



SRGC Forrest Medal - Highland show in Nairn 2014

Best plant in show :

Andromeda polifolia 'Blue Lagoon' shown by Stan da Prato



Dr Stan da Prato is one of the SRGC show circuit's most faithful exhibitors. He is the delight of the Show Secretaries who can rely on him to bring a car full of plants to grace their show benches and exhibit some cracking plants. At the Highland Show in Nairn on 26th April 2014 Stan, who has often won the award

for the overall number of first prize points in a year at all the SRGC Shows, won the supreme award – the Forrest Medal – his first such success, though surely not his last. There was much pleasure expressed as people discovered that Stan – who submits extensive photo reports of the shows to the SRGC Forum as diligently as he brings his show plants – had won a Forrest. Stan is one of the few exhibitors regularly showing ericaceous plants at our shows in recent years so it was fitting that the medal should be awarded for this fine *Andromeda*.



The forms of *Andromeda polifolia* in cultivation have been developed from a species occurring around the northern hemisphere in cool, acid bogs thus the common name of bog rosemary. The leaves are similar to rosemary but the plants are unrelated and true rosemary is not in Ericaceae.

A. polifolia's range includes Japan and some good forms have come from there including the cultivar Nikko, named after Nikko National Park in Honshu,

Japan, where it was found. Americans confusingly often call Pieris the 'Japanese Andromeda'.

'Blue Lagoon' was found as a sport from Andromeda 'Blue Ice' in a nursery in Holland in 2006. Its foliage is a stronger blue.

This plant and a plant of 'Nikko' which has featured at several shows this spring, gaining a Certificate of Merit and the Alf Evans Quaich, were bought at a plant sale a year ago. Stan thinks they had been imported from the continent. Grown on and kept well watered they have flowered particularly well this spring. The many small, bell-shaped flowers have proved very lasting –more like Erica or Calluna than Rhododendron. Andromedas detest drying out so going to shows has probably affected them for the future. They are about to be potted on; it will be interesting to see how they flower next year.



Andromeda 'Nikko' at Edinburgh – shown by Stan da Prato

Students of the Greek myths will know Andromeda was the daughter of Cassiopeia (now another Ericaceous shrub) who boasted that her daughter was more beautiful than the daughters of the sea god. To punish the queen for her arrogance, Poseidon sent a sea monster to ravage her kingdom. The desperate king consulted the Oracle of Apollo who told the king to sacrifice Andromeda to the monster. Stripped naked, she was chained to a rock but then rescued by Perseus who duly killed the monster, set Andromeda free and married her. As she had been promised to her uncle a quarrel took place and uncle Phineus was turned to stone by the sight of the Gorgon's head.

Nice people the ancient Greeks- they supposedly gave us civilization and democracy .

At the Israeli port of Jaffa a rock outcrop is said to be the site of Andromeda's ordeal. The shrub Andromeda would not grow there now as it is far too dry and hot.