

View from The Southwood Garden January 2019

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



This Helleborus x ericsmithii in a container came out long before the helleborus orientalis planted directly in the ground.

Introducing Violet odorata 'Baronne Alice de Rothschild'

I fell for this scented viola because of its name and because it was going cheap! We have the native Viola odorata which arrived of its own volition which suggests this species is happy in our garden. Viola 'Baronne Alice de Rothschild' has a richer purple flower than its native cousin and a lovely scent.



Violas are *cleistogamous* which means they produce flowers which never or barely open but are fertilised by the plant itself. In fact violas produce two sets of flowers during the season, the first set in winter produce honey rich flowers which are fully open (photo above) but sterile. Then they produce a second, less visible set in autumn which are less attractive to pollinators but set seed through self pollination. Apparently campanulas behave in the same way so keep an eye on our Campanula trachelium.

Our first snowdrop was spotted at the beginning of January.



Pruning our ornamental grasses

We have two types of grasses in our garden – Anemanthele lessoniana and Miscanthus sinensis 'Morning Light.' Anemanthele is evergreen while Miscanthus is deciduous.

Miscanthus 'Morning Light' (above) is the best variety of miscanthus to grow in containers. It offers a delightful feature in winter months when its leaves and stems die back and form an explosion of wiry curls. It seems a shame to remove them but if you delay cutting them back you risk cutting off the new shoots emerging in early spring.

Our Anemanthele share their bed with hellebores, mahonias and spring bulbs. They are like golden bushels behind the dark green yew alcoves. However, they have grown so well they have overshadowed their slower growing neighbours. Evergreen grasses are not routinely pruned back each year but in this instance, to give the plants around them a chance to catch up, I decided to cut them back.

We have left the grass cuttings from both grasses out for birds to use for their nests.

Woolly scale

I spotted this white fluffy substance on one of the pittosporum under the bay tree. The Southwood Garden's Pittosporum population suffered badly from thrip a couple of years' ago. They have recovered well and are now full of flower buds but this one is also full of woolly vine or currant scale. Although woolly vine scale is unlikely to kill your plant it will deplete it making it vulnerable to other pests and diseases. I wiped off the scale with a solution of water with a drop of washing up liquid in it.



Plants in flower (as of 31st January 2019)		
Camellia x williamsii 'Donation'		●
Crocus chrysanthus 'Goldilocks'		●
Cyclamen coum		●
Helleborus argutifolius 'Silver Lace'		●
Helleborus x ericsmithii		●
Helleborus foetidus	Stinking hellebore	●
Helleborus orientalis	Lenten rose	●
Jasminum nudiflorum	Winter Jasmine	●
Galanthus nivalis	Snowdrop	●
Vinca major	Periwinkle	●
Viburnum tinus 'Eve Price'		●
Viola odorata	English violet	●
Weigela florida 'Variegata'		●

Catherine Tidnam, gardener at St James's Piccadilly