

A Season in Full Bloom

It's been a wonderfully busy summer for the Society, with members opening their gardens for a series of Pop-Up visits that truly showcased the creativity and care within our community. Each garden had its own character — from meticulously curated borders to lush, informal plantings — and every visit offered something unique to enjoy.

Many thanks to all members who generously opened their gates and shared the results of their hard work. The displays were exceptional, and the optional entry donations raised funds for charities close to each gardener's heart. We're equally grateful to all the visitors who came along, explored, and supported these events. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive from both hosts and guests, and +we're delighted to say that impromptu openings will continue. If you're interested in showing your garden, do let us know — the Society will be there in person to support and help with logistics.

Summer Gardens of North Norfolk - a report from Chris Page

'There is no nation more passionate about gardening than the British,' says Monty Don and this was much in evidence in the gardens visited on the annual HGS Horticultural Society outing in mid-July. 'Summer gardens in North Norfolk' proved to be a glorious 3-day feast of 6 gardens ranging from the grand to the naturalistic, elegant to quirky, and the flamboyant to the secluded.



Our visit to East Ruston Old Vicarage was a private one, on a day closed to the public, and a highlight of the trip. We were privileged to be given an illuminating and entertaining tour of the 32-acre gardens by the owner and designer. Alan Gray's curiosity and passion for plants have resulted in an extraordinary celebration of flora from all over the world, displayed in 'rooms'. He explains, 'We try to be as original as possible with the planting combinations here; sometimes you might find them soothing at other times shocking, but that's the fun of gardening'. The most recent area is the Desert Wash, designed to resemble parts of Arizona with agaves, aloes, cacti and palms dominating.

Another private visit was to Elton Hall, near Peterborough, home to the Proby family for 400 years. The present garden is a result of the work of Meredyth Proby who spent the last 40 years redesigning and replanting. Here we admired the sunken garden, a herbaceous

garden with fountain, a topiary, box parterre, lily pond, an arboretum and a Gothic orangery built to celebrate the Millennium.

At Houghton Hall, a grand Palladian mansion surrounded by extensive parkland, we focused on the five-acre walled garden – lovingly developed as a memorial to Sybil Sassoon, grandmother to the 7th Marquess of Cholmondeley. With its unusual design of separate ‘rooms’ divided by thick yew hedges, each garden surprised us with a different theme, mood or unexpected detail. Contemporary sculptures added structure and intrigue.

A walled garden too was our destination at West Acre Nursery and Gardens. With its unique D-shape filled with borders, ornamental grasses, specimen trees and Mediterranean planting, it was a perfect place for a peaceful meander in the heat of the afternoon. We enjoyed the naturalistic, informal style and had time to nose about in the specialist nursery, with many of us purchasing plants for our gardens at home.

At Sandringham House and Estate, we were treated to a tour of the historic house before being guided around the magnificent gardens and grounds. There were sweeping borders, ornamental shrubs, peaceful lakes and some wonderful trees (including a 900-year oak). The King, we were told, has a hands-on approach to developing the garden and we admired a recently added Topiary Garden and Lower Maze Garden designed under his direction. At the north end, we wandered through the cottage garden created by Geoffrey Jellicoe. It was here, apparently, in the secluded and peaceful corners that George VI used to practise his speeches.

Anglesey Abbey, a stop on our way up to Norfolk, is a Jacobean-style country house built on the remains of a priory. We followed designated trails through landscaped grounds, with the highlights at this time of year being the herbaceous borders filled to bursting with gorgeous colour, wildflower meadows, peaceful glades of silver birches, a rose garden and a working mill.

What a fabulous trip, with perfect weather and a well-paced itinerary. We returned to London inspired by the remarkable gardens and places we had visited and buoyed up by the camaraderie among friends with whom we shared a passion for gardens and gardening.



Looking Ahead: Autumn Events

The new season brings a full programme of activities:

- **September Flower Show**, 19th September — complete with a lively brass band performance and, for the first time in a few years, a bulb sale. We are looking

forward to members entering the various categories - don't be shy, there are always helpers on hand on the day to support first time exhibitors.

- **Soil Science Talk**, 20th October — an opportunity to deepen your understanding of the foundations of healthy gardening.
- **Annual General Meeting & Prize-Giving**, 10th November — taking place in November.
- **December Quiz Night**, 5th December — always a favourite and a cheerful way to round off the year.

Advance Notice of Upcoming Events

We are planning half day expert-led workshops on apple and pear tree pruning and rose pruning in early 2027. More details to follow, but please hold the dates below and email Alison via events@hortsoc.co.uk if you'd like to reserve a space on one or both workshops, as numbers will be limited.

- Saturday 30 January - apple tree pruning workshop
- Saturday 20 February - rose pruning workshop

It's shaping up to be a vibrant autumn, and we look forward to seeing you at these events and celebrating another season of shared horticultural joy.