

Fuchsia News Autumn 2023

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Sorry for the long gap without a Fuchsia News! I started this before Malvern in September and then it went to the back of my mind for some time! I am now catching up on things!!
I have had to edit some of the articles to make them relevant to the season of the year!
My apologies to one and all!!

Ric's Bits - Reaching out

The small band of fuchsia folk who generate our publications and newsletters, and those who regularly contribute, amaze me with their energy and inspiration to stick with it after years and even decades and keep everyone in touch. With local societies in decline and all of us getting a little older and maybe a little less mobile, never have our publications been more important, indeed a lifeline for many. So why not, as you spend time with your fuchsias and gardens, jot down thoughts and ramblings as they come to mind, and consider turning these into a few lines to help us fill our pages and provide some new ideas, thoughts and perspectives.

For me that's the most difficult bit done, the first paragraph, a bit like what do you say when meeting people for the first time. I do have a theme for this edition and that is that this fuchsia malarky is much more about the wonderful



people we meet and the friends we make, than the plants themselves, and much of what we are doing now and have always done is about companionship. I am a great appreciator of serendipity (defined as desirable discoveries by accident), and our tech enabled Fuchsia Friends Gossip, Online and on facebook, which came about in the darkness of the pandemic, is serendipitous as it broadens the reach of our fuchsia enthusiasm and enthusiasm for fuchsia friends and widening the accessibility to our fuchsia events.

Fuchsia Friends Online

I could re-use screenshots of our Friday fuchsia gatherings from past publications, but I always use a recent one to illustrate that our weekly gathering is still going strong, sometimes predominantly about fuchsias as you might expect but other time yacking about a cornucopia of subjects, always unplanned and spontaneous.

We meet, using Zoom, on Friday evenings from 7 pm UK time until 9 pm, and the format can vary between large discussions, smaller groups in rooms, talks from members of the group, and sessions of 'show and tell' of objects or our gardens and plants other than fuchsias. That I have to write '7 pm UK time' highlights the most delightful aspect of Fridays and Facebook and that is that online there are no geographical boundaries, although for some like Ian in Aus it can be a very early morning. Who could have envisaged that we would still be chatting every week with friends across three and even sometimes four continents.

If you fancy joining us occasionally why not drop [Carol](#) or I ([Ric](#)) a line. If you're not sure about the tech, we'd be happy to set up an individual Zoom session so you can give it a try and see how simple it is. Even after three years none of us are complete experts, with regular cries of 'you're on mute' and 'not a clue, try logging out and coming back in', so even as a novice you'll be in good company. A big well done to Carol who makes it all happen.

While mentioning Fuchsia Friends Online, I must give my usual plug for our [Fuchsia Friends Gossip group on Facebook](#), now with over 8,000 members who I'm sure all appreciate the pictures and posts, even if only a handful contribute; such is life. A big thank you goes to Andrew, Carol and Theo who do the admin and much of the posting.

Sharing Shows and Events

Another innovation that is now in its second year is our broadcasts over Zoom from our various shows around the UK. The online audiences are treated to a guided tour of the show and commentary class by class, and sometimes a word or two with the organisers, judges and exhibitors, at least those who aren't quick enough to scarp. We will normally publish broadcast times on Facebook and Zoom details can be obtained from [Carol](#) or I ([Ric](#)). We will start this again in 2024

Two of our Special Interest Groups, Species and Lore, are now or will be using a combination of physical and online meetings, and details can be found on the [BFS website Events page](#). The Species, Hybridisation and Heritage Group have an in-person/hybrid meeting a Lilbourne each May, and meetings on Zoom in July, October and January. The next Species SIG online will be 7 pm on Sunday 21st January, and Zoom joining details can be obtained from me ([Ric](#)). In October the first Lore Group meeting took place and there will be another on early in 2024 which will be a "Show and Tell" evening.

For me holding SIG meetings online has been a boon, breathing new life into the species group which would otherwise have been in terminal decline with numbers falling, members ageing and travelling becoming increasingly difficult. Nothing beats face-to-face when you can, but online has allowed us to grow our numbers and include UK enthusiasts for whom Lilbourne was never viable and now we can also include our friends across the globe too.

Sharing Our Experience with Others

I would never have described us, the BFS, as trail-blazing, but my experience with my local u3a (University of the 3rd Age) reveals that there is a lot of good stuff that we can share, with organisations with similar demographics and challenges.

Our success with our online gathering on Friday evenings has given me the idea for Mondays Online twice a month for u3a Carrick (Truro, Falmouth and environs) aimed at but not limited to members who are housebound, poorly or confined by caring responsibilities. We do have gatherings at coffee shops and the like, but our old friend Zoom partially answers the question 'what about those who can't get out?'

Likewise drawing on our experience of hybrid meetings (combined physical and online) for the Species SIG and the odd roadshow, we are now trialling a hybrid approach with u3a meetings of various groups and it is alleviating the unintentional exclusion of many members. And I am glad to say with the support of Cornwall Council we are tackling the challenge of helping some of our members join the digital age, and again what we have done with our world of fuchsias helps exemplify some of the benefits of going digital.

What Me! The Committee! Why Not?

Like all societies, the BFS only thrives because of the hard work of the people on the Committee, Area Reps and those doing so much hard work in organising our shows and other events. Have you ever thought that you could contribute to the running of the BFS and wouldn't mind joining the fine folk on the Committee, but maybe you are not quite sure. We meet in Midlands in June and now on Zoom in October and February, and if you might like to give it a whirl, why not join one of these Committee meetings as an observer and see what we do? You'd be very welcome, and for more information why not drop [John Nicholass](#) or [Carol Gubler](#) a line.

Arthur's Article

Too Many Fuchsias again!

Trying to grow extra fuchsias to stage a display at the BFS Festival of Fuchsias at the Malvern Autumn Show, as well as good/decent plants for the BFS London, Midland, Wales and West and Malvern Grow to Show. We have Fuchsias growing everywhere, hanging off the house, the potting shed and every other available space!

The consequence of growing and /or trying to grow all of these decent/good fuchsias is that some of the plants put underneath the staging to overwinter have never been moved out.

These fuchsias have now decided they want to be noticed and are now pushing up between the staging and the glass and pushing out into the walkway making it difficult to get around, I know they should be brought out into the light and cut back, but where do I put them?? I brought some out before jetting off to the USA and cut them back.

These are growing on and demanding more space.

A never ending problem...and even after the events the greenhouse is still packed to the rafters!!

John's Jottings

Bugs and Pests

The weather this year has not been the easiest for growing fuchsias for me. First it was rather cool and dull earlier in the year and I had a lot of aphids in the greenhouse. Then in late May and June it got quite hot with a lot of sun and then I lost plants due to getting cooked, the whitefly started to appear with a vengeance and a lot of plants were coming into flower rather early. In July it went gone cold and wet with a lot of rain and my lawns have turned quite green again. Unfortunately, the heavy rain opened up the growth of one or two plants that were a bit too soft. One was discarded and the other cut back and wired and hopefully will be Ok for Malvern. The cold and wet weather has also meant that some rust has started to show up on the plants standing outside.

Anyway, enough of my general problems. I have also been having trouble again with the Nettle Capsid Bug (*Liocoris tripustulatis*). You may remember I reported this in the 2015 Autumn Bulletin? The bugs natural host is the common nettle, but they also seem to have a liking for fuchsia flower buds. They seem to feed on the young buds which cause them to drop off and die!! I have caught 5 in the last 5 days! Unlike the green capsid bugs, they don't seem to feed on the growing tips. They are quite small - 3-5mm long, but of a very distinctive colour, quite quick and if you don't catch them the first time they hide under a leaf. If you chase them too much they can fly away. I tend to find at least one on the plants when I am watering but what worries me is how many are there when I am not looking at the plants? The reason I have revived this was while talking to Paul Russell at the Reading & District show I had been talking to him about them and low and behold I saw one on his big plant of *Insulinde*!! (I didn't put it there honest!!). I don't know if had been on his plant all the time or flown in from the garden centre!

If you see small buds that have been shed round a plant it can be for other reasons such as the plant being too wet in long periods of rain, however it could be the common nettle capsid bug. I would be very interested to hear if any other growers have seen them on their fuchsia plants.



A new one on me, but then I have had tortrix moth caterpillars for the first time ever this year!

Many years ago, Jim Muil wrote a series of articles on Fuchsia History just for Fuchsia News and I thought that it was time to repeat them!

A Fuchsia Journey - Surrey and Bucks Jim Muil

My decision to couple these two counties for this series was forced on me when I considered the amount of material available. In spite of a well deserved reputation for a number of excellent nurseries who established themselves in Surrey during the 19th century, few specialised in fuchsias. Bucks appears to have been in a similar position. In reality both counties probably sold as many, if not more fuchsias than did counties of comparable sizes but fuchsia advertisements from these two counties in the national gardening press were rare. My own research has uncovered insufficient fuchsia information to fill a single article for either county. However, each county did provide some important information relevant to the development of the fuchsia and both examples concern the results of what could be considered thoughtful hybridisation rather than the need to introduce a novelty for a demanding market. In addition, there is a subtle link between the work of 2 gardeners, one from each county. What follows is probably a very good example of quality being much more significant than quantity as far as information is concerned. During the first 30 years of the 19th century Iver House in Buckinghamshire was the home of Lord of the Admiralty, Admiral Lord Gambier and his wife Lady Gambier. William Thompson was their gardener and, like a number of private gardeners of the time his flirtation with fuchsia hybridising would be brief but quite significant. Devotees of the Pansy might recognise his name because he also became widely referred to as the Father of the Heartsease, thus reinforcing his status as a leading breeder in the Pansy world. In 1841, an article in *Floricultural Cabinet* reported that Mr Thompson, 'had had some success with hybridising fuchsias, namely, 'the Globe with other sorts.' 'The Globe' was *Fuchsia globosa* which had been introduced about 9 years earlier. The 'other sorts' would have included pretty much any hybrid that had been introduced up to that date. The article suggested that *F. fulgens*, which had been imported into the country during the mid-1830s, might have come after Mr Thompson's work and his efforts might have signalled the last of the 'magellanica' based hybrids. Unfortunately, his early fuchsia efforts were not fully recorded, but we can connect his name with at least two known varieties. One was a plant that might still be grown in many gardens today. It can still be found in the hardy section of some fuchsia nursery lists under the name *F. Thompsonii* and it was described by W P Wood as having a 'Fastigate habit of growth, free longish flowers.' Unfortunately, like *F. Riccartonii*, another magellanica hybrid of the same era, there is no guarantee that the *F. Thompsonii* of today is the same one that was introduced nearly 170 years ago, even though the names are the same. At the beginning of the 1840s Mr Thompson also introduced what was to become a very popular show variety of the time, although it didn't make the transition to the 20th century. It was called *Formosa elegans* and it appeared at a number of shows in the early years of the 1840s. It was described as having 'small leaves, numerous stems and an extraordinary profusion of blossoms, which have crimson reflexed sepals and a deep purple corolla.' Although we do not have full details of its parentage it must have been one of the *Globosa* crosses mentioned above. It made something of an impact, not only with showmen but also with the increasing number of fuchsia hybridists of the time. These included William Story, who will be the subject of my article in this year's Annual, and the nurseryman John Standish, who represents Surrey in the second half of this article. John Standish, originally from Yorkshire, had learned his gardening at Bowood in Wiltshire where his father was the gardener. Subsequently he moved to Bagshot Park, home of the Duchess of Gloucester, where he became foreman under the well known gardener of the time Andrew Toward. Then he opened a nursery in Bagshot in Surrey and his work with fuchsias seems to have occupied him during his early days here. His name came to the fore in the horticultural press in *The Floricultural Cabinet* during 1840 when it was reported that he received seeds of what was then thought to be *F. corymbiflora* from Cusco in Peru. Another of his early seedlings was *Standishii*, an *F. fulgens* hybrid that was one of the first of its kind and this was followed by *Sanguinea*. One report announced that a plant of *Standishii* had been trained up to a single stem seven feet high, with lateral branches its entire length in profuse bloom. *Standishii* was figured in the *Floricultural Cabinet* at the time and its image has survived until the present day even if the plant itself was not so fortunate. In 1841 he named a fuchsia hybrid *Towardii* in respect of his old employer at Bagshot Park and he continued to produce further seedlings until about 1854 although it was a trio of his early hybrids that proved to be the ones of great importance in future breeding. In 1844 *The Florists' Journal* reprinted a report from Paxton's *Magazine of Botany*. It concerned his introduction of three new seedlings, *Attraction*, *President* and *Colossus*. All three were described as having stout corollas and being large and possibly

would therefore lack the delicacy of a daintier variety. In addition, all three had strong sounding names - a feature that was likely to be more attractive to the public. The report read, "In 1841, he raised a number of seedlings from Thomson's *Formosa elegans*, crossed by *Corymbiflora*; they were very pretty and free growers, but not particularly different from the hybrids of *F. Fulgens*, except that they seeded abundantly, which these hybrids rarely do. Having saved some of those seeds without any fertilising, Mr Standish was astonished to find, in 1843, that the produce had acquired so much larger leaves and flowers as to be nearly twice the size. They are softer wooded than the hybrids of *fulgens*, and exhibit the interesting fact that, instead of degenerating when propagated by seed without being fertilised, they improve to a very great degree. Attraction has the pleasing aspect of the old *F. Globosa*, with longer and more acute as well as reflexed petals, and immensely larger corollas, which are of the richest purple. President is a longer and bolder flower, more in the way of *Standishii*, with a much better corolla. Colossus had a shorter tube, less reflexed sepals, and a fine purple (crimson) corolla." The results of part of his work were reported in "Proceedings of Societies of the Horticultural Society," in the Chronicle. It read, "Mr Standish of Bagshot exhibited four seedling fuchsias, which he stated to have been obtained in the following manner. Having raised in 1842 from *Formosa elegans*, fertilized with the pollen of *F. corymbiflora*, some pretty seedlings, these again seeded freely without assistance and gave rise to the present plants, which showed that this tribe, instead of degenerating like *Calceolarias*, and many florists flowers, improved considerably." 5 Subsequently three of the four seedlings achieved some very positive publicity as they were paraded in the gardening press and their existence has been recorded by most fuchsia historians. No doubt their appearance in a coloured plate in Paxton's Magazine of Botany in March 1844 did much to give their written descriptions a visual appeal. Other seedlings of the same period might have been equally as important but have long been forgotten because they were not the subjects of a coloured plate. One example is the 4th seedling, Candidate. Even though it shared the same parentage it seemed not to attract the same attention and didn't appear as a coloured plate. Interestingly, Mr Standish went on to achieve horticultural perfection in another field and his reputation was assured with his work on Azaleas and he is remembered for these beautiful shrubs much more than his foray into fuchsia hybridising. In view of Mr Thompson's similar success with the Pansy these two gardeners seem to provide yet another perfect example of nurserymen cutting their hybridising teeth on fuchsias before finding their true vocation with a different species of flower.

A Bit More History – by Jim Muil

International collaboration has always been an important aspect of the contact between fuchsia lovers of different countries. Most of us enjoy seeing how the other lives and how they grow their fuchsias. Sometimes the results of this cooperation are long lasting and remain constant over a period of years. Some ten years after the formation of the American Fuchsia Society, the British Fuchsia Society came into being and one of the founder members was a certain Mr Bert Brown, a specialist fuchsia nursery man from Chingford in Essex.

There were very few specialist fuchsia nurseries in the country at that time. The public's flirtation with the fuchsia as a popular flower had withered considerably during the previous forty years. However, Mr Brown's connection with the American Fuchsia Society went back to 1930 when, as a young nursery man, he had been approached by Professor Sydney B Mitchell, one of the Directors of the newly formed American Fuchsia Society. Professor Mitchell, accompanied by his wife, visited Europe but before he left the States he obtained what he called a "blank permit to import fuchsias" back into the United States.

His stay coincided with a fuchsia trial being conducted by the Royal Horticultural Society at its gardens at Wisley. Professor Mitchell spent a whole day there in June 1930. The plants in the trial had come from a number of different nurserymen and when Professor Mitchell made his final choice of plants to take back to the US he discovered that no one nursery carried all the plants in the trial. However, at a subsequent visit to the Chelsea Flower Show he was introduced to a man he described as a small grower, Mr H A Brown and it seems there was something of an instant rapport between them.

A subsequent visit to Mr Brown's nursery at Chingford saw Professor Mitchell's order of fifty plants ready and waiting for onward shipping to the United States. In addition, Mr Brown suggested that another plant worth having was Victor Lemoine's "Rolla" – a semi double pale pink and white variety that the Frenchman had introduced in 1913. Professor Mitchell accepted the advice and "Rolla" became one of the imported plants that were not thought to be available in the United States at that time. The United States seems to have had the basis of some good collections of fuchsias long before this date, of course. As a result of another collaborative effort, in this case between Sali Dahl and myself, I have been fortunate enough to acquire copies of some 19th century nursery catalogues that go back to the 1850s and many of them carry the same varieties that appear in the English press at the same time. These collections seem to have contained a high proportion of plants that were introduced in the latter thirty years of the 19th century. "Mrs Marshall" and "Mrs Rundle", two favourites of yesteryear were among his choices, although I notice that among Sali's catalogues the New York nursery man Peter Henderson & Co. included a "Mrs Marshall" in his 1879 catalogue.

However, the significance of this visit is that the American breeders, particularly those in California had new stock to exploit in their constant search for something new and different. "Rolla" became the parent of "Cascade," "Sunset" "Blue Moon" and "Brentwood" all varieties that flourished in the US although part from the first named, they were less popular on this side of the Atlantic. There has been a good liaison between BFS and AFS members ever since those early days and this has inevitably rubbed off over the border into Canada as well.

And what about the young nurseryman Mr H A Brown? As well as being a founder member of the BFS, his nursery flourished for many years as the Society worked hard to rediscover many of the favourites of the previous 75 years or so. But Bert was also to answer a different calling after the Second World War. He studied for the Church and eventually qualified to become a missionary. His calling took him abroad and he spent much of his life with the people of Papua New Guinea.

His family looked after the nursery- particularly by a younger sister whose wealth of fuchsia knowledge probably ultimately matched his own. Her married name was Margaret Slater and she served for many years on the BFS Committee as well as being a popular speaker and judge throughout the country. Her achievements for the BFS were ultimately recognized when she became President of the Society in 1970.

The Reverend Bert Brown, as he became, returned to England on a number of occasions. He kept in touch with former fuchsia fiends and the Society and was made President in 1976. I had the pleasure of meeting him when he attended one of the AGMs when I was getting interested in fuchsias some thirty years ago. Writing in the Fuchsia Annual in 1988, Bert Brown confirmed the details of his meeting with Professor Mitchell and added, "There was a peculiar satisfaction in sending to America the descendants of plants that had originally come from that side of the Atlantic." A satisfaction, no doubt, experienced by many a fuchsia grower since Professor Mitchell's visit to England.

Sadly, plants cannot be moved across the Atlantic any more, but thanks to Zoom we have many close links with fuchsia growers in the US.

Some other bits from various newsletters over the years!

New Year Resolutions

Support your society – look after your fuchsias, attend the meetings, enter in the show – who knows you may win, and you will have a great time.

Support your society – Attend meetings whenever you can. The committee will have organised a programme of meetings and speakers.

Support your society – Societies need funding halls and speakers do not always come cheap. See if you can help with raffle prizes or plants for sale and by paying your subs on time.

Support your society – Send in articles for the newsletter, have a go at doing a 10 minute talk or run a "corner" if asked!

Support your society – join in the fun – joining in is so much better than just watching.

Root pruning

Root pruning should only be done after the top growth has been cut back, as a reduced root system cannot support a lot of top growth.

THE CASE AGAINST ROOT PRUNING: Root pruning and repotting are unnecessary as the old roots die off and decompose to form part of the potting medium and also provide some nutrition for the new roots. A lot of effort and work is saved by not repotting. However, it is important to maintain a regular and adequate long term fertilisation programme if mature plants are not repotted.

THE CASE FOR ROOT PRUNING: Annual root pruning gives room for the plant to produce new healthy young roots without the need to repot into a larger container. Giving plants a fresh mix, supplies and nutrients, and prevents the mix (especially if it is very fine) from going sour.

METHOD ONE:

- a. Tip the plant out of the container (tap the edge of the inverted pot onto a bench etc)
- b. Using a large, sharp, clean knife (a kitchen knife will do), remove about 1/3 of the root mass. Cut all around the rootball and slice off the bottom.
- c. Repot in the same container with fresh potting mix.

METHOD TWO: (more suited for plants of two years or more)

- a. As "a" above
- b. Using a fine pointed stick, remove all the old mix from the root ball. Wash off the last of the mix by dipping the root ball into a container of tepid water.
- c. Old, gnarled, and discoloured roots are cut away using clean sharp secateurs. New white fibrous roots will be seen these must be kept.
- d. As 1" c" above.

I don't know about you, but I seem to mix and match how I do it – frequently not what is suggested here – but the main thing is an article such as this does make you think about what, how and when you do certain jobs with your plants! And perhaps proving yet again that growing fuchsias is not an exact science – with no "right" or "wrong" way of doing anything!

In 2004 we had a limerick competition and here are some of the entries!

There was a young lady from Cheltenham
Who had whitefly and couldn't get rid of'em
So, she smoked out the house
With the aid of her spouse
And now the blighters are on her, Cimbidium

There was a young lady from Cheltenham
Though she grew fuchsias for fun
When it came to deadheading
Her patience was ebbing
So she blew off the lot with a gun!

There was a young lady from Cheltenham
Who's fuchsias were growing gigantium
She thought she would show'em
But couldn't transport them
So chopped the lot down and composted'em

There was a young lady from Cheltenham
Who's fuchsias just grew to perfection
They were meant for the show
But so tall did they grow
That she let the birds go up and nest in'em

In 2005 I asked – why do you grow Fuchsias and here are some of the replies I got!

- I enjoy the challenge of growing and the friendship gained from joining a society.
- My wife says that that I am Soft! But I say what other plant is so beautiful and versatile!
- I like them and they are easy to propagate.
- They are easy to grow, very rewarding and a wonderful range of colours and flowers.

- I enjoy the growing and I have met many friendly people from all parts of the UK.
- I got hooked and like a fish out of water I seem unable to get off the hook.
- They can present a challenge, you can have them in bloom about 9 months of the year. We love the flowers and consider that there are very few plants who can rival them.
- I find that it is very therapeutic when I am attending them. There are so many different ones, and they lift my spirits.
- They smell nice.
- If you grow fuchsias, you have year round hobby and they take over your life, holidays are put on hold till the shows are over and her indoors gets upset but it is a lovely hobby and you don't get drunk down the greenhouse!
- I don't but my husband does – I am here to keep the society going.
- I like them!
- Once you have started you will never stop
- It is the best hobby in the world!
- It was my late father's favourite flower.
- Well actually I don't, but my husband does because I like them!
- I can't forget how to, or remember not to
- It seems that so many other people with the "disposition" also grow fuchsias.
- I can remember and pronounce their names, well most of them anyway.
- They are easy to grow, versatile, beautiful flowers and colour combinations.
- They have become part of my life and I just enjoy trying to produce a good plant plus the excitement of seeing new varieties bloom.
- If you are willing to give the time, they will give you the pleasure.
- I have a terminal condition called "Fuchsiatitis" from which there is no remedy save growing more and more fuchsias. I blame my Mother in law for this as she was the one who introduced me to the fuchsia, This is my excuse whenever the wife complains about the fuchsias.
- I'm mad!
- They have given me a hobby that I am successful at, and they have given me the chance to make many new friends.
- The secretary has to practice what she preaches!
- I just love fuchsias, there are so many to choose from and so many things that you can do with them.
- I am mad, crackers or anything else along those lines....no I am a fuchsia fanatic!
- I love the flowers and I like the people.
- I have grown them for 40 years, but it is not easy to grow them 1250' up on the Pennines.
- I love 'em!
- I sometimes wonder!
- You are never alone with a fuchsia!

I can relate to all or most of these!!

Normal routine with Fuchsia News will return in 2024!

Best Wishes for Christmas and 2024

Carol, Arthur, John and Ric

