

# View from The Southwood Garden April 2019

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



## A climber with a 'A loud perfume'

The crudeness of its name, 'Sausage Vine,' belies the exquisite scent of the flowers of *Holboellia coriacea*. The fragrance is so intoxicating, I was tempted to ask Floris, the perfumier on Jermyn Street, to consider it for their next collection. This is the first year it has flowered - just as I was considering removing it for rampaging along the south eastern corner of the garden. It is a member of the Lardizabalaceae family - as is the chocolate vine, *Akebia quinata*, and comes from central China where it grows in scrubby thickets and mountain slopes. Now it has flowered, it should produce fruit this winter which contain a supposedly edible jelly.

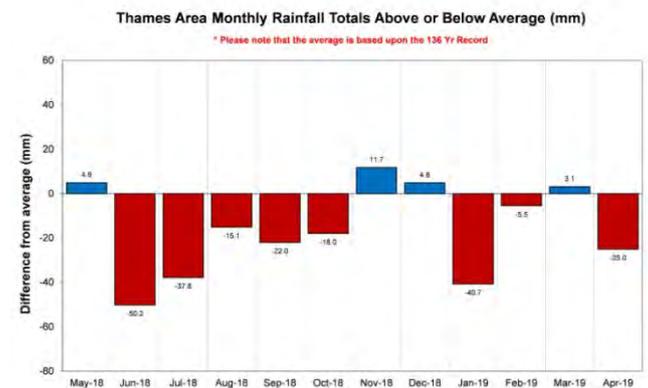
## Woodland rush

*Luzula sylvatica* is a clump-forming perennial rush with hairy-edged leaves. Like the Sword leaf rush in our bog garden, it is a member of the Juncaceae family. When I first started at St James in August 2013, the plant was everywhere and by that point in the summer, looked tired and dull. However the following spring it proved its worth by bouncing back with fresh green growth and dainty brown flowers. The seed heads are the sole food of the larvae of *Coleophora sylvaticella* - a rare moth. We should look out for just in case it visits! Interestingly wild occurrences of *Luzula sylvatica* are in decline in the South East.



## Rainfall levels at a worrying low

Here in London this spring, we've enjoyed day after day of bright sunny weather with a mini heatwave thrown in in February. Not unexpected in summer but concerning at this time of year when plants need water to get growing for the new season. Thames Water reports that although March rainfall was slightly above average, April's was 50% of the 136 year historic monthly average. In fact from May 2018 to April 2019, we had 7 months of below average rainfall. The dryness of the ground is above average. Once soil is dried out it becomes difficult to rehydrate.



Find this graph and other fascinating water-related information at <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help-and-advice/water-quality/where-our-water-comes-from/reservoir-levels-and-rainfall-figures>

What does this mean for our garden which we water because of its dry shady conditions? We already select plants for dry shade and plant during the autumn to give them the winter to establish but we still face a serious challenge if this weather trend continues. If we no longer have access to water, the nature of the garden may well change. Over the next few years we will explore what options we have for improving efficiency and reducing water usage.

Here is one of our pots sitting on a saucer of horticultural sand. The saucer captures any run off when watering and the pot can then draw up that water as it needs it.



## Plants in flower (as of 30 April 2019)

<i>Brunnera macrophylla</i> 'Jack Frost'	Siberian bugloss
<i>Erythronium</i> 'Pagoda'	Dog Tooth Violet
<i>Galium odoratum</i>	Sweet woodruff
<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	English bluebell
<i>Lamium</i> 'Album'	White dead-nettle
<i>Lunaria annua</i> 'Alba'	White honesty
<i>Luzula sylvatica</i>	Great woodrush
<i>Myrrhis odorata</i>	Sweet cicely
<i>Narcissus</i> 'Pheasant's Eye'	
<i>Omphalodes cappadocica</i> 'Cherry Ingram'	Navel cherrywort
<i>Ornithogalum umbellatum</i>	Star of Bethlehem
<i>Pulmonaria</i> 'Diana Clare'	Lungwort
<i>Skimmia x confusa</i> 'Kew Green'	
<i>Tellima grandiflora</i>	Fringe cups
<i>Tiarella</i> 'Crows Feather'	
<i>Vinca major</i>	Periwinkle
<i>Vinca minor</i> 'Bowles Variety'	Periwinkle
<i>Weigela</i> 'Florida Variegata'	

Catherine Tidnam, gardener at St James's Piccadilly