



Friends of Morrab Gardens

Newsletter Mid-summer 2019

Up-coming events

Mazey Day is on Saturday 29 June. There will be lots going on in Morrab Gardens, and the Friends will have plant and bric-à-brac stalls and a raffle.

The tempting raffle prizes include:

a silver Tiffany bracelet; a three-course meal for two at the Old Lifeboathouse Bistro; a fused glass landscape of St Michael's Mount, and a bottle of champagne! Raffle tickets are only available on the day – if you can't come, find a friend who can!

We need more volunteers to sell plants and raffle tickets. If you can spare an hour or two, let us know (see 'Keeping in touch', page 7).



We're in the Top Ten!

We know many people use TripAdvisor when planning their holidays, so we're delighted to see it shows that Morrab Gardens is a firm favourite with visitors to Cornwall. According to TripAdvisor rankings in May 2019, Morrab Gardens is in the top 10 of all gardens in Cornwall. It's the only one in the top 10 that doesn't charge for admission, making us the top free garden in the whole of Cornwall – outstripping our traditional rivals in Truro and Falmouth!

Read what people have said about their visit to Morrab Gardens at <http://www.morrabgardens.org/reviews/>. You can see the rankings for Cornish gardens at <https://goo.gl/KLZT7b>.

Is Morrab one of your favourite spots? Help others to get the most out of their visit – review us on TripAdvisor and say what you like best about the Gardens!

Thanks to Paul Brett for representing us on social media, and making known our rankings.

Flowering plants

Michael Snellgrove undertook a count of plants flowering in the Gardens on 16 December 2018. He counted over eighty in bloom, and it is interesting to compare these with a count of over 100 plants in flower on Christmas day 1908, recorded by Canon Arthur Boscawen in his garden at Ludgvan.



Polygala myrtifolia 'Grandiflora' was flowering in Morrab Gardens in December.

Michael Snellgrove's list is reproduced below. Boscawen's hand-written list is held in Morrab Library (see page 3).

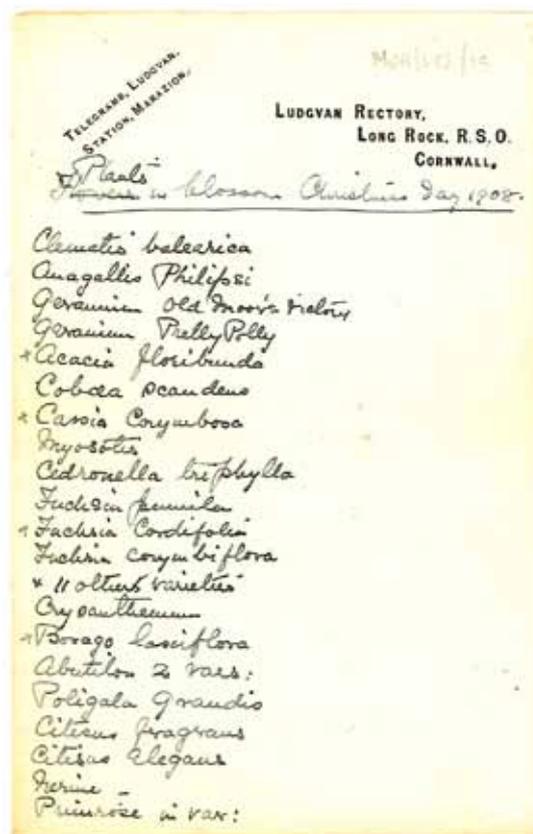
Michael Snellgrove's list of plants flowering in Morrab Gardnes, 16 December 2018		
<i>Abelia x grandiflora</i>	<i>Correa alba</i>	<i>Helleborus corsicus</i>
<i>Acacia baileyana purpurea</i>	<i>Cuphea ignea</i>	<i>Helleborus hybridus</i>
<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	<i>Cytisus</i> 'Porlock'	<i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i> 'Ayesha' (syn.: 'silver slipper')
<i>Agyranthemum</i> 'Mary's Cheeks'	<i>Daphne odora</i> 'Aureomarginata '	<i>Magnolia grandiflora</i> 'Goliath'
<i>Azalea</i> 'General Wavell'	<i>Drimys winteri</i>	<i>Mahonia japonica</i>
<i>Azalea simsii</i> 'Queen Elizabeth'	<i>Echeveria</i> ?	<i>Mahonia x media</i>
<i>Bergenia cordifolia</i> group	<i>Erica</i> (S. African pink?)	<i>Mahonia x media</i> 'Charity'
<i>Callistemon salignus</i>	<i>Erica arborea impatiens tinctoria</i>	<i>Myrtus lechleriana</i> (budded)
<i>Camellia</i> 'Cinnamon Cindy'	<i>Erica x darleyensis</i> group (pink)	<i>Nemesia denticulata</i> (?)
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Alba Simplex'	<i>Erica x darleyensis</i> group (white)	<i>Osteospermum</i> (large white-flowered)
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Jupiter'	<i>Euphorbia</i> (probably characias)	<i>Osteospermum</i> (yellow)
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Noblissima'	<i>Euryops chrysanthemoides</i>	<i>Parahebe catarractae</i>
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Preston Rose'	<i>Euryops pectinatus</i>	<i>Polygala myrtifolia</i> 'Grandiflora'
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Bokuhan'	<i>Fatsia japonica</i>	<i>Prunus subhirtella</i> 'Autumnalis Rosea'
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Contessa Lavinia Maggi'	<i>Freylinia lanceolata</i> (syn.: <i>cestroides</i>)	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> Prostratus Group
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Desire'	<i>Fuchsia</i> (unconfirmed, located by pond)	<i>Schizostylis coccinea</i>
<i>Camellia japonica</i> 'Lady Clare'	<i>Fuchsia</i> 'Lady Boothby'	<i>Solanum rantonneti</i> (syn.: <i>lycianthes rantonnetii</i>)
<i>Camellia japonica</i> seedlings	<i>Fuchsia excorticata</i>	succulents?
<i>Camellia sasanqua</i> 'Narumigata'	<i>Fuchsia magellanica</i> 'Alba'	<i>Tetrapanax papyrifer</i> 'Rex'
<i>Camellia x williamsii</i> 'J.C. Williams'	<i>Fuchsia microphylla</i>	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
<i>Camellia x williamsii</i> 'St. Ewe'	<i>Fuchsia splendens</i> 'Cordifolia'	<i>Viburnum tinus</i>
<i>Cestrum elegans</i> (syn.: <i>purpureum</i>)	<i>Grevillea lanigera</i> 'Mount Tabotitha'	<i>Viburnum tinus</i> 'Hirtellum' (?)
<i>Chaenomeles japonica</i> pink	<i>Grevillea rosmarinifolia</i>	<i>Viola anthurium</i>
<i>Chimonanthus praecox</i> (syn.: <i>fragrans</i>)	<i>Hamamelis japonica</i> 'Pallida'	violets
<i>Choisya ternata</i>	<i>Hebe matthewsii</i> (white)	<i>Yucca gloriosa</i> 'Variegata'
<i>Clematis armandi</i>	<i>Hebe x andersonii</i>	
<i>Coprosma</i> (probably <i>cunninghamii</i> hybrid)	<i>Heliotrope</i>	

Canon Boscawen of Ludgvan

Paul Brett has been finding out about Canon Arthur Boscawen...

Shortly after Morrab Gardens was established as a public park – 130 years ago this year – Canon Arthur Boscawen was appointed Rector of nearby Ludgvan parish. It must have been good timing for Morrab Gardens in its early years, to have such an enthusiastic and knowledgeable horticulturist taking up residence in a nearby village. For the young clergyman was not simply a keen amateur gardener; he also had very influential connections! His father, as Rector of Lamorran, had one of the finest gardens in Cornwall. And his uncle, Viscount Falmouth, was developing the garden on his estate at Tregothnan with exotic plants, which had been sent by a Captain Boscawen of the East India Company. These connections must have helped to ensure that Ludgvan Rectory, and Morrab Gardens, were exchanging seeds and plants with the great Cornish gardens.

Canon Boscawen did not leave a list of his plantings, but he was one of the great gardeners of the time, and his introduction of exotic species, along with the plant varieties he bred, led to an extraordinarily diverse range of plants at Ludgvan Rectory.



A page from Canon Boscawen's list of plants flowering in his Ludgvan garden, Christmas day 1908, reproduced by permission of Morrab Library.

Can you help?

We would like to compare the plants on Canon Boscawen's list with our own planting in Morrab Gardens. This is not straightforward, as many of the plants he listed are known by different names today, and his handwriting is not always easy to decipher! If you would like to help with this research, please get in touch (Paul Brett, paul.brett@talk21.com, 07419 190529).

Colourful myths from Morrab Gardens

A long-time resident of Penzance, Jenny Dearlove has been studying the stories associated with some of the plants in Morrab Gardens. She presented the results of her research to Head Gardener Joe Palmese, ahead of a talk she will be giving with Penwith Local History Group at Penlee Coach House, for the Penzance Literary Festival on 5 July (<https://www.pzlitfest.co.uk/event/borders-boundaries-and-big-ideas-with-penwith-local-history-group-pch33/>). Jenny has very kindly allowed us to publish her research in this newsletter, as follows:

Acanthus: Greek architect plant/bear's breeches

Acantha was loved by the god Apollo, but rebuffed him and scratched his face. So Apollo transformed her into *Acanthus spinosus*, a plant with spiny leaves.



The leaves and flower of an acanthus plant.

When a young Greek girl died, her nurse put her possessions in a basket by her tomb. An acanthus plant grew around the basket, enclosing it. The sculptor Callimachus saw it, and was inspired to design the leaves that adorn the capitals of Greek Corinthian columns.

Agave: century plant

Makes an intoxicating Mexican drink called *pique*.

The personification of the plant, Mayahuel, is the Aztec goddess of fertility and nourishment; she was the mother of the 400 rabbits [!] who were considered by the Aztecs as gods of intoxication.

In Greek mythology, Agave was the goddess of desire who was a follower of Dionysus, the father of bacchanals and profound inebriation.



Agave – the century plant.

Amelanchier: serviceberry

The first shrub to flower in the Appalachians, signalling the opening of the roads at the end of winter. The circuit-riding preachers could now reach the outlying villages, to conduct funerals for those who had died during the winter. Serviceberry being abundant and white-flowered, it was gathered for the services.

Araucaria: monkey puzzle tree

The Devil himself sits in this tree, and people have to be quiet when walking past or else they will attract the Devil's attention and get bad luck.

Arbutus: strawberry tree

Imported into sixteenth-century England < Ireland. Its red fruits, white blossoms and green leaves, inspired the colours of the Italian flag.



Arbutus – the strawberry tree.

Azalea – national flower of Nepal

Long-ago, a Chinese king was assassinated and turned into a cuckoo. Because of the king's violent death, the cuckoo sang so bitterly that blood came from his bill. April is the time of the cuckoo's cries, and the brilliant red azalea blooms, thus the legend says the cuckoo dyed the flowers red.

Camellia sinensis thea

A species of evergreen shrub or small tree whose leaves and leaf buds are used to produce tea

Cornus: dogwood

State flower of Virginia, USA.

Native American uses were for toothbrushes, daggers and arrows. It was used as a calendar, because when the dogwood flowers it's time to plant maize. In American Indian lore, a beautiful Cherokee princess was courted by a brave. She refused his advances, and in a jealous rage, he killed her. The maiden used the blossoms of a dogwood to soak up her blood as she lay dying. This explains the red stains at the tip of each petal, or bract. The red-blossomed dogwood is named *Cornus florida*, 'Cherokee Princess', in honour of the legend.

A Christian legend: dogwood once grew tall and straight. The wood was said to have been used to construct the cross on which Jesus was crucified. The dogwood tree was distraught over this, so Jesus took pity upon it, promising that it would never again be used for crucifixions. Since then, the dogwood tree has grown bent and twisted, unable to reach significant height. The petals of its flowers grew in the shape of the cross, each bearing the reddish mark of a rusty nail.

Crocus sativus

Krokos was a boy loved by the god Hermes. After his accidental death, the god transformed into the crocus flower. Its red stems were described as his spilt blood. Zeus, king of the gods, spied the Phoenician princess, Europa, gathering flowers in spring. He turned into a bull and breathed a crocus from his mouth. She found him irresistible, and so he carried her away.

Cypress sempervivens

Cyparissus, grandson of Hercules, had a favourite companion, a tame stag. He accidentally killed the stag while hunting (as it lay sleeping in the woods). The gods turned him into a cypress tree, whose sap forms droplets like tears on the trunk. Therefore, the cypress tree became the classical symbol of mourning.

Davidia: Chinese dove tree/handkerchief tree

The story of a famous Chinese heroine, Wang Zhaojun, a real person. She lived from 52 to 19 BC and was a concubine of the Han Dynasty Emperor Yuan. After years of war, the enemy khan or prince asked to marry the Emperor's daughter to seal the peace. Not wanting to send his daughter to the prince, the Emperor instead called for volunteers from his harem; he asked for a picture of the volunteer and was shown an unflattering painting of her, so he allowed her to leave. In fact, she was very beautiful, one of the 'Four Great Beauties' of ancient China. On the journey to her new home she was terribly homesick, so each day she sent a letter home by dove, which is a symbol of peace in China. The relay of doves landed in the tree outside her family's home; when in full flower the tree looks as if it is full of doves.

Helleborus nigra: Christmas rose

During the Siege of Kirrha in 585BC, the Greek forces poisoned the city's water supply by adding crushed hellebore leaves. The besieged inhabitants drank the poisoned water and got severe diarrhoea. As the city was now undefended, the Greeks secured it for themselves.

A concoction of hellebore caused the death of Alexander the Great, whose royal cup-bearer administered it to him; Alexander died of poisoning twelve days later.

Christmas rose gets its name from the tears of a young Jewish girl; she was sad because she was too poor to have a gift to give the baby Jesus, as was the custom in her day.

Hydrangea

This symbolized arrogance and frigidity in the Medieval times, because it was believed that young women who grew them would never find husbands.



Hydrangea.

Laurus nobilis: bay laurel

Mentioned in classical Greek, Roman, and biblical culture. The laurel wreath of Ancient Greece, a symbol of highest status, was made of bay laurel. Christian symbol for the resurrection of Christ. Used in Cornwall for marinating pilchards.

Mischievous Eros fired two arrows: a gold arrow that struck the sun god Apollo and made him fall in love with Daphne, and a lead arrow that made Daphne hate Apollo. Under the spell of the arrow, Apollo continued to follow Daphne, but she continued to reject him. Daphne turned to the river god for help, and was turned into a laurel tree. Apollo used his powers of eternal youth and immortality to make Daphne's laurel leaves evergreen.

Magnolia

The earliest Western record of magnolias in cultivation is found in Aztec history at the time of Montezuma.

In the American South, white magnolias are often seen in bridal bouquets, because the flowers are thought to reflect and emphasize the bride's purity and nobility.

In ancient China, magnolias symbolised womanly beauty and gentleness.

Morus nigra: mulberry tree

The leaves of *Morus alba*, which has white fruit, are fed to silkworms in China, and were used by the Romans as a mouth wash. The mulberry in Morrab Gardens is *Morus nigra*, which has black fruit – and no silkworms!

Lovers Pyramus and Thisbe met at night under a mulberry tree outside the city. Thisbe arrived first, wearing a veil. When she heard a lion roar, she fled, dropping her veil. The lion, whose jaws were bloody, found the scarf and tore it up. When Pyramus arrived, he saw the stained, tattered veil and assumed that Thisbe was dead. He drew his sword and stabbed himself. Thisbe then returned to find Pyramus dying, and she used his sword to kill herself as well. It is said that, before this incident, the fruit of the mulberry tree was white. However, the blood from Pyramus and Thisbe turned its fruit deep red, and it has been that colour ever since.

German folklore says the roots of mulberry are used by the devil to polish his boots!

An Armenian story has it that Silkworm wove a special beautiful dress for a girl; the dress possessed magic powers: the woman who wore it would become more attractive, and could go without food for days. The girl wore it and then lent it to her friend, who in turn passed it on. All were happy because they were all so beautiful. The King chose one of the girls to be his wife. She then insisted that she would be the only one who would wear the beautiful dress. Her friends grew angry, threw stones and broke into the palace. They found the new queen, ripped the dress from her hands and tore it to shreds. The hem of the dress grew into a tree trunk with many branches. The shreds of the torn dress flew up to the branches of the tree with swollen pink buds and broad leaves, forming a dense bushy crown.

Myrtus: myrtle

Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of love, beauty and sex, and guardian of the gates of birth and death. Myrtle was planted in Aphrodite's temple gardens and shrines,

and she is often depicted with a myrtle crown, sprig or wreath.

Myrrha was a Cyprian princess who fell in love with her father and conspired to seduce him in disguise. When he learned of her crime, she fled his wrath and was transformed into a myrtle tree. The boy Adonis was later born from her trunk. The same story is told of the myrrh tree.

Narcissus

Narcissus, a handsome and proud young man, was punished by the gods for his vanity; he gazed at his own image in a stream, fell in and drowned. 'The body, however, was not to be found – only a flower with a trumpet of gold and pale white petals.'

Daffodil bulbs: a crusader sent bulbs from the Holy Land to his wife as a special present. On his return, she served the bulbs in the welcome feast, thinking they were of the onion family. Unfortunately the crusader and his lady died of lycorine poisoning.

***Punica granatum*: pomegranate**

One of the first fruit trees to be domesticated, it is known to have existed in ancient Egypt and in the early Bronze Age. It has been found in a 141BC Turkish shipwreck.

Hades, king of the underworld, abducted Persephone to be his wife. She refused to eat while she remained with him, until he tempted her with the seed of the pomegranate. She tasted these, and in so doing was condemned to spend six months of each year in the underworld.

***Rosmarinus*: rosemary**

Symbol of remembrance, dating back to ancient Egypt, it was sold for herbal uses in Roman times. In the Middle Ages it was tucked under pillows against nightmares and visits from evil spirits. It was also burned in the house against the black plague. In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Ophelia pleads with her brother to remember their father's death: 'There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray you love, remember.'

Maybe you know stories associated with these or other plants in Morrab Gardens. If so, we would love to hear from you!

Plant sales

Plant sales continue to make money for the Gardens. In December, despite poor weather, we held a sale and raffle, at which mulled wine was served to Friends. Sales, including festive greenery and cards, continued until Christmas, resuming in January from the Greenhouse.

We were thrilled to be invited to take part in the first Charter Market Sale in Penzance on



The distinctive trunk of Trachycarpus fortunei.

***Trachycarpus fortunei*: Chusan palm/Windmill palm**

Named after plant collector Robert Fortune, who collected young plants on islands off the east coast of China in the mid-nineteenth century. He wore Chinese costume with his head shaved in the Chinese style to conceal the fact that that he was a foreigner, as Britain and China were engaged in hostilities at the time.



Our stall at the first Charter Market in March.

30 March; our plant stall attracted lots of interest and favourable comments, and raised more money for the Gardens.

None of this would be possible without a continual supply of plants, of course, and we are indebted to Joe, Linda, Lois, Michael and all the volunteers who provide the plants that make our sales such a success. A huge thanks also to the team who assembled at short notice to man our stall at the Charter Market.

Of related interest

Friends of Morrab Gardens Dave and Lizzie Puddifoot opened their garden at Alverton Cottage on behalf of the National Garden Scheme on 12 May. They kindly linked to Morrab Gardens, which resulted in a steady stream of new visitors to the Gardens. (The NGS gives visitors access to over 3,500 private gardens in England and Wales, raising money for nursing and health charities: <https://www.ngs.org.uk/>).

On Sunday 30 June, Patrick Gale and Justin Hicks will open their garden at Trevilley (Sennen TR19 7AH) from 2 to 5 p.m. in aid of the NGS. Entry is £6. The Friends of Morrab Gardens will donate plants to their plant stall.

Keeping in touch

Keep up with the news from Morrab Gardens by subscribing to our website at <http://www.morrabgardens.org>, or by following Morrab Gardens (@morrabgardens) on Facebook.

We hope you enjoy our newsletters, and welcome feedback. If you would like to see something we are not including, let us know.

*Joint Chairs: Rosie Hughes (email rosie.hughes@gmail.com) and Alan Jones
(tel. 07879 424 161; email alan@cogentanswersllp.co.uk)*

Secretary: Alison Hodge (tel. 01736 368093; email alison@blue-vista.co.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/MorrabGardens>