



## BSBA Newsletter December 2025

### **A few words from Jan Robertson our chair:**

It is hard to believe that it's the end of another year and the end of painting for our Bowood exhibition which will take place in 2026. It was a pleasure on 4<sup>th</sup> December to receive all the wonderful paintings that members have produced. These will be taken over to Bowood on 19<sup>th</sup> December and can then be returned to members for framing.

It has been a real treat having free access to Bowood this year and now we have to decide what our next painting topic should be.

This year we have very sadly lost two long-standing members, Audrey Child and Barbara Phillips. Both contributed greatly to BSBA over many years. Audrey quietly supported the painting group in many ways and was on the committee for several years.

The BSBA may never have come into being without Barbara. It was she who encouraged the formation of our painting society when Angie Girling left the area and her teaching group was left without a leader. Barbara was our very first Chairman in 2002. She was always full of ideas and we exhibited in Dublin in 2009 thanks to her family links to Augustine Henry, the plant collector in China.

We miss very much both Audrey and Barbara and think of them and their families particularly at this time of year.

Do keep in touch and help to keep BSBA a thriving society. We are always looking for new ideas for workshops, things we might do differently and things we could improve.

We have members who are at the moment unwell and some who are currently undergoing treatment. Our thoughts are with them and we send them our love and best wishes.

Wishing you and your families a Very Happy Christmas and very best wishes for the coming year.

Jan

*Following on from Jan's introduction my last communication with Barbara was in September when she sent me this piece for the newsletter:*

Dear Janet.

I thought this little piece might be of interest.

#### DON'T DISCOUNT DUNG!

Over the centuries ivory and ebony have been used together in decorative designs. But now their relationship has taken on a new importance.

It has been observed that depredation of the forest elephants of the Congo delta by ivory poachers has coincided with the loss of ebony tree saplings.

The juicy fruits of the ebony are eaten by the elephants and the seeds then excreted in the dung. They are thus dispersed and it's been found they are nine times less likely to be eaten by ground based rodents.

Recent studies have shown that without the protection of the dung there was a 68% reduction in ebony sapling production.

Further work may show that the presence of elephants is thus important for the conservation of many plant species.

Ref. "Science Advances"

Good wishes, Barbara

We will all miss Barbara and the interesting items that she contributed to the BSBA Newsletter. The illustration at the head of this letter was painted by Barbara.



Some BSBA members enjoying a sunny day out at Bowood in May

From Jonathan Tulloch in The Times, December 5 2025:

**Ragwort:**

Plants are often intrepid long-distance travellers. Take narrow-leaved ragwort. Originally this species lived along the footpaths and rocky slopes of southern Africa, and there it was content to remain until the Merino sheep arrived in the 19C. Like all members of the ragwort family the plant's seeds are usually dispersed by wind, but narrow-leaved ragwort found that the Merino fleece could carry their seeds further than the few yards offered by a gust of wind. In fact the fleece could carry them all the way to Scotland. Having arrived in wool imports the plant was first recorded growing in Fife in 1834. Further imports dispersed the plant throughout Europe. But it is only since 2008 that the plant has become a fully naturalised presence. (Janet)

A report from Jen Sheppard on the Sally Pond workshop - **How to show reflected light on autumn fruit**

On Friday 19 September 10 members had the pleasure of attending Sally's workshop. We began the day with a lively discussion on observing not only our main light source but how very important the secondary light source is. It enables us to make our

subjects stand out on the page. For example, if we get it right, a disc will become an orb, or an oblong a tube.

Sally gave us demonstrations throughout the day working in watercolour, and using a large shiny rose hip as her subject.

Our morning task was to choose something from the splendid array of fruits Sally had brought with her, and to work on making tonal drawings in graphite to help us define the light and shade. We had to try not to muddle the tones with dark and light colour. After lunch there was another demonstration, after which we launched in to using colour, trying to get our reflected light and colour.

In all a great workshop with a lot of tuition, Sally is very generous with passing on her knowledge.

Photographs of the workshop, below, supplied by Celia:



The October mini workshop was given by Lyn and concentrated on working with pen and ink as a medium.

Lyn says: following our workshop....

Anyone interested in looking at pen and ink botanical drawings should head for the website of Sydney Botanical Gardens. They hold an annual competition, The Margaret Flockton Award, which has a worldwide entry.

Click on the link to see this year's results.

<https://www.botanicgardens.org.au/margaret-flockton-award-2025-gallery>

November's mini workshop was given by Kate Souter on the naming of plants. Below is a synopsis from Kate for those who were unable to attend – and to refresh information for those who did attend – it's a complicated business!

### **What's in a name?**

Plant-lore, knowledge of plants, their properties and uses, hazards and attractions, has been passed down from generation to generation. In ancient times careful observation of leaves, stems, flowers and fruit, were vital if a plant was to be identified correctly. Errors were potentially fatal. More recently scientific research has transformed our understanding of the natural world. Biochemical and DNA analysis has enabled botanists to explore the relationships between plants, and this has led to changes in the way that plants are classified. A phylogenetic tree for flowering plants based on DNA (sequences of genes) rather than visual features has been drawn up by the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group (APG). Amendments to this continue to be made in light of discoveries. Articles and textbooks published since the Millennium reflect these findings including changes to the names of some plant families, creation of new families and reassignment of some genera (groups of closely related plants) to different families.

### **Why use scientific names?**

As scientific knowledge of the natural world expanded so too did the realisation that it would be helpful to have a way of naming organisms (living things) in a systematic way. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, developed a naming system called the Binomial classification which is still used today. Having a scientific name is beneficial in a number of ways. Generally, Latin is used to name the species. Although Latin is no longer spoken, it is recognised as an international language of science. The unique name given to an organism is both descriptive and informative. It avoids the confusion of use of common names used in different places to name the same plant, and it identifies relationships between species.

### **How to name a plant**

Each species has a unique name consisting of two parts: a group name (genus) akin to a surname and a species name (aka. Specific epithet) akin to a first name. The genus is a collection of related species that share a number of distinct and significant characteristics e.g. similar habit and arrangement of flowers. A species is the basic unit of classification. It is a group of individual plants with the same ancestry, and similar structure and habit, that can interbreed to produce fertile offspring.

In practice names for a genus name may come from a variety of sources including Latin, Greek and Persian. Characters for mythology and fiction as well as honorary names. Specific epithets are often a description of a characteristic of the plant including flower colour, size, the shape of the leaf and its country of origin.

Here are some examples. The scientific name for the Common Dandelion is *Taraxacum officinale*. The word 'taraxacum' comes from the Persian word for a bitter herb whilst 'officinale' is Latin refers to the plants use in medicine or being sold in apothecaries. *Ranunculus repens* (creeping buttercup) with literal translation from Latin of

‘ranunculus’: frog, ‘repens’: creeping. White Clover is another creeping plant and has the scientific name *Trifolium repens*. The genus gets its name from the characteristic three-leaved arrangement of plants and comes from the Latin: ‘tri’- three; ‘folium’ leaf’. Hours can be spent exploring the wonderful world of etymology!

Guidance was given on how to write a scientific name.

**Genus (pl. Genera):**

Typed with a capital letter and in italics eg *Geranium*.

Underlined if written by hand eg Geranium

**Species**

The species name (second word in the binomial) is typed in italics in the lower case. It is written by hand in the lower case and underlined.

When put together this gives the following binomial for the commonly known Cut-leaved Cranesbill also known as the Cut-leaved Geranium:

Typed: *Geranium dissectum*

Written by hand Geranium dissectum (NB individual words are underlined)

**Naming authority**

Sometimes the scientific name is followed by an abbreviation eg *Bellis perennis* L. (common daisy). This refers to the person who originally identified the species and was first to record it within the scientific community (often in a scientific journal). Currently, the primary naming authority for wild plants is the International Code of Nomenclature for algae, fungi and plants (ICNafp). The governing standard for cultivated plants is the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants (ICNCP).

Despite changes in families of plants and the renaming of some species many have retained the scientific name given to them centuries ago. Whilst this means changes to textbooks the visual nature of the plant remains unchanged. The meticulous drawings by botanists and artists, are a testament to hours spent studying them. Detailed and accurate they are a valuable resource for botanical artists today.

Great sources of information and guidance include:

- <https://powo.science.kew.org/> Plants of the world online
- <https://treeoflife.kew.org/tree-of-life/order>
- Harrison, L. (2012) ‘RHS Latin for Gardeners’ Mitchell Beazley.

Kate Souter November 2025

From Josie:

In December of 2024 I was informed that I had been selected as an artist to form the inaugural florilegium at Munstead Wood. The work was commissioned by the National Trust

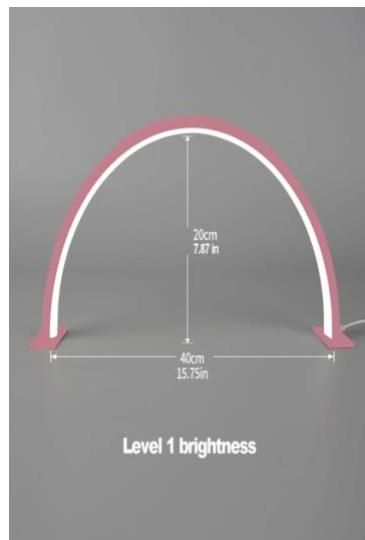
Below two paintings by Josie for the florilegium: (copyright National Trust)



From Lyn:

I have noticed a couple of botanical painters, online, using these lamps while painting. They are called Half Moon Lights or sometimes Nail Salon Lights. I have no idea how good they are but this one is 40 cm wide but 20 cm high doesn't sound much.

Found on the website [www.clasterior.co.uk](http://www.clasterior.co.uk) for £20.86 and is on a USB plug if anyone wants to follow it up. You too could 'enhance your nail care experience'...



From Theresa:

### Day Workshops for 2026

To start off the New Year we have organised two day workshops; so here are two dates for your new diaries!

In February, Angie Girling will be running a day workshop portraying tulips in collage, using recycled paper. This will be in the style of Mary Delany and Penny Brown. The

date will be Friday 13 February: please see the signing up list on the board, or email Theresa at [theresasmith2351@gmail.com](mailto:theresasmith2351@gmail.com) , to put your name down.

The second workshop of the year will be taught by Laura Silburn. Laura runs the Sawpit Studio at Heligan, Cornwall, and also teaches botanical painting at the Eden Project, RHS Rosemoor, as well as overseas. She has three RHS gold medals and has illustrated a newly published book titled 'Ferns: Lessons in survival from Earth's most adaptable plants'. The date of the workshop will be Friday 15 May - the subject has yet to be confirmed. See Laura's website for more background information.

[www.laurasilburn.co.uk](http://www.laurasilburn.co.uk)

We would also be interested to know what other day workshops you would like us to arrange for later in the year. Therefore, to help us choose other artists, there will be a list on the notice board for you to tick your preferences. If you have your own ideas, please add them to the list.!

### **Botanical bookshelf:**

*Treasured Trees* by Christina Harrison and Martyn Rix

A new edition of this book which explores some of the oldest and finest trees in Kew Gardens. Illustrated by Masumi Yamanaka. Kew Publishing.

*Forever Flowers* by Sven Van Dorst

Seventeenth-century Flemish flower still life and its symbolism. Cannibal/Hannibal Publishers.

*Botanicals from the Royal Collection*, Royal Collection Trust, introduced by Alice Alder. A beautiful, pocket sized treasure!

*What stands Behind the flowers?* Hilma af Klint, MOMA New York.

This book investigates the spiritual connection between humans and plants.

### **Exhibitions:**

The Garden Museum, London has an exhibition: *Rory McEwan: Nature's Song* Running until 25 January. Curzon recommends this exhibition and draws our attention to his foray into collage, an area that we don't immediately associate with Rory McEwan.

A display of paintings from the Shirley Sherwood collection exploring India's rich biodiversity is at the Shirley Sherwood Gallery, Kew alongside the two exhibitions below all running until 12 April 2026.

*The Singh Twins: Botanical tales and seeds of the Empire.*

A new body of art inspired by the Kew archives.

### *Flora Indica*

An exhibition of botanical illustrations by Indian artists commissioned by British botanists between 1790 and 1850

An exhibition to look forwards to: The Ashmolean, Oxford: *In Bloom; How plants changed our world*, opens 13 March – 16 August 2026.

Leeds Art Gallery, *Plant Dreaming*, a multi-disciplinary, plant-themed exhibition that considers plants in relation to eco-politics and the self.

### **Websites and courses:**

West Dean College have various botanical themed courses during 2026

[www.westdean.ac.uk](http://www.westdean.ac.uk)

[www.juliatriickey.co.uk](http://www.juliatriickey.co.uk)

See Julia's website for details of her classes, courses and talks series – including information about talks to come in 2026.

Keep in touch with Sarah Morrish's work and workshops at:

[www.illustratingnaturesdetails.com](http://www.illustratingnaturesdetails.com)

### **Dates for your 2026 diary:**

8 January Painting re-starts at St Andrew's

26 January Committee meeting (if you have anything for the committee to discuss please contact Jan Robertson)

5 February Mini workshop: 12.15-1.15 (Mini workshops on the first Thursday of each month March – July)

13 February Day workshop: Angie Girling – tulips in cut paper

9 April No painting

23 April AGM

15 May Day workshop: Laura Silburn

**And don't forget the BSBA Christmas lunch on 11 December at St. Andrew's Church Hall**

Best wishes for a Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year!

Janet