

View from The Southwood Garden November 2018

It's amazing what you see when you look ...



Clockwise from the top: *Danae racemosa*, Yew, a non-variegated Spotted Laurel (*Aucuba japonica* 'Rozannie'), *Butchers' Broom* (*Ruscus aculeatus*)

The value of berries

At this time of year, berries bring a shot of colour into an otherwise receding garden and colour which will last through winter. They will often, like the bright red berries of *Aucuba japonica*, provide food for birds who in turn distribute their seeds. As well as the plants pictured above, we have a number of others producing berries at different points in the year which also offer some value to wildlife: Alder buckthorn, Amelanchier, Berberis, Cornus mas, Cotoneaster, Dogwood, Elderberry, Rose.

The variegated holly which arrived with berries a couple of years ago, is showing nothing this year. This is because there is no male holly in the vicinity with which it can pollinate. If you want to buy a holly that produces berries buy it in late autumn when you can see the berries and so be able to pick a male and female. Some varieties are self pollinating but as with apple trees, you will usually get a bigger crop if a pollinating partner is nearby.



The 'Hart of London' by artist Faith Bebbington has proved a popular attraction in the garden. Also called 'The Stag' and 'The Reindeer,' it is made out of 2,000 recycled plastic bottles. You can donate to a range of charities using the tap donation attached to it. If you do this the deer's red heart will light up in pleasure at your generosity.

Scented seed heads

When I was working on the narrow bed at the top of the steps, I was surprised to find that the seed heads of *Aster divaricatus* (now known as *Eurybia divaricate*) were scented. A fantastic herbaceous perennial for dry shade (and for bees), this plant is commonly known as wood aster because it resembles Michaelmas daisies and flowers around the same time of year.



The *Crocosmia* produced these attractive sun-dried style seed heads. However the easiest way to propagate them is to dig them up, break off the largest corms from the string of corms they produce and then replant.



A fevered debate

Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*) has spread throughout the garden. It's pretty, daisy-like flower glows in the dim winter light. I have encouraged it, appreciating the natural look of its self seeding. Then, whilst researching chrysanthemums (which belongs to the same Asteraceae plant family), I discovered *Tanacetum* contains pyrethrins. This compound is a natural insecticide which apparently repels

insects, presumably including bees which we want to attract. So, should I clear it or restrict it to certain parts? Following some further probing, it seems there are many more factors to consider. I will keep you posted!

Plants in flower (as of 30 November 2018)		
Alstroemeria 'Summer Snow' and A. 'Summer Paradise and Summer Sky'	Peruvian or Chilean lily, also known as lily of the Incas.	●
Clematis 'Niobe'		●
Cuphea viscosissima	Blue waxweed	●
Fuchsia		●
Geranium nodosum	Knotted cranesbill	●
Tanacetum parthenium	Feverfew	●
Vinca major and minor	Periwinkle	
Viburnum tinus		●

Catherine Tidnam, gardener at St James's Piccadilly