

The Scottish Rock Garden Club Forrest Medal - Discussion Weekend Pitlochry 2018



Larix kaempferi 'Nana' Shown by Stan da Prato



Stan da Prato made history at the SRGC Show in Pitlochry's Atholl Palace Hotel. To my knowledge this the first time that any tree has been awarded The George Forrest Memorial Medal. Stan's wee larch was spectacular. Its golden glow lit up the bench, especially dramatic when backlit by the sun. It was quite appropriate that a fabulous plant in autumn hues should win the Autumn show. This was the weekend when the Larix needles were turning from green to gold. I think these tinges of green overlaid with gold captured the judges attention and once seen was indelibly printed on their mind.

There were many wonderful flowering Cyclamen and Gentians in the show but once seen the Larch would not be beaten. If spectacular foliage was not enough, it also had numerous tiny cones.

I have followed the progress of Stan's Larix kaempferi 'Nana' through our shows. Looking back through my pictures taken at previous shows I realise I have photographed it many times, showing that I like it and am drawn to it. This may be the conifer which I have photographed most often at recent shows. As you can see from the picture it resembles an arboreal teddy bear in the way it is reaching out for a cuddle.

Larix kaempferi itself is the 'Japanese larch'. It is a forest tree found in the mountains of central Hokkaido, where it can grow to 40m, nearly 100 feet high. Thank goodness there is a miniature. Its name commemorates Engelbert Kaempfer, the German botanist who travelled widely in Asia including Japan between 1683 and 1693. He wrote flora japonica, the first extensive description of Japanese plants.





The form 'Nana' only grows to 50cm (20 inches) in ten years. Thus Stan must have nurtured his for at least 10 or 11 years. The form originated as a witch's broom found 'presumably' in 1976 by **H. Neumann** in Großer Wildenloh Forest, near Edewecht, Germany. Interestingly and to spoil the fun The American Conifer Society writes 'the cultivar name will be considered illegitimate unless it can be proven that it was found prior to 1959. This reflects the naming regulations which prohibit the use of Latin names for cultivars unless they were used before 1959! Several forms of the species are in cultivation. There are domes, pyramids and weeping clones. I have a picture of a garden tree on bottom right.



Bonsai versions of the species are quite different from Stan's 'nana' form. The bonsais have the same form as mature forest trees. [picture on left].

Stan's plant made a trip to this year's Gardening Scotland. The big picture above shows it sitting at the top right, on the Club table, beside Treasurer Richard Green. Well done Stan. It is a wonderful tribute to the support you give to our shows. The wide variety of plants you bring encompasses many species and genera. I am sure you will retain your title as 'Plantsman of the year'.

Well Done! Well deserved!





Nana's progress!
Nairn May 2017
Glasgow May 2018
Ponteland last week
Pitlochry this week