



The Scottish Rock Garden Club

Forrest Medal Aberdeen 2018

Ramonda nathaliae JCA 686

Shown by David Millward



David Millward's *Ramonda nathaliae* took the top award in Aberdeen. I was unable to get to Aberdeen again this year but from the photograph taken by Stan da Prato I can tell that this was a magnificent plant, try counting the flowers. I stopped at 100! In my garden I am happy if my *Ramonda*s flower at all. David's plant also has perfect leaves. Mine have leaves which turn brown at the hint of sunshine. It also looks good all from all sides. This degree of perfection is a tribute to David's skill as a cultivator. Well done David



*I was interested to see that David's superb plant has been raised from seed collected by Jim & Jenny Archibald. According to Jim's field notes which are on the SRGC web site, it was collected as *Ramonda serbica*, [difficult to tell the difference out of flower] in the Radika Valley and Gorge in 'Yugoslavian Macedonia', along with *Lilium martagon* and *Sempervivum heuffellii**

Ramonda nathaliae grows in Serbia and Macedonia, mostly in the east of both countries. Whereas most flowers in Gesneriaceae have of five lobes in their flower, *Ramonda nathaliae* has two fused petals which give the overall appearance of four lobes (usually), making it distinctive among Gesneriad flowers. The *Ramonda nathaliae* flower is considered a symbol of the Serbian Army's struggle during World War I. The plant was scientifically described in 1884 from specimens growing around Niš, by Sava Petrović and Josif Pančić, who named it after Queen Natalija Obrenović of Serbia.

From Queen To Nun: Queen Natalija Obrenović of Serbia

Natalie was born in Florence on 15th May 1859, grew up in Bessarabia, [part of Ukraine] and died aged 81 in Saint Denis, Paris on 8th May 1941. A celebrated beauty during her youth, she was later regarded as one of the most beautiful queens in Europe. She married to her second cousin, Prince Milan Obrenović IV of Serbia on 17 October 1875. When Prince Milan proclaimed the Kingdom of Serbia in 1882, Princess Natalie assumed the title and rank of a queen. At the Easter reception of 1886, Queen Natalie publicly slapped the wife of the Greek ambassador.^[9] The Greek woman was rumoured to have had an affair with King Milan. Her only surviving son was the future King Alexander of Serbia.



The relationship of the royal couple reached a critical level in 1887, following not only many affairs of the king with other women, but even political differences between king and queen. Natalie and Alexander left Serbia to live in Ukraine. There was a divorce, a reconciliation, an annulment of the divorce and King Milan abdicated leaving Alexander king but with restrictions on Natalie being allowed back to Serbia. The politics is analogous to but more complicated than Scotland under Mary Queen of Scots and the young James VI. Things did not really get much better as when Alexander chose Draga Mašin, a former court lady of Queen Natalie, in 1900, as his bride, his parents rejected the future queen as improper. Ex-king Milan left Serbia for good and died in Vienna in 1890. King Alexander and his wife Draga were killed in 1903 during a military coup. This left Natalie the sole member of the Obrenović dynasty. She donated the inheritance to the University of Belgrade and various churches and monasteries around Serbia. The same year, Queen Natalie became a member of the Roman Catholic Church and a nun, converting from Serbian Orthodoxy. Queen Natalie spent the remaining years of her life in exile in France. She died in 1941 in Saint-Denis, France