**Report of the Storrington Horticulture Society held on January 20TH 2023**

 Very well attended meeting enjoyed a talk and slide presentation by our President ‘Tom Brown ‘on a very topical subject entitled ‘Gardening in a Drought’.

Tom has a wealth of gardening knowledge and is the Head Gardner at West Dean Gardens, situated at the bottom of the South Downs near Chichester and recognised as one of the greatest restored gardens open to the public today as well as offering a wide range of gardening courses and lectures.

As Head Gardener Tom Brown explained ‘Over recent years’ we have all become aware of how much water we use in our gardens. The trial measures growth of drought tolerant plants with less resources and watering but different growing conditions to support them. With this in mind West Dean Gardens have grown a number drought tolerant of deep rooted perennials in a new experimental dry meadow garden.

One of Toms gardening team brought his attention a study conducted by Ben O’ Brien who had experimented with growing drought tolerant perennials using various mixtures of mulches to recycled crushed concrete and found that there was very little difference in growth between them all but those grown in the crushed concrete had very little weed growth and required less watering.

The experimental dry meadow was created with a view of examining how good this type of cultivation was at reducing the need to water while maintaining a decorative effect of the plants. The dry meadow was planted in a matrix style where you can put a community of plants together. Therefore rather than planting three or five plants the meadow is planted in much larger groups of 70 or 80 plants and using a crushed concrete mulch.

The Dry Meadow has 2500 plants with 50 different plant types 10 of which are:

\*Rudbeckia Maxima

\*Gypsophila Pacifica

\*Agastache Liquorce Blue

\*Eryngium Planum

\*Limonium gmelinni ssp hungaricum

\*Echinacea purpurea

\*Echinacea Paradiso Yellow

\*Tulbagia violacea

\*Eryngium planum

\*Agattache Liquorce Blue

 In the experimental dry meadow at West Dean the top two thirds of the plants have been planted in contact with the crushed concrete the bottom third within the soil. Planting was started in March 2022 and was followed by a single watering no further watering was carried out that summer highlighting the water retaining qualities of the crushed concrete mulch compared to more traditional mulches. To date the results appear to be very encouraging and it will be interesting to see how this progress in the future. The Dry Meadow was opened to the public in August of that year.

The meeting ended with a raffle and light refreshments our next meeting 17th March 2023 is as usual at the village hall Storrington commencing at 7.30 pm when Alex New talk is entitled ‘Pioneering on chalk’.

M.J.Webber

Web site :- storringtonhorti.org.uk