



# PlantNetwork

Connecting gardens, sharing skills

## **A Focus on Winter Gardens**

12-13 February 2020

Cambridge University Botanic Garden

National Trust - Anglesey Abbey

RHS Garden Hyde Hall

**@PlantNetwork**



# PlantNetwork

**PlantNetwork** is a charity and membership organisation that provides training and network support to gardens and gardeners throughout Britain and Ireland.

Through its work, PlantNetwork contributes to maintaining and developing the horticultural and plant conservation skills for which our gardens are renowned. The goals of PlantNetwork are:

- Supporting gardens and plant collections for conservation, knowledge and enjoyment.
- Providing networking and professional development for the plant network community.

Since being formed in 1996, PlantNetwork has brought together both institutional and private members and now represents over 300 gardens including all the major public horticultural and botanic gardens in the countries.

Chair: Simon Toomer  
Vice-Chair: Ros Burnley  
Treasurer: Christopher Weddell  
Co-Treasurer: Robert Brett  
Hon President: Dr Matthew Jebb

## **Contact details**

Coordinator: Rebecca Slack  
PlantNetwork, Unit 20231, PO Box 15113, Birmingham B2 2NJ

Email: [office@plantnetwork.org](mailto:office@plantnetwork.org)  
Telephone: +44 (0)1535 957453  
Twitter: @PlantNetwork  
[facebook.com/plantnetwork/](https://www.facebook.com/plantnetwork/)  
[linkedin.com/company/plantnetwork](https://www.linkedin.com/company/plantnetwork)

<https://plantnetwork.org/>

*PlantNetwork: The Plant Collections Network of Britain and Ireland is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England 3777793; registered charity 1081747. Registered office Beaver House, 23-38 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford, OX1 2EP*

## Table of Contents

<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Programme</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Venue &amp; Speaker information</i></b>	<b>3</b>
<b><i>Winter Garden at Cambridge University Botanic Garden</i></b>	<b>5</b>
<b><i>Winter Walk at Anglesey Abbey</i></b>	<b>6</b>
<b><i>Winter Garden at RHS Garden Hyde Hall</i></b>	<b>7</b>
<b><i>Winter Gardens around the country</i></b>	<b>8</b>
Sir Harold Hillier Gardens – Winter Garden	8
Other winter gardens	9
<b><i>The Winter Garden Planting Palette</i></b>	<b>10</b>
<b><i>Notes and contacts</i></b>	<b>11</b>

## Introduction

We have the opportunity to explore three of the most highly respected winter gardens in the country and find out more about what they are, how they are created and maintained, and why they can enhance any designed landscape. From the long-established winter garden at Cambridge University Botanic Garden to the highly acclaimed winter garden and walk at the National Trust's Anglesey Abbey and the relative newcomer at RHS Garden Hyde Hall, we can compare and contrast these different spaces.

Winter gardens demonstrate that gardens can provide interest all year round. Using brightly coloured bark, winter-flowering and often scented shrubs, evergreens with unusual leaves, late/early-flowering bulbs, and even sculpture and man-made features, winter gardens expand the season for many destination gardens and demonstrate the range of plants that are available for year-round interest. Winter gardens can also provide interest in other seasons and this multifunctionality lends itself particularly well to small gardens.

## Programme

Day 1		
11:00 – 13:00	Tour of Cambridge University Botanic Garden Winter Garden followed by lunch.	
14:00 – 16:00	Tour of Anglesey Abbey's Winter Garden and Walk, followed by an opportunity to explore the wider garden.	
Day 2 at RHS Garden Hyde Hall		
From 10:00	Registration opens (when garden opens)	
10:10 – 10:30	Welcome and introductions over refreshments	
10.30 – 12:15	Talk and tour of RHS Garden Hyde Hall winter garden	
12:15 - 13:00 LUNCH & networking		
Session 1: Creating and maintaining a destination garden		
13:00 – 13:30	The winter garden as a visitor attraction in a heritage landscape: Anglesey Abbey	David Jordan, Head Gardener, National Trust Anglesey Abbey
13:30 – 14:00	The winter garden at CUBG: looking to the future	Peter Kerley, Demonstration & Display Supervisor, Cambridge University Botanic Garden
14:00 – 14:30	The role of thematic gardens in horticulture, conservation and as a visitor attraction	Rob Brett, Curator, RHS Garden Hyde Hall
14:30 – 14:45	Refreshment break	
Session 2: The planting palette		
14:45 – 15:30	Planting choices at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens	David Jewell, Curator, Sir Harold Hilliers Garden
15:30 – 15:45	Plants and planting design used in winter gardens: what works well? Panel discussion with representatives from the three gardens	
15:45 – 16:00	Q&A and discussion the close	

# Venue & Speaker information

## Cambridge University Botanic Garden

Cambridge University Botanic Garden (CUBG) holds a collection of over 8,000 plant species from all over the world to facilitate teaching and research. The Garden provides resources including plant material, horticultural expertise and facilities to research workers and lecturers. The original Botanic Garden of Cambridge University was founded in 1762 in the centre of the City, but moved to a larger, 16 ha site in 1831 although planting the site only began in 1846. Plans for the western half of the site were drawn up by the first Garden Curator, Andrew Murray, with John Stevens Henslow, Professor of Botany at Cambridge. This plan can still be enjoyed today as the Grade II\* heritage landscape we see today. The design represents the 'Gardenesque' style of the time, combining both specimen plants and composed landscapes with great horticultural expertise. The eastern part of the garden was developed from 1951 due to a legacy from Reginald Cory and rather than grouping plants taxonomically, the design has focused on how plant communities develop. The Winter Garden is located in this more recent area.

*(Adapted from the Cambridge University Botanic Garden website: <https://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/>).*

Speakers include Peter Kerley, Demonstration & Display Supervisor, and David Austrin.

## National Trust: Anglesey Abbey

Anglesey Abbey seems to have started out as a hospital in 1135 and by the early 13th Century had been converted into an Augustinian priory. In this remote spot, a small community of monks followed their quiet life until the priory was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1536. The ruined remains of the priory formed the core of the present house, which was built in the early 17th century. In 1926, the property and estate were purchased by Lord Fairhaven who started to create the 114 acre garden seen today.

Adding and expanding the formal gardens, along with the help of close friends such as Major Vernon Daniell, there are several distinguishing features that can be found throughout, such as the use of straight, tree lined avenues with a sculpture at the end to draw your eye, or the use of circles and symmetry in

the formal areas such as the Formal Garden and Dahlia Garden. The Winter Garden is a National Trust addition, providing seasonal winter interest to a garden which provided considerable interest spring-autumn.

*(Adapted from the Anglesey Abbey website:*

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/anglesey-abbey-gardens-and-lode-mill>)

Speakers include David Jordan, Head Gardener.

## **RHS Garden Hyde Hall**

In 1955 when Dr and Mrs Robinson came to Hyde Hall there were only six trees on the top of a windswept hill and no garden. For centuries Hyde Hall had been a working farm and the area around the house was a dumping ground for all kinds of rubbish. Mrs Robinson started to garden as a reaction to this and as she cleared areas around the house, they were planted with anything available. In this way she created herbaceous borders and a vegetable garden close to the house and established the framework of the garden with some 60 young trees bought at an auction sale in Wickford Market.

The Hyde Hall Gardens Trust was set up in 1976 and then in 1993 the garden became the responsibility of the Royal Horticultural Society. Under ownership of the RHS a number of modifications were made to accommodate growing visitor numbers. As well as the installation of a reservoir, new garden areas have been created from Hyde Hall's distinctive Dry Garden, The Queen Mother's Garden, and, Australian and New Zealand Garden to the most recent additions of the Global Vegetable Garden, Sky Meadows and Winter Garden.

*(Adapted from the RHS Garden Hyde Hall website:*

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall/about-hyde-hall/history>)

Speakers include Rob Brett, Curator; Tom Freeman, Garden Manager; and, Andrew Tebbutt, Horticulturist.

## **David Jewell, Curator at Sir Harold Hillier Gardens**

David trained at RBG Kew and has always had a passionate interest in all plants. Over the years he has gathered considerable experience, spending 11 years at Wisley and 10 years at the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens. In the last few years, he oversaw the extension of the critically acclaimed Winter Garden at the SirHarold Hillier Gardens.

## Winter Garden at Cambridge University Botanic Garden

The Winter Garden displays a diverse range of plants to dramatic visual and sensory effect. Developed in 1979 by Garden Superintendent Peter Orriss and Garden Supervisor Norman Willis, the Winter Garden has long provided a winter focal point for our visitors, and has continued to serve as a source of inspiration for amateur and professional horticulturists alike. Last year marked the Winter Garden's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

With the onset of winter this seasonal planting comes into its own, bringing colourful tints to brighten the gloomiest day. To enhance the plantings the site was sculpted to provide topographical interest in our flat landscape, and consideration was given to the orientation of the Garden to ensure that low winter sun caught stems to intensify colours. It is no happy accident that the boundary hedges provide an evergreen backdrop to the coloured stems and plant forms, while also capturing the many scents of winter flowers.

At the western entrance the *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' bears pink-flushed blooms, while its heady fragrance fills the air. Opposite, the intense red stems of *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica' provide striking vertical contrast to an underplanting of *Bergenia* 'Bressingham Ruby'. Beyond, *Galanthus nivalis* and *Eranthis tubergenii* produce a contrasting mat beneath the arching stems of *Rubus* 'Goldenvale'. At the western end of the Winter Garden the flaky cinnamon-coloured stem of *Acer griseum* emerges amidst the orange stems of *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire', and the spined stems of *Rubus phoenicolasius*.

(Adapted from Winter Garden: <https://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/the-garden/gardens-plantings/winter-garden/>)

The Winter Garden plant list (2019/20) is available online from the CUBG Winter Garden website.

## Winter Walk at Anglesey Abbey

Last year marked 21 years since the opening of the now famous Winter Garden. Planted to commemorate the centenary of Lord Fairhaven's (the last owner of Anglesey Abbey) birth in 1896, the quarter of a mile path (450m) contains over 150 different varieties of plants. The plans for the garden began in the spring of 1998, by then Head of Gardens for the National Trust, John Sales and Richard Ayres, the then Head Gardener.

The design of Lord Fairhaven's garden meant that there was always an area of beauty, regardless of the season, with the one exception of winter. An extremely sensory mix of plants, the Winter Garden now offers colour, scent and beauty in the frosty months of January to March.

This area of the garden has become a firm favourite with both staff, volunteers and visitors alike. Nobody can forget the striking image of the silver birch grove planted at the end to create a grand finale: 114 *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* 'Doorenbos'. Over the next three years the Winter Garden will see some change, refreshing some of the planting which has outgrown the space. This will create new layers, including shrubs and bulbs, which will go towards enhancing the Winter Garden experience for future generations.

(Adapted from The Winter Garden:  
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/anglesey-abbey-gardens-and-lode-mill/features/winter-at-anglesey-abbey> and  
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/anglesey-abbey-gardens-and-lode-mill/features/the-winter-garden-at-anglesey-abbey> )

A Plant Guide is available at the beginning of the Winter Walk.

Anglesey Abbey has one of the finest snowdrop collections in the country, with >300 varieties including 20 discovered at Anglesey Abbey.



## Winter Garden at RHS Garden Hyde Hall

Hyde Hall's Winter Garden, which opened in winter 2018, and has been designed to show that gardens can look spectacular even through the coldest months of the year. The Winter Garden celebrates seasonal change, from its autumn display of foliage and berries to the colourful stems and skeletal seedheads of the colder months.

The Winter Garden is filled with trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants and bulbs that peak in interest in the coldest months. Colour and texture are also provided by the herbaceous plants with seedheads and stems that remain through winter adding a variety of colour and texture - like the perennial grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Cassian's Choice' and *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau', with the seedheads of *Liatris spicata* 'Floristan Violet', *Amsonia tabernaemontana* and the silvery foliage of *Anaphalis triplinervis* 'Somerset'.

Groupings of *Acer*, *Malus*, *Edgeworthia*, *Prunus*, *Salix*, *Hamamelis*, *Ginkgo*, *Viburnum*, *Ilex*, *Callicarpa* and *Cornus* add colour and texture to gloomy winter days and many of these plants produce fantastic scents that carry on the breeze. The Winter Garden features around 100 different types of *Cornus*, which will be monitored as part of a RHS Trial to establish which varieties perform reliably.

Acting as an exclamation mark at the end of the garden, is a view towards one of Hyde Hall's most beautiful trees, *Fraxinus angustifolia* 'Raywood' – best enjoyed in autumn when its leaves are alight with vivid, deep red tones. Set against this winter landscape, a series of sculptures explore the gradual decay of a leaf, alongside living sculptures. (Adapted from Winter Garden at Hyde Hall: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall/Articles/winter-garden-at-hyde-hall>)

A plant list is available from the website: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/hyde-hall/garden-highlights/winter-garden-millennium-avenue-higgledy-hyde>

## Winter Gardens around the country

While the three gardens we are visiting represent a selection of winter gardens of differing age (from 40 years old to two years old via a 21-year old garden) in different garden types (botanic, heritage, horticultural), we will also hear about another famous winter garden: the Sir Harold Hillier Winter Garden.

### Sir Harold Hillier Gardens – Winter Garden

The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens is famous throughout the world for its phenomenal collection of woody plants, probably the biggest in Europe, and maybe the biggest in the world. Started as the private collection of the late Sir Harold Hillier it is now in the care of Hampshire County Council, responsible for its extension and development since the late 1970s.

Created in 1996, the Winter Garden has more than 650 plants grown for their winter beauty and differs from much of the rest of the garden as it has been planted according to a scheme whilst much of the original garden was planted with individual plant performance in mind. In early 2014, the Winter Garden was extended and now covers around 4 acres in total, being one of the largest winter gardens in Europe. Many new plants have been added. This includes 500 *Cyclamen* tubers planted as ground cover.

The planting features a palette of bark, bold coloured stems, scent and foliage. Close to the Visitor Centre is a large new bed planted with *Salix* and *Cornus*. There is also extra height provided by some existing birch trees. It is a simple combination of just four or five plant groups to improve the entrance to the Winter Garden. (Adapted from <https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/hilliergardens/explorethegardens/wintergarden> and <https://www.learningwithexperts.com/gardening/blog/a-walk-in-the-winter-garden-the-sir-harold-hillier-gardens>)

## Other winter gardens

Some of the gardens listed are designed landscapes that look fantastic in winter rather than the more enclosed winter garden exemplified by the three gardens we will be visiting:

- Dunham Massey, Cheshire
- Mottisfont, Hampshire
- Aberglasney Gardens, Carmarthenshire, Wales
- Stowe, Buckinghamshire
- Stourhead, Gloucestershire
- Studley Royal Water Garden, North Yorkshire
- Trentham Gardens, Staffordshire
- RHS Garden Harlow Carr, North Yorkshire
- Littlethorpe Manor, North Yorkshire
- Marks Hall Gardens & Arboretum, Essex
- Ham House, Surrey

Or for the more tropical look, visit sub-tropical gardens in winter or gardens with glasshouse collections. Many also have winter walks or gardens too:

- RHS Garden Wisley
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
- The Lost Gardens of Heligan, Cornwall
- Tremenheere Sculpture Gardens
- Abbotsbury Sub-tropical Gardens
- National Botanic Garden of Wales
- Logan Botanic Garden
- Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

## The Winter Garden Planting Palette

The mainstay of winter gardens are coloured stems rather than flowers or other foliage as dominate in other seasonal gardens (e.g. *Camellia* in spring gardens, herbaceous flowering plants in summer borders and leaf colour in autumn gardens). *Cornus alba* and *Cornus sanguinea* cultivars along with *Salix* and *Rubus* provide these splashes of colour, usually set against evergreen hedging to provide contrast. The hedging also helps concentrate scent, another feature of the winter garden and one that can be more intense than in any other seasonal garden. *Daphne*, *Sarcococca*, *Viburnum*, *Hamamelis* and *Chimonanthus praecox* among others providing a heady mix of scents from often small and unshowy flowers. Spring flowering bulbs provide ground level colour as the season progresses (e.g. *Iris reticulata*, *Galanthus*, *Crocus*, *Narcissus* etc.). Trees, usually with coloured (e.g. *Prunus serrula*) or textured (e.g. *Acer griseum*) trunks, and topiary provide vertical structure and focal points. Structure can also be provided by hard landscaping, sculpture and seating, while grasses and seedheads provide a soundscape.

### Top 10 plants from Cambridge University Botanic Garden<sup>1</sup>:

- *Betula utilis* subsp. *albosinensis*
- *Chimonanthus praecox* 'Grandiflorus'
- *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire'
- *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill'
- *Acer griseum*
  
- *Galanthus* 'Magnet'
- *Rubus thibetanus* 'Silver Fern'
- *Salix alba* var. *vitellina* 'Britzensis'
- *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Charles Lamont'
- *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Jelena'

---

<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.botanic.cam.ac.uk/the-garden/gardens-plantings/winter-garden/top-10-plants-for-winter-interest/>

4

## Notes and contacts



Will this meeting change how you manage your garden?  
If so, we would like to hear from you. Let us know what you are  
planning to do: [office@plantnetwork.org](mailto:office@plantnetwork.org) or @PlantNetwork.

#PlantNetwork

# PlantNetwork Events 2020

**PlantNetwork Annual Conference and AGM with Sibbaldia:  
Promoting Horticultural Excellence**

22- 23 April 2020

<https://www.rbge.org.uk/science-and-conservation/sibbaldia-conference-april-2020/>

#PEH2020

## **Training Days**

- Winter Gardens
- Glasshouse Forum
- Plant Records Group
- Exotic Gardening
- Tree Forum: Sourcing Healthy Trees
- Plant Health
- Kitchen Gardens

And introducing.... **The Sustainability Programme** with in-depth analysis of topical issues concerning growing media, plastics, herbicides, water use and many more issues. Reports will be available to members only.

If you have suggestions for training days or discussion topics, or would like to host an event, please contact us.



# **PlantNetwork Events 2021**

**PlantNetwork Annual Conference and AGM**  
Date and venue TBC.  
Celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of PlantNetwork

Events being planned include:

## **Training Days**

- Propagation Forum
- Glasshouse Forum
- Plant Records Group
- Tree Forum
- Other events....

More information and online booking at the PlantNetwork website:

**[www.plantnetwork.org](http://www.plantnetwork.org)**



**PlantNetwork**  
Connecting gardens, sharing skills