



A tribute to
**PETER
SEABROOK MBE**
1935 – 2022





Peter was awarded an MBE in 2005 for his services to horticulture. He also held the RHS Associate of Honour, the Harlow Carr Medal and the Victoria Medal of Honour awards

Peter's career highlights

Peter John Seabrook was born on the 2nd November, 1935. As a young boy he gardened with his father and grandfather, living on his grandfather's farm in Galleywood, Chelmsford. He adored growing sweet peas, selling them to the local flower shop which funded tours for Peter of Holland's flower markets near Amsterdam. In his early career he would cycle miles to work at plant nurseries, and work long, physical days.

He gained a two-year diploma from Writtle Horticultural College (then the Essex Institute of Agriculture) in 1956 where he met his wife to be, Margaret. As a young man he completed National Service in the Royal Army Service Corps, where they taught him to type and paid for him to learn floristry skills (which he later relied upon to make posies for the Queen). He then became director of Cramphorn Garden Centres, before working for the Irish Peat Board.

His break in publishing came when he read mistakes in a weekly trade magazine, so he wrote to the editor and told him he could do a better job. In 1965 he then had a similar break on local radio, and was employed by the BBC Home Service for broadcasts on In Your Garden and Gardeners' Question Time. Then began a broadcasting career in 1975, following on from Percy Thrower as the host of Gardeners' World. He was also the regular gardening expert on Pebble Mill at One, and he co-hosted coverage of the Chelsea Flower Show. Frequently

he would also fly to America to host the TV show, The Victory Garden, which he appeared on for over 20 years. More recently Peter hosted a podcast, 'The Sun's, This Week in The Garden' - he recorded well over 250 episodes.

Peter penned numerous gardening books on trees, shrubs and edibles, and was a long-standing columnist for The Sun (as Gardening Editor, for 44 years) and Amateur Gardening magazine (for 36 years). Since 1977 he built Sunflower Street - back-to-back garden displays at the Chelsea Flower Show. In 2020, when the show was cancelled due to covid, Peter relocated his intended display - a 3m high pyramid of flowers - to RHS Hyde Hall, Essex. His local RHS garden was also home to the Floral Fantasia garden, where Peter promoted new bedding plant introductions. Here, he trialed new varieties of rudbeckias, calendulas and alstroemerias, with the help of his assistant Molli Christman. Just this autumn they had planted thousands of bulbs for a spring bedding display. During the initial Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 he campaigned passionately for garden centres to be re-opened.

In 2021 Peter launched a pale pink verbena, 'Margaret's Memory' in honour of his late wife who sadly died in 2020 after living with dementia for 9 years. All proceeds (£7,000) were donated to Alzheimer's Research. In 2022 he was planning to build The Sun's biggest ever exhibit at Chelsea Flower Show, to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Words by Lucy Chamberlain



Peter as a very young man sporting his trade mark tie - Writtle 1953



Peter at the GMG awards 2017

Tributes from patrons of the Garden Media Guild

Peter Seabrook was my mentor and my friend. From the time I was first introduced to him as a new entrant into the horticultural industry in 1989, Peter was always there for me with his own brand of down to earth guidance and advice. Soon after meeting him, I asked to see Peter again. He suggested we met at Wisley. When I asked why Wisley he said he had an idea about forming a 'Garden Writers' Guild' and was looking for a suitable venue for the first meeting. That idea, over 30 years ago, has morphed into the highly successful Garden Media Guild we know today, with Peter becoming a patron.

Photo: Jane Lloyd

Peter wanted to be a help to horticultural journalists as he had help others, especially school children and students. Peter was not only full of new ideas throughout his career, he also had his personal opinions which were strongly held and fearlessly expressed to anyone who would listen - and to those who would not! Peter was not just a character and a true gentleman, he was a national treasure.

By your countless fans and followers, you will be sadly missed and especially by me. RIP my friend.

Gordon Rae, Guild Patron



Alan Titchmarsh, Peter, Gordon
Rae and Roy Lancaster – friends
and Guild supporters

It was in the 1980s that I began broadcasting with Peter Seabrook at the Chelsea Flower Show. We had known each other for a few years previously through press trips and RHS shows, but Chelsea became the time when we worked together for a good number of years as what one newspaper referred to as 'The Morecambe and Wise of Gardening'. We took it in the good-humoured spirit that we hoped was intended.

For more than forty years I counted him as a friend, a champion of the horticultural industry and a consummate broadcaster whose generosity of spirit had few equals. If my own research notes were lacking on a particular Chelsea exhibit, Peter would reel off a list of facts and figures from his own 'homework' - not to show off, but to make sure that I had chapter and verse and would not look an idiot in front of the camera. I did the same for him. It was a reciprocal arrangement that we both had cause to be grateful for, but not one that is often encountered.

When I took over 'Gardeners' World' in 1996 - a programme he had presented himself - he could not have been more enthusiastic or encouraging.

'The Garden Writers' Guild', as 'The Garden Media Guild' was first called, grew out of our levelling with one another about our journalistic earnings to make sure that we were not underselling ourselves! We did not share such information as the years progressed and our respective careers diverged, but in the early days it was a useful way of making sure that there was some kind of level playing field when it came to fees for horticultural journalism.

Peter was always good company, often controversial (I seldom agreed with his more extreme pronouncements!) but I never lost my respect for his views and his commitment to horticulture and to getting children interested in growing things. Whether he was sharing a juicy bit of gossip, shaking his head at the folly of someone in horticulture whom he considered should have known better, or making sure that my wife, Alison, had a ticket for Chelsea (on one occasion at least he gave her his own), his wide smile over those half-moon glasses never failed to lift our spirits. He may have gone, but his legacy lives on in the enthusiasm he engendered in several generations of gardeners. I shall miss him enormously.

**Alan Titchmarsh MBE VMH DL,
Guild Patron**



I always regarded Peter as the professionals' professional who believed a job worth doing is worth doing well. He practised what he preached and did so throughout his life. What he preached was joy of good gardening and there are few others who shared it so widely and thoroughly. He was a friendly man, comfortable in the company of all who gardened be they children, students, amateurs, fellow professionals or Royals.

I first became aware of him in his early years of television gardening, the BBC Pebble Mill programmes followed by Gardeners' World. Apart from a one-off programme he produced and directed the only occasion I worked with him was in May 1998 when Alan Titchmarsh and I teamed up with him for a special Channel Four "Chelsea Live" coverage to celebrate the show's 75th Anniversary. Given the occasion, Peter suggested that we three presenters should wear tuxedos. This led to an embarrassing incident for me when, in explaining to camera the significance of a drift of candelabra primulas bordering a stream on one of the famous Embankment rock gardens, the smooth leather-soled shoes I was wearing caused me to miss my footing and end up ankle deep in water while, ever the "professional" continuing my dialogue. I was told later that when Peter viewed the action on play-back he laughed his socks off and asked for a re-run.

He carried his knowledge and expertise lightly and was a natural communicator never happier than when sharing with others the benefits as well as the highs and lows of his long career. His television and radio appearances as well as his lectures and articles secured him a wide, appreciative and loyal fan base as did his attendance at flower shows and other horticultural events countrywide. Nor must we forget his podcasts during the recent Covid 19 lockdown periods, one of which in 2020 I was honoured to be included, enabled him to spread a sense of calm and normality in a time of dread.

For Chelsea Show visitors the many exhibits he helped design and stage in The Great Marquee, latterly the Great Pavilion, were a "must see" and he was always on hand to answer questions and deal with the inevitable media requests. Characteristically, he always promoted the team effort that made these exhibits possible much to the pleasure and pride of the individuals concerned, especially the young. It was at the Chelsea Flower Show in September in 2021 that I last met him at The Sun exhibit, smartly dressed with his favourite broad-brimmed hat ready to doff in respect to welcome the approaching Royal visitors.

Guild Patron Roy Lancaster and his wife Sue



Encouraging children to grow was a constant priority for Peter

What a hugely sad loss for gardening and for The Garden Media Guild. Peter will be missed by all who knew him. Nobody has given so much encouragement to so many young people to join the world of horticulture. His talents are legend, plant breeding, journalism, promoting plants and people, always with energy and enthusiasm. Generous to a tee to those starting off, making secret donations to introduce young horticulturalists to our world and enable them to broaden their perspectives.

Like so many, I first made his acquaintance through the television, watching him on Gardeners' World - Oh those wonderful aran sweaters and cardigans. Later I met him personally at numerous Chelsea Flower Shows and other horticultural venues including gatherings of The Garden Media Guild of which he was a founder member. On those occasions though, his attire was more formal - suit, flowery tie topped off at Chelsea with his distinctive straw hat.

We didn't always agree but agreed to differ with good humour and respect. Condolences to his family who must be hugely proud of his achievements and his legacy. What a worthwhile life he lived!

Carol Klein, Guild Patron

Barbara Segall and Peter
at Hyde Hall in 2021



Peter Seabrook and the beginning of the Garden Writers' Guild

I met Peter Seabrook soon after I started my gardening writing career. I was editing *The Horticulturist* for the Institute of Horticulture and began to meet some wonderful horticulturists as well as garden writers. Peter sent out an invitation, through a steering committee, to some 50 garden communicators asking them to attend the inaugural meeting of the Garden Writers' Guild on 2 May, 1991 at RHS Garden Wisley.

The letter stated that Rosie Atkins, Nigel Colborn, Peter Dawson, Carol Kurrein, Gay Nightingale, Adam Pasco, Peter Seabrook, Faith Whiten, and Fred Whitsey among others were willing to stand for membership of the Guild's first committee. Membership started at £5 and initially Peter, with the help of his wife Margaret, ran the membership list. Fred Whitsey was elected President and Peter became the Guild's first Chairman.

Peter was clear that the objective was to improve contact, knowledge transfer and understanding between people actively involved in writing, broadcasting, photographing and general communicating about horticulture and garden subject. Another objective he felt was to raise and enhance the standard and quality of material and therefore to improve the reputation of horticultural communicators. Close to his heart was the need to encourage good liaison between the Guild and the horticultural trade. The briefings and presentations that started that day became the standard for the many and regular briefing days that Peter thought would benefit trade and Guild members in publicising and promoting horticulture.

Bill Simpson, then Director of Horticulture at RHS, Pippa Greenwood (on honey fungus), Tony Lowe of the NCCPG (now Plant Heritage), Barry Ambrose (MD RHS Enterprises), Donald Hearn and Stephen Bennett (both RHS) were among the presenters in the morning. After lunch John Hillier President-Elect of the Horticultural Trades Association

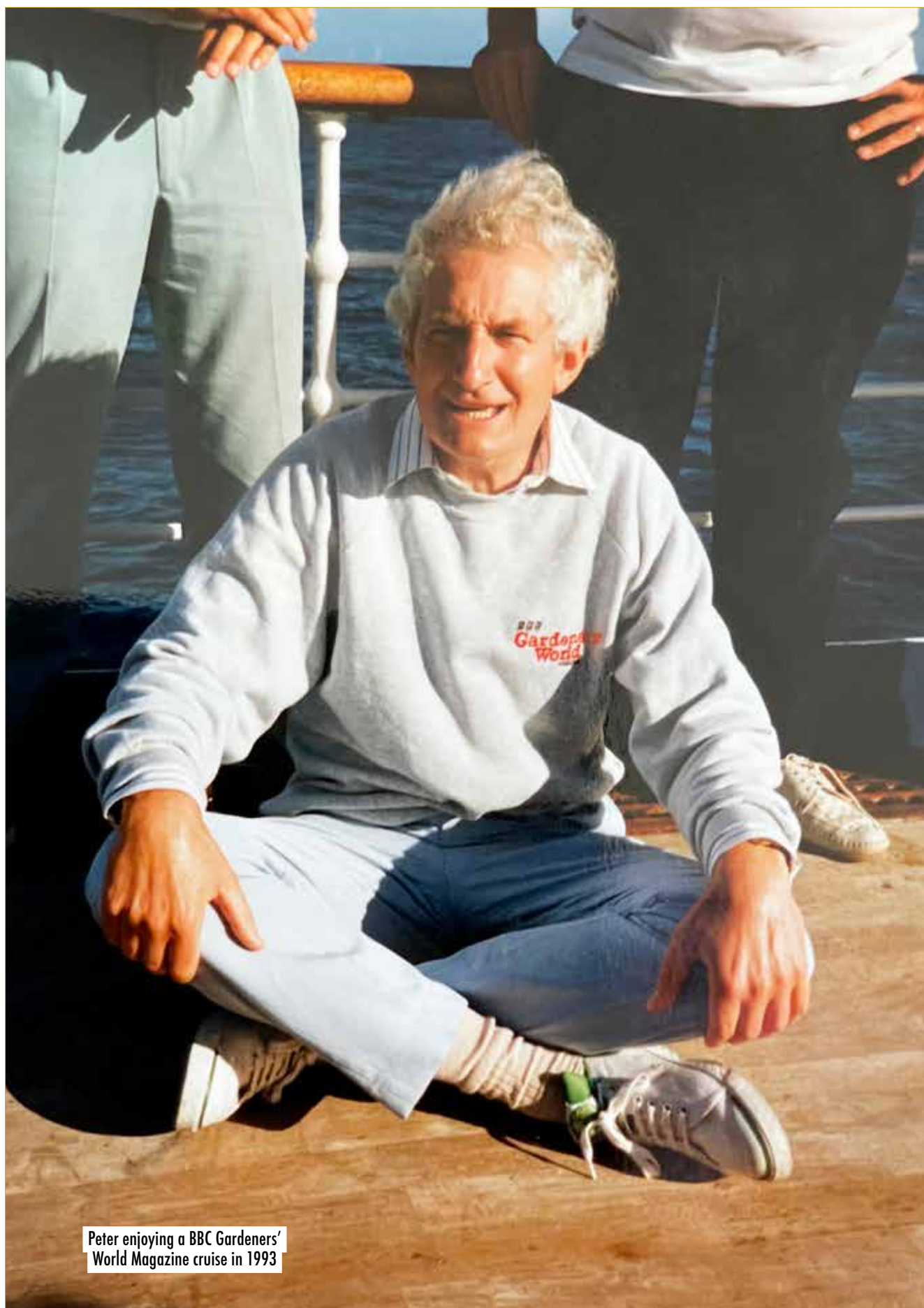
set out the HTA stall and there was discussion on how the HTA might assist members of the Guild. The presentations ended with a tour of Wisley led by Curator Jim Gardiner.

A year later the first AGM and Awards Lunch was held, and Peter asked me if I would be in charge of the seating plan for the lunch (which I did for the first few years). It was a relatively small event, and took place in the RHS horticultural hall in Vincent Square. Within a few years it had outgrown that venue and after a couple of moves eventually found its way to the splendour of the Savoy Hotel Banqueting Room.

Words by Barbara Segall

One afternoon in 1991 Peter Seabrook turned up in the Institute of Horticulture (now Chartered Institute of Horticulture) office in the RHS building in Vincent Square in his charmingly persuasive way to ask whether the Institute would take on the administration of the newly formed Garden Writers' Guild, which a meeting a day or so earlier had decided to set up. This arrangement was agreed and I as the Institute's General Secretary together with my assistant continued to do so until I retired in 2006. Along the way the offices moved from Vincent Square to Belgrave Square. It was a very happy arrangement. It normally took about half a day a week of our time but inevitably more ahead of the GWG awards which were soon established. Then the office became full of wonderful books, photographs, recordings and gardening articles.

Words by Angela Clarke



Peter enjoying a BBC Gardeners' World Magazine cruise in 1993

Tributes to Peter

In 2000, my final year at Pershore College, I was recommended to do the planting design on the Water Aid show garden at BBC Gardeners' World show. We were awarded a silver medal. Peter stopped by the garden and congratulated us. A short while later Peter presented me with my HNC in Garden Design Certificate. His words to me were "you have a gift - never give up" and I never have. This photo has been up in my office for the past 22 years. Only last year I had several conversations with him as I embarked on some garden writing. His advice and encouragement have been invaluable. I will truly miss him as 1000's of others will.

Carol Smith, garden designer and writer



Our friendship started during the 1960-73 period when I worked in England, firstly with Salop Education Authority and then in East Midlands as an ADAS adviser. During the 1990's, in the early days of the Gardening Scotland Show at Ingliston, Edinburgh, Peter did some judging for us and together with his wife, joined us for dinner on the Friday evening, along with others from the south like Roy Lancaster. It was called 'The Gardeners' Gathering'! It was an evening of wonderful exchanges and memories. We have kept in touch ever since.

Our industry has lost a veritable powerhouse and individual. We mourn the passing of a good friend and colleague.

Jim McColl MBE VMH

The sudden, unexpected passing of Peter Seabrook, MBE is not just a great loss to the world of Horticulture but to me, the loss of a personal friend. We first met in 1969 on a two-day Press event launching the Anglia Group of Nurseries. From then on, our paths often crossed and in the 1970's I had the pleasure of illustrating his first book 'Shrubs for your Garden' (Floraprint). Other titles followed, and I learnt so much about horticulture from him.

Peter, myself and others were instrumental in founding the Garden Writers Guild, later to be re-named the Garden Media Guild of today. He was its first Chairman. It was a joy to serve on his committee and later take over as the second Chairman. One quote stays with me, I still use it today. After discussing some subject on the agenda,

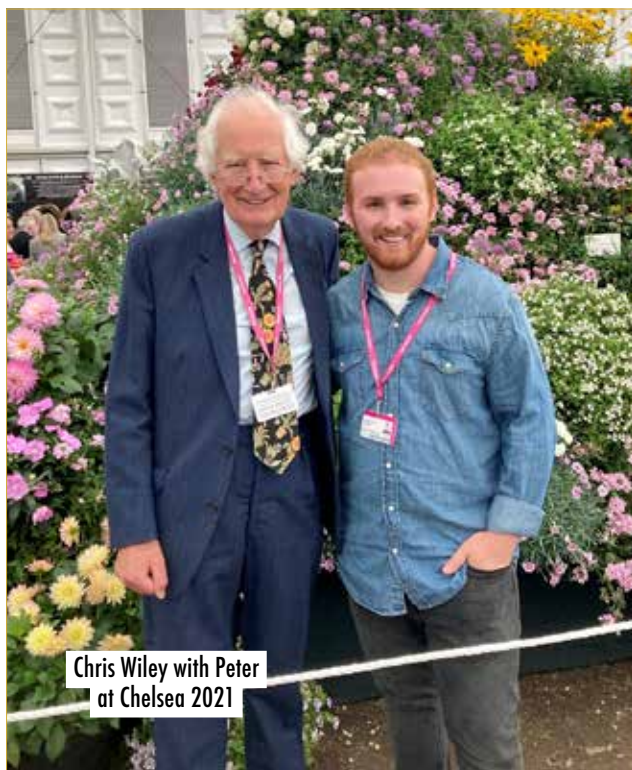
Peter would say 'life is too short, let's take a vote on it and move on.' In recent years I have had some involvement with Peter's 'Floral Fantasia' displays & Trials at RHS Hyde Hall, hidden away at the far end of the garden. He had great plans for the future of this colourful feature and as he said 'Life is too short', it certainly is.

Michael & Lois Warren

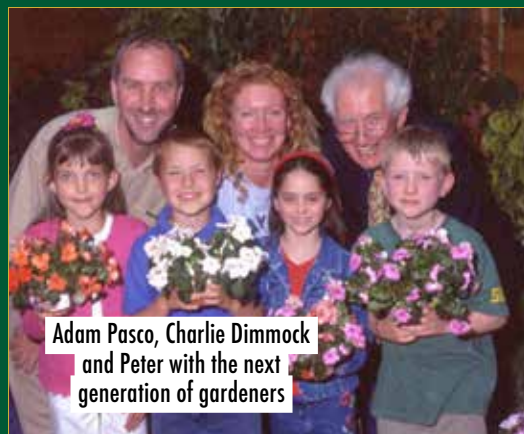
Peter became a good friend of mine in recent years and his love and vast knowledge of plants became clear in the first few minutes of meeting him. He has been incredibly supportive of me since, and I was honoured when he asked me to grow Verbena 'Margaret's Memory', named after his late wife, for Chelsea Flower Show and BBC Gardeners' World Live in 2021 - one of my proudest achievements and I can't thank him enough for putting his trust in me. All he wanted to do was to support me in my new business venture and to help a young horticulturalist achieve their dreams.

It was only a month or so ago that he last visited me and the first thing he said was "how do you fancy being on my podcast? How about tomorrow?!" To which I replied "absolutely Peter" not even questioning myself, as that's just the level of respect that everybody had for him. No is not an answer when Peter requests something of you. You just do it!

Chris Wiley, grower



Chris Wiley with Peter
at Chelsea 2021



Adam Pasco, Charlie Dimmock
and Peter with the next
generation of gardeners

Peter has been part of my gardening life since childhood, inspiring me with his TV appearances on "Pebble Mill at One". I never thought that one day I would work alongside him during my 22 years as Editor of BBC Gardeners' World Magazine and more.

One of my very first gardening books was Peter's "Shrubs For Your Garden" (which he told me was set to music to provide the words for an opera), and the book gave me a grounding in hardy plants during my training at Slocock Nursery back in the late 70's, before becoming a journalist.

Peter and his wife Margaret joined me on a gardening cruise with several hundred Gardeners' World readers in 1993, and many will have enjoyed sharing his company and hearing him read the humorous letters he had received over the years. Peter was a wonderfully generous man in so many ways ... with his time, support, encouragement, enthusiasm, extensive knowledge, and boundless energy!

In his Christmas message to me last month he said "Desperately busy... just planted 15,000 spring flowering bulbs at Hyde Hall", finishing with an invitation to join him in spring for a walk together to enjoy the flowers. I will go and enjoy the tulips, but sadly not in Peter's company. I could go on, as I'm sure could everyone who has crossed paths with Peter over his many years in the gardening industry. He will be greatly missed.

Adam Pasco, Writer and previous editor of Gardeners' World magazine

I have known Peter for many years, having met him at Chelsea and Hampton Court flower shows on so many occasions. More recently we also met regularly at the Garden Press Event and besides talking about plants our conversation included Peter's Margaret and my Brian. When I saw Peter at Birmingham in 2019 and told him Brian had died he gave me a huge hug; what a lovely gesture from such a caring person!

I too have a plant, to be named for Brian's memory and had hoped to be able to tell Peter this year, either at the Garden Press Event or at Chelsea; he would have loved to have known this. It is a beautiful purple *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* and will have a musical name. Peter was very interested and supportive of my research on *Thymus* nomenclature, as he was with so many other people involved in horticulture.

A few years ago I was invited to talk to a gardening group, but was not told until I arrived for the talk that Peter was the group patron! Talking to the big white chief was a daunting enough scenario, but this was an occasion when if it can go wrong, it goes wrong! My projector and computer were not "talking" to each other and the screen was blank. Members were trying to help, with no success. I then noticed that there was a power surge protector and suggested that we should try without it and fortunately it worked and we were only a few minutes late starting. Peter's reaction; one of those things that happen and no problem! Peter is now reunited with his beloved Margaret, but he will be missed by so many people in horticulture. I feel privileged to have known Peter for so many years. RIP my friend.

Margaret Easter, photographer and author

I first met Peter when I was in my 20's and working for Your Garden magazine and later Amateur Gardening. Even though I was young and naive he made me feel as if my opinion and thoughts were relevant. He had a knack of including everyone in the conversation and I never once felt that I couldn't bother him with a question or go to him for a quote.

One of my career highlights was having him turn up to my book launch in Hatchards in 2020. How generous, how encouraging, how Peter.

I am proud that I have been able to follow in his footsteps as a chair of the Garden Media Guild. How he will be missed. Thank you for your generosity Peter.

Tamsin Westhorpe, Co-chair Garden Media Guild

He was always there when you needed him. Never missed an AGM and frequently was full of praise and generally supportive of everything the committee did. Personally, I found him very approachable and helpful when I wanted a picture of him for Guild or stock use.

There were also instances when the Guild committee needed advice on a specific matter and I know that successive Guild Chairs have contacted him off the record. He had such a level head and understanding mind.



Mike Howes, Vice Chairman Garden Media Guild

I have known and worked with Peter for more than 30 years and we were planning joint activities at Hyde Hall and Chelsea. On 23 November, out of the blue, he sent me an email with the below photograph. He was always a good friend, and I shall miss him greatly.

Graham Paskett, Paskett Public Relations



Graham Paskett and Peter

I had always admired Peter Seabrook for his horticultural prowess and stature in our industry, but it was when I was chair of the Guild that I also realised how willing he was to share his knowledge, and how generous he could be. Worried that some members of the Guild might miss out on the Awards Lunch because of the cost of the ticket, he offered to pay for 20 members to attend. We held a ballot, 20 members were duly picked, and Peter paid for their tickets out of his own pocket, although he didn't want that known at the time. The only stipulation was that he wanted them to come to the AGM held on the morning of the lunch - it was one of the best turnouts the AGM had had in years.

Clare Foggett, former Chair of the Garden Media Guild

I 've never met anyone like Peter before, and I doubt I ever will again - he was an exceptional person. His support of the horticultural trade was unparalleled, his limitless energy was enviable, and his kindness and

generosity were appreciated by all who knew him. Our paths first crossed when I edited his column for Amateur Gardening magazine 15 years ago, and during those initial weekly calls we found common ground due to our Essex origins and Writtle College qualifications. I would then regularly

seek him out at trade events and flower shows, where he always made time to chat - I was in awe of his knowledge, and kindness. The fact that this horticultural giant was equally as happy to talk about our personal lives as well as work was a marvellous surprise, and very special. He was incredibly supportive and I am so grateful for that. In recent years we shared many a chat (and a joke) on the breezy hilltop of RHS Hyde Hall - Peter's stories were always told with a cheeky glint in his eye. I was lucky enough to call him a friend, and will miss him dearly.

Lucy Chamberlain, Garden Media Guild Committee Member



56 THE SUN, Saturday, June 26, 2004

GARDENING WITH PETER SEABROOK

with STEVE and VAL BRADLEY

HOW THE KIDS ARE GROWING!

THE future of gardening is in safe hands if the finalists of the Baby Bio National Schools Growing Competition are any guide. More than 50,000 youngsters took part in regional eliminators hosted by garden centres. And 490 schools were represented in the final at the BBC Gardeners' World Live Exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham last week.

The first prize was £1,000 for the school and £100 National Garden Gift Vouchers for the child. Second was £750 for the school and £75 National Garden Gift Vouchers for the child. Third prize was £500 for the school and £50 National Garden Gift Vouchers for the child.

Ground Force's Tommy Walsh, BBC Gardeners' World editor

Adam Pascoe and myself were judges with help from Page 3's Natasha. A special prize went to Jessica Peden, 11, of Parkgate Primary School, Ballyclare, Co Antrim. Her plant was damaged by an airport X-ray machine.

WINNERS: First - Abigail Nash, eight, of Kingsbury Junior School, Tamworth, Staffs. Her host garden centre was Whitacre GC, Birmingham.

Second - Alexandra Hardy, six, of Fairfield First School, Bromsgrove, Worcs, whose host centre was Webbs of Wyckbold, Worcester.

Third - Harry Lord, nine, of Greenfield Primary School, Leics. His host centre was Woodlands Nurseries, Stapleton, Leics.

A runner-up fourth prize also went to Lindsey Castille, ten, of Saint John's C of E Junior School, Wigan, Lancs. Her host centre was Guley Nook GC, Greater Manchester.

CHAMPS... Natasha, Tommy, me and Adam with winners Lindsay, Harry, Alexandra, Abigail and Jessica

THE BBC is looking for the best amateur gardener in Britain. In the sixth year of the competition, five gardening enthusiasts are wanted for the final to be televised in September. To apply, send an A4 stamped address envelope to: BBC Gardeners of the Year 2004, Room 317, BBC, Birmingham, B5 7QQ or send an e-mail to gardenersoftheyear@bbc.co.uk. Closing date for entries is July 15.

WESTLAND Horticulture from Northern Ireland are in the frame to buy Unwins Seeds. One of our leading seed companies, Unwins have traded from Histon, Cambridgeshire, for 100 years.

Q&A
Q HOW can I control blackspot on my roses?

Pretty in pink

Encouraging children to grow through the pages of The Sun, June 2004

Photo: Val Bourne



I first met Peter face to face over 30 years ago. Despite being middle-aged I was beginning my third career, as a gardening writer and journalist. I felt raw, nervous and shy but Peter was instantly friendly, encouraging and amusing. He put me at ease from the start and we soon became friends. Over the years we worked together, often at the RHS and sometimes hosting gardening cruises, usually with our wives on board too, to keep us in order.

When Peter replaced Percy Thrower as lead presenter on *Gardeners' World*, Percy will have been a very hard act to follow. But he cracked it in a heartbeat. What impressed me most about Peter was his deep and abiding love of horticulture. His expertise was always impressive, but unlike so many super-gardeners, he was never grumpy or uncommunicative. His energy was unmatched - as anyone who had worked with him will know. When you were beginning to flag, he was just getting going. That, I'm sure was driven by his almost unique love and knowledge of everything to do with growing plants.

So, thank you Peter, for everything you achieved. You showed us all how to make our gardens more beautiful and more productive. Now rest in peace with Margaret. With deep affection.

Nigel Colborn, writer and lecturer

What a man! What a gardener! One of the highlights of any gardening event was bumping into Peter, especially when he fished out his notebook and began enthusing about his latest discoveries. He was an incredible man who inspired generations of gardeners, helping and encouraging so many of us over the years. I, like many, will be forever grateful for his support and kindness. It's a mark of the respect of the entire industry that he has received such heartfelt tributes from every single sector, from the garden media

to the growers, from garden centres to plant breeders.

Last summer, Peter kindly gave my wife, Val, a bunch of his legendary sweet peas. As a small gesture, this autumn and every autumn in future, I'll be sowing my sweet pea seeds on 11th Oct, the date he told me that he sowed his, every single year for the past fifty years. It'll be my way of remembering an extraordinary and very special man.

Richard Jackson, writer and broadcaster

I've been working in the industry for more than 20 years now and Peter has always been there - always at press events, always at shows, always working hard (and always with his notebook in hand). I've got to know him better over the years, but I always respected his opinion, his deep seated knowledge and what he stood for. I didn't always agree with him but that was fine - he was Peter and he was his own man. His endless enthusiasm to encourage children and younger people to get growing were passions he had before the rest of us had even thought of it. The industry has lost one of its leading lights.

Chris Young, landscape designer and gardens consultant

Peter was first and foremost an inspiring and dedicated plantsman. His wit and charm were legendary and he was at ease in any setting. He was a tremendous force for horticulture and a good friend to our International Rose Trials. We will miss him greatly along with his collection of pens and notebooks!

Paul Rochford and the team, Rochfords International Rose Trials



Enjoying the roses with Paul Rochford

Peter's passing feels like a landmark has gone from the garden writers' landscape. He was always there, a beacon to so many for so long. It's just brilliant that he was active to the end. A silly personal memory: we were the only two, I think, who voted against the then Garden Writers' Guild proposal to publish a members' directory. Both wrong!

Joy Larkcom, garden writer

Shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Peter Seabrook. Such a wonderful, inspiring, charming and honest gentleman. A real wise gem in the gardening industry! An incredible horticulturalist and gardening writer.

In July 2019 I was incredibly fortunate to spend a whole day shadowing him at The Sun offices where he worked for over 40 years! We recorded a podcast, finalised newspaper content and had a good natter over lunch together. Debating the world of social media and influencer marketing, among many other aggravating topics. As well as of course sharing our passion for the wonderful joy of incredible plants and how we both got into gardening. He talked full of so much love about his wife, his devotion to her alongside having a determination for hard work and giving his all. It was a truly special day that I felt honoured to experience at the time and even more so now.

Peter is and was an inspiration to many generations of gardeners, my grandparents and I included. Thank you, Peter! "

Annabelle Padwick, writer



I had the pleasure of knowing Peter as a friend for forty years and while other media gardeners have come and gone, he remained without peer; the best any of us will ever see or know.

Stefan Buczacki, writer and broadcaster

I have known Peter since the late 1970s when our new books were launched at the Park Lane, Hilton Hotel probably in 1979 or 1980, others launching their Burrell and Floraprint books that day were Adrian Bloom, Christopher Fairweather and probably Roy Lancaster.

Peter has been a fantastic champion of gardening for such a long time and has remained so to this day. His inspirational exhibits at the Chelsea Flower Show with The Sun newspaper brought gardening to all types of people and gardeners. His contribution to the horticultural trade has been enormous and we have all benefited from his enthusiastic approach to our new different plants, in the way he presented them to his readers followers.

He has been a great friend to me especially during these last few years and he was due to be here in Guernsey in April. He will be very much missed by all of us in the horticultural trade.

With much sadness to be writing this.

Raymond J.Evison OBE VMH FLS FCI Hort

I 've 'known' Peter since his days on BBC's Pebble Mill at One & my first garden book 'Shrubs for Your Garden'. These were my days of inspiration that, along with Percy Thrower on Gardeners' World, launched me into a life of horticulture.

Peter, as a former Writtle Student, was always a big supporter of the college and my future. My wife had the ignominy of refusing Peter entrance to the annual open day because he didn't have a ticket. He was guest of honour but she didn't recognise him. He passed it off with humour while the Principle didn't.

My career as a horticulturist has been focused on garden centres, and Peter's influence and support for this part of the industry has always been highly enthusiastic and innovative. It was his love of gardens, gardening and plants and encouraging the gardening public in any way he could, that seemed to be the main drivers of his passion. He loved his fans, and they loved him.



Two gentlemen of horticulture -
Raymond Evison and Peter at Chelsea

Over the years Peter and I bumped into each other at various events, many of them his original ideas that others would enthusiastically support. He was always free with his advice when asked and was very helpful to me when I started as BBC Radio Sheffield's garden phone-in expert, 15 years ago. Peter was able to flex his skills as media technology changed, even though on some topics he was traditional & had conventional views. I'm not sure there are many eighty years old podcasting with the ease Peter managed it.

From my garden centre colleges, I hear that only two days before his passing he was emailing asking to be involved in a future event where he could share his latest ideas. It's my view that Peter Seabrook was unique. His adaptability, his enthusiasm, his love of sharing his passion for plants and gardening over such a long life probably won't be equalled. We should be inspired by much of his life and learn from it.

Neil Grant, Ferndale Garden Centre

Peter Seabrook was undoubtedly one of the great horticultural figures of his age and someone who combined a sound knowledge of commercial horticulture with very savvy media work and excellent journalism.

Very few people can do both jobs so well. I really respected him for his fearless insistence in calling out foolish practices and theories, as he saw them. He was always a great supporter of all the work we did at Glendoick on rhododendron and azalea breeding and he offered to launch our red leaved rhododendrons Everred and Wine and Roses in The Sun newspaper in his column. They were an immediate sell out.

I don't know anyone else of his age who had more energy and enthusiasm for the industry. I was a guest on his podcast a year or so again and we have been working on the peat issue for some time. I'll miss him at all the shows and events where he would always be striding out



with information on the latest thing that caught his eye. It would be top of his agenda to tell you about it. A great man.

Ken Cox, Glendoick, Perth Scotland

In losing Peter Seabrook we say goodbye to a father of horticulture who worked relentlessly to champion growing, plants and gardening in all its forms. He was a man with such passion for his craft that despite a prolific energy and capacity for his work, I do believe he felt as if he never worked a day in his life. One thing's for sure, his craft influenced so much of how the keen home gardener gardens today.

He was unafraid to challenge horticultural beliefs or practices, where he felt they were misjudged, incorrect or inappropriate. I didn't always agree with Peter, but he was always happy to explain his thinking in a calm, embracing and persuasive way, which (even if I still didn't agree!) made me think and research the how's and why's of my own practices. Sometimes my self-reflection and research allowing me the opportunity to better argue my case, particularly if I knew there might be an opportunity to duel with Peter again in the future!

The sparkle in his eye always revealed the energetic, passionate boy of his youth, the youngster who grew sweet peas, worked on his grandfather's allotment, sold flowers and saved to visit nurseries through the UK and Europe with anything he earned. His passion, warmth and when in conversation, his ability to make you believe that you and he were the only people in the room, was obvious to all that knew him - and his unparalleled work ethic in promoting horticulture and the joy it creates, was breath-taking, exceptional and inspiring. I believe horticulture wasn't just what he did, it was who he was - in a way, he had chlorophyll running through his veins!

His passing has made me hold my own horticultural life that bit closer knowing that I owe many of the opportunities in my professional and personal gardening life - to grow, design, garden and share, to the work of Peter Seabrook. I will miss his presence in our horticultural landscape greatly, but know that he will be reunited with his much-missed, beloved Margaret in the great garden beyond our reach.

Farewell Mr Seabrook.

Ann-Marie Powell, garden designer

Although both Peter and I were horticulturists and campaigners, in many ways our philosophies were poles apart. We first worked together on BBC Pebble Mill at One and in 1979, soon after Peter replaced Percy Thrower on Gardeners' World, I horrified him by creating a Rich Habitat Garden for a garden makeover on the programme. Peter made it quite clear that there was no way the great British public would ever be interested in attracting more wildlife to their gardens. However, we soon discovered a shared a passion for introducing children to the joys of gardening and the natural world, and we gradually became good friends.

His recent podcasts proved an ideal way to reinforce that friendship and I will miss the opportunities to laugh our way through our disagreements and revel in our mutual love of gardening. Peter was a wonderful role model and an inspiration. The only silver lining at this sad time is the manner of his leaving - still digging to the very end.

Chris Baines - Wildlife gardener and environmental campaigner



Peter was a good friend and colleague. He was always supportive and kind, generous with his time and knowledge. He had a great sense of humour, always asked the key questions at any press events and was thoughtful and polite, always thanking his hosts and colleagues. He knew everyone in horticulture, made time for newcomers in all fields, wrote so many personal letters and kept in touch with his friends and colleagues, always remarking on and congratulating them on their achievements. It is hard to think of events such as RHS Chelsea Flower Show, the Garden Press Event and the Garden Media Guild Awards without his presence. His floral ties, his buttonholes, that inimitable hat and his notebook packed with facts and notes that he spun into his regular writing and broadcasting ... all part of his no-nonsense horticultural persona.

Barbara Segall, garden writer and editor, The Horticulturist

I had the pleasure of meeting him at the Chelsea Flower Show in 2017 and he was so kind and thoughtful and took the time to offer words of wisdom to someone starting out in garden journalism. He will be much missed and remembered as a true gent in the world of horticulture.

Ciar Byrne, freelance journalist

I grew up watching Peter share his passion for plants and wealth of practical horticultural knowledge on Gardeners' World. It still feels extraordinary that we would eventually meet. Always warm and supportive of me from the start of my career, I'll miss the twinkle in his eye, the gentlemanly tip of the hat, and above all his energy and enthusiasm for gardening. Peter was a one off who spoke his mind and encouraged young gardeners with great charm and tremendous energy. He'll be much missed by those lucky enough to know him... and all who watched, listened to or read his words over the decades.

Rachel de Thame, writer and presenter

Rachel grew up watching Peter and never imagined she would meet him in person



Ciar Byrne with Peter at RHS Chelsea 2017

I was shocked to hear the sad news of Peter's sudden death. We met in 1975 when I was a presenter on BBC's Pebble Mill at One show where he broadcast a live slot called DIG THIS on Friday afternoons until 1986. He was always a joy to work with, fun, kind, totally professional. The viewers loved his jovial chuckle and warmth, friendliness and prodigious knowledge of gardening. His skill was soon recognised by the BBC which turned to him at very short notice to replace Percy Thrower on Gardeners' World in 1976.

We broadcast together from the RHS Chelsea show in the 1970s where he won a medal for a display of radishes grown by school children, the start of his lifelong campaign to involve children with RHS Chelsea.

The following year he was awarded a silver gilt medal for a replica of his BBC DIG THIS vegetable garden project, the first time a BBC programme was awarded a medal at Chelsea! It was developed in the Pebble Mill garden to prove how well you could feed a family of four from a 10'x14' plot spending only an hour's work a week and £1 worth of seeds.

It was a huge success. Thousands of viewers wrote in for factsheets and his 'Dig This' booklets sold over a million.

His amazing work ethic and integrity made him highly respected in broadcasting and journalism as well as the horticulture world. I looked forward to meeting him at horticultural events, somehow he always made time to chat to everyone however busy he was. He encouraged me to join the Garden Media Guild. and I valued his generous advice and support.

He never changed, he was always full of energy, passion for horticulture and on top of his subject. His enthusiasm was infectious and an inspiration to young and old. He greatly deserved all the awards and accolades he received. I will miss him. RIP Peter. My condolences to his family.

Marian Foster producer/presenter

Horticulture has lost one of its most enduring and colourful elder statesman. Peter's presence was the inspirational backdrop to my formative horticultural life. His appearances on BBC Gardeners' World and BBC Pebble Mill in the 1970's helped foster my interest in horticulture, so it was a real privilege to meet and work with him on a number of occasions after becoming a garden writer on Garden News in the mid 1980's.

At those early media events he kindly took me under his wing, showing me plants or items of interest, discussing their various merits. I always hold winning the Peter Seabrook Award for Practical Book of the Year for my 'New Wild Garden' at the 2016 Awards a pinnacle of my career. Peter's knowledge and passion for plants, especially new varieties of ornamental annuals, or fruit and vegetables, continually dazzled. He could always recall important varieties of yesteryear, asking breeders and plant retailers potent questions about the worth of new introductions, everything salient quickly scribbled down in his ever-present notebook and pencil. Woe betide if you got anything wrong!

A few years ago when I accompanied him on a nursery trip to the Netherlands, it felt like being in the entourage of 'horticultural royalty'. I will miss him terribly. Miss his clarity of thought and forthright opinion, miss his wry wit and ready chuckle on puncturing absurdity or waffle, miss his fortitude in standing up for anything he passionately believed in, more over miss his boundless energy and enthusiasm for everything horticultural, and passion for teaching the young. His was a life well grown and tended.

**Ian Hodgson Editor at Large:
Garden News magazine**

Peter and I were friends and sparring partners for over two decades. His manner was composed of equal parts of enthusiasm and provocative insouciance; this latter side he displayed readily whenever we held opposing opinions. But on one minority position we were agreed, namely an enthusiasm for bedding plants, which he maintained and defended in his columns in The Sun for years. In 2013 we were both members

of the panel charged with drawing up the shortlist for the Chelsea Plant of the Centenary competition and defended our corner against the hardy herbaceous majority (Geranium 'Rozanne' was the eventual winner). I hope his love of bedding plants will be remembered, and maybe inspire a few others to continue his interest.

Brent Elliott, author and lecturer

I had the privilege of working closely with Peter Seabrook for more than two decades on Horticulture Week and Amateur Gardening magazines. His encyclopaedic gardening know-how, sharp observations, boundless enthusiasm and unrelenting quest to track down the latest innovation always kept him at the cutting edge of horticulture. Peter wasn't afraid to air controversial opinions, while his old-school charm and gentle humour ensured he was always a hit with magazine readers. Peter knew that helping children to nurture green fingers early in life paved the way for a better society and his efforts to inspire the next generation of gardeners must be celebrated. The horticulture industry has lost its finest ambassador but Peter will go down in history for a lifetime dedicated to helping millions of ordinary people to enjoy their gardens.

Marc Rosenberg, freelance journalist

Peter was a man of many talents, a man who promised much yet achieved more. That rare person who was seen, and was, a champion of the horticultural industry before it was one.

I first met Peter not long after I came back from abroad to join the Bloom family business. At the time he was a technical advisor for the Irish Peat Company Bord na Mona. Peter saw more than most of us, but I doubt even he knew what a central role he was to play in gardening and horticulture, managing through sheer hard work, ability, and taking his opportunities to become a dominant figure at nearly every level. Once a month he would join our family for 'tea', and we'd drive to the meeting in Thetford. My appreciation of Peter as a man of ideas and integrity was firmly formed from that time on and we were to meet in many different places each of most of the next 50 years.

As Bressingham Gardens we exhibited at Chelsea for 35 years. One year we had a big exhibit of mainly conifers on the embankment site where the HM the Queen and entourage started their tour on Press Day. The BBC of course usually covered the first part and Peter, not without ideas and a little mischief said to me "If Her Majesty does stop at your exhibit, point forward and upward and the cameras





Adrian Bloom and Peter
filming at Foggy Bottom

will capture her looking up. The film will be there in time to have it shown on the BBC News this evening." I did as suggested, pointing out a special plant and the rest Well, I never heard whether we got on the news, but it was a challenge, and HRH seemed interested in the garden!

Peter's area of interest was primarily the British nurseryman and gardener, and he had a wider view and knowledge of these than almost anyone or organisation. Above all he was a great communicator which was recognised by Russ Morash, the Producer and Director of The Victory Garden, distributed by WGBH from Boston Massachusetts, who was in the UK to shoot The Chelsea Flower Show. Soon Peter in a surprise move which few knew about was presenting to a nationwide US audience, and for two weeks a year travelling worldwide with Russ, his wife Marian (also presenting a cookery section) and crew shooting 8 to ten programmes for later showing. I couldn't quite imagine Peter doing some of the exploits in these entertaining programmes, such as paragliding, but he did. Here also Peter could also enjoy himself, telling and acting stories of what it was like to be incarcerated in a notorious penal colony near Hobart, Tasmania in the 19th century. In Britain it was a plant orientated Gardeners' World, in America, (the programmes usually shown in the winter), it was the entertainment of The Victory Garden.

We should be glad of what he achieved and celebrate his remarkable life.

**Adrian Bloom, author,
Foggy Bottom, Bressingham**

I am old enough to remember Peter on Gardeners' World, but my first proper conversation with him was at the first Garden Press Event many years ago. I lauding the fact that we grew all our perennials in peat-free compost. Even then, he was questioning whether this was the right way to go. It was something that he did, question and champion what he thought was right. I still have an email from him sent in December - yet to be answered - pointing out that if Britain banished peat from horticulture there would be no mushroom producers and we would import all mushrooms from elsewhere. He could be found wandering around the exhibits at shows, but not only that he instigated them. One NEC Birmingham show we were one of the six exhibitors in The Sun Sunflower Gardens. Prince Charles and Camilla visited the stand and Peter made sure that their Royal Highness shook hands with every one of the exhibitors. A photo opportunity not only for The Sun readers, but for the exhibitors. That was Peter, the supporter of producers.

He was never politically correct. My last meeting with him was at the Garden Press Event in February 2020, when everyone was bumping fists, Peter hugged me and gave me a kiss. Who will replace this upright, big smiling man, who championed both the grower and the gardener?

Claire Austin, grower and author

Peter was a horticultural legend, a greatly respected gardening writer and was one of the greatest champions of horticulture. He was a kind and generous person, always had time for everyone and was always there to listen and advise.

The last time I met him at Gardeners' World Live in 2021 we had a lovely chat and he invited me to visit a project he was working on. He was a warm and welcoming person with a great sense of humour and his passion for horticulture radiated from his being as it always did.

The world of horticulture has lost a true gentleman, and the most wonderful standard bearer and ambassador for the industry and for the nation's gardeners. He will be missed by so many people.

Stephen Studd, Chair of the PGPA

