



HERGEST CROFT GARDENS

Newsletter

April 2019

Magnolias: I was just about to write this a week ago when the Magnolias were magnificent and then it snowed! We got away with less damage than I feared and there were plenty of unopened buds which are unharmed. Elizabeth commented how our Magnolia plantings have added to the spring garden here; we began by buying many newly propagated new selections from Eisenhutt in Switzerland, who had access to Peter Smithers plantings above Lake Como, and continued with seed from the Magnolia Society and Phillippe de Spoelberch in Belgium. More recently we have benefited from the breeding at the Williams family garden at Caerhays in Cornwall, following a connection that has lasted for over 100 years. John Ravenscroft at his new Cherry Tree Arboretum, in Shropshire took on the propagation of many new cultivars, sadly he has now stopped, but much of the material has passed to Frank Matthews, Tenbury, with whom we have a close working relationship as they propagate many of the best Hergest plants. In my view Magnolias have been the single most important addition to English gardens since the Chevalier de Soulange-Bodin made his famous cross of *Magnolia denudata* \times *liliflora*, resulting in *Magnolia* \times *soulangiana*, in around 1817. You can barely drive along any English town road without seeing their floriferous but elegant flowers – typically French to produce beauty without vulgarity but I suppose the British can take some credit for forcing his retirement from the French cavalry after the battle of Waterloo. As I write the white Magnolia cross on the Sycamore Walk made by Philippe de Spoelberch in Holland looks very promising as does the very rare evergreen *Magnolia* (formerly *Michelia*) *sphaerantha* from Yunnan in Western China in the Azalea Garden.



Magnolia \times *soulangiana*



Southern facade showing gabions filled with local stone

The new house which you can see taking shape at the bottom of the Orchard where we think it will fit sympathetically into the landscape replacing the barn and outbuildings that were there before. As I wrote in March we take great pride in the use of materials from the Estate; in this we are following a tradition that dates back at least to the early 19th century if not long before. The great oak pillars on the southern facade have been cut from oaks recently felled in Park Wood and will stand on the barn's old stone plinths, one of which has been carved as a “foundation stone” which will be placed during the Easter weekend. We even have a name for it now Field Barn reflecting the name of the Field in front of it Barn Piece which now forms part of the Well Meadow.

Camellias: I wrote last month about *Camellia* ‘Serenade’ which has disappeared from the trade and I am happy to report that Burncoose Nurseries have agreed to propagate it. I must continue with another gift from the late Dr Jimmy Smart, the red camellia with small red trumpet shaped flowers on the Daisy Border, it is a cultivar of *C. japonica* but I don't have any idea of its name but again it needs to be commercially available as an ideal plant for small gardens. If you know the name do let us know.



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Flowering trees: The blossom in the Orchard is outstanding especially *Pyrus pashia* from the Himalayas which is a shimmer of pink bud at the moment in contrast to the sage green of the nearby *Pyrus amygdaliformis* from Greece. Elsewhere the flowering cherries are as good as I have ever seen them though the recent snow brought down our very old tree of *Prunus 'Ichiyo'* which my father's catalogue entry suggests was planted around 1910. The big *Cornus nutalli* 'Ascona' on the drive is a mass of bud and should be out in a week or two. The very rare *Meliiodendron xylocarpum* in the Maple Grove is showing pink buds that will turn white when open.



Meliiodendron xylocarpum

Bulbs and other things: The daffodils are in full flower at least two weeks ahead of usual as are the tulips which usually grace the Flower Fair in early May. There is a carpet of *Anemone blanda* under the big beeches as you enter the garden. The Spring Border is alive with excitement; the hellebores are still in full flower, primulas are everywhere. Fritellaria and there are ponds of grape hyacinths.

Park Wood: The Rhododendrons are coming to their spring peak under the bare oaks above and it is well worth the walk across the park to get there.

The Spring Fair charity is St Michaels Hospice, who have been several times before. We are putting the auction on line for the first time and including several of the Sculptures from the Marches Makers exhibition which takes place over the Bank Holiday weekend of May 4, 5 and 6. We are most grateful to Rachel Ricketts whose lurcher dog guards the old Potting Shed and whose wild boar bestrides the Terrace and is among my favourites.

Haywood Cabin



This charming two person cabin is at the top of the Azalea Garden and is available for holiday lets. It allows you into the garden at times when no one else is about. You can see details on the web site but here is a photo



EVENTS

SPRING FAIR Monday 6 May 2019 10am - 5.30pm

Plants for sale from local specialist nurseries, as well as handicrafts and produce stalls. Bonanza Auction and fabulous raffle in aid of St Michael Hospice as well as Marches Makers Festival Sculptures throughout the garden.

Plant Sales: There is a wide range of plants and some rare trees and shrubs.

The Shop has a new collection of gifts

For a copy of the Newsletter visit www.hergest.co.uk. Comments are gratefully received.

The Receptionists, Sandra or Helen welcome any comments

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