



Seed Shop Hampton Court Flower Show 2012

Words and images by Janet Wright

The ever popular seed shop surpassed all our expectations this year raising almost £4,000 from the sale of packets of seed and £1,000 sponsorship from Proctors Fertilisers.

We were the busiest we have ever been nearly every day with the best day being the Saturday when we took £815. We needed three people on duty to cope with the number of customers; I think we are becoming quite well known. Either that or the bad weather drove everybody into the marquees for shelter! One lady from South Africa bought in excess of £70 of seed; she has since e-mailed me to say the seed is germinating well, together with some pictures of the most glorious garden. We had donations of seed from many

sources, the most exciting being Buckingham Palace. We are very grateful to Mark Lane of the Royal Gardens for this seed. It was extremely popular with many people wanting a souvenir of the day and a piece of the royal garden. We were also given hellebore seed from the breeding programme at Hadlow College in Kent. Other seed came from Hilliers garden where we were given permission to collect by Barry Clarke, their chief propagator, and also RHS Rosemoor, the head gardener again giving permission to collect seed. Mention must also be given to Graham Gough of Marchants Hardy Plants in East Sussex who very kindly gives me all his collected seed from the previous year and the RHS Lily Group who sent me the biggest box of seed I have ever been given. Seed is also donated by many Plant Heritage members

and county groups. Thank you to you all.....you know who you are!

For the first time we actually stocked a comprehensive selection of heritage vegetable seed with extraordinary names such as 'Nun's Bellybutton' a bean and 'Lazy Housewife' also a climbing bean. The most popular was a lettuce called 'Drunken Woman' which caught the eye of the BBC who then filmed Joe Swift of Gardener's World buying a packet from me. This was broadcast the following day and included a full screen image of the packet of seed. Unfortunately the BBC bought every packet of 'Drunken Woman' so there was none for everyone who wanted it the next day!

The media interest was fantastic this year beginning with an enquiry from the BBC two weeks before the show wanting the seed list, this resulted in Alys Fowler doing a presentation of the seed shop buying seed of a really rare plant *Trochetiopsis ebenus*, St Helena Ebony, of which there are only two plants left in the wild and is the subject of a breeding programme at Kew Gardens. They then wanted pictures of this plant, which thankfully is in my garden, so there I am taking photos that evening and then my photos went out on national television! We also had a big article published on the BBC online website entitled 'Will the Queen's Seeds Grow in your Garden?' Val Bourne writing in the Daily Telegraph Gardening supplement had some really complimentary prose about the seed shop and our Plant Heritage marquee. She then came along on press day and bought lots of seed, saying what a fantastic enterprise the seed shop is!

SO A VERY SUCCESSFUL HAMPTON COURT FLOWER SHOW THIS YEAR BOTH FROM THE MEDIA INTEREST FOR PLANT HERITAGE AND THE FUNDS RAISED

I would be very grateful if you could **all** collect seed this autumn from your gardens whether it be flower, vegetable, shrub or tree and even more grateful if the seed could be cleaned and correctly labelled. It is the most enormous task packeting all this seed and labelling it, we had over 4,000 packets this year!! I and other Plant Heritage members of the London Group get together and have seed packing and sticking days at various times of the year. My co-helper June James is an absolute whizz with the Brother labelling machine, don't know what I'd do without her. If anybody wishes to help in this gargantuan task or to help man the seed shop next year just contact me or Joanna Jones at National Office.



Any seed for next year can be sent to me at any time, preferably not just before the show, or to Joanna Jones at National Office who will forward it on to me. My address is
22, Kelsey Way, Beckenham,
Kent, BR3 3LL.