



# HERGEST CROFT GARDENS

## Newsletter October 2011

### Lucy's Marrow Triumph



Lucy Banks aged 9 won the Novice marrow class in the Horticultural tent at Kington Show. It is the first time the family have shown at the show for many years but there is a long tradition, Mrs Crummer, "great Aunt Esther" was showing produce from Ridgebourne in 1840 in competition with her nephew in law, my great great grandfather Richard Banks – so the tradition continues though Lucy will have to move up into the main classes next year!

### Autumn Bulbs

We are apt to think of bulbs as spring plants flowering before the trees develop their canopies but there are many autumn flowerers as well. On looking up *Colchicum* I found there are many more species than I realised but I think most of ours are *Colchicum autumnale*, a English native, or *Colchicum speciosum*, from the Caucasus; they vary in colour from white to deep purple and flower without their leaves hence the common name of 'Naked Ladies'. I think that they are now self-seeding in the garden since they are turning up in places that I do not remember them before. They have a number of medical applications including control of gout and I rather enjoy knowing

### Hilda Cowdell

An era ended last month with the death of Hilda Cowdell just short of her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday. Hilda came to work for William and Dorothy Banks at Hergest Croft in the late 1920s so she had known five generations of the Banks family. In the finest tradition of Upstairs Downstairs she married an under gardener Bill Cowdell who came to Hergest Croft in 1924 and retired as Head Gardener in 1976. She was a fount of information about the family and old times in Kington even though she was an incomer all the way from Lyonshall! She will be sadly missed but happily remembered by all of us.



### *Crocus speciosus*

that naked ladies are treating my gout. There is a wonderful group of the white form *Colchicum autumnale* var *album* under a brilliant red *Acer japonicum* in the Maple Grove. Later in the month they will be followed by the true autumn crocus, the blue *Crocus speciosus* in the rockery. Cyclamen are truly corms not bulbs and again they are one of the joys of the autumn garden, thriving in deep shade, there is a good group of mixed pink and white forms of *Cyclamen hederifolium* under the cit leaf beech on the junction of the Boundary Path and the Daisy Border.

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## Autumn Colour

Head Gardener, Stephen Lloyd believes that the dry spring is the reason why colour is early this year; be that as it may, it certainly is, as *Acer rubrum* is more advanced here than in Eastern Canada from where we have just returned. Features at the moment are *Disanthus cercidifolius*, *Neoshirakia (Sapium) japonica*, *Acer sieboldianum* and *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy' at the bottom of the Maple Grove, also various forms of *Acer ginnala* including a bonfire of one on the Entrance Path and several at the west end of the Azalea Garden. A new young *Cercidyphyllum japonicum* on the north edge of the Azalea Garden is showing a most unusual colour, I hope it is not just preparing to die! As the month goes on these will be joined by more maples, birches and stewartias. Berries are variable this year but there are spectacular displays on *Sorbus alnifolia* and *Malus robusta* in the Orchard, the Yunnan Crab apple, *Malus yunnansis*,

## A few late flowers

In a fading season there are still a few things to look out for; *Clematis rehderiana* by the Greenhouse is covered in flower, two privets *Ligustrum lucidum* by the Potting Shed and *Ligustrum quiboui* in the Maple Grove should be good later in the month. There are some flowers on *Luma appiculata* (*Myrtus luma*) by the Potting Shed which considering last winter is amazing and don't miss the two plants of *Hydrangea* 'Merveille Sanguine' in the Cedar Glade which are a



*Neoshirakia japonica*

*Berberis jamesiana* and *Sorbus* 'Pink Pagoda' in the Maple Grove. One *Acer micranthum* at the east end of the Azalea Garden has already turned a strong red and the large tree by the Entrance gate is beginning to show colour.

deep purple blue that I have never seen before. As we prepare for the autumn apple spectacular I can reveal two finds that we hope to show. Pear 'Peer Gynt' on the espalier in the Kitchen Garden is now thought to be 'Monarch' or 'Knight's Monarch' bred by Thomas Andrew Knight. Pear 'Black Worcester' in the Orchard is now believed to be the Wardon pear from near Droitwich

**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

## PLANT FAIR

## RHS Celebration of Apples

Sat 15—Sun 16 October

Apple displays over 400 varieties by RHS Wisley,

Frank P Matthews and

Marcher Apple Network

Apple Identification & Tasting

Local Apple Products

Demonstrations of Cultivation

Talks on the Heritage of Apples

See the spectacular Autumn Colour in the gardens

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

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