

Sweet pea classes 12 - 19 (reprinted from our schedule)

National Sweet Pea Society Bronze medal award to the best exhibit in Classes 12 to 15. A cash prize of £5 will be awarded to cup winners. Cash prizes of £3, £2 and £1 will be awarded in all other classes.

All classes are for Spencer Sweet Peas unless otherwise stated.

Growers of 50 or more cordons

12. The Putnam Challenge Cup
One vase, sweet peas, nine stems, one cultivar
13. The Aird Challenge Cup
One vase, sweet peas, nine stems, mixed cultivars
14. The Lady Fairbairn Challenge Cup
Three vases, sweet peas, nine stems to a vase, 3 cultivars
15. A bowl of mixed sweet peas

Growers of up to 50 cordons

16. The Sir Cyril Dyson Cup
One vase, sweet peas, 6 stems, one cultivar
17. One vase, sweet peas, 6 stems, mixed cultivars

Open to all

18. One vase, one stem
19. A bowl of Old Fashioned sweet peas (non spencers and non cordon grown).
Mixed or single cultivar.

Anything further you might need, please contact alexdenman@me.com

Website Updates

We would just like to remind members that we now have automatic renewal for membership but only if you have fully completed your online registration. This took place around 4th January this year and will be a similar date each year, unless you instruct otherwise. Some members have continued to send in their subs to the membership secretary by cheque or BACS and we have reimbursed them accordingly. The automatic renewals mean that you no longer have to worry about payment each year! Of course, if you have not fully registered online through the website, then you will have to pay in the old way.

Some difficulties have been experienced by members where they have not fully completed the registration. You need to follow the link given and it may be that on some devices (particularly mobiles) and in some browsers, that the link is not functioning as intended. You should be able to get round this by copying the link and pasting it into your device so that you can follow it to the end. There is also a slight time lag on the website, so please be patient – it isn't always instant!

To assist with Login

Head over to the *Members Area*.

Above the thick grey band on the left-hand side, click on **Login**.

In the Drop-Down screen, enter your Username and Password, click on **Login**.

The next screen should come up with Members area, click on the **3 short lines**.

This will then bring up a menu on the left-hand side.

Click on **Resources**. You will now have Access to the Publications and Interesting Articles.

If you have not registered fully when you paid through PayPal, you would have received an email with a registration to complete your details. If you are unable to retrieve this, please contact the Membership Secretary, Julia Beardmore at membership@sweetpeas.org.uk

You can still have access to the Membership Area, even if you don't wish to pay electronically, please send an email to membership@sweetpeas.org.uk and we will set up a User ID and password which will be sent in an email to you.

We thank you for your patience with the website and the payment system. It has been a new experience for us, and unfortunately a few problems have occurred.

When you paid your Membership last year, a number of members made a duplicate payment, which was refunded. Unfortunately, we hadn't realised that the system had therefore retained both requests for payment for this year and we then found that a duplicate payment has been made. You will of course note that these have been refunded and a confirmation will have been forwarded to you. We are sure these have all been seen but do apologise for any inconvenience, which is beyond our control but we hope that the error has now been fully rectified.

On a more positive note, we have now put more items in the members only area. These include a short video on picking blooms without scissors and therefore avoiding transmission of virus (curtesy of Andrew Fletcher); a video from our General Secretary explaining how to sow Sweet Peas and a video of a patchwork leaf-cutter bee pollinating Prima Donna.

These videos have been enabled by Stephen Marsland who manages the video content for us through YouTube. We are very grateful for his help as this is a resource which we can keep adding to. If there are topics you would like to see covered by video, or indeed if you have any you would like to share with members, please do get in touch with us.

These short videos in the Resources section are of course in addition to all the publications the Society produces each year, so if you mislay any of these you are able to see them under the members resources button on the website.

Thank you for your patience and helping us to modernise and improve our Society, it's aims and objectives.



Matthewman's Sweet Peas



Summer's Day

New for the 2022 / 23 season, a fantastic new Spencer sweet pea.

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Gift Aid

Caroline Ball

A big thank you to all members who have filled in gift aid forms. Gift aid provides valuable additional revenue for the Society so please, where you are eligible, complete and forward to us a gift aid form which then allows the Society to claim an extra 25p for every pound you donate.

You are eligible to complete a gift aid form if you are a UK tax payer. It is important to remember that you must tell the National Sweet Pea Society if you need to withdraw your gift aid form, for example if you cease to be a tax payer or the amount of tax you paid is less than the donations you have made to the Society.

If you haven't filled in a form yet you can find one on the Society's website, you can ask our treasurer to send you one or you can use the one on HMRC's website.

We are very grateful for the support provided by our membership which enables the Society to put its funds to good use promoting the Sweet Pea and other lathyrus species in doing things like running Trials, Shows and production of our informative publications.



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