

# Suburb Open Gardens

The HGS Horticultural Society is the Suburb's first society, started in 1909 and continuing to cater for gardeners of all sorts and organising many events not just for its members benefit, but for the enjoyment of us all. The popular February Seed Swap for exchanging saved vegetable and flower seeds is one of many such events. The annual plant sale on Saturday, 16 May in the newly refurbished Fellowship House is probably already in many people's diaries and is the next occasion for us to benefit from their organisation.

And a few weeks later Suburb residents will have the chance to enjoy the delights of four Suburb gardens and Suburb News's

own gardening correspondent's nearby garden in East Finchley, which will all open to the public in aid of the National Gardens Scheme (yellow book) charities this summer.

First off the mark is Marjorie Harris at 48 Erskine Hill (Sunday 7 June, 2-6pm, teas). She is closely followed by Caroline Broome at 79 Church Lane, N2 and David Weinberg at 74 Willifield Way (Sunday 14 June, 2-6pm, teas at both gardens). Then Diane Berger at 86 Willifield Way and Yvonne Oliver at 4 Asmunds Hill will open on Sunday 19 July, 1-6pm, with teas at 86 Willifield Way.

More information about these and other events can be found on the website at [hortsoc.co.uk](http://hortsoc.co.uk).



NICHE SUTTON

Seed Swap (with Patricia Major, Ken Murrell, Terry Rand and Gill Read)

## Rose Gardens

Walking through Northway Gardens, which date back to the beginning of the Suburb, one cannot help but notice that work is going on in the Rose Garden beds. The water supply installation, digging over and composting, which Suburb News reported in the Autumn issue as being in the pipeline, have recently been completed.

"It took seven hours just to wheelbarrow the manure onto the beds," said Kristin Green one of the Northway Gardens Organisation leaders after helping to move the first six tons of the 200 or so metres from Northway to the beds. "With three more tons going on next week this will help transform the soil structure and allow plants to grow properly. It was hot steamy work!" she added.

Brian Ingram continued, "With all beds now planted up, including seven beds of superb roses, we are well on our way to transforming

these ignored gardens and after 15 years of neglect it is starting to look decent again. The feedback from all visitors has been excellent and our little group of local residents who make up the Northway Gardens Organisation is very pleased. Barnet and us are going for low maintenance planting that will ensure the long term viability here."

The NGO has so far relied only on donations from residents and supporters; although they are applying again to the Trust and to the Residents Association for some funding.

If you would like to contribute, you can send money to the account of the Northway Gardens Organisation, NatWest, Temple Fortune, sort code: 51 50 11, account no: 66631904. You can also send a cheque payable to Northway Gardens Organisation to 69 Brookland Rise, NW11 6D. To find out more, please phone 8458 5313 or 07503 212253.



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## Dry shade and boggy borders – right plan, right place



Bog garden

The London clay throughout Hampstead Garden Suburb offers a mixed blessing: Dry and cracked in summer, soggy, sometimes waterlogged in winter, but rich in plant nutrients. Perennials thrive up in the heat, roots rot in the airless, saturated soil of the bog, and are no contest to the tree roots in the dry shade. Money down the drain, disappointment all round.

Many local gardens, whether through poor drainage, natural springs or high water table, have permanently boggy areas. By contrast, but often within the same plots, there are extensive barren dry areas in the shade of the mature trees that surround and overlook our gardens. However by working with nature you can create diverse and innovative areas of planting that will not only survive but thrive in these challenging conditions. There are a few interventions you will need to make, but ultimately, by choosing plants that have naturally adapted to these extreme habitats a lot of the hard work has already been done for you.

### BOG GARDEN

Contrary to popular belief, there is a broad range of plants to choose from for both environments. In the bog garden, for lush abundance not to be

found in more traditional borders, why not try *Ligularia dentata* 'Britt-Marie Crawford' for its glossy claret coloured leaves and huge daisy like flowers loved by bees, and *rodgersia pinnata* Superba, with its spikes of bright-pink flowers above deeply divided, dark green leaves, purplish-bronze when young? Martyrs to slugs and snails, but well worth persevering! For real impact add *osmunda regalis*, the royal fern. For colour add drifts of *astilbe* with its soft plumes of white, pink and red, and *primula beesiana*, and the magenta *candelabra primrose*. Invincible spreaders include *houltuynia cordata*, *persicaria*, *lysichiton* or yellow loosestrife, *iris ensata* and marsh marigold. Finally mulch around the plants with leaf mould, coarse bark or homemade compost to add body and keep in moisture. Avoid walking on the soil by placing stepping stones at intervals amongst the planting to stop soil compaction. Regardless of how boggy the soil gets make sure to check that the plants get enough water in hot dry spells.

### DRY WOODLAND GARDEN

Think about what you see in the countryside: broad drifts of ground cover and bulbs, very

little in the way of height, although there are a few stalwart evergreen shrubs such as *viburnum rhytidophyllum*, *mahonia* and *sarcococca*. For deep shade try *sorbaria sorbifolia*, *dryopteris* and *polystichum* ferns. Don't be afraid to plant spreaders that you would normally avoid like the plague: *Euphorbia amygdaloides* Robbiae, *woodruff*, *Lamium galeobdolon*, commonly known as yellow archangel, *epimedium* and lily of the valley. Must-haves for dappled shade are *pulmonarias* (e.g. Diana Clare), *brunneras* (e.g. Jack Frost), *alchemilla mollis* (lady's mantle), *pachysandra* in plain and variegated form, *geranium phaeum*, *vincas* and *hellebores* to name but a few.

Plant drifts of English bluebells, snowdrops and cyclamen corm and *hederifolium*. Try to imitate nature as far as possible by applying a generous layer of leaf mould or compost each spring. Log piles, drifts of dead leaves and tree stumps create a natural habitat for wildlife and will rot down and add organic matter to the thin shallow soil. Water in well and regularly while the plants are establishing, but in time they should only require watering in prolonged hot weather; a good soaking once a week rather than a sprinkling every day. It wouldn't be advisable to install an irrigation system either as these are plants that like dry conditions.

CAROLINE BROOME



Dry shade garden in spring

## Suburb Rainfall

By the time of writing, at the beginning of April, 2015 is turning out to be a cheerful beginning to the year as far as the weather is concerned. Here in the Suburb, there has been more sun recently; it wasn't really as cold in January as the more excitable weather forecasts (with their beloved amber warnings!)

would probably have led people to expect. However, that does not mean there was little of interest over the six winter months.

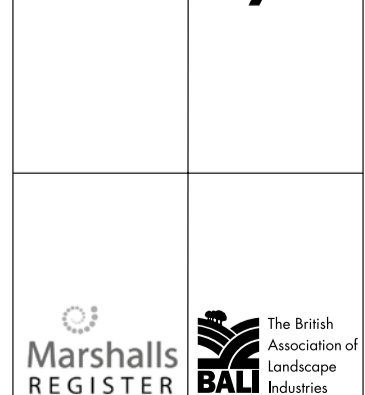
Overall, 2014 turned out to be a wet year, the 36 inches of precipitation being the highest since – 2012! The totals of over 41 inches in 2000 and 2002, and 37 inches for 2001, the year

between, put the rain of last year in better perspective. In the six winter months of October to March, there was a total of 16.5 inches, almost exactly the average for the period. Seven inches of this fell in October and November while the four succeeding months had below average amounts. The end of

March gales were not appreciated by some trees and flowers but, otherwise, the wet autumn, followed by a drier December, February and March really does seem to have inspired Suburb gardens to prove Robert Browning right when he wrote "Oh to be in England now that April's here!"

DIANA IWI FROM MEADWAY

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