



# The Scottish Rock Garden Club

## Forrest Medal - Perth 2018

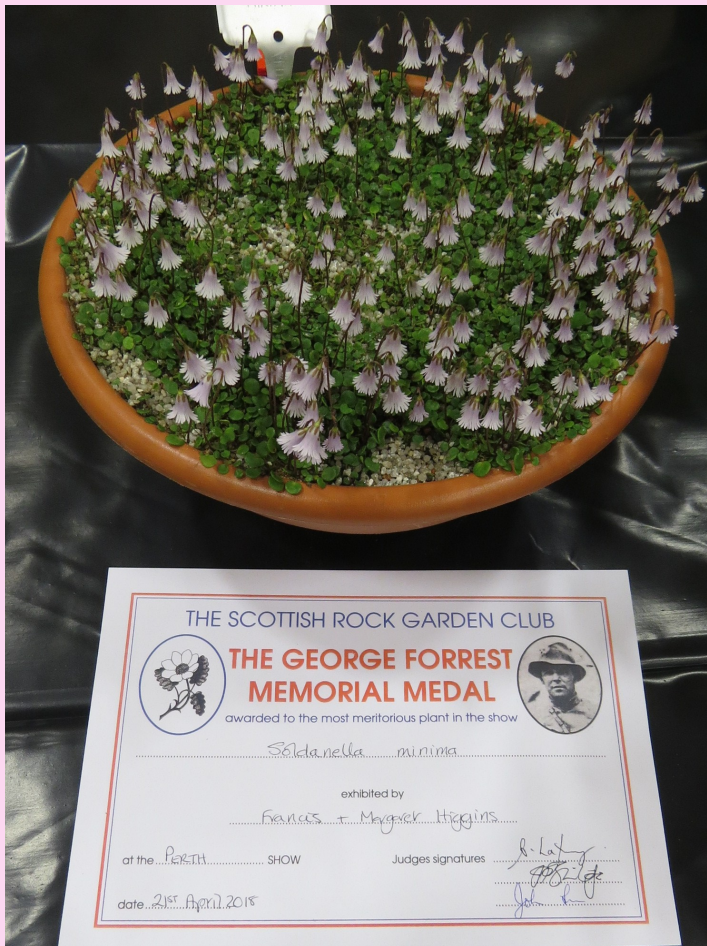
### *Soldanella minima*

Shown by Francis & Margaret Higgins

**By Jove, Mr & Mrs Higgins! You've won !**







**There must be something in the water in Berriedale** or is it the climate? Francis and Margaret 's exquisite *Soldanella minima* was an instant hit with the judges. It is unusual to see a well flowered *Soldanella* exhibited at our shows. Far less frequently, if ever, have we been treated to a such a forest of these tiny fairy bells. Their dark stems, which are barely 2cm, tall hold each wee pagoda like fringed bell, above a sea of shiny round leaves, which Farrer in 'The English Rock Garden' describes as "very fat dark round leaves....







(which) are almost flat like salt-spoons, perfectly round in outline." I know that at one time there must have been some brown leaves to spoil the verdant uniformity. It is a tribute to Francis & Margie's diligence and care in presentation that every less than perfect leaf had been removed. Not only was this a well grown plant but just look at the size of the pot which it fills. *Soldanella minima* is native to calcareous area of the Eastern Alps. It seems to have been a favourite of Reginald Farrer who wrote fondly of its pale lilac flowers which "are the daintiest wee bells imaginable, fine and frail in shape, waxy and sturdy and crystalline in their texture, dancing across the damp hollows and stream basins of the Eastern limestones and down into the Abruzzi preferring the finest turf [rather than stony places] which the plant fills with shining masses of minute foliage, over which hover masses of pale or snow-white bugles, lined with streaks of violet inside". Now there is a sentence which does not stop for breath! He continues, the plant "revels in the underground-watered bed; and of this no *Soldanella* can have too much moisture in summer, or kept too rigidly dry in winter". Perhaps there is an underground stream in Berriedale which reminds it of its alpine home.

On second thoughts Francis and Margie grow and exhibit many wonderful bowls of plants which each demand their own special treatment. This fabulous *Soldanella minima* is a tribute to their excellent horticultural talent and diligence. **Thank you both for travelling nearly 200 miles south to show us what can be grown on the Caithness coast.**