

## The Guernsey Nerine Festival

### Rose Rankilor

In 2000, Plant Heritage Guernsey decided to hold an event to showcase our collection of nerines which was mainly of cultivars of *Nerine sarniensis*, Guernsey's national flower. We were fortunate to be allowed to hold the Nerine Festival in the Lower Glasshouse in Candie Gardens, on the outskirts of St. Peter Port. Owned and run by the States of Guernsey, these gardens contain two lean-to glasshouses which are reputed to be some of the oldest of their type in the UK (c. 1792/3) and which provided a wonderful backdrop to the display of nerines. The event attracted many visitors, both locals and tourists and it was decided to hold it each year.



Guernsey Nerine Festival 2008 in the Lower Greenhouse, Candie Gardens. Photo: Andrew Eames

Unfortunately, in 2018, we were advised that the Lower Glasshouse needed some structural repairs and was considered unsafe for the public. We were given permission to use the Upper Glasshouse and those of you who visited us will remember that although smaller than the Lower Glasshouse, we were still able to hold our Festival there and put on a reasonable display. However, in 2019, we were advised that the Upper Glasshouse had now also developed



Guernsey Nerine Festival 2018 in the Upper Greenhouse, Candie Gardens. Photo: Caroline Stone

structural problems and since the Lower Glasshouse still hadn't been repaired, we were not able to hold our Nerine Festival in Candie Gardens at all. As you can imagine, at this point a certain amount of panic was experienced by yours truly as organiser of the Festival as we desperately tried to think of alternative sites. The site



Guernsey Nerine Festival 2019 at Guernsey Gardens. Photos above and below: Phil Rankilor

had to be indoors to protect the nerines, large enough for the display, with easy access for visitors. After much head-scratching and many discussions, we discussed the problem with our new landlords. We had recently had to move our entire collection as the glasshouse we were renting was due for redevelopment, and were now renting part of a large glasshouse at Guernsey Gardens, a local well-regarded plant centre. The owners of Guernsey Gardens very kindly allowed us a large enough space in another part of the same glasshouse we currently occupy, and even more kindly prepared the site for us by taking out some old heating pipes and putting down a layer of granite chippings to level the floor.

The site was now ready for us to set up. Andrew Lanoe led a team putting up the display tables and we were able to carry the chosen plants to the new area by trolley instead of loading them into a lorry. The set up went well and the nerines looked lovely in their new display area. The glasshouse receives good light and the nerines sparkled in the



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sunshine. This new area had many other advantages; Guernsey Gardens Plant Centre is well signposted, has plenty of parking for visitors and is on a bus route. Our change of venue generated quite a bit of interest from the local media and we had good coverage in the local paper. Our visitors were able to find us in our new location and the staff at Guernsey Gardens could not have been more helpful or accommodating. We had plenty of space for our display and were even able to trolley across some larger planters which we had not been able to showcase before. All in all, the 2019 Nerine Festival proved to be a success and generated much positive feedback from visitors. So much so, that we will be holding the 2020 Nerine Festival in the same place. (Covid-19 permitting of course!)

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*Haemanthus humilis* subsp. *hirsutus*

Steve Hickman received this plant from the late Bill Squire at the Malvern Show in 2014. It is still in the same pot and compost, and flowering well this year.

