



Potting Shed News

The fortnightly newsletter of Cliveden Gardens



What have we been up to?

It's been a while since the last edition of PSN partly because the team has been working flat out on our bedding changeover process. This biannual task sees us plant up over 40,000 bedding plants on the Parterre, in the Long Garden, Duke's Garden and, new for this year, the lower terrace. It takes around five weeks to complete from start to finish and sees the whole team working together. This includes our group of dedicated, hard working volunteers who get involved in all parts of the process (*left are two of our Wednesday volunteers and below left, some of the Thursday team*). National Volunteer Week 2018 may have just finished, but we would like to thank all of our volunteers for everything they do, come rain or shine, to help Cliveden look so spectacular.



The semicircle at the southern end of the Parterre was the first area to be planted (*see right*). This bed now contains 6,200 red salvias and a border of 1,300 grey *Senecio cineraria* 'Cirrus'.

Then we moved on to the Long Garden, where we removed the 11,000 *Bellis* 'Bellissima mixed' which had provided a wonderful sea of pinks and white throughout



the spring months. The four beds were weeded, rotovated and then levelled ready for planting. Working off wooden boards and using a bamboo cane cut to size (20cm), we place each plant carefully to ensure that it is exactly the right distance apart from the next one. Once a whole row is laid out, it can be planted and then it's on with the next row. Just over a week later, the beds were all planted up with over 11,000 mixed salvias.

Elsewhere on the Parterre, we will be filling the 16 triangular beds with different planting combinations. The central four will each contain 950 *Begonia* 'Devil's Delight' (which wowed visitors in the Long Garden throughout the summer of 2016.) Another four beds will be planted with a ribbon of white ageratum, filled in either side with yellow marigolds and red begonias whilst the remaining eight beds will have a ribbon of red salvias, with blue and white ageratums as in fill (*see left*). The planting on the Parterre follows the designs of John Fleming who was Head Gardener here from the 1850s when the house was owned by the Duke and Duchess

of Sutherland. Fleming was a pioneer of bedding schemes and carpet bedding and we try to replicate his ideas as far as is possible.



The lower terrace area looks very different to this time a few weeks ago (*see left*). We have re-instated the ribbon beds that Fleming introduced to be viewed as one walked down the central steps. We have filled them with a total of 1,600 marigolds in four different colours: gold, orange, vanilla and yellow. By planting up these beds, we are linking the bedding planted in the Duke's Garden to our colourful displays on the Parterre.



Seeing red in the Long Garden

Whilst we wait for the 11,000 salvias planted in the four central beds of the Long Garden to fill out, take a wander along the walled herbaceous border where there is already plenty of colour. We normally associate dahlias with autumn but there are several varieties already out including this stunning cactus-like *Dahlia* 'Pontiac' (see far left). You'll be able to spot the intense, bright red flowers of *Lychnis chalcedonica* from a mile off (see 2nd from left). Commonly known as Maltese cross, this easy to grow perennial can reach up to 1m and produces clusters of red flowers throughout the summer. Next up is *Achillea* 'Paprika' (see 2nd from right.) Ideally, this plant likes to be grown in full sun, so this south facing border is just perfect. *Achillea* is commonly known as yarrow and its name derives from the Greek hero Achilles who first used the plant as a herbal remedy. It is such a valuable plant in the border with its feathery foliage and colourful, flat circular heads that will flower all season. Stems can be left over winter for architectural value. The flowers are great for cutting and drying too. Finally, look out for the deep burgundy flowers of *Astrantia major* 'Gill Richardson' (see far right). Preferring moist soils, if cut down after flowering, this perennial will produce fresh leaves and a second flush of flowers.



Rolling out Harriet's carpet

Visitors may remember that last year, we restored the carpet bedding in the Duke's Garden with a display to celebrate the 75 years since the Astor family gave Cliveden to the National Trust. This year we are commemorating 150 years since John Fleming first introduced carpet bedding to Cliveden in 1868, recognising his employer, Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland who died later that year in October. The design is the same even though we had to alter a couple of the plants as the original ones were not available.

Carpet bedding is when plants of a neat, dwarf habit are used to create geometric displays that can represent coats of arms or logos and often commemorate an anniversary. Initially a paper copy of the desired design is sent to Kernock Plants in Cornwall who convert it into colour blocks and work out the number of plants required. These plants, including *Sedum spurium* 'Variegatum' and *Aloe aristata*, are propagated and planted into trays (roughly the same size as A3 paper). Each tray is given a number and then grown under glass for six weeks to allow the plants to root. Once delivered Head Gardener Andrew and I had the simple of task of laying it all out, ensuring that all the trays were placed in the right place. Less than three hours later, the task was complete. There are approx. 450 plants per m² making up this display. By comparison, the Long Garden uses between 25 and 30 per m².