



# HERGEST CROFT GARDENS

## Newsletter

April 2011

### Spring has sprung

With some warmer weather and just a little rain, though we could certainly do with more, everything is coming into flower together. Cherries are having a great year with *Prunus* 'Pink Shell' on the Daisy Border a sight for sore eyes. Magnolias are everywhere and I comment on some below. The Mid season rhododendrons in Park Wood are superb – look out for one of my favourites *Rhododendron var fargesii* with frilly pink flowers on the Chinese Path. The Spring Border in the Kitchen Garden is looking at its best and I love the Kitchen Garden at this time when it looks so promising with young vegetable plants and just for a time, no weeds. The plums in the orchard have flowered prolifically and lets hope that the fruit set will survive without being frosted. - several species of bumble bees have been busy on their pollinating

job. Work on the Rock Garden has been continuing with the restoration of the rill between the Dripping Well and the upper pond which was leaking; the artistic skills of Elizabeth and grand-daughter Lucy have been fully employed on setting out the rocks. The collection of Epimediums built up over the last ten years in the Rock Garden is worth a close look: in my view *E. grandiflorum* which we collected in Japan in 1980 is one of the best, it grows by the Dripping Well.



Rocks in the Rill from the Dripping Well



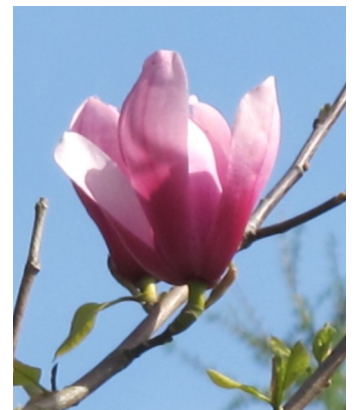
Above Magnolia 'Vulcan'

### A little comparison of Magnolias

By the gate on the Boundary Path into the Azalea Garden are two deep coloured Magnolias; to the North (right) is *Magnolia* Caerhays Surprise (*M. campbellii* ssp *mollicomata* x *M. liliflora* 'Nigra') whilst to the South (Left) is Magnolia 'Galaxy' (*M. liliflora* 'Nigra' x *M. sprengeri* 'Diva'). The former was raised at Caerhays in Cornwall in 1959 and the latter at the US National Arboretum in Washington DC in 1963. They are both magnificent plants and I find it difficult to chose between them. At the South end of the Hergest Croft Lawn are Magnolia 'Vulcan' (*M. campbellii* ssp *mollicomata* 'Lanarth' x *M. liliflora*) bred by Mark Jury in New Zealand and an unnamed hybrid of *M. 'Galaxy'* x *M. sargentiana robusta* which we raised from seed from Phillippe de Spoelberch in Herkenrode, Belgium; I had thought that this might even be an improvement on *M. 'Galaxy'* but this year at least 'Galaxy' wins. It is interesting to see breeders all over the temperate world searching for the perfect dark Magnolia – if I had to vote now I would give

the prize to 'Galaxy' especially for cooler gardens but I have no doubt others will be along in the future. Just for comparison look at *M. 'Raspberry Ice'* (*M. liliflora* 'Nigra' x *M. x veitchii*) to the east of the Tennis Court in the Kitchen Garden and *M. x veitchii* itself by the Shelter in Park Wood which has never looked better in all its ninety years.

There is a fascinating account of the Magnolia breeding at Caerhays from where so many great plants have come in Charles Williams's new book "Caerhays Castle" amongst many other nuggets of horticultural and historical interest. This connection is very important for the garden here since so many of our plants have connections to the Williams family at Caerhays, Werrington and Burncoose.



Magnolia  
from de Spoelberch seed

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### **.The Hergest Hybrid Birches.**

Working on the new birch book due to be published by Kew in the autumn and written by Hugh MacAllister from Ness and the late Kenneth Ashburner I think we have now sorted out the plants from here that are sometimes available here and in the Nursery trade.

*Betula* 'Hergest', *Betula* 'Heywood' and *Betula* 'Dick Banks' are all selections from a group of seedlings that arose naturally in the Azalea Garden; I believe the parentage to be *B. albosinensis* (Probably Wilson 4106 seed from the Williams at Werrington) x *B. ermanii*. There are a number of other unnamed seedlings of the same cross in the garden showing variations between the two parents.

*Betula utilis* 'Park Wood' is the very dark stemmed large tree to the west of the Chinese Path formerly named *B. utilis* var *prattii* which named has now been rejected as not distinct from *B. utilis*. This has not often been propagated as available material is well above the ground but we hope to do something about it next year, as it deserves a place in larger gardens.



*Betula globospica*



### **Anemones**

There are a number of different forms of *Anemone nemorosa*, the native windflower or Wood Anemone throughout the garden ranging from the pure white one that covers the ground below the bare trees in Park Wood that is an indicator species for ancient woodland to various blues. There are blues also in *A appenina* and *A blanda* and I am far from clear how to tell them apart but they make a brave show throughout the garden where they have naturalised. A puzzle is the pink flowered one which originated in the Slate Garden and is now planted on the wall above it as well as in the Spring Border in the Kitchen garden – we always knew it as *A*

*nemorosa* 'Robinsoniana' but that is incorrect as that plant has large blue flowers! Any suggestions welcome! A particular new little gem is the yellow *A. ranunculoides* growing in the Rock Garden.

**Plant Sales:** There are a wide range of plants and some rare trees. **Tea Room** in the Dining Room

**Gift Shop:** unusual gift displayed in the Hall

## **EVENTS**

### **The Flower Fair**

**Monday 2 May 10.30am-4.30pm**

**Events in aid of Noah's Ark Trust**

**Charity for Bereaved Children**

**Range of nurseries and craft stalls selling unusual plants and crafts**

**Rain or Shine Theatre Company**

**Shakespeare's 'Much Ado about Nothing'**

**Saturday 30 July at 7.00pm**

**RHS Celebration of Apples**

**Saturday 15—Sunday 16 October**

**Apple varieties from RHS Wisley, tasting, talks, and identification**

The Receptionists, Jill, Sandra, and Melissa welcome any comments

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