

# THE NEW DIANTHUS TIMES



Published on behalf of the BRITISH NATIONAL CARNATION SOCIETY

Jan 2012 Issue 1

The Dianthus Times is now back in publication after a period of absence. I was approached towards the end of 2011 and asked if I would like to produce The Dianthus Times for the society, I will be publishing The Times on a quarterly basis to help keep all member informed on all things to do with the society and carnations in general. With 2011 now becoming a distant memory I hope all members had a great time over the festive period and wish them the best of luck & success for the current season. Please enjoy and feel free to offer any feedback. (All opinions in this publication are that of the editor unless otherwise stated and not that of the BNCS)

## 2012 AGM

The 2012 AGM is to be held in the Annex of the Westgate Church, Peterborough, PE1 1RG, on 25<sup>th</sup> February at 13:30. All members are encouraged to attend. Any member with any matters for discussion should forward these in writing to the acting secretary Ray Ingram before the end of January. Ray's address is:

**5 Newton Rd, Uppingham, Rutland, LE15 9TR**

## 2012 Official Society Visit

All members should note that the 2012 Official BNCS visit will this year be to Whetman Pinks in Dawlish. A date has not yet been confirmed but we are looking at some time in mid June. Details will be published as and when the arrangements have been made with Whetmans.

## TALK BY IVOR MACE

18<sup>th</sup> February 2012

The Yorkshire Carnation Society is proud to announce a talk By Ivor Mace on the 18th of February at Adwick Social Education Centre, Village Street, Adwick-Le-St, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN6 7AA. It's a 1pm for a 1:30pm start, tea/coffee & biscuits on arrival and a hot meal is included. It will be a ticket only event, these are priced at £5 on can be purchased from Peter Booker (01652 688625) or Barry Hogg (01302 722501). After the talk there will be a guest panel



of experts answering any queries, the panel will be Ivor Mace, Tony Derrick & Vic Borrett, questions for the panel

can be submitted before the day to Peter Booker.

On the day there will be a raffle & a special draw for all paid up members of the YCS attending (prize is a £25 DARGEM Carnations voucher donated by

DARGEM Carnations, who will have a stall selling carnation plants including some of the new varieties).

## Membership

Don't forget that membership subscriptions are now due a renewal form was sent out with your Autumn Newsletter. Non-members should contact, **The Membership Secretary, Graham Davis, 11 Charlotte Row, Ellesmere, Shropshire, SY12 0AX.**

UK Residents Single £12.50, Joint UK Residents (Husband & Wife) £13.50, overseas Single £15.50, Affiliated Society £15.50, Junior's £5.50

## New Society Website

Any members who have not yet visited the society's new website should try and do so, there are some very good articles on it and I would like to thank the web team for all their hard work in producing the site it is an asset to the society. **[www.britishnationalcarnationsociety.co.uk](http://www.britishnationalcarnationsociety.co.uk)**

## Feeding Carnations - Ivor Mace Tells Us How

When it comes to feeding plants I always feel there are many things to consider. Of course by far the most important consideration should be what medium the plants are growing in. Clay particles have a negative charge and they will attract ions of the opposite polarity, so it stands to reason that a growing medium containing some loam will hold nutrients longer than soilless compost. Another consideration will be how much base fertiliser was added when the compost was mixed.

Several years ago I got interested in finding a way of measuring the strength of nutrients in the growing medium. I had some scorching on one of the chrysanthemum varieties I grow. I wondered if it was a result of high nutrients suppressing water intake. After much reading and seeking opinions from others, I bought a soil conductivity meter. Since then I have conducted experiments at keeping the nutrient levels at particular strengths so as to observe the growth of the plants. I grow Chrysanthemums, Carnations and Onions for exhibiting and it amazes me as to how much they have in common. Perhaps I really shouldn't be so surprised because after all they are all plants. As a starting point I tested various proprietary composts and they varied from 1000mS to 500mS

depending on their make up. I have found most multipurpose composts come out at around 500 - 600mS where as Levington M3 which is the highest nutrient compost Levington make, comes out at about 1000 - 1200mS. I have been surprised to find what good growth the plants have made with really low levels of nutrients, providing they are kept at a constant rate.

Since I realised the plants will make good growth at .2 - .4mS provided it is kept constant, I have used lower nutrient compost but began feeding after a month. I have found that a feed of 400mS at every watering will keep the nutrient level constant at around .3mS. My carnations are rooted in a compost equivalent to a John Inness number 1. They go into 13cm pots also in JI no.1 and final potting is also in a JI no.1. I decided it would be better to use a lower nutrient compost to ensure good take off in the new compost and also ensure there would be no possibility of root scorch. Feeding after a month can keep the nutrient level constant.

My liquid feeds contain 2 nitrogen, 0 phosphates, and 1 potassium. The thinking behind this ratio is that ideally I would like equal nitrogen/potassium. Potassium doesn't leach from compost as

easily as nitrogen so that is why I have twice as much nitrogen in my feed. Phosphates leach very little at all so I leave them out completely and just rely on what is available in the base fertiliser. If I grew in soilless compost I would include some phosphates because I would expect them to leach from soilless compost far more than they would from loam based compost. Since I've reduced the amount of loam in my compost from 50% to 20% I have had to increase the feed from 300ms to 400mS.

All this might sound a bit complicated but in a nutshell 300 to 400mS works out at about half strength feeds. Liquid feeding works well for carnations because they are grown under cover and watering is always under the growers' control.

I make up a stock solution by dissolving 7 ounces Potassium Nitrate, 6 ounces Ammonium Nitrate and 12 ounces Calcium Nitrate in a gallon of water. This can be used at 200 to 1. In practice this is one pint in 25 gallon barrel of water and used with a watering can to pots that have dried out on the surface. I suggest that if you don't want the trouble of making up your own soluble feeds then Chempak no 2 has a ratio very close to what I have listed above.

### Big Thank You

May I take this opportunity to thank Betty Linnell for all the hard work she has put in over the last 14 years as the BNCS secretary. Hopefully we will still see her at all of the society's shows. Once again thank you Betty.

## In The Spotlight - Alternaria Leaf Spot

This carnation disease is caused by *Alternaria dianthi*. The symptoms of *Alternaria* Leaf Spot are purplish white spots on the foliage of which the centres are made up of a black fungus – these are the fungus spores, the foliage may also turn to a brown / yellow colour. The spots are usually contained on the foliage but if the node becomes infected the disease may spread to the adjoining foliage. The stem itself may also get infected causing it to become ridged and eventually it will die.

Spores are airborne and will survive in the infected plant and plant debris. The disease only requires 8-10 hours of moist conditions for infection to take place.

To control *Alternaria* Leaf Spot an off the shelf fungicide should be used as per the manufacturer's instructions (something like Systhane Fungus Fighter will be ok). All infected plant material should be removed and disposed of by burning, low humidity and good air circulation will help to reduce the spread of the disease



## Harrogate Show

Once again the BNCS will have a stand at Harrogate Spring Flower Show in the society's marquee.

In 2011 the stand was awarded a 'Premier Award' which is the highest award available. The society also sells carnation plants to raise much needed funds, all plants on sale are donated by members.



Any members wishing to donate any plants for the society's selling table, which will be gratefully received, should contact Gary Hammerton to arrange delivery / collection. Please note that all plants need to be with Gary by early April. The dates for Harrogate Spring Show will be 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> April.

## Obituary

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you of the passing of George Shields. George was a founder member of the GNCS, a top grower and breeder of Border Carnations whose blooms always adorned the show benches and were much admired by all. In the late nineties it was George who championed Borders in the society, giving advice and encouraging members new and old to grow borders. His knowledge of Borders was second to none, George will be sadly missed by all and our condolences go to his family at such a sad time.

## Publications

All members should now have received a copy of the societies Autumn Newsletter and the 2012 Year book is well underway and this will hopefully be distributed sometime in April.

## Publication Contributions

Anybody wishing to contribute an article for inclusion in one of the society's publications should forward the literature / photos to one of the following:

**Yearbook & Newsletter –**

**Gary Hammerton, hammertons320@hotmail.co.uk**

**Dianthus Times –**

**Daryl Harris, dianthustimes@gmx.com**