

NATIONAL
SWEET PEA SOCIETY
ANNUAL
— 2026 —



The Early National Show

Will be held at

**RHS HILLTOP CENTRE
WISLEY GARDENS
SURREY GU23 6QG
17 & 18 JUNE 2026**

The Show will be open

**Wednesday 10.00am - 5.00pm
Thursday 9.00am - 3.00pm**

Presentation of awards at 2.00pm on Wednesday

Entries to Admin

Show Manager: Caroline Ball

Email: caroline_a_m_ball@yahoo.co.uk

Or post to: Challow Mead Silver Lane,
West Challow Oxon, OX12 9TN

Show Manager: Roger Dix

Tel: 07713 329 074

Staging:

Tuesday 16 June 6.30pm to
8.30am Wednesday 17 June

Judging:

8.45am Wednesday 17 June

**Refreshments available
within the gardens, overnight
refreshments will be available.**

**VISIT WWW.SWEETPEAS.ORG.UK
FOR SHOW SCHEDULE AND ANY UPDATES**



NATIONAL
SWEET PEA SOCIETY
ANNUAL
2026

There are always flowers for those who want to see them.

Henri Matisse

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Honorary Editor: Caroline Ball
caroline_a_m_ball@yahoo.co.uk

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Photo by Caroline Ball

THANKS

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The opinions expressed by contributors to this publication are their own and may not necessarily coincide with the opinions of the Society or the Editor.

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'Millennium'. Photo by Caroline Ball.

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*“It was such a pleasure to sink one’s hands
into the warm earth, to feel at one’s fingertips
the possibilities of the new season.”*

Kate Morton, The Forgotten Garden

Officers and Committee for 2026

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Alan Titchmarsh

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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 29 April 2026

The 2025-26 elected representatives were Laurie Burrell (resigned), Neal Hatch, Phil Johnson and Jenny Morgan.

The NSPS website is run and managed by:

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AGM

AGM 2026

By Caroline Ball

The 121st Annual General Meeting of the members of the National Sweet Pea Society was held on Saturday, 7 March 2026 at the Kings Court, Hotel, King's Coughton, near Alcester, Warwickshire. 20 members attended. The chairman invited everyone present to introduce themselves, and to tell the room what was their favourite Lathyrus. The answers were diverse, mainly Spencers, a few old fashioned and one species including 'Dorothy Eckford', 'Grandad Myers', 'Dawn Everest', 'Sir Jimmy Shand', 'Mrs Bernard Jones', 'Miss Willmott', 'Henry Eckford', 'Our Harry', 'Oxford Blue', 'Just Jenny', 'Amanda Jane', 'Turquoise Lagoon', 'Anniversary', 'Alison Louise', *Lathyrus chlorantus* and several votes for 'Jilly'. There was one answer that was 'all of them'. A great icebreaker.

Then it was on to the formal business. As usual a list of members who had sadly died in the last year was read out and a minute's silence held in their memory. The previous year's minutes were adopted. The Secretary's and Chairman's reports had been printed in the Spring Bulletin and were not repeated here. No questions were raised on those reports. The Treasurer had distributed the financial statements on people's arrival and gave a comprehensive review of the Society's finances, which are healthy enough to withstand any financial pressures for the foreseeable future. No questions were raised and the accounts and Trustees report were unanimously adopted.

The 100 Club was then drawn by the President, Roger Parsons

1st £100 no 41 Alison Shreeve

2nd £25 no 39 Laurie Burrell

3rd £10 no 61 Laurie Burrell

The Treasurer was thanked for all her hard work.

Moving on to the election of committee: Darren Myers had been co-opted on to the committee to replace retiring Laurie Burrell and Phillippa Cooper retired under the 3-year rule. Darren and Phillippa, the rest of the committee and the officers were unanimously re-elected en bloc.

The independent examiner Lucy de Quincey Adams has done a great job for the Society since taking on this role from BSM and was unanimously re-elected.

Roger Parsons, also the Trials coordinator, gave a summary of the Trials results, the full report is published elsewhere in this Annual. In 2025 there were 16 Trial entries grown at both venues, Askham Bryan and West Dean. The George Priestley for best trials variety at Askham Bryan was awarded to Andrew Beane for his salmon pink striped Spencer. At West Dean the FC Harriss was awarded to two varieties jointly a dark blue striped grandiflora which has been named 'Nimble' and a pink marbled grandiflora which has been named 'Girls on Film', both being bred by Phil Johnson. Congratulations to Andrew and Phil.



Under any other business a proposal was put to the meeting to restrict overseas membership for new members to online only. Julia Beardmore outlined the practical and cost implications of the difficulties she has encountered in getting publications to overseas members in certain countries, with envelopes being delivered empty or not at all as a result of customs issues. Also of concern was the cost of overseas postage. This gives rise to reputational concerns of the Society not being able to service overseas members with all the publications. This proposal was accepted.

Barrie Eckford thanked Graeme Hollingdale for his work on the excellent Bulletins and raised for discussion the article in the Spring Bulletin about decline in the availability of named varieties and the possible consequences thereof such as if the shows will end up with just of mixed vases in the future if that was all that was available. This caused quite a lot of debate with the question being raised about whether shows would be less appealing if you could not see the spectacular array of different colours. One contributor suggested that individual varieties could be picked out of mixed varieties to counter this. Phil Johnson said that at English Sweet Peas, like other specialist seed merchants, he strives to offer as many individual varieties as possible. Some varieties only had one or two packets ordered each year. Darren Everest, also a seed supplier under his own name, commented on the cost incurred to supply quality seed reflecting the increase in cost of everything. It was made clear that the Society had no intention at the present time to move to predominantly showing mixed vases. After this discussion was the first of the talks.



Photo competition winner 'America'.
Photo by Phillippa Cooper.

Phil Johnson gave a richly illustrated presentation on his first Chelsea giving insight into the work required to set up, the planning and the execution of a gold medal winning stand. It was very interesting to also have fellow Chelsea exhibitor Darren Everest in the audience who offered up some of his experiences too. Being so well covered and so popular both displays contributed to fantastic coverage and promotion of the Sweet Pea in 2025. Phil was thanked for his presentation.

After lunch the results of the plant competitions were given and the winners were:

- 6 Autumn sown plants - Phillippa Cooper
- Single Autumn sown plant - Alison Shreeve
- 6 Spring sown plants - Darren Everest
- Single Spring sown plant - Denise Bonner
- Pot of *Lathyrus vernus*- Carole Tate
- Seven stems of *Lathyrus vernus* - Carole Tate
- 1 specimen daffodil- Roger Parsons
- 3 stems daffodils - Roger Parsons
- 3 stems miniature daffodils - Carole Tate
- Container of bulbs - Jen and Lewis Morgan
- Mixed Spring flowers - Jen and Lewis Morgan
- Flowering pot plant - Phillippa Cooper
- Photograph of Sweet Peas - Phillippa Cooper

Most points overall - Jen and Lewis Morgan

Neal Hatch gave a very interesting presentation on alternative staging materials. This is crucial since Oasis is NOT PERMITTED at either show venue in 2026 RHS

restrictions. Neal has tried and experimented with various different media and offered his own assessment of them which is reproduced below:

Assessment of Alternative Staging Materials

Based on four factors
 Marks allocated from 1-10, where 10 is thought to be 'Excellent', 1 is 'Poor'
 Overall assessment formed weighting the four individual scores
 Information available as of March 2025

	Ease of Handling	Ease of Staging	Good for Environment	Low cost to buy	Overall Assessment
Sand	3	1	9	10	5
Reeds/Stems	5	4	6	10	6
Newspaper	6	3	8	7	5
Floral Foam (Oasis)	8	10	1	5	6
Bio-Oasis	8	9	2	5	6
Staging King	10	6	5	7	7
Chicken wire	5	2	4	9	4
Fibre Floral	2	7	8	4	5
Agrowool	2	8	8	4	6
Oasis Renewal	8	10	5	1	7
Phoam Labs (green)	8	9	7	1	7

Note: not all types of materials are allowed at some shows/shows.
 For example, traditional floral foam (Oasis) is not allowed at RHS shows/shows.

The winners for Sweet Peas were his staging ring, Oasis renewal (which CANNOT BE USED AT WISLEY OR BRIDGEWATER) and possibly the Phoam labs product based on reports but which Neal had not been able to get hold of to test. This was a very interesting discussion and it was helpful to see some of the better options side by side in person.

Weight (Neal's illustration for AGM)

Ease of Handling	Ease of Staging	Good for Environment	Low cost to buy	Overall Assessment
20	40	20	20	100

The final event of the day were table discussions on things the Society could do to encourage new and active members. There were lots of great ideas like inviting societies to forward their schedules for publication on the Society website to encourage people to show; to develop a joined-up approach to social media and to increase posting.

*“The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt,
 head in the sun, heart with nature.
 To nurture a garden is to feed not just
 the body, but the soul.”*

Alfred Austin

Chair's Report

By Alison Shreeve

This year proved to be another challenging one horticulturally as we dealt with weather diametrically opposite to last years! We will have to get used to these extremes of weather and never knowing exactly what to expect. Most of us have already moved the date of our Autumn sowings back several weeks and I have made 2 sowings again to hedge my bets about the best time to sow.

The season was remarkably short. The hot dry conditions being a bit too much for our lovely Sweet Peas. In addition, we had a terrible infestation of aphids and although we had an abundance of ladybirds, they came too late to prevent the spread of virus which also helped to bring about the untimely demise of most of the crop.

There were several positive sides to the year though. I chaired my first face-to-face AGM which was a wonderful occasion. Although slightly unnerving for me it was a great opportunity to meet members from all over the country. We had a very stimulating debate about the future of Shows initiated by the paper written by Caroline Ball and circulated beforehand. Those who couldn't attend were invited to send their thoughts and we duly took those into consideration as we explored issues in three breakout groups. The bullet points were taken forward to a working group which I chaired and the outcome is summarised and published in the Autumn Bulletin. We will continue with the two National shows for the time being but we do need to try and encourage more young people to show.

It is important to the Society to be present at as many public occasions as we can. We were delighted to exhibit at the Royal Windsor Rose and Horticultural Show again. This is very early in the season for us and we were helped out by some blooms from English Sweet Peas, as well as seeds to sell from which we receive a percentage for the Society. Here we met many people who loved the display and reminisced about Sweet Pea growers they had known. It is one of the most evocative of flowers bringing back many memories for many people. We also answered lots of questions and introduced people to the lesser known annual species. The pinnacle of the day was the King being presented with a buttonhole of Sweet Peas by our Treasurer, Caroline Ball. On a personal note, Alan Titchmarsh presented me with a cup for one of my Sweet Pea exhibits! Horticultural Royalty himself. All the shows around the country at which the Society has a presence are dependent on many people who help with setting up, with growing blooms, being present during the shows to answer questions and with helping to clear up afterwards. I would like to extend an enormous thank you to all of you in all areas of

the country, particularly the North West, who have helped to spread the word about our wonderful Sweet Peas and how to grow them successfully. All the shows rely on teams of people to make the magic happen. Thank you to all of you who have done that this year. If you are interested in finding out more about these events, please don't hesitate to contact one of the committee.

2025 was the 125th celebration of the founding of the NSPS. We had two wonderful visits with a cream tea at each venue; Barnsdale Gardens and West Dean as well as a chance to see their beautiful gardens. At West Dean we were also shown the Sweet Pea Trials where new cultivars are grown and evaluated. A very interesting visit indeed. We met with some new members as well as long standing members and supporters of the Society. The additional celebratory classes in the two National Shows were very well received and the Triple, a class requiring growers to demonstrate their breadth of *lathyrus* growing proved popular, though challenging to several would-be exhibitors because of the difficult conditions this year. We have decided to include a version of that again in the show schedules by popular demand. See the show reports and your new Schedule to see what that entails. We commissioned a special banner for the Society to celebrate its 125th Year and this was designed by Tami Marsland, the partner of one of our committee members, so a big thank you to her for her skills. We will continue to use the banner wherever we can.

We have also continued with the Zoom talks and discussions not only in the winter as originally envisaged. We met one technical problem with Darren Everest's equipment which meant we had to abandon it early, for which we apologise, but other talks went well and new topics come to the fore. Graeme Hollingdale talked about what the Judge was looking for at shows and how to present exhibits for showing. He did get a little carried away with vases of 15 stems, so prior to our next shows we will probably get him to do smaller exhibits for the smaller growers amongst us! We reviewed the year and its problems, sharing ideas for coping and getting the best from our erratic weather conditions. With the ban on peat at RHS venues we had a very timely discussion on using Peat Free composts with the added experience from Nick Hamilton from Barnsdale who kindly joined us for the evening. If you were unable to make the evening talks these have been recorded and can be found on our website under Members Area/Zoom Recordings. Each is listed with a link and a passcode to enable access to the recording of the session.

We hope that you will be able to meet some of the Committee at shows in the coming year and I wish you all a very pleasant and successful growing season.

General Secretary's Report

By Carole Tate

As we prepare for the 2026 Annual General Meeting of the National Sweet Pea Society, I am pleased to present the Secretary's Report, summarising some of the key activities and achievements of the Society in the past year, 2025. It has been another year of growth, engagement, and community for our beloved Sweet Pea enthusiasts, and I am honoured to share highlights with you.

In 2025, the Society saw a continued increase in membership, with a notable growth of 7.2% in membership compared to 2024. This reflects a growing interest in the cultivation and appreciation of Sweet Peas across the country. I was delighted to see an increase in our on-line membership of 56% and an additional 5 new Affiliated Societies. We have added class 1.7, The Affiliated Society Challenge in our 2026 Early and Late National shows to build on our engagement.

Our membership base remains diverse, with both seasoned growers and new enthusiasts contributing to discussions, events, and activities.

The Society's annual events continued to be a cornerstone of our activities. In 2025, we held several well-attended events, including:

The National Sweet Pea Society Early and Late Shows

Held at Webbs @ Millets Farm, Frilford, Oxfordshire in June and RHS Bridgewater, Worsley, Manchester in July. Both shows were a resounding success. We saw over 300 vases, bowls and decorative arrangements across various classes and had excellent feedback from the public. A special thank you goes to our exhibitors, volunteers and judges, whose dedication made these events possible.

Regional Events

Across the regions, many local affiliated societies and specialist groups (often led by members of the NSPS) held shows, put on displays, information bureaux and held other events. Our North West Region show held at Chorley Flower Show being a prime example. These provided members with the opportunity to share their experiences, techniques and answer questions. These informal events helped strengthen community ties and foster a sense of camaraderie amongst members.

Members Workshops

We expanded our online presence in 2025 by offering virtual workshops and discussion groups covering topics such as advanced Sweet Pea cultivation techniques, peat free growing and exhibition flower arranging. These Zoom presentations were attended by over 300 participants and have been recorded and made available on our website for future reference.

2025 has been another remarkable year for the National Sweet Pea Society, and I want to extend my sincere thanks to our members, volunteers, and supporters who have made all of this possible. The Society continues to grow in both numbers and spirit, and I look forward to seeing what we can achieve together in 2026. Thank you all for your continued dedication to the beauty and joy of Sweet Peas.

Treasurer's report

By Caroline Ball

The overall result for the year was a profit of £3,175 (2024 profit £9,424) this was after an unrealised loss of £1,217 (2024 gain of £7,788) 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 £4,392 (2024 profit £1,636).

Income levels are up to £28,481 (2024 £22,051). Membership and donations income has increased to £22,059 (2024 £16,751) which reflects the hard work done by Julia Beardmore and others on membership and includes prize monies from displays such as Chorley Flower Show. General membership was £9,481 versus £7,554 in 2024, affiliated societies were £657 down from £1,119 and gift aid £2,800 up from £1,716. Donation levels were up substantially to £9,121 from £4,362 which is partly due to the timing of receipt of certain donations. In 2024 we received a legacy of £2,000 which was not repeated in 2025. Income from charitable activities was up to £3,221 from £1,911 reflecting the impact of cancellation of the Early

National at Wisley in 2024, the outings to West Dean and Barnsdale and the sale of newly purchased merchandise. Investment income at £3,201 was at a similar level to 2024 (£3,389)

Costs were £24,089 from £20,415 in the previous year. The significant difference reflects resuming two National shows, the cost of the two outings, the purchase of seeds for sale at shows and displays and the inflationary effect on general expenses. Our largest items of expenditure are publications costing £9,390 in 2025 which cost £9,143 in the prior year. Postage and telephone costs were £3,738 versus £3,162 in 2024. The cost of the website, constructed in 2022 and 2023 has been capitalised and is being depreciated over 5 years thus a cost of £880 is reflected in each year's accounts until the full cost is written off. Exhibition expenses were £2,582 in 2025 representing the costs of running two shows, with the non-RHS venue of the Early incurring the cost of hiring equipment which the RHS provides free of charge and the cost of moving the staging, vases and other show equipment. This also includes costs of the new Judges rules print run and the cost of certificates issued. Exhibition prizes amounted to £1,971 up from 2024 reflecting two shows in 2025 and the awarded prizes of cash and glassware. Costs also include the independent examination which cost £1,086 in 2025 and £1,070 in 2024.

The value of our investments was £100,974 at this year end (2024 £102,191). This value has fallen since year end and on 4 March 2026 was £97,783 reflecting what I will call the 'Trump effect' including his tariffs and the invasion of Iran destabilising the markets.

Stock held was £14,429 from £17,765 in 2024 reflecting principally the use of stamps purchased prior to the increase in postage charges in early 2024 to smooth Society costs which was not repeated in 2025, the purchase of new merchandise stock and a new print run of the Judges Rules booklet. Stock held at year end was medals £4,544, certificates £3,965, stamps £4,659, show consumables, stationery and merchandise £892, and Enjoy Sweet Peas, Judges Rules and membership cards £369 a total of £14,429.

Debtors and cash were both up on 2024, debtors at £2,802 versus £1,716 reflecting the increased levels of donations in the year and cash of £18,246 versus £10,644. Debtors include £2,802 gift aid claimed on membership and donations. Creditors were at a similar level to 2024 at £1,237 versus £1,157. Creditors include the cost of the independent examination (£1,086) and show prize cheques not yet cashed (£151). The overall value of the Society was £136,974 at year end versus £133,799 last year. This is a satisfactory set of results reflecting the activities of the Society and giving the Society assurance that its activities can continue for the foreseeable future from a financial perspective.

If anyone has any questions I will attempt to answer them.

Trustees Annual Report Year ended 31 October 2025

The Trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 October 2025.

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

The Society celebrated 125 years of its existence in 2025 and this theme ran through many of the events throughout the year.

The Society again ran two National shows. The Early National was held by kind invitation of Webbs at Webbs Garden Centre, Millets Farm, Abingdon and the Late National took place at RHS Bridgewater by kind invitation of the RHS. Both shows were successful with 300 vases and other exhibits staged by 38 exhibitors showing blooms across all types of the genus including special classes celebrating 125 years of the Society. Both shows delighted large numbers of visitors over the weekends many of whom requested information from the special bureau and enjoyed the celebratory displays. Regional shows were held by the Chiltern Sweet Pea Society, the New Forest Sweet Pea Society, the Eckford Society of Wem, the Gloucester Show, the Royal Welsh Show and the North West Region of the NSPS, each was well supported by exhibitors and visitors.

Most of the administrative meetings of the Society were held online. A lively and interesting AGM was attended by 26 members in person at the King's Court, Alcester, Warwickshire, an in-person AGM for the first time since the disruption caused by covid.

During 2025, 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 National shows. The publications were well received by members. 'Enjoy Sweet Peas' was provided to all new members and made available to a wider public. During 2025 a comprehensive rewrite of Enjoy Sweet Peas was completed and will be made available during 2026.

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 members' 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. This was followed up by sessions on How to Show Sweet Peas, a review and discussion of the rather difficult season and on using peat free compost.

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 to inform about Sweet Peas and Society activities.

Trials of novel Sweet Peas, kindly sponsored by Westland Horticulture, were held at West Dean Gardens, Chichester, and Askham Bryan College, York. In total 16 trial varieties were grown at each venue with another 12 comparison varieties also grown at West Dean. 11 varieties were given awards.

Outings to Barnsdale and the Trials at West Dean were held during 2025 as part of the 125 years celebrations and proved popular with members who attended.

A National Collection of Lathyrus, which also has Scientific National Collection status, was held by Society Trustee and President of the Society, Roger Parsons. The collection was passed to Trustee Phil Johnson at English Sweet Peas in Essex during the year. This collection covers approximately 70 species and 1,300 cultivars.

The Society staged popular displays manned by experts available to answer questions at many prestigious horticultural shows open to the general public. Major shows attended with displays and information bureau included the Royal Windsor Flower Show where the NSPS display was visited by King Charles III, the Royal Welsh Show visited by the Princess Royal, Chorley and the Southport flower show together with a number of plant fairs held during the spring. Three Trustees put up and manned the English Sweet Peas first display at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show which was awarded a gold medal and provided extensive exposure to Sweet Peas on the TV and in other media. Member Darren Everest also exhibited Sweet Peas at both RHS Chelsea, where he was visited by King Charles III, and RHS Hampton Court.

Members again 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, 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 attracted new members who grow Sweet Peas to join the Society. Overall Membership of the Society has grown by c7.5% in the last year.

Financial review

Incoming resources of £28,481 arose during the financial year whilst outgoings were £24,089. The revaluation of our investments has given the Society an unrealised loss of £1,217. The overall result for the year is net income of £3,175, with a profit of £4,392 before the unrealised loss on investments. The Society's unrestricted funds as at 31 October 2025 amounted to £136,974 (2024: £133,799) which includes Designated Funds of £30,583 (2024: £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 six 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 7 March 2026 and signed on behalf of the board of trustees by:

Prof A Shreeve, Trustee.

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 2025.

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 FCA
Independent Examiner

Statement of Financial Activities

Year ended 31 October 2025

		2025	2024
		Total funds	Total funds
	Notes	£	£
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS:			
Subscriptions, donations and legacies	4	22,059	16,751
Charitable activities	5	3,221	1,911
Investment income	6	3,201	3,389
TOTAL INCOME		28,481	22,051
EXPENDITURE:			
Charitable activities	7,8	24,089	20,415
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		24,089	20,415
NET GAINS/(LOSSES) ON INVESTMENTS	10	(1,217)	7,788
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)		3,175	9,424
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward		133,799	124,375
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		136,974	133,799

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



'Sweet Caroline'. Photo by Caroline Ball.

Statement of Financial Position

31 October 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Investments	14	100,974	102,191
Website	13	1,760	2,640
		102,734	104,831
CURRENT ASSETS			
Stocks	15	14,429	17,765
Debtors	16	2,802	1,716
Cash at bank and in hand:		18,246	10,644
		35,477	30,125
CREDITORS			
Amounts due within one year	17	(1,237)	(1,157)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		34,240	28,968
Total assets less current liabilities		136,974	133,799
NET ASSETS		136,974	133,799
FUNDS OF THE CHARITY			
Unrestricted funds	18	136,974	133,799
TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS		136,974	133,799

These financial statements were approved by the board of trustees and authorised for issue on 7 March 2026, 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 2025

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.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended 31 October 2025

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.

Notes to the Financial Statements

Year ended 31 October 2025

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.

4. Subscriptions, donations and legacies

FUNDS	Unrestricted	Total 2025	Unrestricted	Total 2024
DONATIONS	£	£	£	£
Donations	9,121	9,121	4,362	4,362
Legacy	–	–	2,000	2,000
SUBSCRIPTIONS				
Members	9,481	9,481	7,554	7,554
Affiliated societies	657	657	1,119	1,119
Gift Aid	2,800	2,800	1,716	1,716
TOTAL	22,059	22,059	16,751	16,751

The Trustees contributed £6,768 to the Charity in donations and sponsorship during the year (2024: £2,085).

5. Charitable activities

	Unrestricted	Total	Unrestricted	Total
	Funds £	2025 £	Funds £	2024 £
Sale of goods as part of direct charitable activities	957	957	412	412
Outings	800	800	–	–
Trial Fees	30	30	40	40
Advertising in publications	515	515	838	838
100 club lottery	860	860	550	550
Exhibition entry fees	59	59	71	71
TOTAL	3,221	3,221	1,911	1,911

6. Investment income

	Unrestricted	Total	Unrestricted	Total
	Funds £	2025 £	Funds £	2024 £
Interest on bank deposits	974	974	1,254	1,254
Repayment supplement	62	62	21	21
COIF Charities Investment Fund	–	–	–	–
Dividends	2,165	2,165	2,114	2,114
TOTAL	3,201	3,201	3,389	3,389

*“ Gardens are not made by singing
“Oh, how beautiful,” and sitting in the shade.”*

Rudyard Kipling

7. Analysis of expenditure on charitable activities

The breakdown of expenditure on charitable activities is shown below:

	2025	2024
	£	£
Cost of merchandise	287	188
Outings	859	–
Trials	–	173
Award cards	211	215
Society medals	651	208
Seeds cost	623	–
Banners & Leaflets	–	1,498
Display costs	43	127
Printing Annual and other publications	9,390	9,143
Exhibition prizes	1,971	1,468
Exhibition expenses	2,582	362
100 club prizes	490	640
Donations to promote Sweet Peas	80	–
Sundry expenses	533	895
Depreciation of website	880	880
Support costs (note 9)	4,403	3,547
Governance costs	1,086	1,071
TOTAL	24,089	20,415

8. Expenditure on charitable activities by activity type

	2025	2024
	£	£
Charitable activities	23,003	19,344
Governance costs	1,086	1,071
TOTAL	24,089	20,415

9. Analysis of support costs

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

	2025	2024
	£	£
Other printing & stationery	262	81
Postage & telephone	3,738	3,162
Meeting expenses	117	304
Sundry expenses	286	–
TOTAL	4,403	3,547

10. Net gains/losses on investments

	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2024 £
Gains/(losses) on other investment assets - COIF Charity Investment Fund	<u>(1,217)</u>	<u>(1,217)</u>	<u>7,728</u>	<u>7,728</u>

11. Independent examination fees

	2025	2024
Fees payable to the independent examiner for:	£	£
Independent examination of the financial statements	<u>1,086</u>	<u>1,071</u>

12. Trustee remuneration and expenses

No Trustee received any remuneration in the year (2024: £Nil). The average number of employees during the year was Nil (2024: Nil). No Trustee or any other person connected to the Society had any personal interest in any contract or transaction entered into by the Society during the year. 2 Trustees (2024: 3) were reimbursed a total of £223 (2024: £515) for travel and other costs on Society business. This sum includes £177 (2024: £362) of costs incurred directly by one Trustee (2024: 1) 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.

	2025	2024
	£	£
Website - Cost at 1 Nov 23 and 1 Nov 2024	4,400	4,400
Additions	-	-
Cost at 31 Oct 25 and 31 Oct 24	4,400	4,400
Depreciation at 31 Oct 25 and 31 Oct 24	(1,760)	(880)
Depreciation in year	(880)	(880)
Depreciation at 31 Oct 25 and 31 Oct 24	2,640	1,760
Net book value at 31 Oct 25 and 31 Oct 2024	1,760	2,640

14. Investments

	Cash or cash equivalents	Other investments	Total
	£	£	£
Cost or valuation			
At 1 November 2024	24,683	77,508	102,191
Additions	–	–	–
Fair value movements	–	(1,217)	(1,217)
At 31 October 2025	24,683	76,291	100,974
Impairment			
At 31 October 2024 & 31 October 2025		–	–
Carrying amount			
At 31 October 2024	24,683	76,291	100,974
At 31 October 2023	24,683	77,508	102,191

Listed investments

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

15. Stocks

	2025	2024
	£	£
Finished goods and goods for resale	14,429	17,765

16. Debtors

	2025	2024
	£	£
Other debtors	2,802	1,716

17. Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025	2024
	£	£
Accruals and deferred income	1,237	1,157

18. Analysis of charitable funds

	2024	Income	Expenditure	Gains & losses	2025
	£	£	£	£	
Unrestricted funds					
General funds	103,216	28,481	(24,089)	(1,217)	106,391
Designated fund	30,583	–	–	–	30,583
TOTAL	133,799	28,481	(24,089)	(1,217)	136,974

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

19. Analysis of net assets between funds

Designated Funds are made up of the following:

	Unrestricted funds	Designated funds	Total funds
	£	£	£
Fixed assets	72,151	30,583	102,734
Current assets	35,477	–	35,477
Current liabilities	(1,237)	–	(1,237)
Net Assets	106,391	30,583	136,974

Designated Funds are made up of the following:

	2024	Income during the year	Transfers (to) from income and expenditure account	2025
	£	£	£	£
Movements in the year:				
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 Fund	500	–	–	500
	30,583	–	–	30,583

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 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 purchased rosettes from Roz Warley at discounted rates for issue to affiliated societies and to commemorate 125 years of the Society. The Society benefited from the donation of plants and blooms from 6 trustees at no cost to the Society.

NSPS Shows

The Early National – Webbs Garden Centre, Frilford

21 & 22 June 2025

By Neal Hatch

We held our Early Show at Webbs Garden Centre, Frilford, Oxfordshire on Saturday & Sunday 20 and 21 June 2025.

First, we should start by thanking Caroline Ball, our show manager, and her local(ish!) team for organising such a fantastic show. These shows are always an enormous effort to put on, with various logistic and administrative tasks prior to the show, and of course the incredible amount of effort put in on the show days themselves. Without all that work, a lot of it done 'behind the scenes', there would be no show. So a huge thank you to Caroline for a fabulous job – it all ran smoothly and there were a lot of contented, but very tired people at the end of the show! As we shall see, Caroline also managed to find some time to put in some fabulous exhibits too – I don't know how she quite fitted it all in!



Friday evening staging. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

We also need to extend our thanks to the Webbs Garden Centre team who made us feel so welcome, and they played a huge part in the success of the show. The logistics of getting in and out of the show with our various containers of flowers was very straightforward. The facilities worked really well. There was plenty of space for staging our vases and bowls. The exhibits were in a light and spacious area, which made a lovely display area for visitors.

In the run-up to the show many of us were quite nervous, following the cancellation of last year's planned early show at Wisley. Would there be enough entries this year? Certainly, weather conditions were very different this year, with the warmer weather through May & June helping to bring on the blooms much earlier than the cooler conditions of 2024, which proved such a challenge to many exhibitors. In the end, there were 19 exhibitors who travelled a combined total of 1100 miles to attend the show. Well done to everyone who battled through the traffic and the heat to get there!

I'll leave the precise figures for the show audit – but my quick count suggested there were around 175 vases and bowls on the staging tables by the time of judging. While that does not match the number of vases we would have seen in the 'heyday' of showing a few decades ago, it was certainly more than enough to make a fantastic display for members and visitors alike. In fact, some simple arithmetic suggests there were well over 2,000 Sweet Pea stems on display! Not counting those on the display stand and bunches for sale!

While the traditional Spencer vases were at a similar level to what we've seen over the past decade, there does seem to have been a reduction in the number of non-Spencer and decorative displays, so something to ponder on as we buy our seeds for next year! I would encourage anyone to have a go – it is a really friendly environment and you would be welcome to try exhibiting, whether it's just a vase or two, or an arrangement, or both!

While the main challenge in 2024 had been to get enough blooms out for the Early National Show, the main challenge this year was the 30-degree heat in the few days running up to the show, making cutting, transporting and staging the blooms a much harder task this year. Thankfully, the open-sided venue in the garden centre



The 2025 Early Show gets underway. *Photo by Lesley Ridgley.*

meant that conditions did cool off late Friday evening when some of us were staging – though not by much! By the time Caroline urged us to leave and we turned off the lights at 11 pm, most of us had been well and truly cooked for the day! What would we find in the morning?

Darren Everest is well known around the show circuit and has been seen to stage in/from the back of his van when required. Whatever he did this time, it worked! I arrived back at the venue at about 6.30 am on Saturday morning (staging restarted at 6, so I had a lie-in!) only to find Caroline Ball, Brian Bartlett, Darren Everest and one or two others already hard at work! Thankfully, the blooms staged the night before were generally standing the extreme temperatures and humidity fairly well, and only a few more adjustments were needed by the exhibitors to the vases staged the previous evening. There was a late flurry of activity as exhibitors arrived who had planned to leave it to the morning to stage. The show benches were soon full, and ready for judging. I think everyone managed to get staged with time to spare as the atmosphere remained very calm throughout.

At this point, we should thank our judges, Robert Read & Dave Fitton, who took on the unenviable task of thoroughly inspecting the 54 vases of 15 blooms under their charge in just the first two classes 1 & 2. Each vase was fully examined and pointed. It was great to meet up with Dave and Robert, and we can only hope that we can see some of their own exhibits on the benches in future years – they were much missed this year. The rest of the judging team was made up of some of my fellow exhibitors. As usual, we had been carefully orchestrated by Caroline Ball and Roger Parsons so that we didn't end up judging our own exhibits! I had the



**Class 1 Roger Parson's Challenge winning entry
by Darren Everest. Photo by Lewis Morgan.**

pleasure of joining our external floral art judge to judge the bowls and the decorative exhibits.

Darren Everest had timed things to perfection, with his decision to cut later than most of us, and arrived a little later when temperatures had just started to ease. As a consequence, his blooms arrived at the venue in a really fresh, tip-top condition. This was to pay dividends on the show day. It may well have been his superb timing that made all the difference in a tight contest! Darren took first prize in the twelve, nine and three vases of 15 stems. What an absolutely fabulous (and rare) achievement. His win in the twelve-vase Roger Parson's Challenge was hotly contested – eventually taking the win by just a few points from a lovely twelve-vase exhibit by Brian Bartlett. Having moved from growing for the 7-stem classes in 2022, to growing for the 12-stem classes in 2023, and the 15-stem classes in 2024, I can fully appreciate the herculean efforts of growers like Darren and Brian to get their twelve vases on the show bench. What is more, they repeat the feat at show-after-show for year-after-year – wow! I was more than happy to come third in class 1 with my first twelve-vase effort in this company. Darren also deservedly won the Jack Harriss Memorial Trophy for the best exhibit in the show. His twelve vases consisted of 'Hannah McGovern', 'Sir Jimmy Shand', 'Windsor', 'Lizanne Davies', 'Dawn Everest', 'Betty Maiden', 'Noel Sutton', 'Margaret Hastie', 'Anniversary', 'Lady Nicholson', 'Restormel' and 'Bristol'.

Darren's nine- and three-vase exhibits were also very impressive, and he won both the Sutton Class and The Fulltone Orchestra/Burpee Cup. John Rieley and I playing supporting roles to Darren Everest in both these open (Division I) classes.

John Rieley would also go on to have a fantastic show, winning the three vase E W King class for those growing not more than 400 plants (Division II), as well as winning the hotly contested (with 8 entries) single vase class with 12 stems of 'Lizanne Davies', which also won him the Cynthia Davis Cup for best vase in that division.

The Keith Brewer prize is awarded to the best exhibit in Divisions III (for members who grow no more than 200 cordon plants) and Division IV (for members who grow no more than 100 cordon plants). It was awarded to the six-vase exhibit class 30 by Kath and Richard Barron. This exhibit also won the Levington Cup. The best vase in Division III was also exhibited by Kath and Richard Barron – of 'Just Jenny'.



Darren's winning entry in the Sutton Class. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



John Rieley's Best Vase in Division II of 'Lizanne Davies'. *Photo by Neal Hatch.*



Six vase Levington entry. *Photo by Neal Hatch.*

The Evan Hince cup is awarded to the winner of the three-vases of 7 stems, in Division IV (for those growing less than 100 cordon plants), and was won by Poul Christensen. The best vase in this division was of 'Gwendoline', by Jenny & Lewis Morgan.

The W E Alsen Novelty Cup is awarded to the winner of class C, one vase of 9 stems of a 2025 novelty. The cultivar used was 'Grandad Myers' exhibited by Denise Bonner of Sutton Coldfield.



'Grandad Myers'. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



Kathy Gray's vase of 'Anniversary' won Best Vase in Show. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

The Leweston prize for the best vase in the whole show was awarded to the vase of 'Anniversary' exhibited by Kathy Gray. It shouldn't come as a surprise that Kathy also won the NSPS 125th Anniversary award for the best vase of 'Anniversary'! Neal Hatch won the Colledge Prize for the best vase of lavender, with his vase of 'Karen Loieuse'.

The Best Bowl in the whole show award went to the exhibit of the perennial lathyrus latifolius 'Blushing Bride' by Roger Parsons. This wonderful exhibit was also awarded the Henry Eckford cup.



Best Bowl - 'Blushing Bride' by Roger Parsons. Photo by Neal Hatch.

A very special prize is the Tom Shilling Award for the best vase in show by an exhibitor showing at a National Sweet Pea Show for the first time. This went to Linda Ellis of Canterbury for her exhibit of 'Gwendoline'. We hope to see more of Linda in the future.



Caroline Ball and Alison Shreeve's wonderful entries in the special '125 Triple' class.

Photo by Lewis Morgan.

We end our roundup of the early show by moving on to the special awards which celebrate the National Sweet Pea Society's 125 birthday this year. The first is the decorative class (class 64) depicting a Celebration of 125 years of the Society which was kindly sponsored by Webbs Garden Centre. This was won by Caroline Ball, although quite how she found the time to manage the show and stage it is beyond me! Not only that but Caroline also won the 125 Triple (class A) required 3



Society display and bureau. Photo by Neal Hatch.

components showing the diversity of the *lathyrus* genus. Caroline exhibited a vase of Spencers, a bowl of Spencers and a bowl of perennial *lathyrus*. One or two of us had also hoped to enter that class too, but weather and time didn't permit it this year. It would be lovely if that class can be retained in future years as it really does show off the range of different forms and was an ideal tiered accompaniment next to the 15-stem Spencer vases. Alison Shreeve and Caroline were neck and neck in a number of classes – including the special 125 anniversary classes above. I particularly enjoyed looking at the decorative petite class entries from both of them, which I came back to look at several times during the day. Alison must excel in these diminutive arrangements, as her exquisite exhibit of annual *lathyrus* species won the Amy Andrews Trophy.

Finally, we must say a big thank you to all the members who organised, assembled and then ran the Society stand. It looked wonderful. Exhibitors donated their spare flowers, and these were sold to the many visitors who passed through the show. Seeds were also available to buy – thanks to English Sweet Peas. We also had a range of fabulous Sweet Pea themed greeting cards to buy and various Sweet Pea Society literature. These show stands help support the Society financially and are a wonderful shop window for all things 'Sweet Pea'.



Darren Everest winner of the Burpee Cup, just one of his prizes presented by President Roger Parsons. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Denise Bonner is presented with the WE Alsen cup by President Roger Parsons. Photo by Caroline Ball.



Linda Ellis won Best Vase by a Novice exhibitor. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Poul Christensen is presented with the Evan Hince Cup. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

The Early Show – Webbs Garden Centre, Frilford

21 & 22 June 2025

SPECIAL CLASSES

A	THE 125 TRIPLE CLASS 1st Caroline Ball 2nd Alison Shreeve 3rd –	(2)
B	SEEDLING CLASS (No Entries)	(0)
C	WE ALSEN NOVELTY CUP 1st D&L Bonner 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
D	UNWINS CLASS 1st J&L Morgan 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
E	THE SOCIETY 20 1st D&L Bonner 2nd Neal Hatch 3rd –	(2)

DIVISION I

1	ROGER PARSONS CHALLENGE (12 VASE) 1st Darren Everest 2nd Brian Bartlett 3rd Neal Hatch	(3)
2	SUTTON CLASS (9 VASE) 1st Darren Everest 2nd Neal Hatch 3rd –	(2)
3	TOM JONES CUP (6 VASE) (No Entries)	(0)
4	BURPEE CUP (FULLTONE ORCHESTRA) (3 VASE) 1st Darren Everest 2nd John Rieley 3rd Neal Hatch	(3)
5	MIXED BOWL 1st Neal Hatch 2nd Darren Everest 3rd –	(2)
6	HAMMETT CLASS (FANCY) 1st Darren Everest 2nd Roger Parsons 3rd –	(2)
7	ONE VASE (SINGLE CULTIVAR) 1st Kathy Gray 2nd John Rieley 3rd Roger Parsons	(4)
8	ONE VASE (MIXED CULTIVARS) 1st John Rieley 2nd Darren Everest 3rd Kathy Gray	(4)

CLASS	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
DIVISION II	
20	SIX VASES DISTINCT (No Entries) (0)
21	EW KING (3 VASE) (3) 1st John Rieley 2nd Derek Chapple 3rd Ted Perren
22	MIXED BOWL (1) 1st D&L Bonner 2nd – 3rd –
23	ONE VASE (SINGLE CULTIVAR) (8) 1st John Rieley 2nd D&L Bonner 3rd John Rieley
24	ONE VASE (MIXED CULTIVARS) (3) 1st D&L Bonner 2nd John Rieley 3rd Ted Perren
DIVISION III	
30	LEVINGTON CUP (6 VASES) (1) 1st K&R Barron 2nd – 3rd –
31	BEN BULSTRODE MEMORIAL PRIZE (3 VASES) (5) 1st K&R Barron 2nd Alison Shreeve 3rd Phil Champion
32	MIXED BOWL (2) 1st K&R Barron 2nd Alison Shreeve 3rd –
33	ONE VASE (SINGLE CULTIVAR) (7) 1st K&R Barron 2nd Linda Ellis 3rd Linda Ellis
34	ONE VASE (MIXED CULTIVARS) (4) 1st K&R Barron 2nd Linda Ellis 3rd Alison Shreeve
DIVISION IV	
40	EVAN HINCE CUP (3 VASES) (1) 1st Poul Christensen 2nd – 3rd –
41	MIXED BOWL (1) 1st J&L Morgan 2nd – 3rd –
42	ONE VASE (SINGLE CULTIVAR) (5) 1st J&L Morgan 2nd J&L Morgan 3rd Poul Christensen
43	ONE VASE (MIXED CULTIVARS) (1) 1st J&L Morgan 2nd – 3rd –

CLASS	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
DIVISION V	
50	HENRY ECKFORD BOWL (OLD FASHIONEDS) (0) (No Entries)
51	VAL & JOHN GOOD (6 VASES) (OLD FASHIONEDS) (0) (No Entries)
52	OLD FASHIONED CLASS (3 VASES) (0) (No Entries)
53	WHITTEMORE OLD FASHIONED (1 VASE) (2) 1st Phil Champion 2nd Roger Parsons 3rd –
N54	NOVICES OLD FASHIONED (1 VASE) (1) 1st Poul Christensen 2nd – 3rd –
55	MODERN GRANDIFLORA BOWL (0) (No Entries)



Roger Parsons is presented with the Henry Eckford cup by Alison Shreeve. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Neal Hatch is presented with his prize for best Lavender in show. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



John Reiley winner of Cynthia Davies Cup.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Richard Barron is presented with the Warwick Cup.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.

CLASS**No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED****DIVISION V**

56	NEWINGTON TRIPLE (3 VASES) MODERN GRANDIFLORA 1st J&L Morgan 2nd – 3rd –	(2)
57	THE CHRISSIE CLASS (1 VASE) MODERN GRANDIFLORA 1st Alison Shreeve 2nd J&L Morgan 3rd –	(2)
N58	NOVICES MODERN GRANDIFLORA (1 VASE) (No Entries)	(0)
59	AMY ANDREWS TROPHY (BOWL OF ANNUAL SPECIES) 1st Alison Shreeve 2nd J&L Morgan 3rd –	(2)
60	LATHYRUS SPECIES BOWL PERENNIAL 1st Roger Parsons 2nd Roger Parsons 3rd Caroline Ball	(3)
61	POT (ANY LATHYRUS) (No Entries)	(0)

CLASS	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
DIVISION VI	
62	JOHN BISHOP MEMORIAL CLASS (0) (No Entries)
63	UNWINS BASKET (0) (No Entries)
64	A CELEBRATION OF 125 YEARS OF THE NSPS (2) 1st Caroline Ball 2nd Alison Shreeve 3rd –
65	THE CORNISH CLASS (0) (No Entries)



125 Year Anniversary Exhibit by Caroline Ball.
Photo by Caroline Ball.

CLASS	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
DIVISION VI	
66	THE ER JANES VASE (PUBLIC VOTE) (3) 1st J&L Morgan 2nd K&R Barron 3rd Alison Shreeve
67	FRANCIS WILLIAMS MEMORIAL DRIFTWOOD CLASS (1) 1st Caroline Ball 2nd – 3rd –
68	THE SYDENHAM CLASS (7 STEMS) (1) 1st Alison Shreeve 2nd – 3rd –
69	PETITE CLASS (2) 1st Caroline Ball 2nd Alisons Shreeve 3rd –
70	LES HARVEY PEDESTAL (0) (No Entries)

SPECIAL AWARDS

JACK HARRISS MEMORIAL TROPHY – BEST EXHIBIT IN SHOW

Darren Everest (Class 1)

THE LEWESTON PRIZE – BEST VASE IN SHOW

Kathy Gray ('Anniversary' Class 7)

THE COLLEDGE PRIZE – BEST LAVENDER IN SHOW

Neal Hatch ('Karen Louise' Class 1)

THE NSPS 125TH ANNIVERSARY AWARD – BEST ANNIVERSARY IN SHOW

Kathy Gray (Class 7)

THE A W GOWER SEEDLING CUP

Not awarded

ROGER PARSONS CHALLENGE CUP

Darren Everest (Class 1)

BURPEE CUP (SPONSORED BY FULLTONE ORCHESTRA)

Darren Everest (Class 4)

WE ALSEN NOVELTY CUP

Denise Bonner ('Grandad Myers' Class 4C)

CELEBRATION OF 125 YEARS OF THE SOCIETY

Caroline Ball (Class 64)

125 TRIPLE

Caroline Ball (Class A)

SPECIAL AWARDS

THE CYNTHIA DAVIS CUP BEST VASE IN DIVISION II

John Rieley ('Lizanne Davis' Class 23)

THE LEVINGTON CUP – BEST EXHIBIT IN DIVISION III

Kath & Richard Barron (Class 30)

THE WARWICK CUP BEST VASE IN DIVISION III

Kath & Richard Barron ('Just Jenny' Class 30)

THE DIVISION VI PRIZE – BEST VASE IN DIVISION IV

Jenny & Lewis Morgan ('Gwendoline' Class 42)

THE HENRY ECKFORD CUP - BEST EXHIBIT IN DIVISION V

Roger Parsons ('Blushing Bride' Class 60)

BEST BOWL PRIZE

Roger Parsons ('Blushing Bride' Class 60)

BEST DECORATIVE ARRANGEMENT

Caroline Ball (Class 64)

THE TOM SHILLING PRIZE – BEST VASE BY NEWCOMER

Linda Ellis ('Gwendoline' Class 33)



Best vase of lavender shown by
Neal Hatch. *Photo by Caroline Ball.*



'Gwendoline'.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Division 1 vases with species bowls in the foreground. *Photo by Caroline Ball.*



That's All Folks! The Show Manager was still smiling! *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

Audit of the Early National Show – Webbs Garden Centre, Frilford

21 & 22 June 2025

By Roger Parsons

No	Name of Cultivar	1	2	3	Unplaced	Total	Colour	Classfn
1	Gwendoline	3	3	3	1	10	Pale magenta pink wg	4a
2	Sir Jimmy Shand	3	2	4	0	9	Striped	16
3	Anniversary	5	2	0	1	8	Picotee wg	15
	Mary Priestley	2	2	2	2	8	White	1
5	Naomi Nazareth	2	3	0	2	7	Pale blue	9b
6	Mrs Bernard Jones	2	2	1	1	6	Rose pink wg	10b
7	Just Julia	2	2	1	0	5	Mid blue	9a
8	Lizanne Davies	4	0	0	0	4	Picotee cg	15a
	Bristol	2	1	1	0	4	Pale Blue	9b
	Jilly	0	3	1	0	4	Cream	2
11	Judith Wilkinson	2	1	0	0	3	Magenta	4
	Margaret Hastie	2	1	0	0	3	Striped	16
	Restormel	2	0	1	0	3	Cerise scarlet	3
14	Betty Maiden	2	0	0	0	2	Striped	16
	Dawn Everest	2	0	0	0	2	Pale magenta pink wg	4a
	Lady Nicholson	2	0	0	0	2	Striped	16
	Memorial Flight	1	1	0	0	2	White	1
	Windsor	1	1	0	0	2	Maroon	5
	Alan Titchmarsh	0	1	1	0	2	Salmon pink cg	11b
	Daily Mail	0	1	1	0	2	Cerise Pink	10c
	Oban Bay	0	1	1	0	2	Pale blue	9b
	White Frills	0	1	0	1	2	White	1
	Sally Maitland	0	0	2	0	2	Magenta	4
	Eclipse	0	0	1	1	2	Mauve	7
	Alec Cave	0	0	1	1	2	White	1
	Gilly Norah	0	0	1	1	2	Salmon pink cg	11a
27	David Unwin	1	0	0	0	1	Scarlet	3a
	Grandad Myers	1	0	0	0	1	Pale blue	9b
	Hannah Magovern	1	0	0	0	1	Scarlet	3a
	Night Sky	1	0	0	0	1	Striped	16
	Noel Sutton	1	0	0	0	1	Mid Blue	9a
	Serenity	1	0	0	0	1	Lavender	8
	Clotted Cream	0	1	0	0	1	Cream	2
	Linda C	0	1	0	0	1	Mid blue	9a

No	Name of Cultivar	1	2	3	Unplaced	Total	Colour	Classfn
	Millennium	0	1	0	0	1	Crimson	3b
	Queen of Hearts	0	1	0	0	1	Striped	16
	Solitude	0	1	0	0	1	Lavender	8
	Somerset Lady	0	1	0	0	1	Magenta	14
	Valerie Harrod	0	1	0	0	1	Orange pink	13
	Karen Louise	0	0	0	1	1	Lavender	8
	Olivia Grace	0	0	0	1	1	Dark blue	9
	Syd Dunscombe	0	0	0	1	1	Orange red	14
	Ballerina Blue	0	0	0	1	1	Mid blue	9a
	Hannah Rachel	0	0	0	1	1	Rose pink wg	10b
	John Gray	0	0	0	1	1	Salmon pink wg	10a
	Mrs R Chisholm	0	0	0	1	1	White	1
	Our Colin	0	0	0	1	1	Mid blue	9a
	Pip's Maroon	0	0	0	1	1	Maroon	5
	Seedlings	0	0	0	1	1		
	Totals	45	35	25	18	123		

Non Spencers								
1	Romeo	1	1	0	0	2	White with blue edge	MG
2	America	1	0	0	0	1	Red flake	OF
	Chrissie	1	0	0	0	1	Lavender	SG
	Cupani	1	0	0	0	1	Maroon/violet	OF
	Little Red Riding Hood	1	0	0	0	1	Red/white	MG
	Scarlet	1	0	0	0	1	Red	MG
	Sweet Caroline	1	0	0	0	1	Bright pink flake	OF
8	Black Knight	0	1	0	0	1	Maroon	OF
	Total Non Spencers	7	2	0	0	9		
	Mixed vases	8	5	3	6	22		
	Total Vases	60	42	28	24	154		
	Decorative & Bowls	12	8	1	1	22		
	Total	72	50	29	25	176		

*“There is no gardening without humility.
Nature is constantly sending even its oldest
scholars to the bottom of the class for some
egregious blunder.”*

Alfred Austin

The Late National – RHS Bridgewater

12 & 13 June 2024

By Phillippa Cooper

The Show coincided with the third, and hottest, heatwave of the year. Exhibitors travelling any distance required not only efficient air conditioning, but also a copious supply of ice cubes in their containers to keep their blooms in good condition.

Fortunately, the North West team had done a sterling job keeping the marquee well-ventilated for us all. Exhibitors staging during the afternoon and early evening were lucky to be able to work outside in the shade.



Outside staging. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

Congratulations go to Susan Meeks and Stephen Hayward for the exceptional and eye-catching display celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Society. Here, I would also like to mention Matt Lloyd, who although not entering himself, put the final touches to the display during the Friday evening using everyone's spare blooms after they had finished staging. Throughout the weekend there were many visitors having their photograph taken next to the display. Sadly, the two large champagne bottles were empty!

It is true to say that the extended drought coupled with record breaking temperature had a deleterious effect on some growers who usually enter numerous classes at the show. However, despite the weather the marquee looked stunning with a total of 124 entries (66 vases and 58 decorative displays and bowls.)

Even before judging had been completed on the Saturday morning a large and very patient queue started to form on the approach to the marquee. I know that both the sales and information desks were busy throughout the whole weekend.

Staging in the sunshine. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



Many congratulations to all the prize winners and huge thanks to Carole Tate, show manager, and the entire North West team for their meticulous planning, running and efficient break down of a highly successful show.

2025 was a particularly successful year for Darren Myers who exhibited some absolutely stunning blooms. In Division 1 the Eastbourne Prize (9 vases distinct – class 2) and the Charles Hanmer Memorial Class (6 vases distinct- class 3) were both won by Darren. Allan Evans also had considerable success in this open Division being awarded first place in the Fulltone Orchestra Class (3 vases distinct – class 4) and the Open Mixed Bowl (class 5).

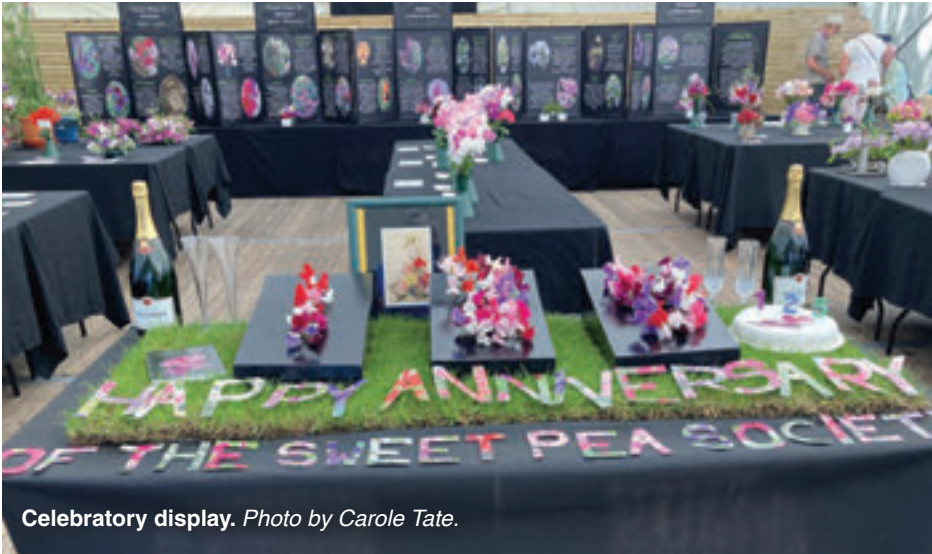


**Division 1
vases.**
*Photo by
Lewis
Morgan.*

Darren was the very deserving winner of the Tom Cordy Prize for the best exhibit in the show (his display in class 3), the Clay Cup for his superb vase of 'Dalesman' in class 7 and the Colledge Prize for best lavender ('Karen Louise') in class 3). The Best Bowl Award went to Allan Evans for his exhibit in class 5.



Late Show work in progress. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Celebratory display. Photo by Carole Tate.



125 year Anniversary class exhibits. *Photo by Phillippa Cooper.*

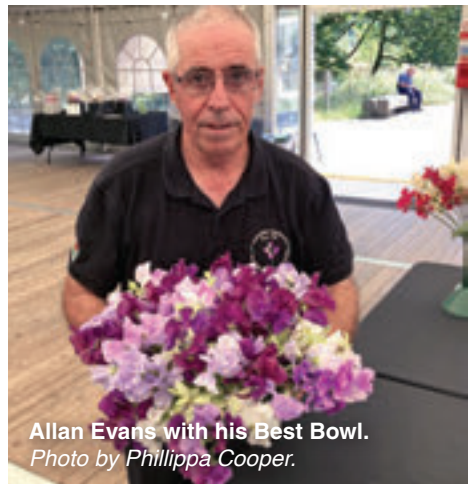
The NSPS 125th Anniversary award, which recognised this significant milestone in the history of the Society was presented to Carole Tate. This special class (the 125 Triple) depicted the diversity within the *lathyrus* genus. Congratulations Carole.

There were slightly fewer entries in Division II (not more than 400 cordon plants) this year but congratulations go to Dave Torrington who won the Hinchcliffe Prize for the best vase in the division ('John Gray' in class 23), Carole Tate for her mixed bowl and Claire Hicken for her mixed vase.

In Division III (not more than 200 cordon plants) there was more, very well-deserved success for Claire Hicken who won both the M K Franks Cup (6 vases distinct) and the Monro Trophy (3 vases distinct) as well as the two single vase classes.



Best Seedling in Show. *Photo by Phillippa Cooper.*



Allan Evans with his Best Bowl. *Photo by Phillippa Cooper.*

Division IV is for growers of not more than 100 cordon plants and the awards this year went to Carole Tate in both single vase classes (Randall Cup) and John Cooper for his mixed bowl.

Division V (for non-cordon grown plants) includes not only the Old Fashioned, Modern and Semi Grandiflora cultivars but also annual and perennial *Lathyrus* species. Carol Tate was successful in the Henry Eckford Class for her lovely bowl of Old Fashioned cultivars with Phillippa Cooper winning the Whittemore Old Fashioned class (for her vase of Henry Eckford), the pot grown class and the David Archer Perpetual Trophy for annual species. John Cooper won the Modern Grandiflora bowl and Lisa Tedesco the perennial *Lathyrus* species class.

The decorative Division VI was very well supported with a large number of really eye-catching exhibits. Eirwen Evans won the Les Harvey Pedestal class (class 70) with a really stunning display. Sarah Haisley was successful in the highly competitive Petite Class and Carole Tate enjoyed further success in both the Frances Williams



Memorial Driftwood Class and the Sydenham Class (7 stems of Sweet Peas) which also attracted numerous entries. Phillippa Cooper was awarded first prize in the Bridgewater Class (small pedestal) and Susan Meeks triumphed in the Burfoot Basket Class.

On the first day of the show each year the public are asked to vote for their favourite vase in the E R Janes class. This year the award was presented to Jenny and Lewis Morgan for their extremely colourful and vibrant display.



Species and other bowls. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



ER Janes exhibit.

Photo by Lewis Morgan.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to congratulate Susan Meeks for winning class 64. This was a special class for 2025 titled “A Celebration of 125 Years of the National Sweet Pea Society”. It is fitting that Susan should win the award as she spent such a huge amount of time and effort working on the wonderful welcoming display.

It has been a delight to be able to report on such a wonderful show. Everything ran very smoothly and that is a testament to the hard work put in by the entire team including those who work in the background.

We are now looking forward to the 2026 show which will take place on the 11 and 12 July. Fingers crossed that the weather is kinder to us next year.

The Late Show – RHS Bridgewater, Worsley

12 & 13 July 2025

SPECIAL CLASSES

A	THE 125 TRIPLE CLASS 1st C Tate 2nd A Evans 3rd J & P Cooper	(4)
B	SEEDLINGS (No Entries)	(0)
C	WE ALSEN NOVELTY CUP 1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
D	UNWINS CLASS 1st J Cooper 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
E	THE SOCIETY 20 1st I D Myers 2nd L Grisdale 3rd –	(2)

DIVISION I

1	THE DAILY MAIL CUP (12 VASES) (No Entries)	(0)
2	EASTBOURNE PRIZE (9 VASES) 1st I D Myers 2nd L Grisdale 3rd –	(1)
3	CHARLES HANMER MEMORIAL CLASS (6 VASES) 1st I D Myers 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
4	THE FULLTONE ORCHESTRA CLASS (3 VASES) 1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
5	MIXED BOWL 1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
6	HAMMETT CUP (No Entries)	(0)
7	ONE VASE (SINGLE CULTIVAR) 1st I D Myers 2nd I D Myers 3rd D Torrington	(3)
8	ONE VASE (MIXED CULTIVARS) 1st I D Myers 2nd – 3rd –	(1)

CLASS	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
DIVISION II	
20	DAVIS CUP (6 VASES) (No Entries) (0)
21	E W KING CLASS (3 VASES) (No Entries) (0)
22	MIXED BOWL 1st C Tate 2nd – 3rd – (1)
23	ONE VASE (SINGLE CULTIVAR) 1st D Torrington 2nd C Hicken 3rd – (2)
24	ONE VASE (MIXED CULTIVARS) 1st C Hicken 2nd D Torrington 3rd – (2)
DIVISION III	
30	M K FRANKS CUP (6 VASES) 1st C Hicken 2nd L Grisdale 3rd – (2)
31	MONRO TROPHY (3 VASES) 1st C Hicken 2nd L Grisdale 3rd – (2)
32	MIXED BOWL 1st – 2nd L Tedesco 3rd – (1)
33	ONE VASE (SINGLE CULTIVAR) 1st C Hicken 2nd C Tate 3rd L Grisdale (3)
34	ONE VASE (MIXED CULTIVARS) 1st C Hicken 2nd C Tate 3rd L Grisdale (3)
DIVISION IV	
40	GEORGE HERBERT CUP (3 VASES) (No Entries) (0)
41	MIXED BOWL 1st J Cooper 2nd M Wright 3rd – (2)
42	ONE VASE (SINGLE CULTIVAR) 1st C Tate 2nd B Eckford 3rd B Eckford (4)
43	ONE VASE (MIXED CULTIVARS) 1st C Tate 2nd B Eckford 3rd – (2)



125 Anniversary class.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Carole Tate Show Manager (left) with one of her awards presented by RHS events coordinator Michelle Darwin.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.

CLASS

No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED

DIVISION V

50	HENRY ECKFORD BOWL (OLD FASHIONEDS) 1st C Tate 2nd S Haisley 3rd P Cooper	(3)
51	VAL & JOHN GOODE CLASS (6 VASE) (OLD FASHIONED) (No Entries)	(0)
52	OLD FASHIONED (3 VASES) (No Entries)	(0)
53	WHITTEMORE CLASS (ONE VASE) (OLD FASHIONED) 1st P Cooper 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
54	NOVICES OLD FASHIONED (No Entries)	(0)
55	GRANDIFLORA BOWL 1st J Cooper 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
56	NEWINGTON TRIPLE (3 VASE) MODERN GRANDIFLORA (No Entries)	(0)

CLASS**No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED****DIVISION V**

57	THE CHRISSIE CLASS (1 VASE) MODERN GRANDIFLORA (No Entries)	(0)
N58	NOVICES GRANDIFLORA/SEMI-GRANDIFLORA CLASS (No Entries)	(0)
59	DAVID ARCHER PERPETUAL TROPHY (BOWL ANNUAL SPECIES) 1st P Cooper 2nd C Tate 3rd J & L Morgan	(3)
60	<i>LATHYRUS</i> SPECIES PERENNIAL 1st L Tedesco 2nd J Beardmore 3rd C Bromley	(4)
61	POT (ANY <i>LATHYRUS</i>) 1st P Cooper 2nd J Beardmore 3rd S Haisley	(4)



CLASS	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
DIVISION VI	
62	THE BRIDGEWATER CLASS 1st P Cooper 2nd – 3rd – (1)
63	BURFOOT CLASS 1st S Meeks 2nd – 3rd – (1)
64	A CELEBRATION OF 125 YEARS OF THE NSPS 1st S Meeks 2nd P Cooper 3rd L Tedesco (5)
65	THE YORKSHIRE BOWL (No Entries) (0)



Prize winner Phillippa Cooper.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Bowl of Annual species.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.

CLASS**No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED****DIVISION VI**

66	E R JANES VASE (PUBLIC VOTE) 1st J & L Morgan 2nd A Evans 3rd J Cooper	(5)
67	THE DRIFTWOOD CLASS 1st C Tate 2nd J Beardmore 3rd S Meeks	(4)
68	THE SYDENHAM CLASS (7 STEMS) 1st C Tate 2nd C Bromley 3rd E Evans	(6)
69	PETITE CLASS 1st S Haisley 2nd J Beardmore 3rd C Bromley	(6)
70	LES HARVEY PEDESTAL CLASS 1st E Evans 2nd P Cooper 3rd –	(2)

SPECIAL AWARDS**THE TOM CORDY PRIZE – BEST EXHIBIT**

I D Myers (Class 3)

THE CLAY CUP – BEST VASE

I D Myers ('Dalesman' Class 7)

THE COLLEDGE PRIZE (BEST LAVENDER)

I D Myers ('Karen Louise' Class 3)

THE NSPS 125TH ANNIVERSARY AWARD – BEST ANNIVERSARY

C Tate (Class 42)

THE A W GOWER SEEDLING CUP

I D Myers (Class 3)

THE HINCHCLIFFE PRIZE (BEST IN DIVISION II)

D Torrington ('John Gray' Class 23)

THE K E ANDREWS PRIZE (BEST IN DIVISION III)

C Hicken ('Karen Louise Class 31)

THE RANDALL CUP (BEST IN DIVISION IV)

C Tate ('Anniversary' Class 42)

THE HENRY ECKFORD PRIZE (BEST IN DIVISION VI)

C Tate (Class 50)

BEST BOWL PRIZE

A Evans (Class 5)

BEST DECORATIVE ARRANGEMENT

C Tate ('Driftwood' Class 67)

THE TOM SHILLING PRIZE (BEST VASE BY NEWCOMER)

(No Entries)



MK Franks Cup winning entry by Clare Hicken. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



Perennial *Lathyrus* species bowl.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Society 20 vases.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



The pedestals.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Best exhibit in show Class 3 from Darren Myers. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

Audit of the Late National Show – RHS Bridgewater, Worsley

12 & 13 July 2025

By Carole Tate

No	Name of Cultivar	1	2	3	Unplaced	Total	Colour	Classfn
1	Gwendoline	3	3	1	0	7	Pale magenta	4a
2	White Frills	2	3	0	1	5	White	21
3	Anniversary	3	1	0	0	4	Picotée wg	15
	Karen Louise	3	1	0	0	4	Lavender	8
5	Sir Jimmy Shand	1	1	2	0	4	Fancy (striped)	16
6	Dalesman	2	0	0	0	2	Mid blue	9a
	Grandad Myers	2	0	0	0	0	Pale blue	9b
	Eva Bridger	2	0	0	0	2	Pale mauve	7a
9	Evie Jones	1	0	0	0	1	Magenta	4
	Honeymoon	1	0	0	0	1	Lavender flush	8a
	John Gray	1	0	0	0	1	Salmon pink wg	10a
	Karen Michelle	1	0	0	0	1	Fancy (striped)	16
	Pink Pearl	1	0	0	0	1	Pale pink wg	10
14	Daily Mail	0	1	0	0	1	Cerise Pink	10c
	Eclipse	0	1	0	0	1	Mauve	7
	Just Julia	0	1	0	0	1	Mid blue	9a
14	David Unwin	0	0	0	1	1	Red (Scarlet)	3a
	Seedlings	1	1	0	0	2	No classification	
	Totals	23	13	3	1	40		

Non Spencers

1	Henry Eckford	1	0	0	0	1	Orange scarlet	OF
	High Scent	1	0	0	0	1	Cream with lilac	MG
3	Little Red Riding Hood	0	1	0	0	1	Red/white Bi-colours	MG
	Total Non Spencers	2	1	0	0	3		
	Mixed vases	10	7	3	3	23		
	Total Vases	35	21	6	4	66		
	Decorative & Bowls	18	14	11	15	58		
	Total	53	35	17	19	124		



Darren Myers and his awards.
Photo by Phillippa Cooper.



National Sweet Peas Trials at Askham Bryan

By Andrew Beane

ASKHAM BRYAN

First of all, welcome to Abigail Linden who has taken over the growing of the Trials for 2025. All the sowing and growing has been done by the RHS Level 2 students. Sowing was carried out one week earlier than usual, in mid-November. They were germinated in a warm greenhouse and then moved to a well-ventilated polytunnel. A visit in February saw the Trials plants short and cobby. Planting out was in March. We had been allocated new beds in the college allotments. The fresh soil certainly made a huge difference with extremely good growth. The plants had been carefully fenced off, to prevent rabbit damage.



Askham Bryan Trials. Photo by Darren Myers.

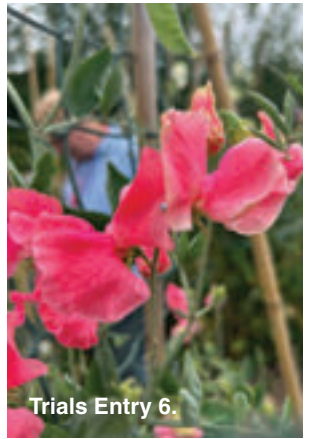
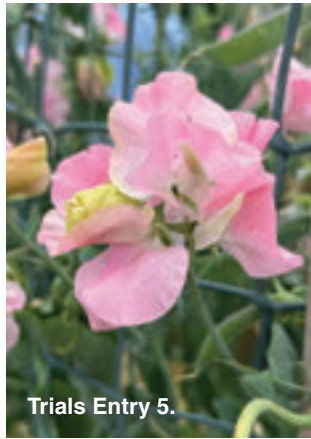
The judging dates were 24 June and 1 July 2025. It was planned to have a judging day on 17 June but this clashed with exam week, so we were left with just two judging days. Very dry conditions followed planting out and two very severe heat waves made growing conditions difficult. The first judging was a mass of Sweet Pea bloom, by the second they were past their best and so it was decided against a later judging date. A big thank you to the college staff, students and judges who contributed to a successful Trial under very difficult growing conditions.

The judging panel in 2025 consisted of Claire Hicken, Aaron Hickman, Bryan Jepson, John Mabbett, Dave Matthewman, Darren Myers and Dave Torrington. Thanks to Sue Lee, course manager of the floristry dept, for doing the floristry awards.

REPORTS ON ALL VARIETIES AT ASKHAM BRYAN ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1	C McAleer, Spencer, Cream, 'Hazel Mullen'	Code
	Placement good, large blooms. A few duplex blooms seen. AM Garden Decoration, HC Exhibition	
2	C McAleer, Spencer, Maroon w.g., 'Mya'	Code
	A maroon stripe on white ground. Included two mauve rogues. Variation in striping. No award	
3	C McAleer, Spencer, Purple, 'Bridget Ann'	Code
	Colour maroon. Grandiflora magenta rogues seen. No award	

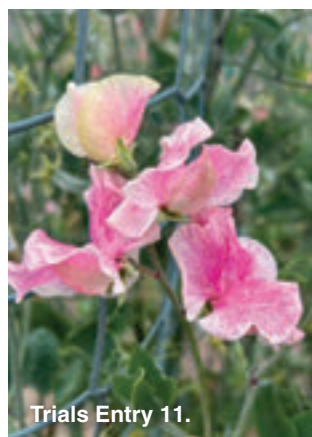




4	C McAleer, Spencer, Lavender	Code CMA4
Colour pale blue. Good placement of mostly fours. Better at first judging. AM Garden Decoration, AM Exhibition, 1st Florist award.		
5	P Johnson, Spencer, Pale pink	Code JSP23-675
Thought to be more grandiflora. Flowers sixes. One rogue white with pink wings. No award		
6	R Parsons, Spencer, non-tendrill, Rose pink w.g.	Code 22183
Mixed. Scarlet, maroon and pink rogues. Some plants with tendrils. No award		



- | | | |
|---|--|----------------|
| 7 | C A Beane, Spencer, Dusky salmon c.g. | Code 19B1 |
| | Unusual colour. Moderate growth.
HC Garden Decoration | |
| 8 | D Myers, Spencer, rose pink c.g., 'Salhouse Sunset' | Code |
| | Raised by C A Beane and I D Myers. Some mosaic virus.
HC Garden Decoration, 2nd Florist award | |
| 9 | P Johnson, Spencer, Pink picotee w.g. | Code SDL24-114 |
| | Pale pink flush, not picotee. Veining on wings. Maybe colour ran due to excess sunshine? HC Garden Decoration | |



- | | | |
|----|--|------------|
| 10 | C A Beane, Spencer, Salmon pink stripe c.g. | Code 16A4 |
| | Flowers mostly fours, Strong growth. After second judging, still had a good quantity of flowers compared with other trial cultivars.
AM Garden Decoration, 3rd Florist award | |
| 11 | C A Beane, Spencer, Pink marble / flake | Code 22A3Z |
| | More flake than marble. Variation in flaking, perhaps from age of blooms.
HC Garden Decoration | |
| 12 | C A Beane, Spencer, Rose pink marble | Code 204B1 |
| | Colour magenta, not rose pink. Affected by Mosaic virus by 2nd judging.
HC Garden Decoration | |



13	P Johnson, Grandiflora, dark blue stripe	Code SDL24-121
<p>Trialled in 2024 as SDL21-0038. Mid blue rogue and a bicolor rogue. Judges liked this seedling. Please resubmit. No award</p>		
14	P Johnson, Grandiflora, Pink / pale salmon reverse bicolor	Code JSP22-578/2
<p>One self salmon pink rogue. Some Mosaic virus. HC Garden Decoration</p>		
15	P Johnson, Grandiflora, Violet flake	Code SDL24-105
<p>One almost black rogue. Variation in flaking: heavy, medium and light. No award</p>		
16	P Johnson, Grandiflora, Orange flake	Code JSP22-561/1
<p>Mixed. One shifter rogue plus crimson and mauve. Please resubmit. No award</p>		

The George Priestley Award, for the best seedling at the Askham Bryan Trials, was awarded to entry no.10 submitted by Andrew Beane.



Askham Bryan Trials. Photo by Darren Myers.



Askham Bryan Trials. Photo by Darren Myers.

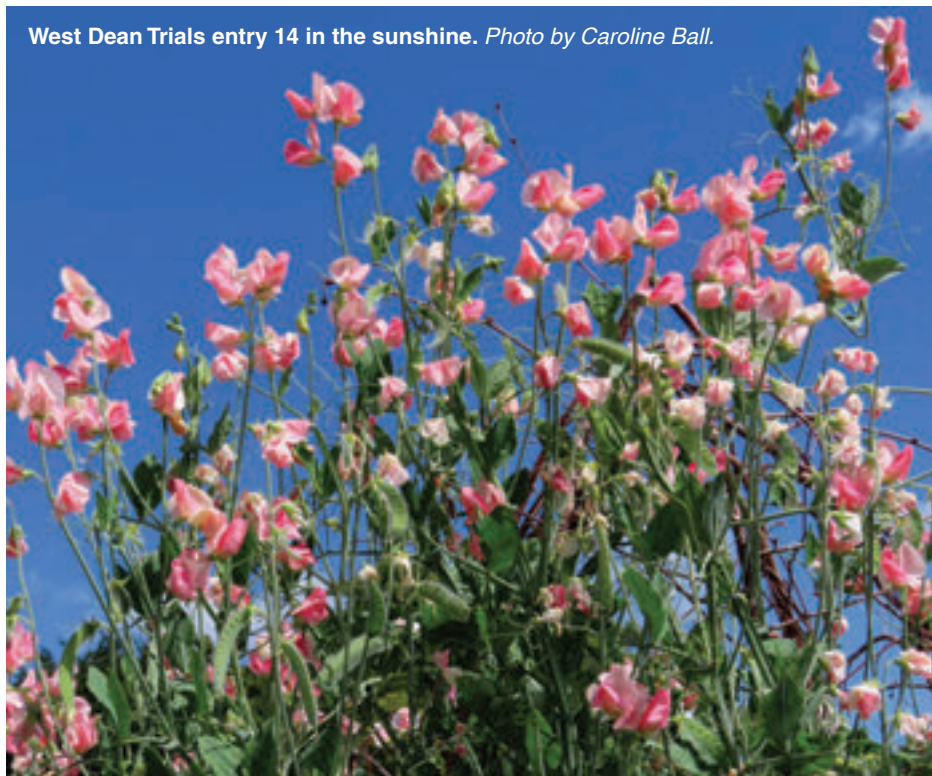
WEST DEAN

By Roger Parsons

Grown in the same walled garden as in 2024 using very attractive supports. Seeds were sown in January 2025 and planting out took place in late March. The plants were given a weekly nitrogen-based liquid feed until flowering time. Alongside the trial entries, plants were grown for comparison of 'Jilly', 'Windsor', 'Sir Max Hastings', 'Karen Louise', 'Southbourne', 'Mrs Bernard Jones', 'Susan Burgess', 'Elizabeth Shorthouse', 'Anniversary', 'Somerset Ripple', 'Audrey Kirkman' and 'Our Heroes'. Judges were pleased to see how well the plants looked in a difficult dry season.

Judging took place on 15 June, 24 June and 3 July 2025. The judging panel in 2025 consisted of Caroline Ball, Keith Brewer, Dave Fitton, Jim McDonald, Mary McDonald and Roger Parsons. The Trials panel conducted a tour for NSPS members on 15 June 2025. One glasshouse contained a display of early-flowering and semi-dwarf Sweet Peas. Our thanks go to head gardener Tom Brown, Marie Stevens and other staff and volunteers for a very successful Trial and for providing hospitality for the judges.

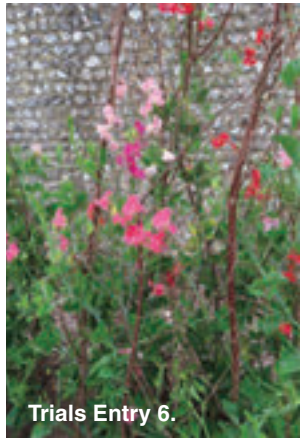
West Dean Trials entry 14 in the sunshine. *Photo by Caroline Ball.*



REPORTS ON ALL VARIETIES AT WEST DEAN ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1	C McAleer, Spencer, Cream, 'Hazel Mullen'	Code
	Sparse flowering at first but much improved by 2nd judging. Some duplex blooms seen. HC Exhibition	
2	C McAleer, Spencer, Maroon w.g., 'Mya'	Code
	About 50% maroon and 50% maroon stripe. Big flowers on long stems. No award	
3	C McAleer, Spencer, Purple, 'Bridget Ann'	Code
	One type rogue. Variation in plain-ness and shade. No award	
4	C McAleer, Spencer, Lavender	Code CMA4
	Would be classified as pale blue, possibly has a slight lavender flush. Very good growth and prolific flowering. Some malformation. HC Garden Decoration, HC Exhibition	
5	P Johnson, Spencer, Pale pink w.g.	Code JSP23-675
	Multiflora with flowers up to nines. Some malformation. Sparse flowering. No award	
6	R Parsons, Spencer, non-tendrils, Rose pink w.g.	Code 22183
	Mixed colours and some plants with tendrils. No award	





7 C A Beane, Spencer, Dusky salmon c.g. Code 19B1

Colour close to 'Susan Burgess'. Petals a bit plain. Not vigorous and some malformation. **No award**

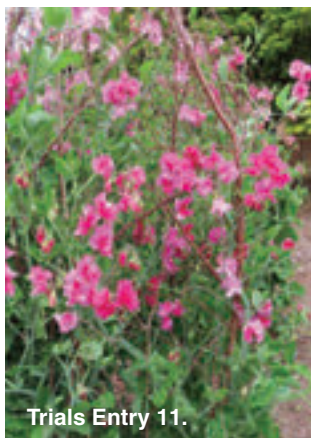
8 D Myers, Spencer, rose pink c.g., 'Salhouse Sunset' Code

Raised by C A Beane and I D Myers. 1 rogue. Virus by 3rd judging. Good growth. **HC Garden Decoration**

9 P Johnson, Spencer, Pink picotee w.g. Code SDL24-114

Colour a broad flush, not picotee. Many flowers of uniform colour. Some virus. **No award**





10 C A Beane, Spencer, Salmon pink stripe c.g. Code 16A4

Wings rather furled for exhibition. Some malformation.
HC Garden Decoration, HC Floristry

11 C A Beane, Spencer, Pink marble / flake Code 22A3Z

Subtly marbled but with some colour variation. Affected by Virus which created a flaked appearance at the 3rd judging. **No award**

12 C A Beane, Spencer, Rose pink marble Code 204B1

Badly affected by Virus. Strong growth. Please resubmit.
No award



13 P Johnson, Grandiflora, dark blue stripe Code SDL24-121

Trialled in 2024 as SDL21-0038. One bicolour rogue. Strong growth, masses of blooms. Looked stunning at every visit. **FCC for Garden Decoration, FCC for Exhibition (Grandiflora classes only)**

14 P Johnson, Grandiflora, Pink / pale salmon reverse bicolour Code JSP22-578/2

Colour pale salmon pink with deeper veins in the wings. Some fives. Similarly impressive as entry no.13. **FCC for Garden Decoration, FCC for Exhibition (Grandiflora classes only)**

15 P Johnson, Grandiflora, Violet flake Code SDL24-105

Rogued. Some malformation. Please reselect.
No award

16 P Johnson, Grandiflora, Orange flake Code JSP22-561/1

Colour cerise flake. Good growth and lots of blooms. Some malformation. **AM Garden Decoration**



West Dean Trials Entry 10.
Photo by Caroline Ball.



Articles

Roger Parsons Veitch Memorial Medal

By The RHS



Roger has been awarded one of the most prestigious RHS awards, the Veitch Memorial Medal in March 2026. This is awarded to persons who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of the science and practice of horticulture. The Veitch Memorial Medal is held for life.

The RHS have awarded the Veitch Medal to Roger for his outstanding contribution to Sweet Peas through establishing a scientific National Collection, breeding

new cultivars and promoting *Lathyrus* to a worldwide audience. His National Collection of *Lathyrus* species at Bracklesham Bay near Chichester remains a resource of scientific importance, and his collection of Sweet Pea cultivars is the most comprehensive in the world, comprising around 1,300 cultivars, supported by his encyclopaedic knowledge of the genus, which he shares widely through many gardening publications.

Lathyrus Collection Report

By Phil Johnson

National Plant Collection: *Lathyrus*

Collection holder: Philip Johnson

Period Covered by report: 2025

Database system used: Excel

Plant list additions

None

Desired plants:

Any not currently held within the Collection. Contact has been made with growers around the world, particularly Canada and Latvia in the search for further accessions.

Developments to the collection:

During April 2025, Philip Johnson took over custodianship of the Collection from Roger Parsons, the instigator and founder. This transition was later sanctioned and recognised by Plant Heritage and cited as a good example of succession planning for national collections.

The Collection was transported to English Sweet Peas premises near Maldon, Essex in three freezers with accompanying reference documents and spreadsheets.

At the same time the Roger Parsons Sweet Peas business was bought by English Sweet Peas as a going concern.

Contacts / visits:

Due to the extreme heatwaves experienced in early summer, it was not possible to hold any open days during 2025. Plans are in hand to hold an open day on Saturday 27th June 2026. Admission by ticket in advance.

Several visits by Roger Parsons and Caroline Ball. Alison Shreeve and Graeme Hollingdale collected blooms for display at the Windsor flower show. Paris Alma and Milli Proust visited late in the year.

Research, shows and publicity:

Attended plant sales at Great Dixter and the Garden Museum in April, both very busy.

First exhibit at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in late May. Assisted by a very friendly team, including ESP staff, Roger Parsons, Caroline Ball, Cecilia and Flora Wingard. Delighted to be awarded a gold medal. Excellent BBC coverage and further press publicity following the launch of a new variety for Amy Dowden MBE.

Are there any changes to your succession plans?

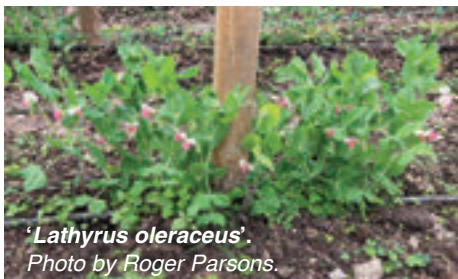
Submitted five new varieties to NSPS trials. Delighted to receive two First Class Certificates for 'Nimble' and 'Girls on Film' and the F. C. Harriss award.

Flower Colour in Garden Peas

By Roger Parsons

A few years ago, I acquired from the John Innes Centre 25 different cultivars of Garden Pea, *Lathyrus oleraceus*, with a view to growing these to assess their potential as ornamental plants. I was mostly interested in flower colour but was also aware that some have decorative pods. In 2025, I finally found the time and space to grow about half of these, with the following results. They were sown in February and grown in a cold polytunnel.

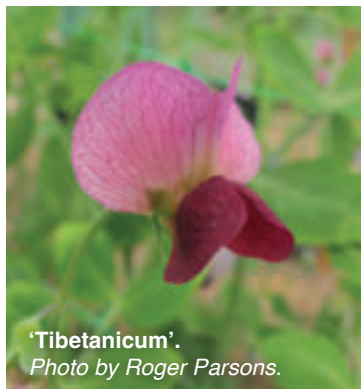
All had large stipules and 2 flowers per stem. 'Pink' is the earliest, flowering about 8 weeks from sowing. It has dwarf plants with flower stems up to 10cm long. The flowers are nicely placed on the stem and of old-fashioned Sweet Pea size. Their colour is a whitish / pale pink bicolour. This cultivar was quite decorative on compact plants but some rabbits got into the tunnel and either they or pigeons particularly liked this cultivar. The Peas themselves were sweet and plentiful so no wonder something else liked them.



'*Lathyrus oleraceus*'.
Photo by Roger Parsons.



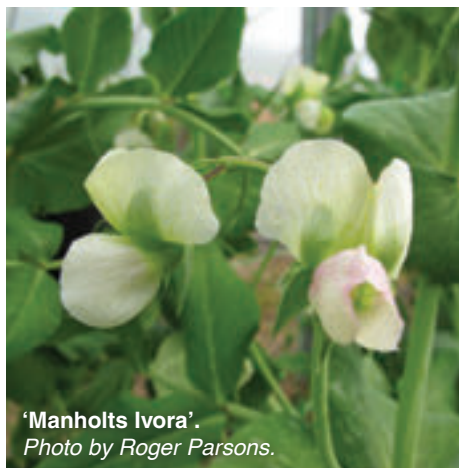
'*Lathyrus oleraceus*'.
Photo by Roger Parsons.



'*Tibetanicum*'.
Photo by Roger Parsons.

Spring-flowering

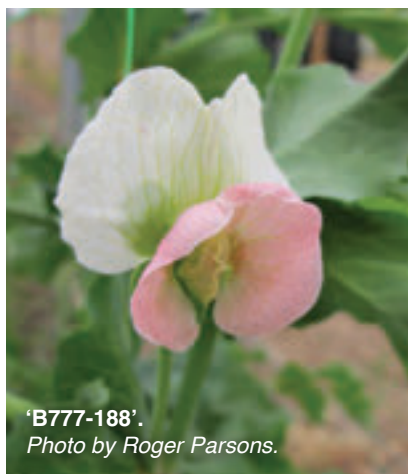
Most of the remainder were Spring flowering, about 10 weeks from sowing. All had nicely placed flowers except 'POL13', which had a large gap between flowers. It is very tall with long flower stems, up to 30cm. The leaflets are large. Old-Fashioned size flowers are whitish with 2 pink blotches at the base of the standard. Both flowers and plant were too coarse for decorative use. The Peas are enormous, of Marrowfat type, not sweet and slightly sparse production.



'Tibetanicum' is tall with flower stems to 20cm. The Old-Fashioned size flowers are a lilac / purple maroon bicolour, as commonly found in Garden Peas. The Peas themselves are large and sweet, and produced in abundance. A semi-wild collection from Tibet.

'Omega Waxless' is semi-dwarf to tall. The flower stems are up to 15cm. The Old-Fashioned size flowers are a white / pink bicolour. This has unusual bright green stipules. The Peas are large, not sweet but abundant.

'Mansholts Ivora' is semi-dwarf with flower stems up to 15cm. The Old-Fashioned size flowers are pale pink with 2 pink blotches. The peas are large, fairly sweet and produced in abundance. This is another one the rabbits or pigeons particularly liked. I am still not sure which of these decimated the plants.



'B777-188' is semi-dwarf with flower stems up to 15cm. Shorter stems than this are less useful for a bowl of *Lathyrus* species. The Old-Fashioned size flowers are whitish with 2 pink blotches, and pale pink wings. It has large leaflets. The Peas are sweet and plentiful with plants again decimated by rabbits or pigeons.

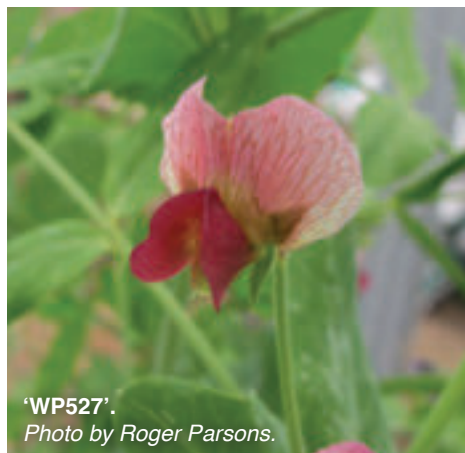
'Ladhakh' is semi-dwarf with short flower stems up to 10cm. The flowers are smaller, similar in size to *Lathyrus annuus*. These are pale lilac / purple maroon bicolour. The peas are fairly sweet and plentiful. From Ladhakh in the far north of India.



'WP527' is semi-dwarf with flower stems up to 10cm. The flowers are similar in size to *L. hirsutus* and are a deep pink / crimson bicolor. It has dainty leaflets. The Peas are small and not sweet but are plentiful. Semi-wild in Afghanistan.

'Pumilio' is dwarf to semi-dwarf with flower stems up to 10cm. It has *L. hirsutus* size flowers which are a lilac / true purple bicolor. It is even more dainty than 'WP527'. The stipules have serrated edges. This would be better grown in pots, as with other delicate *Lathyrus*. It has very small Peas. Collected from a wild population. Originally named as *Pisum sativum* var. *pumilio* by Meikle in 1969.

'Orlex' is dwarf with short flower stems to 10cm on compact plants. Old-Fashioned size flowers are ivory with a cream tinge. The pods are yellow. I thought this the most decorative for garden display until the rabbits or pigeons found they liked it too. The Peas are pale and fairly large, slightly sweet and plentiful.



Summer-flowering

Three of the accessions grown were summer-flowering and did not receive as much assessment as the others. 'Freer's Mummy' came from Gabriella Harman, rather than the John Innes Centre, and is available from Garden Organic. It originated from Highclere and is reputed to have originated in a mummy's tomb. This seems unlikely as it has some modern characteristics. It is very tall with flower stems up

to 20cm. The leaflets are large. Flowers are white with two pink blotches and have better placement than 'POL 13'. I neglected to test the Peas of the three summer-flowering cultivars but Garden Organic says 'Freer's Mummy' has tender, delicious Peas that freeze well.

'Humile' is tall with flower stems up to 10cm. The flowers are white / crimson bicolour but are relatively sparse. This was a semi-wild collection from Israel. Originally named as *Pisum humile* by Miller in 1768.

'Jomardii' is also tall and was the last of the cultivars to flower, timing just right for our Early National Show. The flowers are a lilac / purple maroon bicolour. Originally named as *Pisum jomardii* by Schrank in 1805.

Conclusions

Growing these Garden Peas has encouraged me to try those that I have not yet grown but I can't say any of those trialled in 2025 struck me as being a "must have" addition to the range of *Lathyrus* species popular for cutting for bowls. There seems to be potential for crossing these cultivars to produce new cultivars better suited to cutting for flowers. I have not much experience of growing Garden Peas and was surprised that some plants were attacked by pests. These were mostly the shorter ones while the taller ones were left alone.

Changing Weather Patterns and the Impact on Sweet Pea Growing

By Neal Hatch

Gardeners often complain about the weather. But how has the weather we have experienced in recent years impacted the growing and exhibiting of Sweet Peas? There are many factors behind the decline in the number of people showing Sweet Peas (or other flowers) over the past few decades. Most notably, shifts in leisure activities and many other economic and social changes have occurred. However, changing weather patterns are likely to have had some impact. A paper published in the proceedings of the Royal Society in 2022, based on data collected by the Woodland Trust, shows that plants in the UK are flowering several weeks earlier than was once the case. Although there is no direct read across to cultivated garden plants, such as Sweet Peas, these findings are consistent with what we observe in our gardens.

There are two key changes to focus on:

- First, average summer temperatures have risen, and the Sweet Pea flowering season has been brought forward and is shorter.
- Second, we may be experiencing more frequent periods of extreme heat/drought or very wet/windy weather over the summer – making growing conditions more challenging.

As far as Sweet Peas are concerned, the rise in temperature during the growing season is easy to show. Chart 1 shows average temperatures over the May-July growing season (very roughly taken to be the Sweet Pea season in the 'South'). Temperatures have been rising over the past 50 years.

As well as higher average temperatures, we also see more days with very high maximum temperatures. If we break down the distribution of days by maximum temperature reached, we can show that the distribution has shifted to the right over the past 50 years or so. See Chart 2. The past decade (2016-2025) has seen more days fall in the 20°C+ range and fewer days below 15°C. I know from my own experience that plants/blooms aren't very happy on days when temperatures reach 30°C+, especially if there is a breeze too (as this tends to destroy the flowers very quickly).

As I touched on above, the weather has not only become hotter, but probably more variable. There seem to be more extremes of weather, for example, with longer unbroken dry or wet periods. This variability is surprisingly difficult to capture, as there are many factors at play. Chart 3, showing rainfall over the Sweet Pea season, hints at these changes.

Between 1973 and 2000, we had only one year (1991) with more than 150 mm of rain over the three months May-July, and one year (1999) with no rain. Most years recorded a 'comfortable' 50-100 mm of rain over the season.

Since 2000, almost every other year has seen rainfall exceed 150 mm during the main Sweet Pea growing season, with relatively few years as low as the 50-100 mm range.

2024 was both cool and fairly wet – conditions that were partly behind the cancellation of the early National Sweet Pea show. It also rained (in Somerset!) just before the 2022 and 2023 early National shows.

It was, of course, very dry in 2025 (just like 1999 and 1975/1976). But this illustrates the variability point.

So the general trend is for wetter (and hotter) summers, but with more variation from year to year.

Chart 1: Average Temperature, °C, May-Jul

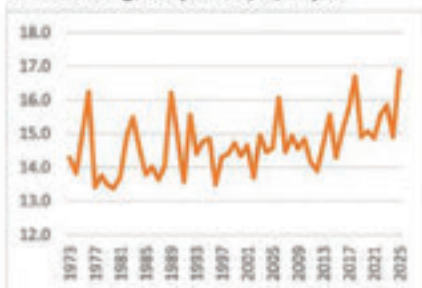
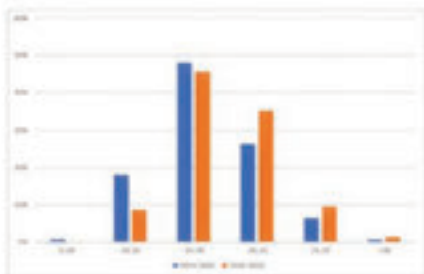
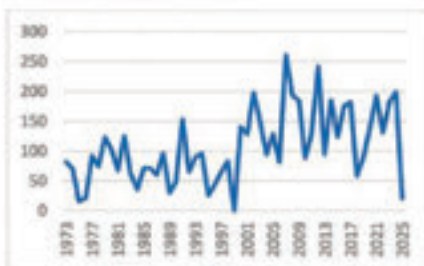
Chart 2: Temperature Distribution, °C, May-July
(percentage of days reaching max temp in ranges shown)

Chart 3: Rainfall, mm, May-July



References

¹ 'Plants in the UK flower a month earlier under recent warming', U Buntgen A Piermattei, P J Frusic, J Esper, T Sparks and A Crivellaro. Proceedings B, Royal Society, 2022.

What is to be done? Clearly, we can't address the causes of these weather changes by ourselves! But we can plan our Sweet Pea growing activities with those changes in mind. For example, traditional autumn & spring Sweet Pea sowing dates/patterns have changed. I sow much later in the autumn than my father would have done because the weather is typically so mild over the winter that my plants keep on growing through December and January.

A simple back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that over the past 50 years, we should have brought the national shows forward by perhaps two to three weeks, to maintain (roughly) the same growing conditions as existed back in the 1970s. Indeed, the National shows have been brought forward over the years to reflect the changes in growing conditions, and the 2026 Early National Show will be on the 17-18 June. Of course, with the variable weather noted above, earlier dates can't mitigate against the droughts or deluges we get, but it is difficult to think of things that can.

Note: All three charts are for Yeovilton in Somerset, using daily data from Visual Crossing.

Review of 30 Sweet Pea Species

By Caroline Ball

It is with great excitement, that I take ownership of a new book about Sweet Peas so last year was a year of massive excitement with both the World of Sweet Peas and the Sweet Pea School being published. Both are worthy of gracing the bookshelves of any Sweet Pea enthusiast and were reviewed in the 2025 Annual.

You can imagine, therefore, my excitement to find a book called 30 Sweet Pea Species by Mixa Lunga. I ordered it straight away expecting to receive a book describing *Lathyrus* species. Sadly, this small paper backed book contains descriptions of principally cultivars of *Lathyrus odoratus*. The front cover depicts *Lathyrus grandiflorus* but that was the extent of coverage of 'Sweet Pea' species. I should have realised it was not a short reference work as it referred to 'Sweet Pea' species rather than *Lathyrus* species but nevertheless I was still deeply disappointed. What was also disappointing was that none of the cultivars described were photographed and whilst there is an index the pages are not numbered either. It is not a well-researched book for example it refers to 'Mrs Bernard Jones' as a variety which has been grown since 'the early 1900s' and it's colour as 'shades of pink and cream'. It describes the colour of 'Charlie's Angel' as 'shades of pink white and purple'. The NSPS classification list records 'Mrs Bernard Jones' as 10b rose pink on a white ground and 'Charlie's Angel' as 9b pale blue. The book is of some interest if you are interested in ideas of *odoratus* cultivars to grow, however I'd suggest reading the audits published in the NSPS Annual and Bulletin and looking at the varieties on the benches of a Sweet Pea show would be much more informative for most.

Climate Change and Its Effects on Sweet Pea Growing

By Alison Shreeve

Much discussion has been had about changing seasons for growing Sweet Peas. A recent FaceBook poll instigated by our District Representative's Co-ordinator, Roz Warley, has formed the basis for this article. We hope to keep monitoring how climate change is affecting growing patterns across the UK, and indeed in other parts of the world. If you would like to share your thoughts with us, we will be holding conversations through the members only FaceBook Chat Room at regular intervals, or you can email us through the website, so please feel free to share your experiences.

For this first article we are basing our discussion on the UK only, so apologies to our international members. This is also a non-scientific view based on personal experiences and responses. As far as we are aware no-one has to date made a systematic study of the impact of climate change on Sweet Pea growing and we would welcome this.

Flicking through the book, *Sweet Peas: a complete Guide to Their Culture* by E.R. Janes published in 1953 I was amazed to see a photograph of cordon-grown Sweet Peas over 14 feet high and still flowering and in good health. There were two examples, both grown from Autumn sown plants, one sown in mid-September and still in bloom over 13 months later – so from a September sowing still flowering in October. For those of us in the South of England it is now proving almost impossible to keep our plants flowering to the end of July, let alone October! There have been exceptions to this of course. In 2024 we had a very cold slow spring and plants only got going in late June. They did last then until September, but the summer was not very hot. In 2025 we had a very early long hot spell and that brought aphids and virus which decimated the crops in most of England, so nothing much survived beyond the beginning of July.

E.R. Janes's recipe for prolonging the life of Sweet Peas is to use Autumn sown plants which have developed good root systems rather than lots of top growth; to have good cultivation conditions; 'mulching and watering if necessary'; deadheading and taking out side shoots; and generally preventing checks in growth. Neither does he advocate feeding when they are growing (p95).

There are obviously some major changes over the 70 plus years since Janes wrote. Most growers are sowing later than they used to do. Some are hedging their bets with an Autumn and Spring sowing:

I am sowing two/three weeks later this year (2025). They flowered really well beginning of June last year so I'm hoping to extend the season and enter the Late National in July (respondent from Lancashire, NW England).

I have an issue with the longevity of Sweet Peas. I'm wondering about doing an Autumn sowing for half my plot and a spring (January) on the rest, with the possibility that I have Peas in August (respondent 2 from Lancashire).

It is clear that these experiences are very different from E. R. Janes' and it is not only the NW of England that is experiencing different growing patterns, a similar response was received from growers in Southern England, Devon (SW England) and North Yorkshire (NE England). A respondent from NE Scotland was concerned that the window for growing, already short so far north, will become too short to make growing Sweet Peas worthwhile.

Other points people made are the necessity to plant out early, if possible; to ensure good mulching to suppress weeds and keep in moisture and to water well in dry spells, not always easy if there is a drought and a ban on hosepipe use. Other challenges brought about by climate change are the unpredictability of the weather patterns we experience and the extremes of heat, cold and wet. These all make preparing the plot, sowing and planting out much more of a gamble than it used to be. If you can't get on your plot to prepare it because it has been raining constantly for months that in itself might lead to pot-bound seedlings and a check in growth. Too much sunshine and perhaps we need to plant in a more shaded area of the garden, but how are we to know!

Last year's very long hot and dry spell encouraged a rapid increase in aphids which carried virus with them. One way to combat this might be to spray ones roses to pre-empt aphid spread onto the Sweet Pea rows. This might entail using pesticides but possibly a garlic spray might be worth trying too. If we have to employ more chemicals to maintain Sweet Pea health that's not good for us in the long run either.

Maintaining good growth across a long and unpredictable season is going to be a challenge and we would like to hear your experiences and your solutions to the problems that we are and might encounter in the future.

Discussion

By Keith Hammett

There are two types of specialist horticultural societies; namely collector societies and sporting societies. The former focusses on people establishing and maintaining collections of specific genera, Rhododendrons and Camellias spring to mind.

In contrast the sporting societies are focused on measuring the ability of growers to produce blooms that match as closely as possible predetermined judging criteria. Dahlia and Sweet Peas societies are examples. Here it is the horticultural growing skills of exhibitors that are being measured. To an extent cultivars are irrelevant beyond their ability to be able to be grown to show standard. Their beauty or ability to produce seed is seldom if ever discussed.

Within the confines of exhibition, judging criteria are important in defining how a flower progresses; sadly, their insistence on uniformity has acted as a strait jacket. Exhibitors of both Dahlias and Sweet Peas have shied away from bicolours, while Sweet Pea exhibitors have also avoided flakes and stripes, with the notable exception of 'Sir Jimmy Shand'.

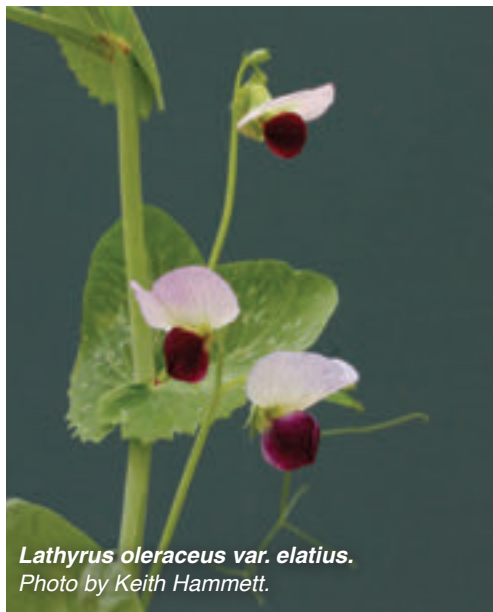
The focus on self-coloured Sweet Peas has unconsciously created breeding *cul de sacs*. With the exception of yellow and associated shades, most of the other possible colours have been produced. Cultivars deteriorate over time, so all an exhibition breeder can hope to do is to replace cultivars with better performing lookalikes as they decline. In doing this they are acting as technicians.

In contrast, if we distance ourselves from the edicts of the show bench, we can explore possibility in much the same way that a visual artist conceives something in their head and then works out how to bring it into the world.

All Sweet Peas need not have the open keel of the Spencer flower form nor do they always need to be fully fixed. I have long offered the opinion that a segregating population is more aesthetically pleasing in terms of visual tonality, than a formulated mixture. At the same time acknowledging that a formulated mix probably ensures a better range of colours where a low number of plants is involved.

The flower farmer movement in Western countries has been a breath of fresh air for me. I have been a Dahlia judge for sixty odd years now and I tend to see cultivars through that filter. Flower farmers have not been similarly programmed and see things through different filters.

The acceptance of cultivars such as 'Blue Shift' and 'Turquoise Lagoon' where the colour of the flowers changes as they age has been gratifying to me. I recall with pleasure a comment by Roger Parsons that "I was developing a characteristic that breeders had for a previous century been trying to eliminate".



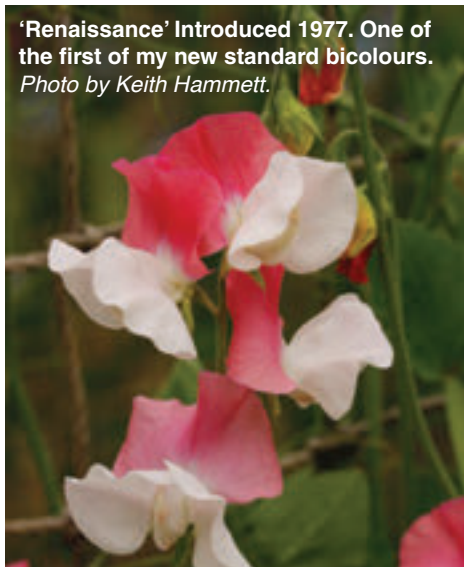
Lathyrus oleraceus var. elatius.
Photo by Keith Hammett.

When I started breeding Sweet Peas in the 1960s, I set myself the goal of producing a range of bicoloured cultivars. By that time the only bicolour still grown was the pink and white 'Gaiety' introduced by Boltons in 1947.

I achieved my goal here in New Zealand and individual cultivars and mixtures were introduced. For whatever reason, I was not fully satisfied. The colour balance did not feel quite right.

Some years later I was given seed of the then called *Pisum elatius* now styled *Lathyrus oleraceus var. elatius*. This has flowers with a white standard

'Renaissance' Introduced 1977. One of the first of my new standard bicolours.
Photo by Keith Hammett.



'Erewhon'.
Photo by Keith Hammett.

petal and purple wing petals, namely a reverse bicolour. All existing bicoloured Sweet Peas had the standard darker than the wings. This caused me to set a new breeding goal, reverse bicoloured Sweet Peas.

Progress was made and the first reverse bicolour 'Leading Light' was introduced. However, the real breakthrough occurred when genes were introduced from *Lathyrus belinensis*, which can be seen to be a reverse bicolour. The yellow wings are much darker and more intense than the background colour of the standard petal.

'Erewhon' is perhaps the best example of reverse bicouring, a characteristic reflected in the name. In hindsight I realise that I had stumbled on atmospheric perspective, a phenomenon well known in the art world. If one looks at a range of hills in the evening, those closest appear darker than the next ones, which in turn are darker than those furthest away. Darker wing petals mimic this.

What goals might breeders of the future set themselves? The possibility of new flower colours and patterns has probably nearly been exhausted, although cultivars such as 'David Tostevin' and 'King's Ransom' belie this. Other characteristics such as heat tolerance, vase life and fecundity could significantly increase popularity of an already popular flower.

Time will tell.

Reflections of 2025

By Roger Dix

The reaching of a milestone birthday is always a time for reflection and I find myself doing just that as I look back at my Sweet Pea year of 2025.

During my many Sweet Pea encounters, whether it be shows, talks or just meeting people with an interest, I am often asked how my love affair with the flower began. The honest answer is I do not remember my life without them. My late father grew and showed before I was born having had his interest fuelled by Fred Burfoot the then treasurer of the NSPS and a local bank manager. He was also good friends with Cecil Harvey another Society stalwart. I loved helping, or more likely hindering him, at shows and I became hooked. When I acquired my own garden I started growing myself and before long our roles had reversed and he would be helping me. Although I would normally lose him at shows as he went off to speak with other exhibitors and to help out anyone showing for the first time. It is sad to reflect that so many of these shows are no longer around. The Middlesex Show and Cookham Dean were particular favourites.

One show that we both loved was the Royal Windsor Show held over three days in the grounds of the castle which included a whole host of Sweet Pea classes. Sadly once the site could no longer be used the show struggled to keep going until relocating to St. Georges School. Unfortunately as this had to be held once the school term had finished in mid-July my ability to enter became difficult as my blooms would be well past their best by then. Recent years have seen the venue become the superbly appointed York Club and it has returned to its glory days of being the very essence of an English show attracting several thousand visitors and being attended by members of the Royal family. Sweet peas are very much a part of things with some superb displays by the NSPS. It is a shame that the competitive classes do not get more support, largely due to the fact that it is now at the beginning of June. I do feel that there are more growers out there who could show and it would be great to see more in 2026.

Having had my best and longest showing season for a few years in 2024 it was inevitable that 2025 would be a bit disappointing. A long hot and dry April meant my aspirations would be curtailed and after Windsor I only managed one more show. This was at the wonderful Haywards Heath Show held in a large gazebo in the middle of the shopping centre. Again it is a pity that there are not more exhibitors as the unique setting, good range of classes and a warm welcome deserves more. I always have a tussle with John Rieley here and he once again had some lovely blooms, although not in the same numbers as mine, so I was pleased to have the

upper hand this time around. I am always jealous of his supply of reeds which I still consider to be the best material for the vases. It was nice to see a new exhibitor there who was showing for the first time at the age of 82!

With more hot weather and rapidly shortening stems the National at Abingdon and the Chiltern Show proved a bridge too far and I was unable to make it to either. I have been experimenting with ways to extend my season but as yet have not found a solution.

Touching back to my father's growing days, I remember that he always looked to have a bunch for my Mum on their wedding anniversary in the middle of June but didn't always manage it. I grow just a few hundred yards from his site and in recent times have been well past my best by then having had flowers in mid May. Definitely food for thought regarding Global warming.

My year ended with a visit to Harington College and the wonderful students led by Lee Haley who have taken to Sweet Peas in a big way. I had a great morning chatting with the students and seeing and hearing about their plans. The enthusiasm and knowledge of the students was a delight to behold and I am looking at how we can make sure they are a part of this years Early National at Wisley.

So having reached my three score years and ten my enthusiasm for growing and showing shows no sign of abating and I look forward to the challenges ahead. One thing for sure it never is and never has been dull.

Reflections on the 2025 Season

By John Rieley

A week before the National there was a show at Haywards Heath where I won a cup for a mixed vase of nine but Roger Dix cleaned up all the others including the James Box cup for a six vases of six. I had won it a few times many years ago but Roger has had a grip on it for several years as I don't usually grow that many varieties. This year I thought that I would try to prise it from his grasp but came unstuck mainly because most of my vases were not as good as his but one variety in particular let me down badly. Ironically that one won best vase in Division 2 a week later (it was xxxx)! I would have done better concentrating on the single vase classes. Interestingly Roger did not show at the National. I wonder if his flowers were past it by then? His blooms did have much shorter stems than mine; small but perfectly formed.

Regarding my season, when I came to enter the National I did so without much hope and only entered six single vase classes but suddenly everything came good and I had enough to enter an additional two classes, each of three vases (Ed and he won both). After that things came to a grinding halt, had the National been a week later I doubt that I would have had anything to enter. Talk about a short season!

My local show was 3 weeks later. Two lady members of my Sweet Pea course were also planning to enter and in the weeks before we were practically crying on each other's shoulders. One reported that some of hers were just giving up and dying. I went and had a look at them but there was nothing obviously wrong. I had helped layer her plants some weeks previously and was sufficiently impressed to try to persuade her to enter the Haywards Heath show and even the Nationals but she was determined to save them for the local show and was not letting them flower until then. The other lady had been letting hers flower as she took them to people who were housebound but she said that the stems were getting very short. I suggested that she do the same as me and give them a regular foliar feed. At the show she said that this had made a difference but what was a great help was a cloudburst that dumped a lot of rain, about 10cm, on Lindfield over the weekend before the show.

As for the show I managed to find enough flowers to win the class for three vases of six, for which I was awarded the best floral display, the Sweet Pea rosette and the Lemmy Cup for my vase of 'Naomi Nazareth'. I also won the class for a vase of nine mixed, which one of my ladies managed to enter. There were two other classes, one for a vase of three and the other for a vase of seven which my ladies entered and won one each. My flowers were pathetic, being less than half the length one would want and I was reduced to using some 'threes'.

I gave a talk to a local flower club about growing and showing Sweet Peas. I managed to find enough blooms to demonstrate staging a vase of fifteen. I made just over £600 pounds for the local Hospice by selling my flowers to a local florist.

There was one interesting occurrence. In July I there was an outbreak of aphids on my plants. I was considering stripping of any flowers and using an insecticide but then I discovered that there were ladybirds everywhere and they cleaned up the aphids. I wonder if anyone else experienced this?

Remember last year when we talked about leafcutter bees being responsible for producing rogues? I have had another idea which I have not seen mentioned. What about pollen beetles? I have seen many within the keels of my flowers.

I don't know if you will see me at the Nationals in 2026. 2025 has been a physical and motivational struggle and the sensible part of my brain says it's time to finish!

Lathyrus Report

By Lee Haley

In 2022 and 2023 we experienced partial success with our Sweet Peas at Harington. At the start of the season in 2024 we decided to double our efforts to get the best out of our plants, for the benefit of our students as well as for our own professional development. The world of horticulture can be daunting for those new to it but, as we have found, by focusing and specialising in a particular species or genus, one can quickly gain confidence and acquire skills and understanding that can be useful elsewhere in the field.



In 2025 we grew over 30 different Sweet Pea cultivars as well as around 20 separate perennial and annual *Lathyrus* species. Each cultivar and species were allocated to different students. Distribution of seeds was based on student's preference (flower colour or plant name association), ability (cordon types required extra work) and level of interest (some students were keen to more than one cultivar, as well as *Lathyrus* species, some were happy with only one). Levels of engagement were high throughout, and all students were keen to see their own plants do well, as well as being remarkably supportive of each other by looking after each others plants.

We tried out various methods of propagation, cultivation, supporting structures, maintenance routines and harvesting for various purposes. We learned a lot of new techniques and disciplines, many of which were rewarding and will be repeated. Not all species and cultivars did well, nor were all support structures effective. We

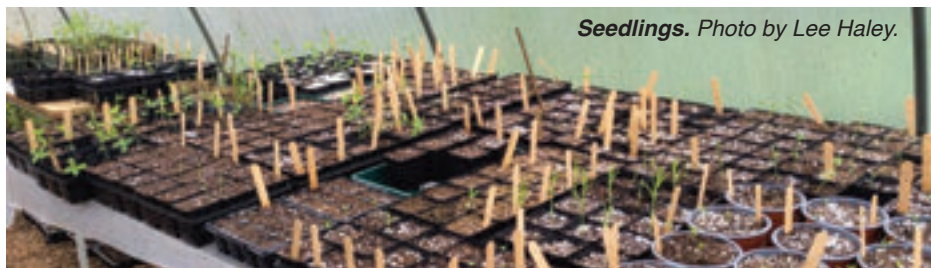
also learned or were reminded of the importance of watering and plant nutrition. It could be worthwhile to take stock of what was fully achieved this year and what we might change in order to improve our output next year.

Achievements and findings

Sustainability

From the outset the project was done as sustainably as is feasibly possible for a small charitable organisation. Peat-free compost is known for increasing the risk of brown collar on over-wintered seedlings, as the soil surface dries out and can cut into the base of the stem if blown or moved around. Despite this we lost no more than about 20% of seedlings to brown collar and damping off.

All *Lathyrus* plants have nitrogen fixing root nodules, which means that they tend to leave soil in a good state afterwards for subsequent planting. If nitrogen is low in the soil then they can create their own. Despite this some plants clearly lacked the right conditions and did not reach their full potential. This is most likely due to a very hot year with very little rainfall. Ones that faired better were our cordon plants which had been given a modest top dressing of farmyard manure.



Seedlings. Photo by Lee Haley.

The flowers were seen to be a rich source of nectar for pollinating insects. The main Sweet Pea plot was also seen to attract a lot other wildlife including blackbirds, robins and song thrushes. All of these helped to control other pests such as slugs and snails, which did not affect our crop this year.

While we initially thought that using wooden labels would be more sustainable than plastic ones, we found the wooden labels often went mouldy in the pots and were difficult to read. Plastic labels are now preferred for hygiene reasons and for re-usability. Other growers cut up and reuse plastic containers from recycling and use as labels.

We used SB plant invigorator as a foliar spray which boosts plant health and is an environmentally friendly pest and disease control. We sprayed at least once a

week from February through 'til July. No aphids were seen on our plants until near the end of the season, when we had eased off our spraying program, after that some powdery mildew, flaking, and mosaic virus, spread by the aphids, were seen during the holidays. This was impressive as the site is surrounded by sycamores, and our plants are often covered in aphids by mid-summer. The SB spray could be used more effectively with a CP-15 knapsack sprayer and a properly implemented spraying program. Hand sprayers are exhausting after a while and a waste of time if regularly refilling. Another spraying device was trialed called a "flit sprayer" which was highly effective at first but both models broke before long. Use of SB did not seem to deter pollinators, and plenty of bees, hoverflies, butterflies and birds, were seen around our cordon plot throughout the season.

A few different sustainable alternatives to plastic pots were trialed including containers made from cardboard toilet-roll holders, and from rolled up newspaper. Neither of these were successful, however this is probably because they were sown in Autumn and hung around too long in damp conditions. They might have worked better with a Spring sowing. They also would have worked much better if I had cut and folded the bottom of the cardboard holders inwards in order to prevent a lot of solid form falling out.

There were many opportunities to practice green skills while working outdoors with natural materials. The challenges of building structures gave us a chance to carry out forestry and weaving. Many of the more formal structures taught us some practical maths skills by measuring distances between plants and between rows, accounting for the height of bamboo canes, counting and multiplying.

We used coffee grounds as a slug deterrent. This involved regular trips to the village coffee shop where we would collect a heavy bag with a wheelbarrow. There was no slug damage this year on the Sweet Peas, although this would also have been helped by the dry season.

*“A garden is a grand teacher.
It teaches patience and careful watchfulness;
it teaches industry and thrift; above all,
it teaches entire trust.”*

Gertrude Jekyll

Support structures and maintenance

We learned sometime after sowing our seeds that some of them were Old-Fashioned types and some were Spencer types. This latter group are the only kind that we need to be growing using the cordon method. Plants were planned accordingly for 3 different hort groups at Harington. Old-Fashioned types were allowed to grow naturally or “bush grown” around wig-wam type structures.

Although wig-wams are easier to build, the most effective structures were cylinders or columns made from vertical bamboo sticks, with string wrapped around. We learned that the plant’s tendrils need lots of horizontal rungs of string or wire wrapped around the base of the structures, more so than vertical members (10cm pea netting is ideal), to help the plant get tall, and less can be used near the top.

Cordon grown plants were effective but proved difficult to maintain given the limited time we had each week around other seasonal jobs and event preparations. The Spencer types grown using the cordon method were disbudded regularly until



about 2 weeks before our first Summer show in July. The flowers were noticeably bigger and more showy than the Old-Fashioned types which had been flowering since late May, and the stems were very long and strong as we had hoped for.

Next year we would like to add more structure to improve our cordon growing. If we add wooden posts securely to either end of the double rows, then the bamboo canes can be fastened to the wire or rope stretched between the posts. We would also like to add some irrigation to the rows to facilitate watering during dry weather.

Sales and Shows

The flowers were a success with the public, selling out quickly whenever they appeared on our stalls. Overall we took about £700 in sales, from about £200 worth of seeds. In addition to cut flowers, we also sold a number of left-over seedlings at Pond Square, at our Spring sale. Our friend Gary Sycamore managed to sell a lot of them at the Ally Pally stall to raise money for our charity.



Flowers won all top prizes for Sweet Peas at both of our local shows. We also won 2 first prizes at Wem sweet pea show in Shropshire. In all cases prizes were judged and awarded without knowledge of the exhibitors and no concession given for us being a special school. The students won over other experienced exhibitors, hopefully influencing some of our neighbours to adopt cordon culture to their growing next year in order to compete with us in the Sweet Pea classes.

Muswell Hill & District horticultural society

1st & 2nd prize for Vase of Sweet Peas
(‘Just Julia’, ‘King’s Ransom’, ‘Naomi Nazareth’)

Highgate Horticultural society

1st prize for vase of Sweet Peas – distinct (‘Naomi Nazareth’),
1st prize for mixed vase (‘King’s Ransom’, ‘Gilly Norah’, ‘Castle of Mey’)

Wem Sweet Pea show

1st prize for Novice class vase of 7 mixed stems,
1st prize for 3 distinct vases Division 4
(‘Naomi Nazareth’, ‘Gilly Norah’, ‘Gwendoline’),
2 x 3rd prizes. (‘Henry Eckford’, ‘King’s Ransom’)

Chorley Sweet Pea show (Northwest and Region)

2 x 3rd prizes

Our entry of 'King's Ransom' for the any other colour class at Wem was controversial, as the judges disliked it, but still managed to award it 3rd prize over other entries. One critic described it a "monstrosity", no doubt due to the uncertain shifting of the colour as it ages, making it difficult to assess. It is, as Andy Beane has said, the "marmite" Sweet Pea that people either love or hate. I did see many people at work pointing at this one out among all others and saying that they loved it.

Social networking

The growing of Sweet Peas has improved our relationships with our local community. Earlier this year we gained publicity from two local newspapers. Joining the Sweet Pea Society has enabled us to receive advice from leading experts in the field, most notably Roger Parsons and Phil Johnson.

All of the SPS members are kind and encouraging to new growers like ourselves and are keen to see us do well. Entering and attending the national shows has brought us into contact with other Sweet Pea growers from all over the UK including Scotland, Isle of Man, Shropshire and Chorley. I was also fortunate enough to meet Darren Everest on his stall at Cheslea. He has also given us lots of good advice. At Wem I met a myriad of Sweet Pea Society members, including Tom Atherton, who inspired me to take the Sweet Pea even more seriously than I previously had done.

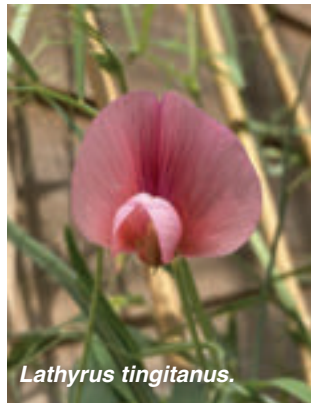
Many growers are members in other plant societies also. We also have links with the Daffodil Society, the Delphinium Society, and the National Chrysanthemum Society who support us with other projects.

Lathyrus Species



Lathyrus chloranthus

All of the annual species managed to flower. In general many suffered, from no fault of their own, from a very hot and dry season, and did not manage to establish good root systems in time for flowering. We were hit by a heat wave in May shortly after planting out. With so many Sweet Peas to plant out and support, many of the lesser species ended off staying too long in their pots. *L. chloranthus* fared better than most, and managed to grow to a decent size before flowering. This was sown in Autumn and always looked good as a seedling, growing slower than the Sweet Pea. It was the last to flower and still had flowers in August.

*Lathyrus belinensis.**Lathyrus sativus.**Lathyrus paranensis.**Lathyrus angulatus.**Lathyrus annuus.**Lathyrus tingitanus.*

L. belinensis and *L. paranensis* both performed well in pots filled with garden compost and fed weekly with tomorite once flowering. Both are rare species endemic to Turkey and Brazil, respectively. Again, both would have been better if not for the drought. *L. tingitanus* was vigorous and has strong colour with compact flowers from May 'til August, and we would recommend as a garden climber. *L. annuus*, *L. sativus*, *L. angulatus*, *L. hirsutus* and *L. odoratus* were the worst affected by the drought, all planted out in a very dry part of the garden, but all showed interesting flowers and deserve to be grown again.

It was thrilling to observe all of these species from germination to flowering for the first time. Some we might not see again for a while, some we hope to grow again.

Lathyrus neurolobus

Of the perennial species, only two flowered in their first year. The first was the tiny, jewel-like purple-flowered *Lathyrus neurolobus*, from Crete, which has become a favourite of ours. Because the flowers are too small to pick, we have managed

to harvest quite a few seeds from the tiny black pods. We were impressed by how it regenerated after older growth was chopped.

The other was our native species *Lathyrus pratensis*, the meadow vetchling. Like most wildflowers, it was tricky to establish from seed outdoors. It was sown in roughly prepared meadows which received hardly any water for many weeks. The plants that did develop were those that we grew in in the greenhouse, first in a modular seed tray, then pricked out into pots. It took a while for them to get big enough to be planted out. Hopefully they'll come back next year. It's fun to observe the wild and wayward nature of this plant and its unusual shaped flowers, and how its tendrils grasp onto nearby grasses and other plants to pull itself above them all.



Lathyrus neurolobus.

***Lathyrus pratensis* (Meadow vetchling)**

Suppliers

Majority of seeds were bought from Roger Parsons and English Sweet Peas (now merged), and also from Chiltern seeds, Sarah Raven, Plant World Seeds, Unwins, Mr Fothergills, Kings and Merikai Seeds.

Propagation

We sowed our first batch of seeds in October 2024, repeating the sowing in November, and sowed a new batch of cultivars in the Spring (by then we'd learned which ones had a good show record), using ordinary peat-free multipurpose compost mixed with perlite at a 2/3 ratio. The perlite helped to retain moisture between waterings.

Pots were filled with the mix and tapped three times to consolidate. Seeds were sown at a depth of around 5-10mm, then watered well afterwards. After this we didn't water the seeds again until after they germinated, to reduce chances of rotting.

We used a variety of containers including rootainers, 5" pots, 8cm pots, toilet roll holders, rolled up newspapers, and seed trays. The majority were sown 2 seeds



Sowing. Photo by Lee Haley.

per 8cm pot and the germination rate overall was excellent for the Sweet Peas. Once they were about an inch tall, the seedlings were carefully pricked out and potted on into individual 8cm pots. This proved an effective method as not all seeds germinate but most of them do. *Lathyrus* species varied. Perennials were generally slow to get going, and a few didn't really make it past germination stage. *Lathyrus latifolius*, *syvestris*, *niger*, *vernus*, *aureus* and *nervosus* are all still establishing and will not flower in their first year. We hope to see some of them next year.

After sowing the seeds we left them in the greenhouse, using the heated bench to keep them at around 10-20c degrees. As soon as they germinated we took them down to the polytunnel in order for them to harden off. We left the doors open throughout the Winter to aid ventilation. Seedlings were kept on tables and managed to stay safe from slugs and mice, their main predators. We believe Sweet Peas and their relatives to be hardy down past -5 degrees so we only need to protect them from wind and rain throughout Winter.

It was a challenge to prevent the seedlings from drying out, without over watering. The peat-free multi-purpose appears to be dry on top but in fact holds moisture at the bottom of the pot. Great care must be taken to ensure that all plants are watered evenly so that they all dry out at the same rate. We lost about 20% of our seedlings to damping-off, which was expected. Some cultivars got off better than others, and seemed to be more robust. 'Henry Eckford' and 'Castle of Mey' seemed less vigorous at first than 'Scarlett' and 'Cupani', but all came good in the end.

Sweet Peas and species planted in January seemed to quickly catch up with Autumn sowings. Next year it might make sense for us to sow them all in January, to avoid the time spent taking care of over wintering plants. Because of the very mild winter, earlier sown seedlings became very leggy, and floppy, which encouraged some brown-collar. Many advise growers to pinch out the growing tip, but we refrained from doing this until February, to avoid the premature development of sideshoots.

Cultivation

From April seedlings were planted out and around the garden, in pots and on plots. The Spencer types which we aimed to grow for shows were grown using the cordon method. This involves selecting a single stem of the plant and training it up a cane, which are placed in rows. The plot was prepared by single-digging with some garden compost incorporated. Bamboo canes were placed 18cm apart in double rows 30cm apart. Well-rotted, organic farmyard manure was added as a mulch inside the double rows to help the plants to retain moisture and to provide some nutrition. Weed proof matting was pinned down to fit the 1m wide path between each double row. Used coffee grounds, spread generously around the outside of the plot, seemed to help to keep the slugs at bay (and gave off a powerful aroma).

Cordon grown plants required regular maintenance. Tasks involved disbudding (until 2 week before first show), removing tendrils and side-shoots, tying in, watering, feeding, and spraying leaves with SB plant invigorator to protect from pests and disease, and some liquid feed maxicrop at first and then sulphate of potash to assist flower production.



The most effective structures for bush grown Old Fashioned types were bamboo columns or cylinders, with 6 vertical canes placed 30cm apart in a hexagon. These allowed plenty of space for foliage and flowers at the top of the structure without over-crowding.

We learned later on from experienced growers of the importance of regular watering. Although our Sweet Peas were all very good, we could probably have obtained even more top quality flowers, if more regular watering had been carried out. This proved very difficult for us as the season was very hot and dry for many weeks at a time. Next year we hope to install some irrigation.

A few cultivars were grown in the polytunnel to prevent their colour from being bleached out by the sun. These were 'Henry Eckford' and 'Prince of Orange'. Both also did well on a plot shaded by trees, and these continued flowering until later in the season.

'Prince of Orange' did not grow true to type and appears to have reverted back to its Old Fashioned form. The same was true of 'Noel Sutton', although a few flowers showed some Spencer traits.

Conclusion

Overall the project proved to be of huge interest to everyone involved. Many people became more aware of the diversity of the Sweet Pea, and were impressed by our students abilities to demonstrate their knowledge when asked. It was made accessible to each individual, and there was plenty of scope for those who were willing to delve deeper into the Sweet Pea world. We have emerged more confident, and keen to try out new things next year.

We grew around 100 cordons on our plot 9, but with better planning we could grow and maintain double that amount within the same area. This would qualify us for a higher division in national shows. Bush grown cultivars could be planted with free-standing structures around the garden, and the plots could be reserved for cordons.



'King's Ransom.'

A lot of our knowledge has been transferable. For example tomatoes, when grown using the cordon method, require a culture very similar to that of Sweet Peas, including maintenance of support structures and removing of side shoots. Similarly the nutritional requirements of plants is something that we have come to understand more, thanks to the Sweet Pea experts who have informed the project. We now have a good store of nutrients and fertilisers, which are being applied to other plants.

Although we have learned an incredible amount in one year we realise that the project was not exhaustive and that we are only just scratching the surface. We are still novices at the Sweet Pea game and are bound to the learn the hard way one or two things. Tips and advice from the more experienced growers will spare us that pain. Nevertheless we are very happy with what we have achieved so far, having made a small impact on our community. Ultimately what the project has helped to us to become aware of is that Sweet Peas are a thoroughly rewarding and worthwhile endeavour, and that we all need to grow more of them.

References

Sweet Peas: An essential guide. R. Parsons, Crowood, 2018
Lathyrus: A complete guide. R. Parsons & G. Kenicker, RHS, 2021
Enjoy Sweet Peas. National Sweet Pea Society, 2008
NSPS website <https://sweetpeas.org.uk>

Spencer types	Old-Fashioned types	Modern-grandiflora	Annual species	Perennial species
Gwendoline	Cupani	Matucana	<i>L. tingitanus</i>	<i>L. latifolius</i>
Gilly Norah	Black Knight	Scarlett	<i>L. odoratus</i>	<i>L. sylvestris</i>
Alison Louise	Henry Eckford	CCC	<i>L. paranensis</i>	<i>L. vernus</i>
Castle of Mey	Flora Norton	Fire and Ice	<i>L. belinensis</i>	<i>L. aureus</i>
Naomi Nazereth	Mrs. Collier	Indigo King	<i>L. annuus</i>	<i>L. niger</i>
Just Julia	Primadonna	Almost Black	<i>L. angulatus</i>	<i>L. rotundifolia</i>
Just Jenny	Painted Lady	Nimbus	<i>L. hirsutus</i>	<i>L. nervosus</i>
Serendipity	Dorothy Eckford		<i>L. sativus</i>	<i>L. pratensis</i>
Anniversary				<i>L. neurolobus</i>
King's Ransom				<i>L. laevigatus</i>
Dream Girl				<i>L. laxiflorus</i>
Prince of Orange				

Walter Clarence Schmidt

By Mark Smith

Walter Clarence Schmidt, known as Dick, was born in Walthamstow in 1896. He attended Black Horse Road School leaving in 1908. He became a Butcher at Smithfield Meat Market. Walking to and from Walthamstow to work as the train was too expensive.

On the 8 September 1914 he, at the Call of King and Country, joined the King's Royal Rifle Corps, KRRC, at St Paul's churchyard aged 18. On being asked his name he hesitated over Schmidt and finally said Smith, thus changing the family name from that moment on.

In July 1915 he traveled with the 10th Battalion KRRC to France moving to the trenches of the Western Front. His first major action was on the 25th of September 1915 when he went over the top in the first British Gas attack of the Great War during the Battle of Loos. Unfortunately the wind changed as the gas was released and blew back into the British Trenches, Dick was gassed but pressed forward gaining the German Front Line trench before he was wounded in a Bayonet fight with a German, though wounded, only Dick survived the hand-to-hand combat.

Picked up, luckily, by a stretcher bearer party he returned to Blighty and married Emma Sandy, while convalescing.

Returning to the Front, now a qualified Machine Gunner he was, with his Battalion in the attack in September 1916 on a fortified German position called the Switch Line, a German trench system running between High Wood and Delville Wood on the mighty Somme Battlefield.

As the attack started, Dick, as No 1 on the gun, carried the tripod into action with his number 2 carrying the gun. He recalled, often, “ there was just a purple flash and I woke up hours later peppered with Shrapnel, my mate had just simply vanished in the explosion”.



Dick was returned to England so badly wounded he was unable to continue to be a Soldier and was Medically Discharged, “ no longer fit for Military Service “ at the age of 20 - he was discharged 48% disabled.

Dick returned to being a Butcher at Smithfield Meat Market earning a wage but also supported by his Disabled Soldiers Pension. A growing family in Walthamstow would take all of his looking after.

In 1936 the Army Pension Department announced that you could convert your weekly pension to a one-off final lump sum payment, Dick accepted the offer and received a final payment of £65. Roughly £6,000 in todays money. Did he stash this windfall away, bearing in mind a 3 bedroom house in Walthamstow at the time was about £200?

No, he placed the whole £65 pounds on a horse called Mahmoud, it was running in the 1936 Derby at 100/8. What a race that must have been to watch! Mahmoud won in the record time of 2 minutes 33 seconds, a time which lasted as the Derby record for 49 years, Dick won £877.

Dick retired. A wealthy man. His new found passion flower growing. He devoted his time on his allotment in Walthamstow to growing Sweet Peas. As time went buy he started to exhibit his flowers, the pinnacle becoming several Golds at the Chelsea Flower Show.

In 1940 he answered the call for old soldiers to join the Home Guard but was turned down as too badly wounded from the Great War, not to be left out he joined the ARP in Walthamstow and with his two sons, Victor and Leslie, was on Fire Watching Duties, ironically, near his beloved Sweet Pea allotment in Walthamstow, all through the Blitz of 1940/41.

Dick returned to Smithfield, desperate to do something for the War effort, and during the War became the Master Butcher of Smithfield Meat Market, dealing with salvaging cuts for human consumption from Condemned Meat, we really dont ever understand the true hardships of the Home Front in World War Two!!

After the War Dick returned to his flowers winning many more awards for his beloved Sweet Peas, but, the British Gas from Ypres was taking its dreadful toll and, in September 1959, almost 44 years to the day, after being gassed at Loos Dick passed away in Walthamstow aged 63.

I grew up with Grandad Dick's stories of the Great War and his prowess with his beloved Sweet Peas, standing in the garden of 74 Blenheim Road, Walthamstow, in Grandad's green house. My Nan would fondly remember him tending his blooms. The sideboard in the Parlour adorned with three huge silver cups.

For me, born on Christmas day 1963, Dick was just a photograph, but the family stories always brought him to life and I am now the proud owner of all his Medals, silver cups and awards from Chelsea and many other Flower shows.

I am very proud to be able to call Dick "my grandad ", I can never see a Sweet Pea without feeling his fond memory.

"I like gardening – it's a place where I find myself when I need to lose myself."

Alice Sebold

English Sweet Peas – A Golden Year

By Fran Armitage

The year 2025 will surely be remembered as a landmark year for English Sweet Peas, marking our long-awaited debut at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. To exhibit at Chelsea is an ambition held by many growers, and for us it represented not only a tremendous honour, but also the culmination of many months of careful planning, hard work, and dedication.

Preparation for the show began well in advance, with serious discussions taking place as early as 2024. One of the first and most important decisions was selecting which varieties would be suitable for display. This involved balancing colour, stem length, fragrance, and reliability, while also ensuring that we had sufficient seed stock to meet the expected interest following the show. Alongside this, considerable time was spent designing the stand itself, thinking carefully about how best to present the flowers so that they would truly reflect the natural beauty and charm of Sweet Peas.

Equally important was familiarising ourselves with the extensive rules and regulations set out by the Royal Horticultural Society. Chelsea is renowned for its high standards, and every detail, from staging to labelling, all must comply precisely with their requirements.



Monty Don appreciating the display before his piece to camera.

Photo by Josh Leppenwell.



Amy Dowden holding Sweet Pea 'Amy Dowden' with Phil Johnson.

Photo by Josh Leppenwell.

The show also provided the perfect opportunity to introduce a very special new variety: Sweet Pea 'Amy Dowden', a stunning pale pink cultivar named in honour of Amy Dowden MBE, the much-loved dancer and television personality. With its long, elegant stems and beautifully fragrant blooms, this variety proved to be the ideal centrepiece for our stand. The launch at Chelsea made the occasion even more memorable, and we were delighted by the enthusiastic response from Amy herself, visitors and fellow exhibitors alike.



**Phil Johnson with his
English Sweet Peas
Chelsea Gold Medal.**
Photo by Josh Leppenwell.

We were particularly proud that ten percent of all sales of Sweet Pea Amy Dowden are being donated to two charities personally chosen by Amy: CoppaFeel!, the breast cancer awareness charity, and Crohn's & Colitis UK, which provides information, support, and services to those living with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Being able to combine horticulture with support for such worthwhile causes made the introduction of this variety especially meaningful.

In the lead-up to the show we were fortunate to receive wonderful support from the BBC, who visited the nursery in Maldon to film a feature on English Sweet Peas and our preparations for our Chelsea debut. It was an extremely entertaining day, though not without its moments of nerves, as cameras captured both the plants and the people behind them. The piece was broadcast during the BBC's Chelsea coverage on the Tuesday evening, and we were thrilled to appear again twice more during the week. The exposure brought Sweet Peas to a wider audience and generated tremendous interest in our work.



RHS Gold Medal.
Photo by Phil Johnson.

During the show itself we were delighted that Monty Don took a particular shine to another of our new introductions, Sweet Pea 'Shell Pink', a soft and elegant variety making its first appearance at Chelsea. His kind comments were greatly appreciated and helped draw further attention to the stand.

The design of the stand itself had been the subject of much debate. In the end, we decided to present the flowers in as natural a state as possible, with leaves and tendrils left attached rather than removed. This approach gave the display a relaxed and authentic feel, allowing visitors to see the plants as they would appear in the garden. The fresh greenery also helped the colours of the blooms stand out vividly, creating a display that felt both traditional and full of life. We felt the effect was rather special, and thankfully the judges agreed, awarding us the coveted RHS Gold Medal. Receiving this recognition at our first Chelsea appearance was a moment none of us will forget.

The week itself proved to be a steep learning curve and, as anyone who has exhibited at Chelsea will know, an extremely tiring one. Early starts, long days, and constant attention to detail were all part of the experience. Yet despite the exhaustion, it was also a truly wonderful and rewarding occasion, filled with new friendships, shared enthusiasm, and a great sense of achievement. Having taken the plunge once, we are pleased to say that English Sweet Peas will be returning to Chelsea in 2026. With the experience of our first year behind us, we hope to build on what we learned and create an even finer display next time.

Wish us luck.



English Sweet Peas Chelsea display 2025. Photo by Josh Leppenwell.

Exhibiting Sweet Peas

By Carole Tate

If you are new to exhibiting I would urge you to scrutinise the Exhibition Schedule and plan well for success. For NSPS Shows, decide which division you will be entering.

There is a Division for non cordon plants and includes Old Fashioned, Grandifloras, Perennials and *Lathyrus* species. You need to sow sufficient seeds of the right kind to ensure you have enough flowers to enter the class you have chosen. The species are exhibited with own foliage and buds are allowed. There are classes in the National schedule for Novice entries, so please consider those if you are new to exhibiting.

The decorative division is very popular, particularly with growers who have smaller gardens. I would encourage you to study the schedule and work out how many blooms are needed, which varieties, what foliage (if any), what size arrangement and any accessories. It allows opportunity to display Sweet Peas in different arrangements, let your imagination run and be rewarded with gasps of delight from the judges and public. It also gives you opportunity to use your short stemmed blooms! A bowl/saucer takes 24 stems of mixed varieties with any foliage. It is always worth reading the Rules carefully to check if the foliage is own or any and whether small flowers, grasses or seed heads are allowed.

The graded divisions allow growers to compete against members who grow a similar number of plants. Check which varieties you are growing and work out how many Spencer blooms you will need for each vase class. As a general rule of thumb you will need 3 plants for each stem entered. Check which Division you qualify for and how many stems needed for each vase. You can always show in a division with more cordon plants than you have if you wish. If you are growing no more than 100 cordons you will need 7 stems for each vase so you would need at least 21 plants of a particular variety. If you wanted to enter the 3 vase distinct class, (distinct means recognisably different colours) you would need 21 of three different varieties ie 63 plants. If you do not have enough flowers to enter the single vase there is the option to enter a mixed vase with not less than 3 different cultivars. If you have more than 7 stems of one variety you could enter the classes in the divisions above, paying attention to the number of stems required.

When choosing which varieties to grow you can look in the recent NSPS Annuals for the Show Audits which detail the most popular varieties and their success in the show. Try to work out what date your Peas will be blooming and aim for them to peak at the date of the competition. This may mean nipping off buds to stop them

flowering too early, or succession planting to extend the growing season. Try to time any layering so that it happens between shows to ensure long straight stems, and don't forget to feed and water regularly.

Please check through the Regulations for Exhibitors. We aim to be fair to all exhibitors giving each the opportunity to maximise the potential of their Sweet Peas. Refer any questions to the relevant Show Manager. Lots of hints and tips can be found in past publications, on Facebook (For the Love of Sweet Peas), on the website www.sweetpeas.org.uk, your District Representative and your fellow growers.

Make sure you know when the staging times are and leave plenty of time to pack your blooms carefully for transporting, keeping them as cool as possible to retain freshness. Have your staging material and equipment ready beforehand and identify which booms will be entered into which class. When you arrive at the venue, collect your entry cards and vases/bowls/saucers. You will also need variety cards to identify your Sweet Pea varieties and it is common practice to add a set of Sweet Pea leaves at the front and back of the vase. If you are not sure, look at the photos in the NSPS publications or check with fellow competitors.

Once your entries are on the show bench you can sit back and relax whilst Judging takes place. At the NSPS Exhibitions you can be offered the opportunity to take part in stewarding. It is an excellent opportunity to see what the Judges are looking for and get a better understanding of what makes a good exhibit, so please do volunteer. Reading through the Judges Rules booklet is also very useful.

I hope you are encouraged to enter your flowers in one of our NSPS Shows or a local venue. Many horticultural shows across the country are struggling to survive. Without entries there is no show. I look forward to seeing you (and your Peas) at one of the many events.

How to Compete Without Peat

By Lee Haley

Firstly let me say that I am relatively novice regarding not only the nature of peat but of horticultural practice in general. I do not intend to educate the public here or to enlighten anyone, but merely to share my experiences and thoughts on peat free compost, and perhaps question one or two things. I was asked to write an article on the subject by fellow member Phillippa Cooper who knows me from the Wem Sweet Pea show. Last year the college I represent won some small victories at Wem using blooms from our peat free grown plants.

Harington, the college where I work, switched to peat free about 5 years ago, in line with RHS recommendations. Since then I have felt that I have been working a lot harder to ensure that seedlings do not dry out, and at the same time being careful that too much water is not being retained at the bottom of the pots. One thing about peat free compost is that it often looks dry on the top, but if you lift the pot it is actually quite heavy. Last year I remember at one point during the Christmas holidays having to poke holes with a pencil in all of the pots of our Autumn sown seedlings, so that they weren't sitting too long in damp soil.

When I joined various societies last year, one of my hopes was to discover some of the secrets of horticulture, that would enable me to grow amazing plants. I soon discovered that veteran growers of Sweet Peas, chrysanthemums, delphiniums, and daffodils all use peat and have all struggled to find a substitute. It's just my luck that I am only really discovering the benefits of peat just as the RHS are pushing towards a complete ban. The fact remains that until an official ban is put in place, top commercial growers as well as exhibitors will continue to use peat, which has been working well for many years. As a horticultural college we sell and exhibit plants we aim to match industry and show standards, and so my question now is; how can we compete without peat, without incurring defeat?

Some sources report that as little as 5% of the peat sold commercially is used in horticulture and some say as little as 0.0005%⁽¹⁾. Most of the rest is burned in furnaces which is of great detriment to the environment. Could we not argue that growers are essentially putting the peat back into the earth? We are told that peat releases carbon into the atmosphere, but plants which they are grown in release oxygen and provide other benefits to the planet.

Another thing to consider is the nature of the peat bogs. Their total surface areas are documented (there are 500 million hectares of peat on earth) but depth is not taken into account. Some are thought to be many feet deep⁽¹⁾. They were formed under the canopy of ancient rainforests, now long vanished, once rich in vegetation and diversity⁽²⁾. Now a lot of these uplands are protected and maintained as nature reserves, which have become so depleted by sheep that they can only now support a very limited range of flora (heather, purple moorgrass, tormentil) and fauna (red grouse and ring ouzel)⁽³⁾. I'm not sure what is the benefit of having peat in the ground if it could be being used in horticulture, to increase local plant diversity. Instead we have to add all sorts of products to help the peat free compost to do its job, such as perlite and vermiculite, both of which have to be heated at extremely high temperatures in furnaces, probably using fossil fuels.

While the RHS has highlighted the detrimental effects of peat on the environment it has not, so far as I know, published any data regarding the use of peat specifically in horticulture. Before issuing a complete ban I would like to be sure that we are doing it for the right reasons, and not because of just wanting to be seen to be doing

the right thing. For example we could ask what percentage of peat has been used in horticulture, and what detrimental effects are associated with this sector, as well as for more accurate info of how much peat there is in the ground.

As I was keen to make some John Innes no. 3 for chrysanthus, following advice from time honoured literature. I decided to treat myself to buying some Irish moss peat, before it was too late. I found it lovely fluffy stuff to work with and decided then to sow some Sweet Peas in a mix recommended by Roger Parsons in his Essential guide⁽⁴⁾, which was 90% peat and 10% sand. Since writing this guide, Roger has actually switched to a peat reduced mix, in order to ease his conscience, like many other top growers.

It will be interesting to see if there is any notable difference between our peat sown Sweet Peas and the majority which are peat free. Plants sown in peat were done before 2026 and so will still qualify for Wisley, which we hope to be entering. Despite the increase in maintenance, I would say that we still manage to grow good plants. I am glad to see that the overall quality of peat free compost has improved. As a charity we generally buy the cheapest option, and our compost has added perlite, some nutrients, and seems to be improving its ability to retain water.

As long as compost is of good enough quality then this will hopefully encourage new growers. Since many growers are being put out by rising costs, which puts pressure on small family businesses, I like to question whether or not a peat ban in horticulture is for the greater good for our environment. Meanwhile many top growers continue to experiment with growing mediums, so we can expect PFC to continue to improve.

References

¹ International peat society survey <https://landscapejuicenetowr.com/>

² *Otherlands*, Thomas Halliday, Penguin, 2022.

³ *Feral*, George Monbiot, Penguin, 2013

⁴ *Sweet Peas: An essential guide*, Roger Parsons, Crowood, 2011

“Gardening simply does not allow one to be mentally old, because too many hopes and dreams are yet to be realised.”

Allan Armitage

Viruses in Sweet Peas

By Roger Parsons

There were many reports of virus infection of plants in 2025, not always displaying all the symptoms of the well-known Mosaic viruses. People wanted answers so I was asked to write this article but don't claim personal expertise on this subject. There are very many viruses which can affect Sweet Peas, and we know viruses will readily mutate, meaning this topic is a bit of a minefield. I hope these notes will be helpful.

I used the term Mosaic viruses (i.e. plural) because many similar viruses have been identified in Sweet Peas so symptoms may vary. Pea Mosaic Virus is commonly seen as mottling and yellowing of foliage. Flower colour is broken. Pea Enation Mosaic Virus forms scattered translucent "windows" in leaves, which may also be stunted. I did not hear any reports of this in 2025. Bean Yellow Mosaic Virus and White Clover Mosaic Virus make up the four most frequently found in the UK. At least 11 viruses are known on Sweet Peas in the UK and over 50 have been identified world-wide. You would need an electron microscope to distinguish them. This is why symptoms may vary.



The three virus symptoms people will be most familiar with are:

- Fuzzyhead, seen when the growing point of shoots becomes pale, compressed and distorted,
- Leaf discolouration, and
- Colour-breaking in the petals.



Some reports last year were of reddish-brown streaks appearing on the haulm. This is commonly referred to as Streak and used to be a widespread problem but is not often encountered these days. It was traditionally caused by a bacterium rather than a virus, but the symptoms resemble Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus. This is spread by Thrips, rather than Aphids, and can also lead to discoloured rings on the leaves.

What can you do to prevent virus infections? Viruses are often spread by insects, especially Aphids, so Aphid control is important. Once a plant is infected, we might spread it to other plants by our cultural methods. Some growers dip their knives in disinfectant between cuts or avoid using a knife altogether. Alternative host plants may be a source of infection and should be removed, Clover for example. A few viruses can be transmitted by soil-dwelling Nematodes.

Mercifully, most viruses are not seed-borne. I would hesitate to say none can be transmitted by seed but have yet to experience it. The failure of these viruses to transmit via seed is well-documented.

An interesting example of a “virus” was seen on some Trials plants at West Dean gardens in 2025. Colour in the petals was broken and got progressively worse, but the vegetative parts of affected plants looked completely healthy throughout. A little research suggests this may have been an MLO, described in detail by Mark

Rowland in the 2000 Sweet Pea Annual. MLO is an abbreviation for mycoplasma-like organism so is not strictly speaking a virus. The host plant for MLO is Clover and it is transmitted by Leaf-hoppers. As with viruses, this can be transmitted by growers on a knife blade but is not seed-borne.



Suspected MLO seen at West Dean in 2025. Photo by Caroline Ball.

Outings 2025

By Caroline Ball

Reading through the Annuals of yesteryear a regular event was Outings and the photographs of them were certainly evocative of an era. When thinking of ways to celebrate 125 years of the Society the idea of Outings was a well-favoured option. Thus, two outings one to West Dean and the Trials in West Sussex and the second to Barnsdale in Rutland were arranged. The Outings were open to all members and proved to be well received.

The visit to West Dean happened on 15 June, a very sunny Sunday. The West Dean Trials committee gave an insightful guided tour of the Trials, which were looking pretty splendid and colourful and were much admired. Questions covering the judging criteria and the control varieties were answered. Thereafter (and before) people were free to roam the beautiful well-kept gardens. The restored Victorian glasshouses adjacent to the Sweet Peas proved a great draw, not least because there was a very colourful display of early flowering Sweet Peas housed in them along with the resident chickens. The walled garden boasted delphiniums, alstroemeria amongst other flowers. The roses in the adjacent garden room were spectacular. Many of us bought well grown and well-priced plants from the shop to remember our day.



The sumptuous afternoon tea was hosted in the grade II* listed West Dean House within the panelled library which has spectacular views of the grounds. On the way to/from the tea people could admire Salvador Dali's lobster phone, his lips sofa and a very old dolls house. Such a treat of a day.



West Dean. Photo by Caroline Ball.



West Dean. Photo by Caroline Ball.



West Dean. Photo by Caroline Ball.



Barnsdale. Photo by Alison Shreeve.



Barnsdale. Photo by Caroline Ball.

On 16 July, another hot and sunny day, we visited Barnsdale, in Oakham, Leicestershire. These gardens were the creation of former Gardeners' World presenter Geoff Hamilton developed when he ran out of space to experiment at the original 'Barnsdale' he found a Victorian farmhouse only a mile away and set out on his labour of love to create 38 separate gardens all built on peat-free, organic principles across its site there was a lot to enjoy from the traditional English cottage garden to wildlife, Japanese, French, and of course a rose



Barnsdale. Photo by Alison Shreeve.

garden. We naturally lingered over the Sweet Peas of course and were delighted by the contrasting colours and textures in the vegetable garden. I vowed to buy a clematis called 'Confetti'. There were some very spectacular lilies in a greenhouse and we enjoyed very much peering into all the little buildings around the gardens to see what treasures lay within.

Afternoon tea was held in the charming tea room and again was sumptuous. Many of us concluded our trip with a visit to the plant centre which was stocked with some choice plants we had seen in the gardens. If you have the opportunity both gardens are very worthwhile visiting.



Barnsdale. Photo by Alison Shreeve.



Barnsdale. Photo by Alison Shreeve.

A New Scheme

By Alison Shreeve

The Society has started a new scheme which it hopes will enable more people to enjoy the benefits of Sweet Peas in the summer months. This is the Sweet Pea Gardens Network, and is a collaboration between the Society and individual gardens throughout the UK where they celebrate and grow all forms of *L. odoratus*.

This Network is in its infancy and we hope that you will check out the first few gardens on our website - Sweet Pea Gardens Network - National Sweet Pea Society Please do visit them if you are nearby. The website has a brief description and a link to the garden's own website plus it shows where the garden is located on a map.

You can help to grow this network by letting us know if there are any gardens near you, or indeed far away if you have come across them on holiday, which also include good displays of Sweet Peas. If you have an address and even better, a name

we can contact that would be wonderful. Please contact the Chair a.shreeve1@btinternet if you can point us to further gardens who might be interested in joining the Network. We will add them to our website and in return we ask them to display a poster about the NSPS and we send them some printed information to encourage people to start growing their own Sweet Peas.

So far we have managed to engage gardens in all parts of the UK and Northern Ireland, but we know there are many more out there. If you yourself open your gardens when your Sweet Peas are flowering, perhaps as part of the NGS Open Gardens Scheme, we would be happy to include those too. They don't have to be permanently open professional gardens to be included. Our aim is to be mutually beneficial and encourage visitors to see Sweet Peas in situ.

A Tail of Two Halves

By Darren Everest

The beginning of 2025 was nothing unusual down here on the Isle of Wight. It started off wet and miserable as our winters often are these days. My November sowing for my Chelsea plants went in as usual and germination was good. Unusually I did have two varieties that wouldn't germinate. Something that I've not witnessed for a number of years. So another batch of these were sown with much better results.

I usually get planting in late January but I decided this year to delay until early February, just to try and hold the plants back by a week or two. The reason being that by Chelsea, which is third week in May, the plants are often above head height, and as I grow them up nets it gives me little option to control them. I could only hope that they would flower in time.

As we headed into spring it remained remarkably dry, enough for me to be able to get my Sweet Pea beds rotavated and prepared ready for planting. Over the last



Some of Darren Everest's vases at the Early National. Photo by Caroline Ball.

few years it has been so wet here, and on my heavy ground I've been lucky to get planted out by the end of April, into still wet, cold ground.

I had sown my cordon grown plants a little later than usual, around mid January. Not expecting to get them out until late April. With the unusually dry conditions and a gap between other jobs on the horizon

I decided to plant out in early April. The plants were about two weeks younger than ideal but out they went. They certainly had a good root system on them so I wasn't really worried about them. Of course they don't really move away much in the first two weeks and when you walk past them every day they don't appear to be moving at all. However, after a few weeks they soon start to get away.

Once reduced down to the one main stem, these were then tied onto their canes to continue their journey. My aim this year was the early National show. For the first time in several years it didn't clash with anything else. I had decided to take a break from exhibiting at the Blenheim Palace Flower Show as it fell on the weekend prior to Hampton Court and I couldn't do both. This meant that I could focus my energy into the National.



Darren Everest and his Chelsea Display. Photo by Caroline Ball.

Before that, though, was the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. We have always liked to give our display a theme and we generally run with it for two years before changing it to something new. This not only keeps the public happy but also keeps us happy by experimenting with new ideas. There is a lot to consider when planning a new display such as cost of the build, what is it supposed to represent, will the public get what you are trying to put across and how long will it take to stage and dismantle, to name but a few.



Detail from the Ye Olde Sweet Shoppe display at Chelsea. Photo by Caroline Ball.

This year we had decided on trying to recreate an old fashioned sweet shop. It was an idea that I had had back in the previous April. One of the things that I'm very good at is leaving everything to the last minute. It's not an attribute that my long suffering wife, Dawn, is over keen on. But I think it's quite fun, keeps us all on our toes and generally gets the adrenaline pumping! Needless to say, making the props for my display was all done quite late in the day. The only thing I got arranged in good time was the sign written board I had made for me. With a new puppy thrown into the mix, time was something that was in short supply.

When you create a themed display at a show, especially at the most prestigious show in the world, you do run the risk of the judges not getting it. However, we decided a long time ago that as long as the public enjoy what we try and do then that's the most important, after all, there's a lot more of them to please! This was also untried and untested. With our previous Chelsea displays we have used a wedding theme which we had used many times years ago at the Kent County Show. What was also a challenge was that because of the new addition to our family I had to stage the blooms on my own this time, Dawn was on puppy duties.

I did have some help from a neighbour preparing the stand prior to installing the blooms which was a huge help though. On the Sunday I cut my blooms early in the morning before heading across the Solent. When we first exhibited back in 2023 we were told that as cut flower exhibitors that we could stage through the night. Obviously we needed to get some sleep so we got cracking and had it done by 2.30am. Last year we wanted to get done sooner to allow us more sleep and was done by around midnight. This year, however, when I arrived at the show I was informed that I could only stay until 9pm. How on earth could I stage everything by then? After raising my concerns with the show manager I was given permission to stay until 11pm and to be allowed in early at 6.30am to finish off. This was still not ideal but I therefore had to rush. As it was a new design it was untried and untested so much of it was created organically as I went. Some things worked while others didn't work quite so well and will be worked upon for next year.

The Monday was judging day and for the media, celebrities, invited guests and the Royal visit. It's a strange day, much of it is spent just talking to people, but with very little selling going on. Lots of publicity shots for magazines and newspapers and interviews for radio and television channels. Every now and again I'd see a famous face. Other times I might see a famous face but due to my lack of interest in celebrity culture these days I wouldn't know who they are!

Around 3pm the place is emptied ready for the Royal visit, with only one person allowed to stay per display. At about 4.30pm I was approached by a lady who had been to my display earlier in the day. She wished to purchase a copy of my new book. During our conversation earlier in the day she had told me her name was Lady Bacon. I was unaware that with her was her husband, Lord Bacon. As

I completed the transaction and passed Lady Bacon her copy I turned around to see HRH King Charles walking just a few feet away, heading past my display. Out of the corner of my eye I saw this gentleman gesturing to the King, beckoning him over. The King, attention gained, walked over, away from his meticulously planned route towards us. After a brief introduction as “this is the man from the Isle of Wight with his Sweet Peas” I had a handshake followed by a brief conversation with His Royal Highness before he was on his way. Well, that was something that I wasn’t expecting!

The rest of the week was amazing. I met so many lovely people from all across the world and the feedback from the public was phenomenal. I may have had to settle for Silver Gilt this time around but I was pleased with that. I knew it wasn’t worthy of anything higher and there is room for improvement and will work on improving it for next year. At this point I’d like to congratulate Phil Johnson and his team for their wonderful Gold Medal winning display. It was clearly a hit with the judges.

No sooner was I back from Chelsea the work on the cordons intensified. With the National show in mind I decided to layer my plants the first weekend in June but this meant that they hadn’t fully recovered in time for the Downton show in the New Forest. I’d not been before and as it was in early June, just a week later. I went along with what I could find only to discover a huge array of exhibitors with some fantastic blooms. I should have stayed at home! Brian Bartlett took the top honours.

The next weekend was the New Forest Show where, although my blooms were getting better, Brian still stole the show with some amazing flowers. Then it was the National show and with the temperatures soaring to sweltering levels it didn’t bode well for the Peas. Fortunately, on the island we don’t get the extremely high temperatures as witnessed on the mainland so my stems remained long for just long enough. Despite some issues over staging times I was able to overcome these with a little ingenuity and was able to stage twenty four vases of 15 stems and entered the 12, 9 and 3 vase classes and to my amazement won all three. Winning the 12, the Roger Parsons Challenge, was something that I thought was going to elude me forever but that’s one more thing I can tick off my bucket list!

The last show for me was Hampton Court Flower Festival and although I’m usually there to promote my other flower, the Dahlia, for the second year running I had to fall back on the Sweet Peas to bolster my display. It was red hot during the build up and due to the intense heat I chose to cut my blooms early on Sunday morning in order to get them into some



***Darren staging his
Chelsea exhibit.
Photo by Caroline Ball.***

shade and cooler environment ready for staging early on the Monday morning. Judging was due to begin at around 3pm but it was so hot that some of the blooms were already beginning to struggle then. As it was the judges didn't get to my stand until around 4pm. By this time it was clear that some blooms were fading and it was no surprise that when I arrived Tuesday morning I discovered that I'd won a Silver Gilt Medal. Well, it was a surprise in that I'm surprised it even got that! By the end of Tuesday it had been so hot that many of my blooms had literally melted by the end of the day. I made the decision to return to the island a day early to cut a fresh batch. I had to wait until around 6,30pm before I could get back to the marquee with my van to load up my buckets before heading back down the A3 to Portsmouth to catch the 10.15pm ferry.

I was up the garden again at 11.30pm with my head torch on cutting the next batch. I didn't bother going to bed, I just drove straight back to the ferry terminal and nodded off for a few minutes until it was time to get the 4am ferry back again. Shut my eyes on the ferry for forty minutes then back up the A3 arriving back at Hampton Court around 5.45am. Shut my eyes for another hour or so until I was allowed back in again to re-stage. I repeated this again on the Thursday night although I was able to get away a bit earlier so did manage about three hours sleep. Despite the exhaustion I did still manage to enjoy the week, all thanks to caffeine!

In a way I'm glad that Hampton Court is moving to Badminton next year. It's just that bit too far for me to travel backwards and forwards for fresh blooms so I'll be having a year off. Hopefully I will be able to have a go at winning the Daily Mail Cup this year.

North West Autumn Social

By Julia Beardmore

For many years, the North West hold an Autumn Social for Members to get together and share the successes of the year and maybe have a grumble about the weather. In October 2025, 30+ of us met at St Mary's Church hall, near Chorley.

The first presentation on the agenda was from Paul Adnitt, who shared his and his wife Kathryn's first two years growing Sweet Peas, and were delighted to win first class in the Special Vase class of Sweet Peas and foliage, judged by the public. Paul then enlightened us with their trip to Vietnam and Cambodia, with some interesting slides, giving us a good insight into the culture and people of these two countries.

Carole Tate then talked about changes to the National Exhibitions for 2026.

Carole and Sarah Haisley followed with a talk and slides on *Lathyrus* Species.

A break for lunch, the churches verger makes delicious savoury pies, and members made cakes and fruit skewers. Lunch is “free”, the deal is that everyone brings raffle prizes and purchase plenty of raffle tickets, most people go home with a prize or two.

Over lunch there is a quiz, members can purchase next years seeds and time to chat. Barrie Eckford (descendant of Henry Eckford) gave us an insight into The Eckford History. 2025 Season – How this season has been for Sweet Peas – an opportunity for members to ask the questions to the panel – which comprised Darren Myers, Sarah Haisley and Carole Tate. Jane Robins demonstrated her floristry skills with 3 beautiful arrangements, which were then raffled.

And that is 2025 year wrapped up.

Exhibiting at NSPS North West Region Show, 31 July to 2 August 2026

By Carole Tate

Our ninth NWR Show will again be held at Chorley Flower Show over three days at the end of July. It is exhibitor friendly with good parking, lighting and overnight staging facilities. We have a team of helpers to assist with fetching and carrying, staging and providing, water, vases and staging material (Oasis is allowed but we encourage the use of alternative environmental friendly mediums). Refreshments are provided during staging and throughout the show for exhibitors and helpers.

Staging is from 4pm to 10.30pm on Thursday 30 July and 5.30am to 9am on Friday 31 (overnight staging by arrangement) with judging taking place on Friday morning between 9-10am. The presentation of Awards by the Flower Show Celebrity will be at 1pm on Friday.

We encourage novice and junior entries with a range of graded sections to encourage members with different growing capacities. We also support this with a local workshop. The decorative classes are very well supported and include petite and buttonholes. The popular sponsored single bloom class is open to all members, and we have a vase to be judged by the public.

Chorley show has a true horticultural focus with a very high standard of trade and amateur exhibits. We will have an environmentally friendly display stand and information bureau and look forward to meeting friends new and old.

As with all the shows and displays we need lots of donated flowers and volunteers. You do not need to be a member to help. Please contact me if you would like to

support us at this or any of the other shows, workshops or displays and for details of any of our North West events. Best regards and good luck with your blooms.

Schedule Erratum

By Schedule Committee

The 100 cordons division requires Spencer cultivars only, not more than 7 stems in each vase (not 9 stems as published in the issued schedule). This applies to class 6.1 for 3 vases distinct (not more than 7 stems in each of the three vases) and for both class 6.3 for a vase of a single cultivar and 6.4 for a vase of mixed cultivars (not less than 3 distinct cultivars to be included in the vase).

If you have any queries about this or any other matter concerning the Schedule please do not hesitate to contact the relevant show manager. Apologies if this typo has caused any confusion.

Early National at RHS Wisley 17-18 June 2026

By Roger Dix and Caroline Ball

Once again we are the guests of RHS Wisley for the Early National in 2026. The Hilltop centre is a magnificent well-lit hall, purpose made for shows and events and is the same venue as the 2023 Early. Entry will be via the blue security gate to the far left of carpark 1. Please press the bell to the left of the gate to attract the security staff. Cars will be allowed to drive up to the Hilltop centre for unloading only, please then remove your car to carpark 1 to allow others space to unload. Please adhere to any instructions given by the RHS staff manning the gate. Staging will be from 6.30pm on Tuesday 16 June until 8.30am on Wednesday 17 June. We have been advised that no sleeping on the premises, and that includes the carparks, will be permitted.

We are the guests of the RHS and they are employing special staff to allow us to stage overnight. Once you have finished staging please leave the site unless you are helping the show managers.

Since this is an RHS venue, no staging in Oasis will be permitted. If you are unsure about what is allowed or have any other queries about the show or the Schedule please do not hesitate to contact Caroline or Roger. As usual there will be plenty of people around who would be delighted to give assistance with your exhibits should you need it. NSPS pink membership cards will allow exhibitors and other members



Blue security gate.



Bell.

free entry into the gardens at Wisley during the two days of the show. Show them at the entrance to the gardens.

If you are approaching from the M25 look out for the brown signs bearing a flower to help you get to Wisley. Not all of them mention Wisley.

If you are a commercial grower or a flower farmer of Sweet Peas and might be interested in having some space for a display at the NSPS Early National Sweet Pea show in June please contact Caroline Ball (caroline_a_m_ball@yahoo.co.uk) or Roger Dix (rogerdix@sky.com).

Exhibiting at NSPS National Late Show, 11 and 12 July 2026

By Carole Tate

This year the NSPS Late Show will again be held at RHS Bridgewater Gardens, Worsley M28 2LJ. It is chosen to give accessibility to as many members as possible with good motorway access and fantastic facilities. We will be in the marquee which is large enough to allow us to display the entries for judging and for the public to view our magnificent blooms. Situated in a central location and advertised at Bridgewater and on the RHS website there will be a good footfall of interested horticultural people who will no doubt be inspired to grow our beloved Sweet Pea. The volunteers at the Information Bureau will be able to help encourage new and existing growers as well as provide advice and answer questions.

Help will also be on hand for exhibitors. We have a team who will be available to help with transporting blooms from the car, supply water, vases and staging materials, help with staging and make copious cups of tea and coffee. Staging starts at 4pm on Friday 10 July and runs to 10pm then restarts at 6am Saturday morning. Judging is due to start at 9.45am on Saturday but can be delayed for the bigger vase classes as we appreciate that time is limited with no overnight staging available. Please check the schedule for details of the Special Classes which are open to all members and the Special Awards available.

Show and Displays

Gloucester Open Sweet Pea Show

By Phil Champion



*Venue for Gloucester Sweet Pea show.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

The Gloucestershire Sweet Pea Show was held on 5 July 2025 at Dundry Nurseries and Garden Centre in Cheltenham, forming part of the celebrations during the 125th anniversary year of the National Sweet Pea Society. The schedule comprised sixteen classes in total, including thirteen Spencer classes, two of which were arranged bowls. In addition, there were three non-Spencer classes, including one bowl class.

Despite the challenging growing season, the show attracted fifty entries, with exhibitors travelling from Abergavenny, Sutton Coldfield, the Chilterns and across the South West.

Denise Bonner produced an outstanding display of Spencer varieties, winning six classes. Her exhibit of the cream Spencer 'Jilly' was awarded Best Vase in Show and drew considerable admiration from visitors and fellow exhibitors alike. Other notable exhibits included Alison Sheeve's striking arrangement of purple



A selection of bowls at Gloucester show. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

and blue Spencer varieties, and Graham Edwards' impressive bowl containing twenty Spencer stems. Jen and Lewis Morgan also exhibited the delicate new variety 'Amy Dowden', which attracted much interest.

The judging was kindly undertaken by Gill Hazel, whose experience and careful consideration ensured a fair and thoughtful assessment of the entries.

The show enjoyed a lively and welcoming atmosphere, with a large number of visitors attending throughout the afternoon. Interest extended well beyond the growing community, with groups such as the local spinning and weaving club visiting, alongside enthusiasts travelling from as far as Bristol. The exhibits

generated considerable interest, with many questions from visitors about cultivation techniques and the varieties on display.

One of the aims of the Gloucestershire show is to encourage new and novice growers to take part. Sweet Peas remain one of the most rewarding flowers for gardeners to grow and exhibit, and it was particularly pleasing to see the curiosity and enthusiasm from visitors who were inspired to try growing and showing them in future seasons.

The 2025 season proved a difficult one for many growers. A cold, dry spring delayed early growth, followed by a hot, dry summer which curtailed the flowering period. In addition, several growers experienced virus problems which limited the number of entries they were able to stage. In this context, the quality of the exhibits on display was particularly commendable.

The show was held in the Day Centre building of the Butterfly Garden charity, providing a welcoming and distinctive setting for the displays.

Grateful thanks are due to Chris Evans of Dundry Nurseries, whose generous support and hospitality have enabled the show to be held at the nursery for several years. The 2026 show will be held on 4 July again at Dundry Nurseries & Garden Centre, Bamfurlong Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 6SL.



Denise Bonner NSPS special rosette winner at Gloucester Show.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Prize winning bowl at Gloucester Show. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

North West Region Show at Chorley Flower Show

By Carole Tate



John Robson.
Photo by Carole Tate.

The NSPS North West Region Show was again held this year at the Chorley Flower Show on the 25, 26 and 27 July. The show was well attended by the public and we were favoured with excellent weather. The number of entries were up on 2024 with 75 vases, 16 bowls and pots and 27 decorative classes.

We had 21 competitors who travelled from as far afield as London and Scotland, and a fantastic 8 Novices. John Robson won Best in Division I with his superb vase of 'Kippen Cream', Les Gridale won Best in Divisions II and III with vases of 'Anniversary' and 'White Frills', and Tom Atherton Best in Division IV with a lovely vase of 'Sir Jimmy Shand'. Novice

Alex Cooper won both Best in Division V with his vase of 'Gwendoline', always a show favourite variety, and Best Junior with Class 51, two vases distinct.

Tom and Jane Atherton won the Best in Division VI with a spectacular bowl of perennial species, Julia Beardmore won the Best Decorative with her dinner table arrangement and a delighted Kath Foley won Best Novice with her fantastic birthday celebration arrangement. The single stem class was hotly contested as usual with lots of entries. John Robson won 1st, Carole Tate 2nd, Alex Cooper 3rd, John Robson 4th and Alex Cooper 5th. The awards were presented by Tom Atherton.

The Society stand was a huge success using glass bowls and vases to display the Sweet Peas. No oasis or plastic bowls were used on the stand and we were delighted to win a GOLD Award. The information boards and timeline floral displays attracted much interest from the public and our team of helpers did a terrific job of selling seeds, merchandise and membership as well as providing information on growing methods and Sweet Pea varieties. A great day was had by all.

A big thank you to all the exhibitors, sponsors, judges, members and helpers and a special thanks on behalf of the society to Chorley Council Events team for all their support.

Audit of North West Region Show – Chorley

25, 26 & 27 July 2025

By Carole Tate

No	Name of Cultivar	1	2	3	Unplaced	Total	Colour	Class
	Sir Jimmy Shand	6	3	1	1	11	Fancy striped	16
	Gwendoline	6	0	0	4	10	Pale magenta	4a
	White Frills	3	1	0	1	5	White	1
	Anniversary	3	0	0	1	4	Picotee (wg)	15
	Kippen Cream	3	0	0	0	3	Cream	2
	Just Julia	1	0	0	2	3	Blue (mid)	9a
	Karen Louise	1	1	0	0	2	Lavender	8
	Castlewellan	1	0	0	1	2	Pale pink (cg)	11
	Tom Atherton	1	0	0	1	2	Fancy striped	16
	Daily Mail	1	0	0	0	1	Cerise pink	10c
	Jill Walton	1	0	0	0	1	Pale pink	10
	Millennium	1	0	0	0	1	Red (crimson)	3b
	Miss Truslove	1	0	0	0	1	Mauve (pale)	7a
	Southbourne	1	0	0	0	1	Pale pink (wg)	10
	Daphne	0	0	1	0	1	Lavender	8
	Naomi Nazareth	0	0	1	0	1	Pale blue	9b
	Castle of Mey	0	0	0	1	1	Cream	2
	Charlie's Angel	0	0	0	1	1	Blue (pale)	9b
	Jilly	0	0	0	1	1	Cream	2
	Seedlings	2	2	0	1	5		
	Totals	32	7	3	15	57		
Non Spencers								
	Cupani	0	1	0	1	2	Maroon/violet	OF
	Chrissie	0	1	0	0	1	Lavender	GF
	Senator	1	0	0	0	1	Maroon/violet flake	OF
	Mrs Collier	0	0	1	0	1	Cream	OF
	Total Non Spencers	1	2	1	1	5		
	Mixed vases	7	4	1	1	13		
	Total Vases	40	13	5	17	75		
	Bowls & Pots	10	2	2	2	16		
	Decorative Classes	9	9	7	2	27		
	Total	59	24	14	21	118		

CLASS		No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
DIVISION I		
1	6 VASES DISTINCT 1st J Robson 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
2	3 VASES DISTINCT 1st J Robson 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
3	TWO VASES 1st J Robson 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
4	ONE VASE 1st J Robson 2nd J Robson 3rd –	(2)
5	ONE VASE, MIXED CULTIVARS 1st J Robson 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
6	MIXED BOWL 1st J Robson 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
DIVISION II		
21	6 VASES DISTINCT (No Entries)	(0)
22	3 VASES DISTINCT 1st L Grisdale 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
23	TWO VASES 1st L Grisdale 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
24	ONE VASE 1st L Grisdale 2nd L Grisdale 3rd –	(2)
25	ONE VASE, MIXED CULTIVARS 1st L Grisdale 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
26	MIXED BOWL 1st L Grisdale 2nd – 3rd –	(1)

*“When the world wearies and society fails
to satisfy, there is always the garden.”*

Minnie Aumonier

CLASS**No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED****DIVISION III**

31	3 VASES DISTINCT 1st L Gridsdale 2nd – 3rd –	(1)
32	ONE VASE 1st C Tate 2nd B Eckford 3rd B Eckford	(3)
33	ONE VASE, MIXED CULTIVARS 1st B Eckford 2nd L Gridsdale 3rd –	(2)
34	MIXED BOWL 1st C Tate 2nd – 3rd –	(1)

DIVISION IV

41	3 VASES DISTINCT 1st T Atherton 2nd M Cooper 3rd –	(2)
42	ONE VASE OF ANY ONE CULTIVAR 1st C Tate 2nd T Atherton 3rd L Haley	(5)
43	ONE VASE MIXED 1st T Atherton 2nd P Matthewman 3rd L Haley	(4)
44	MIXED BOWL 1st T Atherton 2nd – 3rd –	(1)

DIVISION V

51	2 VASES DISTINCT 1st A Cooper 2nd C Fuller 3rd –	(2)
52	ONE VASE OF ANY ONE CULTIVAR 1st A Cooper 2nd C Fuller 3rd S Hayworth	(4)
53	ONE VASE MIXED 1st C Fuller 2nd A Cooper 3rd –	(2)

DIVISION VI

61	MIXED BOWL 1st C Tate 2nd J Robson 3rd J Beardmore	(4)
62	ONE VASE OF 9 STEMS OLD FASHIONED 1st J Robson 2nd M Cooper 3rd C Tate	(4)

CLASS	No. OF EXHIBITS STAGED
DIVISION VI	
63	ONE VASE 9 STEMS GRANDIFLORA (No Entries) (0)
64	BOWL OF SHIFTERS 1st C Tate 2nd – 3rd – (1)
65	BOWL OF <i>LATHYRUS</i> SPECIES 1st C Tate 2nd – 3rd – (1)
66	BOWL OF PERENNIAL 1st T Atherton 2nd S Haisley 3rd C Bromley (4)
66	ANY <i>LATHYRUS</i> GROWN IN POT 1st S Haisey 2nd – 3rd – (1)
SPECIAL CLASSES	
A	TEA FOR TWO 1st C Tate 2nd S Halliwell 3rd S Haisley (3)
B	TABLE ARRANGEMENT 1st K Foley 2nd E Ross 3rd C Tate (3)
C	DINNER TABLE 1st J Beardmore 2nd T Atherton 3rd – (2)
D	DRIFTWOOD 1st C Tate 2nd J Beardmore 3rd L Ross (3)
E	7 STEMS 1st J Beardmore 2nd C Tate 3rd S Haisley (3)
F	PETITE 1st J Beardmore 2nd S Halliwell 3rd S Haisley (4)
G	GENTLEMAN'S BUTTONHOLE 1st S Halliwell 2nd C Nightingale 3rd C Tate (3)
H	LADY'S CORSAGE 1st S Halliwell 2nd C Nightingale 3rd – (2)
J	ONE VASE TO BE JUDGED BY THE PUBLIC 1st K Adnitt 2nd J Beardmore 3rd C Tate (4)
K	ONE SINGLE BLOOM 1st J Robson 2nd C Tate 3rd A Cooper 4th J Robson 5th A Cooper (17)

SPECIAL AWARDS

BEST IN DIVISION I

J Robson ('Kippen Cream' Class 1)

BEST IN DIVISION II

L Gridale ('Anniversary' Class 23)

BEST IN DIVISION III

L Gridale ('White Frills' Class 31)

BEST IN DIVISION IV

T Atherton ('Sir Jimmy Shand' Class 41)

BEST IN DIVISION V

A Cooper ('Gwendoline' Class 51)

BEST IN DIVISION VI

T & J Atherton (Perennial bowl Class 66)

BEST DECORATIVE

J Beardmore (Dinner table arrangement Class C)

BEST NOVICE

K Foley (Birthday celebration Class B)

BEST JUNIOR

A Cooper (Two vases Class 51)



Alex Cooper.
Photo by Carole Tate.



Kathryn Foley.
Photo by Carole Tate.

Southport Flower Show 2025

By Tom Atherton

As the season had generally been a poor one for Sweet Peas, it was expected that, at Southport, we would struggle for flowers for the stand and exhibits on the show bench. We were extremely pleased that this was not the case – there were in fact 48 vases/bowls in 13 classes. The open section was dominated by John Robson who won all the First Prizes! His blooms were the best I have seen in recent times. I know he is growing on new ground without cover but they had withstood the idiosyncrasies of the Scottish weather and impressed all of us! The judge (David Matthewman) commented that he had been concerned that there wouldn't be much to judge and was astounded at the quality and quantity of exhibits. John won the Cooper Trophy for his 6 vase 15 stem exhibit ('Millennium', 'Miss Truslove', 'Kippen



Cream', 'Gwendoline', 'Karen Harrod' & his white Seedling) and the Harry Scholefield Trophy for the most first prizes (7). His 6 vase exhibit was also judged to be the



Species bowls.
Photo by Carole Tate.

best flowers in the Amateur Tent and he was awarded the Amateur Gardening 'Champion of Champions' Trophy. He was also awarded the NSPS Silver medal card. In the restricted classes, John Smiles also had outstanding blooms. By coincidence, he had also been growing on new ground! He was awarded the Society Bronze medal for his 2 vase 9

stems exhibit. The most competitive class was for a bowl of *Lathyrus* species which had 6 entries. This was won by Carole Tate with a bowl of mixed annual species dominated by *L. chloranthus*. Second place went to Helen Dolan who had a magnificent bowl of *L. latifolius* 'White Pearl'. Other prize winners in the restricted section were Tom Atherton, Allan Evans, Clare Houghton (who had a beautiful bowl of Old Fashioned mix!) and Heather Wray. Susan Howard picked up a prize in the Open section as did Allan Evans & Carole Tate.



NSPS display at Southport show.
Photo by Carole Tate.

Anticipating a lack of flowers, it was decided to have a smaller Society stand. The arranging team led by Mavis Duxbury had a very creative design that made best use of the space. A tree branch was fixed with ties to the backdrop of the stand. Long strands of *L. latifolius* (haulm & flowers) were attached to the branch and backcloth giving the appearance of growing plants – the bottom of the stems

were all in water containers camouflaged by the lower displays. This resulted in a beautiful display which appealed to all including the judges who awarded it a Large Gold Medal and the Christine Hartley Trophy for outstanding merit. The bureau had a constant queue asking for information, buying seeds and a few even joined the Society. A special thanks goes to all the team who made the show a success!

The weather throughout the show was mostly good and I'm sure that everybody enjoyed it. If you have not attended Southport before it is well worthwhile – why not give it a try in 2026 either as an exhibitor, volunteer or perhaps just a visitor.

The Wem Sweet Pea Show 2025

By Phillippa Cooper

I am delighted to report that the fourth Show held back at our original venue, The Wem Town Hall, was a great success. This was despite some initial concerns regarding the extremely hot, dry weather during the preceding weeks.



Show Manager, Rose Horner with Councillor David Parry (left) and Barrie Eckford (right), President of the Eckford Society.

Photo by Phillippa Cooper.

I wish to start by expressing our gratitude to Rose Horner, the former Director of the Town Hall. Rose took on the role of Show Manager for our 2022 Show despite never having grown Sweet Peas. Her enthusiasm for the Show has continued and we are very grateful that Rose has offered to continue as Show Manager in 2026. Although Rose told the committee that it had been a very steep learning curve it was wonderful that she now enters the multi vase classes in Division 2 (pre 1910 cultivars).

Throughout the first half of July there was some concern that we would have a reduced number of entries as several growers who have always supported Wem confirmed that they would not be able to enter. In some cases, their season had completely finished or that their blooms were well past their best.

However, we were delighted when John Robson of Dumfries and Galloway confirmed that his season had just begun so would be able to enter the open classes. Fortunately, several of our 2023 and 2024 novices returned to Wem along with an increased number of entries from the North West.

In total we had 118 vases, 27 bowls/ baskets and 45 entries in Floral Art. The photography and other craft classes were also popular.

On a very personal note, I was extremely disappointed not to be able to stage a single vase of my pre 1910 varieties. A combination of the weather conditions and mosaic virus infection meant that any blooms I had were more suitable for the decorative classes.

Once again, we are very grateful to Derek Heathcote of Eagle Sweet Peas who judged both our Spencer and Old-Fashioned classes.



John Robson, winner of the Bronwen Eleanor Perpetual Challenge Cup (for best vase) and the President's Plate. Photo by Phillippa Cooper.

In Division 1 – the Open Classes, John Robson swept the board. His 6 vases distinct (class1) included 'Kippen Cream', 'Gwendoline', 'Fields of Fire', 'Marjorie Carrier', 'Miss Truslove' and 'Karen Louise'. It was a spectacular exhibit that was greatly admired by all visitors over the weekend. John was also successful in class 2 (3 vases distinct) and several of the single vase classes. The best vase in the Show was awarded to John's vase of 'Sir Jimmy Shand' in class 6 (any other colour not listed). I am delighted to say that John was not only presented with the Bronwen Eleanor Perpetual Challenge Cup, for best vase, but also the 125th Anniversary NSPS Rosette.

Division 2 is specifically for pre 1910 Old Fashioned cultivars. Sadly, there were no entries in the 5-vase class but it was wonderful that Rose Horner was awarded first prize in the 3-vase class ('Prima Donna', 'Mrs Collier' and 'Black Knight').

Local growers Clive Payne and Len Bennett also enjoyed success in Division 2. Congratulations to Clive Payne, of Wem, for gaining the most points by a Shropshire

grower and being presented with the Archie Silvester Perpetual Trophy. 14 vases in the Old-Fashioned classes is considerably lower than previous years so fingers crossed that we are back to packed show benches next year (weather dependent of course!)

Neil Cooper of Whixall has exhibited at Wem for many years and once again he enjoyed great success in Division 3 (for growers of no more than 500 cordon plants). Neil was awarded the Jack Timpson perpetual Shield for best vase for his display of 'Jilly' in class 16 (6 vases distinct).

Division 4 is for growers of no more that 200 cordon plants and I am pleased to say that Les Grisdale of Ellesmere Port won the Preston Brockhurst Horticultural Challenge Cup for the most points along with the NSPS Bronze Medal for his vase of 'Anniversary' in class 24 (6 vases distinct).



Ben Mifflin, with the Maurice Graham Challenge Cup.
Photo by Phillippa Cooper.



Lee Haley , novice grower, with the W Jenkins Perpetual Challenge Cup.
Photo by Phillippa Cooper.

Division 5 (growers of no more than 100 cordon plants) is always extremely competitive and this year was no exception with 39 vases staged. I am delighted to report that the 2024 winner of the best exhibit in novice classes, Ben Mifflin of Congleton competed again and was presented with the Maurice Graham Challenge Cup for the most points. Ben actually achieved 5 first places in the division. One of our 2023 novice growers Frank Forrest of Bunbury has also continued to exhibit and achieved two first prizes in this division. At Wem we are especially delighted that our novices continue to return and move up through to larger divisions. Sincere congratulations go to Lee Haley of Harrington College, who although a novice, was

awarded the W Jenkins Perpetual Challenge Cup for his vase of 'Naomi Nazareth' in the three-vase class. We look forward to welcoming Lee next year.

At Wem there are 4 Novice classes for growers who have never won a first prize at the Show. Carole Tate of Chorley was successful in 3 of the classes (bowl of mixed Spencer, vase of mixed Spencer and bowl of mixed Old Fashioned). Carole was presented with the NSPS certificate for the best exhibit in this division.

The Special Classes include the prestigious President's Plate; the 2025 winner was John Robson. Rose Horner was successful in the class for 'Cupani' and Lucy Gilchrist a novice from Wem won the newly introduced class for modern or semi grandiflora cultivars.

Phillippa Cooper of Penn, was the winner of the Wem and District Rotary Club Perpetual Challenge Trophy for the most points in Special Classes. Congratulations also go to Sarah Haisley, Clive Payne, Susan Meeks, Tom and Jane Atherton and Les Grisdale who all received first prizes in the Division.

Floral Art remains very well supported and this year was no exception as there were 45 entries. This year we included a class for the under 16's. This is something that we will continue in the future as it is hoped to increase our entries across the board in years to come.

We were pleased to welcome the mayor of Wem, Councillor David Parry, to present all the awards to the prize winners. Councillor Parry emphasised to everyone present the importance of the Show to the town.

Many thanks to Susan Meeks and Stephen Hayward who allowed us to use their remarkable 125th Anniversary display that was very carefully transported from RHS Bridgewater the previous weekend.

Last, but certainly not least, all of the Eckford Sweet Pea Society Committee members recognise that the show would not be possible without the wonderful work done by the staff and volunteers at the Town Hall. They all give up a huge amount of time, not only during the weekend of the Show but also during all the preparations that go on throughout the town beforehand. Thank you all so much.

“It's incredible to reflect on how much knowledge and growth power is contained in seeds. ”

Charles Dowding

The Royal Welsh Show 2025

By Lewis Morgan



L-R Catherine Bromley, Eirwen Evans, Allan Evans, Stephen Hayward, Susan Meeks, Sarah Haisley, Carole Tate, Jen Morgan, Lewis Morgan. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*

The third week in July in Wales only means one thing, The Royal Welsh Show!

But before we could get into all things Sweet Peas, there was the small matter of putting our stewarding hats on and actually helping to get the Marquee into shape. On the Friday morning, as expected we were greeted by a pile of trestle tables, although the upturned potato crates were all in place, and by the end of the day the Marquee was ready to receive exhibitors.

Come the Saturday together with Allan and Eirwen Evans the Welsh Region exhibition stand was erected, ready to be dressed on the Sunday, and we could all head home early.

As Sunday dawned blooms were picked and stand equipment loaded up. Along with all the other exhibitors from near and far, we all headed to the show ground.

Sunday afternoon into the evening, saw fevered activity as entries were staged and the Exhibition Stand was dressed. A special mention to Eirwen Evans for not only designing the display but also dressing the stand. The thanks must be extended to all others for their help in the set up and during the week. On the run up to the show there was a concern that there would be a shortage of blooms and a further special thanks to all those persons who answered the SOS call to provide blooms for the stand, some of which came from the most unexpected supporters, and by later in evening there was relief, the stand was finished and there was satisfaction



Adam Jones, Assistant Horticultural Director for the Horticultural Village, entering for the first time in the Novices Class.

Photo by Lewis Morgan.

that a top quality display been achieved. The stand featured a replica of the display of the new 'Amy Dowden' variety launched at RHS Chelsea by Phil Johnson of English Sweet Peas. Whilst we couldn't rustle up Amy herself, we made do with a large photograph!

Monday arrived; the show opened to the public. Gareth Roberts from North Wales completed his current stint as judge of the Sweet Pea classes

in good time. The results were in, and Allan Evans collected the Six Vase class and Celebration class. Jim Thompson who is more known as a champion vegetable grower, won the Three Vase class, and Andrew Jones another champion vegetable grower also got in on the act with Best Vase in show for his vase of 'Ida King', an old variety which he tells us he takes seed from every year to keep that particular variety going. Mention should be made of two rarely seen varieties that appeared being 'Evie Jones', and 'John McGovern'.



NSPS display at Royal Welsh. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Royal Welsh filming. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



Princes Ann at Royal Welsh. *Photo by Lewis Morgan.*



Royal Welsh benches. *Photos by Lewis Morgan.*

With challenging growing conditions being experienced, all exhibitors who managed to stage entries must be congratulated, and hopefully 2026 will be kinder and there will be entries in abundance.

So, onto the Exhibition Stand!

On the Monday we welcomed a contingent from the North West Region who decided to go on a Sweet Pea Show Tour. The weekend previous had seen them exhibiting in Wem, and being over halfway to the Show, they decided to make a week of it and visit us down in Wales as well to experience the Show as a whole. They helped on the stand which was much appreciated.

Monday is always a busy day and this year featured a visit from the Princess Royal, who spent a considerable amount of time within the floral Art and Horticultural Marquees, in particular stopping at the Sweet Pea Exhibition Stand noting the late Queen was particularly fond of Sweet Peas, and we remembered them adorning her coffin as it left Balmoral.

The regions adopted Welsh members, John and Phillippa Cooper travelled down to support us on the Tuesday, helping to spread the word about all good things Sweet Peas, again much appreciated. During the show Allan Evans was interviewed on both the S4C Welsh language television coverage and Radio Cymru which included presenting the exhibits and exhibition stand to the audiences.

The Floral Art and Horticultural Marquees were joined together for the Show and proved to be a great success with visiting public circulating through both Marquees and the increased footfall was gratifying. Come 5 o'clock on the Thursday it was all done for another year and all the displays were broken down and packed away for another year. Everyone considered the Horticultural Village had been a great success building on the previous year.

2026 Show Planning is well under way with a raft of improvements being formulated to further promote the Horticultural Village and increase its importance within the Show. With regard to the Sweet Pea Championship, there will be three new classes for 2026, look out for the Show schedule when released.

To sign off this report, if you fancy a trip to Mid Wales, make it the third week in July and come and visit us, perhaps even enter the National Sweet Pea Championship of Wales.



Royal Welsh. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Prize giving. Photo by Lewis Morgan.



Allan Evans (centre) with Royal Welsh Dignitaries. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

**NATIONAL SWEET PEA CHAMPIONSHIP OF WALES
- PENCAMPWRIAETH PYS PERSAWR CENEDLATHOL CYMRU**

SIX VASES DISTINCT

1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd –

THREE VASES DISTINCT

1st J Thompson 2nd D Williams 3rd –

ONE MIXED VASE

1st W D Williams 2nd J Thompson 3rd M Clay

MIXED BOWL

1st A Evans 2nd A Thomas 3rd –

OPEN SINGLE VASE

1st A Jones 2nd J Thompson 3rd –

SINGLE STEM

1st A Jones 2nd – 3rd –

BEGINNERS CLASS - ONE VASE OF MIXED SPENCER CULTIVARS

1st A Thomas 2nd CA Jones 3rd –

SWEET PEA CELEBRATION OPEN CLASS

1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd –

MIXED BOWL OF OLD FASHIONED SWEET PEAS

1st A Evans 2nd – 3rd –



Royal Welsh benches. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

Putting on a Show for Windsor

By Alison Shreeve

For the past few years, a small group of us have put on a display for the Society at The Royal Windsor Horticultural Society Show. This is a one day event held each year in Windsor Great Park and is usually attended by one of the Royal Family. The show is a lively and very well attended event with plenty of trade and other exhibitors, competitions and things to do and see. We exhibit in the horticultural tent which in 2025 was absolutely packed with exhibitors. It takes place very early in the Sweet Pea season - the first week in June - which is a challenge for us in the Chilterns area as we don't grow under glass. We have had support though in the past from Roger Parsons from the South Coast, who does grow some in polytunnels and from Phil Johnson from Essex. In 2025 we had some very welcome support in the way of blooms grown under glass, from Phil Johnson of English Sweet Peas, who also provided seeds to sell; a proportion of the sales being donated to the Society, for which we are all very grateful.



A celebratory picnic theme for the Society display at Windsor. Photo by Caroline Ball.

Leading up to this event, it was an opportunity for Graeme Hollingdale and myself to travel to Essex to collect the seeds and to gather some blooms for the show. It was a real treat to be able to see the rows of glasshouses filled with a wide range of cultivars in full bloom. Phil had exhibited at Chelsea for the first time a few weeks earlier, winning a prestigious Gold Medal and we could view his new introduction,

'Amy Dowden', a beautiful pink and highly scented Spencer which filled a whole greenhouse. There were of course many, beautiful varieties from multi-floras to well-known Old-Fashioned and Grandiflora types too.

The weather on the day we visited was miserable, cold, wet and windy and very grey. Despite this we stood outside one greenhouse and the scent washing out over us was just amazing! This was, I think, 'Dragonfly', a lavender blue on a deep cream background. A big thank you to Phil and his team for allowing us to help ourselves and enable us to put on a proper show at Windsor.

Each year we like to do something a bit different and in 2025 Caroline Ball suggested we have a bit of a picnic theme as part of our celebrations of the 125th year of the Society. We threw a few ideas around and selected some props. We also commandeered Graeme's multi-purpose room (which has a 9 foot snooker/dining/committee table as well as all his musical instruments and equipment) for a mock up and practice run, moving things around until we were happy with the general layout and design of the space; which ended up as a 6 foot long table plus a space for sales and talking to the public. As a backdrop to the display, we used a newly commissioned banner – which later circulated to many venues and shows across the country. We were delighted with the design which certainly conveyed a celebration and love of the Sweet Pea.



The day before the show was open to the public we went to set up, the team included Caroline Ball, Adam Heeley, myself and Graeme. Having practiced the set-up it didn't take too long to get all the arrangements done which hopefully suggest the celebratory theme. Not all of the props were edible(!) but did suggest food, including cupcakes and bottles of champagne with a picnic hamper and chair sat on a checked 'table cloth'. We had less space than we would have liked, but as the tent was packed and many people, competitive exhibits and various societies being represented, we couldn't complain.

Windsor is an NSPS Affiliated Society and has a good section of Sweet Pea classes in the show. As it is early in the season it is a bit hit or miss as to the quality of the few blooms we local growers might have available, but I did give it a go in a couple of classes. The star of the show though had to be Roger Dix, who exhibits there every year he can, as did his father did before him; he does normally manage



The crowds at Windsor. Photo by Caroline Ball.

to produce excellent quality blooms for that early in the season. He puts this down to having a micro climate which is a little warmer than the Chiltern slopes I garden on, even though he doesn't have a greenhouse. There are Novice classes too, so it would be lovely to see more people having a go at the Sweet Pea classes as well as having a very good day out.

On the Saturday, with the show open to the public the marquees are packed. Rumours were flying around as to the identity of the Royal who would be touring the show this year, accompanied as usual by Alan Titchmarsh who also presents the awards at the end of the day. The weather was forecast to be bad, but the sun shone and Caroline and I were joined by Tony Mowlem and Elaine Davis who helped us to man the stand and sell our merchandise.

The tent was cleared except for those on the stands and all eyes turned to the entrance and there was the King! He slowly made his way through the tent looking at exhibits and talking to people nearby. Then he made a turn towards us and stood in front of our stand with Alan Titchmarsh. Caroline had prepared for this possibility by making a beautiful buttonhole which she presented to the King. The King asked her if she had grown all the Sweet Peas in our "marvelous" display by herself! In response she modestly said that the flowers had come from several of our members including her! She had also prepared a surprise for Alan. This was a photo taken from Bolton's seed catalogue the year they introduced the Sweet Pea "Alan Titchmarsh"; which of course was taken when he was in his youth! This caused much merriment and discussion!

Once the public were allowed back in, we were rushed off our feet. Many people stopped to talk and to admire the perfume and our display. They were intrigued by the annual species as well as by the range of different colours and blooms. There was much reminiscing and a strong overriding sense of nostalgia, as most people could remember relatives growing Sweet Peas in the past. This included one very well-known face, Mark Smith from the Antiques roadshow and expert on medals. He has kindly allowed us to print his story in the Annual – a very particular and fascinating reminiscence. We also dealt with cultivation problems and heard from others how they grow and what they love about *Lathyrus odoratus*.

As the afternoon drew to a close, the heavens opened. Torrential rain washed underneath the marquee walls and anything on the ground became waterlogged. We were lucky to be in a tent but had to go outside for the presentation of awards. Many of us stood in our waterproofs waiting to shake hands with Alan and to have photographs taken – but spirits were still high! Fortunately, the showers were brief and the sun came out again to help us with the packing away and clearing up.

This was another very positive event for the NSPS where we reached out to people and I hope helped to make their day, as well as learning a little bit more about the Society and the *Lathyrus* genus. Thanks to everyone who helped, including Roger Dix and his wife Carole, who stayed to help break down the stand. We look forward to showing at Windsor again in 2026 and hope that you can join us for a grand day out!



King Charles is presented with a Sweet Pea button hole by Caroline Ball. Photo by Alison Shreeve.



King Charles at Windsor.

Competitions

100 Club

By Caroline Ball

Prize winners since those listed in the 2025 Sweet Pea Annual were as follows:

Draw Date	£100	£25	£10
23.04.25	AJ Gillingwater Chingford	G Hollingdale Princes Risborough	F Towers Preston
10.9.25	L Johnson Essex	GW Putman Surrey	H Bastone Devon
8.11.25	J Bulstrode Poole	G Hollingdale Princes Risborough	H Bastone Devon
15.2.26	G Hollingdale Princes Risborough	A Haskin Cuddington	AJ Gillingwater Chingford
7.3.26	A Shreeve Lacey Green	L Burrell Shepperton	L Burrell Shepperton

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



Lathyrus belinensis. Photo by Caroline Ball.

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

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District Representatives Reports

Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns

By Graeme Hollingdale

Like many areas of the country which used to be thriving with numerous Summer Shows, as numbers of exhibitors and people willing to step up and help organise such events dwindle, so they are gradually lost from our calendars. Many Societies used to hold three or even four shows a year, timed to show off what crops would naturally be producing in different seasons. Those Societies which do survive (possibly through amalgamation with neighbouring towns and villages) might now just have a single Autumn Show. This is natural, because so many more flowers, fruit and vegetables are at their best in early September. If you are lucky (more likely towards the north of the UK of course) you may see an odd vase of 'Peas hidden away, almost as an afterthought and certainly not given the priority that you would expect during the summer.

The 2020 covid year seemed to accelerate this steady decline.



If there are any Societies in Bucks and the surrounding counties still holding Summer Shows with Sweet Pea classes, then please get in touch with me (Graeme) listing your results and if you are interested, perhaps I and/or Alison (Shreeve) would be willing to attend and give a presentation on our favourite flower.

Just this week, we have been informed that one of our longest surviving and competitive Open Sweet Pea Shows, held as part of their village festival, will be no more. Wingrave and Rowsham Allotments and Gardens Society (WARGAS) will no longer have a Show, which was held on either the first or second Saturday in July. Their extensive collection of trophies have engraved on them, the names of many of the top growers locally and nationally from the Sweet Pea world. The reason for the cancellation of the 2026 show simply reads, "lack of people to organise and help". So sad.



Chiltern show Kathy Gray being presented with Early National best vase. Photo by Lewis Morgan.

Thankfully the Chiltern Sweet Pea Society's Annual Show remains on the calendar for the foreseeable future but even we struggle with recruiting committee members and additional helpers. At our recent committee meeting, we continued our discussion about changes to our name and constitution as we no longer (due to lack of interest from others) hold an Autumn social meeting. The only CSPS event we now hold is the Annual Show, although members are heavily involved in displays and other events such as The Royal Windsor Flower Show and the new RHS Show at Badminton, as well as more local talks etc.

What we did ratify was a simplification to the registration/membership/entries process. From this year, although still very much open to all, you will be invited to make one single payment to the Society. A minimum donation of £5 will enable you to enter any number of classes at our Show. This eliminates the fiddly process of adding up all the farthings and thrupenny bits for different entrants. In actual fact, many automatically donated at least £5 anyway. Prize money still remains at the previous levels although sponsors are always invited if you wish to see the level of remuneration increased.

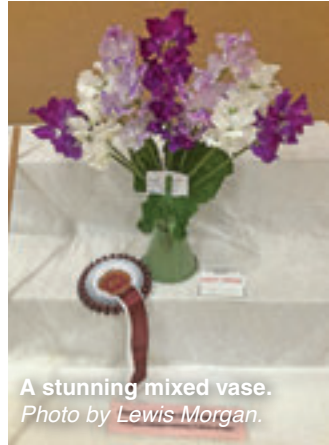
The 2026 CSPS show will be held on the similar date to recent years and at the usual location, on Sunday 28 June at the Millennium Hall in Lacey Green, Bucks. Chris Gray, who has show managed this for many years has stood down but thankfully

remained on the committee. NSPS chair Alison's partner Adam, has stepped into the vacancy and with the assistance of the rest of the small team, will be accepting entries by all the usual methods, nb if you phone in your entry, expect the answer service and DO leave your message clearly with a return number. However, emailing your entries remains the preferred and most straightforward method.

If you have exhibited or otherwise been in contact with any of our activities



Chiltern show benches.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.



A stunning mixed vase.
Photo by Lewis Morgan.

previously with the CSPS, or are even a local NSPS member, you will automatically be sent a digital version of the schedule (to save costs, we no longer print/post them ourselves). If you would like to guarantee your copy, or know someone else who might like one, then just send a short email to graeme@graemehollingdale.com and you will be added to the list!

Despite being a small group with a relatively short staging period on the Sunday morning of the Show, our schedule is pretty comprehensive and caters for all growers. Our Open sections may not have the range of multi-vase classes of the National Divisions but there are still some to enter. We have more colour class single vases (including single spike) and all the usual non-Spencer types are catered for, including decoratives.

Our smaller grower section is for those who grow up to 200 cordons and we additionally have classes for Novices (for those who haven't won a FIRST prize at any CSPS show previously) and New Growers (those who have never staged an entry at any previous CSPS show). Although technically if you are an experienced national exhibitor but never staged or won at a CSPS show before, you could enter these classes but hope that you recognise they are not intended for you!

Last year, a pretty new grower who entered and won at many shows with her excellent blooms was Denise Bonner; she visited us and excelled.

Here are the major prize winners from 2025:

BEST EXHIBIT IN SHOW

Alison Shreeve (Class 125)

BEST VASE IN SHOW

Denise Bonner ('Jilly' Class G)

MOST POINTS TROPHY

Denise Bonner (Classes E – R)

CHILTERN CHALLENGE SHIELD

Denise Bonner ('Bridget McAleer', 'Sir Jimmy Shand', 'Mary Priestley' Class A)

WESSEX TROPHY (Best Vase in the small growers classes)

Alison Shreeve ('Ballerina Blue' Class S)

ALSO NOTEWORTHY

Annual Species Bowls (both Annual & Perennial)

Jenny Morgan

Class D (3 vases of 7 stems)

Phil Champion



Basket by Alison Shreeve at Chiltern Show.

Photo by Caroline Ball.

Essex

By Brian Harwood

Hello everybody

2025 was a poor year for me. Sweet Peas flowered well in late May but by Elm Park Show on 14 June the stems had shortened very quickly due to the intense heat weather wise, which ended up with me showing below par flowers. This was the first show in Essex and my friend Chris Dale from Ipswich took all the honours with very good Peas. I took all the 2nd cards and Michael Tatham took a few thirds. At least we had 3 exhibitors.

There were no exhibitors at the Buckhurst Hill Show or the Chingford Show as Alan Gillingwater informed me that his Peas were finished. I did not receive any feedback from Rainham or Rayleigh regarding the Sweet Pea entries so that was the end of the show season in Essex.

I was at the point of giving up growing because of the very hot weather but Chris Dale gave me some seeds from his 2025 plants so I decided to have another go for 2026. The shortage of exhibitors is a serious problem as I have mentioned in previous reports since the younger generations are not interested and I cannot see it changing in the near future.

2026

Peas were sown on 13 November as I hope I will have some decent Peas for the shows. At the time of writing the Peas are looking good.

Wishing you all a very good showing season for 2026.

“I grow plants for many reasons: to please my eye or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience, for novelty or for nostalgia, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow.”

David Hobson

Ireland

By Niall Coveney

In the country there are approximately 60 horticultural societies registered with the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland. Many of these societies are registered to avail of a group insurance policy which covers the societies when holding events. Most of these societies are local groups set up for flower arranging or merely for holding talks on horticulture. The number of societies holding shows for flowers and vegetables is much lower.

The showing of Sweet Peas is more specialist and clearly the numbers presenting at shows is much reduced. Sadly, many of the older exhibitors are retiring due to ill health or death. During the year we lost two older members of our community, Ignatius O'Brien and Ollie Clarke. Both of these were growers and exhibitors of Sweet Peas for well over 40 years.

The main shows where Sweet Peas are presented take place around Dublin. Venues include Ardgillan, Rush, Swords, Malahide all in North Dublin while Delgany/Greystones is held in South Dublin. The main venue outside Dublin is Tullamore in the centre of the country.

The first show is held in Delgany/Greystones at the end of June each year. We had a great turn out with David Moloney from Clonmel winning three of the eight classes. Maria Melvin won the class for the bowl and Trevor Stevenson had great success as a newcomer with Pat Thornton showing his expertise.



David Moloney with his winning blooms in Greystones. *Photo by Niall Coveney.*

The next show was held in Argillan Castle and we had amazing displays from Peter Harvey, Maeve O'Rourke-Russel and Louise O'Connor.

This was followed by a very big show called "The Flavours of Fingal" run by the County Council in North County Dublin. It featured a wide range of exhibits from agricultural produce, livestock and children's competitions. Again, David Moloney swept the boards in the Sweet Pea categories, followed by Louise O'Connor, Maeve O'Rourke, Michael Burke and Peter Harvey. There was a lot of difficulty



John Harford at Swords show.
Photo by Niall Coveney.



Maeve Russell at Swords show.
Photo by Niall Coveney.

staging in the marquee as there was a very strong wind on the day. That did not deter those who had travelled great distances.

The following week saw competitors come to Rush in County Dublin. This is a big show held indoors with exhibitors treated to tea and coffee and plenty of good food. A new class was added to the schedule for non-Spencer Sweet Peas. David

Moloney was again the winner of the All-Ireland trophy along with the best exhibit of Sweet Peas in the show. Maeve O'Rourke produced outstanding Sweet Peas in the novice section as did Louise O'Connor.



Maria Melvin and Mossy Buttery at the Rush Show. *Photo by Niall Coveney.*

The next show was held in Malahide. On this occasion Catherine Coveney made a clean sweep of the classes with Peter Harvey taking the novice prizes. The Swords show had beautiful

displays from Maria Melvin, Maeve O'Rourke, Pat Thornton and John Harford. The Delgany /Greystones late show at the end of August produced some lovely blooms for Maeve O'Rourke and Christy White.

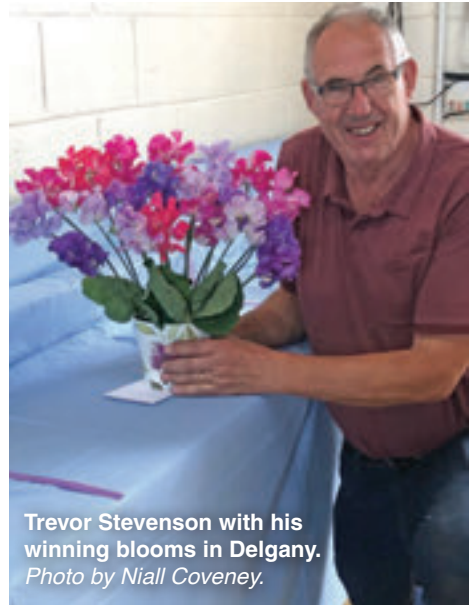
Finally, the Naul September show still produced a strong bench of exhibits with David, Maeve and Christy putting up some amazing blooms.

Behind the scenes work progresses on the hybridization front by Chris McAleer who had great success at trials in the UK with 'Donna' (Pale Blue) and 'Hazel Mullen' (Cream). Chris also supplied the National Botanic Gardens with seven different varieties of Spencer Sweet Peas during the year which were grown on trellises for the public to admire.

Our season has already begun again with the early sowing in November and December. Obtaining seed is still a problem for many with import restrictions. Still, we are looking forward to a great season and wish all exhibitors the very best.



New seedling 'Donna' with Donna McAleer. Photo by Niall Coveney.



Trevor Stevenson with his winning blooms in Delgany. Photo by Niall Coveney.

“There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments”

Janet Kilburn Phillips

Norfolk and Suffolk

By Chris Dale (signing out)

My 'Peas are looking remarkably healthy in the frames at the moment. I sowed a couple of weeks later than usual, but not too late, hoping to achieve a compromise between warm temperatures in winter and v early show dates. Fingers crossed. Also a mixture of my saved seed from a handful of good plants in 2025, plus some new bought-in seed. Again, fingers crossed! So far they've been drenched, wind-battered and deep frozen. To be fair, they are much healthier than me. Since having covid in August I've had a succession of bugs, such that my GP's words before Christmas were: "Your lungs have taken a heck of a battering". Still, the pills seem to have done their thing over the festive period, until I've picked up another virus from my dear little granddaughter once the schools went back. Still, every cloud has a silver lining: at least the pub goers have largely been spared my singing in the folk group, though the occasional effort at a shanty now has added raspy tones of authenticity.

North West Region

By Carole Tate

The 2025 season was a particularly memorable one for Sweet Pea enthusiasts across the North West. Despite the variable Spring weather and a warmer-than-average start to Summer, members rose to the challenge with remarkable resilience and passion, making it another successful year for growing, showing, and sharing the joy of Sweet Peas across the region.

The growing season began with a damp March, delaying early sowing and affecting germination for some. April brought improved conditions, with longer daylight hours and intermittent sunshine helping plants establish. However, unseasonably hot weather and lack of rain for 8 weeks resulted in flowers blooming earlier than usual making it challenging to enter the competitions in mid July and August.

Pests were relatively manageable this year, with fewer reports of aphid infestations or mildew, thanks in part to the vigilant efforts of our members and a proactive approach to plant health. The dry weather kept the snails down to a minimum.

Despite ongoing pressures on local events and the challenges facing small horticultural societies, several regional shows proceeded with strong attendance and spirited competition.

Our programme of workshops for beginners started this year in February and is a fantastic opportunity to pass on our enthusiasm, knowledge and skills to future growers. It was followed by a busy schedule of Plant Fairs and horticultural shows across the region which were well attended. Highlights of the NSPS Late Show at RHS Bridgewater, the NSPS North West Region Show held at Chorley Flower Show and Southport Flower Show are documented elsewhere in the Annual. We even managed to stray across the borders and attended the Sweet Pea Show at Wem and the Royal Welsh Show where we were made to feel so welcome by the volunteers there. The importance of meeting other members socially cannot be overestimated and we had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

Many North West members have been involved with National events too, and details of some follow. I would encourage you to make the most of your membership and consider coming along and taking part. Your company, views and opinions are welcomed and it is an opportunity to meet fellow enthusiasts.

We could not attempt such an ambitious programme of events without the dedication and commitment from all our wonderful members here in the North West who come together to make everything happen. A big thank you to every member who has contributed to their success.

Let's Get Growing Childrens Planting Event

On 29 January we took part in the fantastic 'Let's Get Growing' event held at Chorley St James CE Primary School where we helped over 40 children from 13 local schools to sow seeds.

The children were very enthusiastic and listened, asked questions and took part in the seed sowing. We used *Lathyrus tingitanus* seeds which are large seeds to handle and the plants germinate and grow quickly. We demonstrated how to sow in pots and they half filled the pots with compost, popped the seeds in then topped up the pots with compost before a 'pretend' watering (too messy to use real water) Not sure if they were amused, bemused or just thought we were plain daft, but they joined in!

They were given written children's instructions, and a reminder that the Peas are not edible! They were appreciative of the pots of seeds and took them back to school to watch grow, initially on the window ledge, then planted in the school gardens. We all enjoyed the afternoon and hopefully the children and teachers left inspired to get involved with plants, horticulture and nature.

Workshops

The series of 6 sessions looking at Sowing, Potting on, Nipping off, Planting, Layering and Exhibiting took place from February onwards and was well attended by local enthusiasts. The second session was delayed a week due to the dull, cold weather. Whilst the seeds germinated well in the propagator, the seedlings decided they would wait until the daylight hours increased before being tall enough to handle. This had a knock on effect on the rest of the workshops but had little effect on the flowering season.

Great feedback was received from the participants and everyone took their own seedlings ready to plant in April, with the Layering and Exhibiting sessions held in July. We had several workshop participants helping at the National Show at Bridgewater and 8 novices entered our North West Show in Chorley later in the year, with our Best Novice coming from the Workshops

AGM

A group of us from the North West attended the National Sweet Pea Society AGM on Saturday 7 March at Kings Coughton, Warwickshire. I am delighted to say we had several winners in the Plant Competition with spring bulbs, daffodils and *Lathyrus vernus* delighting the attendees with their fresh colours.

The discussions in the breakout groups were very interesting, attesting to the passion members have for our Society and the results of the breakout groups were presented to the rest of the members. A sub committee group took forward these suggestions to present to the NSPS Committee which has enabled decisions to be made on the future of the Exhibitions and the Society. Thanks to everyone who sent in their views beforehand and to all who participated.

Zoom Talks

Several Members only ZOOM Talks have taken place during the growing season. Roger Parsons and Phil Johnson presented a Q&A session on Growing followed by Darren Myers Zoom Presentation on Growing for Show. I followed with a presentation on Growing and Showing *Lathyrus* Species on 3 March. This was very timely for the special classes in the Nationals where you can exhibit species and Graeme followed with an excellent display to help with What the Judges Look For. Other Q&As and Sweet Pea related topics have been featured providing a valuable resource for members to use.

The Zoom recordings are available in the Members Section of the website www.sweetpeas.org.uk

Arley Plant Fair

On 23 March we set out early morning to take part in the Plant Fair at Arley. Eight volunteers manned the Information Bureau, sold *vernus* plants and seedlings, and discussed Sweet Pea growing with many of the 1789 visitors (a record number for the Fair). The sausage and bacon breakfasts started off the day and the sun shone in the afternoon.

Each volunteer had a minimum of 2 hours to look around the gardens, plant fair and walk through the wooded area which was full of spring bulbs, beautiful hellebores and flowering shrubs, including magnolias and rhododendrons. It was delightful to look at the various unusual plants the specialist growers had for sale, and we nearly came back with more than we took!



Arley plant fair. Photos by Carole Tate.



Garstang Agricultural Show

We had a small stand in the horticultural marquee at the Garstang Agricultural show. Lovely weather again for this one day show with horses (the Shires are so majestic) sheep, prize bulls and rare breeds, rabbits, dog shows and everything you would expect with lots of entertainment, crafts and food market. A superb day out. We had a few personal entries in the various horticultural classes and Francis Towers won the award for the best Sweet Pea vase.

Bridgewater Plant Fair

Similar to Arley, this two day Heritage Plant Fair was well attended and gave us the opportunity to meet over 4,000 visitors over the 2 day event. We had many interesting conversations about Sweet Pea growing, sold plants, seeds and merchandise for the benefit of the Society. We also signed-up 3 members and promoted the Late Show.



Bridgewater Heritage plant fair.
Photo by Carole Tate.



The Glow at Bridgewater with North West members. *Photo by Carole Tate.*

Poynton Show

Poynton show was the last display stand and information bureau for the year, along with a Sweet Pea section, best vase won by Tom Atherton displaying the Peas named after himself. We had some excellent feedback from the judges on the quality of our stand which was awarded a Gold Medal Award and the Silver Challenge Cup. Similar to Garstang, and again blessed with good weather, it was another thoroughly enjoyable day.



Poynton Show.
Photos by Carole Tate.

Social

Our Social event on Sunday 26 October was well attended and very entertaining. We had Paul and Kathryn Adnitt telling us about their first year in Sweet Peas, plus an interesting presentation about Vietnam and Cambodia, Sarah Haisley, and myself looking at species, Barrie Eckford with an Insight into the Eckford History and a Q&A Session on the 2025 Season. Jane Robbins demonstrated several Autumnal floral art displays, which were then donated to the raffle. Our quiz, raffle and hot pot lunch made it interactive and thoroughly enjoyable.

Christmas Outing



Christmas meal at Worsley Old Hall. Photo by

Our final event of the year was a visit to RHS Bridgewater for their Glow event. A spectacular display of lights and special effects around the gardens, preceded by Christmas lunch at Worsley Old Hall. A great opportunity to exchange plans and ideas for 2026 and wish our friends a happy new year.

The 2025 Sweet Pea year in the North West was marked by resilience, innovation, and team spirit. Through weather challenges and changing times, the love for *Lathyrus odoratus* endures. I extend thanks to all volunteers, judges, and exhibitors for their unwavering dedication, and look forward to an even more colourful and fragrant year ahead.

Staffordshire & West Midlands

By Phillippa Cooper

Each year my report starts with problems associated with the weather! Spring 2024 was cool and damp and I worried that my plants were not actually growing. Would they be ready for the July Shows that we always enter? In fact, we need not have worried as from the end of May onwards they thrived and reached their peak during the second weekend in July.

2025 could not have been more different. The prolonged intense heat and drought conditions throughout the season meant that the plants developed much more



Mid June. Full of hope for an excellent season. *Photo by Philippa Cooper.*

quickly. In fact, with hindsight, we should have considered entering the earlier Shows. However, all was not lost as we were able to pick lovely blooms to sell at our church summer fair on 21 June (raising £130).

After many years of entering the ballot to obtain tickets for tennis at Wimbledon we were thrilled to be successful. Surely there would be no problem leaving the plants for just

a couple of days knowing that our allotment friends were on hand to water for us. Sadly, the aphids noticed our absence! My Old-Fashioned plants were really vigorous and intertwined meaning that when the aphids took hold, I just could not control the spread.

On the second weekend in July, we travelled up to RHS Bridgewater in temperatures of over 30 degrees and with a very poor selection of blooms. Instead of being able to enter multiple vases, I had to be content to enter bowls and some decorative classes. Fortunately, Matt Lloyd (who was also unable to enter vase classes) joined forces with me to enter the pedestal class.

The following week at Wem John and I had another zero for entries in vase classes. Such a disappointment as this Show has been extremely important to us for over 25 years. Fortunately, the Show itself was a great success with John Robson entering both the open classes and President's Plate.

Although I had a dreadful season myself, I am delighted to report that Denise Bonner, a West Midlands member had a truly amazing season winning multiple awards at the Early National, Chiltern and Gloucestershire Shows. Many congratulations to Denise! I wish her the best of luck for continuing success in 2026.

Looking ahead I am finding it difficult to decide when to sow my seeds. In recent years we have sown both Spencer and Old-Fashioned seeds during the last week of January. That has been fine for the July Shows apart



Denise Bonner with her stunning Best Vase at the Chiltern Show. *Photo by Laurence Bonner.*

from last year! In 2026 we will wait two weeks longer than usual before sowing and see what happens! It all depends on the weather, which really is not very dependable at all.



John selling blooms for church funds.
Photo by Phillipa Cooper.



Joint effort when neither grower has enough blooms! *Photo by Carole Tate.*

As John and I are both involved with the Wem Show I was very pleased to be asked to become the District Rep for Shropshire. I look forward to receiving details of members in the county so that I can begin contacting them and helping wherever possible.

Visiting gardening groups and distributing free seeds has remained very important to us. I remain passionate about encouraging as many people as possible to grow wonderful Sweet Peas. It is so satisfying when novice growers come along to Wem and sometimes enter with the seeds we have given out.

I have my fingers crossed for less extreme weather in 2026 and look forward to welcoming you to Wem Town Hall on the 18 and 19 July for our fifth Show back in our original venue.

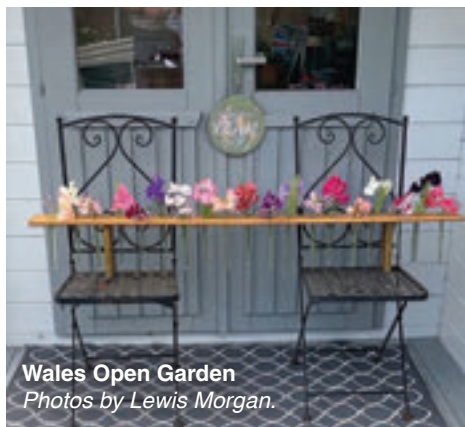
South Wales

By Jenny & Lewis Morgan

In footballing terms 2025 was a game of two halves. As in 2024 seeds were sown in January, we had excellent germination, and everything went to plan, planting out in early April with the weather being as good as one could expect.

The plants got away well, and so did we for a week's holiday in Jersey to charge up the batteries ready for the summer Sweet Pea exploits.

RHS Chelsea Flower Show beckoned again with a visit to support Phil Johnson's first exhibition stand. Not that we were needed! The stand seemingly drew everyone that visited the show, including some guy called Monty, who has a TV garden show.



Back to the real world tending our Sweet Peas. This year we decided to take off the early buds as advised by more experienced exhibitors, aiming for blooms for our local open garden day which just about worked out but was ideal for the New Forest Show which we attended the following weekend. The New Forest Show was very well attended. Any prizes were well earned and we were pleased to pick up a few prize cards. We made a weekend of it with a visit to the Trials at West Dean which included a sumptuous afternoon tea.

It was from this time that we started to have issues with our plants. What turned out to be a long dry spell of weather was in its infancy, and although we were ensuring the plant were regularly watered, they started to fail. We don't think it was a soil issue as we have our Sweet Peas both at home and the allotment and had the same problem at both. There was a reported country wide aphid problem, so it may have been this. By contrast, our seed clumps in both locations were unaffected.



'Kings Ransom
Photo by Lewis Morgan.

We still supported the various shows, but only made limited entries with Sweet Peas, but we were pleased to be able to meet up with friends and acquaintances.

The dry weather saw our seed harvest start and finish earlier than previous years. The seeds were of a good size and there is plenty of optimism for 2026.

We ended the year with a small exhibition stand at a Christmas Fayre at the local livestock market, where we spoke to numerous visitors, offering encouragement to all.

West Sussex

By Roger Parsons

An eventful year for me personally began on 1 February helping on the NSPS stand at Wisley for the RHS Great Seed Swap Event. It was there that I formally agreed to transfer my seed business and the National Collection in April to Phil

Johnson's company. This generated a lot of publicity, culminating in helping Phil at Chelsea Flower Show on his Gold-medal winning exhibit. After 20 years of seed production and selling, it seemed strange last Summer to be growing Sweet Peas just for pleasure and not worry about the quality and quantity of seed production.

I grew some cordon plants for the first time in decades and managed to enter a few classes at the Early National Show at Abingdon. The results appear elsewhere in this Annual. Other West Sussex exhibitors having good success at this show were Richard Barron and John Rieley.



Phil Johnson and Roger Parsons
at Wisley seed event after agreeing
Roger's business transfer.
Photo by Caroline Ball.

Richard tells me, the only other show he attended worthy of mention was Rustington. The standard was quite good despite the lack of rain. Jeff Haine won the 3-vase class with 'Charlie's Angel', 'Sir Jimmy Shand' and 'Wild Swan'. Richard took the award for most points with Jane Pumfrey also in contention.

John Rieley reports a week before the Early National there was a show at Haywards Heath where he won a cup for a mixed vase of nine stems but Roger Dix cleaned up all the others including the James Box cup for six vases of six stems each. John's detailed report, published elsewhere in this Annual, includes the Lindfield show so I won't repeat that here.

Looking to 2026, I am hoping to move to the north Shropshire area to be closer to family. This will be a big move after living in West Sussex for nearly 40 years. Moving house with 7 horses and a Daffodil breeding programme will not be straightforward but I hope to be settled and growing Sweet Peas again in 2027. If anyone would like to take on the role of district rep for West Sussex, I would be delighted to hear from you.

*“A garden requires patient labor and attention.
Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions
or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive
because someone expended effort on them.”*

Liberty Hyde Bailey



'Mrs Bernard Jones'.
Photo by Caroline Ball.

Obituaries

Ollie Clarke

By Members of the Rush Horticultural Society



We would like to pay tribute to Ollie Clarke, our cherished member and friend, who sadly passed away last year.

Ollie was a Sweet Pea enthusiast for decades, not only growing and exhibiting, but sharing his vast knowledge with growers of all levels. He contributed immensely to Sweet Peas in Ireland over the years, especially in co-founding the All-Ireland Sweet Pea Championship. He leaves behind a legacy in his namesake flower.

We are honoured to say he was a friend to us. We are deeply saddened that he is gone and wish him rest.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

Tony Welch

By Keith Brewer

It is with great sadness, that I report the passing of Tony Welch from Teddington, near Petworth, Sussex. He was a great friend and wonderful grower of everything, especially Sweet Peas. He had a dry humour and attended a great many shows, National and others, especially the Shalford Sweet Pea show, always with his wife, Christine. They were married for many years and had a big family, to which I send my sympathies. He passed away at the end of March 2025 well into his 90s.

Dave Rollinson

By Roger Parsons

Dave died on 19 February 2026 at the age of 90. He started growing Sweet Peas aged 15 and joined the Society in 1953 aged just 17, becoming a life member in 1987. His name first appears in the prize list for the 1984 National Show at Bournemouth, including as winner of the Evan Hince Cup against 12 other entries. He subsequently took on the vacant role of District Rep for Hereford and Worcester. He was a member of the General Committee from 1991 till 2013. An engineer by profession, he set up a rig to make cane clips and supplied these for the Society to sell.

Dave retained a lively interest in all things *Lathyrus* until the end, attending the 2025 AGM and visiting the Early Show in 2022. He is best known for his enthusiastic devotion to *Lathyrus* species and Old-Fashioned cultivars. I recall Dave and his wife June staged a display of Old-Fashioneds, Cupids and Royals at the 1992 National show at Wisley for which he was awarded a silver-gilt medal by the RHS. He widely distributed seeds of such cultivars that were not readily available elsewhere. He was of course a great help to me in setting up what became the National Collection seedbank in 1998. He was always on the lookout for different Grandifloras. A more recent find was a cerise red cultivar which was introduced in 2020 and named for him as 'Dave R'.

Other Deaths

We pass on the condolences of the Society to the family of Sylvia Brackley. With husband Norman she travelled the country displaying and promoting Sweet Peas.

We also pass on our condolences to the families of Lindsay Dunse from Thornhill, Scotland and Graham Putman from Kelley, Surrey.

Affiliated Shows 2026

To advertise your show here and on the Society website contact the Editor or return the form included in the Autumn Bulletin by 31 January.

6 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 Alex Denman. Details of classes to be found on www.rwrhs.com/royal-windsor-flower-show

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.

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: eperren1943@gmail.com Various specialist and novice classes.

20 June – Chipperfield Horticultural Society

Show held at Chipperfield Village Hall, The Common, Chipperfield WD4 9BS. Show open to public 2.30pm. Show Manager Sue Tyler. Email: chipperfieldhortsoc@hotmail.com

24 & 25 June – Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Society

Show held at Royal Norfolk Show, Norfolk Showground, Dereham Road, Norwich NR5 0TT. Staging on 23 June. Show open 8am to 6pm each day. Show Secretary Mrs Lesley Webdale, Mirtna Cottage, Whinburgh Road, Westfield, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 1QL. ☎ 01362 821549. Email: showsecretary@nnhs.org.uk

28 June – Chiltern Sweet Pea Society

Membership of the Society is OPEN TO ALL and now costs £5, which includes free any number of Show entries. Show is held at the Millennium Hall, Lacey Green, Buckinghamshire HP27 0QT What3Words famous.october.advantage. Staging 8.30am – 12.00 noon, bowls and baskets until 1.00pm. Show opens 2.30pm. Show manager Mr. Adam Heeley: adamheeley@btinternet.com ☎ 01844343936. Classes for All including novices, new growers, under 200 cordons, all types of *lathyrus* and ALL WELCOME.

4 – 5 July – Ainsdale Horticultural Society

Show held at Ainsdale Village Green. Show open 11.00am – 5.00pm. Show Manager/Secretary Paul Bradshaw, 5 Dunster Road, Southport PR8 3AG.

4 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.

4 July – Gloucestershire Sweet Pea Show

Show held at Dundry Nurseries & Garden Centre, Bamfurlong Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 6SL. Staging 7.00am – 11.00am. Open to public 2.00pm – 4.00pm. Show Manager Phil Champion, 3 Boswell Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 2NB. ☎ 07841 923301. Email: glossweetpeas@outlook.com Classes 5 and 9 stem classers. Non-spencer classes, vases and bowls. First time exhibitors encouraged and welcomed.

4 July – Witney Horticultural Society (Summer Flower and Vegetable Show)

Show held at the Methodist Church, Witney OX28 6HG. Show Schedule due end of March 2026. Email for further information: witneyhs.enquiries@gmail.com WHS Website: www.witneyhorticulturalsociety.com

11 July – Buckhurst Hill Horticultural Society

Show held at St. John's Church, High Road, Buckhurst Hill IG9 5RX. Show open 2.00pm – 4.30pm. Show Manager Mrs. P. Thompson, 33 Spring Grove, Loughton IG10 4QD. ☎ 02055 020106. Email: pthompson1@btinternet.com

18 & 19 July – Wem Sweet Pea Show

Held at Wem Town Hall, 28-34 High Street, Wem, Shropshire, SY4 5DG. The show is open between 10am - 4pm on both Saturday and Sunday. Staging on Friday with judging at 7.15 am Saturday. For further details and schedules please contact the Show Manager Rose Horner, 8, Britannia Road, Cuddington, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 2FR. ☎ 07739461900. Email: wemsweetpeashow@gmail.com. 4 divisions for Spencer cultivars (including open classes). Separate division for pre 1910 varieties plus many decorative, novice, craft and floral art classes. Schedule / entry forms also available in person from the Town Hall. We are a very friendly show in Wem, the home of Eckford Sweet Peas.

18 July – Holymoorside Horticultural Society

Show held at Holymoorside Village Hall, Chesterfield, Derbys. Staging 10.00am – 1.00pm. Show open 2.30pm – 4.30pm. Show manager/secretary Peter Forrow, 33 Gallery Lane, Holymoorside, Chesterfield S42 7ER. ☎ 07807 270411. Email: peter.forrow@btinternet.com

20 – 23 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
Classes, open, restricted, beginners, arrangements, petite etc. Schedule appears on website in April www.rwas.wales or contact Amanda Burton.

8 August – Clutton Horticultural Society

Show held at Ridges Field, Bendalls Bridge, Clutton, Bristol BS39 5SJ. Entry forms needed by 9pm on 6 August. Entries to be staged 7am – 10am on 8 August. Show opens from 12 noon. Show secretary Roger Snary, Brookfield, Carlton Close, Clutton BS39 5SF. ☎ 01761 453063. For description of classes and rules see website: cluttongardening.com 4 Classes to enter.

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CLASSIFICATION LIST
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**Contact Carole Tate. Email: caroletate10@gmail.com
for more information and prices**

Gloucestershire Sweet Pea Show

Saturday 4th July 2026

at

Dundry Nurseries, Bamfurlong Lane, Cheltenham, GL51 6SL

Staging: 7.00 - 11.00am, Open to Public: 2.00 - 4.00pm



Spencer and non-spencer classes
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THE LATE SHOW

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Occupation Road, Salford, Greater Manchester M28 2LJ
what3words: proper.readjust.headsets

11 & 12 JULY 2026

The Show will be open
Saturday 11.00am - 5.00pm
Sunday 10.00am - 3.00pm

Presentation of awards at 1.00pm Saturday

Entries to Show Manager: Carole Tate

Email: showentries@sweetpeas.org.uk **or post to:** Carole Tate, 22 Lime Grove,
Chorley, Lancashire PR7 3JA Tel: 07961 477137

Staging 4pm to 10pm Friday (via gate code from
Show Manager) and between 6am to 9.30am Saturday
Judging at 9.45am Saturday

VISIT WWW.SWEETPEAS.ORG.UK FOR SHOW SCHEDULE & UPDATES



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