



NATIONAL  
*Sweet Pea Society*

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AUTUMN  
BULLETIN



2024

Registered Charity No: 226802



## 2025 Novelties

### Our Helen (right)

Extremely pretty pink and cream bicolour in Spencer flower form.

Raised by D.J. McDonald



### Karen Michelle (left)

Magenta stripe in Spencer flower form.

Long stems and frilly flowers. Good scent

Raised by Ian Myers



### Grandad Myers (right)

Pale blue Spencer type with long stems and good flower placement.

Won 'Best Vase' at the Late National Show and Wem 2024.

Raised by Darren Myers



## AVAILABLE NOW

Roger Parsons Sweet Peas

W: [rpsweetpeas.com](http://rpsweetpeas.com) | T: 01243 673770 | E: [info@rpsweetpeas.com](mailto:info@rpsweetpeas.com)

# NATIONAL SWEET PEA SOCIETY

Registered Charity No: 226802

## AUTUMN BULLETIN 2024

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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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## **Dates for your Diary**

[correct at the time of editing]

Thursday 12 February	<b>Committee meeting via Zoom</b>	Committee members
Saturday 8 March	<b>NSPS AGM &amp; Spring Social</b>	All paid up members
Wednesday 23 April	<b>NSPS Committee meeting</b> Face to face meeting, venue tbc	Committee members
Sat 21 – Sun 22 June	<b>Early National Exhibition</b> Webbs at Millets, Frilford Oxfordshire	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Sunday 29 June	<b>Chiltern Sweet Pea Society Show</b> Lacey Green Bucks	Members' Competition
Sat 12 – Sun 13 July	<b>Late National Exhibition</b> RHS Bridgewater Gardens Worsley	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Sat 19 – Sun 20 July	<b>Wem Sweet Pea Show</b> and Festival	Members' Competition and town festival
Fri 25 – Sun 27 July	<b>North West Regional Show</b> At Chorley Flower Show	Members' Competition Display & Bureau
Thurs 14 – Sun 17 Aug	<b>Southport Show</b>	Display & Bureau

## **Introduction/Editorial**

### **Deadline dates for submitting copy for 2025 publications**

<b>Spring Bulletin</b>	by <b>31 December 2024</b> please.
<b>ANNUAL</b>	by <b>30 January 2025</b> to <u>Caroline</u> please.
<b>Autumn Bulletin</b>	by <b>1 September 2025</b> please.

Thank you again to everyone who has assisted in the production of this Bulletin, it is very much a collaborative effort. If you haven't provided copy either previously or for a year or two, then please do; the continued success of the NSPS publications (Annuals and Bulletins) are in your hands.

In this edition we have news of another upcoming landmark for the Society next year, alongside several articles aimed at the newer or less experienced growers/exhibitors. Do remember that the more experienced growers are here, ready to share their vast knowledge to all of our members.

Historically the Bulletins had many pages of questions and answers in each edition, some submitted directly to me, others via the general secretary. If you have a question, or details of something you have found that works (or not) share via these pages your experiences.

The Society Website is regularly updated with news and reference articles (do log into the members area) this alongside the (formally known as) Twitter and very active public Facebook group, plus the closed (so no spam guaranteed!) so called “members only chat group”, mean that there are now many places online to get and share information.

The social media formats lend themselves to short, quick messages and images, however, printed material with longer more detailed writing (and accompanying photos) does still most definitely have its place. For this issue, in common with recent years, copy prior to my deadline was sparse, however since a deal of prodding, I have amassed quite a decent pile! Hopefully you have been inspired, frustrated, enlightened, disappointed, educated by what you read here – how about putting something down in writing now, so that come January 1<sup>st</sup>, I will have plenty to form the Spring 2025 Bulletin! You do not have to send completely finished or stand-alone copy; I can bring what you note down, together into an article.

Photos are also very welcome but please DO NOT embed them into your article. Send them (in as high resolution as you can) separately but clearly named please.

The very disappointing and late decision to cancel the Early National in 2024, I can assure you all was not taken lightly. Do see the article (and entry numbers list) from joint show manager Roger Parsons, which gives full transparency and hopefully addresses all the points raised with us by one or two members. A hastily convened zoom meeting by the executive was a difficult place to be on that Saturday morning, however all avenues were discussed and the relevant people supported.

Sometimes from the outside, decisions that affect you in one way are difficult to understand from the holistic viewpoint and everyone concerned was and still is, very sorry if this caused you significant last-minute issues. Relating this to the previous paragraph, all the digital platforms were updated immediately the decision was made; another reason for regularly checking for updates.

## **1900 – 2025 = 125!**

2025 is the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the National Sweet Pea Society. This is a tremendous length of time for a society to exist and there have been many significant events during this time. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century saw a massive interest in growing and breeding new varieties of plants, and as the Sweet Pea has a propensity to mutate this gave rise to several variations through the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. It usually self-pollinates which might make the crossing of varieties relatively easy, though to get a fixed new cultivar can be a lengthy process. The search for more colours and novelties in plant forms in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century meant that there was enormous enthusiasm for the Sweet Pea and commercial companies began to introduce many different colours, including stripes and bi-colours into their catalogues.

By the end of the century there was such a momentum for Sweet Peas that the idea of holding a bi-centenary exhibition was put forward to celebrate the introduction of the Sweet Pea into England in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. A conference and exhibition were arranged for July 1900 at Crystal Palace in London. The organizing committee held a meeting in March 1901 and the outcome was the formation of the National Sweet Pea Society. The widely held view has always been that the Society was a continuation of the organising committee for the 1900 event, so the Society has always promoted itself as “inaugurated in 1900”.

The following year they held an exhibition in London and here the first Spencer form of the flower caused great excitement. Although ‘Countess Spencer’ no longer exists, there have been many hundreds of ‘Spencer’ variations bred by professional and amateur seedsmen with ‘novelties’ introduced most years to tempt us into trying something new or different.

Since its formation the Society has held shows and exhibitions in order to promote all forms of *lathyrus*. There have been publications each year, though the number and format has varied over the years. The Annual was introduced in 1905 and has been produced each year since then, with the exception of 1941-1943. Now Bulletins, introduced in 1939, are produced twice a year and the booklet, Enjoy Sweet Peas originating from publications in the 1930’s is given to all new members. Of course, coming up to date with communication methods we now have a website with general information and an area for members only with additional specialist information, access to video resources and copies of the Classification List, our publications and the show schedules. There is also a members only Chat Room on Facebook for the exchange of information, queries and advice.

There have also been in most years a series of trials of sweet pea introductions. These trials constitute a more scientific analysis of *L. odoratus*. Originally the Trials were run by the Society and then in conjunction with the RHS where Awards of Garden Merit may be granted to those varieties that do exceptionally well. The Society also runs its own Trials in conjunction with various Horticultural Institutions which provide the space and manpower to manage the cultivation. These Trials establish whether new cultivars are worthy of awards, are correctly classified according to type and colour and whether they are likely to be good for exhibition or for general garden display.

To commemorate our achievements over the last 125 years the Early and Late National Shows will have two classes for this year only to celebrate 125 years of Society activities. We hope that these two classes inspire you to enter so that we can create a wonderful show and a great display to celebrate the longevity of the Society. Please see the article “A Celebration of 125 years of the NSPS” about these classes elsewhere in the Bulletin.



Just a photo of well grown *L. odoratus*, to cheer us all up during the autumn/winter months!

## **Celebrating 125 years of the National Sweet Pea Society**

In 2025 the Society will be in its 125<sup>th</sup> year. At the recent review of National Shows by the Scheduling Sub-committee, it was agreed that we should reflect this landmark of longevity by having two unique classes for this year only.

We have temporarily replaced **Class A**, The Duo Class, with one named:  
**“125 Triple – an exhibit celebrating 125 years of the National Sweet Pea Society – depicting the diversity within the Lathyrus genus”.**

This will be a three-component class which will reflect the history and development of the Lathyrus genus. You will be able to choose from not only the Odoratus types; the Old-Fashioned, Grandiflora and semi-grandiflora and Spencer forms, but also Annual and Perennial Species. We envisage this as a class that anyone can enter if they grow some of these forms of Lathyrus. You do not need to be a wizard at staging or floral art to put together the combination of items of your choice from a list of vases and saucers\*\*. It is a multiple-choice selection from the following list:

- 1) A vase of 12 mixed Spencer cultivars
- 2) A vase of 12 mixed Grandiflora/semi-grandiflora cultivars
- 3) A vase of 12 mixed Old-Fashioned cultivars
- 4) A saucer of mixed Spencers, any foliage allowed
- 5) A saucer of mixed Grandiflora/semi-grandifloras, any foliage allowed
- 6) A saucer of mixed Old-Fashioneds, any foliage allowed
- 7) A saucer of mixed annual Lathyrus species, any foliage allowed
- 8) A saucer of perennial Lathyrus species, one or more kinds, any foliage allowed

Mixed in the classes means at least two cultivars from the 2025 classification lists. Novelties are allowed but not Seedlings.

The exhibit will consist of **three components, at least one vase and one saucer**. Which you select to stage will be your choice, depending on what you have decided to grow in 2025: for instance, two vases and one saucer or two saucers and one vase, and you can decide when you know what you have available on the day.

The judges will not only be looking at the usual criteria; eg conforming to the schedule, quality, trueness of type and colour, form, cleanliness as well as the quality of staging and arranging, but also the range of types throughout the exhibit, reflecting the title.

For those of you more focused on the creative use of sweet peas, you will be interested in **Class 64**, which will, for 2025 be entitled:

**“A Celebration of 125 Years of the National Sweet Pea Society”.** An arrangement in any container/s of your choice but Lathyrus to predominate.

This class is in the Decorative section (Division VI) of the National Exhibitions Schedule. It should be viewed all-round and have a space of 2'6 x 2'6 to express your feelings about our society's 125<sup>th</sup> year of existence. Accessories and bases will be allowed, alongside additional foliage, but Lathyrus (eg any type of Sweet Peas and/or species) should predominate the exhibit. Please note that the wording “container(s) of your choice”, means that you can, if you wish, use more than one placement. Do remember the overall size allowance though, the judges will check!

For both these classes we are enhancing the Prize money available (including awarding a fourth place) and there will be a special commemorative piece of glass for the first prize winner of each class in each show. If anyone would like to sponsor these (or any other) classes, please do get in touch with our general secretary, Carole Tate, in order to express your desire.

Please do think now about what cultivars and types you might grow to enter these two special, one-off classes. We hope to make the shows a real celebration for our 125<sup>th</sup> Year. In addition to these two classes, we would like to put on a commemorative Society display at both the Early and the Late Shows. If you would like to help or have any suggestions, we will be looking for additional volunteers to help stage and provide blooms for these displays, in addition to all the other small and not so small help that is required with putting on the shows.

For the Early National please contact the Show Manager, Caroline Ball, and for the Late National, the Show Manager is Carole Tate. Any support you can provide for the shows will be very much appreciated. Plus, it is fun and rewarding to take part in the preparation and running of the shows!

\*\* Please remember that for decorative classes, instead of the small bowls previously used (which have become much harder to obtain) we are now using the much more easily obtained small saucers, in which great results can be achieved with a smaller amount of staging material. Please see the 2023 Autumn and 2024 Spring Bulletins for articles on these.

## **Early National Show 2024**

Roger Parsons

With great reluctance, the Executive Committee decided to cancel our Early Show, which was due to be held at RHS Wisley on 26th and 27th June 2024. The joint show managers for this were Phil Johnson and myself. An exceptionally difficult and late season had resulted in few blooms being entered in the show plus, key show manager Phil Johnson had to withdraw. Considerable thought went into exploring ways to enable the show to proceed but the circumstances this year made the show untenable. We greatly regret any inconvenience and disappointment this caused to exhibitors and those planning to visit the Show.

So, what went wrong? The hall at Wisley is very large so we intended to enhance it with large non-competitive displays from myself and Phil. A similar approach worked well in 2022 when there were non-competitive displays from Phil and the RHS Wisley. The latter were cut from the Trials ground but this year, as the two-year Trials (held in 2022 and 2023) had ceased, so we were unable to fall back on those to help fill out the hall with flowers.

In the event, class entries this year were exceptionally low (*see next article*). Reports from exhibitors suggested the main reason for this was the exceptionally cold and wet Spring experienced in most of the country so that even those who had entered were struggling with numbers of blooms. Bud-drop was still rife.

Early on the Saturday before the show, I had a phone call from Phil Johnson to say he needed to withdraw from any involvement in the show. His nursery had been invaded by travelling folk who had locked him out so that his valuable seed crop was at risk. His priority was understandably to regain access to the nursery. All our staging, vases, table coverings and other items required for the show are stored by Phil, who was expecting to spend the weekend preparing these items for transport to Wisley. Most of Saturday morning was instead taken up with Executive committee members exchanging emails and for those available at the time, holding an impromptu Zoom meeting. We explored other sources for vases and staging, such as the Chiltern Sweet Pea Society, and how to transport them to Wisley but the bottom line is that the Society is dependent on the same, too few numbers of people willing and able to carry out the physical work needed to set up and dismantle a show. On this occasion, without Phil, all the heavy physical work was down to me (aged 71) and Laurie Burrell (mid 80s). Most of us were also involved with the Chiltern Show, held next day, on the Sunday.

From my personal perspective, I sold a great many seeds at the 2022 Wisley show, resulting in a large donation to the Society, and was hoping to achieve similar again. Unfortunately, it was not to be. If we had taken longer to consult more widely, would a situation have arisen where a viable show was possible? We felt not. It was decided on Saturday lunchtime that the kindest way to address our inability to put on a show was to immediately inform exhibitors, the RHS and members while they still had time to cancel their arrangements. A few members and some non-members were quick to volunteer to help with future shows, so perhaps some good will have come from this unfortunate cancellation.

Thankfully a week or so after this, Phil was able to regain control of his nursery and retrieve his seed production. Looking ahead to 2025, we have a new venue (on a site which has previously been very successful) an experienced, returning show manager and team, a well-chosen date at a popular venue where Oasis can be used; hopefully weather will also be better suited to our flower. We can't hide the fact that numbers of exhibitors have been declining in all sorts of specialist plant societies but here in the NSPS, there is still plenty to be optimistic about.

I am already looking forward to the 2025 Early National, to be held at Webbs garden centre, Millets farm, near Abingdon Oxfordshire, show managed by Caroline Ball.

## **Entry numbers Early National 29 & 30 July 2024**

Compiled by Roger Parsons

This is the list of entry numbers as received by the deadline date, prior to when the show would have taken place. These are included for reference purposes only and must be read with caveats.

In the vast majority of years, entries staged at the Early are approx. 75% of those entered. For instance, entries in several of the multi-vase classes (esp classes 1 - 4) were, as is normal practice, made by the same entrants as a failsafe and would never actually all be staged (for instance, you may hope to stage a 12 and a 6 but in fact, may only have been able to stage a 9 and a 3)

## EARLY SHOW 2024

CLASS		ENTRIES
A	Duo	1
B	Seedlings	0
C	Alsen Novelty	0
D	Unwin	2
E	Society 20	1

## DIV 1

1	Daily Mail	2
2	Sutton	2
3	Tom Jones	3
4	Burpee	3
5	Mixed Bowl	1
6	Hammett	2
7	single cultivars	3
8	Mixed vase	4

## DIV 2

20	6 x 12 stems	0
21	3 x 12 stems	0
22	Mixed Bowl	0
23	single cultivars	0
24	Mixed vase	1

## DIV 3

30	Levington	3
31	Ben Bulstrode	6
32	Mixed Bowl	2
33	single cultivars	7
34	Mixed vase	5

**DIV 4**

40	Evan Hince	1
41	Mixed Bowl	1
42	single cultivars	0
43	Mixed vase	1

**DIV 5**

50	Eckford Bowl	0
51	V & J Good	0
52	Old-fashioned	1
53	Whittemore	1
54	Novice old-fashioned	0
55	Grandiflora	1
56	Newington Triple	0
57	Chrissie	0
58	Novice G or Semi-G	0
59	Amy Andrews	1
60	Perennial species	2
61	Pot-grown	2

**DIV6**

62	John Bishop	0
63	Unwin Basket	0
64	Tom Baines	0
65	Cornish class	0
66	E R Janes	1
67	Frances Williams	1
68	Sydenham	2
69	Petite	2
70	Les Harvey	0

**Late National 13 & 14 July 2024**

Compiled by Carole Tate

No	Cultivar name	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	unplaced	Total	Colour	Class
	<b>Spencers</b>							
1	Gwendoline	3	2		1	6	Pale magenta	4a
2	Jilly	4	1		1	5	Cream	2
3	White Frills	1	1		1	3	White	1
4	Elizabeth Shorthouse	2				2	Rose pink	11b
	Eva Bridge	2				2	n/c	
	Mary Priestley	2				2	White	1
7	Sir Jimmy Shand	1	1			2	Fancy	16
8	Karen Louise	1		1		2	Lavender	8
9	Anniversary	1				1	Picotee	15
	Dalesman	1				1	Blue	9
	Eclipse	1				1	Mauve	7
	Evie Jones	1				1	Magenta	4
	Fields of Fire	1				1	Red (cerise)	3
	Millennium	1				1	Red (crimson)	3b
	Mollie Rilstone	1				1	Picotee (cream ground)	15a
	Nora Holman	1				1	n/c	
	Oban Bay	1				1	Pale Blue	9b
	Pink Pearl	1				1	Pale pink	10
	Southbourne	1				1	Pale pink	10
	Terry Davie	1				1	Mauve	7
	Tom Atherton	1				1	novelty	
22	Alec Cave		1			1	White	1
	Betty Maiden		1			1	Fancy (striped)	16
	John Gray		1			1	Salmon Pink (white ground)	10a
25	Bristol			1		1	Pale Blue	9b
	Route 66			1		1	Fancy (bicolour)	16a
	Seedlings	2	2			4		
	Total Spencers	31	10	3	2	46		

	Non-Spencers						
1	Mrs Collier	1	1	1	3	Cream	OF
2	Painted Lady	2			2	Pink/white	OF
3	Cupani	1	1		2	Maroon/violet	OF
	Jack Ellis	1	1		2	Maroon/purple	MG
	Prince Edward of York	1	1		2	Red/pink	OF
6	Dorothy Eckford	1		1	2	White	OF
7	Romeo		1	1	2	White blue picotee edge	MG
8	America	1			1	Red flake	OF
	Henry Eckford	1			1	Orange scarlet	OF
	Lord Nelson	1			1	Navy Blue	OF
	Senator	1			1	Maroon violet flake	OF
12	Flora Norton		1		1	Pale Blue	OF
	Kingfisher		1		1	Violet blue flush	SG
	Rosay		1		1	Deep blush pink	MG
15	Janet Scott			1	1	Pale pink on white ground	OF
	Lady Grisel Hamilton			1	1	Lavender	OF
	Non-Spencers	11	8	5	24		
	Total Spencers	38	11	5	54		
	Non-Spencers	11	8	5	24		
	Mixed vases	6	4	1	13		
	Total vases	48	22	9	83		
	Decoratives (inc bowls/saucers)	17	11	5	12	45	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>128</b>	

**28 - 30 July 2023 N W Regional Show**

Compiled by Carole Tate

No	Cultivar Name	1st	2nd	3rd	unplaced	Total	Colour	Class
	<b>Spencers</b>							
1	Gwendoline	4		1	3	8	Pale magenta	4a
2	Mrs Bernard Jones	1	1	1	1	4	Rose pink	10b
3	Mary Priestley	3				3	White	1
4	Anniversary	2	1			3	Picotee	15
5	Charlie Bear	1	2			3		
6	Promise	1	1			2		
	Fields of Fire		1		1	2	Red	
	Sir Jimmy Shand		1		1	2	Fancy	16
9	BrIDGET McAteer	1				1	Purple	
	Olivia Grace	1				1		
	Valerie Harrod	1				1	Orange pink	13
	White Frills			1		1	White	1
	Seedlings				2	2		
	<b>Non-Spencers</b>							
	Cupani	1				1	Maroon/violet	OF
	Rosay	1				1	Deep blush pink	MG
	Janet Scott		1			1	Pale pink on white ground	OF
	Kingfisher		1			1	Violet blue flush	SG
	Prima Donna			1		1	Light pink	OF
	Total Spencers	15	7	3	8	33		
	Non-Spencers	2	2	1		5		
	Mixed Vases	4	1			5		
	Total Vases	21	10	4	8	43		
	Bowls and pots	8	7	2	1	18		
	Decoratives	8	8	6	6	28		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>89</b>		

# Chiltern Sweet Pea Society Annual Show

## 23 June 2024

Compiled by Chris Gray

NB the number of unplaced vases (ie not in the first three places) was not recorded, so the final totals would have been higher.

No	Cultivar name	1st	2nd	3rd	unplaced	Total	Colour	Class
<b>Spencers</b>								
1	Gwendoline	3	6	2		11	Pale magenta	4a
2	Anniversary	3	1	5		9	Picotee	15
3	Sir Jimmy Shand	4	2	1		7	Fancy	16
	White Frills	3	1	3		7	White	1
5	Jilly	2	2			4	Cream	2
	Karen Louise	1	2	1		4	Lavender	8
	Naomi Nazareth	2	2			4	Pale blue	9b
8	Bristol		3			3	Pale blue	9b
	Gardeners Jubilee		3			3	n/c (fancy)	
	Just Julia		1	2		3	Blue mid	9a
	Mary Priestley	1		2		3	White	1
	Mrs B R Jones	1	1	1		3	Rose pink (white ground)	10b
13	Daily Mail	2				2	Cerise pink	10c
	Valerie Harrod		2			2	Orange pink	13
	Piccolo	1		1		2	Novelty	
	Somerset Lady	1		1		2	Magenta	4
	Eclipse	1		1		2	Mauve	7
18	Alice Hardwicke	1				1	Orange red	14
	Barons Court	1				1	Mauve	7
	Daily Mail	1				1	Cerise pink	10c
	Queen of Hearts	1				1	Fancy (striped)	16
	Ruby Anniversary	1				1	Red (crimson)	3b

Millennium		1		1	Red (crimson)	3b
Olivia		1		1	n/c (fancy)	
Bridget McAleer			1	1	Mauve	7
Judith Wilkinson			1	1	n/c	
Windsor			1	1	Maroon	5
<b>Non-Spencers</b>						
Prince Edward of York	1			1	Red pink bicolour	OF
High Scent	1			1	Cream with lilac edge	MG
Little Red Riding Hood	1			1	Red white bicolour	MG
Prima Donna	1			1	Light pink	OF
Romeo	1			1	White blue picotee edge	MG
Sweet Caroline	1			1	Novelty	
Chrissie		1		1	Lavender mauve marbled	SG
Kingfisher		1		1	Violet blue flush	SG
Matucana		1		1	Maroon violet bicolour	MG
<b>Total Spencers</b>	30	28	23	81		
<b>Total Non-Spencers</b>	6	3		9		
Mixed Vases	3	3	3	9		
<b>Total Vases</b>	39	34	26	99		
Decoratives (inc bowls/saucers)	3	3	2	8		
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>		<b>107</b>	

## **2025 Schedules for the National Exhibitions**

As you will remember that because of falling numbers of exhibitors and entries over many years, a major revision of the exhibition schedules was made for the 2024 season, with the full intention of adjusting as and when the entry patterns change. Sadly, with the very challenging weather patterns experienced in almost all areas from Autumn 2023 through to Summer 2024, not only was the Early sadly cancelled but also many other shows, including the Late, had poor numbers of entries. This means of course that reliable data cannot be used to compare and is partly the reason (bar the odd tidying up of some wording and prize awards) why no alterations will be made for 2025. Do see separate articles regarding the significance that the year 2025 has and how we are acknowledging this in the schedules.

What can be noted however, was that the hoped for increase in competition of the multi-vase classes in some divisions, was encouraging. Hopefully a more normal year of weather and growing conditions will result in significant entries being staged in all shows in 2025 and proper evaluation can then take place.

We have sadly lost two significant sponsors again this year. We thank both Mathewman Sweet Peas (Class 4 in both shows) and Diane Gray - néé Sewell (Best Vase of Anniversary in both shows) for many years of support. One new company (controversially perhaps?) who has no obvious connection with Sweet Peas, has come forward for the Class 4 sponsorship but at the time of going to print, we are without one for the Best Vase award. The Society will cover this for 2025 (as it is a popular one) however it is unlikely to continue. If you would you like to sponsor something, then please contact our general secretary Carole to start a discussion!

## **Running a course on growing Sweet Peas**

John Rieley

Last year, being the only serious grower around, I was asked by my local Horticultural Society if I would run a course on growing Sweet Peas. It was decided that the Society would supply the necessary equipment, and the 'pupils' would use their own seeds. The Society thought that it would be simple to arrange several meetings at fixed times, making these social occasions at which refreshments would be provided.

As you can imagine Sweet Peas do not run to a schedule and the difficulty of getting a group together when there was something to be demonstrated meant that only the date of the first meeting could be set with certainty.

I decided that an autumn sowing and looking after the plants all winter was too much to ask of beginners, so the first meeting was in early January and dealt with a general description of growing, soil preparation, a warning about the amount of time required to look after them and a very stern warning about the need for them to be kept outside and grown as hard as possible! I also recommended that they should read as much as possible about how to look after them and showed copies of Roger Parsons' and Bernard Jones' publications.

Before the meeting I had recommended that they should only start with a few plants and that a packet of 20 mixed seeds would be adequate. After a discussion about different methods, everybody sowed five seeds to a pot, using the pots and compost provided and were only sent home after being told to keep them warm until germination and cold thereafter. All reported satisfactory germination but despite my warnings, not everybody believed that Sweet Peas were hardy. Several people thought that a cold windowsill would do instead of a cold frame and unsurprisingly, I received reports of leggy plants!

When it was time to plant out, there was a significant problem with the weather. Trying to arrange a meeting at short notice when it seemed that it would never stop raining looked impossible, but then I came up with an idea. Why not make a video?

Never having made one before there was some learning and trial and error involved before I succeeded. The response was very gratifying; however, people like videos! So much so, that I then went on to make several others. I didn't make ones about layering and staging because I was just too busy at the time, but those who were interested were invited to come along to watch on a 'drop-in' basis and I think that it worked better that way, they certainly seemed very happy.

The results were satisfactory. Nobody was unhappy with the course, most said that they had never before grown such long-stemmed Sweet Peas, and several entered our local show. The organisers were delighted as there have been requests for similar courses about Dahlias and vegetables.

The response to my videos was such that I suggested to my local representative that the NSPS should consider having some made for the website. My idea was, that whereas mine were made with me chuntering away, unscripted and forgetting things to my camera, it would be a good to have them made professionally. Instead, I had a response back from Alison Shreeve, saying that they would like to put mine on the website. Hmm!

If you wish to see them and make any comments, please do. Here is the direct link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT0ZK5PQFzypQ2sItNrUPgg>

Or Google 'John Rieley' and 'Sweet Peas' if that is easier.

A Footnote: A lady, of mature years, said to me that if anyone had told her before she started my course that she would be wandering around her garden wearing a head-torch at 11pm looking for slugs she would have thought them out of their mind!

## **A review of 2024 in my Oxfordshire garden**

Caroline Ball

After acquiring a greenhouse last year, I grew my own Sweet Pea plants from seed for the first time this century! The Spencers were pre-germinated on damp kitchen roll in the airing cupboard in early November. This proved to be a good method for germination that I'd not tried before but I did find if they didn't germinate quickly and were left too long in the airing cupboard germination was impaired.

Early November was selected as the right time to sow because that is the timing that the RHS has used for their recent Trials. Previously when I grew my own plants (20 odd years ago) sowing time was always the first half of October. Climate change over these years is such that, whilst early October was the right time to sow then, early November was still too early for my sowing in 2023 - especially when combined with such a wet Spring, which delayed planting out until the end of April. The Spencer plants were starting to get far leggier and larger than ideal by this time, but I planted them out anyway. I had intended to grow some Spring sown Spencer plants too, but never got round to it, as the NSPS Annual and accounts consume a great deal of my time in January and February!

The Spencers were very late flowering as a result of the dull, cold, wet Spring in Oxfordshire. I would have been pressed to do more than a couple of vases at the Early National had it not been sadly cancelled. However, when they did flower properly a couple of weeks later, I was extremely pleased with the quality of the flowers. They definitely benefitted from the fact that part of the ground was fresh soil since there is now a greenhouse on part of my old Sweet Pea plot!



*L. odoratus* 'Sir Jimmy Shand' (Spencer) and 'Little Red Riding Hood' (Modern Grandiflora)

The Old-Fashioned and Modern Grandiflora seed was sown in January, in the same manner as the Spencers were, being pre-germinated in the airing cupboard. That timing worked perfectly and the plants were a perfect size at planting out time. Unfortunately, the Old-Fashioneds never really got to grips with the Spring weather conditions; starting to flower much later than the Spencers and were never that strong. This was a huge disappointment as they normally grow well and flower early for me, despite the plants being perfect at planting out time.

I've grown a few species in the past but not much variety; principally just *L. Tingitanus*, *L. Belinensis* and *L. Sativus*. My species seed didn't get planted until after the Annual had been completed this year - so not until the second half of April/beginning of May! Germination was good and I decided to plant the seedlings in large pots keeping them in the greenhouse to try to push them on to flowering in time for the Early.

I probably would have managed a saucer of mixed colours of *L. Sativus* - the rest of my species plants (including *L. Tingitanus*, *L. Marmoratus*, *L. Clymenum*, *L. hirsutus x odoratus*) had been planted far too late for an end of June show but subsequently flowered nicely and I've decided that next year that I will grow annual species both outside and, in the greenhouse, to hedge my bets on timing, plus I'm going to sow earlier too, somehow! I can't comment on the impact of the weather on the annual species, since they were totally insulated from its effects.



Some of Caroline's species – *L. Grandiflorus* and *L. Sativus azureus*

The wet Spring was detrimental to all of my perennial species as well, except *L. Grandiflorus* which was superb, flowering from 2 June. All of my *L. Vernus* appears to have been lost. The 'Red Pearl' *L. latifolius* flowered much later than normal, when I can rely on it commencing flowering at the end of May/beginning of June in most years; it was the end of June this year. I even thought it had been lost in an exposed part of the garden but it hadn't, though flowering didn't happen there until the end of July. I also thought I had lost 'White Pearl', which made my heart break, but the good news was it had survived although the foliage appeared a lot later than normal and flowering only started on 8 July. A month later the show was absolutely spectacular, the best it's ever been.

I was convinced that my pale pink *L. latifolius* was also lost by the time August arrived. You can imagine my surprise when on 17 August I spotted some of its gorgeous pale pink flowers starting to emerge. It is probably safe to conclude that many *Lathyrus* species are not very happy, or at best, suffer delayed flowering when the Spring is as wet, dull and cold as it was here in Oxfordshire in 2024.



*L. Tingitanus roseus* and *L. Nervosus* 'Lord Anson's Pea'

## Report from the Classification Sub-committee 2024

### 2024 Novelties:

These were inspected and allocated to colour categories as follows:

'Darling Claire'	- semi-grandiflora (mid blue)
'Dawn Everest'	- 4a pale magenta
'Glynne Collins'	- 16a bicolour
'Just Christine'	- 16a bicolour
'Kings Coronation'	- 8 lavender
'Lizanne Davies'	- 15a picotee, cream ground
'Piccolo'	- 8a pale lavender flush
'Pinstripe'	- 16 striped
'Suffolk Punch Miggie'	- 7 mauve
'Tom Atherton'	- 16 striped

## **New Resources on the Website**

The Website Sub-Committee

A quick update on what is available to members on our website.

Member John Rieley has kindly given us access to his videos (see his article “Running a course”) to help people with Sweet Pea issues. These are great little clips of information which includes how to remove raindrops from your blooms; bud drop; removing unwanted stems; pricking out Sweet Pea seedlings and planting out.

We also have other videos available; “Sowing by Carole Tate” and courtesy of Roger Parsons and Darren Myers, “Breeding Sweet Peas”.

Do take some time to have a look at the resources available to members only on the closed section of the website. If you have any difficulty in accessing them, please let the secretary know and we will do our best to resolve the issue. They can be found in the main menu tab Members/Resources/Video Links. Click on each of these in turn and you will find a list with links to all the videos we have so far.

If you have any material that you think might be of use for other members, then please contact the secretary or chair. Happy browsing!

## **Explaining *Lathyrus odoratus* and other species from an exhibition perspective**

At flower shows it is occasionally noted that there might be some confusion about which *Lathyrus* plants are allowed in which categories. This article, we hope, will help to clarify, for the less experienced or new to our Society members, the differences and ensure that exhibitors enter the right blooms in the right classes at all Sweet Pea shows but especially at the National exhibitions and regional specialist shows.

The majority of classes in shows are for *Lathyrus odoratus* (*L. odoratus*), commonly known as the Sweet Pea. These are the highly scented annual plants we are all very familiar with. Within this category there are different types or forms of the flower, developed throughout the centuries through hybridisation (naturally or targeted) and also possibly mutation, with clearly defined attributes which a classification committee assess and allocate to the appropriate sections and colour classifications each year.

The Old-Fashioned varieties are more delicate and smaller in form, often with fewer flowers per stem (normally 2-3, with occasionally 4). They are highly scented and closer to the original Sweet Pea found in the wild than the more recently developed forms, the Grandifloras and Spencers. There are specific classes in the NSPS Shows for Old-Fashioned varieties and the Eckford Society of Wem (in Shropshire) has an annual show which particularly celebrates the historic varieties of this form of *L. odoratus*, with a large specific division in its schedule. In the NSPS Nationals classes 50 - N54 are specifically for the Old-Fashioneds. Examples include 'Prima Donna', 'Lord Nelson' and 'America'.

MANY NATURAL COLOR WORK

**SWEET PEAS**  
**B**RECK'S HIGH-GRADE SEEDS, BULBS  
 AND PLANTS PRODUCE RESULTS

A Seed Store Ninety-four Years  
 51 and 52 N. Market St., BOSTON, MASS.  
 Entrance at the "Big Clock."

Mixed Old-Fashioned types of *L. odoratus*

Developments in breeding in the late nineteenth Century led to larger, more showy blooms of the Old-Fashioned form, which Henry Eckford called “Grandifloras”, reflecting the increase in size of the flowers. This term is now reserved for the “Modern Grandiflora and semi-grandiflora” hybrids, which have larger blooms than the Old-Fashioned cultivars. However, Old-Fashioned and Modern Grandifloras are both Grandiflora as they share the same form, which contrasts with Semi-grandifloras and Spencers, which have a more wavy standard petal.

Modern Grandiflora and semi-grandiflora are often grouped together for show purposes (as they are very similar, especially size-wise, unless studied closely) but always be careful to read the schedule carefully. In the NSPS Nationals there are classes 55 - N58 specifically for Modern Grandiflora and semi-grandiflora forms. Cultivars available include ‘Scarlett’, ‘High Scent’, ‘Erewhon’, ‘Chrissie’ and ‘Romeo’.



Modern Grandiflora/semi-grandiflora types of *L. odoratus*. ‘Scarlett’ and ‘Chrissie’

In 1901 a new form was discovered, possibly in three places simultaneously, but named by Lord Spencer’s gardener at their Althorp estate, after his employer’s wife, the Countess Spencer and subsequently referred to as Spencers. These are the larger flowered, frilly blooms that most people associate with Sweet Peas today. Examples available now include ‘Anniversary’, ‘Gwendoline’ and ‘Windsor’.

There are many different coloured and patterned forms of these flowers; for example, flaked, striped and marbled, plus bi-colours, picotees and shifters. All the above three basic forms of the flower are from the plants of the species *L. odoratus*; eg the sweetly scented annual types, which are the only ones that should be referred to as “Sweet Peas”.



*L. odoratus* (Spencer types) ‘Valerie Harrod’ ‘Lady Nicholson’ and ‘Windsor’

*L. odoratus* belongs to the wider, very large biological classification group of plants, referred to as *Lathyrus*. These are all pea-like plants, including annual and perennial species. The Genus now includes the edible garden pea, though this is a recent reclassification.

Species of *Lathyrus*, other than *odoratus*, are eligible for some classes in the NSPS National Shows. Most of the *Lathyrus* Species are not scented, or have very delicate scents, very different to *L. odoratus* (the Sweet Pea).

Species can be annual plants sown every year, or they may be perennial. The most common, and the biggest, most showy perennial flower is *L. latifolius*, sometimes called the everlasting pea, or erroneously referred to as the perennial sweet pea in some seed catalogues. This comes in a range of colours from white to red, a more cerise colour than the term would indicate. *L. latifolius*, though beautiful whilst in flower, has no scent at all and has become really established in the UK, often growing wild on motorway embankments. It sets and grows from seed very easily, but as a perennial, it survives over winter after dying back and spreads underground. Some have even been known to refer to it as a weed!

There are other perennial *Lathyrus* species and these can be seen on the NSPS website, or in particular on Roger Parsons’ online catalogue.

In addition to the well-known perennial, *L. latifolius*, there are many beautiful, somewhat more delicate and fragile annual species which are easy to grow (including in containers) and lend themselves to cutting and arranging decoratively. These come in a range of colours and different heights, from white, to blue, orange, red and magenta, including *L. chloranthus*, a vivid greenish yellow. *L. tingitanus* comes in pale pink or cerise and grows up to 6 feet tall.

This group also includes the original *L. odoratus* Species – the wild Sweet Pea - which is shorter and smaller flowered than the modern cultivars. The NSPS Shows have one class specifically for annual *Lathyrus* Species (59) and one class for perennial *Lathyrus* Species (60). The annual species often appear on the show bench, as pot grown in class 61!



One of the less common variations of *L. latifolius*, this one a pale pink

The difference between *L. odoratus* in its modern forms and the Annual and Perennial Species is actually very clear, but the challenge comes in reading the Show Schedule carefully.

The decorative classes (Division VI) state that ‘*All types of Lathyrus odoratus are eligible in this section, unless otherwise stated*’. That refers to the Old Fashioned, Grandiflora/semi-grandiflora and Spencer forms of the flower. However, in classes 64, 67 and 70 any combination of the above plus Species are allowed. These are theoretically also allowed in 69 the Petite class, however you have to be very careful to only use those with flowers of a suitable size! Other classes, such as Class A (in most years known as “The Duo”, but for 2025 only, as the “125 Triple”) have a mix of forms and, just like an exam paper, we need to read and re-read the Class description very carefully!



Two stunning decorative saucers of the perennial *L. latifolius*, the rare white variation and more common pink/magenta

When deciding what kinds of *Lathyrus* you are growing it is essential to look at the Classification List produced every Autumn by the Society. This is the bible for deciding what form of *L. odoratus* you have.

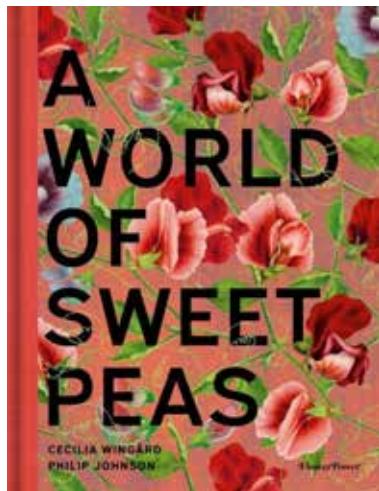
Many seedsmen do not state whether you are buying an Old-Fashioned form, or a Modern grandiflora or a Semi-grandiflora (or on occasion, even a Spencer). Sometimes these are labelled incorrectly as well, so always check with the Classification List. This is also available on the Website under the Members Only Resources, if you have misplaced your hard copy.

For more information on the Species and the three forms of *L. odoratus* please have a look at the NSPS Website. More detailed information is available in the RHS publication: Kenicer, G. & Parsons, R. (2021) *Lathyrus: The Complete Guide*. RHS Media, Peterborough.

## **“A World Of Sweet Peas”**

A new book written by Cecilia Wingard, Swedish Sweet Pea personality and Phil Johnson (that well known English personality!)

A book for Sweet Pea lovers all over the world, there are tips to help growers in many different climates. Aimed at the enthusiastic gardener, rather than exhibitor, there are suggestions for plants to grow with Sweet Peas and flowers that look wonderful, arranged together in a vase. Truly stunning photography and amazing arrangements, by Scandinavia's best photographers and florists.



One chapter discussing the history of the Sweet Pea from a different perspective, mentioning prominent personalities from the past and present. A ground breaking section, describes the nuances of scent in many of the well-known varieties – it is almost like wine tasting! This new kind of publication about Sweet Peas, brought together in a high-quality format; a hardback running to 240 pages. Available in English or Swedish versions.

The Swedish launch will be on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> November at Groens Malmgård, Stockholm, a little-known and very atmospheric historic building. The UK launch will be at Hilltop, RHS Wisley on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> December, between 11am and 2pm. There will be talks and presentations, seed sales and obviously book signing; with a chance to meet both Cecilia and Phil and learn about what led us to create this desirable new book.

Available to pre-order now at [www.englishsweetpeas.co.uk](http://www.englishsweetpeas.co.uk) with free p&p before the end of November.

## **Encouraging Novices (and pass it on!)**

By Phillipa Cooper

It was very pleasing that we had 7 entries in the novice classes at Wem this year. One novice, Frank, wrote to our Show Manager, Rose on the final day of the show. His letter is included at the end of this article.

I wonder what made you decide to exhibit for the first time. Perhaps a family member was already involved in exhibiting, and it was a natural progression to follow in their footsteps? Was it a visit to a show that inspired you or did you enjoy being part of practical classes such as those held in the North West?

Thinking back to the beginning of the century, a visit to the Eckford Sweet Pea Show in Wem was a turning point for John and myself. Visiting the show for the first time was a wonderful experience. The sight of so many beautiful blooms and the amazing perfume when we entered the marquee was something that we will always remember. We decided there and then that we wanted to be part of such an amazing event. The following year we arrived at Wem with a motley bunch of sweet peas, no leaves and definitely no idea what to do. Fortunately, the Show Manager John Good was on hand to help and guide us. Without him we would probably never have started exhibiting.

Moving forward to 2023, Matt Lloyd was the winner of the best vase at Wem. I decided to ask him about his progress from novice to expert grower. Matt became interested in growing sweet peas when he took on his allotment. When entering the first local, horticultural show his blooms were arranged in a drinks bottle and a flask as no vases were provided. However, he still won a 1<sup>st</sup> and a 3<sup>rd</sup> prize. Later that year Matt visited the Southport show where he met Tom Atherton who signed him up for the NSPS.

The following year, Matt applied to enter for his first major competition, the Yorkshire Show. He realised that he had very limited experience staging blooms. Fortunately, Darren Myers was there busy staging his own vases. Matt remembers that Darren stopped working on his own display and spent several hours that night showing him how to stage a vase. The following week Matt entered his first National Show and once again Darren (and also Ian Myers) advised Matt with practical details of staging. Now, of course, Matt and Darren compete against each other within friendly rivalry with great success!

In July, Frank Forrest of Bunbury, Cheshire, entered as a novice at Wem after visiting the show last year. I met up with Frank at his local gardening group in March this year and he was pleased to say that his plants were coming on well and he was definitely still planning on entering. When Frank arrived on Friday evening with his blooms it was Matt Lloyd who was busy staging his vases for the open classes. The letter that Rose Horner, the Wem Show Manager, received from Frank sums up just how vital it is that knowledge is passed on to encourage as many novices as possible.

I am pleased to say that Frank won first prize for his vase of Banty (in the pink, red or cerise class) and second for his vase of blue. Here is a transcription of Frank's letter:



Frank Forrest

## Sweet Pea Virgin

Frank Forrest

I visited the Wem Sweet Pea Show in 2023 and was astonished, amazed and delighted by the range of colours, size and scents of the various classes of sweet peas. Because I was so enamoured, I bought two varieties and followed the very clear instructions given to me on how to sow and grow them. I decided to enter the show in 2024. After following all the instructions I was given, I had, what I thought, some magnificent flowers and entered 5 different classes. I arrived at the venue at 7.30pm on the Friday night before the show not really having a clue what to do.

The Show Manager Rose, who was very helpful, introduced me to Matt Lloyd who had come all the way from Blackburn. He took me under his wing and showed me exactly what to do. He also helped me to select my best blooms and explain “right” and “left”. I prepared my vases, which took me ages, but all the while watched over by Matt. He was brilliant, as were his own entries. This was the very first show I had entered and was extremely nervous but I shouldn’t have been, as everyone was very friendly and helpful.

After seeing the other exhibitors’ vases of flowers, I didn’t hold out much hope for my own, but it was a new and exciting experience. I shall definitely enter again next year!

To everyone, I urge you to “have a go”. You don’t need acres of garden to grow a few stems and the pleasure you get is beyond price, it is good for your physical and mental wellbeing.

Many thanks to Rose Horner and Matt Lloyd and all those behind the scenes for a brilliant show. I am no longer a sweet pea virgin!

*Ed. The NSPS has always been known as the Friendly Society for exactly these reasons. Every single experienced member recalls their first time at a show and the helpful person(s) who made their day such a memorable one. This is why we then are all so pleased to give assistance to other newbies. Thanks, Matt, for carrying on the tradition!*

## **Leading by example**

Roz Warley

It has been a topsy turvy season, during which my sweet peas really didn't stand a chance! However, exhibiting aside I would like to share some positives from Scotland.

As a DR, my intention is to make contact with the local groups and grass roots exhibitors. Being fairly new to this area, it really is my role as DR to let people know I am here and connect them to the society, in order for them to learn about, and enjoy growing, maybe even getting into showing, but also helping with shows, displays and other activities, such as talks.

Through making and sending out rosettes to local shows this has given me the chance to make an initial contact with those I might otherwise not be able to or know about.

Presently the show secretaries are sending me photos of their winning vases and the recipients of the rosettes etc, in fact an email came in this morning from Largs Flower Show. This then gives the opportunity to speak to them regarding their local gardening groups, making sure they have my details (particularly relevant if they are more distant, as being the DR for Scotland, it does cover a very large area!) I can then photocopy and send off some membership forms and other details about the NSPS, hoping they might get into the hands of potential new members.

Along the way I can also send out informative emails; perhaps along the lines of "If you would like to be able to grow sweet peas to show standard, then connect with us", for the show secretaries to pass over to their local clubs, members and neighbouring societies. Don't forget, most of the shows are run by an existing local group or society. This is just an example to show how an idea, given to the right people can grow, hopefully resulting in more members for our Society; indeed, it is this approach which has brought two new societies wishing to affiliate to the NSPS this year.

So, DRs, if you're not already engaged within your area, try approaching local shows and societies, and don't forget there is a huge amount of experience to draw on in the NSPS, you are not alone! New members, in a lot of instances will need your valuable support, and the icing on the cake is the NSPS not only retaining its membership but growing.

The two Facebook groups which our Society have been instrumental in setting up and running which can assist us all for communications. The “National Sweet Pea Society Members Only Chat Room” which, as Graeme alluded to, is still finding ‘its niche’. This private, NSPS members only (so no spam, guaranteed) chat room was designed and set up for DR engagement with their local and neighbouring membership, for the sharing of information about local events etc. At the moment, the 42 members are a little starved of engagement in there; this will improve of course, as everyone gets used to its function.

There certainly is a big difference between this and the public “For the love of Sweet Peas incorporating the NSPS” site. This fantastic and popular group, now run by Darren Myers, has a 3,100 worldwide membership. It actively shares anything and everything sweet pea related, including questions and suggestions from novices through to many of the most experienced growers, breeders and specialist nurseries.

As well as tapping into Darren’s vast knowledge, it’s an interesting site just to drop in and see what’s been posted recently. We obviously hope that our more targeted chatroom, gradually increases its traffic, but that, as ever, is up to you, the membership.

I am confident that our great and locally active team of DRs, will steadily become more confident in using social media as well as the Website and the more traditional but still very relevant Bulletins and Annual. I politely ask that if you could start to use the chatroom a little more, as a method of keeping things pertinent, it will become a very handy place for the members to drop in? One of the benefits is that you can post things at anytime from anywhere – we do after all have very busy and different lives, so the flexibility is very welcome!

## **Report from Herefordshire and Worcestershire**

Meg Clay, District Rep

First of all, I would like to give a warm welcome to our new members; I'm sure that you will find the information the society offers on the website and in the publications invaluable. I hope that you have enjoyed a good season of growing, cutting and showing. I know that one or two shows in Herefordshire and Worcestershire did not take place this year, the main issue being a lack of volunteers. The National Society is a good platform to advertise your local show, so let us know of any shows that you are involved with, so that we can inform other members.

Over the borders we were pleased to hear that the Gloucestershire Open Sweet Pea Show took place in Cheltenham and the Wem Sweet Pea Show in Shropshire.

As for myself, it was a case this year of “if at first you don’t succeed...”.

With the mild winter, I heeded advice and put my seedlings outside the greenhouse to grow on. Unfortunately, I had forgotten the warnings about mice and on my daily inspection found my seeds had provided a tasty meal. I made another sowing, determined not to make the same mistake. Fortunately, they grew on nicely with no further attacks and were eventually planted out.

However, when arriving to check on them one morning, I was mystified to find that half the row had been sheared off – all to the same height. Then, we spotted the rabbit droppings! In twenty-two years, we had never had rabbits in the garden. We had lost our dear seventeen-year-old Tom cat in March – clearly, he had been doing a better job than we realised. To save the rest of the peas, I erected barriers of chicken wire and anything else I could find to protect the young plants. They didn't enhance the look of the plot, but the plants did manage to grow away.

Eventually, I am pleased to report that we had some lovely blooms which seem to have enjoyed the cool conditions we have experienced this year.

## Success for new North Wales member - and an unexpected meeting at a local Show!

By Phillipa Cooper

John and I always enjoy visiting other local horticultural shows when we are in different areas, so at the end of August whilst on holiday in North Wales, we decided to drive over to Llangernyw. Despite it only being a small village, it was a tremendous Show. As we viewed the wonderful show benches, several names kept on appearing including two NSPS district reps., John Rowlands (Welsh region) and Allan Evans (North Wales region). However, we also noticed a name that only became familiar to us at the Royal Welsh Show in July. Jenny Morgan had signed up Bryn Lloyd Roberts as a new member at Builth Wells. However, it hadn't occurred to us that the Llangernyw Show was on his home territory!



Bryn Lloyd Roberts

Bryn is a very well respected and experienced grower who shows across North Wales. He grows a range of superb vegetables and flowers, including dahlias alongside his sweet peas. It was lovely to meet up with Bryn again. Now he is a member of the NSPS we look forward to hopefully welcoming him to NSPS Shows, including the Late National and Wem in 2025.

## Junior winning an NSPS rosette

Junior exhibitor Alex Cooper, shown here with his vase of 'Gwendoline', was the winner of one of the new NSPS rosettes that are now being awarded to best vases &/or exhibits by non-affiliated societies. These are made and supplied by Roz Warley, our District Reps coordinator.



Alex Cooper alongside the local mayor and his winning vase of 7 stems of 'Gwendoline'

Alex exhibited at the Chorley and District Garden Club on 7 September 2024, accompanied by his grandad. Locals Julia Beardmore and Carole Tate were on hand to chat about staging including left-hand and right-hand blooms and encourage them both to attend the social they are running, where it is hoped the NSPS membership forms will be completed!

Do remember, especially as we are heading to present giving time of year, that there are various levels of membership available, including Junior!

## **NSPS Rosette Winner in Gloucestershire**

By Phillipa Cooper

Many congratulations to Denise Bonner of Sutton Coldfield who was presented with the newly designed NSPS rosette for her vase of Sir Jimmy Shand in the 3-vase class. In fact, Denise is a new member this year and she has certainly got off to a flying start. Her success at the Gloucestershire Open Show follows on from some excellent results the previous week at the Chiltern Show.



Denise Bonner with her vase of Sir Jimmy Shand and new NSPS rosette (c/o Roz Warley)

This is the first year that these rosettes (c/o Roz Warley) were made available, specifically for non-affiliated societies to present to winners of best vases or exhibits. I am very pleased to say that Phil Champion the Show Manager, has decided to apply for affiliation, ready for the 2025 season.

Phil told me that he was very pleased with the increased number of entries this year and that he is also considering altering the schedule to include a class for novices in 2025. It is very pleasing to see this Show thriving again, after being restarted in 2023. It would be remiss of me not to congratulate Jenny and Lewis Morgan of Abergavenny for their tremendous results at this show. A full report with results will be printed in the Annual.

After such a successful first year of exhibiting Denise is hoping to enter other shows including the Late National and Wem next year, where I am sure she will enjoy further success.

## **New to Exhibiting Sweet Peas? Then read on!**

Carole Tate, Show Manager (Late Exhibition)

If you are new to exhibiting sweet peas, I would first urge you to scrutinise the Exhibition Schedule and plan well for success. For NSPS Shows, you need to decide which division you will be entering; for example, if you are growing 100 cordon plants you would be in Division IV.

The divisions allow growers to compete against members who grow a similar number of plants. Check which cultivars you are growing and work out how many Spencer blooms you will need for each vase class. As a general rule of thumb, you will need three plants for each stem entered, so for a vase of 7 stems you would need to be growing approximately 21 plants of a one cultivar. If you wanted to enter the three-vase distinct class, (distinct means recognisably different colours) you would need 21 of three different cultivars, ie 63 plants. If on the day you do not have enough flowers to enter the single vase there is the option to enter a mixed vase (not less than three different cultivars). If you have more than 7 stems of one variety you could also or instead of, enter the classes in the higher divisions, paying particular attention to the number of stems required. Division III is for 9 stems per vase, Division II is for 12 stems and Division 1 is 15 stems. In all vases, please note that the wording is “not more than”, which does mean that if you are short of one stem (or if it is a particularly poor one) you can leave it out and still be judged. However, you will be down pointed, although probably not so much as if you included that really bad stem!

When choosing which cultivars to grow, you can look back through the recent NSPS Annuals at the Show Audits, which detail the most popular varieties and their success in the show. Use this as a rough guide, as what grows well for one person does not mean that it will for you; different soil types and growing positions all contribute.

In most divisions the decorative exhibits are staged in a small bowl/saucer (provided) take 24 stems of mixed cultivars with any foliage (always check the schedule). It is always worth reading the rules carefully to check if the foliage allowed is own or any. There are also some special classes that allow small flowers, grasses or seed heads. Division V is for non-cordon grown plants which will not only include Old-Fashioned, Modern Grandiflora and semi-grandiflora forms of *L. odoratus* (sweet peas), but also Perennial and Annual *Lathyrus* species. Again, you need to plant out enough of the right kinds to ensure you have enough flowers to enter the class or classes that you have chosen to grow for. The species are exhibited with own foliage and buds are allowed. Classes have recently been introduced into the schedules for Novice growers, so you might also consider those if you are new to exhibiting.

The separate Decorative division (VI) is very popular, particularly with growers who have smaller gardens. Again, I would encourage you to study the schedule and work out how many blooms are needed, which cultivars and types are allowed, what foliage (if any) and what size restrictions the arrangement may have, plus whether any accessories are allowed. This division allows opportunities to display sweet peas in different arrangements, letting your imagination run and most likely, then be rewarded with gasps of delight from the judges and public. It also gives you opportunity to use your shorter stemmed blooms!

Try to work out what date your 'peas will be blooming and aim for them to peak for the date of the competition. This may mean nipping off buds to stop them flowering too early, or successional planting to extend the flowering period (particularly regarding the annual species types). Try to time any layering that you might be doing (of cordon grown Spencers) so that it is between shows to ensure you will have long, straight stems, and don't forget to feed and water regularly.

Make sure you know when the staging times are and leave plenty of time to pack your blooms carefully for transporting, keeping them as cool as possible to retain freshness. Have your staging material and equipment ready beforehand and identify which blooms will be entered into which class. When you arrive at the exhibition venue, collect your entry cards and vases/bowls/saucers. You will also need Variety Cards to write the names of your sweet pea cultivars used and it is common practice to add a set of sweet pea leaves at the front and back of the vase. If you are not sure, look at the photos in the NSPS publications or check with other exhibitors. Please check through the Regulations for Exhibitors, also, reading through the Judges Rules booklet will be very useful. We aim to be fair to all exhibitors, giving each the opportunity to maximise the potential of their sweet peas, within set rules and regulations. Do refer any questions to the Show Manager. Lots of hints and tips and other useful information can be found in past publications, on the website [www.sweetpeas.org.uk](http://www.sweetpeas.org.uk) the Facebook groups ("For the Love of Sweet Peas" and the "Members only chat room") and of course, via your local District Representative (DR) and fellow members.

Once your entries are on the show bench you can sit back and relax whilst Judging takes place. At the NSPS Exhibitions you are offered the opportunity to take part in Stewarding which is an excellent opportunity to see what the Judges are looking for and get a better understanding of what makes a good exhibit. You might also be able to help the other volunteers on the Society stand, setting up a display, bunching up blooms to sell; help is always in short supply so please do volunteer and enjoy the comradery. I hope you will now be encouraged to enter your blooms and exhibits in one or more shows during the flowering season, including our NSPS Exhibitions. Many horticultural shows across the country are struggling to survive; without entries and volunteers to help run them, there will be no shows. I look forward to seeing you (and your 'peas) at one of the many events during 2025 and beyond.



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