

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

Forrest medal Edinburgh 2019

Clematis columbiana var. *tenuifolia* 'Ylva'

Shown by Sue Simpson



The top plant at Edinburgh sat quietly by the window at the back of Sue's three pan entry in Class 2, behind *Anemonella thalictroides* and *Hepatica* 'Millstream Merlin', a wonderfully colour coordinated North American trio; Sue's alpine Blues Trio! *Hepaticas* are not American, I sense your thought! No, but Millstream was the home of the doyen of American Rock Gardening and President of NARGS, the late great Lincoln Foster. His selection of *H. x media* is one of the best and most popular in cultivation. *Anemonellas* are woodland plants of the Appalachians and other eastern north American mountains. Star of the trio and lead singer was the *Clematis columbiana* var. *tenuiloba* 'Ylva'. [I doubt if any plant with a longer name has won a Forrest] The three plants are distantly related as all three are members of the *Ranunculaceae*, the buttercup family.

When most people think about *Clematis*, they imagine a great big climber covering a wall or fence, with blooms

the size of hands. Their flowers come in various shades from white through blue, to red and purple, single and double. Even *Clematis alpina* from the European Alps is relatively rampant. Sue's wee treasure, *Clematis columbiana* var. *tenuiloba* 'Ylva', is a sapphire compared to these gaudy gems beloved of garden centres and TV programmes. [sorry about the metaphors!] We rock gardeners appreciate





small plants with delicate flowers, though we do like a bit of gaudy colour as well. If you are used to big Clematis you will need a moment to convince yourself that 'Ylva' is indeed a Clematis. However it is not a vine. Instead it forms a low growing mat. Modestly, the flowers avoid your gaze by looking downwards rather than full face. While the branches are prostrate, it sends up short flowering stems with one flower per stem. This habit may be to protect the flowers from inclement weather. In selection 'Ylva' the flowers are lavender blue but red and white forms have been seen in the wild. Its home is in the Rocky Mountains. 'Ylva' was raised by Henrik Zetterlund of Gothenburg Botanic Garden and named after his daughter. It may be suitable for a gritty trough.

What a tangled world is the world of horticulture. Sue's trio had an American selection of a European plant and a Swedish selection of an American plant. It takes a Plants-woman with enormous dedication and skill to produce exhibits like these. Well done Sue. Thank you for bringing your entries from Ayrshire to Edinburgh. Here in Fairmilehead, West met East triumphed!

