

# The Scottish Rock Garden Club

## Forrest Medal - Glasgow 2016

### Ranunculus parnassifolius

### Shown by Sam Sutherland

Sam's beautiful plant of the pink form of *Ranunculus parnassifolius* was a present from Margaret and Henry Taylor. The plant is an 'intra-specific hybrid' being the result of crossing two pink flowered plants of the species, one from Nuria and the other from the Picos de Europa. These locations are at the eastern and western ends of the Pyrenees and their continuation along northern Spain, the Picos de Europa. The resulting magnificent plant has over 25 flowers. Sam had already removed many which were past. We hope he leaves the rest to set seed. *Ranunculus parnassifolius* is usually white flowered but pink flowered plants are sometimes found e.g. near Nuria in Catalonia in



northern Spain. Anyone who sees the plant is captivated by its beauty and all owe a debt of gratitude to Margaret & Henry for the opportunity.



In the high, cold, wild mountains the bowl shaped flowers focus the sun's rays into the centre. This raises the temperature enough to ripen the seed a bit earlier. The pink colour will also warm the flower and help to ensure good seed set. The flowers are produced in succession over a few weeks. The bottom picture shows the deep pink veining on the reverse of the petals. That on the inside is more difficult to see in the picture. Even the 'love heart' dark green leaves have attractive veining. This is a plant which should be in any connoisseurs' top ten. The same plant was awarded the Forrest medal in Edinburgh in 2014 when it had only about a dozen flowers. Well done Sam for growing such a splendid pink mountain buttercup.



In the January 1982 edition of the Journal of the Scottish Rock Garden Club Margaret Taylor wrote an excellent article on Europe's Alpine *Ranunculus* which I have copied below

Alps. *R. parnassifolius* is always locally rare, growing on acid and on limestone screes.

A ten hour hike took us to the almost always apetalous form on the summit of Mt. Demant 2400 m (8000 ft) in the French Alps; while a short scramble up a scree above the Stelvio road, a mile below the summit on the Bormio side 2400 m (8000 ft) Italy, produced the squinny, transparent petalled type growing with a fairly showy *R. alpestris*. But for one of the most wonderful finds in Europe, take the little rack railway from Caralps to the Sanctuary of Nuria, in the Spanish Pyrenees. There again at 2400 m (showing a peculiarly consistent altitude preference) on the most treacherous, loose slaty scree grows a large, full petalled form with pink veining both inside and out of the flower. Each plant is better than the last. Our daughters nick-named it the 'Mermaid plant' for tempting us farther out on to that constantly moving wet scree, on which a sensible climber would have roped up. *Ranunculus parnassifolius* 'Nuria form' keeps company with *Senecio leucophyllus* and *Adonis pyrenaica*. The hybrid *R. x flahaultii* (*R. parnassifolius* x *R. pyrenaicus*) is variable with white to pink, narrow to broad petals, also grows there. Nuria is well worth a visit. *Ranunculus parnassifolius* is easy in a trough or scree. Pot culture suits it also. It is a good multiplier. This is the species most often seen at Club Shows.

