



The Scottish Rock Garden Club SHOW REPORTS NORTHUMBERLAND - HEXHAM 2011



Farrer Medal

Best Plant in the Show

Primula "Broadwell Milkmaid"

by Cyril Lafong

[Joint show held under AGS rules this year]



If you need more plants Hexham has a great selection of plants on sale from many nurseries and the local plant sale is full of treasures. Get there early and make your choices early. There is a supermarket next door and another across the road, so you can enjoy yourself and do the weekend shopping.

There are so many trophies at the Hexham show that it would take a whole article to show the plants and the winners. I will try to pick the winning plants out in the report.. Under AGS rules there are different sections for the exhibitors than in an SRGC show. The winners of the 'most points trophies were:-

R B Cooke Plate

most first prize points in Open Section
Ian Kidman

Gordon Harrison Cup

most first prize points in Intermediate Section

Jim Watson

Cyril Barnes Trophy

most first prize points in Novice Section

Tony Stanley

SRGC Bronze Medal - Section TWO

Subject to SRGC rules

Jim Watson

The show is quite extraordinary with an incredible number of absolutely wonderful plants being exhibited and when it comes to specific genera it is like a living encyclopaedia. It is well worth getting up early and travelling to Northumberland to see for yourself. Better still, be inspired and exhibit some plants yourself. For real beginners there is a special section and you graduate slowly through the ranks to the open section. If





The great thing about the SRGC and the AGS is that members make friends from all parts of the country. Many are members of both clubs. I was warmly welcomed to Hexham in N E England by Brian Russ who comes from Ormskirk on the English East coast. I meet Brian only 2 or 3 times a year but have done so every year for the past 30 years or more. For the

first time th' I wondered why he had a woman's head on his shoulder! **The bunch of rieviers on the left** are look a bit shaky because I did not use a flash but nonetheless these are the members from North Northumberland, North Cumbria and South West Scotland groups who got together to organise the Discussion Weekends for 2011 and 2012.



Ian B is getting ready for a Dashing White Sergeant while Ian L hopes for a waltz!



Brian D and Ian C



It's a good time of year for Primulas



Do you think the judges got it right?

Unbelievable Primulas - fabulous colours, range and quality

I doubt if many people have seen such a wealth of Primulas at one show. They dominated the benches! Some as big as footballs; others more modest in size but entrancing to the eye. Choose your colour; pin or thrum?: wavy petals?: tight or loose growing? A Primula for everyone!



Primula 'Mars'



Primula 'Tony'



Primula 'Pink Aire'



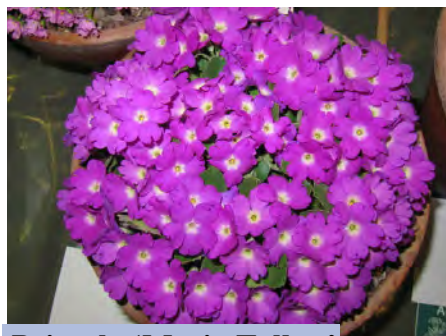
Primula 'Gilderdale Glow'



Primula 'Mary Berry'



Primula Lindum Wedgewood'



Primula 'Maria Talbot'



Primula 'Clarence Elliott'



Primula 'Raymond Wooster'

Primulas from home and abroad



Primula scotica

I bet few of us have seen *Primula scotica* growing in the wild. To see it involves a trip to Caithness. There you should find it in early May growing in short turf beside the Pentland Firth. Either that or you could head south to North Wales where Tim Lever grows it to perfection at Aberconway nursery. I had to travel to England, from Scotland to see a Scottish native exhibited by a Welshman.
!Vive La Grande Bretagne !

The *Primula marginata* on the right is new to me. It is a splendid plant with large wavy edged flowers. It reminded me of 'Linda Pope', with its quite big, well defined sharply defined leaves which are outlined in golden farina. Unlike 'Linda Pope' these flowers are paler lilac and have only a very feint white ring of farina surrounding the eye.

I Googled 'Johannes Hoeller' and at first try I found he might be a dentist in Stuttgart and then I came on 13 Johannes Hoellers in Austria! Eventually, I found a message on the 'Primula Gardening Group' website from 2003 from Johannes H. who lived in the Austrian mountains. I reckoned 'This was the man'.

The post was about growing Primulas in pots. I was intrigued as to why he used light coloured grit on his pots. Johannes wrote,

'I usually cover seed and all pots with plants with limy or quartz or grit which is used in aquariums to protect against dry up. I have the best success with the limy grit which is snow white and sharp (seed and plants). I use it for sensitive Alpine Primulas and all Androsace which like lime. This grit holds the substrate much colder than a dark. A dark grit is getting very warm, when sun is shining. And so some gardeners in hot locations use light pots for their plants or paint them white. My white grit is specially used for sewage treatment through plants. My garden is in the Austrian Alps and the plants (most in pots) and greenhouses are usually covered with snow in winter and so protected. But sometimes we have warm winds (Föhn) with temperatures up to +20°C. And then the white grit is very helpful.'



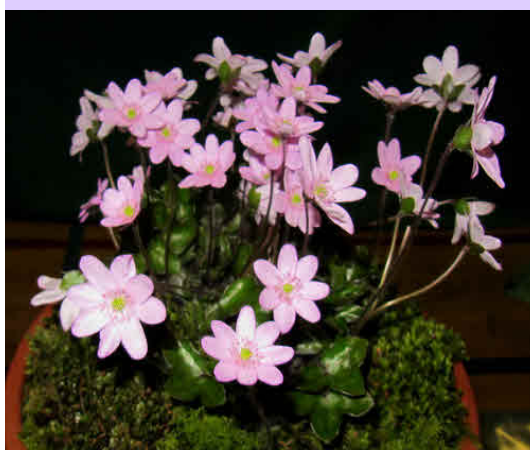
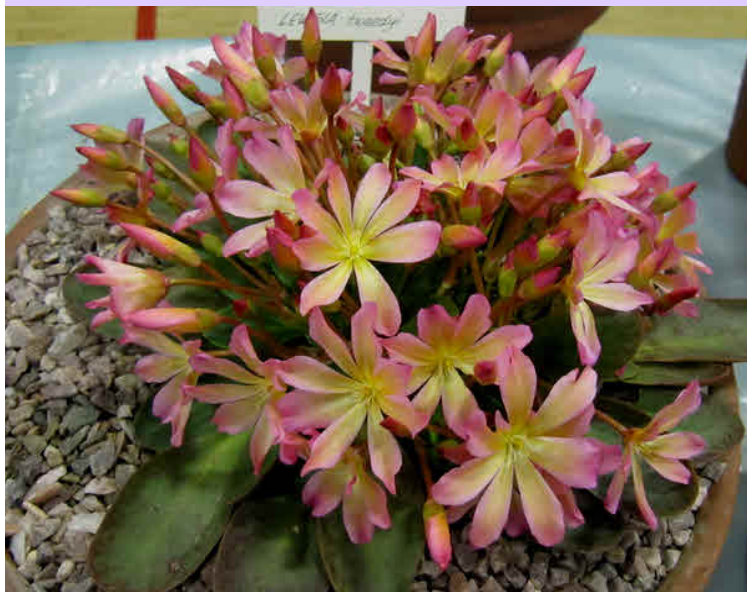
Further searching and I find Johannes Hoeller is a hero member of the SRGC forum! Maggi Young told me

'Hans Hoeller (Höllner) was a super bloke who lived in Austria, in the path of ghastly avalanches, (which he showed photos of, surrounding his house every year, which managed to remain largely unscathed) who grew a lot of primulas and also orchids. He was very active in the SRGC Forum. Sadly he died almost a year ago. If I remember correctly that plant shown at N'therland was one raised/ selected by him and sent to Susan Tindall, who named it for him. Quite a lot of Forumists have had plants from Hans.... me too! Got some lovely *P. marginata* types and some other alpine species too. He was only 55, I think, very sad loss.'



Primula marginata
'Johannes Hoeller'

The World of Alpines



These pictures all taken within a short space on the benches illustrate the different sorts of plants our members love to grow. Like our members. The plants come from different places on different continents. Some have brightly coloured flowers while others rarely flower. Some are 'easy', others are known to have difficulties associated with their cultivation. No matter how difficult a plant is reputed to be to grow, someone is away collecting seed so that others can try to grow it.

When we see the results we appreciate the effort expended in collection and cultivation. Many Horticultural Societies restrict themselves to a certain type of plant. Rock Gardeners can indulge in plants from hundreds of genera and still be seen to be growing rock plants.

As well as a 'garden club' we are an 'ecological club'. We grow plants which like or tolerate a certain range of conditions. Add in an alpine house and a wee bit of frost protection to say nothing of actual heat and the range open for us to grow is incredible.

We might think of ourselves as the 'Scottish Plants and Bulbs Under Two Feet Tall From Temperate Regions Club. SPABUTFTFTRC! It sound like a swearsy word!

We could sing out 'We are the Spa-but-fit-fitrick!



Asian Bulbs



**Iris graeberiana
'Dark Fall'**



**Iris graeberiana
'Yellow Fall'**

Iris graeberiana
 Out of flower it looks like a shiny leek. It is a Juno Iris from stony hillsides in Central Asia [Turkestan]. Two forms were shown here one with mid blue flowers and the other with pale blue flowers with a very attractive yellow blotch on the falls. The flowers appear in the leaf axils. While beautiful, both are reputed to be best grown in a bulb frame. When we visited Janis Ruksan's nursery we saw rows of Juno Irises including 'Yellow fall' growing lined out in a polythene tunnel



Iris graeberiana 'Yellow Fall'



Fritillaria bucharica

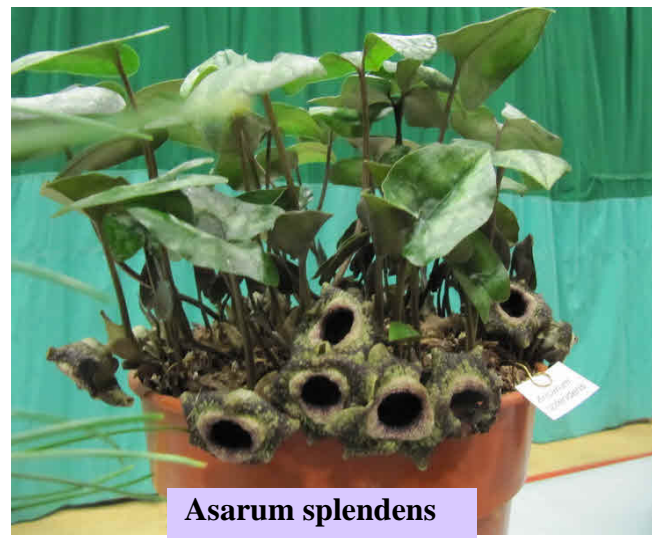
Since the climate of central Asia is so extreme, it is hardly surprising that it is home to a great many bulbous plants. That we can grow them here is remarkable. I have laid out here a few of the disparate range of species from Turkey to China which were on the benches. Those which die down may be easier to present in perfect condition but the *Asarum splendens* must take a lot of year round care to keep its leaves in such good order - and how do you get so many flowers?



**Fritillaria
hermonis amana**



Chionodoxa luciliae

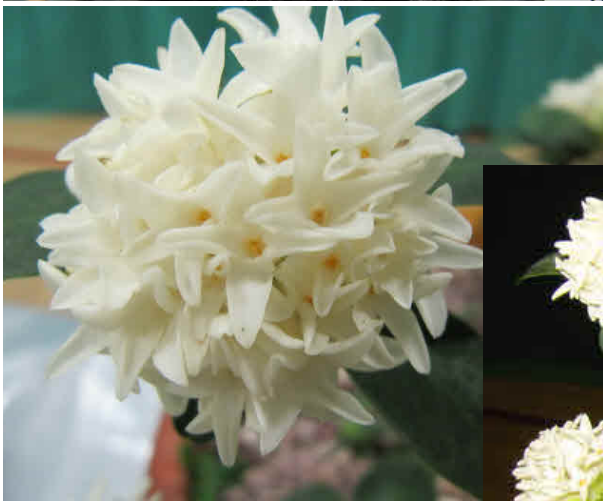


Asarum splendens

European plants



Callianthemum anemonoides



Do you know - *Daphne blagayana*?

Can there be a more beautiful flowering dwarf shrub than this? Would you believe it is in the Thyme family?

Would you believe it was discovered growing in central Slovenia in 1837 and named by Henrik Freyer after the botanist Count Rihard Ursini Blagay?

It also grows in many areas around the Adriatic and in Rumania and Bulgaria.

Can you spell the mountain on which it was found? [Polhograjska Gora]

Did you know it is called the Royal Flower because its habitat was visited by King Frederick Augustus II, King of Saxony?

Did you know this plant was shown by John Richards?

It must be one of the first plants to have been given official protection, since it has been protected since 1898

Hacquetia epipactis Thor

This is a variegated selection of the popular rock plant. This form was one of Alf Evans' favourite plants and he was the man who wrote the book on PEAT GARDENS. Slower to increase than the all green form it is a delightful addition for those who like variegated foliage. Named after a renowned Austrian physician, botanist and scientist Belsazar [or Balthazar] Hacquet [1739 - 1815], who explored the Julian Alps. He wrote a book on Alpine Flora of Carniolica



Hacquetia epipactis 'Thor'

***Viola jooii* [below] is known as 'The Transylvanian Violet'** This conjures up a vision of a hybrid between Count Dracula and the Scarlet Pimpernel.

I have admired it at Hexham for several years. This year Don Peace had it flowering fabulously. A winner in my book. In olden days Violas were the flowers associated with love, which is why Eliza Dolittle sold them in bunches. I hope my own love gives me some seed of this fab-



Viola jooii

Townsendia rothrockii



Townsendia exscapa



Daisy, Daisy! From the USA

These small composites are exceptionally beautiful. . You have to admire these narrow silver leaves on the Townsends. T. exscapa has a wide range from Alberta to Mexico along the range of the Rockies. T. hookeri from Alaska to Nevada, from the coastal mountains and along the Rockies ; T. spathulata is only found in Montana and Wyoming while T. rothrockii has an even more limited range mainly in Colorado, just spreading into adjacent states. It is the subject of a USDA Forest service Conservation project. Most of these must be grown from seed so it is important to save seed and sow it, to keep fresh young plants in cultivation. We are lucky that both SRGC and AGS have such good seed exchanges where we can hopefully get seeds of these beauties. By the way David Townsend, 1787 - 1858, was a botanist from West Chester, Pennsylvania. He was so skillful and tasteful in the preparation of dried specimens that Sir Joseph Hooker described him as 'preeminent in this important art'. This also shows how 150 years ago scientific men from different continents communicated with one another.

**Fabulous whites!
The expression applies to flowers as well as wines**



Colchicum szovitsii



Trillium rivale



Androsace muscoidea



Saxifraga diapensioides

Just like oenophiles, plantmen have different favourite whites

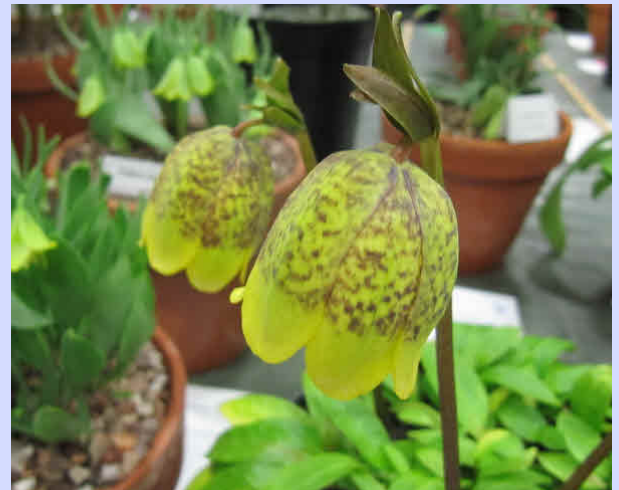


Narcissus alpestris



Fritillaria davidii.

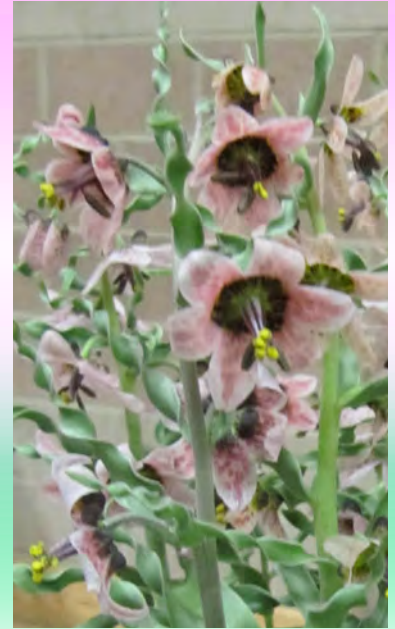
Can a plant be rare if there are two together? Yes - especially when it comes to this exceptional Chinese Fritillaria! They are both rare plants in the sense of being special. Interesting that they are also different in leaf and in the amount of marking on the flowers. Paul Christian on the Rare Bulbs web site gives a hint on cultivation 'Grow as for *F. camscahtcensis* and you will not go wrong - this likes a very humus-rich soil with plenty of moisture when in leaf growth and with some water present almost all year, especially to to stop shrivelling during its short summer dormancy.'







This why you get up with the sun or before it and travel miles to a show. This is one of the best pans of bulbs I have ever seen. **Alan Newton** deserves every acclamation for raising his pan of *Fritillaria gibbosa* from seed. When you sow the wee brown triangular seeds you have this result in mind but only years of dedicated devotion and care lead you along the correct path. Alan justifiably won the **'Sandhoe Trophy'** for best plant in a pan not exceeding 19cm. In time I am sure it will win a Forrest or Farrer medal. Thank you Brenda for looking after Alan so he could look after the *Fritillaria gibbosa*!



Make sure you visit Hexham next spring. You are sure of a warm welcome. I advise you take an oxygen cylinder with you as the plants will take your breath away. I am sure I missed out some great

plants and that doesn't mean big plants. I can't mention all names but if I have shown a photo of your plant a big thank you for making a wonderful day memorable



Sandy Leven

