

BSBA Newsletter, December 2022

This year saw the 20th Anniversary of The Bath Society of Botanical Artists.

What a year it has turned out to be with all its ups and downs. After meeting in Winsley each week since Angie started the group, we are now settled into our new location at St Andrew's church hall in South Bath. I think most members would agree that so far the move has been for the better, as the new hall feels more cheerful and is also warmer than our previous meeting place.



The year's highlight was the groups "Plants for wildlife" Exhibition in October shown in the above photographs, which was very well received by all who visited. The sub-committee did an amazing job of getting the show on the road. The hanging and taking down volunteers worked hard to set up a very attractive exhibition. Special thanks go to Brenda and her husband Paul and also to Celia for their dealing with the finances and to Lyn for stepping in to co-ordinate everything after Jan sadly had to pull out from her usual role. Many thanks also to Annabel for all her email prompts and reminders keeping everybody on their toes.

Congratulations go to Josie White whose painting: "3 stages of the domestic apple" won the peoples' choice award. One other very positive outcome from the exhibition is that we now have 6 student members signed up to receive tuition in botanical painting from Angie with the long-term intention of becoming full members of the group.

From Brenda:

Our Exhibition, October 2022 – a treasurer's perspective

After deciding to cancel our Exhibition last year, it felt very good to see it set up at BRLSI in October. Once again Caroline Frances King, Jen Sheppard and their team did a terrific job with the hanging and there were many compliments from those who visited. Thanks must go to the stewards, without whom the Exhibition could not take place, with special thanks to those who did extra sessions.

Even in the present difficult economic climate we sold £3,263 worth of art works and sundries – less than in 2019 but still something of which we should be proud. Thanks to the Finnis Scott grant obtained by Jan Robertson there will still be a healthy balance left in our exhibition funds for our next endeavour (painting the plants of the American Museum gardens).

Well done everyone who planned, organised and exhibited in this well-curated exhibition.

Sarah Morrish – a one-day Workshop on 17th March 2023

We have organised a pen-and-ink workshop with Sarah Morrish on 17th March at St Andrew's Church Hall, on *Shells and Shoreline Subjects*. Sarah has run very successful workshops for us in the past. She has received many accolades – nationally and internationally – for her work and teaching. Sarah is going to bring her collection of shells and seashore objects for us to use.

As Sarah needs overnight accommodation, this workshop is expensive for us to run, so we shall have to charge £40 for the day. If we do not reach a minimum of twelve people attending, we will have to cancel the event. Please support us by signing up and paying so that we can look forward to a successful Workshop, and let me know as soon as possible if you wish to attend. It is essential that the full £40 is paid when you sign up; payment can be made by cheque (payable to BSBA) given or mailed to me, or by BACS (account name: Bath Society of Botanical Artists, a/c no 79687881, sort code 55-70-31). Payments will be returned if the Workshop has to be cancelled. The workshop will be held in the main hall at St. Andrews as our usual meeting room is in use that day.

I hope to see you there!

Brenda

From Rachel Berger:

On November 3rd a good number of us gathered to learn about Bonsai. Dennis brought in several specimens. He grows the seedlings outside until they are 3-4 years old – he only grows hardy species. Next, they are planted into a bucket of earth for a further two years. He then moves them to a smaller pot, pruning the roots so that it fits, and places the pot in a place which is 50% shaded. Pruning has the effect of rejuvenating the plant just as pollarding or coppicing does.

Pruning is done in late November or December so that the tree is ready to be actively growing in spring. Root growth and top growth have to be balanced so root pruning is followed by pruning of the branches. Generally, about one third of root and top growth is pruned at a time, every 2-3 years. Although garden soil is used, it needs to be sterilised at 80 degrees Celsius to prevent pests and diseases. Grit and bonemeal are added to the soil. After root pruning, the plant needs to be anchored in its pot with wires that can be threaded through the drainage holes of the pot. It's important to tamp the soil between the roots to remove air pockets. Top growth is then pruned back to two buds on each branch/twig. New growth needs to be pinched out in Spring. If the trunk is to be trained into an 'artistic' shaped, this needs to begin when the plant is 1-2 years old, by using thin wires.

Before Dennis' talk, I hadn't thought bonsai was a relevant topic for me, as I expected it to be very labour intensive and difficult. Now I'm thinking that when I leave my home with its 7 acres of land that I mainly look after, and instead have a small garden or even just a balcony, bonsai might be the right scale of gardening for me, so thank you Dennis for making the topic sound straightforward.



Denis and his Bonsai
(photo credit: Lyn Sykes)



Gall-forming wasp and Barbara's drawing of the Knopper Galls

From Barbara:

Oak trees and Knopper galls

One lovely day last Summer I was walking, or rather being pushed along the Iford valley, when my eye fell on a multitude of strange dark, spikey objects on the ground. On closer inspection these were revealed as Knopper galls attached to acorns. These are produced by the alien cynipid gall-forming wasp, *Andricus quercuscalicis*, which predate the acorns of *Quercus robur*. In Spring the female wasps inject their eggs into the developing acorns resulting in the formation of a gall that reduces the size of the acorn or forces it out of its cup. During Winter the females that emerge from the galls then inject their eggs into *Quercus cerris* (Turkish oak) male flower buds, which in turn host the next wasp sexual generation. An acorn typically hosts one or two Knopper galls, but as many as eight galls have been observed in a single acorn cup.

In Silwood Park a group of oak trees has been monitored for 30 years. Knopper galls have been found to destroy about 50% of the annual acorn crop, though in some years close to 100% can be lost to these galls. This has resulted in a substantial decline in *Quercus robur* reproductive output.

[ref. Prof.M.Crawley. Imperial College.]

From Janet:

Mauritian snow tree

With an average year round temperature of 27 degrees C, the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius does not receive snow. However, during the months of November and December the ground can appear to be snow covered. This is due to the Kapok or Silk Cotton tree shedding the contents of its seed pods as they burst open. *Ceiba pentandra* is a large, grey trunked tree native to South America and tropical Africa but now introduced throughout the tropics. It bears creamy white flowers from which develop seed pods between 3 – 6 inches long containing the floss known as Kapok. The Kapok is used to fill pillows and mattresses and as bandages. The tree also has wide ranging medical uses from soothing a sore throat to a cure for dizziness. The seeds can be roasted and ground and bees produce an amber coloured honey from the flowers. Its wood can be used for light joinery purposes.

Ceiba pentandra: A covering of Kapok on the ground and open seed pods on the tree.



From Jan:

Do you know of any young people interested in botanical art?

Young Botanical Artist Competition 2023.

This competition is a joint collaboration between the Shirley Sherwood Collection and the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew.

Deadline: 30th April 2023

Theme: Botanical artwork on the theme of 'Trees'.

Who for: For artists between the ages of 16 and 25

Medium: Any (but excluding photography) provided they adopt a scientific and representational botanical art style.

40 winning and shortlisted artworks will be displayed in the Shirley Sherwood Gallery from October 2023 onwards. Cash prizes of up to £750 plus art supplies.

More details: www.shirleysherwood.com

Also from Jan:

American Museum Gardens

Do make good use of your free entry ticket into the Gardens which are open during December from Tuesday - Sunday from 10am - 3pm. It's a lovely place to meet friends for a cup of coffee and have a walk round the gardens. There are plenty of dried seed heads or interesting tree twigs in the arboretum if you feel like asking one of the gardeners for a sample to take home to paint.

The gardens were put down to grass in 1958, then became a formal garden in the 1960s with box edging. In 2012 a process was started to redevelop the gardens. The £2.5 million needed were raised and the New American Garden opened in September 2018. The arboretum includes a collection of American trees and it is hoped to develop this further when finances allow.

The Mount Vernon Garden adjacent to the main flower borders aims to replicate more closely the original layout implemented by George Washington at Mount Vernon in the USA.

Celia has obtained a list of the bulbs being planted at the American Museum. Members may wish to grow some of these to paint:

Allium Summer Drummer
Anemone White Splendour
Continental
Embrace
Eremurus Himalaicus
Eremurus Robustus
Fritillaria Persica
 " premier
 " Raddeana
 " persica Ivory Bells

Tulips: Pim Fortuyn, Pink Impression, Purissima, Request, Salmon Prince, Spitsbergen, Sweetheart, Ronaldo, White Prince, White Valley, World Friendship.

It looks as though the gardens will be well worth visiting in Spring when the tulips are in bloom.

Julia Trickey now has the programme of talks for 2023 on her website : www.juliatrickey.co.uk

During December the talks can be booked at the special price of £8 each (instead of the full price of £12) and the first talk of the year on 19 January will be free! The illustration below shows images that will feature in this talk.

You can see details of the dates of Julia's talks, access to talk recordings and information about her online painting courses on her website.



Britain's lost rainforests:

Temperate rainforest once covered 20 per cent of the British landmass, now this has been reduced to 0.5 per cent running up the damp western areas of the island. In his book: *"The lost rainforests of Britain"* Guy Shrubsole explores this subject and asks why we are not more concerned to preserve this ancient landscape. Published by William Collins the book maybe one to add to your Christmas reading list if you are interested to learn more. (Janet)

Exhibitions and websites of interest:

Christine Lawes will be having a stall at the **Bath Humbug Art Market** alongside the Christmas Market at the **44AD Gallery** (behind the Bath Abbey) from Monday 5th until Saturday 10th December, between 11.00 – 18.00 hours. She will be selling cards, prints and original artworks.

Running until 15 January Compton Verney has an exhibition exploring the development of Dutch flower painting www.comptonverney.org.uk

The Society of Botanical Artist's **Plantae 2022** exhibition can be viewed here: <https://sbaonlinegallery2022.oess1.uk>

The Art of food continues at the Shirley Sherwood Galley, Kew until 5 March 2023 www.kew.org

Katherine Tyrrell's excellent website giving all the latest botanical art news and exhibition dates is a useful reference point: www.makingamark.blogspot.com

Finally, please don't forget to let Annabel know if you will be at the Christmas lunch on Thursday 8 December, as the committee need to know how many people to accommodate. Coffee will be served at 11.00 with time to peruse the 'Bring and Buy' table and catch up with friends before lunch.

Our thoughts go out to those who will not be there through illness.

Best wishes to all for the Festive Season and all good wishes for 2023.