

NATIONAL  
SWEET PEA SOCIETY  
ANNUAL  
— 2025 —



# The Early National Show

Will be held at

**WEBBS GARDEN CENTRE  
MILLETS FARM FRILFORD  
OXON, OX13 5HB  
21 & 22 JUNE 2025**

The Show will be open

**Saturday 10.30am - 5.00pm  
Sunday 10.00am - 4.00pm**

Presentation of awards at 2.00pm on Saturday

**Show Manager:** Caroline Ball

**Entries to:**

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**Staging:**

Friday 20 June 4pm to 11pm Sat-  
urday 21 June 6am to 9.30am

**Judging:**

9.45am Saturday 21 June

**FREE PARKING • REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE**



N A T I O N A L  
SWEET PEA SOCIETY  
A N N U A L  
2 0 2 5

*Love is like a beautiful flower which I may not touch, but whose fragrance  
makes the garden 'a place of delight just the same'*

Helen Keller

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Cover: 'Ruby's Gown'  
Photo courtesy of English Sweet Peas

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and Janet Bulstrode for all their help in producing this Annual.  
Without them it would not have been possible.

The opinions expressed by contributors to this publication are their own  
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**'Cream Egg' for seed production.** *Photo by Caroline Ball..*

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Trustees, and Executive Committee, in whom all property and funds of the Society are vested and who make decisions regarding the recipients of special awards, prizes, medals or trophies which may be granted from time to time by the Society are:

President	Chairman of Committee	Deputy Chairman of Committee
Honorary Treasurer	Honorary Secretary	

Three representatives from the general committee to be elected on 23 April 2025

The 2024-25 elected representatives were Laurie Burrell, Phil Johnson and Jenny Morgan.

The NSPS website is run and managed by:

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# AGM

## AGM 2025

*By Caroline Ball*

The 120th National Sweet Peas Society AGM was held on 8 March 2025 at the Kings Court Hotel, Kings Coughton, Warwickshire. The Chairman, Alison Shreeve welcomed everyone and invited them to introduce themselves and give some insight into their first experience of Sweet Peas. It was interesting to note how often parents and grandparents were the link.

A minute's silence was held in memory of those members we have lost in the last year.

The minutes of the 2024 AGM were available on the tables and they were proposed and seconded as a true record of the meeting. The Chairman and Secretary's reports had been Published in the Spring Bulletin, no questions were raised thereon. The Treasurer read out a comprehensive report of the activities of the Society for the last 12 months and its financial results. This was profit of £9,424 which are included in detail later in this section. The accounts and trustees report were formally adopted by the meeting. The 100 club was drawn

**1st** £100 74, GW Putman of Kenley

**2nd** £25 9, Nick Bishop

**3rd** £10 1, Graeme Abblitt

Two new committee members had been nominated, Phil Champion and Neal Hatch both of whom are keen exhibitors so known to many members. They were elected unanimously. Julia Beardmore, Jen and Lewis Morgan, Roz Warley and Laurie Burrell all resigned under the three-year rule, but offered themselves for re-election. The AGM elected them unanimously.

The officers of the Society also all offered themselves for re-election and were appointed as follows:

**President** Roger Parsons

**Chairman** Alison Shreeve

**Vice Chairman** Graeme Hollingdale

**General Secretary** Carole Tate

**Treasurer** Caroline Ball

**Membership Secretary** Julia Beardmore

The independent examiner Lucinda de Quincey Adams was also re-elected.

Alison Shreeve gave the Jack Davis citation with the winner being a very surprised Roz Warley, district rep coordinator, who had joined the meeting on zoom. Alison noted all the hard work and enthusiasm that Roz brings to her role and the Society. In response Roz said that she thoroughly enjoys what she does for the Society. The full citation is included elsewhere in this Annual.

Roger Parsons gave a short Trials report which is included in this Annual. The Askham Trials had to be abandoned because of the wet weather, though Andrew Beane's personal comments on the submitted entries are included in the Trials section. At West Dean, there were 17 entries and the F C. Harriss award for best seedling went to entry number 14 a Spencer type red stripe which has been introduced by Fothergills as 'Greenfingers Cherry' submitted by Phil Johnson. In accepting the award, Phil noted that the origin of 'Greenfingers Cherry' was in 2016 out of a purple rogue found in a row of 'Millie' which in the following year produced a selection of picotees and stripes, six of which were selected for onward growing, and this was one of them



Next was an item, not on the agenda, but a very pleasant one. Caroline Ball gave the citation for the 44th award of the Henry Eckford medal, which is given rarely and only then to people who have made an exceptional contribution to the Sweet Pea or its Society, which was awarded to Phil Johnson whose contribution to both has been immense. The citation is reproduced in full later in this section. Phil accepted the award from Roger Parsons and was both stunned and honoured. He later told me it was his 'best Sweet Pea day ever'.

A proposal was put before the AGM to delegate to the committee the ability to set the postage element of membership. Julia Beardmore explained this was necessary since postage costs were going up regularly and significantly. This was particularly problematic with overseas postage. Having the AGM agree such changes was an issue because there was such a lag in implementing the change, since for example the AGM of 2025 could only agree a change of rate applicable for 2026 whereas the committee which meets 5 times a year could be more reactive to increased (or decreased) charges. The proposal was agreed unanimously.

The AGM was asked to agree to appoint Simon Coia as caretaker District Rep for Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. Simon comes from this region and visits regularly. The proposal was agreed.

Alison Shreeve gave notice of some of the celebrations planned for 125 Years of the Society including outings to the West Dean Trials and hopefully also to Barnsdale, the gardens of Geoff Hamilton which were both greeted with enthusiasm. Members were also reminded about the Wem show and encouraged to attend.

There was no further business under AOB with the formal part of the day being concluded with a hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman.

After lunch matters resumed with a very generously supported raffle and auction skilfully run by Jenny Morgan and Laurie Burrell, ably assisted by Phillippa Cooper and Jim McDonald. The raffle raised £205 and the auction £131

The plant competition results were announced with overall winners being Jen and Lewis Morgan.

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>SWEET PEAS</b>	<b>No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED</b>
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1	AUTUMN SOWN - 6 PLANTS, MAX. POT SIZE 5"/13CM 1st Jim McDonald 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
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2	AUTUMN SOWN - SINGLE PLANT IN ANY CONTAINER 1st Jim McDonald 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
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3	SPRING SOWN - 6 PLANTS, MAX. POT SIZE 5"/13CM 1st Jen & Lewis Morgan 2nd Carole Tate 3rd –	(2)
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4	SPRING SOWN - SINGLE PLANT IN ANY CONTAINER 1st Jen & Lewis Morgan 2nd Carole Tate 3rd Jane Robbins	(3)
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<b>CLASS</b>	<b>LATHYRUS SPECIES</b>	<b>No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED</b>
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5	LATHYRUS VERNUS - MAX POT SIZE 10"/24CM 1st Carole Tate 2nd Julia Beardmore 3rd Phillippa Cooper	(4)
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6	LATHYRUS VERNUS - 7 STEMS, FLOWERS & FOLIAGE, OWN VASE 1st Carole Tate 2nd Jen & Lewis Morgan 3rd –	(2)
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<b>CLASS</b>	<b>SPRING FLOWERS</b>	<b>No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED</b>
7	DAFFODIL – ANY VARIETY, 1 SPECIMEN, CUT STEM, OWN VASE 1st Roger Parsons 2nd Jen & Lewis Morgan 3rd Laurie Burrell	(7)
8	DAFFODIL – ANY VARIETIES, 3 CUT STEMS, OWN VASE 1st Carole Tate 2nd Laurie Burrell 3rd Roger Parsons	(5)
9	DAFFODIL – MINIATURE, 1 VARIETY, 3 CUT STEMS, OWN VASE 1st Roger Parsons 2nd Phillippa Cooper 3rd Julia Beardmore	(5)
10	SPRING S10 – CONTAINER – ANY SIZE, OF GROWING BULBS, ANY VARIETY OR VARIETIES 1st Jen & Lewis Morgan 2nd Roger Parsons 3rd Phillippa Cooper	(4)

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>SPRING FLOWERS</b>	<b>No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED</b>
11	A MIXED VASE OF ANY CUT SPRING FLOWERS, OWN VASE 1st Jane Robbins 2nd Jen & Lewis Morgan 3rd Julia Beardmore	(7)
12	A FLOWERING POT PLANT IN BLOOM, POT UP TO 8"/20CM DIAMETER 1st Jen & Lewis Morgan 2nd Roger Parsons 3rd Jane Robbins	(4)

The AGM then broke out into 3 groups to discuss individual elements of the paper regarding shows and related issues which had been published in the Spring Bulletin. This proved to be enthusiastically received with lots of ideas, some of them conflicting, being fed back. There isn't space to cover everything discussed here and the full feedback will be considered and debated by the committee. What follows are some of the highlights.

The first group to feedback was considering shows. They asked themselves the question 'what is a Sweet Pea show for' and concluded it was to promote Sweet Peas to a wider audience with the competition element being the secondary purpose. The group felt 2 shows should be kept because of the difficulties of finding a date and venue to suit everyone. They concluded more use of digital and virtual shows should be explored. They felt more should be made of Grandifloras and that flower farms should be engaged and encouraged to participate. They felt the schedule should be condensed and simplified. Encouragement of grass roots shows was also seen as key to development of National growers of the future.

The second group considered how to increase exhibitors. There had been much discussion about how to encourage people to grow Sweet Peas with examples such as giving out free seeds at talks and shows. They thought a direct SurveyMonkey type survey of members should be undertaken. Mentoring was seen as essential with a role



**AGM Plant Competition.**  
Photo by Carole Tate.

for the District Representatives in this and specific and targeted help being available for anyone that wanted it at shows. The use of social media in all of its guises was thought to be an opportunity to show people in simple steps how to grow and show. There was some debate about whether a 1 day show might encourage more people to have a go at showing as the time commitment would be perceived as less onerous.

Working with local shows to encourage classes and promote them was seen as a way to encourage the first steps of development of National exhibitors of the future. The question was raised as to whether the level of prize money was an incentive or disincentive. The group was not convinced of the impact of this but thought it was a good idea to benchmark the level of prize money compared with other specialist Societies.

The final group considered how to develop more show managers. They were of the view that sharing the load was very important. That checklists of requirements should be produced and the knowledge shared. They saw social media as a place to promote shows as they were happening and to drum up excitement about them. They felt that bringing a friend to help at a show was also a good way to increase the pool of helpers and to develop them for the future. Joining up with affiliated society shows was also seen as an opportunity.

The general committee will be tasked with taking all of the views and deciding on next steps which will be feedback and tested on members in due course.



**'America'.** Photo by Caroline Ball.

# Chairman's Report

*By Alison Shreeve*

2024 was a very challenging year on many fronts for the Society and for my Sweet Peas in particular. I started with a sowing in November which I did on kitchen paper and then transplanted germinated seeds into root trainers. I haven't used this method before and I won't use it again! Germination was patchy and prolonged which didn't bode well. However, those that transplanted grew well until they were several inches tall and then they started to mysteriously die off. This affected odd plants and didn't seem to be one variety or type – Spencers, Grandifloras and Old Fashioned were all affected. The root systems looked healthy and I couldn't see any visible signs of disease.

I made a second sowing in January this time directly into pots. These fared a little better but then seemed to stop growing. By normal planting out time, I had a motley collection of miserable looking plants. I struggled to find 100 to plant out as cordons having to use some very feeble looking specimens to complete the rows. The Spring was cold and overcast and things just sat there looking awful. 'Spare' plants – those that looked too weedy to bother with - were left in their pots on the edge of the plot. I finally planted these out as bush grown plants in another part of the garden; some of them eventually started to grow.

Then came the slugs... I think everyone had an infestation in 2024, it seemed to be the only thing in the garden enjoying the conditions. I had leaves and leaders eaten out by slugs, something else (possibly mice?) had chopped three tops off. My cordons by this time were looking pitiful although thankfully, they had started to grow.

When they did start to produce flower buds, inevitably they developed bud drop. I had bud drop on and off through to July, which has never happened to me before. What else could go wrong? I wondered about layering them, but they looked so brittle that I didn't dare to move them. By the time it came to put in the entries for the Early show I was struggling to think what I could manage, but I did put an entry in. Then came a phone call from Roger, on the Saturday morning before the show. He was worried about the lack of entries, as we needed to fill a large space in the Hilltop Centre at RHS Wisley. Previously when we had our Early Show there, Phil Johnson had been able to provide blooms for a display alongside those from the Trials which were growing at the RHS gardens.

This year nobody in the South had any spare blooms unless they were growing under glass/polytunnels; added to this, Phil had a crisis at one of his sites and had to prioritise getting that resolved. We rallied the troops and had a zoom conversation where we went through possible solutions after analysing the issues. There would have to be the collection and returning the show benches, vases, bowls, exhibition boards, table

coverings etc to the east coast. Was there someone able to stand in for Phil and his roles at the Show? Was there anyone able to provide additional help? Nobody had filled in this part of the entry form, so we just had those few people we knew about in the Chiltern District who might be able to help.

It was with very great reluctance that we bowed to Roger's greater knowledge and experience of show management and decided that there was simply no practical alternative, so we would have to cancel. Roger duly rang around the few who had submitted exhibits and told them the bad news. It was devastating for all of us but particularly for those who had planned for the larger classes and had been growing and tending to their Sweet Peas for months.

It was not a decision taken lightly and I hope one we will never have to make again; but it was one which the RHS understood. The weather had been so dreadful over the preceding months that things were not normal. Ironically the sun came out and stayed out over the next five days and by the original Early show day I would have had more than I thought possible when I submitted the entry form and of pretty good quality too. If only we had a crystal ball. We have since had other offers of help which might have changed the balance of thinking on cancellation, but hindsight is a wonderful thing too.

The committee had one face to face meeting which are so much better than the zoom meetings we normally have, but zoom is more eco-friendly and also enables everyone from all corners of the British Isles to attend. We decided that in 2025 we will go back to the traditional in person AGM format in the hope that the social aspects of the Society, missed by many, will return in some small measure. I hope that many of you will be able to attend and I can get to meet more members.

In spite of the weather and the poor start my Sweet Peas eventually picked up and I took some to the Royal Welsh show – an event that I had never been to previously! This was a great eye-opener – the largest agricultural show I had been to. Jenny and Lewis Morgan plus members of the North Wales District produced a wonderful display in the newly opened Horticultural Tent. There were disappointingly few exhibitors, though the exhibits were great. I would encourage members to have a go and even to take a few days holiday to go and visit the show which is very well organised and quite spectacular. The landscape around Bulth Wells is beautiful and it didn't rain once!

My season lasted longer than any in the past ten years. I had flowers to enter in my local horticultural show at the beginning of September and even at the end of the month there were a few blooms still to pick. Oddly, my *L. latifolius* only started to flower in late July. Normally I have had some for the Early show in June and it has been at its best in mid-August. Last year it seemed to be a full two months later than usual and lasting into the end of September. All in all, a very strange year for weather and growing conditions for Sweet Peas.

Your committee have been discussing ways to celebrate the 125th year of the Society. This includes special classes for the National Shows, so please have a go and support the celebrations. You might like to have a special event such as a visit to a great Sweet Pea garden with afternoon tea for those in your area. Please let us know if you are planning something special and we will advertise it to members through the website and through our emailing system which we now have up and running. We have also started a series of winter talks and question time sessions via zoom. We would love to hear what you think about these and if you have any suggestions for topics to interest the membership.

Please don't forget to check out the resources in the members area of the website – we have added several things to it this year and if you would like to see something which you can't find please let us know and we will do our best to provide it.

One of the biggest issues facing the Society is the challenge of putting on the shows and getting new exhibitors involved. This will be one of the biggest topics of discussion in the coming year, so if you have any views or ideas about the best way forward do speak to your District Rep and also contact any committee member. If you prefer to do this via Facebook there is the Members Only Chat Room where you can air your views as well.

I look forward to a joyful celebration of the Society's 125th Year.

## General Secretary's Report

*By Carole Tate*

As we usher in another year of celebrating the beauty and diversity of Sweet Peas, I am pleased to provide an update on some of my activities and plans for 2025.

The year started with our North West Workshops, run over several weeks, where we encouraged an enthusiastic group of gardeners to sow, pot on, nip off and take home Sweet Pea seedlings with instructions on how to grow them on. They were invited back later in the year to help at various plant fairs and the setting up and giving advice on our NSPS Information Bureau. We also encouraged entry into the local and National shows with workshops on exhibiting and creative floral arrangements.

We also participated in a couple of initiatives to encourage junior members; including attending a schools "Let's Get Growing" event which had 18 local schools represented with 75 children attending and assisting the staff at RHS Bridgewater during the May school holidays. We helped 350 children sow seeds, giving the pots to take home to grow on. At RHS Bridgewater, those children who brought along flowers, or photos of their flowers to the Late National, were awarded with a "Well Done" certificate.

Tatton Show was soon upon us and the huge task of sourcing flowers for the stand, setting up and arranging the display and finding enough volunteers to man the stand took place. The efforts of all the volunteers were rewarded with a well-deserved Gold Award.

Despite challenging weather conditions, enough 'Peas were blooming by July, ensuring a good turnout for the Late National Show at RHS Bridgewater Gardens, near Manchester. Congratulations to all our exhibitors and especially the award winners, whose vibrant blooms and floral arrangements captivated judges and attendees alike.

The North West Region Show at Chorley Flower Show followed on shortly after and was again well attended. Close on its heels was the display at Southport Flower Show in August, where we again won a Gold Award, as well as NSPS members winning on the show bench. Separate show reports are included in this Annual.

These events are a great opportunity to catch up with like-minded fellow Sweet Pea growers and pick up hints and tips on growing and exhibiting.

Preparations for the Early and Late National Shows are well underway for 2025. This year we will also be celebrating our 125 year Anniversary of the founding of the National Sweet Pea Society and have introduced two special Classes to celebrate the event. More details can be found in the Exhibition Schedule, the Autumn 2024 Bulletin, in this Annual and on the NSPS website.

I encourage all members to participate in the shows, whether by entering blooms, volunteering, or attending the events. Please check the Events page on our website for locations and registration information in addition to what is included in the exhibitions schedule publication.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the committee members, volunteers, and all our members who contribute to the success of the Society. Your dedication ensures that the National Sweet Pea Society remains a beacon for Sweet Pea enthusiasts worldwide.

In closing, let us continue to nurture our gardens and share our love for these remarkable flowers. May your Sweet Peas flourish, bringing joy and colour to the months ahead.

*“No occupation is so delightful to me as  
the culture of the earth, and no culture  
comparable to that of the garden.”*

Thomas Jefferson

# Treasurer's Report

*By Caroline Ball*

2024 was another challenging year for Sweet Pea growers. The sad cancellation of the Early National impacted both exhibitors and the financial results of the Society. The activities and finances are also still showing the residual impact of the devastation covid created across so many aspects of life.

The overall result for the year was a profit of £9,424 (2023 loss £(1,426)) this was after an unrealised gain of £7,788 (2023 loss of £(£983)) on investments held and managed by the CCLA. The CCLA is the UK's largest charity fund manager. They understand the investment strategy of charities like ours which includes the creation of revenue, the sustainability of investment over time and the control of risk, both financial and reputational. As I have said previously, investments do fluctuate in value year on year and should be looked at over the longer term. Whilst this year they have performed well it is true to say we do not have direct control over the performance of our investments (we could of course decide to move elsewhere or cash out the investments should the need arise) we do however control our charitable activities, which this year show a modest profit of £1,636 (2023 loss £(443)).

Income levels are down slightly to £22,051 (2023 £23,763). Membership and donations income has increased to £16,751 (2023 £15,625) which is starting to reflect the hard work being done by Julia Beardmore and others on membership and includes prize monies from displays such as RHS Tatton. Income from charitable activities was down to £1,911 from £5,011 in 2023 reflecting the impact of cancellation of the Early National at Wisley and a reduced number of displays.

Costs were also down to £20,415 from £24,206 in the previous year. The significant difference was the reduction in the cost of seeds purchased for sale at shows and displays plus the fact that prizes and exhibition costs were only incurred at one National. Also contributing to the reduced level of costs was the lack of periodic donations to other Societies to promote Sweet Peas in 2024. Other costs showed a small increase over the prior year reflecting largely small inflationary increases and funds being spent on things like producing extra publicity banners and leaflets, which have already been well used at an array of events.

The cost of the website, constructed in 2022 and 2023 has been capitalised and is being depreciated over 5 years. The value of our investments were £102,191 at this year end (2023 £94,403). Stock held was £17,765 up from £15,744 in 2023 reflecting principally the purchase of stamps prior to the increase in postage charges in early 2024 to smooth Society costs.

Debtors, cash and creditors were all at a similar level to 2023. Debtors include £1,716 gift aid claimed on membership and donations. Creditors include the cost of the independent examination and show prize cheques not yet cashed. The overall value of the Society was £133,799 at year end versus £124,375 last year. At this point I would like to pay a personal tribute to John Pratt who died in February. John was Treasurer of the Society for 40 years; he left the Society in a very strong financial position with a legacy of robust financial principles which we adhere to today. As John would have said these are a satisfactory set of results.



*'Karen Louise'. Photo by Darren Myers.*



'Zorija Rose'. Photo by Caroline Ball.

## Trustees Annual Report

### Year ended 31 October 2024

The Trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 October 2024.

#### Structure, governance and management

The Society was registered as a charity on 11 March 1964 under registration number 226802. The Society is governed by rules revised and adopted on 12 March 2016.

The general management of the Society is conducted by a general committee of up to sixteen persons from the Society's members to be elected for a period of three years at the Society's annual general meeting. The general committee has power to:

- Appoint an Executive Committee from the Society's members for the preparation and conduct of any business. The officers of the Society are automatically members of the Executive Committee. The members of the Executive Committee are the Trustees of the Society.
- Fill vacancies of officers and members of the committee occurring during the year and co-opt as deemed necessary.
- Appoint Society's representatives to the Sweet Pea Trials Committee.
- Appoint show managers, editors, advertising secretary, sub-committees, honorary members and president emeritus.

There shall not be fewer than three members of the Society appointed by the general committee as trustees, in addition to the officers of the Society (President, Chairman, Deputy Chairman, General Secretary, Membership Secretary, Treasurer), in whom all property and funds of the Society shall be vested in trust for the Society, and as to real property upon trust for sale with power to postpone sale. The trustees shall not sell any land and the funds shall not be vested or realised without the authority of the general committee.

#### Objectives and activities

The Society consists of Members and Affiliated Societies paying an annual or life subscription to the Society. The object of the Society is to disseminate knowledge of sweet peas and other *Lathyrus* species for the public benefit, to encourage, improve and extend the cultivation of these species by means of scientific trials and the holding of exhibitions and displays, by publications and such other lawful activities as the Trustees shall deem necessary.

## **Public benefit**

The Trustees consider they have complied with the duty in Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission.

## **Achievements and performance**

In 2024 the Society had planned to run two National shows. The Early National was to be held at RHS Wisley and The Late National took place again at RHS Bridgewater by kind invitation of the RHS. Unfortunately, the late season and factors outside the control of the Society led to the cancellation of the Early National. The Late National went ahead successfully and was very popular with the visiting public. The show had 123 exhibits staged by 20 exhibitors which delighted over 2,000 visitors over the weekend. Regional shows were held by the Chiltern Sweet Pea Society, the Yorkshire Sweet Pea Society, the New Forest Sweet Pea Society, the Eckford Society of Wem, the Royal Welsh Show and the North West Regions of the NSPS, each was well supported.

Most of the administrative meetings and the AGM on 2 March 2024 for the Society were held online.

During 2024, the Society produced five publications in total; three informative and educational journals, the Annual and two Bulletins, the comprehensive classification list of varieties and the show schedule which covered the two planned National shows. 'Enjoy Sweet Peas' was provided to all new members and made available to a wider public.

The Society website, which was relaunched in November 2023, continues to be an informative and popular way of connecting with members and the general public. The content is updated regularly with topical events and information and includes a member's only area. Online only membership, which was introduced in 2023 has modest but increasing uptake. A selection of videos have been created by members, hosted by YouTube, and are available to Society members via the members area of the Society website. Other new online initiatives include an 'Ask the Experts' zoom meeting answering members topical questions.

The Society uses its social media presence to reach out to members and beyond via its popular Facebook pages, its topical Instagram presence and its X (formerly Twitter) pages.

Trials of novel Sweet Peas, kindly sponsored by Westland Horticulture, were held at West Dean Gardens, Chichester, and Askham Bryan College, York. The Trials at West Dean were in a walled garden at this new venue for the NSPS having moved from Sparsholt in Hampshire. Head gardener Tom Brown and his team achieved an attractive and successful Trial with a full complement of judging possible and to where we will return to in 2025. The poor weather that impacted the Early National also

impacted the Trials at Askham Bryan and whilst the remaining plants were still tended they could not be judged. In total 17 varieties were grown at each venue with 8 novelties also grown at West Dean. 3 varieties were given awards.

A National Collection of Lathyrus, which also has Scientific National Collection status, is held by Society Trustee and President of the Society, Roger Parsons. This collection covers approximately 70 species and 1,300 cultivars.

The Society staged popular displays manned with experts available to answer questions at many prestigious horticultural shows open to the general public. The Society exhibit at RHS Tatton Park was again awarded an RHS Gold Medal. Other major shows attended with displays and information bureau included the Royal Windsor Flower Show where the NSPS display was visited by amongst many others, Mary Berry, the Royal Welsh Show, Chorley and the Southport flower show together with a number of plant fairs held during the spring.

The book launch of 'A World of Sweet Peas' by Cecilia Wingard and Philip Johnson took place at RHS Wisley in December 2024 and was supported by members of the Society. Members took part in workshops during February – April, the 'Let's Get Growing' initiative in schools and provided speakers for many horticultural Societies. A network of area representatives is maintained and work is being done to increase the level of regional activity as a way to enhance membership. Roz Warley, the district representative coordinator, and has established a forum for sharing ideas on Facebook and introduced a rosette which is available to local gardening societies to award for Sweet Pea classes. This initiative has generated some new Society members. Overall Membership of the Society has grown by c 5% in the last year.

## **Financial review**

Incoming resources of £22,051 arose during the financial year whilst outgoings were £20,415. The revaluation of our investments has given the Society an unrealised gain of £7,788. The overall result for the year is net income of £9,424 with a small profit of £1,636 before the unrealised gain on investments. The Society's unrestricted funds as at 31 October 2024 amounted to £133,799 (2023: £124,375) which includes Designated Funds of £30,583 (2023: £30,583).

## **Reserves Policy**

The Society's reserves consist of accumulated income and designated funds. The designated funds are identified with past members from donations received and held by the Society so as to provide income towards the cost of annual trophies given in memory of the past members and the Life membership fund contributes towards the cost of publications for life members. The funds are invested in COIF Charities Deposit Fund and COIF Charities Investment Fund income units. Reserves held as accumulated income are at a level determined by the Trustees and Management

Committee to provide assurance that the Society will be financially viable for the future and able to build on the Society's one hundred and twenty four years' of history.

The Trustees and Committee are mindful of the current cost of living crisis putting pressure on its activities and the ability of members and the general public to donate towards its charitable activities, the difficulty of securing volunteers to support its activities and to find suitable show venues at affordable prices. The financial review reports the level of reserves held at the financial year end.

### **Risk Management**

The Trustees have reviewed the risks to which the Society is exposed and consider there are no major risks facing the Society providing the Society has sufficient financial resources and volunteers to carry on its charitable activities.

The trustees' annual report was approved on 8 March 2025 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:

Prof A Shreeve, Trustee.



'Aurora Borealis'. Photo by Caroline Ball.

## Independent Examiner's Report to the Members of the National Sweet Pea Society

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of The National Sweet Pea Society ('the charity') for the year ended 31 October 2024.

### Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

### Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
3. the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair' view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.-

Lucinda De Quincey Adams MA ACA  
Independent Examiner

## Statement of Financial Activities

### Year ended 31 October 2024

		2024	2023
	Notes	Total funds	Total funds
		£	£
<b>INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS:</b>			
Subscriptions, donations and legacies	4	16,751	15,625
Charitable activities	5	1,911	5,099
Investment income	6	3,389	3,039
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>22,051</b>	23,763
<b>EXPENDITURE:</b>			
Charitable activities	7,8	20,415	24,206
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>20,415</b>	24,206
<b>NET GAINS/(LOSSES) ON INVESTMENTS</b>	10	<b>7,788</b>	(983)
<b>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)</b>		<b>9,424</b>	(1,426)
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>			
Total funds brought forward		<b>124,375</b>	125,801
<b>TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD</b>		<b>133,799</b>	124,375

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

## YOUR SOCIETY NEEDS YOU!

**Join the 100 Club. £10 joining fee, 5 draws a year.  
Prizes £100, £25, £10.**

Contact: Caroline Ball, Challow Mead, Silver Lane,  
West Challow, Oxon OX12 9TN

## Statement of Financial Position

### 31 October 2024

	Notes	2024 £	2023 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Investments	14	102,191	94,403
Website	13	2,640	3,520
		<b>104,831</b>	97,923
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Stock	15	17,765	15,744
Debtors	16	1,716	2,158
Cash at bank and in hand:		10,644	9,858
		<b>30,125</b>	27,760
<b>CREDITORS</b>			
Amounts due within one year	17	(1,157)	(1,308)
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>28,968</b>	26,452
Total assets less current liabilities		<b>133,799</b>	124,375
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>133,799</b>	124,452
<b>FUNDS OF THE CHARITY</b>			
Unrestricted funds	18	133,799	124,452
<b>TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS</b>		<b>133,799</b>	124,452

These financial statements were approved by the board of trustees and authorised for issue on 8 March 2025, and are signed on behalf of the trustees by:

Prof A Shreeve, Trustee

Ms C Ball, Trustee

The notes on the following pages form part of these financial statements.

# Notes to the Financial Statements

## Year ended 31 October 2024

### 1. General information

The charity is a public benefit entity and a registered charity in England and Wales and is unincorporated. The address of the principal office is Challow Mead, Silver Lane, West Challow, Oxfordshire, OX12 9TN.

### 2. Statement of compliance

These financial statements have been prepared in compliance with FRS 102, 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland', the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP (FRS 102)) and the Charities Act 2011.

### 3. Accounting policies

#### Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared on the historical cost basis, as modified by the revaluation of certain financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through income or expenditure.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the entity.

The entity constitutes as a public benefit entity as defined in FRS102.

#### Going concern

The trustees consider that there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue as a going concern.

#### Disclosure exemptions

The entity satisfied the criteria of being a small charity as defined in Charities Act 2011 and the Charities SORP (FRS102) and has taken advantage of the disclosure exemptions available to it.

## **Accounting period**

The accounting period runs to the 31 October each year.

## **Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty**

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported. These estimates and judgements are continually reviewed and are based on experience and other factors, including expectations of future events that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances.

No significant estimates or judgements have been made by management when preparing the financial statements. The policies followed are shown below.

## **Income tax**

The Society is exempt from taxation on its income and gains on investments.

## **Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees to further any of the charity's purposes.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the trustees for particular future project or commitment.

## **Incoming resources**

All income is included in the statement of financial activities when entitlement has passed to the charity, it is probable that the economic benefits associated with the transaction will flow to the charity and the amount can be reliably measured. The following specific policies are applied to particular categories of income:

Income from subscriptions and donations is recognised when there is evidence of entitlement to the gift, receipt is probable and its amount can be measured reliably. Investment income is recognised when receivable and is shown gross to include income tax recovered and recoverable. Investment income comprises the returns on investments for the year and interest on cash balances.

## **Resources expended**

Expenditure is recognised on an accruals basis as a liability is incurred. Expenditure includes any VAT which cannot be fully recovered, and is classified under headings of the statement of financial activities to which it relates:

- expenditure on raising funds includes the costs of all fundraising activities, events, charitable trading activities, and the sale of donated goods.
- expenditure on charitable activities includes all costs incurred by a charity in undertaking activities that further its charitable aims for the benefit of its beneficiaries, including those support costs and costs relating to the governance of the charity apportioned to charitable activities.

## **Depreciation**

Depreciation is calculated so as to write off the cost or valuation of an asset, less its residual value, over the useful economic life of that asset as follows:

Show Stands & Equipment – 33% straight line

Website – 20% straight line

## **Investments**

Investments are measured at fair value with changes in fair value being recognised in profit or loss.

## **Stocks**

Stocks are measured at the lower of cost and estimated selling price less costs to complete and sell. Cost includes all costs of purchase, costs of conversion and other costs incurred in bringing the stock to its present location and condition.

*“Don’t let the tall weeds cast a shadow  
on the beautiful flowers in your garden.”*

Steve Maraboli

#### 4. Subscriptions, donations and legacies

<b>FUNDS</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Total 2024</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Total 2023</b>
<b>DONATIONS</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
Donations	4,362	<b>4,362</b>	5,555	<b>5,555</b>
Legacy	2,000	<b>2,000</b>	–	<b>–</b>
<b>SUBSCRIPTIONS</b>				
Members	7,554	<b>7,554</b>	6,934	<b>6,934</b>
Affiliated societies	1,119	<b>1,119</b>	978	<b>978</b>
Gift Aid	1,716	<b>1,716</b>	2,158	<b>2,158</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,751</b>	<b>16,751</b>	<b>15,625</b>	<b>15,625</b>

The Trustees contributed £2,085 to the Charity in donations and sponsorship during the year (2023: £2,159).

#### 5. Charitable activities

	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>Funds £</b>	<b>2024 £</b>	<b>Funds £</b>	<b>2023 £</b>
Sale of goods as part of direct charitable activities	412	<b>412</b>	3,164	<b>3,164</b>
Trial Fees	40	<b>40</b>	217	<b>217</b>
Advertising in publications	838	<b>838</b>	558	<b>558</b>
100 club lottery	550	<b>550</b>	1,070	<b>1,070</b>
Exhibition entry fees	71	<b>71</b>	90	<b>90</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,911</b>	<b>1,911</b>	<b>5,099</b>	<b>5,099</b>

#### 6. Investment income

	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>Funds £</b>	<b>2024 £</b>	<b>Funds £</b>	<b>2023 £</b>
Interest on bank deposits	1,254	<b>1,254</b>	900	<b>900</b>
Repayment supplement	21	<b>21</b>	41	<b>41</b>
COIF Charities Investment Fund	–	<b>–</b>	–	<b>–</b>
Dividends	2,114	<b>2,114</b>	2,098	<b>2,098</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,389</b>	<b>3,389</b>	<b>3,039</b>	<b>3,039</b>

## 7. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

The breakdown of expenditure on charitable activities is shown below:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Cost of merchandise	188	507
Trials	173	–
Award cards	215	198
Society medals	208	191
Seeds cost	–	2,267
Banners & Leaflets	1,498	1,167
Display costs	127	88
Printing Annual and other publications	9,143	9,095
Exhibition prizes	1,468	2,365
Exhibition expenses	362	1,001
100 club prizes	640	675
Donations to promote Sweet Peas	–	630
Sundry expenses	895	717
Depreciation of website	880	880
Support costs (note 9)	3,547	3,375
Governance costs	1,071	1,050
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,415</b>	<b>24,206</b>

## 8. Expenditure on charitable activities by activity type

	2024	2023
	£	£
Charitable activities	19,344	23,156
Governance costs	1,071	1,050
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,415</b>	<b>24,206</b>

## 9. Analysis of support costs

The breakdown of support costs is shown in the table below:

	2024	2023
	£	£
Other printing & stationery	81	679
Postage & telephone	3,162	2,385
Meeting expenses	304	311
Sundry expenses	–	–
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,547</b>	<b>3,375</b>

## 10. Net gains/losses on investments

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2023 £
Gains/(losses) on other investment assets - COIF Charity Investment Fund	7,788	<b>7,788</b>	(983)	<b>(983)</b>

## 11. Independent examination fees

	2024	2023
<b>Fees payable to the independent examiner for:</b>	£	£
Independent examination of the financial statements	<b>1,071</b>	1,050

## 12. Trustee remuneration and expenses

No Trustee received any remuneration in the year (2023: £Nil). The average number of employees during the year was Nil (2023: Nil). No Trustee or any other person connected to the Society had any personal interest in any contact or transaction entered into by the Society during the year. 3 Trustees (2023: 2) were reimbursed a total of £515 (2023: £762) for travel and other costs on Society business. This sum includes £362 (2023: £651) of costs incurred directly by one Trustee (2023: 2) in their role as show manager for the National show.

## 13. Tangible fixed assets

The tangible assets of the Society consist of show equipment and the Society website. Show equipment costing £2,064 is still in use and is fully depreciated. The website was brought into use in November 2022.

	£	2024 £	2023
Website - Cost at 1 Nov 23 and 1 Nov 2022		<b>4,400</b>	1,200
Additions		-	3,200
<b>Cost at 31 Oct 24 and 31 Oct 23</b>		<b>4,400</b>	4,400
Depreciation at 1 Nov 23 and 1 Nov 22		<b>(880)</b>	-
Depreciation in year		<b>(880)</b>	(880)
Depreciation at 31 Oct 24 and 31 Oct 23		<b>(1,760)</b>	(880)
<b>Net book value at 31 Oct 24 and 31 Oct 2023</b>		<b>2,640</b>	3,520

## 14. Investments

	Cash or cash equivalents £	Other investments £	Total £
<b>Cost or valuation</b>			
At 1 November 2023	24,683	69,720	94,403
Additions	–	–	–
Fair value movements	–	7,788	7,788
<b>At 31 October 2024</b>	<b>24,683</b>	<b>77,508</b>	<b>102,191</b>
<b>Impairment</b>			
<b>At 31 October 2023 &amp; 31 October 2024</b>		–	–
<b>Carrying amount</b>			
<b>At 31 October 2024</b>	<b>24,683</b>	<b>77,508</b>	<b>102,191</b>
At 31 October 2023	24,683	69,720	94,403

### Listed investments

All investments shown above are held at valuation and relate to the designated funds invested in Charities Investment Funds (COIF).

## 15. Stocks

	2024 £	2023 £
Finished goods and goods for resale	17,765	15,744

## 16. Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Other debtors	1,716	2,158
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,716</b>	<b>2,158</b>

## 17. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024	2023
	£	£
Accruals and deferred income	1,157	1,308

## 18. Analysis of charitable funds

	2023	Income	Expenditure	Gains & losses	2024
	£	£	£	£	
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>					
General funds	93,792	22,051	(20,415)	7,788	103,216
Designated fund	30,583	–	–	–	30,583
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>124,375</b>	<b>22,051</b>	<b>(20,415)</b>	<b>7,788</b>	<b>133,799</b>

	2022	Income	Expenditure	Gains & losses	2023
	£	£	£	£	
<b>Unrestricted funds</b>					
General funds	95,218	23,763	(24,206)	(983)	93,792
Designated fund	30,583	–	–	–	30,583
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125,801</b>	<b>23,763</b>	<b>(24,206)</b>	<b>(983)</b>	<b>124,375</b>

## 19. Analysis of net assets between funds

Designated Funds are made up of the following:

	Unrestricted funds	Designated funds	Total funds
	£	£	£
Fixed assets	74,248	30,583	104,831
Current assets	30,125	–	30,125
Current liabilities	(1,157)	–	(1,157)
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>103,216</b>	<b>30,583</b>	<b>133,799</b>

	2023	Income during the year	Transfers (to) from income and expenditure account	2024
	£	£	£	£
<b>Movements in the year:</b>				
Life Membership Fund	21,810	–	–	21,810
Colledge Prize Fund	300	–	–	300
Charles Hamner Memorial Fund	510	–	–	510
J C P M Davis Memorial Fund	300	–	–	300
E R Janes Vase Account	100	–	–	100
Frances Williams Memorial Fund	234	–	–	234
FC Harriss Memorial Fund	500	–	–	500
Bolton Cup Proceeds Fund	2,068	–	–	2,068
Tom Baines Memorial Fund	100	–	–	100
B R Jones Memorial Fund	1,761	–	–	1,761
Burfoot Trophy Class	2,000	–	–	2,000
Whittemore Fund	400	–	–	400
Tom Cordy Award	500	–	–	500
	<b>30,583</b>	–	–	<b>30,583</b>

## 20. Related Parties

The Society requires all members of the Executive and General Committees declare and, if necessary, withdraw from the relevant part of the meeting should any conflicts of interest potentially arise. The Society also requires that all committee members, or anyone else undertaking activities on behalf of the Society, declare any material interests they or a related party may have in the activities of the Society.

During the year, Roger Parsons of Roger Parsons Sweet Peas, and Phil Johnson of Agrifusion made purchases of advertising from the Society. These transactions were completed on the same terms as other advertising sold by the Society.

The Society purchased sweet pea seed from Phil Johnson and Roger Parsons at discounted rates for sale at Society events. The Society offered to purchase sweet pea seeds from other seed merchants on the same terms. The Society benefited from the donation of plants and blooms from 6 trustees at no cost to the Society.

# Jack Davis Award 2024

*By Graeme Hollingdale and Adam Heeley*

This person has been keen on growing all of their life; starting off growing in some inauspicious areas in the family garden and then after leaving the family home, growing in their own gardens and also on allotments. The thrill of growing was in their blood.

Like many keen gardeners, they sometimes grew Sweet Peas, not for show of course, just purely for the pleasure of the blooms and their fragrance. Inevitably they have been involved in several horticultural societies over the years and begun regularly entering their local show.

After some success with flowers and vegetables, one year they were provided with some Sweet Pea seeds from a family member. When searching for exhibits for their local (early September) show amongst the garden and found they had some reasonable Sweet Peas and entered them. One of the judges was impressed with the quality of the 'Peas for the time of year and suggested they enter a local Sweet Pea show. They did so the following year after reading up on what was required and achieved some success at their local Sweet Pea show.

As we all know, in recent years the Sweet Pea season tends to be short but in a good year the blooms can be plentiful and a few years later, this exhibitor decided to enter a national show. Again, they achieved some success in their division and this spurred them on. Despite the difficulties some years throw up, they have continued to grow and show their Sweet Peas with some success, particularly in the smaller grower and non-Spencer classes with successes, including several trophies and other awards.

As with most organisations the pool of volunteers to organise events is small but this person has been a member of both their local Horticultural Society as well as Sweet Pea societies both locally and nationally. They have been welcomed, supported and encouraged by fellow committee members and are part of the larger team. They have promoted the national Society at displays and exhibitions and have tried to encourage others to join and take up Sweet Pea growing. They were finally encouraged to take a role helping to shape the Society for the future and despite the challenges have risen to the occasion and worked tirelessly to develop a new website for the Society (a role that has taken countless hours)

By now I am sure you will have guessed who this person is but should any of you still be unaware it is of course, your chairman, Alison Shreeve!

Please step forward to receive the Jack Davies Award, from NSPS President (and today's Judge) Roger Parsons.

*Graeme Hollingdale was due to give the citation to the Society at the Early National in 2024 which was unfortunately cancelled so the decision was taken to make the presentation at the Chiltern Sweet Pea Society show. Due to work commitments, unfortunately Graeme could not stay until prize giving, so Caroline Ball gave the citation to those assembled at the CSPS 2024 Annual Show.*

## Jack Davis Award 2025

*By Alison Shreeve*

In this 125th year of the Society it gives me great pleasure to announce that we have a very worthy recipient of one of the Society's special awards.

The person in question is one of the most enthusiastic and positive people you could hope to meet. They have been a member of the Society for over ten years and in a District Representative's role for a large area of the North of England, as well as being on the General Committee.

As most of you will be aware, it is traditional to maintain secrecy in the citation for as long as possible, but this is not going to be easy in this case, as the roles undertaken on behalf of the Society have been very specific. In more general terms the recipient is a keen gardener with many interests alongside Sweet Peas. Fellow members would meet the recipient at many shows in the North including volunteering at Harlow Carr, and at shows in Malvern, Chatsworth and Harlow Carr representing the NSPS or another major plant society. They are often to be found looking after horses, dogs and children. You can tell already that they are a very busy person! Following a recent relocation they have been busy setting up a new garden and of course including Sweet Peas in their annual sowings and bringing their energy to bare fruit in their new location, both metaphorically and literally, encouraging and supporting others to be part of the Society.

Bringing professional skills to benefit the Society has resulted in new members and new affiliations for the Society. Tireless efforts to engage people and to communicate well with the membership mean that the Society has come to rely on their enthusiasm and commitment and have learned to expect new ideas and new ways to approach things.

By now it has become almost impossible for me to keep the identity of the recipient hidden! Following a move even further North the recipient has taken on a whole country! The role of District Representative Coordinator was a new one set up to specifically engage the widely geographically dispersed people who are responsible for

maintaining communications with the members in their areas. Our co-ordinator has made this role her own and it is with great pleasure that I present the Jack Davis Award to Roz Warley in recognition of the great positivity and enthusiasm as well as the innovations she brings to the organisation of the National Sweet Pea Society. For those of you who don't know, Roz has made special rosettes for the Society to encourage new members and to publicise the work of the Society. In this special anniversary year she has also produced commemorative rosettes for winners of our special classes at the National Shows. She is the person behind the Mailchimp communications to members as well. She is a very talented and approachable person and we are delighted to recognise her special talents with this award.

## Henry Eckford Award

*By Caroline Ball*

The RHS Victoria Medal of Honour (VMH) was established in 1897, with the assent of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, to enable the RHS Council to confer conspicuous honour on those British horticulturists deserving of special honour by the Royal Horticultural Society. In recognition of the duration of Queen Victoria's reign, only 63 medals may be held at any one time.



**President Roger Parsons (left) with latest Eckford winner Phil Johnson.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

The National Sweet Pea Society has an equally coveted award in the form of the Henry Eckford Memorial Medal. This gold medal was inaugurated in 1921 the year of the twenty first anniversary of The National Sweet Pea Society. It is named in memory of the esteemed hybridiser Henry Eckford of Wem, Shropshire who is credited with introducing 115 new Sweet Peas in the period from the 1880s to the beginning of the 1900s. Some call him the grandfather of Sweet Peas. This medal is rarely awarded and only then with the unanimous agreement of the trustees to those considered to have made a truly exceptional contribution to Sweet Peas or its Society, a very high barrier to surmount. During its existence there have only been 43 winners and

there are only 5 living winners - 3 of whom are in this room today. It is a very important and rare honour indeed.

Today, in the 125th year of the Society, we will be awarding the 44th ever Henry Eckford medal to someone whose contribution to both Sweet Peas and the Society is immense. The recipient has been a member of the Society for around forty years with an interest across the whole *Lathyrus* genus.

The recipient shows Sweet Peas and has done so for a good part of his 40 year membership but this is not an award for showing, it is much, much more than that, it is an award for meritorious work in hybridising, literary or research work, investigation of pests and diseases or any truly meritorious work in popularising or development of the Sweet Pea or its Society. We have a tradition in the National Sweet Pea Society of attempting to keep people guessing about award winners and I will try, but the identity of today's award winner will soon be very clear to members and the recipient himself.

The recipient has a significant programme for breeding new Sweet Peas and that interest is particularly centred around novelty in the true sense of the word. He strives, with meticulous attention to detail, to breed something very different - he is not really interested in breeding 'just another white' Sweet Pea. He is striving for something truly new. But something just new isn't good enough, it has to have as near to perfect form as is possible as well as a unique colour, definitely the definition a major contribution to the advancement of our flower. Much of his breeding is centred around the type of *Lathyrus odoratus* that we call 'Old Fashioned' and 'Modern Grandifloras'. These are the smaller more fragrant varieties - you will see his breeding on our show benches - in fact you could call this a natural progression from the breeding of Henry Eckford himself. He has been awarded AGMs by the RHS for the result of some of this work and there is much more in the pipeline.

Not only is breeding part of this person's passion but so are seeds. I have seen a fraction of his production and the meticulous eye for detail I have mentioned in the context of hybridisation is also evident in abundance in his seed production. I would venture to say he is one of our foremost producers of Sweet Pea seed, if not now THE foremost.

This person provides an extremely strong link between the RHS and the National Sweet Pea Society and the fact that we have had shows at RHS Wisley and the RHS has run the afore mentioned Trials of Modern Grandifloras and Old Fashioned Sweet Peas is largely down to him. This person is passionate about Sweet Peas, *lathyrus* in general and the Society. He can always be relied upon to support Society events in his own kindly, humble and knowledgeable way. He has even agreed to take on the National Collection of *Lathyrus* from another giant in the Sweet Pea world, Roger Parsons. I could continue for some time outlining all the reasons why this award winner's contribution to our flower and Society is exceptional, he is a trustee of the Society, a past chairman, has a passion for the history of the Sweet Pea and our Society and has a

large collection of historical items, has edited our twice yearly Bulletin, has written a book on Sweet Peas, is part of the classifications sub committee and he has even managed NSPS shows!

Please Phil Johnson come forward to receive your very richly deserved Henry Eckford Medal from our President Roger Parsons, himself a holder of this important medal.



*'Hero'*. Photo by Darren Myers.

# NSPS Shows

## The Early National

21 & 22 June 2024

*By Roger Parsons*

The reasons for cancelling last year's Early Show were explained in detail in the Autumn Bulletin. There is therefore no report in this year's Annual for that show. The causes were a combination of a late season leading to very low entries and our inability to get staging and vases because of a problem where they were stored.

Not everyone was affected by the late season. I think the person most disappointed by the cancellation must have been Neal Hatch. He had a cracking cut and was proposing to enter the Daily Mail Cup for the first time. Neal staged his blooms anyway and posted a picture on social media. They looked beautifully staged and would have



Neal Hatch's Class 5 & 8 & Society 20 in his virtual National. Photo by Neal Hatch.



**Daily Mail exhibit from Neal Hatch's virtual show.**

**Top row left to right – 'Lady Nicholson', 'Anniversary', 'Gwendoline', 'Karen Louise'**

**Middle – 'Jilly', 'Just Julia', 'Syd Dunscombe', 'Mary Priestley',**

**Bottom – 'Eclipse', 'Mrs Bernard Jones', 'Sir Jimmy Shand', 'Alan Titchmarsh'**

*Photo by Neal Hatch.*



**Jilly and Karen Louise  
as Society 20 for Neal  
Hatch's virtual show.**

*Photo by Neal Hatch.*

strongly contended for first place. I hope he will come back with even more determination in future.

Looking ahead to 2025, we have a new venue, new show manager and team, a well-chosen date at a popular venue where oasis can be used, and hopefully better weather. For me personally, I shall be growing some cordons for the first time in about 20 years, now I no longer have to focus on seed production. We can't hide the fact that numbers of exhibitors are declining in all sorts of specialist plant societies but there is plenty to be optimistic about. I am looking forward to it already.

# Report of the Late National Show – RHS Bridgewater, Worsley

*By Nicky Edwards*

The NSPS Late National Show on 13- 14 July at RHS Bridgewater Gardens was the only NSPS National Show to take place in 2024 due to the unfortunate cancellation of the Early Show at Wisley on 26 - 27 June.

With this in mind I think the mood of the exhibitors at staging time on the Friday night prior to the show was one of jubilation and excitement that a show was in fact taking place. The mood of the show organisers was one of relief and joy at the high level of support with an increase in entries from the previous year. There were particularly good numbers of exhibits in the decorative section.



Late show staging. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

The fantastic quality of Darren Myers' flowers shone out as usual and he won the special award for Best Exhibit in show for his 3 vase Matthewman class exhibit comprising 'Jilly', 'Gwendoline' and 'Eva Bridger' and Best Lavender with his 'Karen Louise'. However Matt Lloyd also had a brilliant day and won Best Vase with a seedling, Best 'Anniversary' and the Gower Seedling Cup,

again with superb quality flowers. I think the race is on between these two outstanding competitors for the Daily Mail Cup when it returns to the Late Show in 2025! Allan Evans won Best in Division II with his vase of 'Terry Davey', Colin Winder won Best in Division III with 'Sir Jimmy Shand' and John Cooper Best in Division IV with a mixed vase. Congratulations to all of them. Well done to Phillippa Cooper who won Best in Division VI with the Val and John Good class for 6 vases of Old Fashioneds and the Tom Shilling Prize. Best Bowl was won by a deserving Allan Evans. Best Decorative was won by Jenny and Lewis Morgan who also won the "any lathyrus grown in a pot" class which also saw more entries than in previous years. There were some really stunning entries across the classes and beautiful decorative entries which made a show to be proud of.

The RHS did a brilliant job of advertising the show in their literature and this along with the clement weather meant the public visited the show in large numbers. We had a



Late show overview. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

stand selling seeds and promoting membership on behalf of the NSPS which attracted lots of interest. There were often many people clustered around the small vases on the seed display which contained blooms of the seeds we had to offer. Visitors to these RHS venues are always so knowledgeable and interested in the show and exhibits so it is a joy to talk to them and answer their many questions whilst on the stand. Many seeds were sold and members signed. Thank you to all the members who helped to put up and man the stand throughout the show.

Running a show like this takes a dedicated team. Members are needed to help set out the benches and provide for the needs of all the exhibitors prior to show day. Water, vases and bowls need to be found and help with fetching and carrying for example, not to mention the tea and coffee and refreshments. On the morning of the show the judges need to be provided for and there is a huge amount of admin before getting to the point of presenting trophies at the awards ceremony. Our thanks go to all those who provided help in any of these areas and of course to all the exhibitors without whom there would be no show. Particular thanks go to the Show Manager Carole Tate who did an amazing job in overseeing all the organisation of the show.



Visitors enjoying the Late National. Photo by Andrew Fletcher.

# The Late Show – RHS Bridgewater, Worsley

## 13 & 14 July 2024

### SPECIAL CLASSES

A	THE DUO CLASS 1st J & L Morgan 2nd K Preston 3rd –	(2)
B	SEEDLINGS (No Entries)	(0)
C	NOVELTY CLASS 1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
D	UNWIN CLASS 1st J & L Morgan 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
E	THE SOCIETY 20 1st I D Myers 2nd – 3rd –	(1)

### DIVISION I

1	THE ROGER PARSONS CHALLENGE (No Entries)	(0)
2	EASTBOURNE PRIZE 1st I D Myers 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
3	CHARLES HANMER MEMORIAL CLASS 1st M Lloyd 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
4	THE MATTHEWMAN CLASS 1st I D Myers 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
5	MIXED BOWL 1st S Meeks 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
6	HAMMETT CUP (No Entries)	(0)
7	ONE VASE 1st K Preston 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
8	ONE VASE, MIXED CULTIVARS 1st I D Myers 2nd – 3rd –	(1)

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED</b>
<b>DIVISION II</b>	
20	DAVIS CUP 6 VASES DISTINCT (No Entries) (0)
21	3 VASES DISTINCT 1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd – (1)
22	MIXED BOWL 1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd – (1)
23	ONE VASE 1st AK Preston 2nd – 3rd – (1)
24	ONE VASE, MIXED CULTIVARS (No Entries) (0)
<b>DIVISION III</b>	
30	M K FRANKS CUP 6 VASES DISTINCT 1st R Rishworth 2nd – 3rd – (1)
31	MONRO TROPHY 3 VASES DISTINCT 1st C Winder 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd – (2)
32	MIXED BOWL 1st A Evans 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd – (2)
33	ONE VASE 1st J & L Morgan 2nd C Winder 3rd J & L Morgan (6)
34	ONE VASE, MIXED CULTIVARS 1st J & L Morgan 2nd C Winder 3rd C Winder (5)
<b>DIVISION IV</b>	
40	GEORGE HERBERT CUP 3 VASES DISTINCT (No Entries) (0)
41	MIXED BOWL 1st J Cooper 2nd – 3rd – (1)
42	ONE VASE 1st J Cooper 2nd A Fletcher 3rd A Fletcher (3)
43	ONE VASE, MIXED CULTIVARS 1st J Cooper 2nd A Fletcher 3rd – (2)

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED</b>
<b>DIVISION V</b>	
50	HENRY ECKFORD BOWL (5) 1st A Evans 2nd P Cooper 3rd C Tate
51	VAL & JOHN GOOD CLASS (1) 1st P Cooper 2nd – 3rd –
52	OLD FASHIONED CLASS (3) 1st A Evans 2nd P Cooper 3rd H Dolan
53	WHITTEMORE CLASS (3) 1st C Tate 2nd P Cooper 3rd H Dolan
N54	NOVICES OLD FASHIONED (2) 1st P Cooper 2nd E Evans 3rd –
55	GRANDIFLORA BOWL (2) 1st J & L Morgan 2nd H Dolan 3rd –
56	NEWINGTON TRIPLE (1) 1st H Dolan 2nd – 3rd –
57	THE CHRISSIE CLASS (3) 1st H Dolan 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd K Preston
N58	NOVICES GRANDIFLORA/SEMI-GRANDIFLORA CLASS (4) (No Entries)
59	DAVID ARCHER PERPETUAL TROPHY (3) 1st P Cooper 2nd C Tate 3rd N Edwards
60	BOWL OF LATHYRUS SPECIES PERENNIAL (2) 1st M Wright 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd –
61	ANY LATHYRUS GROWN IN POT (2) 1st J & L Morgan 2nd C Tate 3rd –
<b>DIVISION VI</b>	
62	THE BRIDGEWATER CLASS (1) 1st P Cooper 2nd – 3rd –
63	BURFOOT CLASS (2) 1st P Cooper 2nd M Wright 3rd –
64	TOM BAINES CLASS (6) 1st J Beardmore 2nd P Cooper 3rd E Evans
65	THE YORKSHIRE BOWL (1) 1st J & L Morgan 2nd – 3rd –
66	E R JANES VASE (6) 1st J Cooper 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd A Evans

<b>CLASS</b>	<b>No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED</b>
67 THE DRIFTWOOD CLASS 1st J Beardmore 2nd C Tate 3rd –	(2)
68 THE SYDENHAM CLASS 1st E Evans 2nd S Meeks 3rd M Wright	(5)
69 PETITE CLASS 1st C Tate 2nd N Edwards 3rd S Haisley	(7)
70 LES HARVEY PEDESTAL CLASS 1st R Rishworth 2nd – 3rd –	(1)

### **SPECIAL AWARDS**

#### **THE TOM CORDY PRIZE – BEST EXHIBIT**

I D Myers (Class 4)

#### **THE LEWESTON – BEST VASE**

M Lloyd (Class 3 Seedling)

#### **THE COLLEDGE PRIZE (BEST LAVENDER)**

I D Myers ('Karen Louise' Class 2)

#### **THE TERRY SEWELL PRIZE (BEST 'ANNIVERSARY')**

M Lloyd (Class 3)

#### **THE A W GOWER SEEDLING CUP**

M Lloyd (Class 3)

#### **THE HINCHCLIFFE PRIZE (BEST IN DIVISION DIV II)**

A Evans ('Terry Davey' Class 1216)

#### **THE K E ANDREWS PRIZE (BEST IN DIVISION DIV III)**

C Winder ('Sir Jimmy Shand' Class 31)

#### **THE RANDALL CUP (BEST VASE DIV IV)**

J Cooper (Class 43)

#### **THE HENRY ECKFORD PRIZE (BEST IN DIVISION VI)**

P Cooper (Class 51)

#### **BEST BOWL PRIZE**

A Evans (Class 22)

#### **DECORATIVE PRIZE (BEST DECORATIVE ARRANGEMENT)**

J & L Morgan ('Yorkshire' Class 65)

#### **THE TOM SHILLING PRIZE (BEST VASE BY NEWCOMER)**

C Cooper ('America' Class 51)



**Old Fashioned exhibits.** *Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**Matt Lloyd and his Best vase in show.**  
*Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**Matt Lloyd's prizes.**  
*Photo by Matt Lloyd.*



**Phillippa Cooper** winner of the **John and Val Good** memorial class.  
*Photo by John Cooper.*

# Audit of the Late National Show

## – RHS Bridgewater, Worsley

### 13 & 14 July 2024

*By Carole Tate*

No	Name of Cultivar	1	2	3	Unplaced	Total	Colour	Classfn
1	Gwendoline	4	1	1	0	6	Pale Magenta	4a
2	Jilly	4	1	0	0	5	Cream	2
3	White Frills	1	1	0	1	3	White	1
4	Elizabeth Shorthouse	2	0	0	0	2	Rose Pink cg	11b
	Eva Bridger	2	0	0	0	2	Pale Mauve	7a
	Mary Priestley	2	0	0	0	2	White	1
7	Sir Jimmy Shand	1	1	0	0	2	Fancy (Striped)	16
8	Karen Louise	1	0	1	0	2	Lavender	8
9	Anniversary	1	0	0	0	1	Picotee wg	15
	Dalesman	1	0	0	0	1	Blue	9
	Eclipse	1	0	0	0	1	Mauve	7
	Evie Jones	1	0	0	0	1	Magenta	4
	Fields of Fire	1	0	0	0	1	Red (Crimson)	3b
	Millennium	1	0	0	0	1	Red (Crimson)	3b
	Mollie Rilstone	1	0	0	0	1	Picotee	15a
	Nora Holman	1	0	0	0	1	Salmon Pink wg	10a
	Oban Bay	1	0	0	0	1	Pale Blue	9b
	Pink Pearl	1	0	0	0	1	Pale Pink wg	10
	Southborne	1	0	0	0	1	Pale Pink wg	10
	Terry Davey	1	0	0	0	1	Mauve	7
	Tom Atherton	1	0	0	0	1	Fancy (Striped)	16
22	Alec Cave	0	1	0	0	1	White	1
	Betty Maiden	0	1	0	0	1	Fancy (Striped)	16
	John Gray	0	1	0	0	1	Salmon Pink wg	10a
25	Bristol	0	0	1	0	1	Pale Blue	9b
	Route 66	0	0	1	0	1	Fancy (Bicolour)	16a
	<b>Seedlings</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>No classification</b>	
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>46</b>		

#### Non Spencers

1	Mrs Collier	1	1	1	0	3	Cream	OF
2	Painted Lady	2	0	0	0	2	Pink/White Bicolour	OF
3	Cupani	1	1	0	0	2	Maroon/Violet Bicolour	OF
	Jack Ellis	1	1	0	0	2	Dark Maroon/Purple Bicolour	MG

No	Name of Cultivar	1	2	3	Unplaced	Total	Colour	Classn
<b>Non Spencers</b>								
	Prince Edward of York	1	1	0	0	2	Red/Pink Bicolour	OF
6	Dorothy Eckford	1	0	1	0	2	White	OF
	Romeo	0	1	1	0	2	White, Blue Picotee Edge	MG
8	America	1	0	0	0	1	Red Flake	OF
	Henry Eckford	1	0	0	0	1	Orange Scarlet	OF
	Lord Nelson	1	0	0	0	1	Navy Blue	OF
	Senator	1	0	0	0	1	Maroon/Violet Flake	OF
12	Flora Norton	0	1	0	0	1	Pale Blue	OF
	Kingfisher	0	1	0	0	1	Violet Blue Flush	SG
	Rosay	0	1	0	0	1	Deep Blush Pink	MG
15	Janet Scott	0	0	1	0	1	Pale Pink wg	OF
	Lady Grisel Hamilton	0	0	1	0	1	Lavender	OF
	<b>Total Non Spencers</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24</b>		
	<b>Mixed vases</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>13</b>		
	<b>Total Vases</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>83</b>		
	<b>Decorative &amp; Bowls</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>45</b>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>128</b>		





**Darren Myers Best Exhibit winner.**  
*Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**Darren Myers Society 20 Class winner.**  
*Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**Class 2 winner. Top left to bottom right: 'Dalesman', 'Jilly', 'Pink Pearl', 'Nora Holman', 'Eva Bridger', 'Mary Priestley', 'Seedling', 'Gwendoline', 'Karen Louise'.**  
*Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**Colin Winder winner of Best Vase in Division 3.** *Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**Jenny Morgan winner of Best Decorative.** *Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**John Cooper winner of Best Vase in Division 4.** *Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**Bob Rishworth's pedestal.** *Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*



**Bowls at Late National.** *Photo by Andrew Fletcher.*

## National Sweet Pea Trials at West Dean 2024

*By Roger Parsons*

### WEST DEAN

This new venue in a walled garden saw the Trial conducted on ground previously down to turf and which had been heavily mulched during the previous Winter. Seeds were sown at the beginning of February and the plants set out towards the end of March. Growth was very slow in the cold, wet Spring and there was considerable slug damage. Plants were mostly recovered using a high-nitrogen liquid feed once a week. Apart from the two dwarf entries, plants were supported on very attractive hazel structures. Head gardener, Tom Brown, and his team are to be congratulated on an attractive and successful trial.

Judging took place on 1st July, 8th July and 15th July 2024. The judging team consisted of Caroline Ball, Keith Brewer, Tom Brown, Jim McDonald, Mary McDonald and Roger Parsons.



Part of the Trials committee discussing the Trials. *Photo by Caroline Ball.*

**REPORTS ON ALL VARIETIES AT WEST DEAN ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

1	C.A. Beane / Pink Stripe/marbled	Code 96A2
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True. Good ground cover but flowers very sparse. Colour is carmine rather than pink. **No Awards**

2	R. Parsons Sweet Peas / Rose Pink	Code 17153
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One clump lost altogether. True. Flowering sparse until the third judging. Resubmit. Colour is magenta pink. **No Awards**

3	Johnson Sweet Peas / Grandiflora Intense Blue	Code SDL23-0023
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True. A bright colour that deepens with age. Some fives. Long stems for the type. Plenty of flower but some rain damage. Colour rather strong for floristry. **Exhibition (AM) Garden Decoration (AM)**



4	Johnson Sweet Peas / Grandiflora Deep Violet	Code SDL23-0026
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True. Excellent colour but flower form not perfect. No rain damage. Colour dark violet, similar to 'Almost Black'. Plenty of flower but colour rather strong for floristry. **Exhibition (AM) Garden Decoration (AM)**

5	Johnsons Sweet Peas / Grandiflora Dark Blue Stripe	Code SDL21-0038
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Mixed. 2 cultivars, the rogues possibly SDL23-0023. Plenty of eye-catching blooms on good plants. Definitely one to reselect and resubmit. **No Awards**

6	C. A. Bean / Spencer White	Code 18B1
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Mixed. One clump was true while the other was mixed. Some pinking but otherwise had good size blooms on long stems. Reselect and resubmit. **No Awards**



Trials Entry 4.



Trials Entry 5.



Trials Entry 6.

7 The Late T. Davey / Spencer Deep Rose Code 15162

Mixed. Deep rose flowers, some on white and some on cream ground. Two corresponding colours in the leaf axils. Reselect and resubmit.  
**No Awards**

8 K. Brewer / Spencer Purple Code AH1

True. Colour deepens with age. Some rain damage. Large flowers on long stems so may be useful for floristry.  
**Exhibition (AM) Garden Decoration (AM)**

9 K. Brewer / Spencer White/lavender flush Code HT3

Mixed. Reselect and resubmit. **No Awards**



Trials Entry 7.



Trials Entry 8.



Trials Entry 9.

10 Roger Parsons Sweet Peas / Spencer Indigo Blue Code Indigo Girl

Mixed. Several shades of mauve and blue. Reselect and resubmit.  
**No Awards**

11 Roger Parsons Sweet Peas / Spencer Pale Blue Code 15243

Mixed. Several shades of blue. Nothing to suggest it could be better than existing pale blue cultivars. **No Awards**

12 K. Brewer / Spencer Pink Code JG4

Mixed. Pinks and white. Reselect and resubmit. **No Awards**



13 C.A. Beane / Spencer Salmon Stripe Code 16A4

True. Only 3 plants survived in the 2 clumps and did not thrive. Very good colour with good potential for floristry and garden decoration. Please resubmit. **No Awards**

14 P. Johnson / Spencer Red Stripe Code SWE968-10212

True. A good colour with blooms equally suitable for exhibition, garden decoration and floristry. Some malformation and furling of wings.  
**Exhibition (AM) Garden Decoration (AM)**

15 C. A. Beane / Spencer Pink Marbled Code 17B2

True. Flowers lighten with age. Large flowers on long stems. Clumps short in height so may lack vigour. Might be popular with florists.  
**Garden Decoration (HC)**



**Trials Entry 13.**



**Trials Entry 14.**



**Trials Entry 15.**

16 Roger Parsons Sweet Peas / Spencer Pale Lilac, Veined 21160

Mixed, including a good mauve similar to 'Lilibet'. Reselect and resubmit.  
**No Awards**

17 Johnson Sweet Peas / Spencer Lavender/blue Shifter Code SDL23-0021

True, but colour shifts. Furled wings on sparse flowers. Suffers rain damage. Not liked for floristry. **No Awards**

The FC Harriss Award, for the best seedling at the West Dean Trails, was awarded to entry no. 14 sent by Phil Johnson and now introduced by Fothergills as 'Greenfingers Cherry'.



**Trials Entry 16.**



**Trials Entry 17.**



**FC Harriss Awarded to 'Greenfingers Cherry'.**  
*Photos by Caroline Ball.*

## ASKHAM BRYAN

### By Andrew Beane

A very difficult year weather-wise, including a very wet Spring that was no better because of torrential downpours in March, April and May. I think this is the wettest period I have experienced.

The Sweet Peas were sown first week in November by the RHS course students. Germination was very good and they were grown on in a polytunnel with the sides open for better ventilation. Planting out was on 28 February 2024. In hindsight, this should have been a couple of weeks later but I don't think it would have changed things. The plants received light spray of garlic and seaweed. A visit on 1st May saw plants struggling after persistent rain. A visit on 24 May to work out judging dates found most plants struggling. Only 2 clumps looked like they would produce something judgeable. A decision to abandon the trial was therefore taken.

The college staff continued to care for the plants and I visited on 2 July. There was some recovery but not enough for judging, as will be seen from the individual reports below. The two dwarf seedlings were grown with 2 pots in the beds and 2 in 15 inch diameter drain pipes partially sunk into the beds.

### REPORTS ON ALL VARIETIES AT ASKHAM BRYAN ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1	C. A. Beane / Pink Stripe/marbled	Code 96A2
	The 2 pots planted in the bed failed. One pot in the pipe grew and flowered. Colour more of a red stripe on white ground. <b>No Awards</b>	
2	R. Parsons Sweet Peas / Rose Pink	Code 17153
	Again, the 2 pots planted in the bed failed. One pot in the pipe grew and flowered. <b>No Awards</b>	
3	Johnson Sweet Peas / Grandiflora Intense Blue	Code SDL23-0023
	Fixed and true colour. Plants in one clump about 4 ft high, the other 3 ft high. Nice colour but some plant losses in both clumps. <b>No Awards</b>	
4	Johnson Sweet Peas / Grandiflora Deep Violet	Code SDL23-0026
	Felt that the colour was deep maroon, very close to 'Almost Black'. The keels were white. True for colour. Growth 4 ft high and a few plant losses. <b>No Awards</b>	

**REPORTS ON ALL VARIETIES AT ASKHAM BRYAN CONTINUED:**

5	Johnsons Sweet Peas / Grandiflora Dark Blue Stripe	Code SDL21-0038
	One clump of plants completely lost. The second clump was 2 ft high and flowering. Flowers of a nice striped colour. <b>No Awards</b>	
6	C. A. Bean / Spencer White	Code 18B1
	One clump of plants completely lost. Only one plant survived in the 2nd clump. Growth 4 ft. high with white flowers. <b>No Awards</b>	
7	The Late T. Davey / Spencer Deep Rose	Code 15162
	One clump of plants completely lost. Only one plant survived in the 2nd clump. Growth 4 ft high with deep rose flowers. <b>No Awards</b>	
8	K. Brewer / Spencer Purple	Code AH1
	Plants survived in both clumps but with some losses. Colour thought to be deep mauve. A lavender rogue was seen and there was mosaic virus in one plant. <b>No Awards</b>	
9	K. Brewer / Spencer White/lavender flush	Code HT3
	One clump of plants completely lost. The second clump was OK. Good size blooms with good stem length. Exhibition potential. <b>No Awards</b>	
10	Roger Parsons Sweet Peas / Spencer Indigo Blue	Code Indigo Girl
	Both clumps had good strong growth. Plenty of flower. Colour faded a little in old blooms. Wings veined. Best Sweet Pea in trial and would have gained an <b>Garden Decoration (AM)</b> in my opinion.	
11	Roger Parsons Sweet Peas / Spencer Pale Blue	Code 15243
	One clump of plants completely lost. The second clump all plants growing with good size blooms. Plenty of fours. Exhibition potential. <b>No Awards</b>	
12	K. Brewer / Spencer Pink	Code JG4
	One clump of plants completely lost. Only 2 plants in second clump at 4ft high. Good size flowers. Rose pink. <b>No Awards</b>	
13	C.A. Beane / Spencer Salmon Stripe	Code 16A4
	Two plants in one clump and one plant in the other. Strong growth. Nice colour. <b>No Awards</b>	

**REPORTS ON ALL VARIETIES AT ASHAM BRYAN CONTINUED:**

- |    |   |                 |
|----|---|-----------------|
| 15 | C. A. Beane / Spencer Pink Marbled  | Code 17B2       |
|    | One clump had very good growth. Some losses in the 2nd clump. One 'Indigo Blue' rogue. Colour fades in older blooms. <b>No Awards</b> |                 |
| 16 | Roger Parsons Sweet Peas / Spencer Pale Lilac, Veined   | 21160           |
|    | Good growth in both clumps. Colour mixed. <b>No Awards</b>  |                 |
| 17 | Johnson Sweet Peass / Spencer Lavender/blue Shifter   | Code SDL23-0021 |
|    | Two plants survived in each clump. Colour a lavender / blue shifter. Extremely long stems. <b>No Awards</b>                           |                 |

To sum up, a very difficult year at Askham Bryan but a big “thank you” to Harry Johnson-Firth, his staff and the RHS course students. The College is losing Harry to Kew Gardens so we wish him all the best. Taking over from him is Abigail Lindon. We look forward to working with her on next year’s trial.



**‘Valerie Harrod’.** *Photo by Caroline Ball.*

# Trial Review

*By Roger Parsons*

This matter took up many pages in the 2024 Sweet Pea Annual so we now need to distil the views expressed into a coherent policy.

## **Reasons for holding Trials**

Trials are included in the Society's Rules as one way by which the Society achieves its objects. They are not an object in themselves. The current and historical reasons for holding Trials are:

1. To enable cultivars to be classified by form and colour. This is no longer carried out as part of the Trials but there remains a requirement for novelties to be compared with existing cultivars for classification purposes.
2. To make awards for superior cultivars. There seems to be general agreement that too many awards are now given. Award winners should be distinct from existing varieties or show obvious improvement.
3. To identify too-much-alike cultivars. A redundant requirement. Those with the same form and flower colour may have other qualities to suit different growing conditions.
4. Comparing stocks of a cultivar from different suppliers. This is commercially sensitive and was only an issue when suppliers were abundant.
5. To assess the merits of un-named seedlings. This is only utilised by a limited number of raisers.
6. To showcase Sweet Peas to the public but to do this, Trials need to be held in an accessible place i.e. a garden open to the public. The move to West Dean serves this purpose.

## **Proposals for future Trials**

On the question of awards to superior cultivars, there were several suggestions on how the number of awards might be reduced:

1. Only make awards to those achieving the standard currently recognised as First Class Certificate.
2. Entries should be assessed over 2 years to mitigate seasonal variation.

3. Retain the F C Harriss Award and the George Priestley Award for the best entry at each location but other awards should only be given to entries achieving a required standard at both locations.

My recommendation is that the third suggestion should be adopted.

It is also proposed to give awards for cut flower qualities equal status with exhibition and garden decoration. The membership of judging panels may need to be adjusted to accommodate this. The Society needs to recognise the enormous interest in growing Sweet Peas for cut flowers. There is comparatively little interest in growing Sweet Peas for exhibition. There is also an argument that awards for exhibition are redundant because the show bench is the better place to assess these.

Increased use of established award-winning cultivars for comparison has been proposed but space is limited for these or for classifying novelties. Retaining Trials at two very distinct locations is valuable. It is also proposed that the fee for each entry should remain at £5.

It was suggested that each Trial should focus on specific types or aspects, in the manner of the RHS. It is not proposed to introduce this at present.

## **Conclusion**

Two significant changes are proposed:

1. Retain the F C Harriss Award and the George Priestley Award for the best entry at each location. Other awards should only be given to entries achieving a required standard at both locations.
2. To give awards for cut flower qualities equal status with exhibition and garden decoration. The membership of judging panels may need to be adjusted to accommodate this.

If accepted, these changes will come into place for the 2026 Trials.

*“Many eyes go through the meadow,  
but few see the flowers in it.”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

# Articles

## *Lathyrus* Collection Report

*By Roger Parsons*

### **National Plant Collection: *Lathyrus***

Collection holder: Roger Parsons

Period Covered by report: 2024

Database system used: Persephone, Excel, IrisBG

### **Plant list additions**

*L. oleraceus* 'Freer's Mummy Pea' from G Harman

(the following all *L. odoratus*):

'David Tostevin' from Plants of Distinction

'Billie May', 'Butterfly Blue', 'Claire Mitchell',

'Greenfingers Cherry', 'Minette Marrin' from Seedlynx

'Blackberry Way' from Kerton

### **Desired plants:**

Not in 2024.

### **Developments to the collection:**

Roger Parsons will continue to breed Sweet Peas after the sale of the collection and will retain full access to the collection's seedbank. There should be more time for trials within the collection. The trial planned for 2025 in Sussex will be *L. oleraceus* cultivars for flower colour plus all the 2025 Sweet Pea novelties..

### **Set backs:**

None that I can recall.

**Contacts / visits:**

No open days held. Few visitors included Gary & Maria Firth and Claire Farrer (Plant Heritage), Phil Johnson, Milli Proust & Paris Grace (Alma Proust), 10 members of Chichester Liberal Democrats including new MP, Jess Brown-Fuller.

Visits by Roger included Seedlynx, Essex.

Various activities as President of NSPS.

**Research, shows and publicity:**

Maintained the online register of *Lathyrus* epithets and raisers.

Roger was co-author of an article in The Plant Review, June 2024, on the 2022-23 Sweet Pea trials held at RHS Wisley.

**Are there any changes to your succession plans?**

The Collection is to be sold in 2025 to Agrifusion Ltd, which trades in *Lathyrus* as Seedlynx (wholesale) and English Sweet Peas (retail). The company is run by Phil Johnson, a Plant Heritage member in Essex and vice-chairman of the RHS Herbaceous Plants Expert Group. Phil is co-author of the book: "A World of Sweet Peas", launched at RHS Wisley on 1st December 2024. The company intends to apply for National Collection status.

## Celebrating 125 years

*By Caroline Ball*

2025 is a special year for the Society, the 125th anniversary since its inception. So where did it all begin? Roger Parsons gives a fascinating snapshot of this in his book Sweet Peas an Essential Guide.

There was by 1899 sufficient enthusiasm for Sweet Peas, that the idea of celebrating the bicentenary of its introduction into England arose during an inspection of the Sweet Peas at the trial grounds of Messrs Hunt and Sons in Kelvedon, Essex. The celebration consisted of an exhibition and conference held on the 20-21 July 1900 at the Crystal Palace, London. Prior to this event, a meeting was arranged for the 26 March 1900 by the bicentenary celebration organising committee to create a London Sweet Peas Society. The meeting was invaded by Charles Curtis and Horace Wright, who 'put up a great bluff' that a national Society was in the process of being created and so those at the meeting formed the nucleus of the National Sweet Peas Society.

Charles Curtis and John Eckford presented a paper to the bicentenary celebration in

which they state:

'From being such a small flower of not over vigorous habit, the Sweet Pea has been developed to a point at which we wonder where the next decided improvement will come'

They did not have to wait long. The new Society, which remains very active to this day, organised its first exhibition of Sweet Peas at the Royal Aquarium, now the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, on the 25 - 26 July 1901. This was the occasion when Silas Cole, head gardener to Earl Spencer at Althorp, Northamptonshire, amazed everyone by displaying a bowl of pink Sweet Peas that were larger and frillier than anything that had previously been seen. They caused a sensation and were unanimously awarded a First-Class Certificate. Cole named this new variety 'Countess Spencer' and large frilly Sweet Peas with an open keel have been known as Spencer type ever since.

Sadly NSPS Annuals did not start until 1905, but we do have the minute books that go back to the start of the Society. They describe the meticulous planning that went in to the formation of the new Society including agreeing what the rules should be and publicising the new Society: they agreed to send a paragraph announcing the Society to the gardening and leading papers of the day.

It looks like much consideration was given to the planning of that first National Sweet Pea Society show at the Royal Aquarium, much like happens today, though today much is delegated to the Schedule Committee and the Show Managers who report in to the General Committee who ultimately approve their decisions. The debate back then included what the classes would be, where the funding would come from for the prizes, how to deal with trade exhibitors, who would run the show and where it would be held. In the end it was agreed that the first schedule would run to 20 classes. These included some impressively large classes by today's standards: class 1 required 36 bunches distinct, the prizes being £4, £3, £2, £1 with Messrs R Sydenham, W P Wright, W Cuthbertson and H J Jones each guaranteeing £2 10/- each to cover the cost of prizes in this class. The firm of Hurst & Son guaranteed the prizes for class 2 for 24 bunches, and Mr Dicks firm of Messrs Cooper Taber & Co sponsored the class 3 special prizes for 12 bunches of Sweet Peas distinct, 3 blooms to be on each stem. 6 people were earmarked to judge at the show: Miss Willmott, Miss Pemberton and Messrs J Stanton, A J Brewin, W Balchin Jnr and A Newby. Messrs A Turner, L Castle and J Hudson were reserve names.

A subsequent meeting reported that the Royal Aquarium Company had declined to provide free admission tickets to Society members (this would have been in addition to their £10 subscription to the prize fund, so not entirely unreasonable) so it was decided to go and discuss the matter with the Royal Aquarium management. The result was a decision to purchase tickets for distribution to members and the press at 4d each. The show was advertised in the Gardeners Chronicle, the Gardeners Magazine, the Journal

of Horticulture, The Garden and The Gardener for 2 issues. It was also decided that tickets for the judges' luncheon be forwarded to the Editors of those papers and that the luncheons provided for the officials, including wines, would happen on the first day of the show. Mr Dean was requested to make the necessary arrangements for bottles and space for the luncheon at the show.

The earliest Annual of the Society dates to 1905 and whose Honorary editor was the afore mentioned Horace Wright, with Charles Curtis the assistant editor. This publication doesn't include details of the finances of the Society but it does list 27 vice presidents and 27 committee members plus a chairman, treasurer and secretary. At that time there were 169 subscribers to the Society, also detailed in full with the amount they each subscribed. There is a comprehensive audit of the 1904 show held at the Crystal Palace on 20-21 July 1904 with a comparison to the 1903 show, whose audit had been reproduced in the 1904 schedule, which had been held at Earls Court. In 1903 there were 28 classes, 29 in 1904 showing progression over the first Society show with 20 classes. In 1903 there were 128 exhibits, 991 bunches of Sweet Peas with 90 varieties exhibited. These numbers continued to increase with time.

Since the bicentenary there have been other celebratory years, notably the centenary of the Society in 2000 which included a special dinner attended by many members, a conference, publication of the Centenary book, production of a special limited edition plate plus special displays and classes. So how are we planning to celebrate the milestone of 125 years of the Society?

Firstly, there are special classes in both National and regional shows. These are aimed at showcasing the diversity of the *Lathyrus* genus and encouraging all members to have a go.

## National Shows

The first class is the '125 Triple'

This exhibit is to contain three components of at least one vase and one saucer, chosen from the list below:

- 1) A vase of 12 mixed Spencer cultivars
- 2) A vase of 12 mixed Modern 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 Modern 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 this class means at least two cultivars from the 2025 classification lists. Novelties allowed. No Seedlings.

1st A special prize and £25 2nd £15 3rd £10 4th £5

The second celebratory class is also designed to show the diversity of *Lathyrus* available although a single type is permitted and allows for you to be as creative as you choose.

‘A Celebration of 125 years of the National Sweet Pea Society’

An arrangement in any container/s of your choice but *Lathyrus* to predominate. Non *Lathyrus* flowers and foliage may be used but *Lathyrus* must predominate. Space allowed 2’6” x 2’6”. To be viewed all round and judged for quality and decorative effect and reflect the class title. Base and accessories are allowed.

1st A special prize and £25 2nd £15 3rd £10 4th £5

## Regional shows

The Chiltern Sweet Pea Society show on 29 June 2025 will include a celebratory class similar to the 125 Triple above requiring 3 components comprising at least one vase and one saucer showcasing the diversity of the *lathyrus* genus (contact Graeme Hollingdale [graeme@graemehollingdale.com](mailto:graeme@graemehollingdale.com) for a schedule).

The Royal Welsh show on 21-24 July 2025 in its open Sweet Pea classes has a special class to celebrate The National Sweet Pea Society 125th Anniversary comprising of:

A Bowl of Mixed Spencer Sweet Peas

A Vase of Mixed Spencer Sweet Peas Front facing

A Saucer of Grandiflora and/or Old Fashioned Sweet Peas

Together with other Sweet Pea Classes in the National Sweet Pea Championship of Wales. More details on Royal Welsh Website and the NSPS website when available.

We hope that members will find the classes exciting and that the public will too. Special prizes will be awarded for these classes so do have a go.

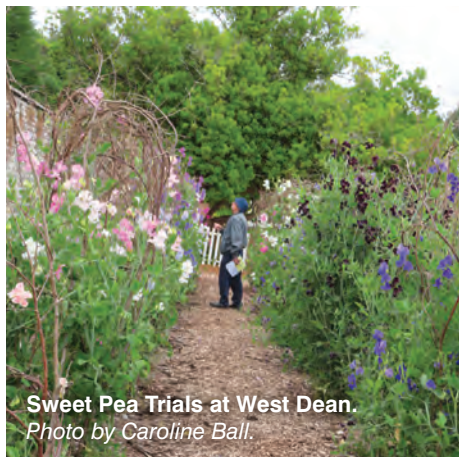
## Displays

The Displays put on around the country at lots of top flower shows will also have a 125 year celebratory theme including the North West Regional show, Southport and Windsor. We hope the Display teams will rise to the 125 year challenge and that everyone will be delighted to see the results of their hard and creative work.

## Outings

Back in the early days of the Society Sweet Pea outings were a regular thing. To celebrate 125 years we have arranged two outings.

### West Dean Trials visit



**Sweet Pea Trials at West Dean.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

A limited number of lucky members will be able to book to visit the Sweet Pea Trials at West Dean and the Gardens for the very special rate of £25 per person on 15 June 2025. This will include entry into the Gardens, a guided tour of the Sweet Pea Trials and an afternoon tea in West Dean House which is not normally open to the public.

West Dean Gardens (part of West Dean College of Arts and Conservation) are situated in West Sussex. They are a beautifully rejuvenated historic garden rich in creative and social heritage. Features

include the 13 restored Victorian Glasshouses housing orchids, fuchsias, figs, vines, kiwis and chillies. A Walled Kitchen Garden of classic Victorian design, 100m-long Edwardian Pergola designed by Harold Peto, the naturalistic Spring Garden, the award-winning Sunken Garden and the orchards. There is a circular 2½ mile arboretum walk set in 50 acres of beautiful parkland offers stunning views of the South Downs and a route passing Edward James' grave. West Dean House is Grade II\* listed as are its landscaped park and gardens. This country estate has approximately 6,350 acres (25.7km<sup>2</sup>) of land and dates back to 1086, with various royal connections throughout the years. In 1971 the Estate became the home of West Dean College, a centre of study of conservation, arts, crafts, writing, gardening, and music. West Dean House is the home to works of surrealist art and objects including some works of Salvador Dali.

The programme will allow time for you to explore West Dean at your leisure and there will be lots



**The walled gardens at West Dean.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

of experts on hand to answer your questions of including the Trials Committee, the Trials Team from West Dean and other experts from the Society. Please contact Caroline Ball ([caroline\\_a\\_m\\_ball@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:caroline_a_m_ball@yahoo.co.uk) with any questions, for full details of the planned programme or to purchase your tickets (see also insert in this Annual). This is an experience not to be missed so apply quickly since ticket numbers are limited and we are expecting the unique nature of the day to prove extremely popular.

### **Barnsdale visit**



Our second outing is to Barnsdale Gardens in Oakham Rutland on 16 July 2025.

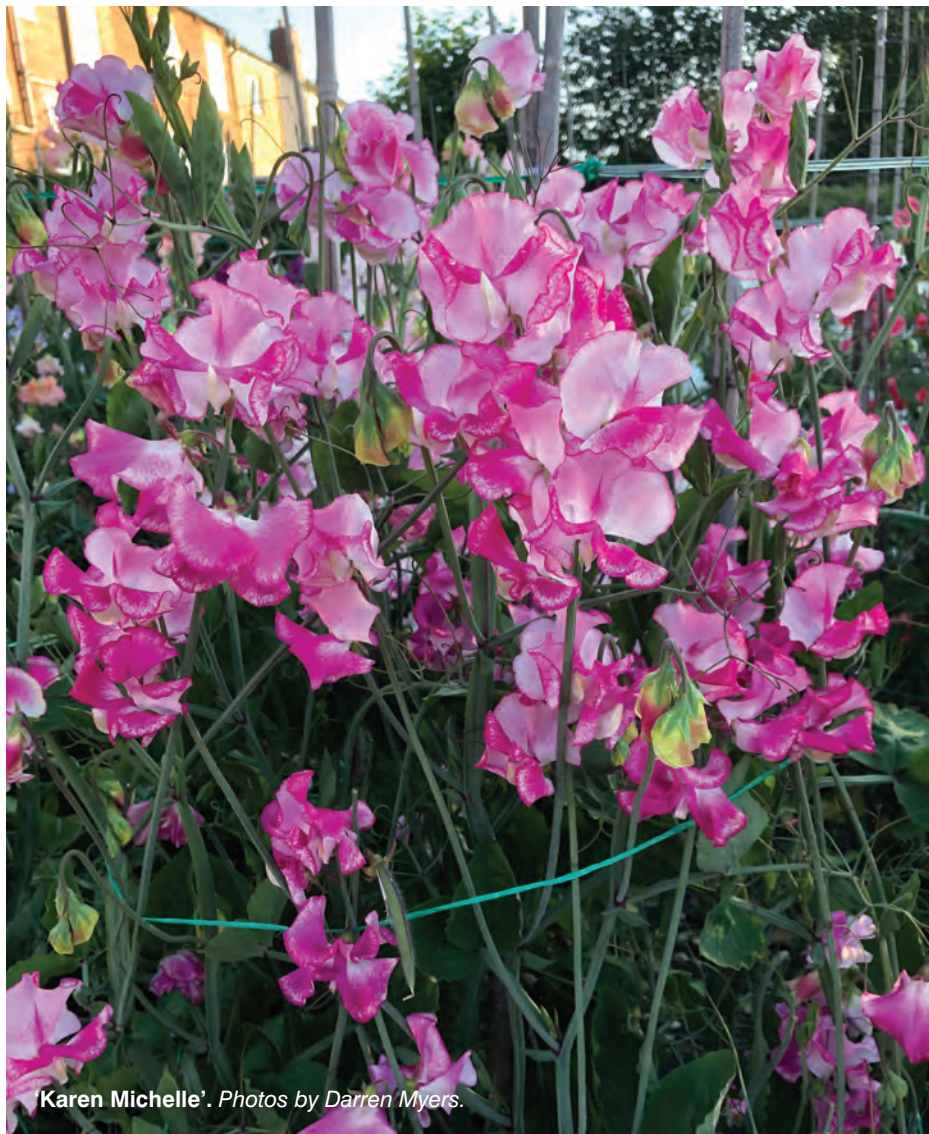
With 38 individual inspiring gardens across a range of styles, Barnsdale has been described as a theme park for gardeners. Its claim to fame is as the garden of Geoff Hamilton which featured heavily on BBC Gardeners' World. It has been voted the UK's best garden to visit. Garden styles in the 8 acre site range from the traditional English cottage garden to wildlife, Japanese, French, rose and even a children's garden. The gardens use organic and peat free methods and Sweet Peas are featured in some.

There is a plant nursery and tea rooms, where afternoon tea is offered as part of the NSPS package for £30 per person which includes entry to the gardens. The programme will allow you to enter the gardens when you wish on the day and to visit them at your leisure. Afternoon tea will be at 3pm. The gardens provide great inspiration for your own garden. Barnsdale has been recognised with an award by the Rutland Access Group for its accessible facilities, which include: accessible parking, accessible toilets and ramp-access to parts of the gardens where necessary. This is an opportunity to be inspired by a number of unique small gardens in one area and for a special NSPS rate and to visit with like minded Sweet Pea enthusiasts.

Please contact Caroline Ball ([caroline\\_a\\_m\\_ball@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:caroline_a_m_ball@yahoo.co.uk)) with any queries and to purchase tickets. See also form included in this Annual.

## Garden open

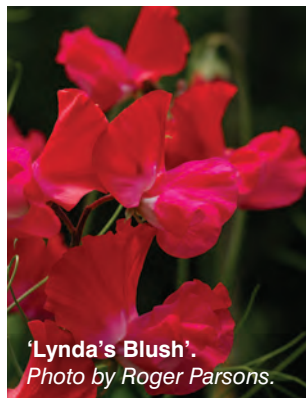
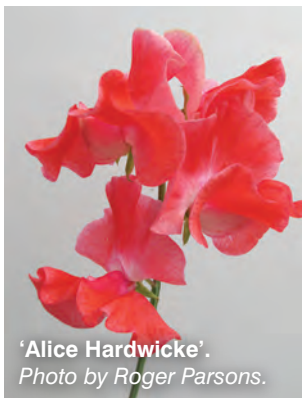
Cantref Open Gardens on Sunday June 8 2025 in aid of Target Ovarian Cancer. Admission £6 on the day. Amongst the approximately 15 gardens open will be Jenny and Lewis Morgan's Sweet Pea paradise. Its early but they hope to have Sweet Peas in bloom. (Postcode NP7 7EB North Street ABERGAVENNY Monmouthshire, South Wales).



*Karen Michelle'. Photos by Darren Myers.*

## A Look Back at Successful Parents

By *Andrew Beane*



I have completed 151 successful Sweet Pea crosses since starting in 1978. This includes seven attempts to produce a yellow Sweet Pea which used *Lathyrus chloranthus* and a mutation acquired from Bernard Jones. None of the seven were successful, but that is another story. The aim of this article is to review the parents of crosses done and identify the most successful.

The first to mention is 'Jack Davis' x 'Honeymoon'. 'Jack Davis' is a lavender bred by Bernard Jones and not widely available. This cross produced a stronger-coloured version of 'Honeymoon', 80C2, which has been used with success in future crosses. The last of these produced a white named 'Alec Cave'.



The next one to highlight is 'Alice Hardwicke' and these days you need to find a reliable stock of seed. Mine came from Bernard Jones, six seeds carefully counted from a white saucer in the front room of Temple Cottage. A cross in 1985 with 'Lynda's Blush' produced 'Daily Mail'. 'Lynda's Blush' is a bicolour from Keith Hammett. In my experience, the latter contributes growth and vigour into seedlings. 'Alice Hardwicke' is also the parent of 'Grandma Butt'.

In 1989, I crossed 'Anthea Turner' with 'Brian



Clough'!!! This produced 'Evening Glow' which is not the best seeder, a character inherited from 'Brian Clough'. The colour is very good but as an exhibition Pea it was superseded by 'Valerie Harrod'. The same cross also produced 'Imogen'. As a footnote, 'Anthea Turner' and 'Brian Clough' both have 'Alice Hardwicke' in their breeding, although a couple of generations back.

The following have been bred from 'Evening Glow'

1. 'William Willson', which is not a good seeder.
2. 'Clementine Kiss', bred by Dave Matthewman.
3. 'Doreen'
4. 'Susan Burgess'
5. 'King's Ransom'
6. 'Salhouse Sunset' also has some 'Evening Glow' in the breeding but two generations back.

The next one on my list is 'Wiltshire Ripple'. This came from a batch of four seedlings bred by the late Mr R.F.M. Wiltshire in 1980. Amongst these was a small brown stripe that was profuse in flowering. It gained an Award of Merit for Garden Decoration in the 1981/82 trials at Wisley. Released by Thompson & Morgan, it can still be found in seed catalogues today. It is not as good as 'Lilac Ripple' which came out about the same time but between them they resurrected interest in the striped varieties.



'Wiltshire Ripple' was crossed with 'The Doctor' in 1982 to produce 'Candy', which was released by Unwins. Seedlings bred by Dick Place will have some 'Wiltshire Ripple' genes in them.

A cross done in 1988, 'Wiltshire Ripple' x Cupids, produced a variety of dwarf seedlings of various colours which fixed readily. One of these, 'Minscar', gained an AGM at Wisley in 1998 and was released as 'Pinochio'. Unfortunately, these dwarf seedlings don't seed very

easily in wet conditions and the seed of 'Pinnocchio' was lost. To take the story further and up to date, a seedling 'Minmaroon' was crossed in 1996 to produce a pink cerise dwarf, 96A2. This was crossed in 2022 with a pink stripe intermediate height, acquired from Keith Hammett. The F2s have produced two scarlet stripes that are similar to 'Pinnocchio'. 'Minmaroon' was a sister seedling to 'Pinnocchio'. We wait to see if they readily fix.

The parents highlighted in this article are from the distant past. There are now more recent varieties that have become successful parents. However, don't be put off by older varieties. They can be useful sources of genes if they are true and retain their vigour.



## Cultivation for Sweet Peas

*By Alison Shreeve*

If you are new to growing Sweet Peas this article is aimed to help you achieve the best results you can. You don't need to grow hundreds to enjoy a long season of good quality blooms.

To begin with the soil. This is where the magic happens. Sweet Peas will grow almost anywhere but prefer a good, well fed soil. They are not too particular regarding ph levels, unless you have extremes which require modifying with lime or organic matter. They fix nitrogen from the soil so do not require a lot of feeding during the growing period. However, the better the soil, the better your blooms will be. If you have an allotment or vegetable garden, they are ideal rotated round the plot with the rest of your vegetables, providing you add compost or organic matter each year. If you want to grow in a flower bed with other flowers then provide a good mulch each autumn to enable the worms to work the humus down into the bed and keep it as weed free as you can to avoid competition for your flowers. They also require a sunny position without too much wind. It doesn't matter if there is some shade, but ideally as much sun as you can give them. Before you plant out you might like to add some Sulphate of Potash to provide potassium to help flowering. I rake in wood ash from the stove – it's a by-product of the wood burner and most of it comes from the garden originally, so is being returned back to the earth.

It is also possible to grow Sweet Peas in pots, but they do need a large container and a good amount of manure in the base of each pot. You will need about 5 litres of

growing medium per plant for Old Fashioned cultivars and 7 litres for Spencers. There are medium height and dwarf varieties which will happily grow in containers, but the taller Old Fashioned and Spencer cultivars will need support once they have reached about 6 inches high.

Having prepared your garden or your containers for the Sweet Peas you have two options – to buy plants or to sow from seed. The latter is likely to result in better plants, but if you have to buy from a garden centre try and get them as soon as they are available and pot them on. The less time they spend cramped in a small pot the better!

Sowing can take place any time from late October to March, depending on your location and also the resources you have available. Germination requires temperatures of around 15-18C, so you will need a heated greenhouse or a windowsill or airing cupboard. However, you must move them to a cold, light environment as soon as you see the shoots emerge to a centimetre or so high. A cold frame or unheated greenhouse is ideal, though a cold room in the house is possible too. They will develop a good root system and shouldn't become too leggy if you can provide these conditions. Once the soil begins to warm, they are ready to plant out, providing the weather is not too extreme. This could be from the end of March, depending on your location. Water in well when transplanting them and provide the support structures if needed before you plant out. Canes are fine, but any kind of netting, pea and bean net, pig wire, chicken wire or twiggy sticks can all be used to support growth. They can also scramble through other plants for support. The ultimate decision is yours and worth experimenting to find out how you like to see your Sweet Peas and where you like them.

If you want to grow to exhibit your Spencer blooms you will need to use the cordon method, where side shoots and tendrils are removed leaving one leader supported by a cane. However, if you are not interested in showing your Sweet Peas you can simply plant out and leave them to grow up the supports – in amongst your flower beds or your vegetables. The tendrils of the plants will hold on to any suitable structure nearby, but they might need a guiding hand to start with. You can of course grow Old Fashioned and Grandiflora types 'on the bush' (not cordon grown) and show these. Then you MUST keep picking the flowers! Such a hardship! If you leave flowers on the plants they will run to seed and stop blooming. You can deadhead of course if you want the flowers to stay in the garden, but they are wonderful brought into the house and simply put in a vase or container of some sort. The perfume will scent your rooms for a couple of days and then you can pick again, and again and again.

Plants will need watering every day if they are grown in a container, even if it rains, the growth will prevent water reaching the soil. Avoid leaving the pots in standing water as this might rot the roots. Grown in open ground they will need watering if it doesn't rain for a few days. Try to water in the morning when the temperatures are cooler and there will be less shock to the plants than there would be after a full day of sunshine. A trickle

hose is good, but a watering can works well, providing you can get the water to the base of the plants and don't damage the blooms by using a sprinkler if you can avoid it.

There is more information on sowing and growing on the NSPS website. If you do have questions or encounter difficulties, remember that you have a District Representative who can help. Also, the members only chat room on Facebook is likely to produce a good response to any queries you might have. Good growing and enjoy your blooms!

## The New Rosette

*By Roz Warley*



**John Rieley (right) wins Sweet Pea rosette.** *Photo by Lindfield Horticultural Society.*

In 2024 I sent rosettes to the April committee meeting with an idea to encourage Sweet Pea classes in small local shows. It was an idea that the committee decided to try. Designing and making the rosettes for the NSPS was very enjoyable, not least because the colours are almost as pretty as the blooms themselves.

The rosettes evolved after discussion surrounding the declining membership numbers just over one year ago. It was recognised by the committee, that this was happening for several reasons and the importance of younger members coming into showing and growing at novice level was apparent.

We think the rosettes are a great way of attracting entries, but also for advertising the NSPS, the website, QR code etc. A way to connect new growers with the NSPS as well as making a great prize for the winners.

This year is our 125th anniversary, and we are presently designing the 2025 rosettes. As well as the rosettes we shall be giving shows the opportunity to purchase a membership subscription, which will go along with the rosettes to the winners.

Hopefully this will help to attract new members, and keep our Society as fresh as it was back in 1900.

The rosettes were well received and we were delighted with this communication from the Lindfield Horticultural Society: 'attached is a photo of John Rieley, the recipient of

our new Sweet Pea rosette (being awarded by our president Neil MacNamara).

John was awarded this for best Sweet Pea exhibit which was our championship class of 3 vases of 6 stems, 3 cultivars. The cultivars were 'Queen of Hearts', 'Gwendoline' and 'Glasnevin'.

We decided at our recent committee meeting that we would like to become an affiliate of the Sweet Pea Society as we've had an increased interest in Sweet Peas largely due to workshops that John Rieley has been running for our society members this year.

Our show was a great success and everyone commented on the lovely scent as they entered the hall!

If you know a Society, currently unaffiliated to the NSPS, that may be interested awarding a rosette please contact Roz Warley or any committee member.

## Climate Change and Sweet Peas

*By Derek Heathcote*

### Question!

#### ***Do Sweet Peas cross pollinate in the bud stage, and if so why?***

In the last heat wave of 2023 several "fixed" varieties of our seed crop "broke up" and the colours mixed, but also some remained the correct colour. Talking to other Sweet Pea growers they had seen similar effects in their plants – so what has happened and has this been seen before?

Looking back into Sweet Pea history there was nothing standing out. In a book called "Seed Time The History of Essex Seeds", by Elinor M C Roper in 1989, page 158 is an article written by Walter P Wright (a horticultural writer), covering Sweet Peas from around 1900, looking at the development of Sweet Peas in 1901 of Eckford 'Prima Donna' which led to 'Countess Spencer' in around 1908, and how Sweet Peas were self-fertilizing. He writes that climate conditions, such as a very hot summer, will sometimes result in the style emerging from the keel above its anthers and so exposing itself to cross pollination.

"Sweet Peas for Garden and Exhibition" by D Gourlay Thomas, page 80, Editions 1949-1950-1952 says:

Some modern varieties expose their stigmas in very hot weather and it is quite possible for some stray pollen to blow on to this and thereby make another "cross".

“Sweet Peas A complete Guide to Their Culture” by E R Janes, page 171, Edition 1953 comments that:

Sweet peas vital organs are closely protected and quite safe, except where there are Leaf Cutter Bee’s or should very hot days at the critical time cause the protecting petals of the keel to flag and expose the reproductive organs.

“Mendelism” by Punnett, page 80/81, writes that the “cretin” Sweet Pea appeared in 1907, discussed in detail by Punnett in 1918. Also, there is a note on the cretin Sweet Pea in the 1989 Sweet Pea Annual. However being deformed was never a threat to large scale cross pollination.

### ***So was the temperature itself upsetting the balance?***

A search on Google found “extreme heat affecting plant pollen germination in Sweet Peas”.

Many studies showed that temperature stress often led to pollen abortion and a synchronous development of pollen and stigma. Particularly high temperature had a significant effect on pollen germination, pollen tube growth, fertilization.

There was a negative interaction between temperature and CO<sub>2</sub> on pollen viability. Increase in temperature from 32/22 to 36/26 deg. C decreases pollen germination by 26% at ambient CO<sub>2</sub> and by 48% at elevated CO<sub>2</sub>. Elevated CO<sub>2</sub> decreases pollen germination by 9% at 32/22 deg. C and by 36% at 36/26 deg. C.

To sum this up - high temperatures can reduce pollen production, prevent anthers from releasing pollen, kill pollen outright and interfere with pollen tubes that serve as conduits for uniting sperm cells and eggs (fertilization) inside undeveloped seeds (ovules), but has little or no effect off cross fertilization, but does reduce fertilization and kills pollen.

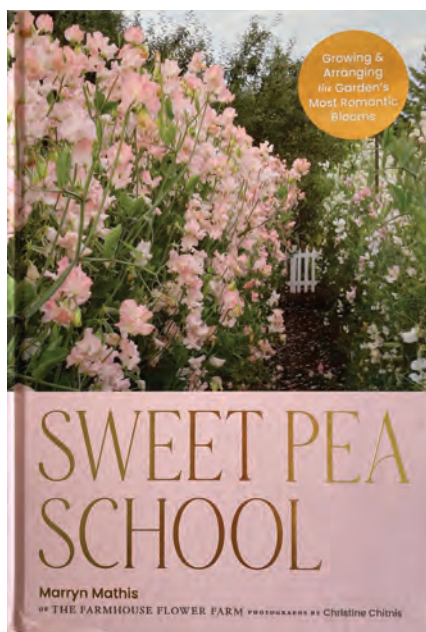
In conclusion, after extensive research and reading, it seems that climate change does affect cross pollination. In the past cross pollination has been noted as far back as 1949, but it did not happen regularly for it to become of any concern. However it may happen more often in today’s environment and it has been noted. Our plants are grown under glass and poly tunnels, with air circulating fans operating in hot weather, blowing free pollen all around as the plants expose the stigmas. Temperatures reached high 90F/40C for very long periods in the heat wave of 2023.

*Thanks to Keith Brewer, Andy Beane and Jim McDonald for their assistance with this article.*

# Sweet Pea School - Book Review

*By Roger Parsons*

Sweet Pea books appear to be like buses. Two months after the launch of "A World of Sweet Peas", I received a copy of Marryn Mathis' magnificent book "Sweet Pea School. I recall something similar happened in 1986 when new editions of Bernard Jones' "Complete Guide to Sweet Peas" and Charles Unwin's "Sweet Peas: their history, development and culture" both appeared in the same year. "Sweet Pea School" is published by Chronicle Books of San Francisco and is a beautifully constructed hardback book of 240 pages.



The author Marryn Mathis owns The Farmhouse Flower Farm, a 10-acre family-run flower farm located in the Pacific Northwest of the USA. She hosts annual online and in-person Sweet Pea School workshops and sells farm-grown seeds, bulbs and tubers for all kinds of flowers through her website. I had the pleasure of meeting her when she visited me in 2022 while here in the UK and was surprised to find my picture appearing occasionally throughout the book.

This is another coffee table book that is beautifully presented. There are extensive photographs by Christine Chitnis which I find particularly impressive and will surely inspire readers to want to grow Sweet Peas. There is sparse information on the history of Sweet Peas but extensive discussion of different growing methods to help the reader find what works best for them. The book is written primarily for an American audience so some of the terminology needs adjusting to. Examples include, sowing in the fall, covering seeds with dirt and a section on how to corral your plants.

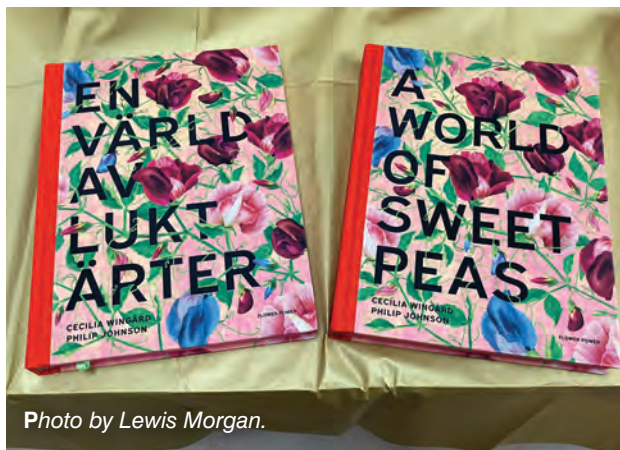
The guidance on how to harvest your own seeds is detailed and well-illustrated, and there is a very good section on designing with Sweet Peas from a floristry perspective. Perhaps this is a personal foible but my main criticism is the lack of an index.

It is hard not to compare these two new books because they are similar in size and quality. Each has their strengths and weaknesses so I would not want to be without either of them.

## A World of Sweet Peas - Book Review

*By Roger Parsons, Georgie Newbery and Mandy Bradshaw*

It is always exciting when a new book on Sweet Peas is published, the last one being published in 2021 by the RHS - *Lathyrus* by Greg Kenicer and Roger Parsons. We are really spoilt, therefore, that 'A World of Sweet Peas' by Cecilia Wingård and Philip Johnson was published in December 2024. This glorious coffee table book has been well received by horticultural writers and we are also spoilt for choice regarding reviews for the book so what follows are comments from three of them.



*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

Our very own esteemed expert and President of the Society, Roger Parsons starts by saying 'if you love the feel and smell of books, as much as I do, then A World of Sweet Peas is one to treasure'. He goes on to say ' Even before you open the pages the board used, cloth covering, binding and other features all ooze quality. This is a book

physically built to last. It has been produced in two languages, English and Swedish.'

The review of Georgie Newbery, a cut flower grower, starts by saying 'A new book on one of the UK's favourite flowers is filled with beautiful photography but is more than a coffee table tome. As books go, this is a beauty. But look beyond the glorious photographs and the list of new cultivars and you'll be inspired to try and find seeds to grow.'

The Chatty Gardener, Mandy Bradshaw award winning Cotswold based garden journalist, says A World of Sweet Peas 'has given me lots of encouragement to get going (with planting Sweet Pea seed). If, like me, you love these colourful scented annuals then this is a must read. '.....' it is a comprehensive exploration of what they describe as 'the Queen of the Annuals' that covers everything you could possibly want to know'.

Georgie Newbery comments 'what I like most is the way the story is told through those people who helped disseminate Sweet Pea seed around the world..... This telling of the grand old days of flower shows evokes a feeling of wistfulness for a bygone age....'

Roger says the book contains some interesting aspects of Sweet Peas, which have not previously been covered.

'The chapter on floral arrangements includes information on companion plants for the garden and the Flower decoration. These are both covered in more detail than anything else I have ever read before. It is an excellent chapter that people will want to revisit from time to time to gain ideas and inspiration. There is an innovative chapter on scent in Sweet Peas. Something not covered in other recent works. This looks to some extent at the science behind fragrance, and tries to categorise cultivars with different fragrances. From my own experience, I can relate very readily to the four broad categories identified. These then form the basis for descriptions of the fragrance of individual cultivars, which some people will agree with and find helpful. Referring to cultivars, there are tributes to the work done by myself and Keith Hammett, which I was delighted to see. Another novel section looks at growing Sweet Peas with children. As someone who remembers growing Sweet Peas as a child, I thought it good to see priority given to this aspect.'

The Chatty Gardner notes that the classifications, such as Spencer or Grandiflora, are explained in the book along with a description of colours..... 'Both authors also, give their own step-by-step instructions on cultivation, one suited to the British climate and the other for far chillier conditions. ....One of the most interesting sections looks at examples from each of the Sweet Pea types with lots of photographs. Among those blooms features are 'Albutt Blue', one of the most strongly scented, 'Ailsa', probably the only Russian introduction and 'Our Heroes' introduced by Phil and named for the front line workers in the Covid pandemic. There's also a preview of new varieties that are soon to be launched.'

Georgie Newbery writes 'Plant societies such as the NSPS will have to evolve to keep up with the TikTokers. But RHS Garden Wisley is contributing strongly to a world where flower festivals are offered. Again the book has pictures of the RHS Sweet Peas forum, examining the trials beds at Wisley, judging for coveted RHS Awards of Garden Merit (AGM).

The Chatty Gardener concludes that the book 'is a thorough look at a garden favourite that's informative and highly dangerous if you are buying seed as it is packed with temptation.'

Georgie Newbery says 'We operate a one book in one book out policy here at Common Farm, or we would find ourselves overwhelmed. However, this one is clearly a keeper. Another will have to be expelled from our collection so that A World of Sweet Peas can stay.'

Roger Parsons finishes saying 'I must conclude by congratulating the authors on a book which itself is a work of art. One that I will treasure. My hope and expectation is that it will inspire many more people to grow Sweet Peas and enjoy them as much as the authors do.'

# Creating a World of Sweet Peas

*By Cecilia Wingård*

In March 2023, Phil Johnson visited Stockholm, and I took the opportunity to ask him if he wanted to collaborate with me on a new, major book about Sweet Peas. I had written a book in Swedish on Sweet Peas in 2018, which was now out of print, and I wanted to combine Phil's extensive knowledge of the subject with my experiences from Sweden. I have been working full-time with Sweet Peas for over ten years and have been selling seeds from English Sweetpeas/Seedlynx to a large number of Scandinavian Sweet Pea enthusiasts since 2017. A new, comprehensive book on the topic was needed! Now, the result is a book available in both English and Swedish.



It was important to us to create a beautiful book and ensure that everything written was accurate. Therefore, we hired the best photographers, designers, translators, and text editors. We wanted to tell the stories of everyone who has worked with Sweet Peas throughout history and highlight that these flowers are grown across almost the entire globe.

Writing the book together with Phil has been an exciting experience. We've sent an incredible number of texts back and forth between each other through text editors. Phil wrote in English, and I wrote in Swedish, which sometimes made it difficult to understand each other perfectly. Agneta Bergström, who reviewed all the texts, has played a crucial role in ensuring everything was accurate.

I am very happy that both versions of the book are now complete and are gradually finding their audience in England, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Poland, and the USA. I

naturally hope that members of The National Sweet Pea Society appreciate our book and can accept that a book about England's most important flower has been published in Sweden.

## **The Making of a Book**

**By Phil Johnson**

I have worked with Cecilia Wingård for a number of years, by supplying her with seeds through Seedlynx, the wholesale counterpart to English Sweet Peas. She began her interest in Sweet Peas, or Luktärter, a number of years ago and one season decided to open her garden to visitors. This proved so popular that I believe she struggled to cope. Visitors soon wanted to know where they could find seeds of the wide range of varieties on display, so she contacted Seedlynx and placed the first of many orders. Over the ensuing years, she has ordered more and more seeds to try to supply the burgeoning Swedish and now Scandanavian market. It is fair to say that she has become the Swedish queen of Sweet Peas! As with me, Sweet Peas dominate her life – but there are many worse things!

We have become good friends of more recent times, triggered by her annual visits to our nursery. In early April 2023, I had agreed to fly to Stockholm to co-host a talk on Sweet Peas. As soon as I arrived and barely taken off my coat, Cecilia asked if I would like to co-write a book about Sweet Peas with her! I was aware that she had self-published two previous books, one about Sweet Peas (Luktärt) and one about growing cut flowers (Blomster – odla egna snittblommor), so I knew that she had experience and all the contacts necessary to create a special book. I expect that many of us have toyed with the idea of writing a book and for me, it may have been an idle dream, but this seemed like an ideal opportunity.

So, with the basic agreement in place, we went back to the day job and started to discuss the focus of the book when time permitted. Cecilia was keen to tell the story of the history of the Sweet Pea, featuring key figures and the spread of our beloved flower around the world; a chapter on growing Sweet Peas with children was important; and a detailed description of how to grow them in colder climates.

I was keen to look at how to grow companion plants and how to arrange them attractively together with Sweet Peas indoors. The work of top florists, Ewa Stromberg and Heidi Mikkonen is truly remarkable – such talent! I was also particularly eager to publish some research looking into the nuance of scent in Sweet Peas. As I have said before, I was aware of distinct types of scent in Sweet Peas, but my nose was so desensitised that I could not describe it successfully. However, I am greatly indebted to our daughter, Livia, who has found a way to distinguish and describe the individual scents of several hundred varieties and then categorise them more broadly. I hope many of us will be

able to at least identify with the categories that she describes in her article.

We included a basic description of how to grow “the Queen of Annuals”, but I was keen not to repeat the in-depth cultivation guides and cordon growing methods so ably and comprehensively covered in many previous publications. I particularly wanted this book to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Sweet Peas for all !

A trip to Cecilia’s home in Brantevik in southern Sweden last August, with Zoe and Lily, was indeed memorable. The landscape and certainly the summer climate is surprisingly similar to southern England. A chance to meet the production team in person and enjoy Molly’s wonderful cooking. Pressure was mounting to create and photograph the final flower arrangements; portraits of Cecilia and I; work on initial editing and graphic design and layout. This was supposed to be a working holiday, but I think I had an easy time of it!

We have managed to produce a quality book with amazing photography by Bjarne Staehr, Pernilla Bergdahl and Eva Mathiasson amongst others. Agneta Bergstrom has been a pillar of calm in a stormy sea as editor. Sofia Scheutz opened my eyes to the world of graphic design and illustration. The translators also did sterling work in managing to publish the same work in Swedish and English. Cecilia’s daughters, Molly and Flora made major contributions too. The whole team are amazingly talented and I have made many new friends.

Then the deadline loomed large and as always there were SO many final queries trying to translate, link photos to page numbers for the variety index, completing an English and a Swedish version at the same time. I am sure there are a few mistakes remaining, but that is the way with books. Agneta and Sofia burnt much midnight oil making the final amendments – all credit to them and Cecilia.

Eventually the books were delivered from the Latvian printer arriving just in time for the two launches; one at the atmospheric Groens Malmgård in Stockholm and one courtesy of RHS at Wisley Garden. Groens Malmgård is a manor house set in an oasis of a large walled garden surrounded by high rise buildings, built in the mid 17th century and little changed. It was incredibly atmospheric in the snow and lit with candles and lanterns. Many people came along and thankfully most spoke English very fluently!

The launch at Wisley, the following weekend, was equally successful, but the setting and the audience rather different. We were able to enjoy the facilities at the Hill Top hall, where we held the Early National in 2022 and made good use of the audiovisual systems.

I am so appreciative of all the many contributions and support that I have received from all corners throughout the book project. Hopefully, many of you will be able to enjoy the finished product too. But I would not be writing this article at all, if my dear friend Cecilia had not dreamt of a beautiful book, back in snowy Stockholm!

## One – Two – Five

*By Lorna Minton*

The folk who formed our Society  
 All those years ago,  
 Would not have believed its longevity,  
 If they had, they were licensed to crow;  
 For we've been in existence for donkey's years,  
 One hundred and twenty five to date;  
 Surely a milestone to celebrate  
 For this achievement is noticeably great.  
 Our committee will have shared their ideas,  
 And discussed how to mark the anniversary;  
 It's the equivalent of two Golds and a Silver,  
 So the answer should not be just cursory.  
 They probably mulled over a few ideas  
 But then settled on " 1-2-5 Triple" ,  
 This brand new Class in the Schedule  
 Should reward all those folk with a tippie!

But how has our Society lasted so long,  
 Is it simply that we all love Sweet Peas ?  
 Or are there some other subtle factors,  
 Which keep us buzzing together like bees?  
 I'm sure that the answer concerns friendship,  
 Alongside the generosity of experts,  
 Who freely give advice to new growers  
 Who in no time at all become converts.  
 When the writer of this poem won Gold  
 For a collection of *Lathyrus* paintings,  
 She was approached by a Society member  
 Who said she should join...without waiting!  
 I was only an amateur grower,  
 And nervous about how I'd be received,  
 But I only found friendship and kindness,  
 Which at the time, I hardly believed.

But I acted on advice and joined promptly,  
 And have never regretted the decision;  
 Thirty great years have since passed,  
 (Though my gardening is now in remission)  
 But I am still very active with painting,  
 And learning about 'Peas from each expert,  
 I hope to keep membership for a year or two more,  
 As the Society has made **me** an old convert !!

## Bicolour Sweet Peas

*By Roger Parsons*

When it comes to classifying Spencers, most cultivars are allocated to a colour category but the fancy ones are grouped together by colour pattern. All those with the same colour pattern, such as striped, flaked and bicoloured, are in the same category whatever their colour. In last year's Annual, I looked at the colours available in the striped category (16) and this article discusses the bicolours (16a).



'Just Christine'.  
 Photo by Roger Parsons.

Bicolours should be easily identified because the standard petal has one colour while the wing petals have a different colour. Most Sweet Peas are self-coloured, both standard and wings having the same colour. Although not a Spencer, the Wild Sweet Pea, from which all other colours have arisen, is a maroon and violet bicolour. Bicolour is genetically dominant to self-colour so why are selfs much more common? This is primarily because plant breeders spent most of the 20th century trying to refine the uniform colouring of selfs. Uniformity of colour is an important consideration in assessing the quality of a cultivar and this led some raisers and show judges to reject anything that was not self-coloured. It is only in the past 40 years or so that fancy cultivars have become increasingly valued.

By the 1970s, bicolour Spencers had almost disappeared. 'Gaiety' was still popularly found. This is a pink and white bicolour introduced by R Bolton & Sons in 1946. It had been popular for exhibition but by the 1970s had deteriorated in quality. It still exists but I have not grown it for decades so would hesitate to say how true it is to its original form. The other one from this era is 'Orange Surprise' introduced by E W King in 1961. The colour burns and it is multiflora so has never been widely grown.



Keith Hammett in New Zealand made it a mission to produce a new series of exhibition-quality bicolours and the results of this work were first seen at the 1977 NSPS trials at Wisley. Keith's series included 'Brenda Bridger', 'Cocktail', 'North Shore', 'Renaissance', 'Signpost' and 'Two Tone'. These Hammett bicolours were usually sold as a mixture,

which some seed firms gave other names to such as "Lovematch" and rather confusingly "Two Tone". Later came 'Mary Lou Heard'. The individual cultivars have also been re-selected and sold under other names, such as the Melody series and Matchmaker series.

'Brenda Bridger' is cerise & pink. I like to think my own 'Chance' (Parsons 2006) is an improved form of 'Brenda Bridger'. 'Chance' may have a little more white at the base of the petals. 'Duo Salmon' (Unwins 2009) has brighter standards than both.

'Cocktail' is maroon & violet, like the Wild Sweet Pea. 'Emilia Fox' is simply 'Cocktail' renamed. 'Duo Magenta', introduced by Unwins in 2007, has similar colour, but in my view is not so good for cutting. 'Together' (Matthewman 2018) is very like 'Cocktail'. For me, 'Purple Pimpernel' is best of this colour. It was raised by Toby Hunt, who exhibited a wonderful vase of this at the 2004 National show, but it was another ten years before T&M introduced it.



'North Shore' is navy blue & violet. 'Richard & Judy' (Matthewman 2002) is purple & mauve and very popular with cut flower growers for its long season. 'Just Christine' (Parsons 2024) is purple & violet and arose from my attempt to produce an improved 'North Shore'. 'Suffolk Punch Miggie', raised by Phil Johnson and introduced by Fothergills in 2024, is purple & lavender. These are all variations on the same colour theme, however the raisers describe them.



'Renaissance' has the pink & white colouring of 'Painted Lady' and 'Gaiety'. I hope I am being objective when I say that 'Promise' (Parsons 2006) is an improvement on the others in this colour. 'Route 66' (Hammett 2015) has great colour (red & white) but for me is better for garden decoration than for cutting.

'Signpost' is lavender pink & white. 'Cold Steel' (Hammett 2019) is lavender & white and might be considered an improved 'Signpost' because of its colour and form.

'Two Tone' has salmon and pink flowers, like 'Brenda Bridger' but paler. 'Strawberry Fields' (Hammett 2005) is paler still. It flowers prolifically but is perhaps one for the garden rather than for cutting.

'Mary Lou Heard' is mauve and lavender. 'Regal Reflection' appears to be the same cultivar re-named.

It can be seen from the above that other people have taken up Keith's initiative in breeding their own bicolours. Some notable introductions are 'Charley Bear', introduced by Kertons in 2015, is rosy mauve & white. This is striking colour contrast but the placement was quite bunched when I grew it. All bicolours in this article are essentially white ground, perhaps from using 'Gaiety'





**'Margaret Hughson'.**  
Photo by Roger Parsons.



**'Ella Mountbatten'.**  
Photo by Roger Parsons.

at some point in their ancestry. 'Our Helen' (McDonald 2025) is pink & cream rather than pink & white so represents a genuine breakthrough in colour. It should prove popular with cut flower growers. Its origin is that Jim McDonald selected a magenta / cream plant from a Hammett mixture which included segregating material. He had trouble fixing this but with Andrew Beane's help,

arrived at this pink and cream bicolour. I have introduced it this season, so 'Our Helen' really has been a team effort.

I said early in this article that bicolours should be easily distinguished. However, some are barely bicoloured. I describe 'Lake Windermere' Boltons 2003 as a dark blue bicolour. Its classification has oscillated between bicolour and dark blue over the years. 'Newby Blue' is from the same mould.

An innovation from Keith Hammett was the introduction of reverse bicolours. He had admired the reverse bicolouring seen in some Garden Peas, now *Lathyrus oleraceus*, and bred from plants which hinted at this pattern until it became a stronger characteristic that could be fixed. 'Leading Light' lavender & mauve was the first of these. 'Margaret Hughson', from Bob Chisholm, white with pink flush on the wings, has the vigour which 'Leading Light' lacks. 'Enchanté' (Hammett 2009) is cerise & mauve flushed on a white ground. I describe 'Ella Mountbatten' as also cerise / mauve but without white at the base of the petals. It more readily produces 5 flowers per stem so I think of it as an improved 'Enchanté'. 'Glynne Collins' (Parsons 2024) is blush pink & blue. It originated from a cross between 'Erewhon' and 'Margaret Hughson'. I have a non-tendrill selection of this which is yet to be named. 'Somewhere' (Hammett 2018) is a pink & mauve Spencer. When I grew it, there was a tendency for the wings to furl under.

There are a few others in the National Collection seedbank which I have not yet grown, such as 'Sheena' and 'Capel Manor'. New this year is 'Claire Mitchell', described as a pink & mauve shifter and raised by Phil Johnson. I hope to have more time to try these novel colours in the future.



**'Enchanté'.**  
Photo by Roger Parsons.

# RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2024

*By Darren Everest*

Following our Silver Gilt medal success at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2023, we decided to apply again for 2024. Despite all the logistical challenges that we had encountered in 2023 we thought that we should be able to overcome all the hurdles having done it once.

The seeds were sown in early November once again and were ready by late January for planting in the polytunnel. The late Autumn and early Winter weather brought its usual wet and miserable weather so I was pleased to have installed the raised beds the year before. The pathways between the beds were regularly submerged in water during the early weeks, which I'm sure didn't help the plants at all. A few days after planting the local rodent population decided to take a liking for the young plants with the outside beds suffering significant losses over the course of a week or two. Drastic action was necessary to deal with them and to encourage them to stay away!



**Dawn and Darren Everest with their precious Chelsea Gold.** *Photo courtesy of Darren Everest.*

The next few weeks were not particularly cold but we just had so very little sunshine to warm the tunnel and encourage any growth. Eventually, however, the plants did start to move away and despite the outer rows being very thin on growth the inner rows began to look good. I have a rather strange method for growing in my tunnel but it does appear to work. I

have nine varieties in each row and grow eighteen varieties in two rows. I then grow two more identical rows but in reverse order. I do this so that if there is a difference within the tunnel in relation to light levels and warmth distribution, then all being well there should be an equal number of blooms between the varieties. I then grow a selection of nine varieties from the eighteen as a top up, focussing on the ones of which I have the most seed stock.

The first week of March arrived. The key week where the buds that are formed will be the ones that bloom for Chelsea. However, it just so happened to be a week of cold

nights. Trying to heat the large tunnel is not easy, especially trying to keep it above eight degrees Celsius. The heating went on with extra fans to distribute the heat. Despite my best efforts many of the buds turned brown and succumbed to the dreaded bud drop. To say that I was despondent was an understatement. I really thought that there was no way that there would be enough blooms to stage a display. We had still had no sunshine for what seemed like an eternity. Then, by some miracle the sun came out. With just five days to go until the show we were blessed by dawn to dusk warm sunshine. With just three days to go I picked my first bunch, just one handful of stems. It wasn't until the Saturday night that I was finally confident of having a reasonable cut.

Normally the first few stems only have two or three blooms on them but I think the bonus of having bud drop, if there is such thing as a bonus, was that the flush that came out just in time mostly consisted of stems with four blooms. I couldn't have wished for a better cut and ended up with more blooms than needed on the day.

We set off to the show and having planned for the logistical issues found the whole experience a whole lot more bearable! We got everything staged in good time, finishing nearer to midnight which allowed for a few hours sleep, in a comfy bed this time. As usual I staged the easy bit, all the individual varieties as near to identically as I can, while Dawn does the more difficult theatrical centre piece. The first day is when the judging is completed before the media and invited guests arrive. It is a day for chatting rather than selling and it was lovely to meet some very nice people so I make no apologies for name dropping here. First to come along was TV presenter Gethin Jones, former Blue Peter presenter and now seen on Morning Live and The One Show. He was escorting his auntie around the show which he does every year. I have to say what a lovely man he is and only too pleased to pose with me for a photo! Then came along Chelsea royalty in none other than multi Gold Medal award winner Medwyn Williams. He was exceedingly complimentary towards our display and said in his opinion we would be getting a Gold. Well that was good enough for me, coming from one of the most successful Chelsea exhibitors ever. From around 3pm the Royal party arrives but as HRH had decided not to visit us again this year we decided to head back to get a well needed rest.

We returned early Tuesday morning to get ready for the hordes of visitors to arrive. As we entered the Grand Pavilion and walked past the other exhibits we could see the awards that had been given out. There were quite a number of superb displays that had only been awarded Silver and Silver Gilt and so I had sort of resigned myself to the idea that we would at best get a Silver Gilt. After all, I'm just a small time grower on the Isle of Wight, growing in a relatively small polytunnel in my back garden. I never expect to win anything more. So, imagine my surprise and genuine shock to see that we had received a Gold Medal. I just couldn't really believe it. Little me, well maybe not so little, hobby grower, winning a Gold! We didn't really have time to let it sink in. As soon as the public were allowed in we didn't have any time. I have to say that the rest of the week

was truly phenomenal and it's an experience like no other. We met some truly wonderful people from all across the world many of whom are now growing Sweet Peas.

I still don't think that winning Gold has still sunk in yet. When I get a rare moment to sit down and relax I do feel very proud of what we've achieved. It might not be on the same level as winning the Daily Mail Trophy at the National but it's not far off!

## A Visit to Easton Walled Garden

*By Alison Shreeve*

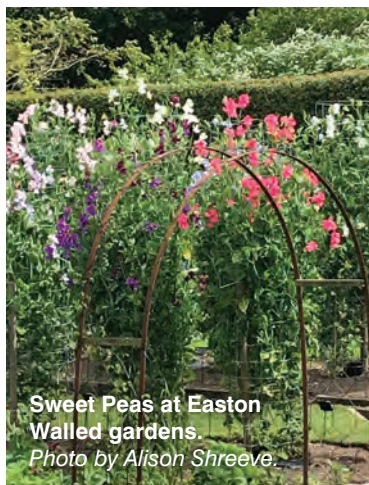
In early July 2024 my partner and I paid a visit to Easton Walled Garden, having heard about the special Sweet Pea season held there every year. The garden is situated in South Lincolnshire, close to Rutland and not far from Barnsdale, Geoff Hamilton's garden.

Easton has a long and complex history. The Manor of Easton was bought by Sir Henry Cholmely in 1592 and when he died was passed to his nephew. Since then, the estate has remained in the Cholmely family and still does.

There has been a house on the site since at least the 16th century, with photographic records from the Edwardian era of a much enlarged or changed house from the Victorian period. This house stood on the top of a slope leading down to the river Witham which was canalised through the grounds. There were terraces and a long flight of steps down to the flat area before the river. On the opposite side a large walled garden rises up the slope. Built of local limestone it clearly depicts the outline of what was probably an Elizabethan Garden.



**Views of Sweet Peas.**  
*Photo by Alison Shreeve.*



**Sweet Peas at Easton Walled gardens.**  
*Photo by Alison Shreeve.*



**Easton Walled Gardens.**  
*Photo by Alison Shreeve.*

The house was requisitioned at the start of WW2 and was the quarters for several battalions. During this time the house suffered much damage and was deemed beyond repair and demolished in 1951. The outline of the house remains in places together with some outbuildings: the Gatehouse and Stable yard. The garden was kept productive for several years but eventually that too fell into disrepair. Gradually the wild vegetation took over and the buildings lost roofs and became dangerous. Trees grew through stonework and brambles and ivy covered everything.

Entering into this wilderness came Lady Ursula Cholmely, wife of the 7th Baronet. Inspired by other lost gardens being restored around that time, in 2000 she began to envision a return to a functioning

garden on the site. Work began with tractors to remove trees and to start the construction of what has become a beautiful garden bearing signs of its earlier structures and forms, but with a 21st century feel to it as well. The site is over 12 acres, a massive and ongoing work of creation and recreation.

In 2003-17 Ursula employed a gardener, Stephen Marsland, who was willing to undertake this massive project. Together they made new beds to form a place to grow flowers from seed. This became the 'Pickery' – a self-explanatory garden within the garden. This has been joined by a cottage garden, orchard, a grass maze, the White Space Garden, roses, wild flower meadows with bulbs and of course, the Sweet Peas, which drew us to the garden in the first place. In winter/spring there are carpets of snowdrops too.

Sweet Peas have been grown at Easton for over 100 years. The Old Fashioned varieties for the Edwardian house and in the 1950s large quantities of Spencers were grown for markets in Nottingham. With the restoration of the garden there was space to grow many different varieties which were trialled for their colour and



**Sweet Peas.**  
*Photo by Alison Shreeve.*



scent. At one point over 100 varieties were grown as cordons, but now the palette of varieties has been reduced and these are grown round sheep netting tubes about 1metre across and 6 feet high. There are three sites for the Sweet Peas, one is in the cottage garden and one in the Pickery. In the walled garden they are grown against a south wall and these are for seed production.

The varieties include old fashioned, grandiflora and Spencers, 38 varieties in all are available to buy in the estate shop or online. Being able to see them growing in the gardens and then buying them in the shop is a lovely way to become familiar with different varieties.

As we stayed in one of the very luxurious self-catering cottages close to the Stable yard and entrance to the garden, we were able to walk around and examine the plants and take in the views before and after the day visitors were there. All together it made a lovely break and a place to enjoy the peaceful rural life of south Lincolnshire with its beautiful honey-coloured stone cottages and charming unspoilt villages. The people were all very friendly and enterprising too! A Sweet Pea enthusiasts perfect holiday break.

More details of Easton Walled Gardens are on their website: Easton Estate and Walled Gardens ([visiteaston.co.uk](http://visiteaston.co.uk))

With thanks to the booklet of the history of the family, their house and gardens published by Fred and Ursula Cholmely and available from Easton Walled Gardens.



## Phil on Scent

*By Phil Johnson*

I have written previously in these pages about my fledging thoughts on the nuance of Sweet Pea scent. I am delighted that my daughter, Livia, has been blessed with a particularly sensitive nose and the growing ability to recognise Sweet Pea scent in many forms. In our new book, *A World of Sweet Peas*, we devoted a short chapter to this subject and I am pleased that Livia has been able to write a little more on the subject.

Personally, I believe that this is the start of a whole new world of interest in Sweet Peas, but will take time to develop and to be recognised, perhaps in the perfume industry, who knows.

Even I, with my worn out olfactory senses, can start to group the different types together and I hope this subject is interesting to at least a few enthusiasts. As Livia says, "Scent is subjective for all" and I am sure some will say that this discussion is all bunkum, but we will continue to explore and investigate, regardless.

## It Makes Scents!

*By Livia Leppenwell*

Scent is the most powerful sense linked to our memories, evoking forgotten experiences for us all, whether that be of a person, or a poignant time in our lives. The memory of scent is complex, having different meanings for each one of us. Scent is subjective for all.

It could be argued that we each perceive all our senses in varying ways. Scent is just one of these and we can assess scent differently to family and friends, in much the same way that colour is often seen diversely and some are said to be "colour blind". Green and blue can be tricky to distinguish.

Sweet Peas are most certainly sweet, hence the clever name. However, there are so many different layers to sweet, and what types of sweetness attracts us. The sweetness of a freshly baked cake, is most certainly different to the sweetness of a freshly peeled orange. Similarly, Sweet Peas too have different layers of sweet, which my father, Phil Johnson, has tasked me to begin to describe and make accessible to us all.

As Sweet Pea lovers, we grow Sweet Peas for two different reasons, the evocative fragrance and the plethora of romantic blooms. Some of us buy and grow Sweet Peas to enjoy the scent that fills up our homes. However, the redolent scent of the blooms

may be too much for some. Remember the simple pleasure of bringing a bunch in from the garden to pop on your kitchen windowsill and enjoy while we wash up.

I have been able to categorise many cultivars over the last few years, but not all just yet, give me a few more summers! It could be fun to choose what attracts us most about the scent and choose our favourites this way rather than just selecting by colour.

I have identified four categories: citrus, spice, sweet and musk. The categories describe the body of scent in each cultivar. The top notes and hints in each description of the cultivars are what make them individuals.

**Sweet** - how innovative I know! This categorises cultivars that strike me as having an artificial sweetness. I describe these types as candied, as they have multiple layers of sweet. The best way I can describe it, is taking something already sweet and making it sweeter. For example, toffee apples, glace cherries or peaches in syrup. A lot of the sweet cultivars I have noted are perfumed, or redolent in terms of strength in scent. Try 'Noel Sutton' – mild fragrance, floral frangipani body with sweet almond and jojoba; 'Sir Jimmy Shand' – mild, sweet bouquet, notes of frangipani and cherry blossom; 'Black Knight' – a mild, fruity scent, notes of sweet summer blackberries.

**Citrus** – this category is for cultivars that are crisp and fresh. Generally having a natural fragrance, with a zing and tartness to the scent. These cultivars are not overpowering due to their natural aroma. Some examples would include, 'Anniversary' – citrusy balm, grapefruit zing with hints of honeysuckle and jojoba; 'Oban Bay' – perfumed, citrusy bouquet, with fresh notes of lemon balm and orange blossom; 'Painted Lady' – billowy aroma, body of neroli with hints of blackcurrant and apple.

**Musk** – encompasses a broad blanket of scent, which can be floral and woody, with a natural, earthy body. When I think of a musky scent, I think of a perfume that was applied in the morning, fast forwarding to the evening when you can still smell the last notes of it on the warmth of your wrists. Most of the types that I have described as musk, have been recognised by me as a typical Sweet Pea scent, a scent you would relate most with a Sweet Pea. Those I describe as musk are pleasantly fragrant, and not particularly overpowering. This category, in particular, has a range of strengths of scent. If this type of scent appeals, why not grow 'Kings Ransom' – billowy, aromatic bouquet, earthy body with notes of bergamot and a zing of lemon; 'Almost Black' – billowy, oriental aroma, earthy body with a hint of neroli; 'Prince of Orange' – billowy, musky aroma, with neroli and sweet cherry blossom.

**Spice** – this category has spiced and woody notes. Spiced meaning that it tickles the nose as you inhale, either being aromatic like ginger or earthy like pepper or cardamon. Most of these cultivars are generally rich in scent. Examples include, 'Cathy' – rich, oriental fragrance, a peppery body with floral notes of rose and jasmine, and a hint of bergamot; 'Chrissie' – spiced incense, perfect mix of orange blossom and bergamot; 'Milly' – rich perfume, earthy body, with a peppery hint of ginger and sweet vanilla.

**Distinctive** – these ones are the rogues that do not fit into the other categories! ‘Albutt Blue’ stands out as having the most complex and strongest scent of those I have “sniffed” so far. It is almost mind blowing with a redolent, almost artificial perfume that features oud, bitter orange, frangipani and jasmine. To my nose, ‘Albutt Blue’ is much stronger than the famous ‘Matucana’. Others in this category include ‘Just Julia’ – ambrosial perfume, like candied fruits with notes of strawberries and oranges; ‘High Society’ – a redolent fresh fragrance that is tart and citrusy; and ‘Fire and Ice’ – layered and spicy with smooth oat, candied almond and citrusy top note of yuzu.

The word redolence or redolent is used when I feel a cultivar provides a particularly strong, permeating scent, that can fill a room.

So, why not try distinguishing the various scents this summer and let us have your thoughts?

## National Novices

*By Phillippa Cooper*



**John Cooper's People's Choice award.** Photo by Phillippa Cooper.

I wonder if anyone reading this is thinking of entering a National Show but has not yet decided whether or not they will send in an entry form?

That was the situation that I was in for several years. My advice is not to dither but take the leap of faith and enter. You will find an extremely warm welcome, lots of people to help and a great deal of encouragement.

I have enjoyed growing Old Fashioned Sweet Peas for a number of years. My local show at Wem has always had an emphasis on the Old Fashioned varieties due to its historical relationship with Henry Eckford. In fairness Wem has always given me the opportunity to exhibit. John and I have both been involved with the Wem show for a number of years and even enjoyed some modest success.

However, I have always felt nervous of entering a National Show. John and I have visited the Nationals and always been so impressed by the quality of the blooms. I am, by

nature, quite cautious and I was worried that my blooms were not up to the required standard. Seeing prize-winning Old Fashioned blooms in the multi vase classes was so inspiring but could I manage to stage 6 vases from my rather modest plot? How would my flowers compare to those of other exhibitors?



I am grateful to Carole Tate and the Bridgewater team who encouraged me to enter in 2023. Sadly, my hopes were dashed when my plants were so poor that I couldn't enter a single vase at any show that year.

My mentor throughout my journey growing Old Fashioned Sweet Peas was the wonderful Val Good MBE. As you will have read Val sadly passed away in March 2024. Although I had already decided that I would enter the Late National, losing Val probably spurred me on even more! Fortunately, 2024 was a really good growing season and I just about managed to stage 6 vases in Division 5.

After looking through the schedule John also decided to enter a few single vases in Division 4. I think that we were both rather apprehensive on the Friday while staging but we really need not have worried. The whole team were great and gave us a very warm welcome. We both did the best with the blooms we had and had the most enjoyable weekend. On the Saturday morning, I was delighted to be able to steward for Darren Myers so I also received the most comprehensive judging education. That was a real bonus.

I am pleased to say that John and I both enjoyed some success but it was definitely the taking part and the friendship that was most important. Roll on the Late National 2025. Fingers crossed that I manage to have enough blooms for some multi vase classes again. We look forward to seeing you at a National Show this year, you definitely won't regret entering.

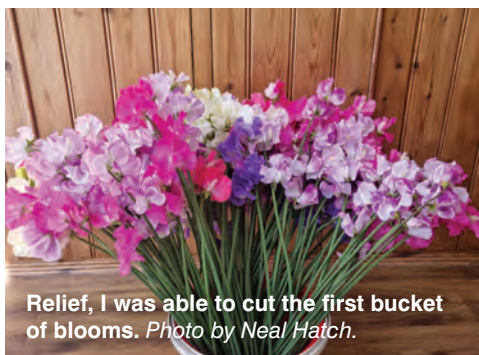
# An Unusual Sweet Pea Season

*By Neal Hatch*

The 2024 season didn't go quite as planned. In the 2024 Annual, I outlined my journey to the 2023 Early Show at Shepperton, growing around 300 plants. At the end of 2023, I decided to try growing for the 'Daily Mail Cup' at Wisley in 2024. The class requires 12 vases of 15 stems of Spencers. A rule of thumb is to grow at least 3 plants for every 1 stem you plan to exhibit. So for 15 stems, that would require, say, 50 or so plants. I would need more than 12 varieties (to allow for one or two variety failures). So, ideally, around 750 plants (say 15 x 50). A quick look at my plot confirmed that I could find enough space to grow the plants, but only at the expense of growing fewer dahlias than usual (I normally grow 500). I decided on a compromise, I would cut back on my dahlia and veg growing, but risk growing fewer Sweet Pea plants of each variety than is normally recommended.



**Brown biodegradable tape was used to secure stems.** *Photo by Neal Hatch.*



**Relief, I was able to cut the first bucket of blooms.** *Photo by Neal Hatch.*

I planned to grow 36 plants of 16 varieties (roughly 575 plants). Some varieties would have a few more plants and some less. This should ensure that, at a minimum, I might be able to stage the class of 6 or 9 vases of 15 stems, even if I wasn't able to stage the full 12 vases. More accurately, I should say 575 canes rather than plants. I wasn't planning to layer, so I would risk growing two plants up on some of the canes. So

I ended up with closer to 625 plants. In recent years I haven't layered the Sweet Peas, because I'm quite busy at that stage of the season and the return from layering seems fairly low. In the past, when I have layered the plants they often struggled in very hot/dry conditions with ever-shortening stems. So this would be an all-or-nothing 'dash for the line' – targeting the plants to reach a peak for the show at Wisley.

Given the planned increase in plant numbers, my existing stock of dedicated lightweight metal Sweet Pea cane clips would be insufficient. I sourced some fairly heavy-duty wire vine clips to secure the canes to the support wire (it saves a lot of tying). I would also

need more T-posts, support wire and 2.4m (8ft) canes. A small innovation was using biodegradable tape (made using corn starch, I believe) in my tape machine rather than the traditional plastic tape. The version I sourced was a bit thicker than traditional tape (and more expensive), but I found it worked equally well.

We had some stormy weather after planting so I built some temporary wind-breaks, which proved invaluable. Slugs were also very troublesome! After that, the season progressed fairly well, with reasonable growing conditions. The previous two years demonstrated that the season can be very short if we get a hot blast of weather in June/July. So I was not too surprised that the cooler conditions through June 2024 meant that the Sweet Peas were later flowering than in 2023, despite being planted around the same time. It was unfortunate, but I would miss my early local shows, such as Downton, as there was absolutely no colour showing on the plot – not even the 3's I had in 2023! I missed New Forest & Ferndown the next week too – still no blooms.



I was getting concerned that I'd managed to get the timing completely wrong for the Early Show. But with a period of cool weather in June and no rain in the immediate run-up to the show, I couldn't have hoped for better growing and flowering conditions. With about a week to go the flowers started to come out as planned – I took this picture on Wednesday 19

June as it was the first time I had been able to pick a sizeable bunch. By the end of the week, it was clear that everything was coming out on schedule for the Wisley show the following week.

The cancellation of the Early Show at Wisley came as a big disappointment to all those involved. I had been really looking forward to it. As I had lots of bloom in the garden, but no show to go to, I decided to get some practice staging 20 vases in my kitchen. These would have been my Wisley Early Show entries. I constructed some impromptu three-tier staging and a black photographic backdrop. I posted some of those pictures on Facebook ('For the love of Sweet Peas' page). I received some really lovely comments, so was glad that I took the time to stage the vases and share a few pictures.

A few people asked how I staged the vases. I used a mixture of Agrawool (see Darren Myers' excellent description in the NSPS 2022 Autumn Bulletin), my own reusable staging rings (NSPS 2022 Autumn Bulletin) and some 'bio' foam. I wanted to

experiment and practice with the different techniques, as I had never tried to stage 20 vases of 15 stems before. Had this been at Wisley, all the vases would have been staged in Agrawool, for greater consistency.

The reason for choosing a two-row formation (9/6) for the vases of 15 stems that I staged, rather than the more usual three-row formation (7/5/3), was simply to experiment in the safety of my home. It also demonstrated that it was possible to get 9 blooms across my 3D-printed staging rings (the picture published in the Autumn 2022 Bulletin was a rather eclectic mixed colour vase staged in the usual 7/5/3 formation). Had I been at Wisley, I would have used the familiar three-row arrangement. Even though staging was at home, I'd gained some valuable experience of what it would be like to stage a 12-vase exhibit, in terms of time and effort. I'd like to think that if I repeated the experiment I would have further improved my staging techniques.

A day or two later I thought it might be interesting to directly compare three similar vases of 15 stems, using these three very different types of staging material.

I picked all the white blooms I had available that day ('Mary Priestley') and a few cream ('Jilly'). I used these to stage three vases of 15 (45 stems). None of the resulting three vases of 15 stems would be as good as staging one vase using the best 15 white stems available. The 'random' selection of these three sets would make a comparison fairer





**Three informal cut-flower bowls at Taunton Flower Show. Photo by Neal Hatch.**

than if I'd started by staging the first vase by picking the best matching 15 stems, the second vase with the second best set and so on. You can see that, as a result, some of the blooms staged in each vase are less than ideal!

The top vase is Agrawool, the bottom left is 'bio' foam and the bottom right is my reusable staging ring. While these three vases are by no means perfect examples, they show that you can produce similar results using a wide range of staging materials. But it takes time to adapt to whatever technique you are using.

After the date of the Early Show passed, the perfect Sweet Pea-growing weather we had been enjoying broke down, and we were hit with a deluge just as I was due to cut for what would have been my final Sweet Pea show of the season in Bournemouth. Never mind, I just have to put 2024 down to experience!

As an end to the main season, I did take a picture of the Sweet Pea beds from the platform I use to prune the hedges and apple trees - giving a lovely overhead view of the Sweet Peas in full bloom at pretty much the end of the season and at the top of their canes. I now know what 600 Sweet Peas look like when they are flowering all at once. Don't look too closely, or you will see the rain damage and that I had stopped 'manicuring' them at this stage of the season!

Although I missed the Sweet Pea Shows...that wasn't quite the end of the Sweet Peas. The cooler conditions meant that I managed to keep a small number of plants going into early August when I usually exhibit at a variety of 'general' flower shows. I entered 6 Sweet Pea vases at Taunton Flower show, even though they were far past their best. After staging the more 'formal' vase classes I used my spare blooms to produce three bowls of Sweet Peas and dahlias for a 1.2m cut-flower display. I always find that a fun

task after the intense focus on staging the traditional 'fan-shaped' vases of various flowers for a few hours. I had about half an hour to complete this class before heading home to cut more flowers and prepare vegetables for my own local show at Castle Cary the next day!

As I write this, I'm starting to prepare the beds for the 2025 season. I'm not quite sure what I will end up planting, or what approach I might take, but I'm looking forward to the 2025 summer season.

## Save your Seedlings from Damping-off Disease

*Received from Maria Melvin*

### **Times Past Article on Damping off that appeared in Home Gardening Magazine in 1933**

All seedlings are liable to damp-off and the danger is greater in these early days because the weather changes so rapidly. One day the sun shines brightly and runs up the greenhouse temperature to summer heat. The next day a biting east wind may make it difficult to keep the house warm enough, or a cold, soaking rain may make it clammy. It stands to reason that this changing weather is bad for tender seedlings, whose hold on life is very flimsy, and that unless you nurture them carefully, they will go under.

The minute spores or seeds of the damping-off fungus are always in the air, waiting to catch the seedling in a weak moment. They attack the stem at a collar, or where it touches the soil, and actually grow inside it. In all directions they send threads which are continually sucking the life out of the little thing. Soon it topples over, and once that happens, there is no remedy.

About the same time, it produces myriads of spores which are shed around, infecting and destroying in a day or two literally thousands of seedlings if the conditions are favourable. You see that this enemy, though small, is deadly.

Golden Feather, Golden Moss, Lobelia, Petunias, Antirrhinums, Phlox Drummondii, Asters, Stocks, Nemesias, Primula malacoides, Begonias and Gloxinias are specially liable to attack. Generally, the tenderer the seedling, the greater is the liability. The disease breaks out in patches. Stricken plants look sleepy at first; then, as already described, they fall over and die.

There are certain measures you can take, however, which do a great deal to keep down the trouble. For instance, you should always water in the morning - with water that has been exposed to air - so that leaves can dry up before night. A plant's vitality is lower

after darkness and there must be around it no conditions that favour the enemy. Use a fine syringe having a bent nozzle and let the moisture fall like dew. Never use a watering can until after transplanting. However fine the rose, it is liable to flatten the seedlings or plough them up.

Should the other occupants of the house need syringing, do this early, so that before night the atmosphere can lose its humidity. Keep the temperature steady and, while ventilating as freely as the weather will allow, avoid cold draughts. You can do this by opening out on the sheltered side. Be consistent in shading seedlings that need it, such as Gloxinias and Begonias. If the coverings are not on one sunny day, the next time you see the plants they may be victims.

If in spite of these precautions damping - off breaks out, take prompt steps to deal with it. With a label or pointed stick lift the stricken patch of seedlings, together with a little of the surrounding soil, and burn both. Sprinkle thickly on the site powdered charcoal and renew every day for a week. Sprinkle sulphur powder lightly on the surrounding seedlings.

Wherever possible, isolate an infected batch of seedlings. Even though you only take it to the other end of the house, it may be the means of preserving the health in still healthy stock. Stand the infected box or pan on flowerpots or bricks to ensure an all-round circulation of air. For a time reduce watering to the minimum without allowing the seedlings to suffer.

All of these measures should help to prevent or alleviate the damping-off we so often encounter.



*Lathyrus vernus roseus.* Photo by Caroline Ball.

## Old Fashioned or Grandiflora?

By *Caroline Ball*



**Old Fashioned - 'Queen Alexandra'.**  
Photo by *Caroline Ball*.

What are meant by the terms Old-Fashioned and Grandiflora Sweet Peas? These are terms that some might find confusing so what follows attempts to dispel the confusion.

The term grandiflora was used by Henry Eckford for his varieties to show they were bigger and better than any Sweet Peas previously seen. It is ironic that grandiflora varieties are now smaller than the Sweet Peas that people most commonly encounter, namely the large frilly Spencers. The name Grandiflora was therefore considered misleading and attempts to otherwise define the type have been made. The term pre-Spencer has sometimes been used to indicate the varieties having small flowers, plain petals and clamped keels, the only type known prior to the advent of the

Spencer type. However, the term pre-Spencer did not gain universal acceptance since many of the existing grandiflora varieties were introduced later than 1901, the date of the first Spencer. An alternative term used to overcome the problem is Old-Fashioned, suggesting the varieties are of old fashioned type, even if they are of modern origin. Some seedsmen have introduced their own terms to cover this group of varieties, including Heritage, Heirloom and Antique, however Old-Fashioned is the term adopted by the National Sweet Peas Society and is therefore preferred.

In the early 1800s only 10 different varieties of Sweet Peas were available to buy. These stemmed from improvements to the wild Sweet Pea and the pink and white bicour, 'Painted Lady'. That was until they caught the imagination of Henry Eckford. Eckford became a prolific breeder of the Old Fashioned type of Sweet Pea. His first introduction was 'Bronze Prince' in 1882 which was awarded a First Class Certificate by the RHS. Eckford transformed the flower, developing improved form, larger size and new colours whilst retaining the fragrance of the original wild species. By 1900 he had introduced 115 varieties out of a total of around 264 varieties in existence. One of Eckford introductions was the clear pink 'Prima Donna' in 1896 which spawned the Spencers, but that's a different story entirely. Other Eckford introductions still grown today include

'Princess of Wales' (1886), 'Senator' (1891) 'Lady Grisel Hamilton' (1898) 'Countess Cadogan' (1899) Dorothy Eckford (1903) and Queen Alexandra (1906). Modern Old Fashioned types include 'Sweet Caroline' (2023), 'Bramdean' (2007) and 'Cedric Morris'.

We now use the term Grandiflora to refers to any flower spike that has plain petals and clamped keel. It is quite common for Spencer varieties to revert to Grandiflora type; so that the flower spikes may have all the size and vigour of the Spencer variety but the individual flowers are plain and have a clamped keel. The problem arises because of the Sweet Peas propensity for mutation. Genetically, the Grandiflora form is dominant to the Spencer form and produces more seed so it is not surprising that Spencers are seen to 'revert'.

Since the late 1990s a range of varieties have been recognised that are intermediate in vigour, stem length and bloom size between Old Fashioneds and Spencers. These are termed Modern



**'Minette Marin' - a Modern Grandiflora.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

Grandifloras and Semi Grandiflora. The two differ only in terms of the form of their standard; in Semi Grandifloras this is a waved standard, in Modern Grandifloras it is plain. The first introduction of the Semi Grandiflora type was 'Albutt Blue' introduced in 1999 by Eagle Sweet Peas others include the stunning lavender, 'Chrissie' (2021) and 'Ailsa' (2015). Modern Grandifloras are more numerous and include the popular 'High Scent' (2002), 'Almost Black' (2009), 'Matucana' (1955 note this predated recognition of the Grandiflora type), 'Romeo' (2000), 'Little Red Riding Hood' (2012) and 'Scarlett' (2006). Old Fashioneds and Modern Grandifloras produce a wonderful garden display and to encourage them to be shown more the 125 Year celebratory classes include them in addition to the existing show classes for them. Let's hope this encourages more people to try these delightful Sweet Peas.

Sources used in drafting this article  
Sweet Peas an Essential Guide by Roger Parsons  
The Sweet Pea Book by Graham Rice  
A World of Sweet Peas by Cecilia Wingard and Philip Johnson  
NSPS Centenary book by Caroline Ball  
Checklist of Sweet Pea Epithets [www.rpsweetpeas.com](http://www.rpsweetpeas.com)

# Roger Parsons and his Impact on Sweet Peas

*By Alison Shreeve*

At this point in time, when Roger Parsons Sweet Peas is being incorporated into English Sweet Peas it would seem timely to review the impact Roger Parsons has had on the world of Sweet Peas. As Roger is a modest and unassuming man, we have compiled this overview from his own recollections and those of a few key people who know him and have worked with him over the years.

Roger comes from a Northern working-class background and this is reflected in his work ethic. His interest in gardening developed at an early age and the introduction to Sweet Peas started then. He remembers his mother taking him to Woolworths to buy seeds, these included 'Mrs R Bolton', 'Powerscourt' and either 'Red' or 'White Ensign' along with a new introduction, 'Winston Churchill'. His interest in gardening developed into a career with qualifications in Horticulture.

Whilst working for Bath City Council in 1978 he was asked to grow Sweet Peas by the Council's florist so that she could decorate the Assembly Rooms where the NSPS were going to have a show. Roger called into the library and subsequently dug a deep trench according to the advice he found there. His boss provided a trailer load of manure that duly went into the trench and eventually the plants were planted out. His priority at this time was the growing on and planting out of bedding plants by their thousands and sadly the Sweet Peas had to take second place and were very neglected. The florist never spoke to him again, but his boss was pleased as they won the Entente Florale that year – the best floral city in Europe. So, Roger was no stranger to competitive success, even if the Sweet Peas came later.

About this time (1978-84) he completed an Open University degree which included subjects across the sciences and social sciences, including politics, economics and genetics, which he found fascinating and easy to understand. This obviously set the seeds, or encouraged the growth of Roger's enquiring mind; a very practical research approach. If he asked a question about the plants he was growing he would experiment to find potential answers, and then he started writing them up 'to see if I understood it'.

He joined the Trowbridge Horticultural Society and became their secretary. They were affiliated to the National Sweet Pea Society and had invited John and Gwen Bishop to come and talk to them. As it was a long way from their home Roger and Alison his wife invited them to dinner before the talk and thus began a long friendship based around Sweet Peas. John was encouraging and enthusiastic and in 1988 Roger joined the NSPS himself. He moved to Littlehampton in Sussex in 1988 as Horticultural Services

Manager, later Head of Parks and Landscape at Arun District Council. That year he also went to his first National show at Southampton and met more influential people: Mike Carr, Jeff Brande and Ted and Amy Andrews. He loved Amy's staging of annual *Lathyrus* species and later offered to host a collection of *Lathyrus* species at Hotham Park, Bognor Regis, with help from Ted and Amy. This gained National Collection status in 1993. Roger added Sweet Peas for their colour, particularly the Old Fashioned types.

He also gained considerable support from Keith Hammett, Sylvia Norton and Peter Grayson amongst others. Thus, his keeping of the National *Lathyrus* Collection began.

In 1993 the collection at Hotham Park only held annual species. There was a parallel collection in Cambridgeshire run by Sylvia Norton and this contained perennial species and was focused on conservation of things collected in the wild, similar to the collection now held in Edinburgh under the aegis of Greg Kenicer. These are complimentary to Roger's main interest in annual species and selected forms better for the garden. In 1996 Roger gave a paper to the *Lathyrus* conference organised by Plant Heritage in Cambridge.

The National Collection and links with Plant Heritage have grown and the collection has been awarded prestigious accolades. The collection was transferred to Roger personally in 2005 and expanded to include Sweet Peas. In 2012 Roger was awarded the NSPS Henry Eckford Memorial Gold Medal for his work with *Lathyrus* species and *odoratus*. In 2018 the collection was awarded Scientific status by Plant Heritage. This is only awarded to about 20 out of a total of 720 or more plant collections and to qualify must be accompanied by research into the collection's subject species. Most of those collections with this award are associated with major Institutions and research centres, like the RHS at Kew Botanic Gardens, or Wakehurst Place, or Wisley. So, for Roger to have developed and extended this collection to achieve this level is a terrific achievement. The crowning glory was the Plant Society's Brickell award, named after Chris Brickell, former director of RHS gardens. This was awarded for outstanding excellence in conservation of cultivated plants.

Roger also enjoys history and obviously archives fascinate him. He is custodian of the NSPS archive including a complete set of Annuals and readers of this Annual will know that he uses these frequently to explore topics and questions relating to anything Sweet Pea. Roger is a regular contributor to NSPS publications as well as authoring books.

He was approached by Crowood press to write *Sweet Peas: an Essential Guide* first published in 2011. His wife Alison had to persuade him it was worth the time. It has been a wonderful marketing vehicle. This was followed by the RHS *Lathyrus* monograph, published in 2021, co-written with Greg Kenicer who he has never actually met. They have complimentary writing skills and sets of knowledge. Essentially, Greg wrote the botany and pre-history and Roger wrote the horticulture and history. Both commented on each other's work. This represents a culmination of all his research over the decades, although his research continues. There wasn't space to include the

full register of epithets, names of all known cultivars, so this is freely available online on his website and will soon move to the NSPS website.

The scientific interest in genetics is part of the basis for starting the seed bank, a collection of seeds kept in a freezer. In 1998 Roger was fortunate in being given seeds by companies like Robert Bolton, varieties no longer in commercial catalogues. Each year this is added to. Some of these seeds are taken out and grown, sometimes to ensure the variety is true to form, cleaning up for example 'White Supreme', which started to revert to grandiflora form, or sometimes to ensure they are still viable. Now he is 'retiring' Roger is looking forward to taking more out and having a look at them! For example, this year he is growing a grandiflora variety called 'Strawberry Ice' which he raised himself, on the allotment, and which Kings Seeds marketed for him. The seed was from 1997, went into the seedbank in 1998 and came out last year. He sowed 32 seeds last October and had excellent germination, and now the plants are looking really strong and vigorous. It is a sign of Roger's meticulous approach that when asked he knew its parentage. It was a cross from 'Mrs Bernard Jones' and a maroon called 'Maudie Winfield' (which didn't make it into the freezer and is now lost). He claims he was 'just playing' then but was able to become a bit more serious when he moved to his current site at Bracklesham Bay, Sussex in 2000 where he now has more space and some polytunnels. This is where he set up his Seed Business after taking early retirement in 2005 and where he continues his breeding programme.

He was inspired by Keith Hammett's work in bringing back bi-colours and stripes and saw the potential to expand them. His extensive research into the archives alerted him to how much was lost during the First World War. He cites the introduction this year of 'Our Helen', a pink and cream bicolour, a combination that we have not seen before, but one which records show existed pre 1914. He claims that his breeding programme is not a serious one, 'I do things on a whim'. However, he knows what he is doing and keeps records and looks for specific outcomes. He also sees the gaps in the market, for example, identifying characteristics suitable for the cut flower market which had all but disappeared and is now making a comeback with Flower Farms and has at least one commercial company growing Sweet Peas for retail. With these in mind he has developed multiflora stems, both summer and early flowering forms and extended their colour range. The non-tendrill varieties are also aimed at this market. This hasn't precluded Roger seeing the potential for show varieties, such as his own popular 'Just Julia'. His favourite when asked was the one he named for his wife, who he met over 50 years ago, 'Alison Louise'. He waited a long time for one he felt deserved her name and this has 5 or 6 flowers per stem, is a good colour, blue on a white ground, and has a good scent for a Spencer form with a long vase life. In all Roger has introduced over 100 cultivars and through his business has helped bring amateur breeders' cultivars to market. This year for example Darren Myers and Jim McDonald both have novelties marketed by Roger Parsons Sweet Peas.

Shows were the catalyst for Roger growing Sweet Peas, but this has been neglected somewhat for the last 20 years as his business has taken off. He is growing cordons again this year with a view to showing. He began to manage shows jointly with Ben Bulstrode but can't remember his first time as manager. It was prior to 2009 because that was the year he won the Daily Mail at Lyndhurst in the New Forest. The vases were staged for him by Chris Hill who also won the Clay Cup that year. There were only two entries in the Mail, the other being Keith Brewer, and there was only one and a half points between them! Roger's plants were grown on the bush, but still managed to win.

He modestly says that if the current rules about colour were in place then, he would have been second! I suspect he was instrumental in bringing in that rule to make it more competitive. He remembers many shows such as the 1992 show at Wisley with just short of 1000 vases. Bernard Jones was still alive at that time and he recalled seeing him at shows but did not have the courage to engage such an iconic hero in conversation. Chatsworth in 1994 was also memorable. He stayed with Peter Grayson and met Harvey Albutt for the one and only time.

Roger has long supported the National Sweet Pea Society becoming membership secretary in 2006 for ten years and Chairman in 2015 for 3 years. He has been involved in the Society's Trials and is now leading these as well as checking colour classification.

He has contributed many articles and looks after the Archive. This is a resource he uses for research; it is not left idle. In 2022 he became President of the NSPS, which he perceives as a 'huge honour'. He is only the 6th President since WW2 and we are honoured to have him. He is not simply a figurehead but continues to be a show manager and takes meticulous minutes, honed by his work in local councils.

And now it is time for Roger to pass on his business and the National Collection. He says:

Keith Hammett taught me once that we are only custodians of germplasm for a short period. He likens it to a relay race. It is now time for me to pass the baton on to someone younger. I have known Phil Johnson for about 30 years and am confident he is the right person to take care of this valuable resource for future plant breeding.

This should make time for Roger to develop his love of showing; it might take a few years to catch up with the changing climate and to get used to growing cordons again.

We will see some different varieties probably, as he champions the undervalued. He will still be undertaking his breeding programme and trialling things from the National Collection. This year, just for fun, he is growing garden peas! They have been reclassified and come into the *Lathyrus* genus, so present a different and new challenge. They come in different coloured flower forms, so he says he 'just wants to have a look at them'. Such an innocent phrase! Who knows where this research will take him!



**'Alison Louise'**. Photo by Roger Parsons.

What comes through very strongly in talking to Roger about his achievements are the people he met, the friends he made and the lasting impact the social aspects of working with and showing Lathyrus in all its forms has made. His interests cycle through many facets of knowledge and research underpins what he does. He understands the significance of the histories surrounding Sweet Peas and the importance of getting to the root of the matter and increasing our understanding, not simply regurgitating folk histories. He communicates in many ways, through writing and publishing, talking to people, presentations and encouraging us to learn more about showing and growing Lathyrus. Creating a seed bank and capturing for posterity varieties that might have been lost has provided a lasting legacy and resource that has won important accolades. The varieties he has bred are with us now and appear on the show bench regularly, but are also fulfilling other needs. Whilst Roger is 'retiring' from his business, he isn't retiring from Sweet Peas, merely switching focus. He is intending to do more showing and he continues to breed and grow new cultivars. We can be assured that these will only be made public if they fill a gap of some kind in the colour, pattern or form of the blooms and they come up to the highest standards Roger sets for himself. He says: 'I've always had several things on the go at one time. Alison's the same. I can't emphasise how much we help each other.'

We will look forward to being introduced to more of Roger's work in the future and wish him and Alison the very best on this next part of his journey.

## Breeding – The Basics

*By Darren Myers*

Over the years I have dabbled with breeding Sweet Peas but had never ventured down the road of having my own breeding programme. That was until Covid and so in 2020, I decided to start a serious breeding programme.

As an exhibitor of many years, I have seen the variety of colours slowly disappear from the show benches as exhibitors now stick to the tried and tested. With the diminishing number of seed merchants, fewer new varieties are making it onto the market. So, the aim of my programme is to produce Sweet Peas of exhibition quality that are better or different in colour to ones that are currently available.

Each breeder I am aware of, has specific aims. Whether that be to improve scent, produce something different or something better than what is already available on the market. Given the popularity of Sweet Peas, I believe that there is room in the market for all to coexist and satisfy what is a demanding market.

I have been in the fortunate position to observe Andrew Beane's work at close hand

over several years, and so a lot of my learning has come from him but have shaped them for my own aims and ambitions. A couple of years ago, and following a request on the 'For Love of Sweet Peas' Facebook page, I did a video showing how to cross pollinate with the aim of producing a brand-new Sweet Pea. A link to the video can be found on the NSPS website.

When selecting what varieties to cross, I take a number of factors into consideration. If I am looking to produce a specific colour, I look at the colours of the parents, based on knowledge and experience, that may provide my ultimate aim. Although I must stress that this is far from an exact science. For example, I have previously crossed 'Alice Hardwicke', an orange red, with 'Mary Mac', a large frilly deep cream, with the aim of producing an orange pink on cream. The result at the F2 stage was a selection of magenta's resulting in the entire cross being abandoned.



**'Grandad Myers.'**  
*Photo by Darren Myers.*

I then look for varieties whose characteristics will complement each other. The recently introduced 'Grandad Myers' is a great example. When looking for a new pale blue, I wanted the stem length and reliability which is provided by one parent, 'Dalesman' and the quality of placement with the second parent, 'White Frills'. For me 'White Frills', whilst it has excellent placement, stem length can shorten quickly. Therefore, crossing it with 'Dalesman' which holds its stem length better, would balance out that characteristic. The result has produced a consistently reliable variety with excellent placement, that has the added bonus of a good scent.

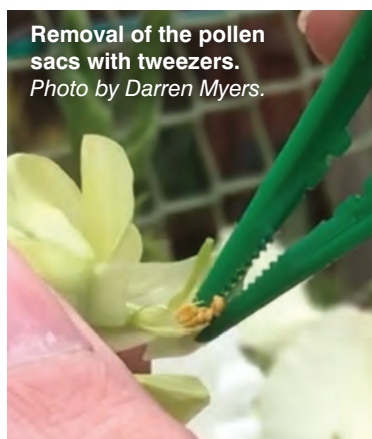
I will also consider which variety will act as the 'mother' and which will act as the 'father'. The 'mother', (the one which will produce the seed) shouldn't be a variety that struggles to produce seed. I also avoid varieties that have a tendency to throw a lot of malformations, and so wouldn't use varieties that throw a double standard, for example.

Having observed the work of Andrew closely, he has a rule that he will never do a cross using 2 varieties that have won the Clay Cup. To my knowledge, at the time of completing a cross, he has only knowingly broken this rule once despite completing over 150 crosses.

I usually plan my crosses 12 months in advance. This is to try and coincide with bulking up seed of any variety where my own stocks of seed are low or it's a new variety to my collection that I want to bulk up. At the moment I have somewhere in the region of 140 varieties in my collection, at varying amounts of seed, so there is always a need to bulk up a variety.

The plants that I use in my crosses are sown in the last week in October and planted out around the 3rd week of March. The reason for the October sown is so the plants flower slightly earlier and ultimately, I can harvest seed before there is an increased risk of mildew and other fungal diseases being prevalent.

The timing of when I do my crosses are season dependant. So, the weather conditions, how the plants are progressing, whether there are conditions that are conducive to providing bud drop are all factors. But any crosses I make are generally done anywhere between the 10 and 21 June. If there is a lot of bud drop, I'll wait until the plants have grown through that phase to give the plants the best chance to set seed. I will also, where possible, try and do any crosses as close to midday as I can on a fine dry day. This is a period where the pollen seems to be the most viable.



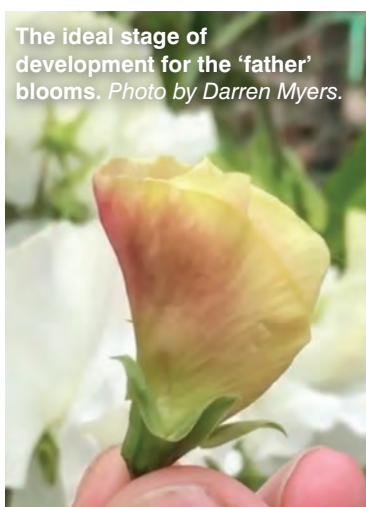
**Removal of the pollen sacs with tweezers.**  
*Photo by Darren Myers.*

As can be seen in the video, pollination occurs in relatively young blooms. So, any crosses must be done before the pollen sacs of the 'mother' mature. Firstly, we remove all of the pollen sacs from the flower that will act as 'mother'. A fiddly job made easier with the use of a pair of tweezers.

We then take 2 flowers from the variety that will act as the 'father'. These flowers must be of blooms where the pollen sacs have just started to shed pollen. We use 2 flowers to ensure that there is sufficient pollen deposited onto the stigma. This is to ensure that fertilisation takes place and the cross is successful.

All other blooms, apart from the 1 that has been fertilised, are removed, making sure that the stem is easy to identify when it comes to collecting the seed. I tie a plant label on to the stem, with my code to identify the cross in later years. Once the pod has set and ripened, I collect the seed ready to sow again in the October of the same year.

When that seed is sown in the October, post-harvest, the plants are now considered F1's. These plants will produce all of the same coloured blooms and will show the dominant traits of the parents. For example, if a bicolour is used in the cross, then a bicolour will be produced at the F1 stage. We allow these plants to flower, from which we then collect the seed.

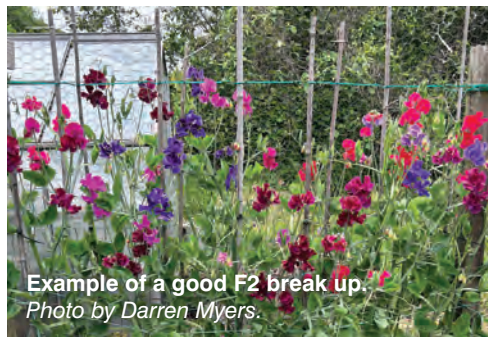


**The ideal stage of development for the 'father' blooms.**  
*Photo by Darren Myers.*

We then select a variety of seed from this batch ready to sow in October once more. The selection of seed should consist of differing shapes, sizes and colours. The principle behind this is give us, what we hope, will be a mix of colours from the F2 plants.

The same pattern repeats, where we sow the seed in October and allow the plants to flower early. However, the F2 phase is the most important. It is here where we get a break up. This means that plants will throw up a variety of colours. It is at this stage that we select the colour/varieties that we intend to take forward.

When the F2's first flower, it is very much the equivalent of a Sweet Pea enthusiasts Christmas. The anticipation of what is going to open can be captivating. When they do finally open, will you get the gift of your dreams or is it a deodorant box set that you'll end up donating as a raffle prize?



Some crosses will provide a really good break up, others may only provide 2 colours. But I avoid selecting anything that looks similar in colour to the parents.

I normally select, usually a maximum of 2 new varieties to take forward. However, if I get a good break up then I am open to selecting more, if there is anything showing real potential.

We then continue to repeat the process each year, removing any plants that throw any colours or traits that we don't want. This process is carried out each year until all the plants produce the same colour and traits. It is at this point when we consider a variety to be fixed. However, Andrew doesn't consider a variety to be fixed until the plants throw the same coloured blooms for 2 consecutive years, a practice that I have adopted.

It is at this stage that a variety is ready and can be sent to the NSPS Trials to be judged. From making the initial cross to finally getting a new variety fixed can take anywhere between 5 to 15 years.

It is a process that can have its ups and downs, and can provide pleasure and frustration in equal measures. Not every cross makes it. Some will start with promise but will end up being abandoned at some stage in their development. But some will make it, and it is those that make it such a rewarding process.

For anyone who attends a show and see the cultivar named 'Seedling', this denotes that this is a brand new variety that is most likely fixed, and has not yet been made commercially available.

I would encourage anyone to have a go at breeding. Breeders (aka hybridisers) have become few in number and we need more to come on board to continue the development of Sweet Peas for generations to come. Who knows, your breeding could result in the elusive Yellow Sweet Pea.

## Thoughts on Sweet Peas

*By Tom Brown (Head Gardener, West Dean)*

The majority of Sweet Pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*) seed that's available is an annual plant, meaning that it'll only live for one year before it set seeds. There is a huge variety of colours and will look stunning in your garden or on your kitchen table in a vase, delighting you with their perfume.

Although there is much debate; most peat free composts will be suitable for germinating Sweet Pea seeds, if the mix is open and free draining. There is no need for any extra fertiliser as these seeds do not require feeding initially but a few weeks after germination, as they develop into young plants, a weekly liquid seaweed fertiliser applied once a week (at 10% dilution rate of the recommended amount) will keep them buoyant until planting in the poorest of composts. I generally like to sow my Sweet Peas into pots rather than directly into the ground as I find that a little bit of protection goes a long way. Germination rate is far higher indoors and there are several garden inhabitants that will thank you for a tasty, Sweet Pea seed, such as mice, squirrels and rats. Sweet Pea seeds require a little bit of warmth to get them going, so a sunny windowsill in the house or a cool greenhouse or conservatory will be fine. Once your seeds have germinated, the trick is to get them into a very light and cool environment to prevent them from becoming too leggy or drawn.

There are several discussions about soaking your Sweet Peas before you sow them or removing a piece of the hard seed coat to help with germination. As I become a little longer in the tooth and having grown Sweet Peas for a number of years, I have never found the need to do any pretreatment. I get a very good germination rate from simply pushing the Sweet Pea seed into the compost by a centimetre or two and then covering the pot with a piece of glass or a clear plastic bag to retain some of that humidity, until I see the seed germinate. The moisture within the compost and the slightly warmer temperature will often be enough to break down that seed coat with absolutely no need for any pretreatment, meaning that Sweet Peas are easy to grow, and for everyone.

The size pot that you're looking for is roughly around 9 centimetres or three inches, allowing the plant to develop into a reasonable size, ready to plant into your garden or into your pots around the middle or end of March. Keep your Sweet Pea seeds moist, and do not let them dry out. Grow them on until they're about 10 centimetres high then

remove the tip of the plant with your finger and thumb which will encourage it to form side shoots and give you a bushier plant, and therefore many more flowers throughout the early summer.

A fertile garden soil in full sun will best serve your Sweet Peas by adding plenty of garden compost or well-rotted manure, I would also apply a few handfuls of Growmore or Vitax Q4 around the planting area, just before planting. Space your plants around 20 centimetres apart and position the plants close to the base of the climbing support that you're providing. Once they're in the ground, ensure that your Sweet Peas do not dry out, keeping an eye on the water levels by simply inserting your finger into the ground or digging down with a trowel to ensure that there is moisture where your Sweet Pea roots are growing, more often than not as the season progresses I would say a watering can once a week with a cap full of tomato food mixed in will work well, increasing to a couple of watering cans a week through particularly dry spells.

Finally, one of the most important pieces of advice that I can give you is to cut your Sweet Pea flowers as regularly as you can. One of the most common issues for Sweet Peas is people that don't pick them enough, around three or four times a week in the high summer will often keep on top of your flowers to enable you to enjoy them and stimulating the plant to produce more blooms. The moment that you see a seed pod, remove it immediately, as the plant will then begin to focus on seed production rather than repeat flowering.

Some of my favourite Sweet Peas that I would thoroughly recommend would be the pale blue 'Charlie's Angel', 'Gwendoline' which is a great one for cutting and is pink and 'Clotted Cream' which is an ivory colour, try mixing all three together which gives an absolutely divine combination both in the garden and for you to enjoy as cut flowers in your home.

### **Trials at West Dean**

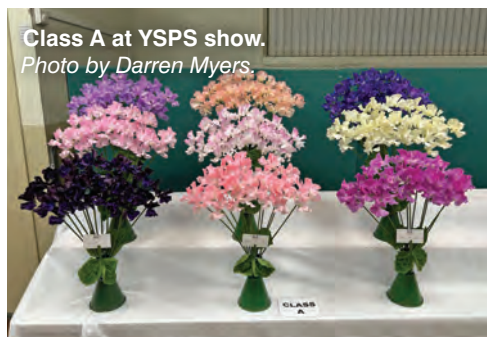
I have been fortunate enough to know Roger Parsons from the Sweet Pea Committee for a number of years. In the past, he was incredibly helpful and kind enough to impart his knowledge when we set up a Sweet Pea display in the garden that I managed before I came to West Dean, Parham House. We set up around 50 hazel obelisks to showcase cultivars that Roger grew at the time. Not only was it one of the most spectacular looking trials that we conducted there but also one of the most popular with the public.

In 2023 when Roger approached me about a collaboration with the Sweet Pea Society in running Trials at West Dean, I needed very little encouragement. We set up a trial in a recently renovated space at West Dean to showcase new varieties, growing them alongside stalwart varieties for comparison with a few dwarf forms too. After a very cold and wet spring with challenging conditions, where it felt as if every slug in West Sussex was descending on us, we began feeding the Sweet Peas to get them ready

for judging that summer. Once the temperatures warmed and the plants began to establish themselves, they didn't look back. Unsurprisingly a hugely popular display with the public, I'm delighted that we are once again showcasing this Trial at West Dean in 2025.

## Yorkshire Sweet Pea Society

*By Darren Myers*



**Class A at YSPS show.**  
*Photo by Darren Myers.*

The Yorkshire Sweet Pea Society was founded in 1996 by Gary Hammerton and Ian Myers.

The premise being that the Society would stage a Sweet Pea show for local growers, recognising that the nearest Sweet Pea show was Wem, following the demise of both the Leeds Show and Wakefield Show, a venue that had previously welcomed the NSPS

Provincial. The first show was held in the East Ardsley Community Centre, and welcomed some notable names of the day including George Priestley, Bob Banks, Andy Hubbuck plus many more.

Despite the hall being packed with flowers, visitor numbers were disappointing. It was decided in 2005 to move the show, and a venue in Mirfield, St Mary's Hall was found. Despite the change in venue, and a concerted push to attract visitors, which included local BBC Weather Presenter, Keeley Donovan, presenting prizes, it was desired that a new venue would once again be needed, and a change in format would be needed, if the show was to attract visitors.

Following talks with local groups, the society found a new home in St Paul's Church in Mirfield. The revamped show was badged as the Mirfield Sweet Pea Festival. The show incorporated a craft fair and encouraged local businesses to decorate shop windows with Sweet Peas. The first show in the new venue received financial backing from Mirfield Town Council.

The Show proved to be a huge success with exhibitors, visitors and stall holders alike.



**6 Vase Class. CLASS**  
*Photo by Darren Myers.*



Yorkshire Sweet Pea Show benches. Photo by Darren Myers.

In 2014, the show attracted 225 vases. A record for any YSPS show. However, 2014 proved to be a perfect storm. The society borrowed tables from a horticultural society some 30 minute drive away. With all staging, vases etc being stored in a similar location, everything had to be transported. With very little assistance on that weekend, including the insistence by the venue that even the carpets were cleaned before we left the venue (something that previously hadn't been requested and ignoring the fact that we had to clean the venue due to the condition it was in when the society took occupancy for the weekend) it was decided that it was unsustainable given the number of bodies available to work. So, in 2015, St Michael's Church School Room in East Ardsley became the new home of the show. This time no craft stalls and no decorated shop windows.

The venue once again provided a hit with exhibitors, given its easy access to the motorway network, good lighting in the venue and close to a number of hotels. This venue remains the home of the show and has proven to be a success all round.

Being a show dependant on 1 species, it hasn't been plain sailing. In addition to the Covid years, where no shows were held in 2020 and 2021, the show has had to be cancelled in 2012 due to poor weather and everyone experiencing bud drop. This has led to 2025 being the year for the 25th show. A milestone that the



Yorkshire Sweet Pea Show benches. Photo by Darren Myers



**Species bowl.**  
*Photo by Darren Myers.*

Society is hugely proud of given the difficulties faced by many societies, especially Post Covid where exhibitor numbers have fallen dramatically.

Schedules will be available in April 2025 and will include a Special Class to celebrate the milestone, which has kindly been sponsored by the NSPS. We are looking to make it a real celebration with a thank you to exhibitors for their continued support, without whom no show would be possible.

Our annual show in 2024 was viewed as an excellent show with a healthy number of vases and a noticeable increase in visitor numbers. The Show schedule saw some minor amendments for 2024, with a class for species and a further decorative class added.

## YSPS October Social Day 2025

*By Darren Myers*

This year the YSPS Annual October Social Day will be held on Sunday 12 October 2025 at the Wrenthorpe Village Hall, Wrenthorpe Lane, Wrenthorpe, Wakefield WF2 0NE. This was a new venue in 2024 and proved to be popular.

Lunch will once again be a choice of either pie and mushy peas or jacket potato with filling. Please advise of your choice of food and let us know if you require a vegetarian option when you book your place. For catering purposes, we will require all bookings to be made by Sunday 5 October 2025 at the very latest.

The day itself will start at 10.30am and filled with guest speakers, along with a quiz and raffle. The day will finish at approximately 4.30pm.

The cost for the day will remain at £7.50 per person. To book your place please either email: [yorkshiresweetpeasociety@gmail.com](mailto:yorkshiresweetpeasociety@gmail.com) or ring

Darren Myers – 07736 469343

Joan Myers – 01924 870748

We hope that you can join us for what will be an excellent day.

# NSPS Early Show at Millets Farm

*21-22 June 2025*

*By Caroline Ball*

We will again be back at Millets Farm in Oxfordshire for the Early National show in June, but this time the guest of Webbs who are very excited to host us in our special 125th anniversary year. Webbs have agreed to sponsor some of the classes too. There will be other events on at the Farm that weekend so we can hope for lots of visitors. It is always an interesting place to visit and it is very popular with the general public of Oxfordshire and beyond.

The Show will be held INSIDE the Garden Centre in an area usually used for plants and other material (NOT as before outside in a marquee). It will be enclosed but will have some permanently open doorways so make sure you are warmly dressed if a cold evening is forecast. Staging will take place on Friday 20 June between 4 pm and 11 pm and from 6 am to 9:30 am on Saturday morning. The gates will be locked outside these hours and people will not be able to enter or exit the Farm site so please plan accordingly.

NSPS access to the Garden Centre will be signposted. We will be able to park for unloading in the deliveries car park right next to the back of the Garden Centre where the show is located, which will be signposted. It will then be a short walk through the Garden Centre to the show area and trolleys will be available. Depending on space you may be asked to move your car into the main carpark so that others are able to unload.

Depending on the level of entries, we may have our own dedicated staging area, which will be brightly lit (if entries are large some of this area might be needed for show benches). Exit and entry to the Garden Centre during closing hours will be through the deliveries car park. Refreshments will be available throughout staging. When the Garden Centre closes toilets will be available adjacent to Millets Farm shop.

In the morning, breakfast will be available from 9am in the Garden Centre café. There is also a restaurant adjacent to Millets Farm shop.

Oasis is a permitted staging material at this venue. We encourage exhibitors to use alternative staging material but there will be no penalties for not doing so. Please enter as early as you can to allow plenty of time for preparation of the show layout. I have got contingency space organised if needed but if we do the Garden Centre staff will need to clear it of plants so I would like to give them as much notice as possible should that be necessary.

Emailing entries is easiest for me to deal with, I will be organising a show that week so might not be able to take your calls immediately. If you do call and there is no answer please send me a text and I will call you back as soon as I can. Late entries will very much depend on space so please, please get your entries in as soon as you can. If you are uncertain enter everything you might possibly want to do, taking space out is much easier for a show manager than creating space when the class spaces have all carefully been measured out.

We will need helpers to set up on Thursday 19 June, to judge and steward (please indicate with your entry if you can do either), to man a sales table/information bureau (both days), to help sell Sweet Peas on day 1, to help sell Sweet Peas prior to the breakdown on day 2, to help with the breakdown on day 2. If you can help with any of these things please email [caroline\\_a\\_m\\_ball@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:caroline_a_m_ball@yahoo.co.uk)

Let's hope for great weather, abundant entries and a joyful celebration of 125 years of the NSPS.

## NSPS Late Show at RHS Bridgewater

*12-13 July 2025*

*By Carole Tate*

The 2025 Late show at RHS Bridgewater Gardens, Worsley will again be held in the Show Marquee, which has a large display area and plenty of room for visitors. Access to the Marquee for staging: 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, and help will be provided to carry exhibits the short distance if required. Access for direct unloading in front of the marquee will be before 10am and after 6pm.

I would appreciate if entries could be sent by email to [caroletate10@gmail.com](mailto:caroletate10@gmail.com) and I will 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 ring your entries as a last resort and email if possible.

RHS Bridgewater has a "no oasis" policy in line with all RHS venues. I plan on having a supply of agrawool blocks for use in our NSPS vases. If a suitable eco-oasis alternative can be sourced, we will offer it for sale on the day.

If you have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact me. I am looking forward to lots of entries. I know this is 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. Please note, staging is up to 9.15am on Saturday which gives members with not many entries time to stage on Saturday morning. Awards will be presented at 1pm on Saturday.

Please volunteer to help at the show, you could be Judge or Steward and let me know if you can assist in other ways on the day. We are planning 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, how to arrange a Buttonhole demonstration and a small Lecture Theatre at the rear of the Marquee with a series of talks and slide shows.

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

Good Luck with your Sweet Peas this season. I look forward to seeing you in July 2025 as a competitor, helper or a visitor.



*Lathyrus latifolius* 'White Pearl'.  
Photo by Caroline Ball.

# Shows and Displays

## Gloucester Open Sweet Pea Show

*By Jenny and Lewis Morgan*



**Gloucester staging.** Photo by Lewis Morgan.

The Gloucester Open Sweet Pea Show was once again held at Dundry Nurseries at the start of July. The Show was held in the Day Centre building of the local Butterfly Garden Charity, which proved to be an excellent venue, especially as the weather turned somewhat inclement later in the day.

With the Show looking in doubt earlier in the year, a special mention and thanks must be made to Gloucester Society Chairman Robert

Champion who took it on himself to organise the Show with invaluable help from his brother Phil an NSPS member.

The Show followed the previous format comprising a three-vase class, multiple single vase classes, single stem, mixed vase classes, bowls, with classes for novices and local residents. NSPS member Gill Hazell was again kind enough to undertake the judging duties and had an excellent 57 entries to assess which amounted to 60 vases and seven bowls.

Local entrants were again welcome visitors, along with NSPS members Jane Findley and Phil Champion, John and Phillippa Cooper, Denise Bonner, ourselves, and Graham Edwards who had the prize for furthest travelled.

Prizes were shared out amongst the exhibitors, Jenny Morgan picked up the three-



**Gloucester vase and NSPS rosette.**  
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



vase class and a couple of single vase classes, with Denise Bonner, whose arrival in the Sweet Pea Show world was akin to that of Luke Little in the darts world, picked up four first places, two second places, and a third place along with Best Exhibit in Show

The day was thoroughly enjoyed by all exhibitors, and thanks to the Butterfly Garden Charity and Dundry Nurseries for hosting the show, and Phillippa Cooper for compiling the results.

CLASS	SPECIAL CLASSES	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
1	3 VASES DISTINCT 1st J & L Morgan 2nd Denise Bonner 3rd Jane Findley	(3)
2	ONE VASE, WHITE OR CREAM 1st Denise Bonner 2nd Phil Champion 3rd J & L Morgan	(3)
3	ONE VASE, RED OR ORANGE-RED 1st Graham Edwards 2nd John Cooper 3rd –	(2)
4	ONE VASE, MAGENTA, MAROON OR PURPLE 1st Denise Bonner 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd John Cooper	(3)
5	ONE VASE, MAUVE, LAVENDER OR BLUE 1st Denise Bonner 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd John Cooper	(3)
6	ONE VASE, PINK 1st J & L Morgan 2nd Denise Bonner 3rd Phil Champion	(3)
7	ONE VASE, ORANGE, PICOTEE OR FANCY 1st Denise Bonner 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd John Cooper	(3)
8	ONE VASE, MIXED CULTIVARS 1st J & L Morgan 2nd John Cooper 3rd Phil Champion	(3)
9	ONE STEM, ANY SPECIES 1st J & L Morgan 2nd John Cooper 3rd Denise Bonner	(3)
10	MIXED BOWL 1st Phillippa Cooper 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd Phil Champion	(3)
11	ONE VASE, NON SPENCER 1st J & L Morgan 2nd Phillippa Cooper 3rd Graham Edwards	(3)

# Northwest Regional Show 2024

*By Julia Beardmore*

We will have heard many times this season what a difficult year it has been for Sweet Peas, so Chorley Flower show at the end of July had the same problems experienced everywhere else. The Flower show weekend was blessed with better weather than usual, I think we only had one downpour, and there had been plenty of rain beforehand.

At this show, we have our North West Regional show, and also a display stand with an information bureau. The large vase classes were not surprisingly down this year, but we had more in the bowls and pots classes, it was a lovely display. 'Gwendoline' featured most in the vases.

This year Matt Lloyd, stepped up into Division 1 and won a well deserved Best in Division I. Barrie Eckford won Division II with 'Gwendoline'. Phil Champion entered at Chorley for the first time, travelling all the way from the Midlands and won Division III with 'Mary Priestley', Stephen Hayward won Division IV, Nicky Edwards won best in Division V with her vase of 'Mrs Bernard Jones'. Catherine Bromley won best in Division VI with her beautiful bowl of perennials. Carole Tate was awarded Best Decorative with her "Tea for Two" arrangement of Species. Newcomer Jane Robbins won the Novice trophy for her beautiful buttonhole. Bryn Edwards won the junior award with his fabulous bowl of 'Turquoise Lagoon'.

The single stem class is always popular at the NW show with lots of entries and gives everyone a chance to enter. First prize was awarded to Matt Lloyd, 2nd to Tom Atherton, 3rd to Nicky Edwards, 4th to Barrie Eckford and 5th to Julia Beardmore.



**Barrie Eckford and his prize winning vase.**  
Photo by Nicky Edwards.

Tom Atherton presented the trophies, with winners also receiving a sponsored prize, these are kindly donated by local businesses. The show benches delighted the public.

The Society Display stand looked fabulous and once again won a Gold award. We arrange in glass bowls and vases, much of it is pre-loved crystal, these complement the Sweet Peas. No floral foam is used in the display. It is amazing what can be done with a dead branch! This was tastefully decorated with the perennial *Latifolius* climbing up the back of the stand. We also had the information boards, which provide the History of the Sweet Pea beginning in 1699 with the wild



**Phil Champion receives his award from Tom Atherton.**  
*Photo by Julia Beardmore.*



**Best Decorative exhibit.**  
*Photo by Julia Beardmore.*

Sweet Pea and Cupani, Henry Eckford's breeding programme in Wem, then descriptions of mutations with the Spencer varieties in 1901. There are explanations of other varieties and also covering Species varieties. Bowls of flowers are displayed by each board depicting the variety. This always attracts a lot of interest with the public.

The bureau provided lots of information, our experienced growers and volunteers are on hand to help with advice and problem solving to the public to help the with the growing of their Sweet Peas. We display in small jars and diffuser bottles all the variety of seeds we have for sale, this is so helpful for people to select which seeds they wish to purchase. We love to welcome new members and talk through what the membership has to offer. We enrolled 4 new members at the show, with some joining later through the website.



**Gold award for Sweet Pea Society display.**  
*Photo by Julia Beardmore.*

A big thank you to all exhibitor's and judges and all who donated sponsored prizes for the show, and to the display team for the stand and all volunteers who manned the stand. A special thank you to all who provided Sweet Peas for the display.

# RHS Tatton Flower Show 2024

*By Carole Tate*



Planning for RHS Tatton Show started early 2024 with Julia Beardmore completing the necessary paperwork, including photos of all volunteers. We then prepared a timetable of who would be doing what on which days so we could obtain the passes.

We were in the Floral Marquee, and the build up started on Sunday

14 July, with Peter Matthewman, Mavis Duxbury, Stephen Hayward, Susan Meeks and Julia Beardmore covering the tables and fixing up the banners. Whilst the build up team were working on the layout, another team, Sarah Haisey, Catherine Bromley and Larysa Hathaway were out picking the Sweet Pea flowers, foliage and species for the display. Our resources were stretched as this was also the last day of our Late Show at Bridgewater!

Monday saw the flower arranging team Julia, John and Trish Pattinson, Monica Wright, Susan Meeks, Nicola Hanney and myself, organised by Mavis Duxbury, starting on the displays and the set up of the information boards. Mavis was very creative with a couple of dead branches which were hung with test tubes holding Sweet Peas and we decorated the back board with *latifolious*, using a needle and thin wire to hold it in place. We again used pre-loved glassware for the main display stand with chicken wire or gel beads to support the flowers.

Being previous winners we were looking for fresh ideas. Julia had a great idea to introduce a flower arranging demonstration area, complete with information leaflets,





**Membership information & sign-up area.** Photo by Carole Tate.

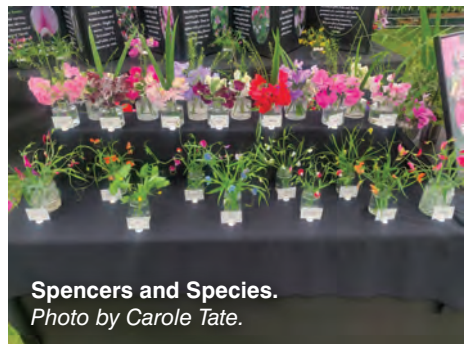


**Flower arranging advice.** Photo by Carole Tate.

and we had the opportunity to create a membership stand using our new tabletop banner and a borrowed book holder. We also utilised the new banners which co-ordinated with the literature and gave the stand a fresh modern look.

Last finishing touches were on Tuesday morning before judging in the afternoon. A few changes to the team on Wednesday to include Rachel Matthewman, Lisa Tedesco and Joanne Ashworth. They were delighted to report that we had won a Gold Award plus £650 for the Society. The Judge said they were pleased that we had used the glassware and commented on the education element. We had small glass jars and diffusers to display the different varieties of Spencer, Old Fashioned and Species, each with labels which looked very effective. They also liked the quality of the literature.

The show was busy every day and our volunteers did a tremendous job answering questions and discussing membership. The timeline was popular with the public who were interested in the history of the Sweet Pea, and we had many interesting conversations, particularly on which variety was the most fragrant. 'Cupani' and 'High Scent' were the favourites for fragrance. We signed up 13 members at the show and had more joining online after the event.



**Spencers and Species.** Photo by Carole Tate.

Eight volunteers per day were kept busy, with many of the blooms needing to be replaced on Thursday/Friday. A huge thanks to the teams already mentioned and to Tom and Jane Atherton, Nicky Edwards, Adina Zemanek, Don Ross and Martin Hathaway.

The stand was a huge success. We had lovely conversations with enthusiastic visitors as well as time to catch up with each other and we all managed time to have a look around the show ground. Hard work at times but very rewarding. 2025 sees the show

relocating to Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire, so we will not be back at Tatton until 2027. We have a busy programme in the North West and will be unable to do a Society stand at Wentworth. If any members are interested in running this show, we would be happy to offer support. I have pulled together a summary of how we planned the stand at Tatton and this can be a guideline for this, or any future events.

### **DISPLAY DEADLINES**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Promote the National Sweet Pea Society (NSPS) and its initiatives.
2. Increase membership and raise awareness of Sweet Pea and other *lathyrus* cultivation.
3. Provide educational materials and engage with visitors through demonstrations and displays.

#### **Planning and Logistics:**

##### **1. STAND DESIGN:**

- Theme: "Celebrating Sweet Peas: Colours, Fragrance and Variety"
  - Display:
    - A vibrant array of Sweet Pea varieties in pre-loved glassware
    - Informational posters detailing the history, cultivation tips and benefits of Sweet Pea membership.
    - A demonstration area for arranging Sweet Peas in floral displays.
- Signage: Clear branding for the NSPS, incorporating the logo.

##### **2. LOCATION:**

- Ensure the layout of the stand, information bureau, timeline display and demonstration table will maximize visibility and foot traffic.
- Consider proximity to other floral displays and storage areas.

##### **3. STAFFING:**

- Recruit volunteers and members to arrange the displays and set up the stands, and to man the stand during show hours.
- Arrange passes as required for each day.
- Assign roles: information desk, demonstration lead and membership representative
- Plan lunch hours and time for volunteers to enjoy the show.

**4. MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES:**

- Sweet Pea flowers, glassware, staging materials (wire & glass chippings) and seeds
- Educational brochures, membership forms and merchandise.
- Setup materials: tables, chairs, banners, ladders, buckets, covering material, stationery etc.

**5. LOGISTICS:**

- Arrange transportation for materials to and from the venue.
- Coordinate setup times with event organizers to ensure the stand is ready before the show opens.
- Plan for electrical needs if utilizing lighting or digital displays.

**Engagement Strategies:**

- Workshops: Host mini-workshops on Sweet Pea care and arranging.
- Contests: Organize a “Best Sweet Pea Display” contest for visitors to participate in.
- Social Media: Promote the stand and activities via social media channels before and during the event.

**Budget Considerations:**

- Costs: Stand fees, materials, transportation, and staffing expenses.
- Funding: Explore sponsorship opportunities and potential partnerships with local nurseries or gardening businesses.

**Evaluation:**

- Post-show analysis to assess visitor engagement, membership sign-ups, and feedback.
- Gather data on sales of materials and participation in workshops to gauge interest and success.

**Conclusion:**

Setting up a stand at the Tatton Flower Show 2024 presented a valuable opportunity for the National Sweet Pea Society to enhance its visibility and promote the beauty of Sweet Peas. With careful planning and execution, the stand effectively engaged the public, fostered interest in sweet pea cultivation, and strengthened the society's community presence. We also signed up several new members and won a Gold Award. The prize money plus profits from seed sales have been donated to the Society.

# Royal Welsh Show 2024

*By Jen and Lewis Morgan*



**Royal Welsh Stand.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

The Royal Welsh Show was back again, this time after a one-year break for reasons no one fully understood!

Gone was the barn sized marquee destined to be a distant memory, and hello to the new Horticultural Village. This time there were three small marquees, one for the floral art crowd, another for the growers, both plants and vegetable producers, and other small rural food and drink-based producers. A Dome stage was borrowed from Hay Literary Festival for use as the main stage and was used well during the week.

The third marquee was for the horticultural competitions to include the National Sweet Pea Championship of Wales, vegetables, other flower classes, and children's and schools' competitions. The concern was encouraging competitors to enter after three fallow years in the last four years. The word went out within the Sweet Pea community and entries rolled in from both sides of the border, including chairman Alison with riding shotgun her sister being an adopted Welsh woman and only living down the road from ourselves.

Gareth Roberts from Conwy, an experienced grower and exhibitor had accepted the invitation to judge the entries. For this year some of the less well supported classes had been dropped and single colours amalgamated into one class. However, the quantity of entries staged were as good as the previous show in 2022 which had to be considered a success and something to build on going forward.

The show benches were this year made up of potato crates turned upside down to create a more Country Show feel together with large handcrafted



**Alison Shreeve presenting Allan Evans with his Medal/Certificate for winning the 6 vase class.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



**Royal  
Welsh prize  
winning  
vase.**  
*Photo by  
Lewis  
Morgan.*



**Royal Welsh bowls.** *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

vegetables and flowers from the Arts Alive Group in Crickhowell, all of which helped to create a rural ambience to marquee.

The Society Stand was located both adjacent to the show benches and the entrance to the marquee, a prime location. A lot of visitors were welcomed to the stand and no oasis was used in the staging of any exhibits.

S4C and Radio Cymru came calling with Allan Evans being interviewed. Dignitaries from the show organiser and host County visited the stand, and BBC Gardeners World presenter Sue Kent filmed a social media post.

The Welsh Region once again sponsored the Sweet Pea Celebration class which was well supported. Moving onto the results, for once the cross-border raid was the other way, Alison Shreeve collecting 4 first prizes and a second prize. Allan Evans collected the 6-vase award, with Dei Williams the 3-vase award and best vase in show with his vase of 'Anniversary'. Other class prizes were spread out amongst all the entrants.

Looking forward to 2025 we understand the horticultural section will continue with the same format which was well received, with the emphasis being to encourage more entries and support. So, for members looking in on this report and thinking about supporting the Show, if you need any more information, please do not hesitate to contact us whether to enter the Show or merely coming along to visit the Show.



**Allan Evans being interviewed by  
Nia Roberts for the live S4C Show coverage.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

CLASS	SPECIAL CLASSES	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
1	SIX VASES DISTINCT 1st Allan Evans 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
2	THREE VASES DISTINCT 1st Dei Williams 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd –	(2)
3	ONE VASE, MIXED 1st Alison Shreeve 2nd Dei Williams 3rd Megan Clay	(3)
4	MIXED BOWL, SPENCER VARIETY 1st Allan Evans 2nd Alison Shreeve 3rd –	(2)
5	ONE VASE, DISTINCT 1st J & L Morgan 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd Dei Williams	(3)
6	SINGLE STEM 1st Alison Shreeve 2nd Dei Williams 3rd J & L Morgan	(3)
7	NOVICE CLASS, ONE VASE, MIXED 1st Alison Shreeve 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
8	CELEBRATION CLASS 1st Allan Evans 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd Megan Clay	(3)
9	MIXED BOWL, OLD FASHIONED VARIETY 1st Alison Shreeve 2nd J & L Morgan 3rd Allan Evans	(3)



Royal Welsh team. Left to right, Allan Evans, Jenny Morgan, Royal Welsh Show Host County Presidents Wife Mrs Brenda Jenkins, Alison Shreeve.  
Photo by Lewis Morgan.

## Wem Sweet Pea Show 2024

*By Phillipa Cooper*



**Hannah and Darren Myers with Matt Lloyd. Exhibitors in the Open Classes.**  
*Photo by Phillipa Cooper.*

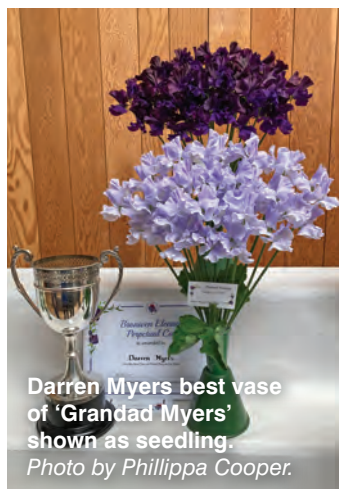
I am delighted to report that the Show on 20-21 July was a great success. The reintroduction of the open classes made a tremendous difference to the entries, as we had two growers exhibiting in the 6 vase class. On a very sad note we all greatly missed the presence of the wonderful Val Good who was so central to the Show since its inception in 1989. (The obituary to Val can be found in this Annual).

I know that many growers were concerned whether or not their blooms would be at their peak condition for the third weekend in July. Fortunately, the sunny weather during the week leading up to the Show provided a much needed boost. On a personal note, my Old Fashioned blooms were much better than in 2023, which was a great relief.

The Show was extremely busy over both days with the Sunday attendance boosted by the Vehicles of Interest display staged on the Recreation Ground (with a procession through the town during the afternoon).

It was extremely encouraging to have 7 entries in the novice classes. A particular mention goes to Dei Williams of Bala. Dei won the NSPS certificate for the best novice entry in 2023 and returned to exhibit in Division 5 this year. Another 2023 newcomer, Clive Payne of Wem returned to exhibit in the Old Fashioned Division. I hope that our 2024 novices continue to exhibit and we look forward to welcoming them in 2025.

In total we had 208 exhibits. This was made up of 119 vases, 24 bowls and baskets, 28 craft exhibits (including children's classes) and 37 floral art entries. Out of the 119 vases, 74 were Spencer varieties with 45 vases of pre 1910 Old Fashioned blooms. Unfortunately, one of our most successful exhibitors of Old Fashioned blooms, Rhona Owen of Harlescott, was unable to take part but we look forward to her exhibiting in 2025.



**Darren Myers best vase of 'Grandad Myers' shown as seedling.**  
*Photo by Phillippa Cooper.*

The Bronwen Eleanor Perpetual Challenge Cup for the best vase in the Show was awarded to Darren Myers of Wakefield for his superb vase of a seedling. I believe that this will be named 'Grandad Myers' after his late father Ian. What a wonderful tribute to an amazing grower. The judges and visitors also greatly admired Darren's vase of 'Hero' which is a most vibrant, striking dark blue. Congratulations also go to Matt Lloyd of Lower Darwen (winner of the best vase in 2023) who also entered 6 superb vases, including the same seedling. The judges commented that it was a very close contest.

Division 2 is for pre 1910 Old Fashioned varieties. This year there were two entries in the 5-vase class and 3 in the 3-vase class. This was a significant increase on the 2023 entries (despite the absence of Rhona). Congratulations go to Phillippa Cooper of Penn who was successful in both of the multivase classes. In the single vase classes Clive Payne of Wem won the named Eckford, blue, pink and strength of perfume classes with David Perry, Janet Hankey, Len Bennett and Neil Cooper also being successful.

The exhibitor with the most points was Clive Payne, who was presented with the Dorothy Eckford Perpetual Cup in Division 2. He also won the Archie Silvester Perpetual Trophy for the most points by a Shropshire grower.

Division 3 is for growers of no more than 500 cordon plants. This year it was a clean sweep for Neil Cooper of Whixall, who was successful in both multi vase classes as well as two single colour classes. Neil was presented with the Jack Timpson Perpetual Shield. It is appropriate to give a special mention to Neil who has been a most loyal supporter of the Wem Show over many years.

There was keen competition between Les Grisdale of Ellesmere Port, John Cooper of Penn, Graham Johnson of Shrewsbury and Frank Forrest, a novice grower from Bunbury, in Division 4 (no more than 200 cordon plants). Les Grisdale was the overall winner, he was



**Rose Horner, Show Manager, presenting Lynda Oldham with the Hatcher Rogerson Perpetual Trophy in Floral Art.**  
*Photo by Phillippa Cooper.*



**Three Coopers. John , Neil of Whixall (our oldest competitor) and Phillippa. Photo by Rose Horner.**

presented with the NSPS Bronze Medal for his vase of 'Sir Jimmy Shand' (best vase) and also the Preston Brockhurst Horticultural Society Challenge Cup for the most points. Les is actually another long standing supporter of the Wem Show. I would like to congratulate Frank Forrest for his success in class 28 (pink) with his vase of 'Banty'. It is very pleasing that a novice has success against some very experienced growers.

Division 5 (no more than 100 cordon plants) is always the most popular and this year was no exception. In total there were 29 vases staged in this division. Dei Williams of Bala repeated his success from 2023, winning 5 out of the 9 classes. Dei was presented with the Maurice Graham Perpetual Challenge Cup for the most points, awarded in memory of John Good. Dei was also the recipient of the W Jenkins Perpetual Challenge Cup for his vase of 'Sir Jimmy Shand' (best vase in the division). David Perry and Len Bennett, both of Worthen, and two novices Frank Forrest and Ben Mifflin of Congleton were also awarded prizes in this division.

Having 7 novice entries, including our Show Manager Rose Horner, was especially pleasing. Many congratulations go to Ben Mifflin who won the NSPS Certificate for the best exhibit in the novice classes. I know that we look forward to welcoming our 2024 novices back to the Show next year.

The Show includes a number of Special Classes. The Wem and District Rotary Club Perpetual Challenge Trophy for the most points in this division went to Phillippa Cooper. Phillippa was also successful in the class for 'Cupani', *Lathyrus* species and bowl of most scented old fashioned blooms. The President's Plate (for a vase of Spencer, vase of old fashioned and bowl of Spencer) went to John Cooper. The Albert Bennett Memorial Plate for 'Lord Nelson' was awarded to Clive Payne.

There were 12 entries in the children's craft classes, a most encouraging result. Finally, I would like to congratulate everyone who entered the Floral Art Division. This was very well supported. The trophy winners were Wyllis Turner (Chair of the Eckford Sweet Pea Society), Sarah Atwell, Karan Szaroleta and Lynda Oldham.

Over the past three years the Wem Show has grown to almost (but not quite!) fill the available space on the show benches at Wem Town Hall. Throughout the weekend we had many positive comments, quite a number relating to the reintroduction of the Open Classes.

I would like to conclude by praising our Show Manager, Rose Horner. Rose did an absolutely tremendous job, not only organising the Show itself, but also all the promotional and background work carried out over many months prior the Show. We are also very fortunate that Rose was supported by a superb team of volunteers. Once again the team of Janet and Andrew Hankey worked behind the scenes to get all the results and prize money organised with great efficiency.

The Sweet Pea Show is extremely important to the town of Wem and this was reiterated by both the Mayor and our President Barrie Eckford during the prize presentation on the Saturday afternoon.

We all look forward to the continued success of the Show and hope to welcome you to Wem on the 19th and 20th July 2025



# Royal Windsor Flower Show

*By Caroline Ball*



**Show manager Mike Finch resting with the Sweet Pea Society.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

This lovely show set in the picturesque Windsor Great Park has become a firm fixture for the Society, marking the start of the Displays season in early June. It sells itself as a celebration of the joys of gardening, nature, cookery, traditional crafts and nostalgic fun. It is a prestigious one-day event and one of the highlights of the horticultural year. Visitors come in large numbers to explore a quintessentially British flower show with a competitions' marquee, show gardens and displays, outstanding exhibitors, inspirational talks, and delicious food. These visitors include a good sprinkling of famous faces including the Patron of the National Sweet Pea Society, Alan Titchmarsh and Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh. The show provides entertainment for all ages and abilities, with demonstrations and workshops for an immersive, educational and hands on experience and for the keen

gardeners there are also a number of top specialist plant suppliers. It is possible that Elaine and I came back to Oxfordshire with a car full of heuchera and other cottage garden plants after our day at the Royal Windsor Flower Show!

Our set up team of Graeme Hollingdale, Adam Heeley, Caroline Ball and Phil Johnson gathered on a sunny 7



**A happy customer.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

June to spend a leisurely afternoon putting together a lush display that was much fuller than I thought it would be at the start of the day. This was thanks to the generous gift of flowers from Phil's English Sweet Peas to add to our own contributions which were small in such a late season for such an early show. The display was entirely



**Ostara the Bubble Spring Fairy.** [www.ep-tc.uk](http://www.ep-tc.uk)  
*Photo by Elaine Davis.*



**The crowds at Windsor.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

eco friendly - no oasis with preloved vases taking pride of place. Our stand was deemed 'stunning' by Mike Finch the show marquee manager who always makes us extremely welcome. It was nice to have Plant Heritage keeping us company this year in the exhibition marquee. They put up a lovely display of potted plants lent by their members and had seed to sell too.

On show day the sun shone and the crowds came, upwards of 10,000 visitors. The VIPs as normal inspected the marquee before it was open to the public. The group this year also included Mary Berry who was delighted to accept a posy of Sweet Peas from the Society given to her by Caroline Ball. Caroline was joined by Elaine Davis, Tony

Mowlem plus Roger and Carolyn Dix to man the sales table and to pack up at the end of the day. All worked extremely hard chatting to the people who passed by, answering their questions and recruiting new members. Roger Dix also had success in the competitive Sweet Pea classes. Those that dropped by included David Emmanuel, designer of Princess Diana's wedding dress! The highlight of the day, however, was meeting Kanwal Madra, who had exhibited his Sweet Peas in the competitive classes and his vase of 'Scarlett' was stunning provoking more than one question from the visitors, who joined the Society and then was brave enough to come along to exhibit at the Chiltern Sweet Pea show two weeks later, encouraged by his new District Rep Roger Dix.



**Competitive Exhibit**  
**by Kanwal Madra.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*



**The display at Windsor.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*



**Competitive exhibit**  
**by Roger Dix.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

# Competitions

## 100 Club

*By Caroline Ball*

Prize winners since those listed in the 2024 Sweet Pea Annual were as follows:

Draw Date	£100	£25	£10
24.04.24	B Everest Westerham	G Hollingdale Princes Risborough	F Towers Preston
11.9.24	A Haskin Cuddington	R Watson Walsall	TW Lawford Canterbury
13.11.24	A Gillingwater Chingford	G Ablitt Peterborough	A Hopkins Alcester
15.2.25	G Hollingdale Princes Risborough	A Haskin Cuddington	A Gillingwater Chingford
8.3.25	GW Putman Kenley	N Bishop Stokenchurch	G Ablitt Peterborough

Very many thanks to all who participated and congratulations to the winners.



# District Representatives

The role of the District Representative is to give help and advice to members and affiliated societies in their area, to assist at National Shows where possible and to provide an area report for the Annual. They will be pleased to assist with your Sweet Pea queries so do contact yours. We still have vacancies, if you could help please call either Carole Tate on 07961 477137 / email caroletate10@gmail.com or Roz Warley on 07307 867512 / email rwarley5@gmail.com

## SE England

Bedfordshire	VACANCY
Berkshire	Robert Read; 4 Tubbs Farm Close, Lambourn, Berkshire RG17 8PE ☎ 07990 078938 Email: rread94@outlook.com
Buckinghamshire	Graeme Hollingdale; Rowan Lodge, 16 Wellington Avenue, Princes Risborough, Bucks, HP27 9HY ☎ 01844 344985 Email: graeme@graemehollingdale.com.
Hampshire	Darren Everest, Greenbush, Hamstead Road, Cranmore, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight PO41 0YB ☎ 07808 793862 Email: darreneverest@gmail.com
Hertfordshire	VACANCY
Isle of Wight	Keith Brewer; Ivy Bank, Marlborough Road, Ventnor, IOW. PO38 1TE ☎ 01983 856482 Email: keithbrewer123@aol.com
Kent	Linda Ellis; Sycamore Cottage, Aerodrome Rd, Bekesbourne, Canterbury, Kent CT4 5EX ☎ 01227 832458 or 07887 717117 Email: eliislinda57@gmail.com
London (Greater)	Roger Dix; 85 Nursery Gardens, Staines, Middx, TW18 1EL ☎ 01784 455057 Email: rogerdix@sky.com
Middlesex	Roger Dix; 85 Nursery Gardens, Staines, Middx, TW18 1EL ☎ 01784 455057 Email: rogerdix@sky.com
Surrey	Roger Dix; 85 Nursery Gardens, Staines, Middx, TW18 1EL ☎ 01784 455057 Email: rogerdix@sky.com

**SE England** *continued*

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Dorset VACANCY

Gloucestershire VACANCY

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Wiltshire VACANCY

## Eastern Counties

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Norfolk & Suffolk Chris Priestley; Mulberry House, Chapel Lane, Caythorpe,  
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## Midland Counties

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Hereford & Worcestershire Megan Clay; 1 Home Farm Cottages, Ribbesford, Bewdley,  
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Northamptonshire VACANCY

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Shropshire Graham Johnson; 5 Greenways, Shrewsbury, Shropshire,  
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Staffordshire Phillippa Cooper; 101 Brenton Road, Penn, Wolverhampton,  
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**Midland Counties** *continued*

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**North of England**

Cumbria & NW Region	Carole Tate; 22 Lime Grove, Chorley, Lancs, PR7 3JA ☎ 07961 477137 Email: caroletate10@gmail.com
Durham	Roz Warley (Caretaker Rep); Ravondale, New Deer, Aberdeenshire. AB53 6TL. ☎ 07307867512
Humberside & Lincolnshire	Chris Priestley; Mulberry House, Chapel Lane, Caythorpe, Lincolnshire NG32 3EG ☎ 07815 067570 Email: priestley.chris@btinternet.com
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Maria Melvin, Glenkeeran House, Smarmore, Ardee, Co. Louth A92 YX78 email: melvin.maria@yahoo.com ☎ 0860507035

*“Flowers don’t worry about how they’re going to bloom. They just open up and turn toward the light and that makes them beautiful.”*

Jim Carrey

*Supplement to Amateur Gardening, March 10th, 1928*



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**TWO DELIGHTFUL SWEET PEAS.**

Top—"PRINCE OF ORANGE."

Bottom—"SUNRISE."

(Natural Order, Leguminosae, Pea Family.)

*Drawing prepared for Amateur Gardening. (Copyright.)*

*Collingridges, Colour Printers, London.*

## District Representatives Coordinator

*By Roz Warley*

Up here in Scotland, together with Simon Coia, who is based a little South from us, the intention is to contact horticultural societies, and show secretaries (in Scotland) to forge a relationship with the NSPS. We shall be starting this in earnest, in early February - indeed next week (at the time of writing)!

If you are a Scottish member, and have a show local to you with a Sweet Pea section, that you think would benefit from a call please let either myself or Simon know. All suggestions will be welcomed and followed up.

We hope to build on our great start last year, tempting more societies to affiliate to the NSPS, at the moment Scotland is pretty much a blank canvas, therefore an ideal place to concentrate our activities.

In my role as District Rep Coordinator, I'm happy to report that our Mailchimp account is making it so much easier for us to communicate with everyone. You should, by now, have received an email announcing the changeover. We still have a small number of items to iron out, but we are getting there. Should you need anything, just hit the 'reply' button on a Mailchimp message sent to you, and either Julia or myself will assist you from there.

This brings me to the important part, for those District Reps who are not online, it is invaluable to have the Annual to convey messages, so here goes! For anyone, who can't, or doesn't want to be online, or using Facebook please note:

We have developed the NSPS Chatroom on Facebook primarily for the DR's to share details of their activities, and local shows, events, or indeed anything interesting for the membership. Your assistance in helping us build this up would be much appreciated, and very useful for the membership. If you would prefer, please send your details to me, [rwarley5@gmail.com](mailto:rwarley5@gmail.com) or call on 07307867512 and I will list them in the chatroom for you. Should any questions for your area arise in the chatroom, I am happy to send them over to you.

It's our 125th Society Anniversary this year, let's make it a great year!

# District Representatives Reports

## Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns

*By Graeme Hollingdale*

Following the ever-declining number of non-committee and local friends attending the AGM and Autumn Social meetings of the CSPS held in 2022 and 23, the low numbers had reached a point where it clearly was no longer wanted by members and was unsustainable. So, it was agreed therefore that for the foreseeable future, that the social meeting, held at a local hall, would no longer be organised. This would of course be revisited if circumstances and interest changed.



**Chiltern Show staging.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

It was agreed that the 2024 AGM be held, as the committee meetings are, on a weekday at my home in Princes Risborough. Provisionally set as 14 October, this was subsequently moved to the following Monday (21) in order that all committee could attend.

All those on our emailing 'membership' list were given as normal, a short 'newsletter', with various information about local and national societies

(ahead of the publication of the NSPS Autumn Bulletin and 2025 show schedules and classification list) with the request that if they were interested in attending the AGM, to contact anyone of the committee, especially the Secretary and if wishing to enjoy the Buffet lunch, either Caroline or Alison who were co-ordinating and not just turn up!

The only responses were from one relative asking that T E Cox be removed from the list; Roy James asking about National shows and Lorna Minton (whose cards continue to sell very well, providing a source of income from shows and displays for the NSPS) who, although no longer growing or attending, is still very much a friend of the society.

The only other items to report on this year, were another very successful display, at the Royal Windsor Flower Show and our Annual show; which in some small part, because of its closeness date-wise to the unfortunate late cancellation of the Early National



**Judge Roger Parsons.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*



**Denise Bonner and her lovely bowl.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

(which was to be held at RHS Wisley) gave growers and visitors a high-quality show to visit in June.

We, the CSPA, will be integral to the success of the 2025 Early National, held at Webbs garden centre, Millets farm, Frilford on the weekend of 21/22 June, where we need to give Show Manager Caroline Ball as much help and support that we can.

Our Annual show was held on Sunday 23 June 2024 at the usual venue of the Millennium Hall, Lacey Green and attracted exhibitors and visitors not only from the local area but largely due to the unfortunate cancellation of the Early National, some considerable distances as well. The benches were filled with many fabulous flowers and exhibits from both experienced and relatively new growers. Help was, as always, on hand to assist anyone who was less experienced/confident about bloom selection and staging techniques. We do still allow the use of Oasis but encourage the use of more environmentally friendly alternatives.

The main winners were:

The Flay (Most Points in single vases) Trophy  
Wessex (Best Vase in small growers) Trophy  
Best Exhibit in Show (class B 3 vases distinct)

Jen & Lewis Morgan  
Roger Dix  
David Fitton ('Karen Louise',  
'Anniversary', 'Eclipse')

NSPS Medal Best Vase in Show (class G 12 stems)

David Fitton ('Jilly')



**Chiltern Show  
award winning bowl.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

We were particularly pleased to see entries of quality from new exhibitors including Denise Bonner, Kanwal Madra, Poul Christensen and Marilyn Searle. Denise winning the publicly judged bowl class with some super blooms in evidence.

The CSPS annual show is booked for the following Sunday (29 June 2025) with Roger Parsons secured as judge for this year.

The only other local area shows that, as far as I am aware, had Sweet Pea classes and entries in 2024 were held in Wingrave and at Chipperfield where Kathy Gray won the NSPS medal for Best exhibit.

Can I appeal to the secretaries of local societies to please send me details (and photos) of the entrants and winners in Sweet Pea classes held each year, so that I can record and advertise them here for posterity.



**Award winning  
vase by Roger Dix.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*



**Sweet Peas at Wingrave Show.** *Photo by Caroline Ball.*



**Best vase 'Jilly' shown  
by Dave Fitton.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*



**Chiltern awards.**  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

## Chiltern Sweet Pea Audit - 23 June 2024

No	Name of Cultivar	1	2	3	Unplaced	Total	Colour	Classfn
1	Gwendoline	3	3	2	3	11	Magenta (Pale)	4a
2	Anniversary	3	1	3	3	10	Picotee (White Ground)	15
	Sir Jimmy Shand	2	1	3	5	10	Fancy (Striped)	16
4	Jilly	2	2	0	1	5	Cream	2
	Mary Priestly	1	0	0	4	5	White	1
6	Naomi Nazareth	2	2	0	0	4	Blue (Pale)	9b
	Karen Louise	1	2	1	0	4	Lavender	8
	Mrs Bernard Jones	1	1	1	1	4	Rose Pink (White Ground)	10b
	White Frills	0	1	3	0	4	White	1
10	Bristol	1	1			2	Blue (Pale)	9b
	Piccolo	1			1	2	Lavender (Flush)	8a
	Valeries Harrod		2			2	Orange Pink	13
	Olivia		1		1	2	Fancy (Striped)	16
	Millennium		1		1	2	Red (Crimson)	3b
	Just Julia			2		2	Blue (Mid)	9a
	Bridget McAleer			1	1	2	Mauve	7
	Patricia Marilyn				2	2	Pale Pink (White Ground)	10
	Eclipse	1				1	Mauve	7
	Queen of Hearts	1				1	Fancy (Striped)	16
	Ruby Anniversary	1				1	Red (Crimson)	3b
	Alice Hardwick	1				1	Orange Red	14
	Somerset Lady	1				1	Magenta	4
	Romeo	1				1	Not Classified	GF
	Daily Mail	1				1	Cerise Pink	10c
	The Princess Royal (shown as Gardeners Jubilee)		1			1	White	1
	Barrenscourt		1			1	Mauve	7
	White Supreme		1			1	White	1
	Mammoth Scarlet		1			1	Not Classified	Early Flower Spencer
	Windsor			1		1	Maroon	5
	Judith Wilkinson			1		1	Magenta	4
	Our Harry			1		1	Blue (Mid)	9a
	Joejess				1	1	Orange Red	14
	Just Jenny				1	1	Blue (Dark)	9
	Lady Nicholson				1	1	Fancy (Striped)	16
	<b>Mixed vases</b>					<b>21</b>		
	<b>Mixed OF</b>					<b>1</b>		
	<b>Mixed GF</b>					<b>1</b>		
	<b>Bowls</b>					<b>10</b>		
	<b>Pot</b>					<b>1</b>		
	<b>Bowls</b>					<b>5</b>		
	<b>Total</b>					<b>129</b>		



Chiltern Show. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Chiltern Show. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Dave Fitton receives his award from Chiltern chairman Brian Butler, reading the results show manager Chris Gray. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

## Cumbria

*By Carole Tate*

The Westmorland Horticultural Society Show was on Sunday 14 July 2024 at Endmore Village Hall. Judging was from 9.30. The quality of exhibits was exceptional and the number of visitors good. There was an increase in prize money in all classes and vouchers were given for section winners.

It was a clean sweep for Kevin Preston in the Sweet Pea sections. Well done!

The plant sales, raffle and refreshments were well supported, going some way to cover the costs. A big thank you to everyone involved in the show, helpers, committee, judges, sponsors and exhibitors, many of whom came from miles away and had a very early start to get to the show and make it the success it was.

The Programme for the Society next year is full and varied with monthly meetings to entertain and inform. The date of the Summer Show is Sunday 13 July 2025 and will again be held at Endmore Village Hall. Please let me know if you would like more details.

Happy growing.

## Essex

*By Brian Harwood*

Hello everybody.

2024 was a satisfactory year weather wise, but sadly one of our regular exhibitors Harry White passed away in July 2024. Harry loved his Sweet Peas and will be greatly missed not only for his Sweet Peas but he was a very competent Dahlia and Chrysanthemum grower winning many prizes in the Essex area.

The first show in the area was Elm Park where my friend Chris Dale was unable to attend which he will explain in his report, which left me the only exhibitor and taking all the honours. The Elm Park Summer show in 2025 will be held on Saturday 14 June. Next came Buckhurst Hill where they were no exhibitors, then came Chingford where Alan Gillingwater was the only exhibitor and taking all the honours.

Rainham early show had to be cancelled because the show manager went down with covid which was very sad and hoping it will take place in 2025. Once again no feedback from Rayleigh and Collier Row put their annual show back to September, so that completes the show results for Essex 2024.

**2025**

Peas were sown in the middle of October 2024 and at the time of writing plants looking good. Due to my mobility problems I have cut down in numbers and now only growing 80 plants. In general, it is now becoming a major problem with the lack of exhibitors, as the next generations are not interested which is not good for the future.

Wishing you all a very good showing season for 2025.

## Ireland

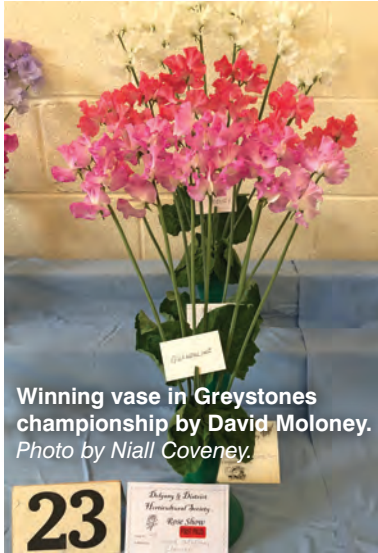
*By Niall Coveney*

Our season begins with a roundup of events in October 2023. This is organised by different societies each year with societies involved in competitions hosting an awards ceremony for competitors and a luncheon. Invariably the forthcoming season is the main item on the agenda as lunch progresses. The Sweet Pea competitions are the first to take place in each new year and the main interest of the guests. The success of the previous year's varieties and how seeds can be obtained is the main topic. There is a small number of seeds exchanged between competitors at this luncheon but clearly not enough for the serious grower. There is no one producing and selling quality seed anymore in Ireland. Most of it must be imported from abroad but import restrictions make this a difficult task. It would be good to have a short talk on the growing and saving of seed as the imported seed appears to be bigger and more uniform than what we produce locally.



**Mossey Butterly at Rush Show.** Photo by Niall Coveney.

Our enthusiasm for the new year was marred by the deaths of four stalwarts. In the first week of January, we suddenly lost Tony Boston who was a grower and exhibitor for over 50 years at shows all over Ireland and the only person I know who ever brought Sweet Peas to a show in the UK. Tony was the life and soul of Sweet Pea gatherings and famed for his Gawler Sweet Peas. In February we lost Madeline Harford. Madeline was involved in a County Council run flower show and her own local society in Swords. She was very keen on growing Sweet Peas and hopefully her husband John will continue where she left off. We then lost Jimmy Kilkenny in April. He too was a big contributor to our Sweet Pea shows having retired from the building industry many years ago. Jimmy won many awards at the local shows and would swap



**Winning vase in Greystones championship by David Moloney.**  
*Photo by Niall Coveney.*

ideas especially with younger members. Then in late November we lost Ignatius O'Brien in his 93rd year of life. He competed right up until four months before he died. He was a physical education teacher all his life and a well-known athlete who competed at every level. He also organised the All-Ireland Sweet Pea shows in the Botanic Gardens in Dublin. May they all Rest in Peace. They are sadly missed by their spouses and gardening colleagues around the country.

The growing season from January to June had mixed weather with warm nights in February and April but sunshine levels were very low. The temperatures in June and July were also mixed with cold weather prevailing. Our first shows were held at the end of June. Two shows were held, one on the North side of Dublin in Newbridge

House near Donabate and one on the South side in Greystones. Both shows were well attended, and the standard was very high. David Moloney won the main classes in Greystones including the Sweet Pea championship with Pat Thornton and Maria Melvin sharing second and third place respectively place.

The next show took place in Ardgillan Castle. On this occasion Maria Melvin and Pat



**Maria Melvin winner of the Rush Championship.** *Photo by Niall Coveney.*



**Catherine Coveney and Mossey Buttery at the Rush show.** *Photo by Niall Coveney.*

Thornton shared the top spots. In the under confined class Peter Harvey swept the boards followed by Dominica McKeivitt, Louise O'Connor, Ann O'Meara and Christopher White.

The next show was held in Rush where judging was shared between Mossey Butterly and Oliver Clarke. The Rush championship was won by Maria Melvin with outstanding exhibits. Being the biggest show of the year there were many classes with prizes being shared between Pat Thornton and Catherine Coveney. There was a strong turnout in the confined class with Peter Harvey doing well once more followed closely by Louise O'Connor, Christopher White and Dominica McKeivitt. During the course of that evening our own judges put on a class for interested exhibitors and members of the public on the growing of Sweet Peas. Over 20 people attended.

The next show was held on the 27 July in Malahide. Catherine Coveney was very successful here with David Moloney winning the special classes. There was a strong entry in the confined section with prizes going to five different exhibitors.

The month of August began with a show on the 5th in Swords, run by John Harford and a great team of people. There was a great display of Sweet Peas at this show among other exhibits. The winners of the main class were David Moloney and Catherine Coveney, followed by Pat Thornton and Louise O'Connor. This was followed by the Tullamore show on the 11 August where David Moloney won all the main prizes. Both Pat Thornton and Michael Burke were among a long list of competitors at this show.

The Autumn show was held in Greystones on the 24 August and the number of entries here was small as it coincided with other shows for vegetables. The winner on this occasion was Joan Gregg followed by Catherine Coveney.

The organisers of the Naul Show on the 7 September took a brave decision to include Sweet Peas in their schedule. While the growing season was late this year they were well rewarded with a wonderful display from a wide range of exhibitors.

Our colleague Chris McAleer continues to produce new varieties with some selections going to trial in the UK. It is a very difficult process and disheartening when your expectations are not achieved. However, Chris continues on and has had a number of successes to date. He has sent four new hopefuls to trial this year, and we wish him all the very best in his endeavours. The elusive yellow Sweet Pea is still in his sights.

The year has come full circle, and we are now looking forward to the 2025 season. We wish all exhibitors the very best and hopefully the weather this year will be a little kinder.

# Kent

*By Linda Ellis*

My first year as the Kent Representative for the NSPS has been an interesting one. The weather has been the main topic of conversation for most growers especially for exhibitors.

It was particularly challenging with a warm wet winter leading to advanced autumn sown plants ready to plant out in the spring. But spring was cold and wet so my newly planted Sweet Peas were slow to get going not helped by the abundance of slugs and snails who quickly demolished any new growth.

But patience paid off and eventually the plants got going and once they got to about 1 metre tall the snails seemed to leave them alone even after I had layered them. As the early season was so cold and wet, I had less watering to do but on the down side the blooms were slow to start and there was lots of bud drop.



**Sweet Pea Entries Kent.**  
*Photo by Linda Ellis.*



**Richard Borthwick receives his award.**  
*Photo by Carole Passey.*

Thankfully the blooms started just in time for my first show in June and despite a very hot spell at the end of July they continued to produce well through until the end of August.

Exhibiting in Kent is limited to local shows and the Kent Federation Show. The closest National show was scheduled to be at RHS Wisley but this year even that was cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

As the new Kent representative I contacted all existing members and met up with a couple of them and some even visited my plot to see how I do things. I also contacted various Garden and Horticultural societies in Kent (members and non-members) as I had planned to attend several shows around the county to introduce myself but unfortunately the shows were concentrated over a couple of



**Three vase class.** Photo by Linda Ellis.

weekends and as I developed Covid I was unable to visit.

I just managed a negative test in time for the Kent Federation Show held at Ditton which is the largest show in Kent. The number of entries was up on the previous year with 4 of our NSPS members entering.

Richard Borthwick, our previous representative, 'wiped the board' winning Best Horticultural Exhibit in Show for his 3-vase class with 'Sarah Kennedy', 'White Frills' and 'Ethel Grace', the 9 spikes class with 'Queen of Hearts', 'Bristol' and 'Ethel Grace', the Exhibitors Choice class with 'Queen of Hearts', and the Striped class with 'Sir Jimmy Shand'.



**Linda Ellis arrangement of Spencers.**  
Photo by Linda Ellis.



**R.Borthwick Best Horticultural Exhibit.**  
Photo by Linda Ellis.



**Linda Ellis receives award for Best Vase of Sweet Peas.**  
*Photo by Peter Ellis.*

I managed the Best Vase in Show with a vase of 'Sir Jimmy Shand', a second place in the 3 vase class, a first for my Bowl of Old Fashioned and another for my arrangement in a bowl.

Brian Everest won a third place in the 3-vase class, a second place in the Exhibitors choice and third places in the bowl of Old Fashioned and the arrangement in a bowl. He also entered a vase of a newly released Sweet Pea variety, called 'Lizanne Davies', which was bred in Kent and named after a dear friend of his, who loved Sweet Peas.

Our final member Derek Parks won a second place in the 9 spikes class. So a good day was had by all.

Generally reports around the county from the local shows were that numbers of entries were low and though this could have been to a poor growing

season it does appear that many societies are experiencing a decline.

I am already planning for the year ahead and have a new allotment, so posts are in ready, and the ground is cleared of weeds. Fingers crossed that the Sweet Peas like it!

I have decided to sow some autumn Sweet Peas, which are looking good though germination was poor, (my fault I think as the compost was too wet) and I am trying a second sowing which I have done in the last few weeks to see which works best in view of the changing weather we are experiencing.

Gardening is all about learning and experimenting and no two years are the same. So only time will tell whether this is the right thing to do or not.

From Kent I wish everyone a good 2025 season.

*“There are always flowers for those who want to see them.”*

Henri Matisse

# North West Region

*By Nicky Edwards*

2024 was another busy year for the North-West region. Activities started in January with the children's planting event "Let's Get Growing!" hosted by our member Andrew Clarke at his primary school in Chorley. This event is gaining momentum and is a brilliant introduction for young school-age gardeners. Personally, I think promoting gardening and its many well-documented benefits to the younger generation is key and should be a primary objective for our Society. I was very happy that we in the North-West were lucky enough to be part of two such events, this one and another hosted by RHS Bridgewater in May. I would like to thank the organisers of both these events for providing the opportunity for us to pass on our knowledge and skills to the next generation.

This was followed by our usual programme of workshops for beginners in the techniques of growing Sweet Peas which started in early February.

Then followed the busy schedule of plant fairs and horticultural and flower shows. Highlights included the NSPS Late Show at RHS Bridgewater, RHS Tatton Flower Show and the NSPS North-West Regional Show at Chorley Flower Show. These are all documented elsewhere in the Annual. Southport Flower Show was another major event in the calendar and there were a number of local horticultural shows that we attended. Activities ended with our North-West Social in September. The importance of our members meeting purely socially at the end of the year can't be overestimated. You can read more details in the reports below.

We could not attempt this ambitious programme of events without all our wonderful members here in the North-West who come together to help out and make them happen. A big thank you goes to each and every member who contributed to their success.

## **Let's Get Growing Children's Planting Event**

Children from 14 primary schools in the Chorley area planted seeds to take back to their schools and grow on. The event was well supported by several sponsors including Robinson's Seeds, Marshall's Seeds, Chiltern Seeds and Melrose Compost to name but a few. The National Vegetable, Fuchsia and Auricula Societies, CDGS and the Bee Keepers' Association were all there to provide inspiration to the young gardeners. It is hoped that this will be an annual event and I think we'd all agree that it's very worthwhile indeed. A big thank you to Andrew for organising it.

## **Growing Workshops 2024**

These were full to capacity with twenty-four people signed up in total to attend across the afternoon and evening workshops. Nearly all those taking part were new to growing Sweet Peas. Several took part helping out at the plant fairs and shows and became novice entrants in the North-West regional show at Chorley Flower Show. Their knowledge and horticultural confidence grew as they talked to the public who visited our advice bureaux and stands. This was lovely to see and some came to the social to do talks about their experiences, which were very positive I might add, at the end of the year.

## **Plant Hunters' Fairs at Arley Hall, Cholmondeley Castle and Capesthorpe Hall**

These excellent events are held in beautiful, historic locations with gardens to match. The team sold lots of vernus and lathyrus odoratus plants as well as seeds and gave advice to the knowledgeable and plant-loving public that attend these specialist Plant Hunters' Fairs. The weather was usually kind but sometimes extremely cold. I'm sure everyone enjoyed looking round the gardens and other plant stalls whilst bringing our favourite flower and the NSPS to the attention of many gardeners.

## **Awareness Day at Astley Park, Chorley, Saturday April 20th**

This was a fun day in the sunshine and the lovely surroundings of Astley Hall Walled Gardens. With refreshments on hand at Café Ambio it was a great opportunity to meet fellow members and gardeners. We sold seeds and plants and raised awareness of the NSPS and the North-West Regional Show at Chorley Flower Show. We offered children's sowing and an information bureau.

## **Children's Planting Event at RHS Bridgewater**

Around 350 children came to sow seeds and take them home to grow at this very busy event. The timing of the event meant that it was too late to sow odoratus seeds and get them to flower this Summer so they sowed tingitanus seeds. We also gave those interested some odoratus plants to take home and plant out in the hope that they would flower in time for the children to return with their blooms to put them on a children's show bench at the Late Show in July. No children in fact did bring their blooms back but this is an idea worth persevering with in the future. Photos were put on the National Sweet Pea Society website ([www.sweetpeas.org.uk](http://www.sweetpeas.org.uk)), X (@sweetpeasociety) and Instagram accounts.

## Southport Flower Show by Carole Tate



**Southport stand.**  
*Photo by Nicky Edwards.*

Southport Flower Show is a well-supported major show in the North West with trade stands, gardens, floral arrangements and competitions, various musical groups, arena entertainment and a large horticultural marquee.

We set up our Society stand on Tuesday and did the flower arrangements on Wednesday using pre-loved glassware, ready for judging and opening to the public on Thursday. We were delighted to receive a Large Gold Award for our stand.

We had an information bureau and seed sales and many visitors who gave us good feedback on the display stand. We signed up 7 new members and have a list of local people interested in our workshop for next year. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the setting up and manning the stand.

We had 15 exhibitors entering the 15 Sweet Pea classes in the Amateur Growers section. Allan Evans travelled up from North Wales to win the 3 vase class and mixed bowl and Clare Houghton from Dumfries to win the vase of old fashioned. Local grower Tom Atherton won the two vase and one vase class with the variety 'Tom Atherton', named after himself. Allan Evans also won the single stem class with an excellent stem of 'Sir Jimmy Shand'. Julia Beardmore won the bowl of Old Fashioned and I won the bowl of species. The full list of winners is on Southport Flower Show website.



**Southport benches.**  
*Photo by Nicky Edwards.*



**Southport gold medal 2024.**  
*Photo by Nicky Edwards.*

All the volunteers had time to look round the show, enjoying massages, lectures, dog and falcon displays, floral demonstrations, food, whiskey and gin samples and buying more plants for the garden!! A thoroughly good event enjoyed by all.

### **Lyme and Disley Horticultural Show and Garstang Show**

We had stands at these smaller local shows selling seeds and offering advice and information to the public. We signed some new members and some existing members came to see us so it was lovely to meet up with them. Well done to those members who helped to support the open classes in the horticultural sections of these colourful and varied shows.

### **Poynton Show**

We wanted to produce something different for this one-day horticultural and agricultural show and the resulting stand looked amazing. The deep blue background was a fabulous backdrop for the branches and perennials and the White Pearl, donated by one of our members, looked particularly stunning. The public and show judges were indeed wowed by this stand and we won a Gold medal with full marks in every category. We also won the Silver Challenge cup for Best Plant Society Stand. Thank you to our small team who helped with the stand (Mavis Duxbury, Barrie Eckford, Bryn Edwards,

Carole Tate, Larysa Hathaway, Sarah Haisley and myself) and thanks for all the support on the ground from members in the Poynton area who responded to my calls for donations of flowers. My heartfelt thanks go to all those who contributed as without them this achievement would not have been possible. It was great to make contact with new members and get them involved with our activities. This is something I hope will be repeated next year and at other events.

There was great support for the Open Classes from our members this year which was lovely to see. Tom Atherton won the NSPS Bronze Medal and card as well as the Frank D'Albuquerque Memorial Trophy for best horticultural exhibit in show. This was for his vases of 'Tom Atherton' and a seedling (shortly to be named Jane Atherton). Sarah Haisley won the David Lloyd Challenge Plate for her beautiful exhibit of cut flowers. Well done to all those who entered. Seeds were sold, members were signed and advice given so all in all a very successful event.

### **Chorley and District Gardening Society Show**

It was good to see members supporting this local show. The Sweet Pea section had two classes. New-comer Alex Cooper (age 15) won the vase of 7 stems with his lovely 'Gwendoline' and Julia Beardmore, our membership secretary, won the bowl with her brilliant mixed old fashioned of 'Lord Nelson', 'America', 'King Edward VII' and 'Mrs. Collier'. Alex won the new NSPS rosette that we have given to some grass roots shows



to encourage entries. Other members won other classes with Sarah Haisley winning for her hydrangea head, carrot cake and jam and Julia winning with her green peas. Alex and his grandad Mick have now joined the Society and it was lovely to see them both at the Autumn social.

**North-West Region Social**



**Voted by the public.**  
*Photo by Julia Beardmore.*



**Some of the information boards.**  
*Photo by Julia Beardmore.*

The Autumn social meeting was very well attended. Around 40 society members from all around the North West and further afield enjoyed some interesting and entertaining talks and demonstrations. Special thanks go to the contingent from North Wales and Allan Evans for his very enjoyable talk “Sweet Peas at the Royal Welsh Show”. Also to Adina Zemanek for telling us all about her first year growing Sweet Peas and her experiences at the workshops and becoming a member. New member Jane Robbins gave us an excellent floral demonstration and made hand-tied arranging look so easy. If you have tried this you will know it certainly is not! Thanks to Tom Atherton for providing an enviable supply of beautiful flowers so late in the season for this. Everyone enjoyed the hotpot lunch and refreshments provided by Michael and his team and the cakes and puddings supplied by Jane and Sarah. Thank you to all who attended, especially those who travelled long distances, for making the day such a success.

*“Even the tiniest of flowers  
 can have the toughest roots.”*

Shannon Mullen

# Suffolk and Norfolk

*By Chris Dale*

No repeat of last year's balmy early February: another week of low cloud, no sunshine and temperatures struggling in low single digits, made worse by a nagging East wind. My 'Peas were sown 3rd week of October, mainly from seed I'd saved 2 years ago. A top-up sowing of bought in seed 2 weeks later, and another 20 or so 3 weeks ago and that will be it. The first lot are very forward. Our unpredictable weather has left me unsure as to the best time to sow in these parts, especially given that the only significant shows for me will be Elm Park followed by the Early National, June 14th and 21st respectively. Those dates would have been at least 2 weeks too early for me when I started growing 44 years ago.

I had hoped that the early show at Elm Park would be possible last year, but it wasn't to be. I just couldn't get sufficient blooms in time, bud drop (always an early risk for me) hadn't quite run its course. Just a few days after I had one decent cut, but then a rapid decline plus poor weather also wrecked my hopes for the National. It seems I wasn't alone with that, and I was sad to read that our showpiece event had been cancelled.

On the plus side, the plot was cleared early, and manure dug in, before my heavy clay soil had a chance to get weighty with rain: much easier to turn over. It's been resting and settling ever since, so fingers crossed for some Spring warmth and get the plants in by mid-March. No more than 100, possibly only 80 or so: the knees don't like planting-out and remind me about it for a good while after!

A bit more prodding at the hospital has revealed no big C, just got to keep taking the tablets. A good friend has been less fortunate with his news so although I don't have the clout of Sir Chris Hoy, I'll pinch a line of these notes to any of our gentlemen readers and say: "Get yourself checked if something isn't right". Give yourselves the same TLC as your plants, though I don't recommend pulling them out and burning them if a problem is detected! Just saying.

There have been no hands raised yet to relieve me of Norfolk responsibilities, but I'm hoping that may change soon if Roz can negotiate. It's generally continued quiet as usual in this patch, only needing to answer a couple of queries raised.

So hoping for a more productive 2025 and looking forward to visiting Brian and friends in Elm Park. Kind regards from Suffolk. Look after each other.

## South Wales

*By Jenny and Lewis Morgan*

After last year's disaster with the October sown plants succumbing to poor weather when planted out, we decided to sow all our seeds in January and hope by planting out later the potential poor weather would be avoided. Thankfully this worked out well as we are part of a local open garden's day in early June and we had a reasonable amount of blooms for the visitors to view.



**Gwen Bishop with 'Gwendoline'.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

The Horticultural Village at the Royal Welsh Show was being reinvented for 2024 with the National Sweet Pea Championship of Wales once again being held and this year we were almost sure it wasn't going to get cancelled at the last minute. Together with Allan and Eirwen Evans from North Wales plans were made for the Welsh Region NSPS exhibition stand to be staged. The only downside was that the Wem and North West Region shows top and tailed the Royal Welsh week so we wouldn't be able to attend both of these shows.

Once again in May we made a trip to the Chelsea Flower Show and checked out Darren Everest's award-winning display, a worthy winner.

Into the show season and on a whim we visited the New Forest Show to see what went on and who was exhibiting. A great regional show and we are hoping to make the trip with blooms in 2025.

The shows were now coming thick and fast with trips to the Chiltern Society Show, Gloucester Open Show, and Late National Show on successive weekends. We met up with friends and fellow members and picked up a few prizes as well.

At the Chiltern Society Show we were pleased that Gwen Bishop was able to attend and along with everyone else spent time with her. Gwen stayed to the end of the Show and was given a large bunch of her namesake 'Gwendoline' blooms to take home with her.

July saw six days at the Royal Welsh Show both Stewarding the horticultural marquee along with helping to put on the Welsh Region NSPS exhibition display. The new horticultural village was a great success visitors welcomed from near and far. NSPS chairman Alison Shreeve continued her quest to visit all the Sweet Pea Shows and not



**Dave Manston congratulates Brian Bartlett.** *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

only attended but entered the show as well. Alison Shreeve possibly had travelled the furthest of any of the entrants in the horticultural marquee and should be commended for this.



**The Late Show.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

Into August and September and we attended local county shows including NSPS member Gill Hazell's local show at Clutton outside Bristol. This year we just managed six vases for the top class which was a minor achievement for us in the middle of August. Local member Graeme Nickel was once again the worthy winner of the 6-vase class, with the single vase classes shared between us.

Our Sweet Pea year was rounded off attending the launch of Phil Johnson and Cecilia Wingard's excellent book "A World of Sweet Peas" at RHS Wisley. The launch was well attended and received, and gave us another chance to meet up with Sweet Pea friends and acquaintances.



**New Forest Show.** *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



**Clutton Show.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



**New Forest Show.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



**New Forest Show.** *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



**The Late Show.**  
*Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

# Staffordshire & West Midlands

*By Phillippa Cooper*



**Denise Bonner and Phil Champion.**  
*Photo by Phillippa Cooper.*



**My proudest moment.**  
*Photo by John Cooper.*

What a difference a year makes when growing Sweet Peas! My Old Fashioned plants were an almost complete disaster in 2023, with most of them being composted before the show season began. At first, I really wasn't sure why this had happened. However, comparing the weather patterns of 2023 and last year got me thinking.

Records showed that we had the sixth wettest spring on record in 2024. After planting out, our plants didn't really make much growth at all and I worried whether or not we would have flowers for the Gloucestershire Open Show at the beginning of July. In fact, we need not have worried as the lovely, sunny weather during part of May (the hottest on record) and in the second half of June spurred on both John's Spencers and my Old Fashioned plants. Perhaps the plants had more opportunity to develop an extensive root system whilst they put on very little top growth at the start of the season?

With the weather patterns so unpredictable it will be interesting to see how this season develops.



**Jenny and Lewis Morgan at the Gloucestershire Open Show.**  
*Photo by Phillippa Cooper.*

We looked forward to our first visit to the Gloucestershire Show. Unfortunately, the evening before the Show brought the most torrential rain here in Wolverhampton and that continued throughout Saturday. We certainly had some bedraggled blooms with us when we arrived. However, it was a delightful Show and we all look forward to its continued success. I would like to congratulate Denise Bonner of the West Midlands as she was awarded the NSPS rosette for her vase of 'Sir Jimmy Shand' that was judged "Best in Show".

2024 was an extremely sad year for us as our very dear friend Val Good MBE died on 15 March. It was Val who first introduced me to the Old Fashioned cultivars and taught me

so much. Her knowledge was encyclopaedic! We miss her very much. Although I have always exhibited at Wem, I never had the confidence to enter a National Show. However, I was determined to try to enter the Val and John Good Class at the Late National Show in memory of Val. As I don't grow a huge number of plants (due to a lack of space) I knew that it would be difficult to be able to stage six vases. Fortunately, I managed to convince John that I needed some extra space on his allotment if I was going to have a chance of entering. I was absolutely delighted to have the required number of stems, my resultant Silver-gilt card and beautiful piece of glassware is very precious. The class is actually sponsored by the Eckford Sweet Pea Society of Wem so in effect I was actually winning some of our own funds!

Wem is the Show that I concentrate on and I am delighted to report that we had more entries across the board this year. It was extremely pleasing that the Open Classes were reinstated after a gap of two years. We benefited by having



**The Late National.**  
*Photo by Phillippa Cooper.*



**Old Fashioned on the allotment.**  
*Photo by Phillipa Cooper.*

two amazing exhibitors Darren Myers and Matt Lloyd entering. The full results from the Show are included in this Annual. Wem has always tried to encourage as many novices as possible and my thanks go to Matt Lloyd who was on hand to guide a novice through the intricacies of staging.

Throughout the year John and I have continued to visit local gardening groups, encouraging as many people as possible to start growing Sweet Peas. I remain particularly keen to extol the benefits of growing Old Fashioned cultivars and to that end distribute free seeds (which tend to be very popular). If just a small percentage of recipients actually start growing and hopefully entering shows we will be able to maintain the popularity of Sweet Peas.

Fingers crossed for a successful growing season ahead. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Wem on the 19 and 20 July.



***Lathyrus marmoratus.***  
*Photo by Caroline Ball.*

# Obituaries

## Karen Bell

*By Jeannette Jennings and Roger Parsons*



Karen Bell passed away on 6 May 2023, aged 75. Karen was born and raised in Hull. She had numerous types of employment throughout her life, but most notable were in Wales, as a florist owning a garden nursery, and her love of teddy bears. She had her own teddy bear shop, where she made and repaired bears.

In 1996, she took a trip to Liverpool. She absolutely loved the city and the people, and in an instant, decided that she never wanted to leave. Wanting to focus on her love of plants, she threw her energies into cultivating and showing plants and flowers. Dahlias, Roses, Gladioli and Sweet Peas were her favourites, and she successfully exhibited in many shows.

Latterly she concentrated on breeding Gladioli and Sweet Peas and was District Rep for Merseyside until 2022. She produced a new Sweet Pea, which she named 'Cilla', introduced by Roger Parsons for the 2020 season. She started a Facebook group called "For the love of Sweet Peas" where just like a version of gardener's question time, she was there to help and answer questions and solve problems. This interactive format proved very popular with enthusiasts around the world and was adopted by NSPS to replace the earlier NSPS Facebook page. Karen also served as a general committee member for the NSPS.

More recently, Karen became an approved British Gladiolus Society judge but her local allotment at Thingwall Road, was her happy place. Out in all weathers, she loved her flowers and plants, and made many friends whilst sharing her passion for gardening with others. She helped run the site shop at weekends, selling Sweet Pea seeds to encourage others. She would go out of her way to help people, despite her own health problems.

Her love of animals included her little yorkie, Lily, who used to go with her to the flower shows and exhibitions, and when they were setting up the displays through the night, she'd be arranging while little Lily was asleep in her basket. Karen will most certainly be missed by all who loved her, but never, ever forgotten.

# Valerie Good MBE

*By Janet Hankey (her youngest daughter)*



**Val Good and her MBE Medal.**

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Mrs Val Good MBE who passed away peacefully on the 15 March 2024, aged 90 years. A lady of strict morals and high principles, caring and unselfish. Loving widow of John, mother of Robert, Karen, Janet and the late Rosemary.

Born in Erdington, Birmingham in 1934, the family moved to Shropshire when Val was an infant and she attended school in Shrewsbury and secretarial college in Birmingham. Val spent many hours walking her dog and falling in love with nature and wildlife.

In the late 50's she met John and they married in 1959. She gave up paid employment and became John's secretary and admin assistant for his thriving building company, as well as raising their children. John was determined to grow Sweet Peas better than his father-in-law. He staged Sweet Peas all over the country and Val would go along for the ride, leaving the children with their Grandmother.

In 1979 Val, John and family moved to Weston with 6.52 acres of land. The home was a tight squeeze but the attraction was the land. Val looked after the farm while John was still working full time. She transformed the garden into a beautiful space of flowers, trees and shrubs; all year round colours as well as fruit and veg. While John continued growing his Spencer Sweet Peas for showing, Val started growing the old fashioned Eckford varieties and collected the seed. Val also grew wildflowers and had a dedicated garden and polytunnel to propagate them, using the space, once John's Sweet Peas had been planted out. As her teenage children started moving out and finding places of their own, this was a time to de-clutter and tidy the house. Oh no!! Val would rather be in the garden or down the field, walking the dog, planting trees and flowers in the many coppices she made.

In 1988 John and Val started the Sweet Pea show in Wem, after earlier noticing Eckford Park, a new housing estate in Wem and connecting it with Henry Eckford, who had a nursery and Sweet Pea seed business in Wem in 1888. The National Sweet Pea Society members were always very helpful with advice and support of the Wem Show.

Val was Secretary of the founding committee of the Eckford Sweet Pea Society of Wem. Her secretarial skills came in handy when she printed Sweet Pea schedules, show programmes, class cards and judging sheets, in fact anything that needed printing!

Val was also there while exhibitors staged their Sweet Peas through the night, giving her help and advice in a cheerful manner.

The Show carried on for over 30 years, starting in the Town Hall and moving to the Stanier Hall when the Show expanded. Val would collect the Old Fashioned seed and flowers and sell them at the Show, along with her wild flowers.

With the Eckford Sweet Pea Society members and family she helped to stage Sweet Pea displays at various shows including Shugborough and Arley Garden Show in Cheshire, driving to Staffordshire to collect the Spencer Sweet Peas from Derek Heathcote, a 'local' grower and using the Old Fashioned grandiflora Sweet Peas out of the garden. They won numerous gold awards and prize money, which was ploughed back into growing and promoting Sweet Peas.

Val and John became Townspeople of Wem in 2004 in recognition of their contributions to the town through the Sweet Pea. In 2006, Val won the Radio Shropshire Gardening Award for her idea of using an old ironing board as a potting bench, as it could be adjusted to suit gardeners of different heights. Val was 5 foot and John was 5 foot 10. Sadly John died in 2006. Just after this, Val was diagnosed with cancer but she didn't let it get her down. She sailed through treatment and received the all clear five years later.

In 2007 Val won the Jack Davis award from the National Sweet Pea Society for her contribution to Sweet Pea growing, marketing and publicity. Val's mobility was deteriorating and she received two new hips (not at the same time), which gave her a new lease of life but she realised she had to slow down.

In the 2011 Queen's New Year honours list Val was awarded the MBE for services to gardening, especially the Sweet Pea. Because she had already attended a garden party at Buckingham Palace with John for their devotion to Sweet Peas, she chose to have her MBE awarded to her by the Lord Lieutenant of Shropshire in Wem Town Hall, where she could invite all her friends and family.

Val carried on gardening and growing Sweet Peas until her mobility and maturing age slowed her down. She employed a gardener; supervised and instructed him on seasonal tasks which needed doing, so she could still admire her creation without the hard work and effort.

Latterly as old age and infirmity took its toll, Val enjoyed watching TV, listening to classical music and napping but she still kept in contact with friends and family and lived independently with Freddie her dog, while her children and carers popped in regularly. She enjoyed her 90th birthday party with family and friends and kept her sense of humour and her mischievous spirit until the end. Val was cheerful, laid back, motivating, encouraging, independent, determined, - stubborn. She could make you laugh or cry depending on the situation. She saw the funny side of life and quite aptly died on the evening of Comic Relief.

We should celebrate Val Good for making our lives so happy and colourful and sharing her knowledge and zest for life.

# Brian Thompson

*By Gill Thompson*



For those of you who don't know, Brian passed away on the 27 October last year. He died from Mesothelioma - a disease caused by asbestos which he worked with for over 30 years. We knew he only had a few years left when we left Wiltshire and moved to Lane End, Nr High Wycombe. The best decision we could have made.

Brian was obsessed with Sweet Peas which I understood from him started when he lived in Barrow in Furness with no garden, and his then wife asked him to plant something to cheer up the 'back yard' - he chose Sweet Peas and continued with them until he died, never missing a year. The photo was taken last year on our small Allotment.

My first introduction to Sweet Peas, after Brian and I got together, was the occasion he wanted to go to the Show at Wem. It was nearly a divorce before a marriage! He spent the evening and most of the night staging his Peas and for what was left of the night we spent trying to sleep in the car..... it was pouring when we 'woke up' and then had the task of trying to make breakfast on the roadside somewhere nearby. That was it - "never again" I said, "you are on your own or we stay in a hotel!!"

I am not sure when Brian was invited to join the Committee but I do know that he had the job of the Early Show Manager for many years - he loved it. Talking to all his old friends, helping newcomers and showing them how to stage the Peas. Personally I think, and I am sure most will agree, that Covid did a lot of harm to Societies of all kinds, in the two years when we couldn't socialise the Society took to the obvious avenue of technology for Committee meetings and the AGM. I only hope the Committee do meet face to face now and again, as it was such an important way of keeping up with what is going on with informal chat. I am doing my best to continue to grow a few Sweet Peas in honour of Brian, on our allotment - they certainly won't be going to any Shows, but at least - I hope - I will have a few to pick.

**By Tom Atherton**

I first met Brian at Southport Flower Show in the early 70s and we both joined the National Society. Brian was already involved with Show management of the large Sweet

Pea section at the Lakeland Rose show where I was encouraged to exhibit and 'help out'. The Lakeland Rose show was one of the most prestigious shows in the area and often had royalty as special guests. Brian had the duty of escort through the Sweet Pea section. Some of his most notable guests were HRH Princess Margaret, Princess Michael of Kent and Princess Grace of Monaco.

By the mid 70s we had encouraged each other to become National exhibitors and his first wins in NSPS shows happened in 1974 at the Liverpool Provincial where he led the pack winning the division III (then 500 cordons or less) WJ Unwin Perpetual Memorial Trophy for 6 vases distinct and various other classes. At around this time we also became National Society District Representatives. Soon after this, we became Committee members. The NSPS committee meetings at that time were held in the RHS Halls at Westminster. Brian and I travelled together on the long train journey and were able to have 'a meeting before the meeting' and dissect the meeting over a bottle of wine on the way back! In the 2000s I understand that he did this with Caroline Ball, not the wine drinking though, they were driving!

Brian was an excellent Sweet Pea grower and was really keen to encourage other growers, including myself. His skills as a Show Manager were very apparent at these events and it is not surprising that he became a Show Manager for the Society, running his first NSPS show in 1978, the first of many and all of them impeccably run. At this show, the Lakeland provincial, in his 'spare' time around show managing he won both the City of Bath Perpetual Challenge Cup for six vases distinct AND the three vase class in the same division plus a gold medal for the Society stand too. I was very proud when we shared the Society's 'Jack Davis Award' in this year, an award that Brian again won in 2020.

Brian contributed to NSPS displays all around the country from Lakeland in Cumbria to Wisley in Surrey and beyond with flowers and his wife Gill's floral skills, Brian also contributed to other NSPS events such as the AGMs. We were part of a large group from the North West who exhibited and promoted the Society at a lot of prestigious events (sadly, many now no longer exist).

Throughout the early years, he was very much a family man and our families exchanged regular visits – his then wife Margaret wrote an article in the 1978 Annual about our journey to the AGM the previous year! On another visit to my house, on carving the meat dish I distributed the best bits to Brian and his family. I kept the gristly bits for myself and promptly started to choke! Very fortunately, Brian had had First Aid training and knew the 'Heimlich manoeuvre' which, I am sure, saved my life!

Brian's showing successes spanned a more than 50 year period. In 1981 he won the Burpee cup and the Hammett cup, in 1983 EW King Cup and Tom Jones cup, the ER Janes 1989 & 90, in 2003 the Kerton class and the Burpee cup, The Francis Williams Memorial trophy in 2013, the Chiltern class in 2014, the ER Janes in 2015, the Lewiston

in 2016, the EW King class in 2016 and 17, the Kerton class in 2018. I'm sure this list is not comprehensive. He won many 'best vases' across numerous prestigious shows. Brian was undeniably a Sweet Pea grower of the very highest class. He was always keen to share his knowledge whether that was on how to grow at open days at his home, helping exhibitors experienced and novice, schooling new Show Managers, chairing and hosting schedule committee meetings, the list of contributions is long.

The National Sweet Pea Show Schedule still has a legacy of Brian's early days – the 20 spike class (used to be called the 'Frances Williams Memorial Trophy' and is now 'The Society 20') was modelled on the class called the 'Lakeland Vase' which Brian incorporated into the Lakeland schedule, originally influenced by the 20 spike class in the Southport Flower Show Schedule. Brian's contribution to the Society and the Sweet Pea is huge and he will be sadly missed.

## John Pratt

*By Caroline Ball*

In losing John Pratt, President Emeritus, we have lost a true legend of the Society and what feels like one of the last links with the old guard, indeed with a bygone age.

John started his NSPS showing career in 1970 when he won the Evan Hince cup and also the Monro trophy. At his first attempt he won the Daily Mail cup in 1973 at Southampton out of 12 exhibitors. This feat was repeated in 1977 at the London National out of 8 exhibitors, in 1987 at St Albans out of 9 exhibitors, in 1988 at Southampton out of 7 exhibitors and again in 1989 out of 5 at Newbury. His Mail scalps include some of the best growers of the era like Alec Cave, Neville Holmes, Keith Brewer, Terry Sewell, Andy Hubbuck and Ron Cordery. In 1988 he even won the Sutton class for nine vases alongside the winning Mail. Imagine being able to show 21 top vases at one National, what an achievement! Over the years John gained three Clay Cup wins in 1977 with 'White Ensign', in 1987 with 'Charles Unwin' and in 1993 with 'Angela Ann'. He also won numerous other show awards. Those of us who knew John were more than a little impressed by the quality of his Peas. Darren Myers reports he first met John at Wem when staging with his father Ian on an adjacent table. They watched as John quietly worked his way through a bucket of 'Anniversary' discarding blooms of such quality that left them in awe. Many will remember the sight of John staging, always quietly with a cigar and a glass of whisky to aid concentration! Angie Gillespie notes too John's meticulous preparation of his vases for exhibition. He was always willing to help members new to the Society with their exhibits. In later years he staged under the pseudonym 'Jane Hatton' and continued to win almost all he entered. At his peak he grew just over 1,000 plants undercovers. He didn't leave any aspects

of their cultivation to chance and was regularly up at 4am tending his plants before going off to his job as manager at Midland bank. At the bank John met many influential people, one of whom was local businessman and entrepreneur William Willson who hosted several charitable events in his gardens at Lapworth featuring Sweet Peas and was a generous Society benefactor. John procured the naming of a Sweet Pea 'William Willson' bred by Andrew Beane as a thank you.



**John Pratt Clay Cup  
winning vase 'Angela Ann'.**

John became Treasurer of the National Sweet Peas Society in 1973 taking over from Fred Burfoot. He told me he had no handover, just a box of records. It was a role John relished, holding it for 40 years and it suited his professional skills. In the period from when he took over to 2014, when he resigned from the role, the wealth of the Society increased more than 17-fold. John embraced every opportunity to make money for the Society; he researched how to make gift aid claims when they were new to add a little extra to Society finances. When interest yields plummeted, he diligently researched funds to invest in which would

be safe but still provide income. which is how the Society ended up with the ethical funds of the CCLA. His principles of prudent investment are still used today. We all had badges, ties, Sweet Pea mugs, coasters and pens with little torches in the end of them thanks to some of John's money-spinning ideas.

John was awarded the Society's top accolade, the Henry Eckford medal in 1989. In the Eckford citation John's perfectionism in both the growing and staging of Sweet Pea blooms was referenced alongside his financial acumen and prudence. A man truly outstanding in all ways. John was extremely proud of his Eckford medal.

Everyone who came into contact with John was aware of his wonderful sense of humour and there are very many examples of his japes at committee and shows. The staging of his vase of yellow Sweet Peas (food colouring on white peas experimented with prior to the event to ensure the result was convincing of course) at Bath repeated at Market Bosworth, his hilarious speech referencing everyone present at the centenary dinner and of course his off the cuff quips were legendary. Who will forget his anecdote about a show in Coventry, at a time in the 70s when IRA bombings were sadly a thing and when the Midlands was a hotbed of top growers including Bernard Jones, Frank Pettipher, John Pratt, Rev Ken Colledge, John Carrier to name a few. Their little Sweet Pea show was the talk of the town and very hotly contested. Apparently Frank Pettipher

was cycling to the show with his Peas on the back of his bike in the middle of the night. Perhaps inevitably he was stopped by the police and questioned as to where he was going at this late hour with a suspicious package. The boys in blue were not entirely convinced by 'to a Sweet Pea show' so went with him to see for themselves. In John's retelling Frank's blooms were so good he needed a police escort! We never could tell what was true and what was embellished with John, but I do know that spending time with him was truly enriching and we laughed so hard it hurt.

## Rosemary Padley

*By Roger Parsons*



Rosemary Padley.

Rosemary Padley died on 20 May 2024 aged 101 1/2. For the last year, she lived in a nursing home at East Preston, on the Sussex coast. She was a keen gardener who lived at Crawley, where she had an allotment close to raiser Roy Tullett. Roy named the ruby variety for her. It was introduced in 1995 and quickly became popular for exhibition until displaced by 'Millennium' in 2000. She wasn't a member but loved Sweet Peas and still grew "her"

variety into her late 90's. Rosemary remained mentally bright, describing herself as a "tough old bird". She suffered a stroke about 2 weeks before her death.



'Rosemary Padley'.

## Other Deaths

Alan Cave from Devon on the 8 December 2024. Alan had been a member for many years. He previously lived in Somerset. Alan's wife advised that he had sowed some Sweet Pea seed in his Care Home only 2 weeks before he died and that his son in law is going to look after them.

# Affiliated Shows 2025

To advertise here costs Affiliated Societies £6. Contact the Editor or return the form included within the Autumn Bulletin by 31 January.

## **7 June – Downton Horticultural Society**

Show held at Downton Memorial Hall, SP5 3NB. Show open 2.00pm – 4.30pm. Show Secretary Anthony Ashford, 51 Moot Gardens, Downton, Salisbury, Wilts. SP5 3LG. ☎ 01725 510656. 13 Sweet Pea classes including novice and other classes.

## **7 June – Royal Windsor Rose & Horticultural Society**

The Royal Windsor Flower Show held at the York Club, Windsor Great Park. Show open 10.00am – 6.00pm. Show manager Alexandra Denman. Email: admin@rwrhs.co.uk or membership@rwrhs.co.uk All classes are for Spencer type Sweet Peas unless otherwise stated. Experienced Growers: Class numbers 13-16 are for those who grow 50 or more cordons – 13. Putnam Challenge Cup One vase of Sweet Peas, containing nine stems of one cultivar, 14. Aird Challenge Cup One vase of Sweet Peas, containing nine stems of mixed cultivars, 15. Lady Fairbairn Challenge Cup Three vases of Sweet Peas, with nine stems to a vase, three cultivars (one cultivar per vase), 16. A bowl of mixed Sweet Peas. Bowl no larger than 15.25cm (6”) diameter. Novice Growers: Class numbers 17-18 are for those who grow fewer stems (up to 50 cordons), 17. Sir Cyril Dyson Cup (New) One vase of Sweet Peas, six stems, one cultivar. 18. One vase of Sweet Peas, six stems, mixed cultivars. All Growers: these classes are open to all. 19. (New) One vase with a single stem of Sweet Peas. 20. (New) A bowl of old fashioned Sweet Peas (not Spencers and cordon grown). Mixed or single cultivar. Judged for decorative effect.

## **14 June – New Forest and District Sweet Pea Society**

Show held at Hulse Hall, Breamore, Fordingbridge SP6 2EA. Staging 6.00am to 10.30am. Show open to visitors 1.00pm to 4.00pm. Show Manager Ted Perren, Gay Correl, Ampport, Andover SP11 8BE. ☎ 01264 772814. Email: eperren@btinternet.com Various specialist and novice classes.

## **21 June – Chipperfield Horticultural Society**

Show held at Chipperfield Village Hall. Staging from 8.00am. Show open to public 2.30pm. Society Chairman John Hopkins, “Beckley”, Langley Road, Chipperfield, Herts. WD4 9JS. ☎ 01923 268852. Email: johnh65@live.co.uk Classes: 3 vases, distinct cultivars, 7 sprays of each; 1 vase, white or cream, one cultivar, 5 sprays; 1 vase pink, one cultivar, 5 sprays; 1 vase, lavender, mauve or blue, one cultivar, 5 sprays; 1 vase, cerise, magenta, crimson or scarlet, one cultivar, 5 sprays; 1 vase, any colour, one cultivar, 5 sprays; 1 vase, mixed, 12 sprays.

**25 - 26 June – Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society**

Show held at Royal Norfolk Show, Norfolk Showground, Dereham Road, Norwich NR5 0TT. Show open 8am to 6pm each day. General Secretary Lesley Webdale, Mirtna Cottage, Whinburgh Road, Westfield, Dereham NR191QL. Email: secretary@nnhs.org.uk Six classes and two trophies. Online entry form and schedule on website: www.nnhs.org.uk

**29 June – Chiltern Sweet Pea Society**

Show held at Millennium Hall, Lacey Green, Buckinghamshire, HP27 0QT. What3words famous.october.advantage. Staging 8.30am – 12.00 noon, bowls and baskets until 1.00pm. Judging from 12.15pm Show open 2.30pm. Awards c3.30pm Show manager Mr. Chris Gray, 68 Narbeth Drive, Aylesbury, Bucks. HP20 1NU. ☎ 01296 488160 or email entries to graeme@graeme.hollingdale.com. Mixed open classes including sections for 100 and 200 cordon growers. All exhibitors welcome.

**5 July – Bournemouth in Bloom – The Bournemouth Horticultural Society**

Show held at St. Francis of Assisi Church Hall, Charminster Road, Bournemouth BH8 9SH. Show open noon – 4.30pm. Show Manager David Bassil, 31 Princess Road, Poole, Dorset BH12 1BG. ☎ 01202 752014. Email: dcbassil04@gmail.com All classes are open to all. Special sections for experienced, intermediate and novice growers.

**5 July – Gloucestershire Sweet Pea Show**

Show held at Dundry Nurseries & Garden Centre, Bamfurlong Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 6SL. Staging 7.00am – 10.00am. Open to public 2.00pm – 4.00 pm. Show Manager Phil Champion, 3 Boswell Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 2NB. ☎ 07841 923301. Email: glossweetpeas@outlook.com Spencers, 5 and 9 stem classes, Old fashioned classes, vases and bowls. First time exhibitors encouraged and welcomed.

**12 July – WARGAS**

Show held at Wingrave Community Centre, Wingrave, Buckinghamshire. Open to public 2.30pm – 5.00pm. Show Secretary Adrian Reeve, 127 Winslow Road, Wingrave HP22 4QB. ☎ 01296 681372. Email showsecretarywargas@gmail.com 6 vases distinct, 3 vases distinct, 1 vase white or cream: 1 vase red, orange or orange red: 1 vase lavender, mauve, or blue: 1 vase pink: 1 vase any colour not listed: 1 vase mixed: 1 vase not more than 20 stems: 1 specimen bloom: A bowl of sweet peas: Novelty class. Special class for exhibitors who grow less than 200 plants, 3 vases, 6 stems of each, 3 distinct varieties: 1 vase 7 stems not less than 3 varieties: 1 vase 6 stems 3 of each: 1 specimen bloom: a bowl of Sweet Peas.

### **19 - 20 July – Eckford Sweet Pea Society of Wem**

Show held at Wem Town Hall, 28-32 High Street, Wem, Shropshire SY4 5DG. Show opens on Saturday 19th July 10.00am – 4.00pm and Sunday 20th July from 10.00am – 4.00pm. Show manager Rose Horner of Wem Town Hall (as shown above). ☎ 01939 232299. Email: [sweetpeas@wemtownhall.co.uk](mailto:sweetpeas@wemtownhall.co.uk). Open classes, vase classes, novice classes, floral art and craft classes. Spencers and old fashioned are 1910 varieties. Very friendly show in Wem, the home of the Sweet Pea.

### **21 – 24 July – Royal Welsh Agricultural Society**

Show held at Royal Welsh Showground, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells LD2 3SY. Show open 8.00am – 8.00pm. Horticultural Secretary, Amanda Burton, RWAS Ltd., Llanelwedd, Builth Wells LD2 3SY. ☎ 01982 554409. Email: [hort@rwas.co.uk](mailto:hort@rwas.co.uk). Open classes, novice, restricted. Schedule appears on website in April [www.rwas.wales](http://www.rwas.wales) or contact Amanda Burton.

### **9 August – Clutton Horticultural Society**

Show held at Ridges Field, Bendalls Bridge, Clutton, Bristol BS39 5QG. Entries 7am – 10am. Show opens from 12 noon. Show secretary Roger Snary, Brookfield, Carlton Close, Clutton BS39 5SF. ☎ 01761 453063. For description of classes see website [cluttongardening.com](http://cluttongardening.com) 4 Classes to enter.

# **ADVERTISE IN NSPS PUBLICATIONS**

**You can advertise in any or all of the following  
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**AUTUMN BULLETIN  
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**'Ethel Grace'**. Photo by Andrew Fletcher.

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what3words: proper.readjust.headsets

**12 & 13 JULY 2025**

The Show will be open  
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**Presentation of awards at 1.00pm Saturday**

**Show Manager:** Carole Tate

**Entries to:** Carole Tate, 22 Lime Grove, Chorley, Lancashire PR7 3JA  
Tel: 07961 477137 Email: caroletate10@gmail.com

**Staging** 4pm to 10pm Friday (via gate code)  
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