

## **The 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Elm Bank's Bressingham Garden**

### **There's more to the Bressingham Garden than meets the eye!**

To all of us who were involved in the creation of the one-acre Bressingham Garden at Mass Hort's site at Elm Bank, the planting day in August 2007 will always be memorable. Apart from the fact that it was around 90°F, and over 180 people from ages 6 to 93 were involved including Mass Hort staff, trustees, experienced professionals (very few) and volunteers (well over 140), it was the excitement and passion of sharing in the creation of this garden that was memorable and the promise of what it could be in the future. Undoubtedly at the special Bressingham Garden Symposium on Tuesday July 25<sup>th</sup>, organised by Kathy MacDonald in consultation with others, more stories will be shared .

### **Has the Bressingham Garden at Elm Bank fulfilled its promise?**

For most visitors this garden, once established, has appealed for its informality, year-round interest and wide range of plants. Like most gardens, there have been successes and failures, plants that have struggled (and a few given up) and plants that have thrived, even to the point of being invasive. Like bringing up a family, a garden needs constant attention and, like both, at times they don't always able get it at the right time!

I have visited Elm Bank at least once every year to see how the Bressingham Garden has been developing and to advise on cultural aspects and plants, and I now feel greatly encouraged that as the Mass Hort Society has rebuilt, so interest, involvement and enthusiasm for Elm Bank as a venue and the Bressingham and other gardens as attraction have grown.

### **The Elm Bank Bressingham Garden - what does it stand for?**

The garden (closely modelled on my own garden, Foggy Bottom, part of The Bressingham Gardens in England - of which more later) was first planned for year-round interest. It was to be designed with vistas and sweeping informal grass pathways, and to have a wide range of plants with striking combinations.

How did we do on that one? It aimed in time to;

- a) become a visitor attraction, which would encourage visitors to make seasonal visits;
- b) give gardeners ideas about plants and combinations that they might try in their own gardens;
- c) act as 'learning garden' for children to senior citizens; for Mass Hort teaching courses; for group visits from amateur garden groups to nursery and garden centre staff learning; and customer recommendations to see plants in a garden setting, plant identification etc;
- d) act as a backdrop to summer events, horticultural or otherwise;

e) and to be a standalone garden for peaceful reflection and therapy  
(probably the best time to for this would be early morning or evening);  
Some of the above have happened; more are planned.

### **The 40-Year Gap**

Elm Bank's Bressingham Garden at 10 years old has certainly seen some changes ... and in 2017 my own garden Foggy Bottom now 50 years old ... (which must make me, well, older than 60 anyway! ) the transformation has been amazing.

In my talk at the Symposium on July 25<sup>th</sup> I will be telling the story of how Foggy Bottom grew out of an empty meadow and became part of the 17-acre Bressingham Gardens, whose first creation was my father Alan Bloom's Dell Garden, where he pioneered the use of hardy perennials in island beds.

I developed Foggy Bottom as one of year-round interest, originally specializing in conifers and heathers, the former with many deciduous trees and shrubs forming the structure needed on such a flat site. Over time many other plants were introduced – perennials, grasses, ferns and bulbs; trees and conifers I planted had to be removed... That's a long story and of course a garden is always a work in progress, but in the past few years we have placed a visitors book at the exit of Foggy Bottom...and here are a few comments, these from visitors this year so far;

"Beyond Words",  
" Splendid garden—keeps on giving! A new vista round every corner",  
" Probably the best I have seen. Constant revisions fascinating",  
" Wow,! So beautiful and peaceful. By far my favourite place to visit with my Mum and Grandad" and lastly underlying what gardening is all about;  
"All the cares in the world disappear in this peaceful setting "

In time we hope to develop a link between our websites, but if you have time to browse [www.thebressinghamgardens.com](http://www.thebressinghamgardens.com) you can watch our 'flying visit' by drone, some videos in the gardens, and then you may begin to see some similarity between The Bressingham Gardens, Foggy Bottom and the Bressingham Garden at Elm Bank.

I look forward to meeting many of you on July 25<sup>th</sup>, and hope to continue a close association with the Mass Hort Society as it moves forward to a very exciting future.

Adrian Bloom