

The HPS Conservation Scheme

Jan Vaughan

The Hardy Plant Society first formed a Conservation Committee in 1980, which developed into the Conservation Scheme and has been committed to preserving good perennial plants that are in danger of being lost to cultivation. You may have been involved with the Conservation Scheme in the past or be a new member interested to find out more about the activities of the Hardy Plant Society. So, what is the Conservation Scheme all about?

These days we are all aware that plants appear in garden centres and nurseries so fast it is impossible to keep up. They may be available for a year or two and are then replaced by the next new fashion. Meanwhile, many of us have plants in our gardens that we love, that have stood the test of time, or may remind us of a friend or garden visit. We probably try to propagate these plants, to provide more for our own garden and spares to give away or sell. In this way conservation of good garden plants is something we all do.

The Hardy Plant Society Conservation Scheme works in a similar way through volunteer growers in Local Groups and interested individuals. There is a range of plants, chosen by members for their value in the garden, for reliability perhaps or long-flowering period. The plants may have interesting connections to people or places or be important in the history of plant breeding. Many of these older plants are hard to find in nursery lists with four or less entries in the RHS Plant Finder.



Plants arriving for the Exchange

Once a plant has been accepted onto the Conservation Scheme plants are distributed at the annual Plant Exchange to Local Groups around the country and out to the growers. This allows a plant to be grown in a variety of areas, providing valuable information about the conditions that encourage these plants to thrive and determining the best methods of propagation as well as recording problems with pests and diseases.

Plants are propagated and returned to the Exchange to widen the distribution, ensuring that they continue to be grown. There are obvious benefits for growers who can acquire and grow interesting plants that are not widely available and by so doing help to maintain the bio-diversity of perennial plants. The knowledge we gain through growing and researching these plants is made available to other HPS members and the general public through the HPS website. I am the current National Coordinator for the Conservation Scheme, keeping in touch with Local Group Coordinators and organising the annual Plant Exchange and I would like to think that more Western Counties members may be interested in getting involved.

You can find out more about the plants and how the Conservation Scheme works on the HPS website, but I will leave you with a brief look at one of the conservation



plants, Chrysanthemum 'Picasso', which has been at its best over the last few weeks. It was introduced to cultivation in 2003, but not made commercially available and has been on the Scheme since 2010 when it was not listed at all in the Plant Finder. It is perfectly hardy, forming a neat mound about 45cm x 45cm covered with sprays of small to medium 'pom-pom' peach coloured flowers. This year 5 nurseries are listing it and so many more people are able to have this lovely plant.