

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

Forrest medal Perth 2022

Polygala calcarea 'Czech Sky'

Shown by Cyril Lafong



Cyril Lafong continues to wow his fellow exhibitors as well as the general public. Like other top exhibitors he really knows his plants and understands their cultural requirements. Sometimes he wins with rare and unusual plants of but more often he produces magnificent pans of plants which many other people grow. It is this combination of perfection, rarity, attention to detail and skill which makes his entries so fascinating. His winning plan of *Polygala calcarea* 'Czech Sky' was faultless. There were scarcely any signs of leaves and stems beneath the carpet of blue flowers. At first glance I thought that it was a reincarnation of his first Forrest medal winner, *Polygala calcarea* 'Lillet', which he showed at Aberdeen many years ago. Right from the start his entries exuded quality. *Polygala calcarea* is colloquially known as 'Chalk Milkwort'. It is a delicate mat-forming perennial native to western Europe. It is sometimes described as a shrub or sub-shrub. In the UK it is found in tightly-grazed chalk and limestone grassland, usually on warm South-facing slopes. It is a poor competitor which disappears if insufficient grazing allows coarser grasses to become dominant. Rarely does it grow to such magnificent proportions.

I asked Cyril about his two clones of the species and over leaf I quote his reply, which gave me permission to include in this report.





Polyglala calcarea 'Czech Sky' showing its 'leathery'

Polyglala calcarea 'Lillet' hails from a town of that name in the Eastern Spanish Pyrenees near Andorra north west of Barcelona.

Cyril wrote, " *Polyglala calcarea* 'Czech Sky' was a small plant I got from **Jiri Papousek** when I visited him in Czech Republic about 10 years ago. The mother plant was growing on his crevice bed and it was an impressive splash of blue. I asked Jiri about the plant last year and after consulting with **Zdenek Zvolanek** (ZZ), his reply is below:

"I received plant from ZZ in 1989. He brought it more likely from England from Surrey, where he had several friends and visits them quite regularly after (the) first one in 1981. More likely he (might have got) {could get it} from Joy Hulme, another person around was also Winifred Bevington. It is obvious that plant was in cultivation and not wild collected."

Last year ZZ named the plant 'Czech Sky'. According to him and Jiri, this clone is easier to grow and of a brighter blue colour than the other two named cloned in cultivation, 'Lillet' and 'Bulley's Form'.

I initially grew the plant in a plastic pot and moved it on to a clay pot when it got bigger. It has been potted on twice and now resides in a 30 cm pot. The flowers completely cover the leaves and as soon as the flowers start fading and the petals fall off, the flowering stems need to be removed to allow light to reach the leaves. At this stage liquid feeding is required as the leaves become chlorotic.

As I wrote at the beginning of this piece, 'attention to detail'. This is evident in the brief but meticulous hints on cultivation he gives at the end.

Well done Cyril on another well deserved George Forrest Memorial Medal.

The lower pictures show Cyril being interviewed by presenter Kirsty Wilson for the BBC programme "The Beechgrove Garden"

