

## Christopher Lloyd Scholarship report – November

The month past has been of continuing effort to plant the bulbs throughout the garden within the beds and boarders. The process from the last month has been the same but equally as varied, with continuing amendments and adaptations to the beds. This has included; lifting, splitting, re-setting, moving and planting of bulbs and self-sown annuals which have been replaced in more appropriate spaces where they won't upset the balance of competition within the areas as well as allowing each to stitch the design of the bed together. Each annuals plays a specific role in drawing the views through the bed together and this is carried out to represent a naturalistic style, free from the structured planting patterns that my muscle memory is so keen to carry out. The plantings are more along the lines of high/low density, with small groups of (for example) 3-5 and then a large space and then the odd one or two thrown in to create the naturalised patterns. The thing I have taken greatly from these experiences is to look at how the self-sowers form before they are temporarily lifted when we begin to clear through the bed. Looking at their density and their spacing. Essentially, to imagine how they are in the wild and use this information to plant them accordingly. It sounds so simple when I write it, but in hindsight I have found it difficult to retrain my brain away from structured spacing, something that doesn't really occur in the same ways in the wild as it does in various styles of planting within horticulture. The bed re-design has allowed us to continue with removing *Canna* & *Dahlia* into the basement for winter protection, where they are set into crates with old soil, ensuring to attach multiple labels, should the inevitable occur and we are found to have *Canna unknownii* & *Dahlia mysterialis*. The design aspect has also taught me some key points of design and how the crucial choice of plants and placement will play a part in the whole so as to ensure that the boarder doesn't get diluted with weak colours, ill forms, lacklustre habits or off timing. The plants are all part of the mechanism and each has a role to allow the piece to sing much like a clock. We have now finished planting bulbs through the main body of the beds and boarders; this concludes the long boarder, peacock garden, high garden, barn garden, blue garden, walled garden and all those in between. Only a few pots are left and lining out of the remaining bulbs in the trail bed. These will be used for cut flowers and observation.

The journey of propagation has continued as a result of the bed design, with lots of plants being taken out with stem and root cuttings being made. The cold frames are under close surveillance as we head into winter, ensuring not to overwater and keep well ventilated. Some more tender plants such as *Clarkia* have begun to show signs of too much moisture and have been potted on and moved to a glasshouse where they can remain warmer and drier. Plants that have now been in the module trays for a short while have begun to make substantial roots and the potting on process has begun. More cold frames have been produced to help manage the larger quantity of pots that are required for next year. Care is taken on potting up to keep the seedlings nice and deep, right down to the cotyledons so that they can form strong plants. Along with this is the care of the roots, not to damage the plant and keep the plant central in the pot. It sounds simple and

obvious but ensures that each plant has the same amount of space whilst they begin their journey into larger plants.

We have been down to the coppice wood to take material for green woodwork. The woodland is 30 acres and houses a broad collection of native species with varied uses throughout the estate. Such as fire, green woodwork and structural work. We were taking sweet chestnut, *Castanea sativa* for green woodworking. They had to be as straight as possible with minimal twisting and knots. These were then split with a splitting blade and mallet, to which a gentle eye is key to ensure the split stays on the straight and narrow. Within the coppice wood, we noticed effects of deer munching the young shoots on stumps through a clearing. If this continues then the vigour of the tree will be reduced and the stump regenerative power will be lost. This can be avoided by piling up smaller young branches and twigs in a boarder around the stump so that access to the young growth is difficult for the meandering mouths.

Gradually everything is starting to make more sense. The layout and structure of the garden, the way it all works and joins together. It really works and is a huge success, not only to visitors but also as a great learning experience to really see how to maximise every space within a bed and boarder. On top of this is how to manage the garden sustainably; using coppice, cold frames, hessian, seed saving, cuttings and the like. Still with many months to go I cannot wait to see what lies around the corner.

Rob Leonard Flack.