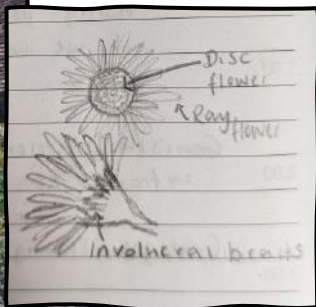


October At Great Dixter Nurseries

Samuel Walker, Nursery Scholar

Key Events this Month:

- Weekly Plant Idents Begin
- Autumn Plant Fair
- Nursery Trip
- Bulb Study Day



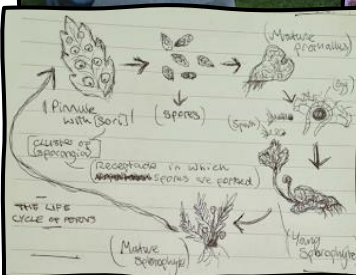
This month we began our weekly Wednesday plant identifications. Starting with Will Larson the Chanticleer Scholar focusing on Asteraceae - symphyotrichum.

-They have composite flowers made of ray and disc flowers.

-The involucre bracts or phyllary are leaf-like structures and a good identification tool. They are located on the underside of the flower where the stem joins.



We also had a fern identification by Ernie Weller, Christopher Lloyd Scholar featuring 36 ferns in total!



Also this month was the Great Dixter autumn plant fair, I spent time in the week before helping to set up, writing labels, setting out etc. The plant fair gave me an opportunity to meet people from other nurseries and listen to talks from the nurseries too. It was interesting to see what other nurseries stock and look out for things we should be selling in the nursery too.



West Country Nursery Trip:

Day 1: We went to Knepp walled garden. A fantastic garden ablaze with autumn colour. I was surprised by the varying levels in the garden, the way the land undulated gives you such a great range of views. I also found the range of plants fascinating, among the wonderful grasses are young betula and salix. It will be interesting to see how the garden changes as these large woody plants mature.



Day 2: A visit to Derry Watkins at Special Plants nursery including a tour of her wonderful garden. It was great to see what plants Derry herself was growing. It was fun to see *Amicia Zygomeris* growing so large and well, at great Dixter it can get a little overwhelmed in the old rose garden. The nursery team were especially eager to see Derry's label storage as we're currently looking for new label storage ideas.

We also visited Hillside, Dan Pearson and Huw Morgans garden. It was great to see the new sand garden in its early stages and hear about their future plans for the area.

Day 3: Derry Watkins joined us on a visit to The Picton Garden at Old Court Nurseries and to Pan-Global plants. Helen from Old Court Nurseries gave us a great tour of the site. It was interesting to see their fern and succulent propagation in particular.

Pan Global is full of rare and unusual plants which was great to look at. It also has an amazing garden which was unexpected.



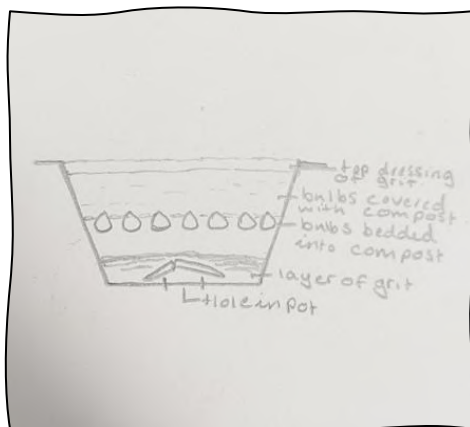
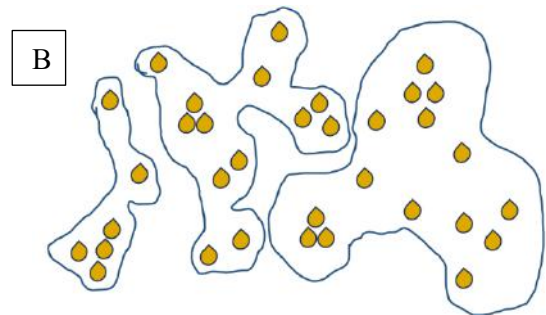
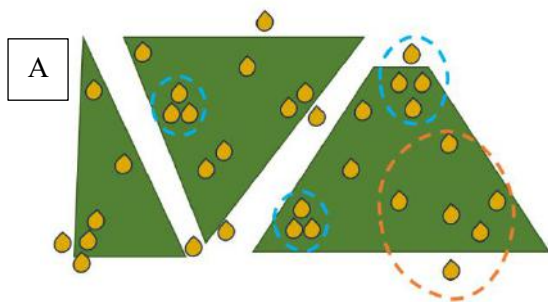
Bulb Study Day with Fergus:

I find the study days are always very interesting and useful. Fergus talked in depth about bulbs in pots, planting bulbs in meadows, planting bulbs in permanent plantings, and using bulbs in bedding displays.

Key Points:

- Your aim with bulbs is to find bulbs which will work for you in your soil and perpetuate well.
- You can use host plants alongside bulbs to cover anything unsightly. For example you can plant a tall variety of tulip with a fox glove, as the tulips die off, the foxglove will grow up and cover the unsightly tulips as they die back

-Planting in a high-density, low-density pattern will give you a natural look and a good flow. See below, A- bamboo canes are arranged in general shapes around perennials, bulbs are planted roughly in these shapes. It is important for some bulbs to be outside of the shape so that you don't end up with harsh regimented shapes. Clusters of 3 or more bulbs are your high-density, 1 or 2 bulbs dotted randomly are your low-density. See below B- the results are frogspawn-like free-flowing shapes that somewhat interlink.



At Great Dixter, bulbs are grown in pots as a trail for beds and borders. It is a good opportunity to see how they grow including how the leaves look, how the flowers look, their height, are they top-heavy, do they perpetuate well etc. When planting bulbs in pots, a terracotta pot is used with crocks to cover the hole before a layer of grit is added. Then a layer of compost is added (usually the gardener's signature old soil mix) which the bulbs are bedded into. Next, the bulbs are covered over with more compost, almost to the top of the pot, before a final layer of grit. The grit not only helps the pots to look nice, but it also prevents compost from splashing up onto the foliage and flowers which could create unsightly spots as well as pests and disease issues.