

THE ROCK GARDEN 150



January 2023

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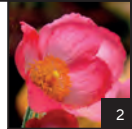
The Rock Garden

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January 2023

Number 150

Cover: *Corydalis rupestris* Kotschy in Iran
(Photo: Sajad Alipour)

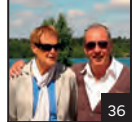
- 2 **Meconopsis at Holehird Gardens**
– Pat Murphy
- 26 **Slovenia: Karst and the Julian Alps**
– Michael J B Almond
- 36 **An Essay from Argentina and Chile**
– Ger van den Beuken
- 50 **The Snowdrop Year at The Garden House**
– Pat Eaton
- 56 **50th Anniversary AGS/SRGC Show**
26 March 2022 Hexham
- 62 **Edinburgh and the Lothians 9 April 2022**
- 74 **Perth Show 16 April 2022**
- 80 **Glasgow Spring Show 7 May 2022**
- 88 **Stirling Show 14 May 2022**
- 96 **Aberdeen Show May 2022**
- 102 **Glasgow Autumn Show 1 October 2022**
- 106 **On Reading 'Sugar Limestone'**
– Jackie Sutherland



2



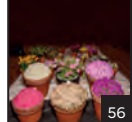
26



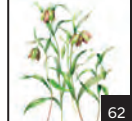
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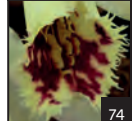
50



56



62



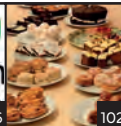
74

108 Book Reviews

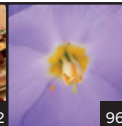


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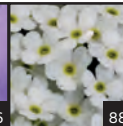
110 Adverts



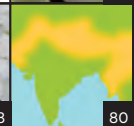
102



96



88



80

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Editorial

I write this against a grim stage backdrop of war raging in eastern Europe, Covid still a threat to all, Britain in the throes of self-inflicted economic damage and self-flagellatory political turmoil, and with many in the world consumed by the fear of climate change. Where in all this Greek tragedy is the beauty that we seek in plants and flowers, the tranquillity of soul we find in landscape, and the warmth of the friendship we need from others? It is in the love we all share for our gardens and our beautiful plants, for their amazing evolutionary adaptations to the harsh vicissitudes of climate, and in the enduring comradeship we find in each other as we tenaciously pursue our small but laudable personal enthusiasms on the wider and darkened stage.

After two years of isolation and distancing it is wonderful that 2022 at last brought many of us together again with the return of the shows to exhibit and admire so many marvellous plants. In Britain the long showing tradition has resumed, and we owe great gratitude to those who have planted, tended and nurtured their best plants to bring them for all of us to enjoy. Many members attended, some are still reluctant, some simply cannot allow themselves the medical risk. Others have lost old socialising habits and need to be restored to normal life.

And so it is that this journal issue is dominated by show reports. After two years of show silence, it is something of a *Show Festschrift*, a catch-up, a tribute to growers, a reminder of the heart of our passions. It celebrates the folk who never gave up in the face of Covid, who nurtured their plants despite political uncertainties and rising costs, and who strive to preserve them for a future that will surely come. While offering you such a rich show diet, I emphasise and appreciate the contributions of our most notable show photographers, Liz Cole and Peter Maguire. Both have delighted members and your editor with the professional quality of the images they have so generously shared with us all over the years. I believe I speak for all readers in thanking them most cordially.

Nevertheless, behind the glitter of the shows, the fascinating exposition of *Meconopsis*, the seductions of *Galanthus* and the charms of Slovenia there lurks a menace. Stock of articles is running dangerously low. Covid, personal circumstances, and restrictions on travel have all repressed our normally creative and literate membership to the point where the future of our own journals in their present forms could be in question. Too few members are writing about their activities and plants. This journal and our online *International Rock Gardener* can only do their job if you write for them. Please enter the stage and play your part, no matter how small or great.

Anton Edwards

PLEASE FILL THIS SPACE

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Meconopsis at Holehird Gardens

Pat Murphy



Holehird Gardens near Windermere are the gardens of the Lakeland Horticultural Society (LHS), founded in 1969 as a centre to promote the art and science of horticulture in the Lake District. The Society first leased two acres of overgrown ground above Holehird Mansion, the former home of the Grove Family, from the then Westmorland County Council. The site was chosen partly because of the impressive views of the Langdales, but more importantly because there was an established rock garden. This was cleared, to reveal specimen trees and shrubs including two Chilean pines *Araucaria araucana*, a blue fir tree *Abies procera* (*Glauca* Group), an umbrella pine *Sciadopitys verticillata*, some mature *Acer* cultivars and a *Malus kansuensis*. Many of these had been planted at the beginning of the last century, along with others including *Davidia involucrata* and *Liriodendron tulipifera*. The Chilean pines recently succumbed to honey fungus, but two raised from their seeds remain. At least one *Acer* was lost but most other specimen trees are still in place. Since their beginning the gardens have expanded to eleven or so acres and are organised and tended entirely by volunteers.

Meconopsis have a long association with Holehird. In 1913, William Grimble Groves – who once lived in the Mansion, Dr Hough from Ambleside and two others supported a plant hunting expedition to China led by Reginald Farrer, each donating £100. William Purdom of Brathay accompanied Farrer. The four sponsors were entitled to one tenth of the seed brought back to England. In his book *A Westmorland Rock Garden*,

Above: The Langdale Pikes seen over Holehird



Hough includes *meconopsis* in the list of seeds he received. It is likely, but not certain, that seed also came to Holehird. Since Farrer introduced *Meconopsis quintuplinervia*, Farrer's harebell poppy, around 1914 and 1915, it is possible that seed from this species came here.

Further mention of *Meconopsis* came in 1960, when William's son described them growing in the border by a path to the rock garden. The border is next to the *Davidia involucrata* and is named the *Davidia* Border. A leaflet produced by Westmorland Council in 1967 lists *Meconopsis betonicifolia*, (syn. *M. baileyi*) growing in the same place. In 1977 in the *Lakeland Gardener*, the LHS journal, there are references to the planting of *Meconopsis* under the Oak, *Quercus petraea*, at the top of the garden. When a bed was made around the Oak the plants were moved to the front of the rock garden, and then again in 1989 (*Lakeland Gardener* Vol. IX, No. VI Spring 1991 p4) to the back of the *Magnolia* Bed into a damper and shadier position. A few years ago an elderly visitor to the gardens remembered the spectacular sight of the blue poppies growing in the *Davidia* Border when he visited the gardens as a boy.

Other early references include *Meconopsis napaulensis* (possibly *M. x complexa*) grown around the *Gunnera* pool, and *M. dwhojii* and *M. 'Crewdson Hybrid'* being planted in the *Magnolia* Bed, named for the *Magnolia soulangea* 'Alba' that grows there. This cross between *M. grandis* ssp. *grandis* and *M. baileyi* occurred in the garden of Cecily M Crewdson, who lived in Kendal.

Above: The Rock Garden at Holehird



Meconopsis x complexa in the Magnolia Bed in 2013

Unfortunately, no photos have yet been found of the earliest plantings at Holehird, but one from the 1970s shows *Meconopsis* 'Lingholm' in the *Magnolia* Bed. The archives show various *M. x complexa* and *M. grandis* in this bed in front of azaleas. Early LHS members were *Meconopsis* enthusiasts, so they regularly planted different species and cultivars. When I arrived about fifteen years ago many *M.* 'Lingholm' were grown in a bed in the paddock to be potted up for a yearly sale in a local school.

Meconopsis 'Lingholm', a fertile blue hybrid, may be considered a Cumbrian plant, although the parent came from Inshriach in Scotland. Roger Nelson and his father from Brampton in Cumbria had purchased plants of the sterile *M. x sheldonii*, from the Scottish nursery for their garden. Surprisingly, one produced viable seeds. Sometime later, seeds were given to Lingholm Garden where the

An early Collection photo showing descendants of *M. grandis* ssp. *grandis*



Meconopsis 'Lingholm', in the Courtyard Bed

resulting plants were grown. The head gardener, Mike Swift, on realising the fertile plant was neither *M. grandis* ssp. *grandis* nor *M. baileyi*, named it *Meconopsis* 'Lingholm'.

Holehird provides good conditions: the climate is typically cool, usually with ample year-round rain, although recently the spring months have been drier than normal. The soil ranges from acidic to neutral and is fairly free-draining. Areas where the big blues and evergreen monocarpic meconopsis always grew have been enriched over the years with Holehird's homemade compost, leaf mould and Singleton's *Just Naturally*. Recently, we have also tried ericaceous Dalefoot compost. We apply leaf mould as a mulch every year to the collection of the perennial big blue poppies in the paddock areas.

Smaller *Meconopsis* species and cultivars have usually been grown on the well-drained rock garden areas or in the alpine house. Not all are on display every year. It depends on how successful we have been in growing them from seed supplied by SRGC, AGS or The Meconopsis Group. Quite often just one plant from a batch of seedlings will flower in a particular year, meaning we cannot always collect seed to return to the seed exchanges. This happened with the spiny *Meconopsis rudis*, with just two plants flowering, but each in consecutive years. Red-flowered *M.*

Meconopsis rudis on the rock garden



punicea is usually present while *M. quintuplinervia* is planted on a bed dedicated to William Purdom. Others found from time to time include *MM. prattii*, *racemosa* and *sulphurea*.

In 2009 the LHS was asked to have demonstration beds of the same twenty-three *Meconopsis* species and hybrids that were on trial for the Award of Garden Merit at the RHS garden at Harlow Carr in Yorkshire. Beds in the paddock where *M.* 'Lingholm' had long been grown provided the perfect site because there were hedges on either side, netted windbreaks for wind protection, an automatic watering system, and soil that had been continuously improved over

Meconopsis 'Mervyn Kessell'



time. When the trial ended, a logical next step was to consider having a National Collection of the large perennial species and hybrid *Meconopsis*. When I applied to Plant Heritage on behalf of the LHS I needed to have 75% of the plants listed in the RHS Plant Finder (criteria for National Collection status have since changed). Three plants of each taxon were needed. Thanks to the generous donations of plants from Evelyn Stevens, Ian Christie, Beryl McNaughton and many other members of The *Meconopsis* Group, I already had more than enough taxa to justify a collection, which now holds approximately 58 taxa. The number varies from year to year owing to losses or to new forms appearing.

Meconopsis 'Mervyn Kessell'



The Collection is arranged in the paddock in nine beds, eight within the hedges, Plants are displayed in lines of three or more and in beds according to whether it is thought they may be connected to each other. For instance, taxa believed to have been derived from *Meconopsis grandis* ssp. *grandis* are in two opposite beds, while those believed to have been derived from *M. grandis* ssp. *orientalis* are in different opposite beds. Plants in the latter section have previously been known as members of the George Sherriff Group. Many

Meconopsis 'Stewart Annand'



are now thought to derive from *M. gakyidiana*, the national plant of Bhutan, the word *gakyi* meaning happiness. Plants that have been selected from *M. 'Lingholm'* are planted next to each other as are three taxa that came from Branklyn Gardens, namely *MM. 'Stewart Annand'*, *'Dorothy Renton'* and *'Mervyn Kessel'*. Stewart Annand was a previous head gardener at Branklyn. Mervyn Kessel was one of the founders of The Meconopsis Group along with Evelyn Stevens. Dorothy Renton lived at Branklyn and was responsible for

Meconopsis 'Dorothy Renton'



laying out and growing many of the many wonderful plants to be found there; her plant has recently received an AGM. Other beds contain plants whose relationships are more uncertain while one bed at the back contains plants that have been divided for sale. The labels next to each of the taxa either show the accepted name or the *Meconopsis* Group number. The *Meconopsis* Group, of which I am a member, is a study group linked to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. When the group was established, each taxon presented to it, whether species or cultivar, was given its own individual identification number. As more has become known about the plants it has been possible to decide whether two taxa with different numbers are the same or different. This is a continuing process and will be helped by DNA investigations.

The various aims of the Collection are to conserve and make available as many of the big blue perennial poppies as possible, to show the general public the wide variety of forms, and to provide an opportunity for comparisons between related taxa.

Generally, there are two reactions from visitors to the Collection: firstly, they don't realise that there are so many Himalayan poppies; secondly, they are surprised that not all are blue. Plants with *Meconopsi grandis* ssp. *grandis* in their ancestry generally have more blue pigments in their petals than others, while those related to *M. gakyidiana* tend to have both blue and purple pigments. Plants in the first group tend to flower earlier than those in the second and have narrower linear leaves while those in the second group tend to have wider leaves. Visitors then want to know how to grow them. The main needs are a rich moist soil that does not dry out but is not waterlogged, plenty of leaf mould or good home-made compost, some fertiliser in spring, and protection from wind. They grow well in neutral to acidic soil but not in very alkaline soil. They do not like the hot dry weather that we are now experiencing more often in the Lake District; it tends to deplete the soil moisture. I have begun experimenting with compost made from sheep's wool and bracken to see if this improves the water retention around the plants. I am also having to water our plants more often.

The next question invariably is '*What is the best one to grow?*' Not an easy question to answer as each visitor's needs may be different. They may need plants that flower early or late. They may want short or tall plants, one that is a deep blue or a paler blue, but most simply want to grow a blue *meconopsis*. Because the majority of the plants at Holehird are sterile hybrids that can only be propagated by division – often a slow process – those available for visitors vary in range and number from year to year. *Meconopsis* 'Lingholm', recently awarded an AGM, can be propagated both by seed and by division and is always available. The best forms result from division. They include plants from Roger Nelson and Lingholm Gardens and also one developed by Michael Wickenden of Cally Gardens, a floriferous plant. It was formerly known as *M.* 'Cally Lingholm' but is about to be re-named and registered as *M.* 'Michael Wickenden'. Like many of

the fertile hybrids, seed-grown offspring show variability from the parent plant, and only plants propagated from the parent plant by division can correctly be called by the cultivar name. Michael developed this plant and 'Cally Purple' by continually selecting plants from many 'Lingholm' plants until he had the best possible forms. Since both were selected from 'Lingholm' it is difficult to tell them apart until they flower, as the basal leaves are very similar. Both forms are more readily available at Cally Gardens.

A pale sky-blue flowered selection from 'Lingholm' is *Meconopsis* 'Louise', named by Les Newby in 1999 for his granddaughter. This clone produces few seeds but is vigorous and easily divided. It flowers at about the same time as 'Lingholm' so it is easy to compare the flower colour of the two taxa. A selection that flowers earlier with distinctive pale turquoise-blue flowers is *M.* 'Mildred', recently awarded an AGM. The original plant was bought by Jim & Mildred Thompson from a street market in Auchtermuchty and named after Mildred. It

Meconopsis 'Louise'





Meconopsis 'Michael Wickenden'
Meconopsis 'Strathspey'



Facing: *Meconopsis* 'Mildred' 🍁

can produce seed but its offspring are unlikely to come true. Its colour can be appreciated best if planted next to *M. grandis* 'Strathspey', another early-flowering cultivar with deep purple-blue flowers. It was originally bought as a form of *M. grandis* grown from seed collected in West Nepal but it is sterile so may be a hybrid form. *M. 'Strathspey'* is also planted in the north-facing border in



Meconopsis 'Harry Bush'

Holehird's walled garden. We grow *M. 'Mildred'* next to other selections from 'Lingholm' to show variations in colour and other features. These include *MM. 'Harry Bush'* and 'Steve McNamara'. The first of these is named after the nurseryman who purchased the original plant at Ascreavie. It flowers a little later than 'Lingholm' and has more coarsely serrated basal





Meconopsis 'Slieve Donard'

leaves. The second is named for Steve McNamara, a former head gardener at Branklyn Gardens. A deep purple-flowered form was selected from plants of 'Lingholm' but unfortunately the colour seems to be unstable. Those at Holehird tend to pale lilac, and are shorter than other selections.

In the same bed are two other long-established plants, both with sky blue flowers. One is *Meconopsis* 'Slieve Donard' AGM, a very reliable elegant sterile hybrid, arising from a deliberate cross between two species *MM. baileyi* and *grandis* ssp. *grandis* in 1935 by Alec Curle in Edinburgh. Plants from this cross eventually reached the Slieve Donard nursery in Northern Ireland whence it received its name in 1967. This hybrid is also planted in the north-facing border in the walled garden. Planted next to it is *M. 'Bobby Masterton'* AGM, another sterile cultivar probably originating from a cross between the same two species. The elliptic basal leaves have long petioles which can be brittle. It was given its name in recognition of Bobby Masterton at the Cluny House Garden in Perthshire.

Hybrids of *Meconopsis grandis* ssp. *grandis* and *M. baileyi* are given the general name *M. x sheldonii*. The cross was first made by W G Sheldon

Meconopsis 'Bobby Masterton'





Meconopsis 'Crewdson Hybrid'

in Oxted, Surrey in 1934 using the Nepal form of *M. grandis* as the seed parent. The cross has been made many times, leading to a range of hybrids many of which have been named: *M.* 'Slieve Donard' is one example; another is a plant originating in 1939 in Helme Lodge, the Cumbrian garden of Cecily Crewdson in Kendal. Plants from the original cross were fertile and seed-raised offspring were distributed by Inshriach Nursery until 1959. *M.* 'Crewdson Hybrid' is now sterile and may be only propagated only by division. It is

shorter than many other hybrids and has deep-blue open cup-shaped flowers. A similar hybrid believed to have arisen at Inshriach Nursery when the original hybrids were still fertile is *M.* 'Mrs Jebb' AGM. This shares many of the former's

Meconopsis
'Mrs Jebb'

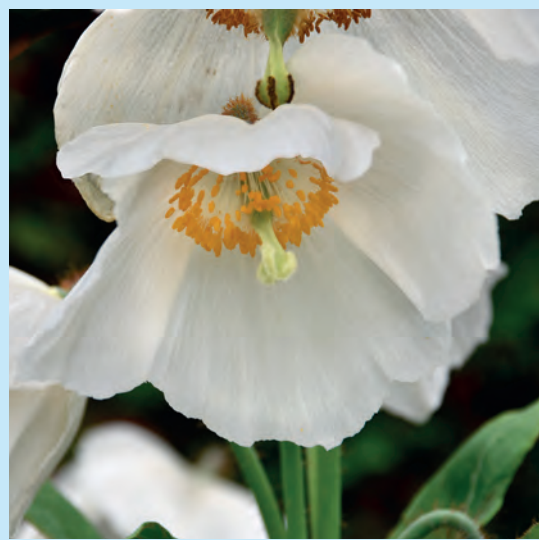


characteristics, being relatively short and with deep-blue saucer-shaped flowers, but these are more outward-facing. Two large clumps of it are also planted in the border next to the *Davidia involucrata*.

Not all perennial poppies are blue; some are white. An excellent example of a white cultivar is *Meconopsis* 'Marit' AGM raised by Marit Espejord in Norway. This elegant plant has pure white flowers. It was selected from seedlings that came from a cross between *M.* 'Lingholm' and possibly *M. x sarsonsii* as the seed parent. However, the *M. x sarsonsii* was reputedly itself grown from seed obtained in a seed exchange, but the hybrid *M. x sarsonsii* is not fertile. A recently introduced hybrid is *M.* 'Moonglow', which originated in Edrom Nursery in 2014 as a single seedling. The white flowers have a hint of blue when they first open. The plants at Holehird will only be propagated by division. It will be interesting to see how this clone develops. Other white plants on display are *MM.* 'Kilbryde Castle White' and 'Ascreavie White', which are probably synonymous. Both are tall plants. For comparison, examples of *MM.* 'Cluny White' and 'Edrom White' are planted close by.

In the Collection are several unique and individual cultivars. One of the most distinctive and beautiful is *Meconopsis* 'Crarae' AGM, with mauve-blue or clear

Meconopsis 'Marit' & *M.* 'Abildgaard'





Meconopsis 'Moonglow'

blue almost globular flowers with a satiny sheen. This grows best in moist conditions. Its pale-green and oblong leaves on long pedicels arch towards the ground. The plant is sterile. Another is the sterile *M.* 'Inverewe' AGM from Inverewe Gardens, with five or six nodding sky-blue flowers that hang down

Meconopsis 'Kilbryde Castle White'





Meconopsis 'Crarae'

Facing: *Meconopsis* 'Edrom' 🍁

from short bent pedicels. The basal leaves have cordate or truncate bases. It resembles *M. baileyi* var. *pratensis*, which until last year was planted next to it, but unfortunately this taxon was lost in the hot dry weather of 2021. *M. 'Inverewe'* AGM is a distinctive plant also found behind the grasses bed. *M. 'Edrom'*, a

Meconopsis 'Inverewe'





cultivar of garden origin, is notable for the dark pigmentation that suffuses its buds, the style in the flowers, and the fruit capsules. Additionally, the flowers are maroon when they open and change gradually to sky-blue. A sturdy taxon with large sky-blue bowl-shaped forward-facing flowers is *M. 'Dippoolbank'*, which was raised from seed bought at a garden centre by Alan Brash. Others in the Collection are hybrids made by Lesley Drummond that have been divided and are being assessed. They are identified by *Meconopsis* Group numbers.

Many of the unique cultivars have been named after individuals. They include *Meconopsis 'Peter Cox'*, a distinct tall cultivar with deep-blue flowers that originally came from Kilbryde Castle. *M. 'Maggie Sharp'* is a shorter hybrid with pale-blue flowers. It is named after Oban's Maggie Sharp who bought the plant at Branklyn Garden around 1976. Both these taxa are sterile, and I am trying to propagate them to share them with other collections so that they are more widely available. A hybrid that produces some seed but should only be propagated by division is *M. 'Willie Duncan'*. It was raised by Willie Duncan from seed listed as *M. grandis* in the SRGC seed exchange around 1972. It has globular sky-blue or mauve-blue flowers on short pedicels and broad pale-green basal leaves. One that flowers later in the season is *M. 'Evelyn'* named for Evelyn

Meconopsis 'Peter Cox'





Meconopsis 'Maggie Sharp'

Stevens, a co-founder of The Meconopsis Group. The bowl-shaped flowers of this sturdy attractive plant are deep purple when they open, changing gradually to a deep blue.

The Collection does not only include hybrids. There are some species and possibly the most attractive is *Meconopsis grandis* ssp. *grandis* 'Astral Blue'. It has mid-blue saucer-shaped, forward-facing flowers in May to June. There is just one to a stem on a pedicel. Each pedicel lengthens during flowering so that the flowers are held high above the foliage. Another

Meconopsis 'Evelyn'





Meconopsis 'Himal Sky'



earlier flowering form, often in April, is *M. grandis* ssp. *grandis* 'Himal Sky'. Both taxa probably originated in Cluny Garden in Perthshire. Another tall and early-flowering form is *M. grandis* ssp. *grandis* 'Great Glen', which occasionally produces a few seeds.

A different species is labelled as *Meconopsis* ex NAPE, (Nagaland Arunachal Pradesh Expedition 2003). I believe this to originate from plants vegetatively propagated from seed collected in the expedition. Plants are relatively short with upright linear leaves, slightly broader at the top, with a rounded tip and pale-blue to lilac flowers. The plants are fertile but the offspring – although similar to each other – are unlike the parents. This

Meconopsis grandis 'Astral Blue'

taxon is planted in the same beds as those generally referred to as members of the George Sherriff Group, now believed to derive from *M. gakyidiana*. Most of them have features in common. The emerging leaves have a red-purple pigmentation and are covered with short hairs. The mature leaves are broadly elliptical. Often the stem leaves appear to clasp the stem. The blue flowers have a purple tinge, with four petals that often overlap, while the fruit capsule is densely covered with short bristles. Many are well-known and have been given cultivar names. They include the very similar *M.* 'Dalemain' AGM and *M.* 'Huntfield', both named after gardens. Another is *M.* 'Susan's Reward' AGM. The original plants were given to Susan Sym by Betty Sherriff in 1972 after Susan helped in the garden at Ascreavie. *M.* 'Jimmy Bayne' was found in a garden in Dunblane around 1962. Establishing its name led to the founding of The Meconopsis Group in 1998. It is named after the eponymous finder. Sometimes it produces seeds and the diverse offspring known collectively as 'Jim's Ex' are sometimes displayed in the Collection.

A slightly smaller and later-flowering clone that once grew in large numbers in Logan Botanic Garden is *Meconopsis* 'Springhill'. There are also plants from Cruickshank and Cally Gardens, and Explorers Garden at Pitlochry, so far un-named. The clone propagated at Cally is about to be registered as *M.* 'Galloway Skies'. It has rounded overlapping petals and is vigorous. Recently, when enough had been propagated, it was sold under the name 'Biggar Park' (where it originated) but this name had already been allocated to a clone similar to *M.* 'Ascreavie'. This well-established clone named after the Sherriffs' garden has widely spaced windmill-like petals and leaves with serrated edges.

Meconopsis 'Susan's Reward'





Meconopsis 'Barney's Blue'

Other clones include *Meconopsis* 'Barney's Blue', a distinctive plant where the pale-green foliage emerges later than others in the George Sherriff Group without distinctive red-purple pigmentation. It is named after Barney Barron, the present owner of Ascreavie. The flowers are smaller, changing from a deep magenta to mauve-blue and finally clear blue. Different coloured flowers may be on the same plant at any one time. There are many more examples of clones in the George Sherriff Group. Growing them next to each other helps distinguish them. In general, they are all stoloniferous leafy plants, flowering in late May and early June. They are taller than taxa derived from *Meconopsis grandis* ssp. *grandis*. Their stoloniferous habit makes them easier to divide.



Meconopsis 'Barney's Blue'

The Collection continues to expand and change. The latest acquisition is *Meconopsis* 'David Smith'. Until recently I only had one plant of MG 52 but I now have three. This one is also known as *M.* 'James Aitken' and is one of the candidates for the fabled *Betty's Dream Poppy*. It is similar to *M.* 'Keillour' but emerges a little later. The leaves have the same distinctive rounded end but are darker.

If ever you are in the Lake District, please visit Holehird Gardens, not just to see the *Meconopsis*, although I hope you do, but also to enjoy the wonderful selection of plants that we grow in our Lakeland Fellside Garden, which is truly a garden for all seasons.



Slovenia: Karst and the Julian Alps

Michael J B Almond*

Lynn is mad about horses. In 2010 we went to Vienna and saw the famous white Lipizzaner horses perform in the Imperial Riding School in the Hofburg Palace. This meant that in 2011 we had to visit their original stud so as to see them *en masse* with their foals, and Lynn could have the opportunity of riding one or more. The original stud is at Lipica (Italian Lipizza) in Slovenia (part of the Hapsburg Empire until the end of the First World War) from which they take their name. We drove there in the second half of June and managed a detour into the Julian Alps on the way home. We toured the stables, saw a performance and, while Lynn was busy riding, I explored the surrounding countryside.

Lipica is only about five miles east of central Trieste (*Trst* in Slovenian) on the limestone plateau that the Slovenes call *Kras* (Italian *Carso*, German *Karst* and – yes – this is where the term *karst* comes from). The international border is not a great impediment to exploration nowadays but, as I am not a fan of large cities, I turned my back on Trieste and confined myself to the Slovenian hinterland to the east and south. The woodland surrounding the stud-farm would have been ablaze with the red flowers of *Paeonia officinalis* earlier in the season, but they were all over, leaving many hundreds of leaves and some seedpods. There were also *Helleborus odoratus* leaves and the pale-yellow flowers of *Digitalis grandiflora*. *Euphorbia cyparissias* was still in flower, as were *Verbascum chaixii*, *Campanula trachelium* and *C. rapunculoides*. The pink flowers of *Allium scorodoprasum* were beginning to go over.



Above: The roads in the mountains

Right: *Paeonia officinalis* seed heads

*Photographs by Lynn and Michael Almond unless otherwise indicated



Lilium carnioolicum

There is a good example of one of the classic features of a karstic landscape at Škocjan, five miles or so east of Lipica, site of one of the world's largest known underground rivers. In the woods above the gorge by the village we found the leaves of *Hepatica nobilis* and *Cyclamen purpurascens*, and the flowers of *Dianthus sylvestris*, *Geranium pyrenaicum*, *Campanula trachelium*, *Orlaya grandiflora* and *Euphorbia myrsinites*. Some ten miles south of Lipica, the hill of Slavnik rises above the plateau to a height of 1028 m and involves a climb of about 300 m to get to the top from where I had parked the car above the village of Skadanščina. Walking up from the road, I found the fragrant orchid, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, along with *Epipactis atrorubens*, *Knautia illyrica*, *Campanula persicifolia*, *C. latifolia*, *Teucrium montanum*, *Maianthemum bifolium* and *Daphne mezereum* (in fruit). From the top, the panoramic view takes in Trieste and the towns on the coast of Istria to the west and south, as well as the snow-covered Alps to the north. In the long grass on the summit were iris leaves (possibly *Iris pumila*), *Scabiosa graminifolia*, *Geranium sanguineum* and a lot of bright scarlet *Lilium carnioolicum* in excellent condition.



About ten miles north-east of Lipica is the col of Strmec, just over 800 m above sea level, on the long limestone ridge of Nanos, which rises to a height of 1250 m and has a lot of woodland on its lower slopes and thickets of woodland interspersed with open areas on its summit. There are lots of signposted walks around here – and signs warning you to beware of the bears. On the woodland margins we found *Epipactis*

Campanula persicifolia



Lilium bulbiferum

atrorubens, *Phyteuma scheuchzeri* ssp. *columnae*, *Campanula persicifolia*, *Clematis recta*, *Orobanche alba* and *O. picridis*. *Lilium bulbiferum* was flowering in considerable quantities in some of the more open areas, along with a lot of *Gymnadenia conopsea*, *Gladiolus palustris* and *Dianthus sylvestris*, some *Dianthus carthusianorum*, *Gentiana lutea*, *Campanula persicifolia*, *Salvia pratensis*, *S. verticillata*, *Viola arvensis*, *Geranium sanguineum*, *Gladiolus palustris* and billows of *Filipendula ulmaria* ssp. *denudata*. A very attractive *Rosa pendulina* formed small bushes here and there. Further north on the Nanos ridge we explored some of the heavily wooded area at about 850 m, below the cliffs of Črni Školj (1080 m) and above the village of Lokavec. Here we found the birds-nest orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*), *Cyclamen purpurascens*, *Dactylorhiza maculata* and *Paris quadrifolia*, together with a thriving population of ferns.

Perhaps this is a good place to pause and discuss the pronunciation of the letter “r” in Slovenian when there is no vowel in its vicinity. As readers of *The Rock Garden*, you may be familiar with the Scottish *Lilium bulbiferum* among *Filipendula ulmaria* ssp. *denudata*





Paris quadrifolia

practice of ‘rolling one’s Rs’ – all you need to do is to take it to a more extreme level. Names like *Trst*, *Strmec* and *Črni* are quite easy to pronounce provided you roll the “r” emphatically and make sure it functions as a ‘semi-vowel’.

After leaving Lipica, we headed north, up the Soča (Isonzo) river valley and past the site of the great Italian rout in the First World War at Kobarid (Caporetto), to spend a few days in the Julian Alps. This mainly limestone range rises to a maximum height of 2864 m in Triglav and is the last gasp of the Alps in their progress eastwards; it lies almost entirely within the borders of Slovenia. In 2011 we made our first base between Žaga and Bovec, below the majestic Slap Boka (*slap* meaning *waterfall*), pouring fully-formed and eighteen metres wide from a fissure in the limestone, and then tumbling a total of 144 metres in two stages. Alongside the road there were plenty of *Cyclamen purpurascens* in flower and more along the path up to the waterfall. In the woods along the path we found *Epipactis atrorubens*, *Campanula carnica*, *Dianthus sternbergii*, *D. sylvestris*, *Gypsophila repens* and *Melilotus officinalis*.

Gymnadenia conopsea among *Filipendula ulmaria* ssp. *denudata*





Thlaspi rotundifolium

From here we made expeditions higher into the mountains. Our trip up Kanin by cable car from near Bovec made a spectacular day out, but the summit area at around 2300 m proved to be such a mass of solid limestone that there was little growing on it. A very impressive display of the humble *Myosotis alpestris* colonised a scree and shone very brightly under the blue sky. Elsewhere on the scree was a considerable quantity of pink *Thlaspi rotundifolium*. We also saw some cushions of a *Saxifraga* species (gone over), *Silene acaulis*, some *Ranunculus seguieri*, a few *Gentiana acaulis* and *G. verna*. Continuing up the Soča valley above Bovec, we saw *Epipactis atrorubens*, *Campanula carnica*, *Listera ovata* and a lot of *Cyclamen purpurascens* at the roadside. In the side valley of Lepena we found a lot of *Polygonum bistorta* in the meadows, together with some *Aconitum lycoctonum* and, on the woodland margins, *Astrantia major* ssp. *involucrata* and more *Cyclamen purpurascens*.

We had visited this area very briefly on two previous occasions: first on 15/16 July 1987, on our way back from our long drive from Scotland to northern Greece via Yugoslavia (as was), and second on 4/6 July 1988, at the start of an exploration of the Carnic Alps and the Dolomites; in 2011 we were in this area from 24 to 27 June. The road up

Melilotus officinalis in front of Slap Boka





Potentilla clusiana

the Soča valley leads eventually to Kranjska Gora, over the Vršič Pass (1611 m). In the woods above Trenta, about 800 m, is the Julia Alpine Botanic Garden. This enabled us to see several flowering natives that we did not see elsewhere, including *Astrantia major*, *Epipactis greuteri*, *Listera ovata*, *Lilium martagon*, *Eryngium alpinum*, *Saxifraga paniculata* and *Physoplexis comosa*, in addition to some we had already seen such as *Epipactis atrorubens*. Further up the road towards the pass we came across a mass of *Helleborus niger* leaves in the woods and some *Gymnadenia conopsea* flowers at the roadside.

The Vršič Pass is dominated by Prisojnik (or Prisank, 2547 m) with the celebrated patterning on its cliff of *The Pagan Girl*. There is a lot of *Pinus mugo* scrub at the top of the pass and, as we wandered between the thickets, we found some *Pyrola media* and *Moneses uniflora*. Further over towards the base of the cliffs east of the pass, there were *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Veronica chamaedrys*, *Pedicularis verticillata*, *Phyteuma sieberi*, *Gentiana acaulis* and *Dryas octopetala*. On the scree we found *Draba aspera*, *Linaria alpina*, *Viola biflora* and a number of large clumps of *Potentilla nitida* in full flower while nearby were robust full-flowered clumps of *Potentilla clusiana*. This last species is in effect the white form of *P. nitida*. On the rocks at the base of the cliffs



Cyclamen purpurascens



Campanula zoysii in bud (Vršič Pass) and in flower (Planica valley)

were *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus* together with *Paederota lutea* and some plants of *Campanula zoysii* whose flowers were unfortunately still in bud. On the cliffs were *Saxifraga crustata*, *S. squarrosa* (? – not yet in full flower) and an attractive white *Moehringia* or *Minuartia* species.

The more northerly road from Bovec leads up through the Koritnica Valley to the Predel (Prèdil) Pass (1150 m) on the Italian border. On our way up we saw *Cephalanthera rubra*, *Listera ovata*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, *Epipactis atrorubens*, *Daphne mezereum* (in fruit), *Helleborus niger* leaves and *Inula salicina*. The pass is guarded by an old fort and has an imposing monument dedicated to memory of the Austrian soldiers who died here fighting Napoleon's army. In 2011 we briefly explored the valley, which runs up westwards from the Lago del Prèdil to the Nevea Pass; although we were no longer in Slovenia we were still in the Julian Alps. In the woodland alongside the road near the lake we found *Aquilegia atrata*, *Paris quadrifolia*, *Lilium carniolicum*, *Cephalanthera rubra* and *Cyclamen purpurascens*. In the meadows further up the valley there was *Phyteuma spicatum* ssp. *coeruleum* and a lot of *Lilium bulbiferum*. On the hillsides below Montasio there were *Hieracium alpinum* and a lot of *Dianthus alpinus*.

A mile or so from the Predel Pass, on the Bovec side, is a minor road leading north-westwards (on the right, coming from Bovec) up the mountain; although this is an old military road, narrow and steep in places, it is well-enough maintained and is kept in a safe condition. It climbs the precipitous wooded slopes by means of innumerable hairpin bends and several old tunnels, to the ridge below the summit

Epipactis atrorubens



Slovenia: Karst and the Julian Alps



Eritrichium nanum on Mangart (Photo: Ger van den Beuken)

of Mangrt (Mangart, 2679 m) on the Italian border. Here there is a car park at the Mangartsko Sedlo (Forcello di Lavina) at 2055 m. It must be said that the road was in much better condition in 2011 (asphalted virtually all the way up) than it had been on our previous visits in 1987 and 1988. Then, we had been camping and on each occasion had spent a night half way up this road among the pine trees, with *Clematis (Atragene) alpina*, *Aquilegia atrata*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, *Leucorchis albida* and *Cyclamen purpurascens*. Once we got out of the trees, there was an abundance of rock plants: in 1987, *Rhododendron hirsutum*, *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus*, *Potentilla nitida*, *P. clusiana*, *Primula auricula*, *Globularia nudicaulis*, *Dryas octopetala*, *Polygala chamaebuxus* (the yellow form), *Silene acaulis* and *Dianthus superbus*; in 1988, *Primula auricula*, *Thlaspi rotundifolium*, *Silene acaulis*, *Petrocallis pyrenaica* and *Paederota lutea*; in 2011, *Primula auricula*, *Rhododendron hirsutum*, *Paederota bonarota*, *Saxifraga caesia*, *Phyteuma sieberi* and *Physoplexis comosa*. In 2011 we had the added bonus of a close sighting of the edible dormouse, *Glis glis*.

The top of the ridge, above the car park, is open and wind-swept with screes and cliffs and has a stupendous vertiginous view down into Italy. Here, on 16 July 1987, were *Primula farinosa*, *P. halleri*, *Gentiana nivalis*, *Campanula cochleariifolia*, *Coeloglossum viride*, *Dryas octopetala*, *Daphne cneorum*, white *Pinguicula alpina*, *Soldanella pusilla*, *Dianthus monspessulanus*, *Linum alpinum*, *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus*, *Thlaspi rotundifolium* and lots of *Silene acaulis*. On 6 July 1988, we found *Gentiana*

Gymnadenia conopsea





Rhododhamnus chamaecistus

acaulis, *G. verna*, *Geum montanum*, *Pinguicula alpina*, *Ranunculus seguieri*, *Rhododhamnus chamaecistus*, *Soldanella alpina*, *S. pusilla* and masses of *Viola biflora*. We may have seen leaves of *Campanula zoysii* on the cliffs but, as there were no flowers, we could not be certain. On 24 June 2011 we saw again *Rhododhamnus chamaecistus*, *Silene acaulis*, *Primula halleri*, *Gentiana verna*, *Soldanella pusilla*, and *Pinguicula alpina*, together with *Trollius europaeus*, *Paederota lutea*, *Ranunculus seguieri*, *Viola biflora*, *Veronica aphylla*, *Arenaria ciliata* and *Geum montanum*. On the rocks by the cliffs we saw *Eritrichium nanum* in both 1988 and 2011 – growing on limestone, as we have also seen it above St Moritz in Switzerland, although it occurs more normally on non-calcareous rock.

Monument on the Predel Pass



On the edge of the abyss, looking down from Slovenia into a corner of Italy, with the Laghi di Fusine shining below you, there was, in 2011, a mass of *Rhodiola rosea*. Just a little to the east of the two lakes you are back in Slovenia again. In 2011 we returned briefly to the Planica valley south of Rateče, the first valley on the Slovenian side of the border. We visited it in 1988 to look for *Campanula zoysii*, which we were lucky enough to find in flower. In 2011 we were not so lucky and failed to find any – or even to locate the place we had found it before; the valley seemed to be being ‘developed’ for skiing. In 1988, in addition to the campanula, we found *Campanula cochlearifolia*, *Dryas octopetala*, *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus*, *Helleborus niger*, *Clematis (Atragene) alpina*, *Dianthus sternbergii*, *Pyrola rotundifolia*, *Moneses uniflora*, *Gymnadenia conopsea*, *Platanthera bifolia*, *Listera ovata*, *Iris graminea*, *Potentilla nitida*, *Primula auricula* (? – in seed) and *Cyclamen purpurascens*. In 2011 we again found *Dianthus sternbergii*, in addition to *Neottia nidus-avis*, *Platanthera bifolia*, *Saxifraga squarrosa* and *S. caesia*. In 1988 we went on a little further east and walked up the valley south of Gozd Martuljek as far as the Martuljski waterfall. Here were *Cyclamen purpurascens*, *Listera ovata*, *Platanthera bifolia*, *Cephalanthera rubra*, *Neottia nidus-avis*, an *Epipactis* species in bud and some *Cypripedium calceolus* which had, unfortunately, finished flowering. We also explored the Vrata valley, south of Mojstrana and discovered *Cyclamen purpurascens*, *Neottia nidus-avis*, *Rhododendron hirsutum*, *Gentiana utriculosa*, *Campanula cochlearifolia*, *Dianthus sternbergii* and *Neottia nidus-avis*, all within striking distance of the Partisan Monument – a vast piton embedded in great block of stone, with an equally large karabiner hanging from it. From here you can look up to the north face of Triglav above you, and it seems like an appropriate place to end my recollections.

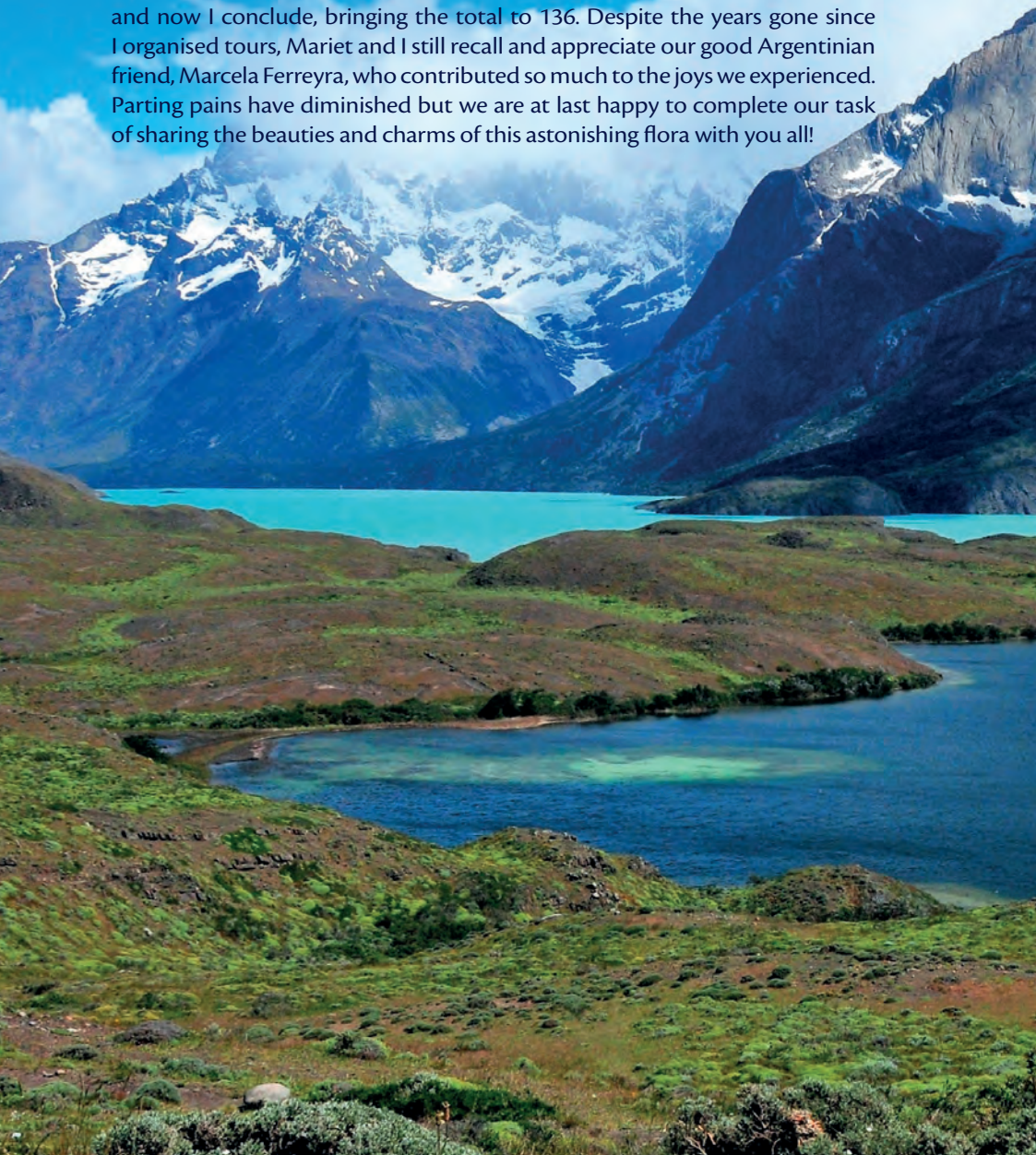
Rhodiola rosea above the Laghi di Fusine



An Essay from Argentina and Chile

Ger van den Beuken

In this my sixth and last article, I end my account of the glorious flora of South America. I have shared memories of wonderful plants and offered you as much advice as I could reliably give you about their cultivation, and now I conclude, bringing the total to 136. Despite the years gone since I organised tours, Mariet and I still recall and appreciate our good Argentinian friend, Marcela Ferreyra, who contributed so much to the joys we experienced. Parting pains have diminished but we are at last happy to complete our task of sharing the beauties and charms of this astonishing flora with you all!



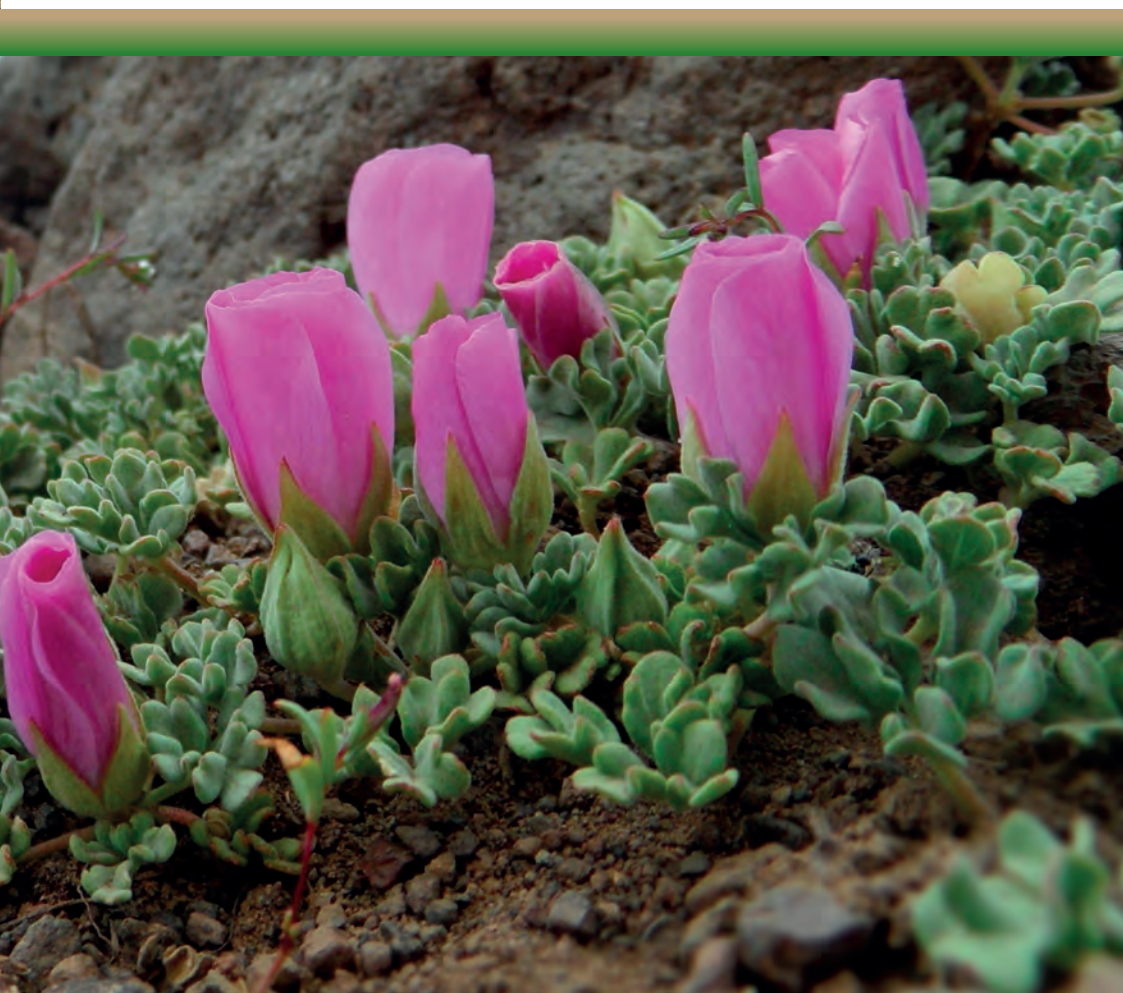
Torres del Paine





Senecio subdiscoideus belongs to a huge genus. The plants form very nice open cushions only ten cm high and thirty cm across. It is spread in the Central Andes to heights of 4000 m. The best we ever saw were on the slopes of Volcán Batea Mahuida, where they grew in lava gravel. The solitary yellow flowers appear on ten cm purple-coloured stems. Propagation is from seed.

Tarasa humilis is a member of the Malvaceae and is one of my favorite plants. It is a magnificent species from the Southern and Central Andes in Argentina and Chile and grows in rocky or sandy conditions, but also in dry steppe. The leaves are round and soft, making a mat of thirty cm across. The pale pink to purple solitary flowers are three cm across on three cm stems. Cultivation is possible in the alpine house and one of my own plants even survived two winters in the rock garden without protection. Propagation is from seed, or taking cuttings is another option if no seed is available.





Tristagma nivale is a species with narrow elongated leaves to twenty cm tall when in flower. The flowers are two cm across, green to bronze coloured. It occurs in Tierra del Fuego and South Patagonia, growing in grass near melting snow at altitudes over 2000 m. The propagation is from seed.

Tristagma patagonicum has a distribution extending from South to North Patagonia. Linear leaves are eight cm long, straight. The solitary white flowers bloom four cm across on fifteen cm long stems and are characterized by a dark line on the back of the petals. The species grows near snow fields in poor soil up to 2000 m high.





Tropaeolum polyphyllum is a species with prostrate stems sixty to a hundred cm long with bright blue-green leaves. It carries yellow-orange three cm flowers that bloom during the summer months. It was mainly on mountain slopes 3000 m high in Chile where we saw this species in rocky and sandy conditions – an overwhelming spectacle to see the mountains in their golden beauty. We have seen it in Scotland in cultivation. Propagation is from seed.



Valeriana moyanoi we have only seen climbing on the Cerro Colo Huincull. The rosettes are solitary and are probably monocarpic. The upright and purple flower stems are fifteen cm long. The flowers themselves form tight clusters in pale pink to purple. It grows mainly in South Patagonia in dry rocky outcrops about 1200 m high. Propagation may be from seed.

Viola atropurpurea This rosulate viola species has flattened rosettes about six cm across. The flowers are black-purple colour from five to seven mm in a ring on the rosettes. It occurs on bare slopes in the Central Andes of Argentina and Chile at altitudes about 3800 m. Propagation is from seed.





Viola auricolor is one of the most beautiful rosulate violas. The species has flat rosettes about five cm across with golden-yellow flowers and a brown spot on the lower petals. It is to be found in the Parque Nacional Perito Moreno in many places, with cushions more than thirty cm across. In the Santa Cruz area it mainly grows in rocky and sandy soil to 2000 m high. Propagation is from seed.

Viola columnaris syn. *V. copahuensis* is a species from the slopes of Volcán Copahue but also occurs in other parts of Neuquén. This is a columnar species with different rosettes. Flowers form in the upper ring in white or cream with purple veins on the lower petal. Rosettes seven cm high are no exception and grow in coarse lava rock and in crevices at altitudes to 2500 m. Propagate from seed.





Viola congesta forms solitary rosettes eight cm across with grey incised red-spotted leaves. The brilliant white flowers are in the upper ring of the rosette. We spotted small colonies in open sandy places in *Nothofagus* woods near Epu Lauqcen. Propagation is from seed.

Viola coronifera grows solitary or in a few together from a taproot. Leaves are leathery with brilliant bright-yellow flowers in the upper ring of the rosette. It is a species we spotted about 2400 m high on the summit of Cerro Colo Huincull. A long exhausting steep walk rewarded us with the most amazing plants in lava soil and rocks exposed to extreme weather conditions. It comes from Santa Cruz. Propagation is from seed.





Viola cotyledon is one of the most common species, cushion-forming with rosettes about 4 cm across. It flowers in the top ring of the rosette. Particularly on a huge lava plateau near Volcán Copahue we saw thousands of specimens in the most spectacular colours from crystal-white to blue. Find it in the Andes in Argentina and Chile at altitudes around 2500 m. Propagation is from seed.



Volcán Copahue



Viola dasyphylla is a cushion-forming species five cm high and forty cm across. Leaves are spatulate obovate six mm. Flowers are two cm across, white or lavender, and yellow throated. Found mainly in the volcanic part of Patagonia on the Cerro Chapelco with different forms and colour, they grow on rocky slopes to 2000 m. Propagate from seed.

Viola escondidaensis This outsider among the rosulate violas is a somewhat untidy-looking species with elongate spatulate leaves but beautiful clear white flowers with yellow spots on the lower petal. It grows around Santa Cruz at low altitudes between low shrubs in dry soil. Propagation is from seed.





Viola montagnei is columnar with densely hairy and red-edged leaves. The flowers are almost black with a white spot on the lower lip. This is a rarely seen and special species, growing in the Central Andes of Argentina and Chile in lava rock to 3000 m high. Propagation is from seed.

Viola philippii has rosettes two cm wide that cluster together to make a nice cushion. The red coloured leaves are spatulate and hairy. The flowers are clear white or soft pink with a yellow throat. It is found from the Central Andes, and especially in the Santiago region of Chile, where it is abundantly seen on ski slopes up to 3500 m in crushed rock and sandy soil. Propagation is from seed.





Viola sacculus is a column-forming species with rosettes three cm across. Dark red leaves are complemented by striking white flowers with yellow throats. It comes from the Cerro Catedral and is endemic in the volcanic region of Argentina to 2000 m altitude. On Passo Roballos we saw also some pale-blue flowering forms. Propagation is from seed.





Viola volcanica grows in cushions from twenty to thirty cm across that are three cm high. Rosettes are grey-brown with spatulate shaped leaves and small white flowers. It is not easy to spot growing in similar-coloured lava sand. It occurs in the volcanic region in Argentina up to 2300 m. The species is in cultivation and is not difficult to grow from seed.

Xerodraba pectinata (Opposite) forms beautiful cushions up to eight cm high with serrated leaves. The cream-coloured flowers are stemless. It lives in the sub-arctic zone. We spotted it on a rocky slope near Stag River. It occurs about 700 m high in extreme weather conditions. Propagate from seed.

And so, dear readers and friends, we reach the end of our South-American journey. Thank you for reading our story. We wish you all well!

The Snowdrop Year at The Garden House

Pat Eaton



Galanthus elwesii var. *monostictus* 'Fly Fishing'

Here at The Garden House, Buckland Monachorum, in Devon, the famous snowdrop festival spans seven weeks from mid-January to early March. But *Galanthus*, ten of its species, and many hundreds of its cultivars extend to a seven-month season of interest. We fortunately have a diverse collection from different sources, established by Matt Bishop and more recently largely expanded with the work of Colin Mason, Avon Bulbs, Andy Byfield and others. The snowdrops are in labelled bed areas and are also naturalised wherever possible throughout much of the ten acres, requiring careful maintenance and recording.

So, our seven months starts in mid-October with whoops of delight, just as autumn is setting in. Species and cultivars of *Galanthus reginae-olgae* from the Eastern Mediterranean are first to flower, liking semi-shade and some dampness. But in autumn 2021 they were beaten by *G. peshmenii* 'Green Flight' from Southern Turkey; a most attractive plant but not easy to grow. These are soon followed by some sturdy colonies of *G. elwesii* var. *monostictus*, which originated in southern Turkey and which we would like to be able to name, and by a really reliable display of *G. elwesii* 'Hogget's Round', originally from the garden of the Devon plantsman Terry Jones. This was named for its distinctive round ovary. Another variety, *G. elwesii* 'Smaragdsplitter' (Norwegian: emerald shards or sometimes emerald splinters) also flowers from November onwards.



Galanthus nivalis 'Ecusson d'Or'



Galanthus plicatus 'Wendy's Gold'



Galanthus nivalis 'Walrus'

All this happens before Christmas. It is also frequently common for the elegant *Galanthus elwesii* 'Fly Fishing', with an exceptionally long swinging pedicel, to be in flower together with some of the many colonies of *G. elwesii* 'Godfrey Owen' with its distinctive and beautiful six symmetrical outer segments.

The 'yellows' have their own magic, flowering from late January onwards. Prolific *Galanthus plicatus* 'Wendy's Gold' and *G. x plicatus* 'Primrose Warburg' both produce a golden glow. Some can be difficult, like *G. nivalis* 'Ecusson d'Or', admired for its yellow marks – also on the outer segments. 'Das Gelbe vom Ei' ('Egg Yolk') made a late appearance last year. From Avon Bulbs, the new *G. x valentinei* hybrid 'Treasure Island' was also to be admired and *G. woronowii* 'Elizabeth Harrison' is truly stunning.

There are numerous Poculiformis Group varieties that have near-equal length inner and outer segments. The quiet elegance of 'Alan's Treat' and the slim attractive markings of the delicate 'Angelique' are great examples here, of *nivalis* cultivars originating from France. Weird and wonderful specimens are always worth a comment. The double *G.*



Galanthus plicatus 'Greenfinch'



Galanthus 'Alan's Treat'

nivalis cultivar 'Walrus' does not disappoint us with its bizarre tusks. Neat and robust *G. nivalis* 'Blewberry Tart' looks outwards with almost all green inners. There are many extensive colonies of reliable and distinctive single and double species and cultivars which make up the backbone of the swathes of white, both in beds where they are labelled, and where they have naturalised through much of the garden. *G. woronowii*, with its bright green shiny leaves, plays an important role in the shadier areas, coming from woodland edges of the Black Sea.



Galanthus elwesii 'Marjorie Brown'



Galanthus 'Lady Beatrix Stanley'

The season finishes with a very attractive green, marked and incurved *G. nivalis* 'Doris Potter', a local find, and – last of all – the fascinating species *G. platyphyllus* from southern Russia.

The Snowdrop Festival at The Garden House will include visiting nurseries (Avon Bulbs, Elworthy Cottage Plants and Millwood Plants) and will also feature talks by snowdrop specialists Julian Sutton and Matt Bishop. For more details on the Snowdrop Festival, nursery dates and talk dates please visit www.thegardenhouse.org.uk



Galanthus elwesii 'Yvonne Hay'

50th Anniversary AGS/SRGC Show March 26 2022 Hexham



The first joint show between the AGS and the SRGC was held in Ponteland in 1972. This experiment was not, as I recall, an official show of either society, but it became so the following year, during which local exhibitors celebrated Sunderland's unexpected victory in the FA Cup Final! Many years later, the show moved to the Wentworth Centre in Hexham, and it transferred to Hexham Auction Mart just before two years lay-off because of Covid. The excellent show hall is currently used as a vaccination centre and has been foreshortened, the vaccination paraphernalia having been hidden behind a partition.

As befitted this momentous occasion, held under Scottish Rock Club regulations, a warm sun shone from a blue sky all day and the show was attended by the presidents of both societies as well as the AGS director. The Joint Rock Garden Committee of the RHS met to consider plants for awards, and the show was graced by a fine educational award by Mike Dale concerning evolution within the genus *Primula*. This informative effort was awarded a gold medal.

Above: Class 1 winner: Fred Hoyle's six pans rock plants:



The Forrest medal for the best plant in the show was unanimously awarded to local grower Ian Kidman for a superb plant of the golden Japanese violet *Viola brevistipulata* var. *hidakana*. Edrom Nurseries (who were present) consider this woodlander as 'easy' if it is not allowed to dry out, but this was probably the finest example ever exhibited. It was given the ultimate accolade, a first-class certificate, by the RHS committee. Other contenders for the premier award could be found in class 1 for six pans rock plants in which Frank Hoyle yet again benched a superb group. He brought beautifully flowered plants of *Cassiope lycopodioides* and *Pulsatilla ambigua* for the first time this season. The award for the best plant in a 19 cm pot went to Robert Rolfe for his *Saxifraga* x *concinna* 'Ben Loyal'. This hybrid between the Caucasian *Saxifraga dinnikii* and the Himalayan *S. cinerea* was raised by John Mullaney and retains a tight, slow-growing habit with large flowers of a vivid reddish-purple. Another hybrid was seen for the first time. Ian & Carole Bainbridge had taken seed from their diminutive form of the Portuguese *Narcissus calcicola* and had noticed that one seedling differed, proving to be

Above: Forrest medal winner *Viola brevistipulata* var. *hidakana*



Cassiope lycopodiodes

Facing: *Pulsatilla ambigua* 🌸

taller, paler and more frequently twin-flowered than the remainder. As the only *Narcissus* flowering concurrently had been the white Moroccan *N. watieri*, the exhibitors concluded that this had formed the pollen parent to this hybrid.

Until the last decade or so, the large and widespread genus *Fritillaria* had not been known to hybridise much. However, Don Peace has led the way with an extensive programme of crossing in which *F. pinardii* was crossed with *F. aurea* and backcrossed to both parents. Some of these hybrids appeared in several classes, including Don's six pans from seed (Roger Smith cup) which also included *F. alfredae* var. *glauca*, *F. bithynica* and *F. amana* (see the Edinburgh show report). Don also presented his hybrid *Fritillaria* 'Lentune Slate' to the RHS Committee and was given an award of merit. This plant is of uncertain parentage. Its seed-parent may have been *F. (crassifolia) kurdica* and, from the appearance of the offspring,

Saxifraga concinna 'Ben Loyal'







Fritillaria pinardi x aurea

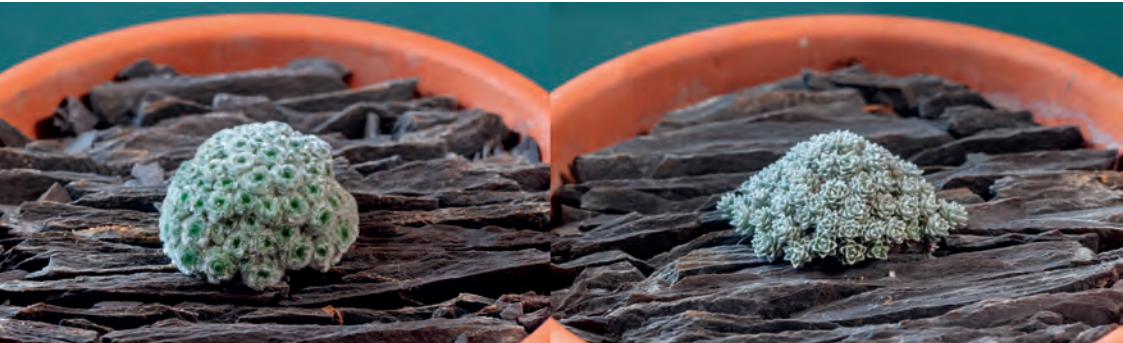
it has been suggested that the pollen parent is *F. whittallii*. This is a fine tall fritillary with flowers of an unusual shade of burnished bronze.

Warmer summers and restrictions on the collection of wild seed have meant that New Zealand cushions are now rare visitors to our shows. It was therefore a pleasure to see diminutive cushions of both *Raoulia eximea* and *R. hectori* shown by Alan Furness.

Finally, I must make mention of *Primula renifolia*. This delightful primrose relative with flowers of a limpid lilac-blue has been a great rarity in cultivation until recent years, a single clone having failed to set seed and fading to extinction. Seed had been collected again in 2011 by an expedition to the western Caucasus from Gothenburg Botanic Garden, manned by Matt Havtröm, Marika Irvine and Henrik Zetterlund, and funded by the Loki

Raoulia eximea

Raoulia hectori





Fritillaria 'Lentune Slate'

Schmidt foundation. The first raisings had been crossed with *Primula megaseifolia*, a related species from nearby northeastern Turkey, to give rise to a new vigorous hybrid, *P. x gotoburgensis*. However, in your correspondent's view the hybrid lacks the beauty of *P. renifolia*. The latter, although less vigorous, comes readily from seed and has proved straightforward if kept cool in growth, away from bright sunlight, and not allowed to dry out. As with many primulas, young seed-raised plants grow away strongly. It is completely deciduous with no top-growth visible for four months. Small plants and a few larger ones were on display in many classes and this species has clearly come to stay, as long as folk take care to cross pin plants with thrums and continue to raise plants from seed.

John Richards (Photographs by Peter Maguire)

The local group's display



Edinburgh and the Lothians 9 April 2022





Our shows have returned! Edinburgh's was the first to be held in Scotland after the two years of restrictions placed on public events. In view of this gap and with the last remaining restrictions still in place, a small show was perhaps to be expected. Though this was the smallest Edinburgh show in many a year, it was pleasing to see that 16 exhibitors had staged 195 plants in 131 high quality entries.

Following the general trend of recent years, very few plants were displayed in section II. However, a splendid mature specimen of *Lewisiopsis* (formerly *Lewisia tweedyi*) shown by Edmund Fellowes (Dumfries) was a worthy winner of the section for the Midlothian bowl and the special prize for this first-time exhibitor. Also in her first show, the Club's secretary, Hannah Wilson, won class 120 with a lovely blue and pale yellow-themed arrangement of cut flowers from her garden, including *Narcissus*, primrose, *Leucojum*, *Muscari* and borage.

Primulas are typically the backbone of the Edinburgh show. There were few *P. allionii* and its hybrids because of the mild winter. The Caucasian species *P. renifolia* shown by David Millward (East Linton) was judged to be both the best European primula, and the best plant in a small pan, winning both the K C Corsar Challenge trophy and the Kilbryde cup. He also received a certificate of merit for *Primula daonensis*, a relative of *P. hirsuta* in the same class. There was also a well-flowered specimen of *P. palinuri*, a rare coastal native of southern Italy, grown by Carole & Ian Bainbridge (Gatehouse of Fleet).

Facing: *Primula bullata* var. *bracteata*

This beautiful species was discovered by the missionary and botanist Père Jean-Marie Delavay in the 1880s. Delavay was an exceptionally avid collector but caught bubonic plague (*Yersinia pestis* – not a desirable species) in 1888 and died seven years later. The species was then lost until Jens Nielsen found it in 2012. It was formally published in 2014 by Pam Eveleigh, Jens Nielsen and David Rankin. Later finds included a collection in 2015 by the seed collector Bjornar Olse in Yunnan, east of Eryuan above 2500 metres. Graham Gunn reported the species in a joint 2016 expedition with Peter Edge, Edward Shaw, Ngaire Burston, Christopher Parsons, and Stella & David Rankin. It was growing in limestone cliffs under pine trees at Nan He Jian near Lijiang. He found the site unique because he had never seen pine trees growing on limestone. The main features are a short flower stem, somewhat longer than the leaves, a characteristic leaf shape that goes narrow towards the stem, and the absence of farina. The growing and somewhat sticky clumps accumulate dead leaves, which presumably offer some protection to the new growth and act as a reservoir of nutrients. As far as is known, the species grows in hardiness zones 6-8b, liking light shade and dry to gently moist alkaline soils.



Primula henrici

Once known under the names *Primula bracteata* and *P. dubernardiana*, *P. henrici* is the valid name for the variable cushion-forming relative of *P. bullata* (*forrestii*) that has become a much-loved show plant after introduction by the Alpine Garden Society (AGS) Expedition to China (ACE) in 1994. It is named for the collector Prince Henri Orléans (Latinized to Henricus). The stem is "*henric-*" with "*i*" appended to indicate the gender, although it sometimes still appears mistakenly as *henricii*.

These remarkably beautiful primulas are found in limestone rocks in dryish areas of China such as limestone cliff crevices in Yunnan and south-west Szechuan, and west into eastern Tibet. They may grow open to the elements, although often covered by winter snows. They do not need too much winter or early spring water and they like well drained alkaline soils. The plants form clumps, cushions or mats of sticky leaves that grow through much of the year, and the withered dead leaves cover the stems, presumably affording some protection.

According to the AGS Encyclopedia, this evergreen species has narrow bullate linear-lanceolate leaves and apparently single flowers, borne just above the cushion, which when in fruit elongate on a short stem to be carried in groups of one to four. The flowers face upwards and are 15-25 mm across with a golden eye. They vary in colour from purple through pink to white (var. *dubernardiana*, in which flowers often bud or age pink), cream and yellow, although deep yellow forms have yet to be introduced. The leaves can lack farina, are thickly farinose only below, or on both sides. The species grows well in the alpine house but should be kept cool in summer and is liable to botrytis in autumn.



Preceding Page: *Fritillaria amana*

The fritillaries are unusual plants often with wonderfully understated colours and intricate patterned design. Among the almost endless numbers of species, *Fritillaria amana* comes from Mount Hermon in the eastern Mediterranean, so is accustomed to warm and dry summer periods after flowering. The subspecies is variable, with characteristic pendant bell flowers that are reddish brown, spotted with green.

The name is a synonym of the old name *Fritillaria hermonis* ssp. *amana*. The epithet derives from the Amanus Mountains in central southern Turkey on the Syrian border. The distribution is southward into a southward-running range, Jabal-al-Nusaira. South of here, a separate species, *Frillaria hermonis*, takes over toward Mount Lebanon.

F. amana is characterised by the basal leaves being shining green, occasionally with glaucescent stem leaves (both are markedly glaucescent in *F. hermonis*). *F. amana* comes from medium altitudes and usually grows in deciduous shade (implying warm shade and well-drained soil for best cultivation) whereas *F. hermonis* is associated with higher altitudes and north-facing open limestone scree; it is one of a number of fritillaries that do really well in the garden as well as in the cold greenhouse in East Lothian.

The best Asiatic primula was David & Stella Rankin's (Lasswade) *Primula bullata* var. *bracteata*. This plant narrowly beat a fine dome of *P. henrici* (Peter Hood, Hetton-le-Hole) for the R E Cooper Bhutan drinking cup. The Rankins also won the Elsie Harvey memorial trophy for class 3, 3 pans new or rare rock plants with *Pp. sinoplantaginea*, *graminifolia* and aff. *woodwardii*. Their entry in class 77 featured *Primula* 'Johanna' alongside *P. warshenewskiana*, known to be one of its parents, with *Pp. rosea* and *clarkei*, disputed as the other parent. Although this four-pan entry in a three-pan class was strictly 'not according to schedule', this was an interesting educational exhibit and observers could speculate on the true identity of the second parent.

Facing: *Narcissus bulbocodium* 'Golden Bells'

Narcissus bulbocodium 'Golden Bells' is a cultivar of *N. bulbocodium* (often known as the hoop petticoat daffodil), which is native to southern and western France, Portugal, and Spain. 'Golden Bells' was developed by Dutch breeders in the 1990s and its performance surpasses *N. bulbocodium*. A perennial bulb, it has – as portrayed here – large, bold, yellow trumpets and slender, star-shaped petals. It naturalises very well and enlivens every spring, especially in woody areas. It likes light shade or sun, and is favoured by moist well-drained neutral soils but seems tolerant of other soil types. At least one supplier claims a resistance to rabbits and deer.







Facing: *Fritillaria alfredae* ssp. *glaucoviridis*
(Painting © Sally Strawson www.sallystrawson.co.uk)

Preceding pages: *Fritillaria alfredae* ssp. *glaucoviridis*

This delightful plant comes from oak woodland in the Amanus Mountains of southern Turkey and is present in the Belen Pass – a Turkish site known in antiquity as the *Syrian Gates*. This is the most commonly cultivated subspecies. It is particularly glaucous and grows taller than many, reaching to about 25 cm. *F. alfredae* ssp. *glaucoviridis* is a much leafier species than the close *F. alfredae* ssp. *alfredae*. The foliage is blue-green, the hanging graceful blue-green bells tend to colour variation from green through to yellow.

Coming from a Mediterranean climate zone at low to medium altitude where most precipitation occurs in winter and early spring, the bulbs are dormant in the dry summer and are often sheltered from direct sunlight by other tall vegetation, tree shade or even by coastal fog. In the garden, it is therefore advisable to grow them in well-drained soil wherever some overhead protection is afforded by taller deciduous shrubs or trees. When growing in pots, summer dryness is a straightforward necessity to help ensure success.

That excellent garden plant *Primula* 'Wanda', along with *Polygonum tenuicaule* and *Iberis sempervirens* formed Stan da Prato's (Tranent) winning Class 2 entry for the Henry Archibald rose bowl. He also took the Alf Evans quail for best pan of Ericaceae with *Andromeda*



polifolia 'Blue Ice', the Midlothian vase for best *Rhododendron* with *R. racemosum* and – for the eleventh time – the Reid Rose bowl for most points in section I.

The Boonslie cup for the best miniature garden went to Peter Hood, who was also awarded a certificate of merit for *Ranunculus montanus* 'Molten Gold', its vibrant colour a shining beacon on the show bench. A further certificate of merit was awarded for a large pot containing perhaps some fifteen flowering stems of *Calanthe brevicornu*; this orchid is a native of the forests of Nepal and Sikkim and was shown by Carole & Ian Bainbridge.

Pleione Volcanello

This beautiful pleione is a tribute to the history of crossing. It is *P. bulbocodioides* x *P. Soufriere*. *P. Soufriere* is *P. Versailles* x *P. x confusa*. *P. Versailles* is the first man-made *Pleione* hybrid, created in 1966 by Georges Morel, who crossed *P. formosana* with *P. limprichtii*.

P. x confusa is known as the confused *Pleione*. It is found in north-western Yunnan and northern Myanmar and is a natural hybrid between *P. forrestii* and *P. albiflora*, making a small, cool-growing terrestrial or lithophytic pleione with green to dark olive-green pseudobulbs. This fascinating crossing tree therefore rests on the five species of *bulbocodioides*, *formosana*, *limprichtii*, *forrestii* and *albiflora*.





Facing: *Primula* 'Hyacinthia'

There was a good selection of bulbous plants, particularly dwarf *Narcissus*. A certificate of merit was awarded for *Narcissus obesus*, which along with *Ranunculus calandrinoides* and *Fritillaria pallidiflora* formed Peter Semple's (Buchlyvie) class 5 '3 from seed' winning entry for the A O Curle memorial trophy. As is increasingly the case at this show, fritillaries were few, although there were several distinct forms of *Fritillaria pallidiflora* on the benches. Richard Green's (Balfron Station) entry, with its prominent angular shoulder to the flowers and dark nectaries was judged to be the best bulb, corm or tuber in section 1, taking the Henry Tod Carnethy quach and the Forrest medal. This was Richard's first and thoroughly deserved accolade.

Many thanks are due to the Edinburgh team for their efforts in making the show a success in challenging circumstances. It's good to be back!

David Millward (images by Liz Cole)

Narcissus 'Intrigue'





Perth 16 April 2022

Who could know what to expect for the 2022 Perth Show? Much preparation and organisation had gone into planning the event at a new venue – Dewar’s Centre. This was the first show since 2019 and the effects of Covid 19 were unknown in terms of how many visitors would attend, how many nurseries were still in business and attending shows, how many exhibitors would still be growing and showing their plants in these changed times? For those of us who love plants and being part of the SRGC, the answers to all these questions had to be put aside because the time had come to get back to enjoying the company of other members and the excitement of the show.

The new venue brought us the opportunity of re-designing the layout and content of the show and, with a desire to bring alpinists and the club to a wider public audience, it was with great pride that we welcomed the TV crew from *The Beechgrove Garden* to film during the day. The larger venue also allowed a demonstration of (polystyrene) trough making to engage the

Dodecatheon poeticum (syn. *Primula poetica*)

This species belongs to a group of beautiful rock-growers from Oregon and Washington in Western North America. The species is more difficult to grow than the relatively easy garden plants in the *meadia* section, requiring a dry summer rest and careful watering. It is mainly found in the northwestern region of the United States, mainly in the arid transition zone in Washington and Oregon. Unlike some others of this genus, *Dodecatheon poeticum* is found in open and bright areas and in dry woodlands up to 1000 metres or even more. It may be found in the shade of Ponderosa pines and Oak or on cliffs but is more frequent in open areas blessed with spring dampness and summer dryness. A mixture of fine sand and rich humus is favourable. One source says that plants are to be found in regions of petroleum seeps. Pests and diseases are not a problem for this beautiful species and if carefully grown it will spread and seed around.





Tulipa armena

This species is commonly known as the Armenian tulip and is native to the Armenian Highlands – after which it is named – and parts of Armenia, Turkey, Iran, the South Caucasus and Azerbaijan. It is very variable in its details. Nevertheless, it has long been known in hilly regions of Eastern Turkey where masses of blooms colour the mountain slopes each spring. *Tulipa armena* was first described by the energetic and far-travelling Swiss botanist Edmund Boissier in 1859. It forms only a minor part of Boissier's work, which impressively covered much of Europe, North Africa and western Asia and many genera. The similar *T. karabachensis*, which is found in the Karabakh mountain range of Armenia and Azerbaijan, is believed to be a synonym of *T. armena*. Fur-lined bulb tunics insulate its small bulbs from the worst of summer heat and dryness in its native haunts. Unsurprisingly therefore, it needs dry, hot summers and should be grown in free draining soil and full sun.

Pleione x *Shantung* 'Ducat'





Tulipa praestans 'Shogun'

visiting public and inspire aspirant rock gardeners. Everyone who attended was given a raffle ticket and at the end of the show the fortunate winner received the planted trough.

The six nurseries who brought their plants along for sale did not disappoint us and our visitors were treated to a long-awaited feast of wonderful specimens. Although the number of exhibitors may understandably have been down on previous years, the quality of plants on the display was exceptionally high. Here are some of the highlights and results from the show benches ...

An outstanding plant from Cyril Lafong was *Dodecatheon poeticum*, one of the Primulaceae known in America as the shooting star. The flowers of this seldom-seen species were bright magenta with a yellow and brown eye, contrasting with the lime-green leaves. The plant was grown from Alplains seeds sown on 29/12/08 and germinated on 19/3/09. Cyril also won the Forrest medal for his *Polygala calcarea* 'Czech Sky', a certificate of merit for *Pleione* x Shantung 'Ducat', and the Masterton trophy with *Primula henrici*.

It was lovely that Margaret Taylor attended the show, not only to exhibit but to make the first presentation of the Henry & Margaret Taylor award – in this case to Cyril – for the *Dodecatheon poeticum*. This new award, a beautiful silver salver, was generously donated by the Angus Group for the best plant 'new or rare in cultivation'. Margaret herself emerged as the winner of the Murray-Lyon trophy with her splendid *Tropaeolum tricolor*.



Erythronium 'Winifred Lorraine'

Many wonderful plants were brought by the stalwart Stan da Prato, who gained the largest number of points overall and was winner of the Middleton, Cox and Caird trophies as well as a certificate of merit for his *Rhododendron groenlandicum* 'Compactum'. The Dundas quaich, the Bulb trophy and the Joyce Halley award went to Peter Semple, the last for a large *Narcissus bulbocodium* ssp. *obesus*, while Barry & Cathy Caudwell won the Perth trophy. In Section 2 the John Duff prize was awarded for a magnificent *Tropaeolum azureum* exhibited by Susan Band, with the help of our convener Nicola Macnee, because Susan was on holiday. Robert Holmes was a welcome first-time exhibitor in Section 2. He won the special prize and Perth salver for gaining most points in the section.

Members from both the Perthshire and Angus Groups did a fantastic job keeping everyone well supplied with delicious food and drinks during the day and we had the added bonus of our new SRGC President Colin Crosbie, who came along to present the winners' prizes. Colin also presented a special award to exhibitor Cyril Lafong on behalf of the Alpine Garden Society – the Lyttel Trophy. This is the most prestigious AGS award; it is given to outstanding individuals who have made a substantial contribution to the knowledge and of alpine plants.

Following this success, we look forward to welcoming you to Perth in 2023 when the show will be held at Dewar's Centre on Saturday 22 April.

Cathy Caudwell and Alison Hogg



Glasgow 7 May 2022

All change! Or actually *plus ça change (plus c'est la même chose)*. Glasgow provided a wonderful show of excellent plants, shown by friends and enjoyed by friends. Some of our shows are held over a short time span. Consequently, several plants are in top condition long enough that some of those mentioned will have been exhibited at more than one show. On the plus side, whenever you see the same plant winning over a few weeks it is one to look out for and perhaps buy for your own garden.

East Dunbartonshire Council based one of their Covid Vaccination centres in Milngavie town hall so the first hurdle the SRGC Glasgow group had to overcome was to find a new show venue. Baljaffray Parish Church Hall in Bearsden was ideal. It may be smaller than the Milngavie Hall but was just right for this year's smaller show. Easy parking with many spaces

Meconopsis sulphurea ssp. *sulphurea*



available in the adjacent shopping precinct was a great advantage. Their second worry was 'Would the exhibitors bring enough plants for a show?' They need not have worried: the total number of entries was 109 and once multi-pan classes were counted there were 179 pots of plants on the benches. All fourteen exhibitors supported the show in style.

The Glasgow show has eighteen trophies and special prizes to award, as well as possible gold medals and certificates of merit. This year five exhibitors shared the top prizes. I have tackled the show report by grouping the plants and awards won by each exhibitor in turn.

Despite the reduced number of entries, the standard was high and careful judging was needed to choose the George Forrest memorial medal winner. The judges' choice? Cyril Lafong's *Daphne petraea* 'Persebee', an eleven-inch undulating dome comprising hundreds of perfect tiny flowers.

Meconopsis integrifolia ssp. *souliei*



Primula zambalensis

One had to search to see any leaves! Cyril told me about his plant: 'This daphne is an excellent 1997 introduction made by Peter Erskine initially under the number 97/T13. I remember getting a Forrest medal at Glasgow some years ago with a *D. petraea* with that collection number. The plant that got the Forrest this time is a different specimen that was grafted onto *D. tangutica* in 2011. It has been progressively potted on until now in its current pot, where it has been for the last 4 years.'

David & Stella Rankin triumphed in the first five classes in Section 1, which needed six, four or three pans each. These wins helped them win the Crawford silver challenge cup for most points in section 1. They spread several yellow *Meconopsis* among these classes. They were once all included in *M. integrifolia* but recent research has led to the recognition of several different subspecies; I will leave it to experts to tell that story.

Whatever their current names, they brightened up their corner of the show bench, *Meconopsis* corner! Their Diamond Jubilee award-winning entry included three different yellow meconopsis as well as an old favourite of mine, *Corydalis wilsonii*, a herbaceous species whose spikes of yellow flowers are complemented by deeply dissected blue green foliage. Incidentally, I bought a plant of *C. wilsonii* at the Glasgow show forty years ago. It is not long-lived but it seeds around into or under alpine house plunge benches. A marvellous white *Primula sieboldii* formed the centrepiece of their entry. A joint star of their winner in the 6-pan Dr William Buchanan memorial rose bowl class was a magnificent plant of pink-flowered *Lewisia* 'George Henley', reminiscent of the late Fred Hunt's Forrest winner in Aberdeen. Their *Primula zambalensis* won the Joan Stead prize for best primula. *P. zambalensis* grows above 4000 metres in north-west Yunnan. The show plant had multiple stems of beautiful yellow-eyed sky-blue flowers. The species is reputed to be short lived. The AGS encyclopaedia recommends that it be grown in a trough, protected in winter. Of all the yellow *Meconopsis*, my favourite was their *M. integrifolia* ssp. *souliei* in the class for 3 pans distinct. It is a very nice 'dwarf' yellow meconopsis but has large flowers. With the blue-flowered *Haberlea ferdinandi-coburgii* 'Connie Davidson' and a copper-orange-flowered *Lewisia* 'Brynhyfryd Hybrid' they won the Henry Archibald Challenge rose bowl. They also won the next class, this time for 3 pans distinct genera, new or rare, taking the William C Buchanan Challenge cup. Their *Zaluzianskya ovata* was memorable for its outward-facing white flowers with maroon backs.

Stan da Prato had several white-flowered plants in the show, spread throughout his generous entries. He won the Edward Darling memorial trophy for three pans *Rhododendron*, of which my favourite was *R. groenlandicum* 'Compactum', although I still think of it as a *Ledum*. I haven't seen it in Greenland, but we did come across it in forests in the Alberta Rockies. My own garden plant is loose-growing and untidy but Stan's was a tight wee gem, well deserving its award of the Rhododendron Perpetual Challenge trophy. He also won the Don Stead prize for most points in bulb classes: his entries included two ornithogalums, *Tulipa* 'Bright Gem' and *Narcissus* 'Hawera'. In the 6-pan class his *Gentiana* 'Arctic Fanfare', a white form of *G. acaulis*, well deserved to blow its own trumpet ... one to look out for. Beside it sat a fine white-flowered plant of *Draba* 'John Sexton'. I admired the flower colour of his *Primula sinopurpurea*, white faces with a deep-blue tube, reminiscent of *Tulipa humilis* 'Alba Coerulea Oculata' (the detail of this name varies, depending which catalogue you look at). In the American class he showed the rare double *Trillium grandiflorum* 'Snowbunting'.

Alison Ward, daughter of Joan & Don Stead, had the best Scottish native plant, a remarkable pan of *Scilla verna*, so while Stella & David and Stan took home the awards commemorating her parents, she took the Ian Donald memorial trophy home with her. A few years ago, Ian Christie led an



SRGC tour to the north coast of Scotland to see some of our native special plants. We saw *Scilla verna* there, growing in the coastal turf alongside *Primula scotica*; I have also seen it on the Cornish coast. This 'spring squill' is another plant with sky-blue flowers.

The SRGC 75th anniversary award for best plant in a pan under 17.5 cm went to John di Paola for *Primula* 'Lindum Rapture'. Small bright yellow primulas are a relative rarity in our shows and this one is a wee stunner. John showed it along with two other good yellow primulas, *P.* 'Pieces of Eight' and *P.* 'Venus'. John's magnificent *Saxifraga pubescens* 'Snowcap' well deserved its certificate of merit.

Peter Semple won the magnificent Charles M Simpson memorial trophy with his nice pan of *Cypripedium macranthos* var. *hoti-atsumorianum*. I remember Charlie being a grower and exhibitor of pleiones, and Peter's cypripedium would have delighted him, eliciting praise for cultivation of such a magical plant. Cypripediums are magical. Who could design such a complicated puffed-up flower?

A magnificent *Pulsatilla* stopped us all in our tracks – something fabulous and new to everyone! Raised and shown by Cyril Lafong, it stood literally above its classmates. It was the impossible to pronounce *Pulsatilla kostyczewii*. It also gets the prize for the species with most adjacent consonants in its name. It looked different; it was different; it was special. Its foliage was definitely pulsatilla-like but its flowers were upward facing, held on foot-long stems, more like tulips than pulsatillas. The flowers were an old-rose shade of pink. The base of each petal was dark, almost black, and each flower had a central yellow boss surrounded by black stamens. Needless to say, it won the new and rare class. Cyril provided helpful notes on the species. "*Pulsatilla kostyczewii* hails from rocky stony places the Central Asian mountains like the Tien Shan and Trans Altai ranges at an altitude of 2700-2900 m. In spring the area is damp but it dries out completely in summer. The plant has unique characteristics different from other pulsatillas. It resembles an anemone with bowl-shaped flowers and a stoloniferous nature. It is also unusual for a pulsatilla in having purple instead of yellow orange stamens.

The plant was grown from seed collected in the Pamir mountains of Kyrgyzstan, sown in December 2016 and germinated in April 2017. The resulting plants were grown in a well-drained loam-based compost watered and occasionally fed during spring and early summer. In late summer the plant goes completely dormant and is completely herbaceous; watering should be withheld until growth reappears in spring".

Sheila McNulty won the one pan rhododendron class with a well flowered plant of *Rhododendron* 'Curlew'. Her miniature garden was rainbow triumph. Several *Rhodohypoxis* and a bright phlox provided the red and pink shades; a low growing form of *Succisa pratensis* the blue, and a wee *Linum*



the yellow. Jackie Thomlinson's *Haberlea* dominated its end of the bench; you could have pushed in no more flower stems. The plant must have taken years of careful cultivation to grow it to this size. The classes for American plants demonstrated a wonderful variety: *Aquilegia*, *Lewisia*, *Jeffersonia*, *Trillium*, *Penstemon* and *Dodecatheon* (I know they are now included in *Primula* but why get rid of the plant of a dozen gods?). My favourite? Stan's huge, pink-flowered *Lewisia cotyledon*, one of the best in years. Although it did not win its class, Peter Moore's *Maianthemum bifolium* var. *yakushmanum* reminded us that we need 'quiet' plants as well as those with bright flowers. Its white flower spires were just erupting through the pan-filling carpet of leaves.

Arisaema utile

This attractive species has synonyms *Arisaema utile* var. *meeboldii* and *Arisaema verrucosum* var. *utile*. Joseph Dalton Hooker initially described the species but his description did not meet publication standards. A valid description came from Heinrich Gustav Adolf Engler, a German botanist from Kiel university, in 1879. It is a more reliably grown relative of *Arisaema griffithii* but is somewhat darker, and with a spathe that is markedly shiny. *Arisaema utile* is one of the hardiest of the arisaemas and is widespread across the Himalayas. Some common names are cobra lily, Jack in the pulpit, showy cobra lily and Sikkim cobra lily, reflecting the distinctive spathe shape.

This *Arisaema* is found in the Himalayas, from Kashmir to Bhutan and Sikkim and on to Myanmar, at altitude ranges mainly quoted as 2800 to 3100 m but sometimes as low as 1800 metres, and as high as 3700 m in Nepal. The hardiness zone is from 5a to 7b, corresponding to minimum temperatures in these altitudes



of -12 to -26 °C. Its habitat is woodland forests (sometimes evergreen *Tsuga*), their openings, margins and thickets. It may be common in the shade of rich forests. *Arisaema utile* flowers during June and July. One source says that male plants occur more rarely than the females.

In climates with lots of moisture, plant this species in a well-drained ground area so that the dormant tuber is dry and the roots retain access to moisture. The plants prefer a half-shady situation and – according to their hardiness zones – they tolerate temperatures as low as minus 29°C. This should pose few problems for most west European gardeners. The plant can reproduce by producing tubercles around the tuber bases. When separated from the old tuber at the end of the season, they may be grown on to form new plants in the following years. The tubers have been used in various Chinese traditional medicine recipes to treat gas trouble, stomach disorder and asthma. When applied to the skin they have been used for skin problems such as pimples. However, an interesting feature of this plant is that it contains calcium oxylate crystals. When eaten raw it creates a very unpleasant sensation like eating needles so must be rendered harmless by thorough drying, cooking, or by steeping the tuber in water.

Year on year more ferns appear. I find them difficult to judge because they are so varied. Star fern at Glasgow was David Millward's *Pyrrosia drakeana* (see the Stirling show for more on this plant), which resembles an aspidistra more than a fern. It has broad lanceolate leaves with a nice brown back like the indumentum on a rhododendron. It is an epiphyte found from the eastern Himalaya to central China but despite its widespread distribution it is not commonly seen in Scotland.

Altogether we must thank our exhibitors for putting on a good show and – as Wallace said to Grommit, 'it was a grand day out'.

Sandy Leven

Stirling 14 May 2022

Ever since its inception Stirling has been the first SRGC show each year held in Scotland. In 1982, Joan Stead, at that time president, was disappointed that there would be no early spring show following the decision of Edinburgh Group to move from the early date to a mid-season one. She asked the Stirling Group to fill the gap and we readily agreed. Since it was a new show, we had no trophies but fortunately for us the Dunfermline show had been wound up, so their trophies were given to Stirling. They had languished for a few years in a Dunfermline cupboard. Hence the reason that the Stirling awards have west Fife names! A late change of date for the Hexham show, because the venue had been in use as a Covid vaccination centre, resulted in Stirling, once again in the Victoria Halls in Dunblane, being held later than usual. This may have accounted for the small number of exhibitors and the fewest plants of the spring season. Nevertheless, a varied selection of rock garden plants and bulbs was present on the open section benches, including some remarkably splendid specimens.

The Forrest medal was awarded to David Millward's fabulous *Ramonda nathaliae* JCA 686 (see the Aberdeen show report for more about this interesting plant and its story). The collection number shows that the seed from which it was grown was collected by the late Scottish plant hunter Jim Archibald. The species is native to Serbia and North Macedonia and its flowers have an almost crystalline appearance, glistening in the sunlight. Jim had a good eye for a good plant and Dave has the green fingers to get the best out of his. First shown long ago, it has grown even more impressive during the Covid years and now almost overflows its ten or twelve inch pan. More than fifty multiflowered stems of lilac-blue and yellow-eyed flowers stood perfectly above unblemished leathery mid-green rough leaves. As soon as they saw it on the show bench, folk knew this was the plant to beat. This *Ramonda*, which also won the Ben Ledi trophy for best European plant in the show, has won three previous Forrest medals, at Aberdeen in 2008, 2018 and 2019, and is David's tenth such accolade, meaning that he will be awarded a silver Forrest medal. Only two other recipients of silver Forrests are still alive: Cyril Lafong (61) and Sandy Leven (14). Other now-departed winners are legends of SRGC history: Harold Esslemont (43), Jack Crossland (30), Fred Hunt (26), Jack Drake (14), Christine Boyd-Harvey (11), and Eric Watson (10). All titans of plant growing.

Numerous lewisias were on display, including 'George Henley' and a 'Carousel' hybrid. The Institute of Quarrying quail for the best non-European plant was won by Cyril Lafong with his *Lewisia leeana*



Junellia coralloides

Junellia is a genus of flowering plants in the verbena and vervain family Verbenaceae. It is a southern species, native to the Andes, Patagonia, and the Falkland Islands. According to Martin Sheader, writing in *The International Rock Gardener*, this is a plant of the drier steppe from Neuquén and on to northern parts of Santa Cruz. It is close to *J. patagonica*, but differs somewhat in scent, in its having three-lobed leaves and by its contorted, rather arching or decumbent growth marked by congested reduced side shoots. The foliage may be green, grey green or grey-purple in colour. Its flowers are white to pale yellow, arranged in a congested globose spike of up to forty at the apices of side shoots towards the end of the main stems. During the southern summer it flowers during the period from November to January. It grows and flowers well in cultivation.



Rhododendron 'Egret'

'Alba'. Also shown in a large pan, it was covered in tiny white flowers over dark green shiny leaves, the effect being that of a bridal bouquet of *Gypsophylla*. Cyril's *Lewisia* also won the AGS Ulster Group quaich. His white dome of *Androsace cylindrica* received a certificate of merit. Among very few primulas exhibited, Tom Green won the Spiller trophy for best primula with his *Primula marginata*, shown for its fine sharply edged leaves, each with a sprinkling of farina.

The Carnegie Dunfermline Trust trophy awarded for most points in section 1 went to Stan da Prato. These days, it must feel at home in East Lothian. Stan supports all our shows with a seemingly never-ending number of good plants. I feel that he prefers the challenge of multi-pan classes rather than the singles. He regularly includes excellent specimens of plants that are new to many of us. Notable among his many and varied entries were a very well flowered *Campanula* species,



Rhododendron 'Wren'

Rhododendron 'Arctic Tern', *Uvularia grandiflora* and a dwarf *Enkianthus*, for which he received a certificate of merit. The Fife County trophy and the Glassford Sprunt trophy were not awarded this year.

Show secretary Sam Sutherland has a fine collection of American plants that he grows very well. This time it was a fabulous pan of *Eriogonum ovalifolium* 'Wellington Form', which drew everyone to marvel at its mound of silvery-grey leaves, studded with five-inch stemmed lollipops of white flowers. It is a member of the Verberna family. It was awarded a certificate of merit, as was his pan of *Junellia coralloides*. This latter is a real challenge to grow as well as this one does. It has pale-yellow flower heads emerging from innumerable four inch or more heather-like stems each with tightly adpressed blue-grey leaves.

As well as *Primula marginata*, Tom Green showed several noteworthy plants. Most exciting was his *Erigeron scopulinus*, a prostrate

plant with tiny, shiny and bright-green leaves. The whole is topped off with a carpet of white daisies. Tom had two shrubs new to me: *Coleonema pulchellum* 'Aureum' and *Diosma ericoides*. I thought they looked similar in flower and foliage especially if viewed in black and white. Both have heather-like foliage with starry flowers. I decided to investigate a bit more. First, I was staggered to read that the *Coleonema* is a cousin of citrus fruits in the Rutacea or Rue family. It has golden foliage with pale pink flowers. To me it looks nothing like rue – or oranges. It is a South-African native and its colloquial name is 'Breath of Heaven' or 'Confetti Bush'. We had seen it growing in South Africa a few years ago. Now to *Diosma ericoides*: it is very similar and also in the Rutaceae. Indeed, some authorities place them both in the genus *Coleonema*. To confuse me further I read that in Australia *Coleonema aureum* is known as 'Golden Diosma', and is known as a popular garden plant ... a wee puzzle to sort out. The truth is that *Diosma* and *Coleonema* are synonyms, with the latter currently accepted. Whatever their names, they both are beautiful plants and a credit to their grower. Among Stan's entries was *Enkianthus* 'Dwarf Form', a 40 cm (15 inch) high shrub with branches draped in orange 'heather' bells, perfect for a fairy Christmas tree. Another ericaceous shrub of Stan's was *Andromeda* 'Blue Ice', looking as vibrant as it was when it won a Forrest medal a few years ago. Blue leaves with pink bells – who could want more?

The only trees we expect in shows are conifers. Stan shows one of the best, a miniature Japanese Larch, *Larix kaempferi* 'Nana'. It sat with fresh new needles and masses of cones. Later in the year its autumn foliage is bright orange and even more stunning, so look for it at our autumn shows. I had hoped for more rhododendrons but there were few. However, if you need one for the rock garden look no further than *Rhododendron* 'Egret'. This Glendoick-raised hybrid forms a wee slow-growing bush with pristine white flowers contrasting with its dark foliage.

There were several pans of *Sempervivum* and its cousin *Jovibarba* to admire. Reputed to be easily grown, it is not at all easy to produce large pans of perfect rosettes and silken spider's web-like hair such as these. Stan grows them well in shallow pans. Enthusiasts may choose hairy or non-hairy plants. The hairy ones include *S. arachnoideum* itself or the selections 'Boule de Neige', ssp. *tomentosum* 'Stansfeldii', as well as *S. ciliosum* var. *borisii*. Non-hairy ones in the show were *S.* 'Mahogany' with purple rosettes and a wild-collected green one. *Jovibarba sobolifera* also had nice green rosettes with red tips. In fact, all had red tips or at least red outer leaves on their rosettes. 'Mahogany' just is much redder in its leaves while the green hides deep down in the rosettes. You may derive a lot of interest from building a collection of sempervivums. Just copy the masters.



Pteris drakeana belongs to a genus of about a hundred fern species in the polypod family, Polypodiaceae. Like others in the family, species of *Pteris* are mainly epiphytic on trees or rocks, with a few terrestrial ones. The Latin name comes from the Greek *pyrrhos* (red), referring to its leaves that are coloured red because of the sporangia. The native range of this species is Arunachal Pradesh to Central China. It grows primarily in the temperate biome from 1000 to 3500 metres, being found in mixed mountain slope forests, on tree trunks, on rocks or rocky cliffs, on slopes, and alongside streams. It is spread across Gansu, Guangxi, Guizhou, Henan, Hubei, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Xizang, and Yunnan.





Matching shades of *Androsace* (Facing) and *Lewisia* 'Carousel'

I was delighted to see Tom Green's *Clematis marmoraria* with its wonderful cream flowers backed by deeply dissected dark green leaves. It is a 'quiet plant' that needs careful attention and is much trickier than its vigorous hybrids. Stan also had some Australasians, winning with *Celmisia semicordata* and *Raoulia australis*. The first has foot-long silver leaves with white felty backs and the other is totally prostrate with tiny silver leaves barely two mm long. I am sorry to be mixing imperial and metric measurements (*but let us indulge him; Ed.*)

We are used to lots of bulbs at this show. Most were over this time but it was nice to see a different selection of plants. Entries were down but quality of exhibits was high. Covid has changed many things in our club and people were still reluctant to mix – but the show must go on. We are indebted to the dedicated exhibitors who supported us. Grateful thanks go to Sam Sutherland for organising and staging the show.

Sandy Leven



It was good on the 21st May to be in the Victorian corridor of the David Welch Winter Gardens at Duthie Park in Aberdeen. The weather on this occasion was good, allowing all the exhibits to be seen at their best. This year we also had welcome and useful access to a room for the show secretary and the exhibitors to meet and relax. Our thanks go to the Duthie Park staff for their help and preparation of the bench space.





In Section 1 we welcomed several familiar exhibitors. Among them, Stan da Prato showed many excellent plants, gaining a certificate of merit for an *Enkianthus* 'dwarf form' (class 25 – 1 pan Ericaceae, excluding *Rhododendron*), the Simpson salver (best *Rhododendron*) for *Rhododendron* 'Snow', and finally winning the Walker of Portlethen trophy (most points, Section 1).

The Neglected Garden





Nick Boss was awarded a certificate of merit for *Salix herbacea* (class 3 – 1 pan rock plant native to Scotland). *Salix herbacea*, also known as dwarf willow, least willow or snowbed willow, is one of the smallest of woody plants. Dave Millward was awarded a certificate of merit for *Ramonda nathaliae* JCA 686 (class 53 – 1 pan Gesneriaceae).



Ian Christie was given the Forrest medal for *Cypripedium parviflorum* (class 33 – 1 pan Orchidaceae) and for *Primula sieboldii*, which won the Craig cup (best *Primula*).

Section II had a good selection of plants, typical of the Aberdeen show. The Aberdeen quail for the best plant in Section II was awarded to Bill & Helen McGregor for their *Trillium grandiflorum* 'Flore Pleno' (class 87 – 1 pan *Trillium*). This exhibit attracted the additional honour of a certificate of merit. Bill & Helen also received the Brian Bull trophy as winners of class 63 (2 pans rock plants distinct).

Ramonda nathaliae (Photo: Liz Cole)

Also known as Natalie's ramonda, this species of the genus *Ramonda* grows in the east of Serbia and North Macedonia and in the Kilikis prefecture in Greece. The flower is a symbol of the Serbian Army's struggle during World War I. It was described in 1884 from specimens growing around Niš, by the botanists Sava Petrović and Josif Pančić, who named it after Queen Natalija Obrenović, a celebrated beauty. Forms *jankovicii* and *serbicifolia* are now considered only as synonyms.

The species is small and poikilohydric (unable to regulate or maintain its cellular and tissue water content. Many such plants can withstand prolonged dehydration and they recover unharmed) plant that grows to 10 cm. The flower is notable for its beauty, for its ability to be restored to life with a few water drops, and for growing on Kajmakčalan, scene of a significant battle in the Great War. For these reasons, it has become a symbol of Serbian revival and an emblem of Armistice Day.

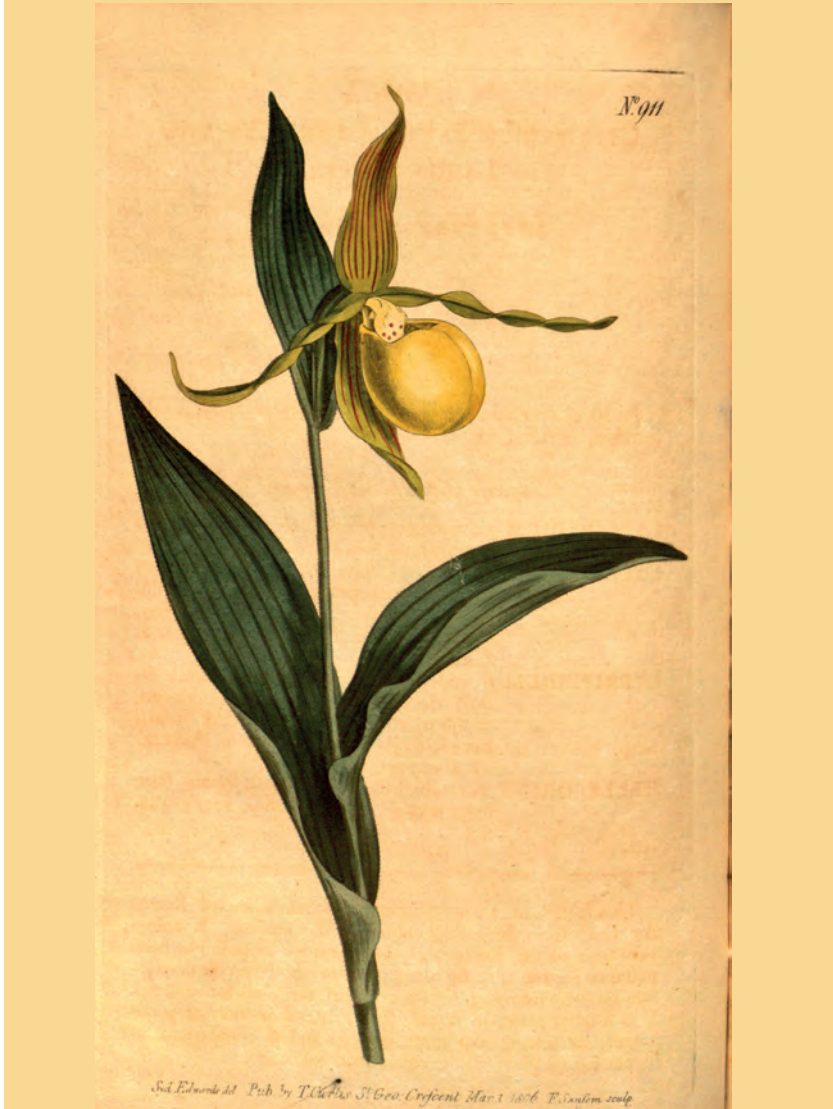


Cypripedium parviflorum

This plant was recorded as a species in 1791, so its history goes back to the days of the French Revolution. It is commonly known as the yellow lady's slipper or moccasin flower and is native of North America. There, it is widespread, ranging from the south of Alaska to Arizona and Georgia. There are four common varieties: *C. parviflorum* var. *makasin* – commonly called the northern yellow lady's-slipper, from Canada and the northern United States; *C. parviflorum* var. *parviflorum* – the small yellow lady-slipper from the south of the species distribution, from Nebraska and Oklahoma east to Virginia and New Hampshire; *C. parviflorum* var. *exiliens* Sheviak, from Alaska; and lastly, *C. parviflorum* var. *pubescens*, the large yellow lady's-slipper – known by many as a distinct species, *Cypripedium pubescens*. This fine orchid occurs in damp and often calcareous sites such as fens, wetlands, shorelines, and woodland, often calcareous. It flowers in May to June.

Authoritative sources say that this hardy plant grows well in well-drained but moist, fertile, leafy and humus-rich soil in sheltered sites offering partial shade and no noonday sun. Leaf mould is helpful. Despite the hardiness, leaves may need frost protection. The species may be propagated by division in early or mid-spring with prompt planting thereafter. Soil from the root ball contains beneficial fungi, so some should be planted with each division. Nutrients are needed during growth phases. Watch out carefully for slugs and grey moulds.

Cypripedium parviflorum (Sydenham Edwards (1768 – 1819) del., F. Sansom sculp., Public domain via Wikimedia)



Finally, an interesting exhibit that added an unusual and welcome note to the show this year was an arrangement of *Saxifraga sempivirens* by Fraser Henderson, entitled 'The Neglected Garden'.

Adrian Banks

Glasgow Autumn Show
1 October 2022





Our autumn show has long been held alongside the annual Discussion Weekend. In its absence we thank David Millward, Richard Green and the Glasgow Group for hosting this stand-alone show in Baljaffray parish church hall. Many exhibits were good garden plants needing no special conditions to thrive. Good examples were: *Aruncus aethusifolius* with bright scarlet autumn foliage; *Cyclamen hederifolium* with patterned or silver leaves and pink or white flowers; dwarf conifers, bringing structure to a raised bed or trough; *Houttuynia cordata* 'Chameleon' with outrageously tricoloured leaves in green, red and yellow – it thrives anywhere, wet, dry or confined to a pot; heathers, sedums and gentians with end of season colour. Plantsman of the year, Stan da Prato, swept the board, winning all but one trophies, and the Forrest medal, awarded to a conifer for perhaps the first time. *Microcachrys tetragona* is native to high rocky areas of western Tasmania. Colloquially known as creeping pine, this member of the Podocarpaceae might easily be overlooked but deserves close examination. With a prostrate habit it reaches 60 cm in the wild and looks nothing like a northern hemisphere conifer. Stan's plant was 25 cm high and 60 cm across. Whip-like branches were clothed in tightly clasped scale-like dark-green leaves and it was covered in innumerable tiny cones. The current year's cones were copper whereas last year's were paler; the young red cones give its other name of 'strawberry pine.'

The *Microcachrys* also won the J L Mowat trophy for best conifer. Mr Mowat edited the SRGC journal in the 1960s, when illustrations were black and white. What a difference colour has made to our show reports! He was curator of the old St Andrews University Botanic Garden. His own garden in Ceres, where he and his wife always made us welcome, was one of the first I visited as a young member of the SRGC.

Facing: on the bench, between the red class bars *Larix kaempferi* 'Nana'



David Millward won the Jim Lever memorial trophy with his well-flowered *Cyclamen mirabile*, a compact plant with emerging marbled leaves. All other trophies went to West Lothian with Stan. He took the East Lothian trophy for Class 3 with a magnificent *Gentiana* 'The Caley' that filled its 25 cm pan, two *fortunei* type saxifrages, white-flowered *Saxifraga* 'Thea', and red-flowered *S. 'Tini'*. Stan grows these Japanese saxifrages very well. Look out for them, they are hardier than they look! His Peel trophy for 3 pans gentians was awarded for *Gentiana sino-ornata*, G. 'Strathmore' (raised by Ian Christie) and G. 'The Caley' (raised by Ian McNaughton). His miniature garden won the Logan Hume trophy and his *Senecio candicans* gained a certificate of merit. He also won the 6 pan class 1 with a fine entry including two heathers and a white *Cyclamen hederifolium*. Winning the most points in section 1, he took the Mary Bow trophy as well. Well done, Stan! Thank you for providing the backbone of the show.

Other exhibitors gave Stan a run for his money in several classes. David & Stella Rankin are primula enthusiasts and experts at growing them. Their 6 pan entry was fascinating, featuring the 45 cm tall, dark-red candelabra-flowered *Primula wilsonii* and an equally tall magenta *P. chionantha* ssp. *sinopurpurea* beside little *P. marei* and white *P. juliae*. Their 3 pan entry comprised three good garden plants, tiny *Persicaria vacciniifolia* and two wee Michaelmas daisies, sorry – symphyotrichums, *Symphiotrichum* 'Small Ness' and *S. 'dark purple ex Ness'*. The latter had large purple flowers reminiscent of *Aster alpinus*. The Rankins also showed an old favourite of mine, *Bukiniczia cabulica*, a biennial from the western Himalaya in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It has large flattened dusky grey-green leaves, each delicately patterned with silver lines. It has had several species names since its introduction in the 1970s. When I grew it, it was *Limonium* and listed as *Statice*. A good selection of ferns,

Happy gardeners with doomed cakes



conifers and sempervivums gave a varied tablescape of foliage but Stan's *Sedum spectabile* 'Autumn Charm' rose above it all. Its charm lies in its beauty (if you like variegated plants). It has big flat light-green leaves, edged in cream. To complete its charm it has pink flowers. Get one for your autumn spectacular! The cyclamen with best foliage was David Millward's *Cyclamen graecum* with deep-green velvet leaves with pale green markings. John Lee came second with a pewter-leaved *C. purpurascens*. We once admired such plants in deciduous woods above Limone on Lake Garda. Stan won the 2 pan silver medal with his fine exhibits of *Raoulia australis* and *Helichrysum* 'County Park Silver'.

Ian & Carole Bainbridge brought several different species of *Petrocosmea*. In the 3 pan class they showed *P. flaccida* (rich blue, my favourite), *P. forrestii* and *P. barbata* (both white-flowered). Their *P. coerulea* in the Gesneriaceae class was exceptionally well flowered and in colour was true to its name. If you like African violets you will love these. Barry & Cathy Caudwell exhibited berried trusses of five *Sorbus* in the class for cut alpine plants in fruit, cone or seed, the largest being red berried *S. wilsoniana*. Others were the white *S. foliolosa* & *S. koehneana*, and the pink *S. gonggashanica* & *S. vilmorinii*. It was a pleasure to learn about rowans by observing their berries. Alan Weepers won both 2 pan and 3 pan cyclamen classes with a fine mixture of species.

Altogether this was a very enjoyable day for SRGC members and the local public. The tearoom was especially popular as it provided a warm place to sit and chat while enjoying the myriad cakes and savouries provided and served by Glasgow members. Thank you to the organisers and exhibitors for rounding off the show season in Scotland in such a splendid fashion.

Sandy Leven

Autumn colours of *Primula bullata* var. *forrestii*



On Reading 'Sugar Limestone' (Andrew Jones, *The Rock Garden*, Issue 148)

Jackie Sutherland

SUGAR LIMESTONE – the words jumped off the page as I flicked through a copy of *The Rock Garden* that I was given at a Kinross Garden Group meeting. It was a phrase I had not heard for many years, and yet I was immediately taken back to Upper Teesdale where, over 50 years ago, I spent many days crawling the turf on Widdybank Fell.

My late mother, then Betty Petrie, was always a keen gardener, trained in horticulture in Edinburgh during the 1920s. When the SRGC was formed, she became a member. One particular outing was to the gardens at Glamis Castle. Arriving by train, the group was met by the head gardener at Glamis and taken by pony and trap to the castle where, after a garden tour, the visit finished with tea inside.

Realising that it was only young men who were sent on plant-hunting expeditions to the Far East, she retrained as a nurse – and worked in Hong Kong and Singapore as a nanny. With the invasion of Malaya, she returned to nursing where, just before the Fall of Singapore, she met and married a young doctor, Jack Ennis. Both were captured and interned in Singapore for the duration of the war. Post war, alpines continued to feature. A postponed honeymoon in Kashmir, a first holiday to Switzerland and, once finally settled in Durham, a chance to develop her own garden. One acre with lawns, orchards, herbaceous border, vegetable patch and, of course, a rock garden.

As my sister and I grew up, the rock garden became a wonderful play area. We were not allowed to climb over it but there were enough pathways to play, chase and hide & seek. Retaining walls were built, almost entirely by my mother, from granite setts, as cobbles were replaced in the old streets of Durham City. A palette of colour in spring and early summer had the yellows of miniature narcissus, the pinks, whites and purples of primulas and pulsatillas, reds of dwarf rhododendrons. There were edelweiss and gentians, and spectacular *Saxifraga longifolia* 'Tumbling Waters' cascading into the cool blue of *Lithodora*.

My late school days included 'A' level Botany and extra-mural classes at Durham University with inspirational teaching from Dr Margaret Bradshaw, who led many excursions. Outings to Upper Teesdale took on heightened importance in the 1960s when, to ensure a water supply for Teeside industries, a new reservoir was proposed. The assemblage of arctic-alpine plants was long recognised but now it became urgent to map distribution of nationally rare and scarce species. With other volunteers, weekends and holidays were spent crawling painstakingly over the short turf of the limestone fell. Mapping

continued whatever the weather – I remember flicking snowflakes off leaves to allow identification, only pausing once during a thunder storm when the hillside opposite (Meldon Hill) was struck by lightning – character-building. Despite appeals to both Houses of Parliament, construction of the dam began in 1967 and parts of Cow Green were flooded. In 1969, remaining areas were taken into the enlarged National Nature Reserve of Moorhouse – Upper Teesdale. These were indeed formative years for my own interests. Many years later, while house-hunting, it was the garden that ‘sold’ me my present home. Arriving early, I wandered through the garden. There was a tree peony (*Peaonia ludlowii*) with fruiting heads and, in a shady overgrown corner, the striking deep blue of *Gentiana asclepiadea*. My search for a new home was ended.

The work in Upper Teesdale continues. Surveys and monitoring are carried out by Dr Bradshaw’s Teesdale Special Flora Research and Conservation Group (‘Teesdale Special Flora’). Sadly, comparisons with the 1970s show decline in most of the rare species including *Gentiana verna*, *Saxifraga aizoides* and *Potentilla crantzii*. If you would like more details or would like to support the work of the Trust, please visit www.teesdalespecialflora.uk

Meanwhile, the ‘rock gardens’ of the sugar limestone and the spoil heaps of the old lead workings of Widdybank Fell will always remain the first rock gardens I ever loved.

The sad decline of Teesdale species counts (Teesdale Special Flora)

Species	Common Name	1968-75	2017-19	Extent
<i>Potentilla crantzii</i>	Alpine Cinquefoil	133	2	-98%
<i>Draba incana</i>	Hoary Whitlowgrass	75	8	-89%
<i>Juncus triglumis</i>	Three-flowered Rush	215	24	-89%
<i>Antennaria dioica</i>	Mountain Everlasting	1,285	211	-84%
<i>Saxifraga aizoides</i>	Yellow Saxifrage	83	25	-70%
<i>Armeria maritima</i>	Thrift	16	5	-69%
<i>Galium boreale</i>	Northern Bedstraw	950	331	-65%
<i>Equisetum variegatum</i>	Variegated Horse-tail	173	63	-64%
<i>Thalictrum alpinum</i>	Alpine Meadow-rue	506	231	-54%
<i>Gentiana verna</i>	Spring Gentian	839	389	-54%
<i>Bistorta vivipara</i>	Alpine Bistort	1,085	524	-52%
<i>Carex ericetorum</i>	Rare Spring-sedge	75	41	-45%
<i>Plantago maritima</i>	Sea Plantain	606	342	-44%
<i>Sabulina stricta</i>	Teesdale Sandwort	61	35	-43%
<i>Primula farinosa</i>	Bird’s-eye Primrose	798	480	-40%
<i>Tofieldia pusilla</i>	Scottish Asphodel	394	246	-38%
<i>Polygala amarella</i>	Dwarf Milkwort	28	18	-36%
<i>Viola rupestris</i>	Teesdale Violet	398	322	-19%
<i>Viola x burnatii</i>	Hybrid Violet	38	46	+21%

Wild Fell – Fighting for Nature on a Lake District Hill Farm

Lee Schofield

Penguin / Doubleday £20.00

341 pages, ISBN 9780857527752

One of the greatest pleasures of spending time in the Alps in summer is the huge diversity of flower meadows, and of the flowers in those meadows. In contrast, one of the biggest disappointments of spending time in the upland margins of most of Great Britain is the dearth of wildflowers in fields of re-sown ryegrass, or on sheep-shorn permanent pastures on the upland edge. The great British countryside has suffered greatly since the second World War from agricultural industrialisation and intensification, a trend still continuing today, despite all that is said about environmentally-friendly farming, and the growing debate about rewilding.

Lee Schofield is very lucky (his sentiments) in that he is the site manager for the RSPB Haweswater reserve in the eastern Lake District, and is responsible for one of the largest rewilding projects in the British uplands to date. RSPB has had a presence at Haweswater, by agreement with United Utilities, for many years, initially because of the presence of England's only golden eagle pair. More recently, the emphasis of work on this large reserve has been on the restoration of meadows, watercourses and moorland, and Lee chronicles the development of the project, the sources of ideas and inspiration, and the progress made to date. Written in a pleasantly discursive style, I found myself quickly drawn in to this fascinating story.

The first part of the book catalogues the problems facing the RSPB at the start of the project. The criticism of some farmers and Park administrators is both shocking and familiar; I remember similar issues with the RSPB reserve on Islay in the 1980s and 90s. The second part catalogues the inspirations assimilated by Lee and his colleagues, from the Carrifran woodlands in the Borders and Ben Lawers in Perthshire, to the Norwegian fells and the meadows of the Italian Alps, along with comparisons with other work being done in Lakeland.

The third part details the work and actions in progress to rewild much of the area. Restoring watercourses, reducing grazing pressures, and enclosing key plant communities have been key activities. Some of this work derives inspiration and benefit from the ongoing collaboration with the Alpine Garden Society over the enclosure and management of the alpine plant communities at Mardale Head.



Initiated by Dave Morris, current AGS President and RSPB ecologist, this element of the project combines the skills of expert growers with those of thoughtful and dedicated land managers; long may it continue.

The good news is that this project is long-term. The bad news is that it represents the exception of upland management, rather than the rule. Let us all hope that post-Brexit changes in farming policies take inspiration from projects such as these, and we begin to see real landscape-scale change in the state of our uplands. In the meantime, let's all applaud the leaders in the field and lend our support to their work.

Ian Bainbridge

The Art of the Japanese Garden

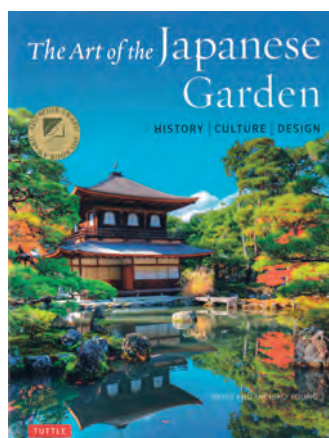
David and Michiko Young
Turtle Publishing, about £20

176 pages ISBN:9784805314975

This book is a fine introduction to the aesthetics and the practicalities of Japanese gardening style as it has developed over the centuries. A quarter of the book is given over to the basic elements and principles of rocks, sand and gravel, water features and bridges, decorative features and buildings, the fauna and flora and their relation to the structural niches that are created by the gardeners. There follows an account of about two dozen notable Japanese gardens, arranged in order to display the historical development of style in relation to the basics. There are many astonishingly beautiful pictures that show how rocks (of particular interest to us all as rock gardeners) may be used in different ways to western tradition, not so much to support and nourish the plants as to echo, reflect and complement the plants and plantings.

Pictures (more than 200) are plentiful and show the beauty, complexity and tranquillity of the designs. They suggest the many ways in which these gardens are to be enjoyed – the pace of walking, the viewpoints, the constraints of perspective. For those who might wish to understand or even emulate the unique qualities, careful design and exotic charms of Japanese gardening, this is an excellent window into an unfamiliar world that is too rarely imitated in the West.

Anton Edwards





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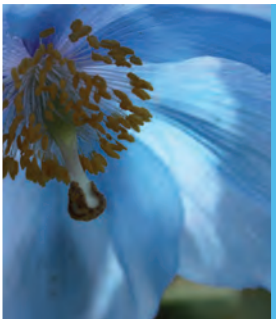
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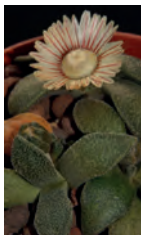
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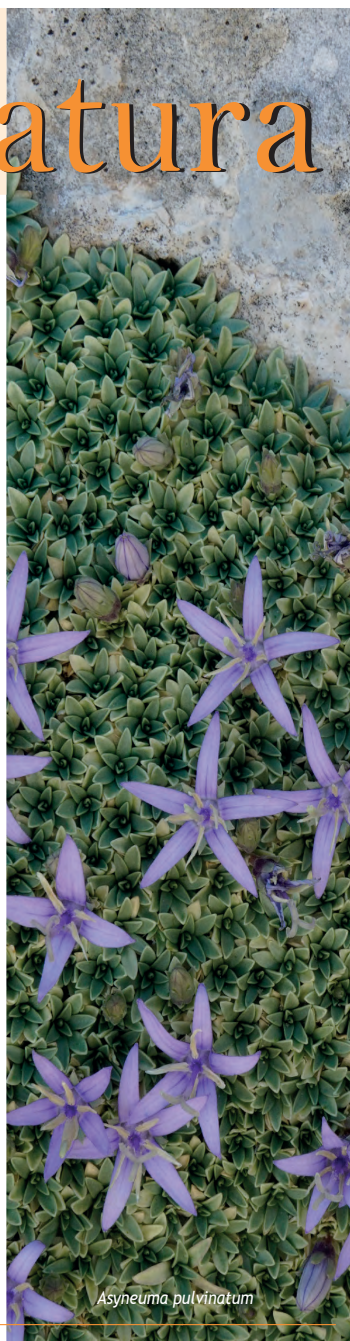
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