

## The National Sweet Pea Society - A Short History



The Sweet pea came to the UK in 1699 so in 1899 it was decided by some prominent horticulturists to celebrate this popular flower. The bicentenary exhibition was held at Crystal Palace, London on 20-21 July 1900. It was a tremendous success and prompted the inauguration shortly after of the National Sweet Pea Society.

The **society's first exhibition** was held in the new Methodist Central Hall Westminster on 25-26 July 1901. At this show the first Spencer variety was unveiled with much longer stems and

larger, frilly flowers.

Over the years regular exhibitions have seen the introduction of countless new varieties. From 1905, the society decided to publish an annual booklet to record the developments of the year and this has continued (with the exception of 1941-43) every year since. The **NSPS Annual** includes a great diversity of articles and remains our flagship publication. Sample articles from the 2016 Annual are reproduced via links in the Membership section. The society expanded its publications in 1939 to issue four **bulletins** a year. The number and size of bulletins has varied over the years but now stands at two per year.

In the 1930's the society started to publish a booklet on Sweet Peas which later became the "How to grow" booklet. This has been updated through numerous renewals and is now titled "Enjoy Sweet Peas".

A formal committee was established in 1906 which took the role of organising variety trials and subsequently became the **trials committee**. The Society has continued to hold trials ever since, almost annually, often in partnership with the Royal Horticultural Society

The **Society's objects** remain:

To disseminate knowledge of Sweet Peas and other *Lathyrus* species,

To encourage, improve and extend the cultivation of these flowers by means of scientific trials, the holding of exhibitions and displays, by publications and other activities.

### About the talk

Chris Dale sits on the committee of the National Sweet pea society and is the Suffolk and Norfolk representative. Chris will be bringing some of his own home grown blooms with him on the night together with a slide show detailing all you need to know about successfully growing sweet peas.