

# THE ROCK GARDEN

The cover of the journal features a photograph of a rock garden. In the foreground, there are several purple flowers with white centers, growing on thick, green, succulent-like leaves. The flowers are arranged in clusters on tall, slender stems. In the background, a large, dark, rounded rock is visible, partially obscured by dark, dense foliage. The overall lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the leaves and the vibrant colors of the flowers.

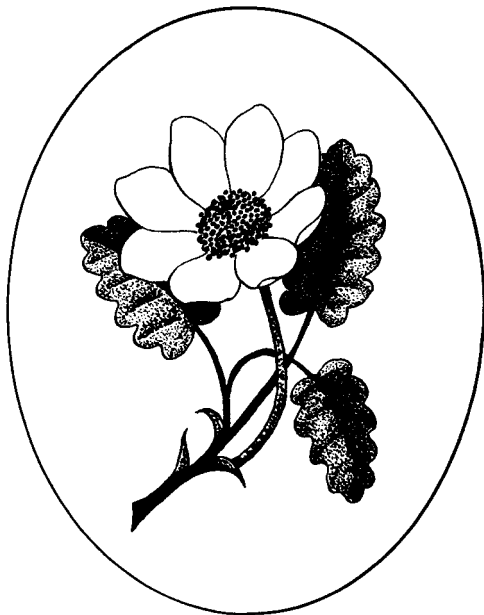
THE JOURNAL OF THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB

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Fig. 32 Dr Peter Semple, elected President of the Scottish Rock Garden Club, October 1994.

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**THE JOURNAL OF THE  
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Front cover: *Primula sinopurpurea*.

Back cover: Beima Shan in North-West Yunnan. R. J. D. McBeath.

# THE ROCK GARDEN

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*Edited by*  
Alastair McKelvie  
43 Rubislaw Park Crescent  
Aberdeen AB1 8BT

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## ***The Rock Garden***

is published twice yearly by the Scottish Rock Garden Club  
on 31 January and 30 June.

The Editor would welcome articles for ***The Rock Garden*** on any aspects of alpine and rock garden plants and their cultivation. Articles should follow the format of previous issues with colour transparencies and line drawings if appropriate.

Pen and ink drawings and vignettes are also welcome as are colour photographs in a vertical format for the covers.  
Articles should be typed in double spacing.

Contributors are asked to contact the Editor before submitting material in order to check suitability of the topic for publication.

The deadlines for contributions are 1 November for the January issue and 1 April for the June issue. These dates also apply to material for the Yearbook and Show Schedules.

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The Illustrations Manager  
F. Carrie  
West Haybogs Farmhouse  
Tough  
Alford  
Aberdeenshire AB33 8DU

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# PRESIDENT'S REVIEW

1993 - 1994

**A**FTER the tremendous success of our Diamond Jubilee Year the Club's activities settled back into the normal routine.

Before hibernating last autumn, a Late Bulb Display was organised at Aberdeen. It was well attended, and the participants enjoyed the Non-Competitive Bulb Display, members' slides and an entertaining lecture by Paul Christian. Thanks are due to the Aberdeen Group for hosting the event.

The Early Bulb Display in February at Dunblane was packed out, members having travelled long distances to shake off the miseries of the winter. We were enthralled by the display of bulbs. Brian Mathew delighted us with two very informative lectures "Dwarf Bulbs" and "Erythronium".

The Spring Shows maintained the high standard we have come to expect from the exhibitors and trade stands. We are indebted to our hardworking Show Secretaries and their Committees for all the time and effort which goes on behind the scenes to make our shows successful. The judges' tasks do not get any easier; they do a magnificent job for us and we appreciate it no matter how much we agree or disagree with their decisions.

The Alpine Garden Society Salver for the highest number of first prize points in Section One was awarded for the 6th time to Margaret and Ian Young from Aberdeen – but it was a close run victory this year. Who is going to give them a run for the Salver next year? The Rutland Salver for the highest aggregate number of first prize points in Section Two was awarded in its second year to Cathie and Barry Caudwell from Abernyte.

The Golden Jubilee Salver this year was awarded to Bill MacKenzie our sole surviving Founder Member who has given great support and service to the Club over the years culminating in his gift of the Rutland Salver which is to encourage Section Two exhibitors. At the start of the year Bill was made a Life member.

Following the success of the Diamond Jubilee Garden Visits, we continued the scheme this year whereby members were invited to visit gardens in the Edinburgh area at the end of May. I sincerely hope that members from other groups took full advantage of this opportunity to see how fellow members had designed their gardens. Thank you to the garden owners. It is a great deal of hard work preparing a garden for a Club visit, I hope the exercise proved rewarding.

Publicity continued to play a vital part throughout the year. I wish to pay tribute to our Publicity Manager Sandy Leven for his input to the Club and for stage managing all the events where our publicity boards appeared over the year. Several Groups put up Publicity Stands at events outwith our shows and the Ayrshire Group won the trophy for the Best Amateur Stand at the Ayr Flower Show in August. Well done. I thank all the Groups for their involvement in publicity.

The Discussion Weekend returned to St Andrews where Ian Douglas and his Group provided an interesting programme. Our reputation as a friendly Club was maintained, as we had several first-timers who wrote to me saying how much they had enjoyed our friendly and relaxed weekend.

Last year has been a period in which a number of outstanding members have passed away. Sir George Taylor (our Honorary President), Mary Findlay (Ayr Group), Esther King (Kirkcudbright Group), Jack Crosland and Alec Duguid (Aberdeen Group), Brenda Anderson and Georgina Blackwood (Angus Group), Lionel Bacon, and Mr King a former Auditor. Each in their own way gave a great deal to the Club that we have all grown to love. They were part of the Club's history and will be sadly missed.

The Club received a £4,000 legacy from the estate of the late W. J. Ford of Edinburgh. Your Council has agreed that this handsome legacy be used to benefit future Discussion Weekends by way of a special Fund. Donations have been received from Morecambe and Hexham Shows, Stirling Group and St Andrews Discussion Weekend auction, plus many other small donations. On your behalf I wish to express thanks for all these monies.

The Exploration Fund received four applications. Your Fund Committee decided to assist John Mitchell with his trip to China and Murray Rixon with his plant study in New Zealand. This fund was set up to award grants to help finance projects with particular emphasis on rock garden plants, I trust we will receive feed-back from these recipients.

Our popular journal **The Rock Garden** lived up to expectations throughout the year. We are indebted to the contributors, the background Editorial Committee but more so to our Editors Carole and Ian Bainbridge for their untiring efforts on our behalf. They have done a marvellous job for us over the years and, like many other officers of the Club, have given up their valuable time to produce the high quality journal we all look forward to popping through the letterbox.

Membership continues to be in a healthy condition. The total

membership at 1 April 1994 was 4,418 made up as follows: Scotland 1,748; England, Wales and Ireland 1,548; Overseas 1,122. Since then we have enrolled over 250 members. Publicity is paying off.

Brian Hammond, Publications Manager, has repeated his success with his book sales. He now operates a "Wanted List" for members who are seeking out rare books not available through the normal outlets. He will put members in touch with sources where they may obtain these books. The Library and Slide Library are as popular as ever, and are necessary functions within our Club. We cannot all afford to own the range of books available, and some members do not take slides so we must have these facilities available to the membership at large, no matter how few requests are made.

Evelyn Stevens has now become Stirling Group Convener succeeding Hazel Smith, and Mike Hopkins has taken over Con-venership of Aberdeen Group from David Atkinson, My thanks to Hazel and David for their work within their respective groups.

We now have a new group, the Elgin Group. Iain Smith is prepared to nurse this new venture along and we wish him every success with his enthusiastic band.

Finally, where would our Club be without the Secretary and Treasurer. Jan has done sterling work in modernising our meeting material and Ian has had to work extremely hard recently changing our accounting system, in conjunction with our new Auditor, Michael Braithwaite, in order to comply with new regulations.

Looking to the future, the 2001 International Conference initial preparations are underway. It will be held at Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh and the Scottish Rock Garden Club have to select the Conference Director. What a superb position and challenge for a member with a flair for organisation. I leave you with this thought in mind.

As I have now come to the end of my term as President and hand over the reins of office and the beautiful specially commissioned Presidential badge, I wish to say that it has been a wonderful three years for me, an honour and a privilege. An opportunity for me to put something back into the Club for all the years of pleasure and enjoyment I have had as a member since 1966.

My gratitude to everyone who has assisted me, particularly my Advisory Committee whose wisdom I could not have managed without on many occasions.

ELIZABETH IVEY



# STONE COLUMN



## FURTHER ALONG THE CHOSEN PATH

**I**T IS now more than a year since I retired from teaching to become a full-time gardener, and as Piaf sang “je ne regrette rien”. Poll says that I am only really happy if I am getting myself thoroughly dirty. Now I can have long hair, get muddy every day, and generally grow old disgracefully. Although it has been very tough going these past 12 months, we are absolutely certain that we made the right choice in staying put and making the Askival garden self-supporting. I used to joke about going back to school for a rest; now, as Poll is quick to remind me, there are no coffee breaks. Be this as it may, more of the same hardly makes for interesting reading, so perhaps we should skate, rather more rapidly than usual, over the customary diary section at the start of our Column. Orchard frame no.3, at 1.4m×16.5m, a slightly longer twin to no.2, was completed in mid-August and, as I write in October, turf-lifting is almost completed, there only remaining a couple of metres along the site of frame no.4. It’s been a very long boring job, how much easier to have simply put down a woven ground-cover plastic over the entire area. Having so little soil over much of the rest of the garden we felt we could not afford the luxury of abandoning any unnecessarily under frames. The orchard site had been chosen for our frame expansion because it was the only remaining area which was both relatively flat and undeveloped. However, by Murphy’s Law, it also held some of the best soil; before the war it had formed part of the vegetable garden for the then Convent next door. While removing the top 10 - 15cm of soil, I took the opportunity to level out various minor undulations.

The worst of these were caused by what we came to call the “Nun’s paths”, raised strips characterised by a layer of uniform gravel just under the turf, and a high concentration of bluebell bulbs, probably having seeded in after the garden was abandoned. Eliminating these has proved more difficult than we anticipated. As we reported previously, the area had been sprayed thoroughly with “Roundup” the previous summer, but some bluebells always remain dormant, skipping a year. Those lacking foliage to absorb the chemical were obviously unharmed, so I had to resort to hand-picking. Fortunately their white bulbs and any living roots are easy to spot; lifting each turf with a fork, I turn it over into a barrow and scarify the undersurface with the tines. Stones and bluebells are discarded into a bucket alongside, together with rusty nails, fragments of broken glass and pottery, clinkers, and other souvenirs of this area’s checkered history. Removing this top layer produced more soil than we had anticipated, far too much for the triangular raised bulb bed. The surplus has been dumped on the sites of two further raised terrace beds, the “Meconopsis snake” and the “Dwarf rhodo walk”, descriptions of which are perhaps best left until they are eventually completed and planted.

#### LAST YEAR’S WEATHER

Looking back at the past year, our impression in retrospect is of a cooler and drier than average growing season, especially towards the start, although it is currently ending with something of an Indian summer. There was still ski-ing on Aonach Mor, near Fort William, at the end of May; and fresh snow was reported on the 28th of August. From Askival, the view to the south-west, down the Great Glen, is dominated by the much lower mountains of the Glengarry Forest, reaching only 935m at Sron a’ Choire Ghairbh (the nose of the rough corrie), which is therefore barely a “Munro”. Nevertheless, the two snowbanks lying either side of the rock buttress which gives this mountain its name lingered into September, the first time we can recall this happening in the 30 years we have been in the village. These north-facing snowpatches whose reflective surfaces lie at a very oblique angle to the sun are, as a result, melted largely by warm rain not sunshine. Thus their persistence is a measure of the lack of mild westerly weather this summer. Another reliable indicator as to the kind of spring is the date of first mowing. The recommencement of growth is controlled by the soil temperature, and this in turn is determined by the average weather conditions. Here by Loch Ness we normally have to give our grass its first cut towards the end of April. In my garden

diaries, the earliest is 4 April, in 1980, while 1986 and 1992 tied for the latest with 16 May. 1994's first cut on 14 May is not significantly different from the tardiness record, clearly indicating a cold spring. Turning to precipitation, we must confess to being even more schizophrenic than usual about summer rainfall. The ideal would be overnight rain roughly twice a week. Drier than average weather obviously helped with my construction, but it only takes a week or so for our "garden on a gravel-pile" to show the first signs of drought. Luckily, such wet episodes as occurred during the summer were sufficient to keep the garden ticking over, helped by the generally moderate temperatures, and artificial watering was only necessary in the rain-shadow areas under our large trees. We understand however that few rain-bearing fronts penetrated as far as the east coast and gardeners over there had a far more trying time this year.

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*A garden visitor from near Dublin mentioned  
that his winter minimum had been  $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$ .  
I couldn't resist telling him that we had been  
down to that overnight on 26 - 27 May.*

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## SPRING FROSTS AND AUTUMN COLOUR

Back here at Askival, our most annoying climactic feature was the usual one of a late spring frost. A garden visitor from a mild area near Dublin, mentioned that his winter minimum had been  $-3^{\circ}\text{C}$ . I couldn't resist telling him that we had been down to that overnight on 26 - 27 May. All the usual things were damaged: *Rodgersia*, *Kirengeshoma*, *Magnolia*, and, of course, the young growth on many rhododendrons. Hardest hit this time was our *Davidia involucreata* which was completely defoliated. It did not produce a second flush of leaves until the end of July; and naturally no handkerchiefs this year. However, it is currently making up for this by a magnificently subtle display of autumn colour: the dark green leaves first blueing like a gun-barrel, changing by degrees to purplish, then coppery tones, before ending up a rich orange. All the various stages are represented simultaneously on different parts of the tree, according to exposure. When recommending trees and shrubs for autumn colour it is usual to concentrate on the highlights, such as the various Japanese maples with their bright if rather uniform reds, forgetting that a more gentle and varied tapestry of, for example, dying bracken, can be just as beautiful if far more difficult to describe. A scarlet accent makes for a more

satisfying picture when set amongst gentle shades of yellow, gold, and brown. As all photographers know, lighting can make all the difference. The soft coppery-orange of a sedge-covered West Highland hillside can be transformed to burnished bronze by the gentle fire of an October sunset, yet the scene has a softness totally lacking in the harsh light, brilliant colours, and sharp shadows of evening in the Great Basin. Each is equally beautiful in its own way. Incidentally, the standard reference book on trees, Bean, while warning that *Davidia* can be damaged by late frosts, makes no mention of its autumn colour. Here we find it as reliable as any and better than most. Many *Sorbus* were disappointing this year, dropping their leaves far too quickly, *S. sargentiana* being an exception. Raised from seed, only one plant proved to be the true species with its stout growth, thick twigs, prominent glutinous winter buds like those of a horse-chestnut, and the largest foliage of any *Sorbus* we grow. The others, of which we kept three, are hybrids, probably with the common rowan, but are worth growing for their superior foliage and brighter autumn tints.

#### OUT IN THE WORLD

Now that, apart from each other, growing plants is our life, it would be very easy to become rather introverted, and so it is essential that we travel, if only to give me something to write about, other than the Askival garden. Autumn colour also figured largely in our

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*... far, far too much food but primarily this  
was a break to stop us working*

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trip away this year: two weeks in France in early October. A little hill-walking in the acid volcanic Auvergne, so like Scotland, and across the Rhone in the contrasting limestone Alps south of Grenoble, some seed collecting, and far, far, too much food, but primarily this was a break simply to stop us working. On the way we called on an old friend in Belgium, Jules Fouarge, whose garden on a north-facing slope just above the Meuse near Liege has a relatively cool and moist microclimate. His raised beds with their outcrops and carefully varied top-dressings reflect something of the Czech style of crevice gardening. Jules loves gentians, especially the *Acaulis* group which were much in evidence. Gesneriads obviously enjoy the shady side of the rock garden overlooking the drive; the rosettes of *Ramonda myconi* were quite magnificent. Jules also has a scree frame, or covered raised bed, wherein alpinists requiring winter

cover are planted out, and an alpine-house closely paralleling Michael Kammerlander's arrangement at Wurzburg. One side is the usual plunge bench for potted specimens and propagation, the other a tufa-wall. These latter seem to be breeding on the Continent, but Jules' wall has evolved into a less regular structure, with a greater variety of crevices, which we find more to our personal taste. There were also differences in content, *Dionysia* is Michael's passion, the genus totally dominating his wall when we saw it in 1991 (see **The Rock Garden** 1992, No.89, p.390). Jules' speciality is *Primula allionii* and he is an authority on the distribution and variation of this classic alpine-house species in the wild. Since they are chasmophytes, or cliff-dwelling plants, we feel that a tufa wall makes a far more appropriate, and aesthetically pleasing, setting for his large collection of cultivars than rows of pots.

As we have often said, one of the most compelling features of this addiction is that alpine gardeners never stop learning. We should never be afraid to borrow each other's ideas, developing them if necessary to suit our own garden conditions. Jules' garden illustrates this perfectly: not mere imitation, but evolution.

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*... advice to us by the late Alex Duguid:  
never to repot after the middle of August*

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## NO HALF-MEASURES IN THE POTTING SHED

By staying at home during high summer this year Poll was able to catch up on her accumulated backlog of propagating and frame rationalisation while I could continue with my building work. One more summer season should see this construction phase completed; with the necessary infrastructure in place we can return to real gardening, and then the fun will really start. Also, on wet days during July and early August I was able to join Poll in the potting-shed and repot the entire contents of the so-called "scree frame". This raised frame in the "old nursery" is our equivalent of an alpine-house, and contains most of our specimen plants, over five hundred pots in all. I must confess that many of these had not been disturbed for four or five years, a situation which had arisen largely as a result of our field-trips each July. One of the earliest and most important pieces of advice we were given was by the late Alex Duguid: never to repot anything after the middle of August, so that the plant can repair the inevitable root damage and settle into the new compost before the onset of the Highland winter. (This advice obviously does not apply to bulbs, nor is it really relevant if

you live in Cornwall.) There never seemed to be time to repot established plants in the last minute rush before our trips, seedlings took priority, and on our return the weeding backlog demanded attention. These larger pot plants had, however, been fed each spring by sprinkling a very little high potash granular fertiliser onto their pots. The first time we did this, we were rather concerned about possible foliage-burn, but have noticed no ill effects. We now regularly fertilise our troughs this way instead of using a liquid feed, which we feel can wash straight out again in our conditions. Leaching is exacerbated by the nature of our scree compost which contains over 50% of 5-6mm chippings. One current trend in container composts is to provide the necessary high air-filled porosity by using a coarse grade of fibrous peat, or equivalent, thus giving a lightweight medium. Difficulties can occur, however, when it comes to repot out of them, especially if the plant is at all pot-bound. The roots become so enmeshed with the peat that they are almost impossible to untangle without causing extensive damage. This procedure is less traumatic if the compost contains a high proportion of chippings. We put a light over plants to be repotted and allow them to dry somewhat, but not so far that they wilt. This can require careful judgement and monitoring. Also, having dry top-growth means that compost will not stick to it and subsequently dirty the new top-dressing when watering in. When a plant has dried sufficiently the bulk of the compost should fall away when it is gently tipped out of its pot over a shallow container. If it does not because it is still too moist, then the rootball can always be slipped back and allowed a further few days drying. All too often with our older plants I had to tease the roots apart gently, either by hand or by combing them with a dinner fork cut down to two prongs, our version of a "widger". To perform this task successfully requires true green fingers, and not a little courage. Inevitably, some root-systems are very much easier to deal with than others. The thong-like *Ranunculi* are bare-rooted without difficulty, simple to divide, discarding any old moribund parts, and respond very rapidly to fresh compost. *Soldanellas* are at the other extreme: a dense mass of fibrous root beneath a tangled mat of rhizomes. There are really only two courses of action, either just scarify the outside of the rootball and pot on into a larger container as one would a rhododendron, or pull the whole thing to pieces. The former can only be a temporary solution, and in our experience leads to some very large pot plants which do not flower sufficiently well to justify their space in the frame. And so: courage, mon brave! (Sorry girls.)

## WILLOW PATTERN GARDENING

There is no doubt that one of the great features of gardening in Scotland is the comparative ease with which one can grow the autumn-flowering gentians of the *Ornata* group. When early October is mild and dry, they are, to quote one recent visitor from the south, “fantastic”. If, on the other hand, the autumn is wet and stormy, then they can be totally frustrating, some patches going straight from a forest of buds, which promise so much, to a brown soggy carpet without ever really opening. The various cultivars we grow vary greatly in this respect, some respond simply to temperature and will open during periods of warm rain, while others require direct sunshine. Once open, some stay open until the flower fades, others have blooms that can open and close several times. Closing in response to fading light is often extremely rapid: Poll moved a pot of Peter Cox’s recent introduction of a “white” *Gentiana* aff. *hexaphyllalarethusae* into the shade in order to try and

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*One great feature of gardening in Scotland is the comparative ease with which one can grow autumn-flowering gentians of the Ornata group*

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capture on film its subtle banding of greeny-cream and palest pink, delicately lined and spotted in navy blue. By the time she had taken three or four shots, the corollas were already closing. Although this is quite a good grower, with rather more lust for life than our old pre-war *G. hexaphylla*, I rather doubt that it will ever make the sort of garden display we enjoyed in the top border this year. For this we can recommend the pale “Strathmore”, from amongst the many medium blues, “Kingfisher”, the true royal-blue “Elizabeth”, and as a bicolour “Coronation” with its striking white throat (see ***The Rock Garden***, 1993, No.91, p.129). All these should make dense ground covering mats, and flower early enough to escape the worst autumn weather. “Strathmore” has an interesting history. It appeared in 1984 at Ian Christie’s Kirriemuir nursery as a sport on a plant he was then growing as “Inverleith”, but is not in fact that cultivar. Thus its actual parentage is unknown. Of the many others we grow, “Devonhall Improved” is perhaps the brightest sky-blue, but it is not a strong grower, requiring regular division, so cannot be recommended for general garden use. On the other hand, “Christine Jean” spreads almost too freely, but it flowers late, the colour lacks brilliance, and it’s too close to straight *G. sino-ornata*. The reintroduction of this latter under CLD 1020 we

find a large-flowered, if rambling plant, resembling in this the old "Brin climbing form". However, when choosing autumn gentians it is worth noting that a cultivar which looks straggly in a pot, can spread and root down once liberated into the garden.

Staying with gentians for a while, we have not, unfortunately, found the slender upright *G. trichotoma* easy to grow. Although the upper border is in full sun, our plants contracted botrytis which eventually caused them to rot off at the collar. Perhaps Wilkie is correct in that it requires a drier place than other Chinese gentians, and we should try it in the scree. It certainly does very well further east. The very distinctive *G. melandrifolia* we have had since 1982 (**The Rock Garden**, 1983, No.71, p.185) and it continues to illuminate the frame with turquoise fire every October. My pessimistic prediction that it blooms too late for seed has not proved to be entirely accurate; helped by hand-pollination, we do get a little in favourable seasons. A much more recent introduction which

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*Not all Chinese gentians are worth  
growing, especially the coarse cluster-heads  
of the G. tibetica type*

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promises to make a good garden plant is the tight mat-forming *G. caelestis* CLD 1087 (see p.172) which we are currently trialling in the upper border. Not all Chinese gentians are, however, worth growing, especially the coarse cluster-heads of the *G. tibetica* type, with their thick stems and closely packed little flowers of a dingy green-cream. The basal foliage closely resembles that of a large docken, and they are just as difficult to dig out.

Crossing the Pacific to western North America, there are some much nicer species available for the unbiased rock gardener, which have the added merit of blooming in the gap between the spring gentians of the Alps, and the autumn Asiatics. Their season commences in June when *G. platypetala* first opens its tubby light blue trumpets. Carried singly on upright stems of less than 15cm, these are paler towards the base, and delicately spotted internally with green. Since it is an endemic of the wet and wind-swept coastal regions of southern Alaska and northern British Columbia, one ought not to be surprised that it grows well in the Scottish Highlands. Two further upright-growing American members of the *Pneumonanthe* section, *G. calycosa* and *parryi*, also provide more refined midsummer alternatives to the ubiquitous and indestructible *G. septemfida*. Our plants of *G. parryi* were particularly good this



year. They originated from seed collected along the North Rim of the Grand Canyon by a friend from Arizona. Growing to around 20cm, this is a distinct species which need not be confused with any other as the cauline leaves increase in size upwards, the topmost clasping the stem to form a loose cup beneath the flowers. Equally distinctive, but this time for the flower colour, is *G. plurisetosa* from the Klamath ranges on either side of the California-Oregon border. The buds are the darkest indigo-blue of any gentian we know, almost black, the corolla lobes turning to royal blue as the flower opens (see Fig.34 p.124). Only described in 1990, and previously known to us simply as "Boyd's black Gentian", this species should not be confused with *G. setigera* (syn. *G. bisetaea*), another native of the Siskiyou area which differs in its basal rosette and stems decumbent at the base. We have this coming on from seed, and will assess its garden potential in due course. Last to flower of the Western *Pneumonanthe* gentians is *G. sceptrum* with good-sized blooms of medium blue, which only open in the sun. Much smaller and more slender than either the European *G. asclepiadea* or the Japanese *G. triflora*, a better perennial than *G. pneumonanthe* itself, and less fickle than *G. trichotoma*, this is a species well worth considering. It has started to self-sow gently at Askival.

The term "willow-pattern gardening" in the heading could be interpreted as meaning the use of either blue and white flowers, or Chinese plants, or both. Whether one regards *Meconopsis discigera* as partly a Chinese species or not depends on one's view of the political status of Tibet. Our plants are, or rather were, in fact Nepalese having been raised from seed collected as KEKE 543 in the Kangchenjunga region. This lived up to its reputation as a tricky species, for of those pricked out in August 1990, only two were still alive four years later. By then in 15cm pots, they had formed singular rosettes of incurving, golden-haired foliage. We were somewhat disconcerted to discover that both plants had decided to flower in September. As we had feared they proved to be monocarpic, dying after flowering, but, aided by cross-pollination, a little seed was set in spite of the lateness of the season. *M. discigera* is named for the dark fringed disc at the base of the style; but the divided stigma with its twisted lobes is equally unusual amongst meconopsis. A very wide range of flower colours has been reported in the wild, from purple to yellow. Our plants were just a good cream, but making a pleasing combination with the foliage.

Definitely extending into China, and then most definitely yellow, *Stellera chamaejasme* is another rare plant in cultivation whose

flowering is worth recording. This is a wide-ranging and unusual herbaceous member of the distinguished Daphne family, the Thymelaeaceae, from the Sino-Himalayan region. We well remember a mature plant of the white, pink-budded, form out on the scree at Branklyn many years ago, raised possibly from a Ludlow and Sherriff collection. Farther to the east, in Lijiang, the scented flowers can be either white or as in our plants, a rich golden yellow. We were lucky enough to be sent a few fresh seeds back in August 1987, under the number SBLE 041. Germinations are no longer recorded, but three seedlings were eventually potted in spring 1991. They have been potted on twice, most recently into deep 2-litre rose containers, bare-rooting each time as described above. The thick tap-roots are said to resent disturbance, but "it ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it" and the plant which flowered proceeded to set four seeds. Unfortunately they disappeared, probably taken by one of the wrens which work our frames; the price one pays for biological control of aphids and caterpillars. Although it has been grown outside further east, we feel that some protection from winter wet is indicated here. Potentially too large for a trough, our Stelleras are prime candidates for the winter-covered scree bed, should I ever escape from the computer long enough to build it.

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*The Stone Column file still bulges but it occurred to us that members might like to request topics for inclusion*

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## AN ANTIPODEAN POSTSCRIPT

The Stone Column file still bulges, but it occurred to us that members might like to request topics for inclusion. If you have any ideas please drop us a note, or telephone; feedback is always welcome. Meantime a year ago we wrote an item on "Some Antipodean heaths", as a result of which we received the following letter from Steve Newall in New Zealand, reproduced with permission.

"My Jan. '94 SRGC Journal has just arrived and I really appreciated your enthusiasm for Dracophyllums. Our native plants are often forgotten about here, and Dracophyllums are forgotten about the most. In the garden I have *D. fiordense*, *longifolium*, *menziesii*, *muscooides*, *prostratum*, *pubescens* and *uniflorum*.

I've not been a member of the SRGC very long, and I find your Stone Column very enjoyable. Six months in the life of a rock gardener appears to be similar, no matter which side of the world you live on. Take rabbits, for example. During the winter,



Fig. 33 *Dracophyllum oliveri* (p.127)

Steve Newall



Fig. 34 *Gentiana plurisetosa* (p.121)

Polly Stone

Fig. 35 *Pulsatilla vulgaris* ssp. *grandis* 'Budapest Blue' outside at Askival (p.156)

Polly Stone







Fig. 36 *Pulsatilla vulgaris* ssp. *grandis* 'Budapest Blue' shown by Fred Hunt (p.155)  
Fred Hunt

Fig. 37 *Pulsatilla vulgaris* ssp. *grandis* 'Budapest Blue' at Inshriach (p.156)  
John Lawson





Fig. 38 *Anemone pulsatilla* 'Budapest Var' AM 1936 (p.155)

rabbits and those other ultra-destructive, miserable, last on the list of God's creations, the hares, decimate my garden. 'I need a fence,' I said to Mandy (Mrs Newall). 'No way,' she replied. Perhaps I should digress a little here to describe our locality: Knobs Flat, population 7 (Newalls 4, others 3), lies 65km north of Te Anau and the nearest shop, in the Eglinton Valley, Fiordland National Park; on a grassy river flat, surrounded by mountains, with our own diesel generator for power. 'A fence would not look right,' she said.

Another winter arrived, and my garden grew shorter, as did my .22 ammunition, I couldn't take it anymore. I stopped for a short period of deep thought. 'Eureka, Children! If we have children, we will need a fence to stop them wandering off down to the river, falling over bluffs and getting lost in the bush.' You know all those Fiordland-type kiddie worries. Without further ado, I rushed inside and declared 'Let's start a family'. And what do you know, Corwin was born in March and Fiona two years later. Now I have my fence. Hurricane netting to keep the children in, and shade cloth to keep the rabbits and hares out.

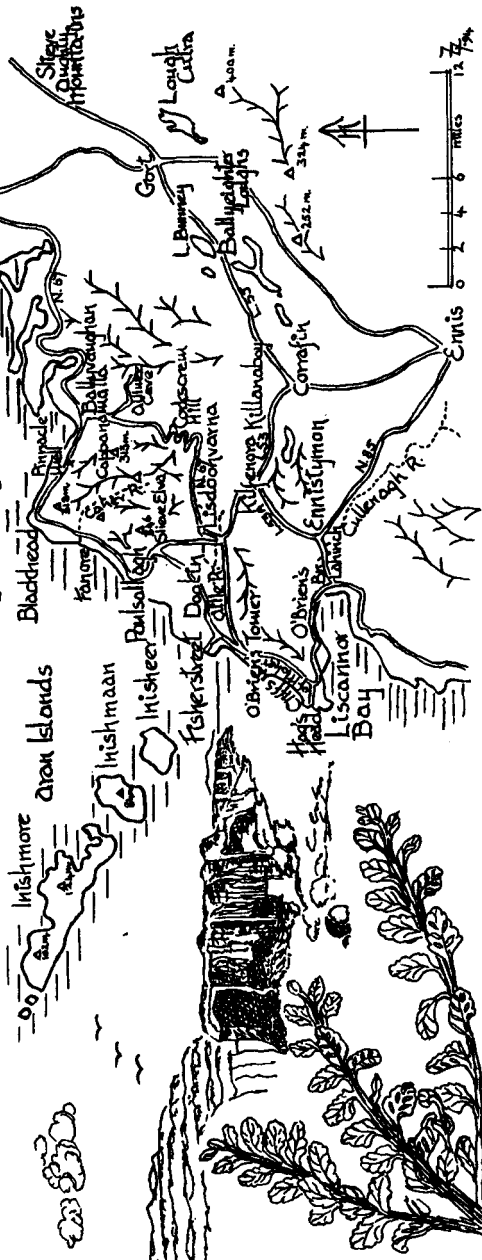
A happy ending you may think. But, no. Other creatures were lurking in the wings. Possums climb the fence and eat the herbaceous plants. The other creature is my good friend, two year old Corwin. He loves jumping off a rock on to the scree garden, with maximum points for landing on Daddy's *Ranunculus haastii piliferus*. When he's bored with this (or the *Ranunculus* is flat – whichever comes first) he swaps labels over in Daddy's seed trays and also removes plants from their pots. I'm sure there's a moral to this story, but for the moment it eludes me."

Thanks Steve, now we know how to keep *Ranunculus haastii*. For you, and all lovers of the distinctive rather than the gaudy, we include a picture of *Dracophyllum oliveri*. (Fig.33, p.123.) Cheers!

Galway Bay  
 Connemara  
 Galway Bay

to Roundstone  
 & Carrismore

to Connemara to the north  
 the Burren to the south



Inishmore  
 Aran Islands  
 Inishmaan  
 Inishkeeran

*Asplenium marinum*



# THE BURREN - THE GREAT ROCK

**The greenery and flowers of the Burren  
are vividly described in a visit  
to this enchanted landscape**

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by F E B FERNS

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**T**HE Great Rock presents an undulating and unbroken skyline to the eye, smoothed by the hand of time and the last glacial period. The glaciation rounded the hills but left little covering of soil when it began to melt down some 12,000 years ago. The strata of the hills stretches bare and uncompromising across the landscape in horizontal bands of limestone of varying shades of grey (Fig.39, p.159).

## EXPLORATORY READING

Making exploratory reading before visiting the Burren, I found two quotes in Praeger, in his still most readable book *A Tourist's Flora of the West of Ireland*, written in 1909. The first, hidden before the preface on those so little-read pages of any reference book, asks . . . "How many, ignorant of their own country, run eagerly into forreign regions, to search out and admire whatever curiosities are to be found; many of which are inferior to those which offer themselves to our eyes at home." I like the lispig 's' of our forebears. This is a translation by one Benjamin Stillingfleet of *Oratio de Necessitate Peregrinationum intra Patriam*, written by Linnaeus about 1741.

Wise words from one who was probably the first true field botanist besides much more, who went out on horseback to explore, rather than to sit at home and examine ill-preserved musty material smelling of mothballs, as too many early natural historians and herbalists had done before him.

The other quotation is attributed to one of Cromwell's officers and more directly, but not very technically, describes the rocky land form of the Burren. Returning from a reconnaissance he observed that this dry skeleton of a country was a . . . "savage land, yielding neither water enough to drown a man, nor wood enough to burn a man, nor soil enough to bury a man". The reader will note that neither reference is of Praeger's own words.

## THE FLORA

Why then are we told that Connemara and the Burren on the west coast of Ireland are unique?

The flora is said to be rich; about three-quarters of the flora of Ireland is found in the area. Taking only native species, out of some 900 for the whole island, 82% are to be found in this area. In the Burren, including Aran, an area of about 345km<sup>2</sup>, Webb and Scannell say that the following species have a greater density in Connemara and the Burren than the rest of Ireland:

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*Taking only native species, out of some 900 for the whole island, 82% are found in this area*

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<i>Adiantum capillus-veneris</i>	P. <i>Minuartia verna</i>
P. <i>Asperula cynanchica</i>	<i>Neotinia maculata</i>
<i>Cerastium arvense</i>	<i>Orobanche alba</i>
<i>Cystopteris fragilis</i>	<i>Polystichum aculeatum</i>
P. <i>Dryas octopetala</i>	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>
P. <i>Euphrasia salisburgensis</i>	P. <i>Rubia peregrina</i>
<i>Epipactis atrorubens</i>	P. <i>Rubus saxatilis</i>
P. <i>Galium sternerii</i>	P. <i>Saxifraga hypnoides</i>
P. <i>Gentiana verna</i>	P. <i>Sesleria albicans</i>
P. <i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	<i>Viola persicifolia</i>
<i>Limosella aquatica</i>	

Those marked with a letter 'P.' are specifically mentioned by Praeger as . . . "plants usually rare which attain here an immense profusion . . . sheets of flowers and foliage turn the grey rock into a botanical paradise in spring and summer". He goes on to say that all of those listed by him extend down to sea level and many to the hilltops. His list carries *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and *Asplenium ceterach*. He mentions other . . . "interesting ingredients of the flora which are locally abundant or frequent, namely":

<i>Ajuga pyramidalis</i>	<i>Neotinia maculata</i>
<i>Epipactis atro-rubens</i>	(first recorded 1880 . . . "on a rocky plateau at the base of the Glanquin Hills")
<i>Filipendula vulgaris</i>	<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>
(first recorded in 1735 . . . "it grows wild in the barony of Burren")	<i>Orobanche alba</i>
<i>Galium boreale</i>	<i>Potentilla fruticosa</i>
<i>Helianthemum canum</i>	<i>Pyrola media</i>
	<i>Saxifraga rosacea</i>
	<i>Taxus baccata</i>
<i>Juniperus nana</i>	<i>Spiranthes spiralis</i>

He comments that the . . . “commingling in these lists of northern and alpine types such as *Dryas*, *Arctostaphylos*, *Euphrasia*, and *Ajuga*, with southern types such as *Neotinia*, and *Adiantum* is a very remarkable feature. Since his writing on Irish flora extended from 1895 to 1951, maybe his earlier observations and continuing influence coloured the thinking of subsequent writers. As an amateur, and having found most of the above listed plants on a five-day visit to

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“*commingling of northern and alpine types  
with southern is a very remarkable feature*”

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the Burren in early June, with all due deference to authority, I find myself thinking that one maidenhair fern and an insignificant orchid do not make a summer; not even when *Rubia peregrina* is added to make a trinity of swallows. The paradox remains.

#### THE PROBLEM OF DISTRIBUTION

I wonder how an area, the greatest height being 329m, mainly comprised of carboniferous limestone, smoothed and hammered by intense glaciation and weathering, evidenced by huge snowball-like erratics, swallow holes, caves, grikes and underground rivers, carries, in some places, plants which formerly had a wider distribution and are thought only to survive where the climate has been warm; that is to say, free from lasting frost for many centuries, nay millenia; namely what we call, rather broadly, a Mediterranean climate. The northern distribution of the wild madder, on the west of Ireland is limited fairly accurately by the January isotherm for 5°C; a temperature about the same as that for Rome.

On the west of Ireland seeds of northern plants could have been carried down in glacier debris and survived to germinate. The *Adiantum*, *Neotinia* and *Rubia* could have survived in pockets of warmth created by the proximity of the Atlantic Ocean, as survivors of an earlier flora, in the same way that the boreal flora survived on nunataks (sun warmed rocky places, free from ice in an otherwise icebound landscape).

I am not competent to elaborate, but there seems to be a conflict in the explanations given, for the existence and exuberance of those species requiring a frost-free environment and those which can survive icebound conditions and recolonise when the ice recedes. There is also another factor which must be recognised; this was pointed out by N. Colgan in 1900, a recognised and critical Irish botanist, which may be summed up by saying that uncon-

sidered trifles abroad can become objects of unbounded enthusiasm at home. *Eritrichium nanum*, Farrer's 'King of the Alps', might be a good example. Flowering in a 3cm diameter circle on the show bench; just stand by and listen to the exclamations of delight, when there are sheets of it on flat and windy passes in the American Rocky mountains and it is quite plentiful in the Alps in the right places. I know that is not the example that Colgan would have given in the year 1900; he would probably have chosen *Dryas*.

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*Unconsidered trifles abroad can become  
objects of unbounded enthusiasm at home*

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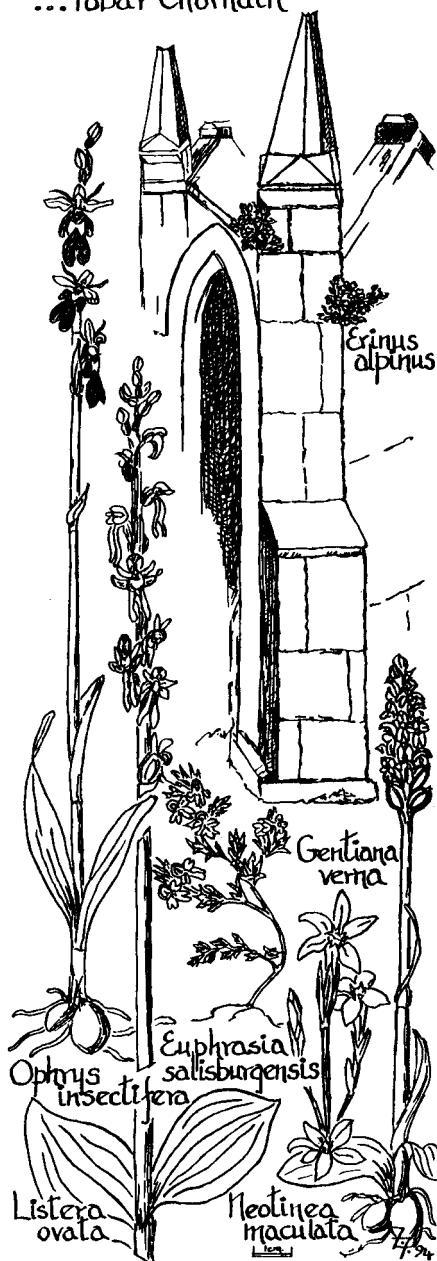
Those of us who grow alpine and rock plants in captivity know that many of those thought to be tender or in need of cossetting, prove to be quite happy to fend for themselves in open rock garden conditions at sea level at home; though the *Eritrichium* and a few others remain intransigent. So, the existence of flourishing alpine-arctic types at sea level is not really so extraordinary; any more than the survival of species thought to need warmer conditions.

Webb and Scannell writing about 80 years later, point out that *Dryas* is the only real arctic alpine of the Burren plants; that *Ajuga pyramidalis* is perhaps better classed as boreal-montane and *Gentiana verna* as a modified alpine, adding the comment on the plants they mention . . . "why they should flourish so much more exuberantly in the Burren than elsewhere in Ireland is not at all clear. We must confess that a general explanation of the Burren flora is still to seek." This search would have to take into account a few species from the south-western European group found in Kerry and Cork, mentioned by Praeger and others, which are scattered around the country, such as the Irish heaths, none of which are yet known to occur in the Burren. Perhaps it is something to do with the leprechauns pushing those huge snowballs of limestone rock, taller than a man, to within sight and sound of the Atlantic Ocean when playing games with the Burren environment. Perhaps it never has been as icebound as originally supposed, but in terms of scale it must be admitted when compared with say Malham in Yorkshire that the area is vast.

## FOREIGN INTRODUCTIONS

Be all that as it may not, there are other signs of tricks being played by the little people by the introduction of foreign species. These are worth looking for and recording. Passing along the coast

The Pinnacle Well  
...Tobar Chornáin



road from Ballyvaughan to Blackhead, at the Pinnacle Well on the north-east of Cappanawalla there is a pull in; on the walls of the well-head *Erinus alpinus* is in flower in June. The records show that it was first seen about 1939. It is worth meandering for a little way up the hill behind the well; *Euphrasia salisburgensis* can be found there along with other more colourful friends, like the cranesbill, birdsfoot trefoil, burnet rose and hart's-tongue fern, even a late gentian and butterwort; this one is *Pinguicula vulgaris*. The rare and more spectacular *Pinguicula grandiflora* was first recorded by Praeger himself in 1903, somewhere near Lisdoonvarna, a record looked upon with suspicion for many years as more likely to be garden escape. However, in 1949, it was discovered growing on this very hill on the south-east face. It is said to be common in Kerry and Cork. Further along the road *Fuchsia magellanica*, another stranger on the shore, grows on the seaward side of the road; like *Tritonia* x *crococsmiflora*, montbretia of gardens, and *Fuchsia magellanica* var. *riccartonii*, a sterile plant; for that matter all to be found in Britain too. These are hardly rock garden plants

even in the broadest sense, but I mention them because the garden escapologists often come from a milder climate or different environment from that to which we are used.

Their presence emphasises the climate and conditions, when a westerly gale is blowing and an anorak is necessary cover even on a sunny June day. Whenever I am on new ground I look for the foreigners; some have acquired the status of natives and others have become downright weeds, like the yellow *Oxalis pes-caprae* of the Cape which turns fields and olive groves on northern Mediterranean shores yellow in spring. Others in the Burren-Connemara area, like *Sisyrinchium californicum* of North America, which occurs further north in Connemara, can well be seen further south by the end of this century: plants migrate as well as animals. *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *babingtonii* is reported from Aran but not so much in the Burren. It is a controversial plant as to its origin; whether it is a plant of cultivation or a true native, it is closely related to the leek of horticulture; again not a rock plant or alpine but one should look at the anomalies and not be blinkered by an over specialised interest.

Of more interest perhaps than the obvious garden escapologists are the plants considered by and reported as rare in the records.

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*The small toadflax is now probably extinct  
caused by systematic spraying with weedkiller*

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These are often so small and insignificant that they are overlooked and therefore fair game for the informed rock and alpine plant hunter; adding zest to the hunt. *Chaenorhinum minus*, the small toadflax, was reported in 1896. Webb and Scannell suggest that it is now probably extinct, its demise caused by the systematic spraying of railway lines with weedkiller from about 1939. For some reason it never got a firm hold in the west, which is hard to believe of any toadflax. *Cymbalaria muralis* also has a tenuous hold. It is found on all three Aran isles, Inisheer, Inishmaan and Inishmore and on walls around Galway city, but, because the species is accepted as endemic to southern Europe and western Asia, it is considered something of an alien. Though a plant of limestone it has not been recorded for the Burren. *Asplenium septentrionale*, the fork tongued spleenwort, was found by two amateur botanists in 1966 on Errisberg near Roundstone on the north-west side of Galway Bay and only one plant of *Cryptogramma crispa*, the Parsley fern, was found in Connemara in 1976. The total recorded count in Ireland is I believe

only 10 or 11 plants in all. Other rarities or plants which have not been seen recently on the Burren include *Arenaria norvegica*. *Ajuga pyramidalis* was spotted by an experienced Irish botanist on the seaward side of the road between Poulsallagh and Blackhead, when we were there, albeit a miserable looking little plant, not in flower. Its recognised station is at Poulsallagh with another near Doonloughan in south-west Connemara. It is not known elsewhere in Ireland.

Webb and Scannell observe that it has an odd distribution for a boreal-montane plant, all the stations being close to sea level. They add . . . "It is a biennial, and its abundance varies from year to year". Flora Europaea says that it is a "rhizomatous perennial". It does not seem very happy in its Irish living quarters.

## WHERE TO GO

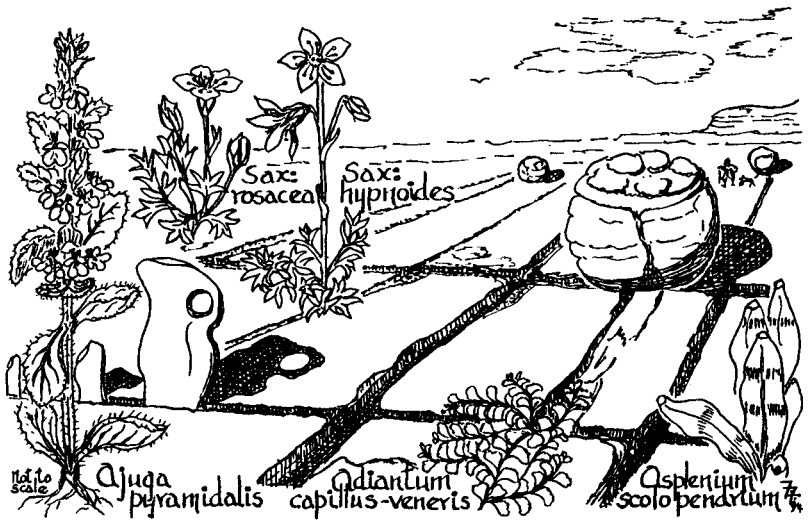
We never visited the Aran islands, partly because my copy of Praeger, liberally underlined and annotated by previous users, carried the pencilled note . . . "Not worth while". Something always has to go. Enquiry showed that there was insufficient time to do justice to Inishmore, the largest of the islands, on a day's boat trip. Neither did we visit the Cliffs of Moher. *Rhodiola rosea* and *Viola lutea* can be found in that area, eight kilometres of near vertical rock from

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*We stopped once to walk into a field liberally  
sprinkled with Saxifraga hypnoides*

---

Hag's Head to O'Brien's Tower. Again the time available did not seem to merit a visit when the Pousallagh - Blackhead stretch called for attention. Also the same annotator had added the information . . . "avoid road Lisdoonvarna to Ballyvaughan and Lehinch . . . coast road much better"; that may be true if only one has a day or two but both roads should be taken if time permits. The roads twist and turn a bit inland. We stopped once to walk into a field liberally sprinkled with *Saxifraga hypnoides*, further inland; superficially it looked like an ordinary green meadow with the saxifrage flowering on humps and bumps, until one fell as a leg went knee deep in a hollow, then any depression becomes a reminder that even inland on the hilltops the fissures of the bare seaward pavement are still there, covered by drift, making the terrain risky for grazing animals or impossible to plough and crop. I was told that this was the only station for the saxifrage in Ireland, though my reading indicates that it and *Cerastium arvense* associate in a broad band from



Ballivaughan to Killinaboy which covers a stretch of twelve miles.

The Mullaghmore lakes and turloughs should also be visited. At the right time of year, *Viola persicifolia* (*V. stagnina*) is said to cover the ground in sheets of china blue, when it flowers from May to mid-June. However, the turlough which I walked round had not begun to dry out, so the Turlough violet, with the narrower leaves, almost circular looking and paler blue flowers than *Viola canina*, could only present one or two forlorn flowers to face very grey skies and no birds sang. Does some wiseacre say: "Well you can't win them all"? A turlough is a shallow lake or lochan-sized depression full of water and wet in winter which normally dries out in summer to leave turf and the bleached skin of algae drying in the sun.

## ORCHIDS

There was the first stop of the visit, by a limestone knoll, when it was so wet we were going to the Aillwee Caves instead of botanising. Orchids popped up in variety everywhere. There were many *Orchis mascula* and *Listera ovata* in ones and twos, but none in a drift. I saw *Coeloglossum viride*, the Frog, and more impressive *Platanthera bifolia*, the Butterfly, but only single plants here and there. I rolled back under the barbed wire to examine the meadow on the other side of the road with the notice requesting me and the world in general to keep out. It looked promising; so, having first checked on the nature of the grazing animals in possession, I clambered over the wall . . . nothing new . . . I walked on, until to my joy for my deliberate trespassing I found *Ophrys insectifera*; just a single plant with three



flowers. I had long ago given up hope of ever finding it in the wild. All that aside, I must say objectively, that it is the most insignificant ophrys that I have ever seen, with a more than ordinary flower the colour of Guinness, but without the other attractions of Guinness. Linnaeus, I believe gave up trying to sort out the genus and classified the lot under *Ophrys insectifera*; now the variations on the theme of ophrys fill volumes.

## HUNTING IN THE GRIKES

When the sun shines, the Burren plants bask in it, even algae flourish in little wet hollows in the rock. These serve as a starting point for the growth of mosses and seedlings, forming a turf by trapping blown debris and sand in which caespitose rock plants can grow. The more long living perennials, however, need established drift soils and turf or the shelter of hollows, even of deep fissures or grikes. Hunting for plants in grikes becomes addictive. One begins leaping and bouncing from one slot to another peering down dark crevices in the flat rock. Where the pavement is rough and broken, only dwarfed shrubs meet the eye, *Prunus spinosa*, blackthorn, *Rose pimpinellifolia*, burnet rose, and *Teucrium scorodonia*, wood sage, with abundant hazel forming a kind of macquis in some places. Where it presents a smooth soilless aspect,

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*Search for maidenhair fern in joints which can't be  
sounded with the length of an arm and walking stick*

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especially nearer the shore, hart's-tongue fern leaves pick out the primary joints in the rock with long yellow-green bands of colour; soil-filled hollows are filled with different greens, spotted with the bright yellow flowers of bird's-foot trefoil and still one searches for maidenhair fern deep in joints, the bottom of which cannot be sounded with the length of an arm and a walking stick.

One such area, on a sunny afternoon, when the wind was blowing the usual brisk westerly, making everything shiver; a low flat stretch of pavement running down to the seashore, near Poul-sallagh, yielded the other mossy Irish saxifrage, *Saxifraga rosacea*; this one carries its buds and flowers upright, facing the sky.

At first glance it looks very like *Saxifraga hypnoides*, until one remembers that the latter has nodding buds. *Minuartia verna*, a little white sandwort, holds bravely still for the photographer; not so *Helianthemum canum* where everything shakes in the slightest breeze; forcing the use of ISO 200 speed film and 1/250th sec.

shutter speed to get sufficient depth of field. It is a delicate straw yellow rock rose (Fig.40, p.159), garden-worthy in my opinion, not like the aggressive *Potentilla reptans*. *Potentilla fruticosa* is not to be found here. In fact all three of the above are reported as being very local in Ireland.

On the bare rock, a few erratics, the limestone snowballs, occur but do not seem to carry much plantlife. Another puzzling sight, whether of natural or man-made origin, are the single slabs of flat stone; sometimes short rows of up to half a dozen standing end on in the crevices in the pavement. All the plants to which after a day or two we have become used, flourish here. There is plenty of colour; the cheerful magenta-red of geranium, the yellow trefoil, and on one grassy bank, quite near the shore, the pale yellow of a patch of late flowering primrose. I will not compile another list, but *Solidago virgaurea* the golden rod, growing only 15cm tall, in perfect flower poked its flower heads just clear of the joints in the rock.

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*Grikes are the deep primary joints in the limestone: horizontal slabs are called clints*

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Noteworthy, because this variant at Poulsallagh is said to keep its dwarf habit in cultivation. Incidentally by definition, not to be found in the *O.E.D.*, grikes are the deep primary joints in the limestone rock including the shallower secondary fissures: horizontal slabs of stone are called clints.

Having exhausted my film and myself I wandered towards some very black rocks by the sea and found what at first I thought was a seaweed, but on closer inspection it proved to be *Asplenium marinum*, it is a large leaved spleenwort with quite leathery dark green seaweed-like leaves. I had never imagined that a spleenwort could grow so close to the sea.

#### ALPINES AT SEA LEVEL

I have to admit that sometimes I ask myself what I was doing on the west coast of Ireland looking for alpiners and rock plants on bare rock at sea level in a westerly breeze; surely I should have been gasping for breath, having plodded up a mountain to three thousand metres or so, looking for alpiners and rock plants on bare rock in a whistling wind. After all, the well trod mountain paths of Europe have much to offer, for the sheer glory of the view when the sky is blue besides the intricacy and beauty of the plant species. Yet, to me, another environment, another puzzle, has its everlasting pull and the greenery and the flowers are always there. Again, and

still again, I want to see them in their own chosen homes, where they have existed so much longer than our history books.

I am reminded of the words Tolkein put into the mouth of Bilbo when he wrote . . . “But not yet weary are our feet, still, round the corner we may meet, a sudden tree, a standing stone that none have seen but we alone. Tree and leaf, stone and grass, let them pass, let them pass” . . . I would add . . . Let them not be wantonly destroyed.

## BACKGROUND READING

Blamey, Marjorie and C. Grey-Wilson (1989): *The Illustrated Flora of Great Britain & Northern Ireland*. Hodder & Stoughton, London. Very useful, especially the colour drawings; plant names up to date but too bulky to carry in a haversack let alone the pocket.

Cunningham, George (1980): *Burren Journey West*. Shannonside Tourism, Limerick. This and other books by the same author give a useful picture of the area as an introduction, in particular the aerial photographs help to read the map; otherwise the approach is archaeological and historical.

Praeger, R. Ll. (1909): *A Tourist's Flora of the West of Ireland*. A well-constructed, illustrated and readable book. See also by the same author, *The Botanist in Ireland* (1934), Dublin.

Raven, John and Max Walters (1956): *Mountain Flowers*. New Naturalist Series. Collins. Besides covering the overall title matter this book carries an enlightening chapter on the “mountain flora”, if such it can be called, of Ireland.

Webb, D. A., J. P. Scannell et al. (1983): *Flora of Connemara and the Burren*. The Royal Dublin Society & Cambridge University Press. A most useful book for the serious botanist; not illustrated but specific on places and areas in which to find plants. Use with Blamey and Wilson and the relevant Michelin map.

# SHOW REPORTS 1994

## STIRLING - 26 March

THIS year's show was as usual held in the Albert Hall, recently refurbished. There was concern from some exhibitors early on with regard to the light but, once the spring morning sun was fully out and filled the hall, all fears, I think, were dispelled.

The George Forrest Medal was awarded to a plant from the Ranunculaceae family, *Pulsatilla* 'Budapest', with twelve large powder blue blooms set off by its globes of yellow stamens – this plant giving Fred Hunt his tenth Forrest Medal. He also won the Ben Ledi Trophy for best European plant with this same *Pulsatilla*.

The Institute of Quarrying Quaich for best non-European plant went to Evelyn Stevens with a fine plant of *Kelseya uniflora* covered in tiny starry red-centred white flowers.

The Carnegie Dunfermline Trophy, awarded for most points in Section I, remained local, going to Show Secretary, Sandy Leven. He still found time to prepare for and run the show and organise his own wonderful display of plants.

Primulas again dominated the show benches, mainly the European varieties, the Asiatics probably being late due to the long cold winter we have experienced this year. *Primula allionii* was represented in all its colour variations. The Spiller Trophy for best primula went to a glistening pale pink *Primula allionii* shown by Betty Craig, which also received a Certificate of Merit.

The Jubilee Class last year was such a success that it was decided to carry it on this year. Class A for Section I was won by Fred Hunt with his usual immaculate display of plants which included *Androsace carnea* x *pyrenaica*, *Primula allionii* 'Marjorie Wooster', *Fritillaria michailovskyi*, *Pulsatilla vernalis*, *Primula* 'Jean Hughes', and *Fritillaria pudica*.

Class B, in Section II, went north to Inchtute – to Barry and Cathy Cauldwell, with a lovely neat display of *Corydalis wendelboi*, *Draba polytricha*, *Sisyrinchium douglasii*, *Fritillaria pudica*, *Narcissus* 'Tete-a-Tete', and *Primula allionii*. Barry and Cathy also won the Fife County Trophy for the most points in Section II, making their journey from Perthshire well worthwhile.

Class 1 for three pans was won by Ian and Margaret Young of Aberdeen with three large pans – *Trillium hibbertsonii*, *Fritillaria bucharica* and *Narcissus watieri* (which had almost 90 scented blooms).

In the class for new, rare or difficult, Margaret and Henry Taylor won with an unusual member of the composite family, *Jurinella*

*moschus pinnatisecta* (JSH 919182) from seed collected in Armenia.

Bulbous classes are always a delight and this year was no exception. In the *Fritillaria* sections plants of note were *Fritillaria aurea* from Sandy Leven, and James Cobb showing the variation of this plant – Sandy's plant being a lower growing one, just above gravel level and James' being nine inches above gravel level, but both being equally floriferous.

*Corydalis* seem to be getting more popular as seen in the Fumariaceae classes with 23 exhibits in the two classes – *Corydalis solida incisa* forma *alba* shown by Fred Hunt, *Corydalis transylvanica* shown by Sandy Leven and James Cobb, being the most outstanding.

Saxifrage numbers were down this year again but Glassford Sprunt still managed to show a superb plant of *Saxifraga iranica*, fully flowered and not a bit of foliage showing.

Other plants which took the eye were *Pulsatilla vernalis* and *Pulsatilla rhodopea* – both grown from seed by Alan Furness of Hexham – and also a rather nice form of *Primula marginata* 'Shipton' very similar in leaf to 'Drakes Form' but much more floriferous – also shown by the same exhibitor.

Section III for the Junior Section was won by Helen Scott, Newport-on-Tay. It is encouraging to see youngsters keen on showing and I would hope this will continue.

Gold Medals were awarded to Lawrence Greenwood for his display of watercolour paintings, and to The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh for its display of plants.

SAM SUTHERLAND

## EDINBURGH - 9 April

The Forrest Medal was awarded to Margaret and Ian Young for a superb, large pan of *Trillium rivale*. They also received the Henry Tod Carnethy Quaich for the best bulb, corm or tuber in Section I with this plant.

Another fine plant of *T. rivale*, together with a *Pleione* 'Versailles' x *P. pogonioides* hybrid (deep cerise with orange-brown throat markings) and *Fritillaria crassifolia* (pale glaucous-green flowers with purple markings), won the Archibald Rose Bowl for the Youngs. Fred Hunt's runner-up exhibit included a striking plant of *Corydalis cava alba* with compact spikes of pure white flowers on contrasting dark purplish pedicels.

The Class for three pans of distinct plants raised from seed was won by the Youngs with *Fritillaria michaelovskyi*; *Narcissus bulbocodium* and *Trillium ovatum* var *hibbersonii*; the last a large plant with small pale pink flowers.

Several other classes were also won by the Youngs who were convincing winners of the Reid Rose Bowl for the highest points in Section I.

The six pan class was won by Henry and Margaret Taylor with a fine exhibit comprising *Corydalis* 'Highland Mist', a new hybrid raised by Fred Hunt; *Fritillaria nobilis*, dark wine red with spots; *Narcissus alpestris* with attractive pale yellow pendant flowers; *Primula* 'Fairy Rose', a *P. allioni* hybrid and *Veronica caespitosa* var *caespitosa*, pale lavender flowers and woolly greyish leaves. The group was completed by an interesting *Primula* hybrid, with very pale yellow flowers and thick leathery leaves, raised by the Taylors from *P. auricula albo-cincta* x *P. hirsuta alba*.

In the two pan exhibits, Sandy Leven won the *Primula allionii* class with nicely contrasting pans of 'Snowflake' and 'Hartside No.12'. The Asiatic *Primula* class was won by David Rankin with a very neat deep pink form of *P. petiolaris* and *P. sonchifolia*. Ray Fairburn was the winner of the American or European class with the white flowered 'Wharfedale Village' a relatively new cultivar which is turning out to be a good show plant and the excellent old stager 'Linda Pope'. The two pan class for androsaces was won by Fred and Monika Carrie with superb specimens of *A. x heeri* with fine pink flowers and *A. muscoidea* (CR 188).

In the single pan classes, Betty Craig did particularly well with her primulas winning the R. E. Cooper Drinking Cup for the best Asiatic primula with a very good deep pink form of *P. petiolaris* as well as taking the K. C. Corsar Challenge trophy for the best American or European primula with an outstanding large pan of an unnamed *P. allionii*. This plant was also awarded a Certificate of Merit. Other Certificates of Merit went to Glassford Sprunt for a fine large specimen of *Dionysia aretioides* 'Paul Furse' and to Sandy Leven for the attractive *Pleione* 'Shantung Apricot'. Other memorable plants were *Androsace sempervivoides*, a large pan covered with short-stemmed deep pink flowers shown by Mrs K. Rimmer, Ormskirk; *Dionysia microphylla*, very pale pink white-eyed flowers (Eric Watson); *Helichrysum pagophyllum*, a faultless silver-grey cushion (Fred Hunt); *Raoulia eximia*, col. Mt. Hutt, New Zealand, another fine compact cushion effectively shown against black coal-like grit (Margaret and Ian Young) and *Thlaspi biebersteinii* with neat heads of whiteish flowers and contrasting purple stems (Fred Carrie). A plant of the recently introduced *Veronica peduncularis* 'Georgia Blue' with deep gentian-blue flowers and bronze foliage was exhibited by Margaret and Henry Taylor.

The Kilbryde Cup for an arrangement of cut flowers and foliage

was again won by Stella and David Rankin with an attractive and interesting exhibit. In Section II the six pan class was won by Alec Lothian. His exhibit was also given the newly instituted Diamond Jubilee Award. The Bronze Medal for the most points in Section II was comprehensively won by George Young. He was also awarded the Midlothian Bowl for the best plant in the section with a good plant of *Trillium ovatum* var *hibbersonii*. The £10 prize for the best plant shown by a newcomer was won by Ewen Mason with a fine specimen of the striking red-flowered *Primula x pubescens* 'Freedom'.

A special exhibit of *Chionodoxa* species and hybrids was staged by Alan Dickinson.

The total number of plants shown was lower than last year as were attendance figures possibly due to the particularly cold weather. Quality and interest remained high, however.

IAN McNAUGHTON

### **NORTHUMBERLAND - 16 April**

On the day of the Show, the winds that had lashed the North-East died down and the sun shone. The change in the weather proved to be a good omen. It had been anticipated that there could be a record entry this year because no other show was being staged at the same time, anywhere. Extra staging was found to accommodate the plants. A total of 766 plants were on display and people travelled great distances with their prized possessions. The mixture of species was outstanding since the season in the south is more advanced than in Scotland.

The Forrest Medal was won by Geoff Rollinson, Holmfirth, for a superb *Androsace vandellii*. It was not an easy decision, for the judges, with so many other good plants to be considered, such as *Fritillaria bythinica* (Fred Hunt, Invergowrie) with over twenty flowering stems, each bearing two lime-green flowers. The same plant had received an Award of Merit a few years ago, and, today, it was awarded a Certificate of Merit. *Primula scotica* (J. Leven, Bolton) and *Primula elatior* ssp. *leucophylla* (John Richards, Hexham) were under consideration and were awarded a Certificate of Merit and an Award of Merit, respectively. The AGS medal for the large six pan class in the Open Section was deservedly won by Jeff Mawson, Dronfield, with a colourful array of excellent plants; *Androsace villosa*, *A. robusta*, *A. breviscapa*, *Draba mollissima*, *Fritillaria affinis*, *Saxifraga diapensioides* which received an Award of Merit and *S. porophylla*. The R. B. Cooke Plate for the most first prizes in Section I went to Fred Hunt who collected the Sandhoe Trophy for *Fritillaria tubiformis*, as well as the AGS medal for the small six pan

class. A local member, Terry Teal, Ryton, continued his success of the previous year and was awarded the Gordon Harrison Cup for the most first prize points in Section I, together with the Scottish Bronze Medal. The Cyril Barnes Trophy for most first prize points in Section C was collected by W. Ingleton, Cullercoats, another local member. The E. G. Watson Trophy was awarded to *Junellia minutifolia* (J. Forrest, Blackpool) which was flowering for the first time, from Patagonian seed sown in 1988. The Cyclamen Society Salver was given to *Cyclamen repandum* (Ivor Betteridge, Burton-on-Trent).

The Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee of the RHS met and, as to be expected from a show bulging at the seams with such good quality and choice plants, had an interesting task to decide the plants to receive merits and commendations. Some plants that were selected have already been mentioned, other worthy plants were: *Pulsatilla patens*, a rare plant, grown from Russian seed with flowers of delicate pale pink hairy tepals, gracefully arching above the leaves (Alan Furness, Hexham) received a Certificate of Cultural Commendation (CC); *Hippeastrum* sp. from Chile had almost sessile bright yellow flowers nestling among the leaves (J. Forrest, Blackpool) – Preliminary Commendation (PC); *Astragalus coccineus* with brilliant scarlet flowers (A. J. Papworth, Stevenage) – PC and CC; *Primula petiolaris* ‘Red Poll’ – AM (J. Dennis, Doncaster); *Astragalus simplicifolius* which is new to the show bench and has pink flowers with a deep magenta keel complementing the glaucous foliage – PC and CC (Alan Furness); pink flowered *Dionysia microphylla* x *involutrata* – PC (J. R. Dixon, East Leake).

Such a cosmopolitan mixture of plants, on show, satisfied the desires of most people and caused much envious comment. These plants included: the Japanese form of *Loiseleuria procumbens* (H. Roberts, Ashby de la Zouch); *Corydalis* ‘Highland Mist’ which is a new form (J. Christie); *Pteridophyllum racemosum* which was awarded the Farrer Medal in London (Mrs C. Coller, Norwich); *Primula auriculata* var. *albocincta* with strange mustard coloured flowers (G. Young, Stocksfield); *Raoulia hectori*, collected in New Zealand and sown in 1988 (J. Forrest); *Lamium eriocephalum* from Turkey with pale pink flowers and silvery green leaves (Eric Watson); *Primula pulchra* (J. Lever); *Ranunculus erysii* (Alan Furness who can always be relied upon to produce many interesting species); *Mertensia alpina* which is the smallest of all the species (J. Mullaney, Wakefield); *Phlox tumulosa*, an interesting flat form with white flowers and rare in cultivation (R. McMath, Poulton); *Anchusa caespitosa* (Mrs C. Coller); *Polemonium viscosum* (F. Hunt); *Primula magellanica*, like a



miniature white drumstick primula (J. Dennis). Fritillarias were well represented with magnificent plants, this year. Some have been mentioned and others included the almost black *Fritillaria lanceolata tristulis* (G. Sprunt, Bridge of Allan) and *F. atropurpurea* collected in the USA (J. Forrest). The miniature garden classes received many entries and the trough of Mrs Taylor, Slaggyford was excellent, containing dozens of plants in flower.

Each year one species seems to create a craving and this year was no exception. *Anemonella thalictroides* 'Schoaff's variety', with pale pink/violet flowers and maiden hair fern-like leaves seemed to be the plant that many growers would like. There were several on the bench.

The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh was awarded a Certificate of Merit for its display of twenty-seven plants, all of which were worthy of inspection. There was the purple *Viola cheiranthifolia* which is narrowly endemic to the Canary Islands; *Raoulia mammillaris* sown in 1976; the cobra-like *Arisaema griffithii* which you either love or hate as well as the very rare *Primula hazarica*.

Three artistic displays added to the enjoyment of the Show. Watercolour paintings of Lawrence Greenwood gained a gold medal. A fine display of photographs of flowers seen on the AGS tour to China, taken by David Millward, received a gold medal and photographs of two seasons in Nepal (Kath Baker) were awarded a Certificate of Merit. In all, a very successful Show with a record number of exhibitors, plants and public.

KATH BAKER

### GLASGOW - 7 May

Much like the regenerative miracle of spring itself, our wizards of cultivation seem to produce, if not out of a hat, then out of the depths of winter's drear decay and depression a spectacle of colour and rebirth that truly verges on the magical. The sheer force and presence of our spring shows seems to articulate rather than merely underline or reflect the season.

This year after a long, fairly cold winter which occasionally stirred memories of time before "the greenhouse effect", and after a March when 25cm of rain made even rebirth a rather soggy affair there was much to sing about on the showbench . . . Not least Fred Hunt's pan of *Fritillaria glauca* which deservedly won the Forrest Medal. The 20 or so yellow, pendant flowers on 10cm stems above immaculate, glaucous foliage demanded utter respect. Not only is Fred to be congratulated for growing to perfection this difficult American adobe species, but in presenting it in a 15cm pot in

Jubilee Class A he has surely given these 'democratic' classes the final stamp of approval and credibility.

In fact, the five superb entries in Jubilee Class A could stand as a microcosm of this corker of a show (the best since the 1988 Garden Festival one). The actual winners of this class, Margaret and Henry Taylor (Invergowrie), balanced difficulty and familiarity, form and colour, character and delicacy as felicitously as possible in a group which included *Primula forrestii*, the lilac *Thalictrum orientale*, the sprawling light pink *Phlox woodhousei* and the classic *Daphne petraea grandiflora*. Elsewhere in the same class Ian and Margaret Young (Aberdeen) showed a fine pink cushion of *Dianthus microlepis* 'Rivendell'; Sandy Leven's pot of *Fritillaria hermonis amana* (EKB 1034) displayed reptilian, jade green and brown bells and looked all the lovelier for it; Jean Wylie's (Dunblane) pan of *Androscae vandellii*, smothered in white flowers, reminded us why it is the quintessential high alpine; yet another American frit, *F. affinis* 'Sun Ray', from Fred Hunt's six, emphasised the incredible richness and class of this bulbous genus. All in all, 30 breathtaking beauties and a mini tour of the alpine world.

Onto their elder siblings – Class 1 and William Buchanan Memorial Rose bowl was won by the Youngs with a superb group of six pans. Certificates of Merit were awarded to the off-yellow *Clematis petrei* and to a very floriferous *Clematis marmoraria* x *C. cartmanii* 'Joe' (fit that onto a label with a blunt pencil). *Fritillaria pyrenaica*, as shown here by the Youngs, was dwarfer than the typical species and was given an Award of Merit pending a clonal name. *Erigeron* 'Canary Bird', *Gentiana acaulis* and *Daphne grandiflora* completed the sextet. Also in this class was a striking pot of *Corydalis flexuosa* 'China Blue' exhibited by Fred Hunt (Invergowrie), a plant which encapsulates the speedy process whereby new introductions travel from obscurity to established favourite in only a few seasons. On the same note, how long ago was it when crowds used to form round *Fritillaria michailovskyi*? Lest you wonder that the process might take on stultifying universality, remember that these are two fine, garden worthy plants; I don't envisage the day when we're all sick of the sight of another nototriche or rosulate viola.

Nonetheless, it is still the plants with pedigrees that bring in the silverware: an outstanding *Androsace cylindrica* helped Jean Wylie win Class 2 and the Henry Archibald Challenge Rose Bowl. Ian and Margaret Young's *Dactylorhiza elata* won the Charles M. Simpson Memorial Trophy for best orchid in the show. Those two great New Zealand cushions, *Raoulia eximia* and *Haastia pulvinaris*, also belonging to the Youngs, contributed to their taking home the William C.

Buchanan Challenge Cup in the new, rare or difficult class. The Ian Donald Memorial Trophy for best plant native to Scotland was won by the Taylors with a sumptuous pan of *Viola lutea* showing lovely variations in the flower markings; a fine pan of *Primula scotica*, shown by Anne and Viv Chambers, must have been a close runner-up.

Obversely, it is often the rare and unusual plants that quicken the pulse and redefine the perimeters of appreciation, and Glasgow typically offers much in this line. The yellow form of *Fritillaria acmopetala*, shown by Sandy Leven, takes this species up a few notches, while Glassford Sprunt's *F. biflora* 'Martha Roderick' – chocolate and cream bells – reaffirms its status as a class plant. Not often seen were the Rocky Mountain composite *Townsendia rothrockii* and the red/yellow *Aquilegia elegantula*, both exhibited by Ian and Carole Bainbridge. However, it is Margaret and Henry Taylor who never fail to amaze with their array of choice and novel items. Three of their Daphnes highlighted this uniquely; *D. hendersonii* 'Rose Bud', *D. cneorum pygmaea* and *D. c. pygmaea alba* . . . all wonderful and refreshing gems of this fickle genus. All of their European primulas, many of them hybrids of their own crossing and raising, were truly delightful, but it was a seed raised *Calceolaria uniflora* (*darwinii* as was) that caught the eye with flowers fully double the typical size. In class 3 they also showed the strange composite *Centaurea achtarovii* from the Pirin Mountains; out of the rosette of felted leaves arise the flowers, a central, fertile floret disc surrounded by a coronet of infertile lilac flowers. For these and many others, the Taylors won the Crawford Silver Challenge Cup for most first prize points in Section I.

Never was a Section II winner more thoroughly deserved than Alison Ward's tour de force of plants. In winning Jubilee Class B she showed six pans which were as accomplished as they were diverse: *Lewisia tweedyi*, *Fritillaria messanensis*, *Ranunculus parnassifolius*, *Dodecatheon meadia*, *Saxifraga callosa* and *Pulsatilla* 'Rubrum' all in splendid condition. Moreover, specimens like *Dactylorhiza incarnata pulchella* and *Ranunculus amplexicaulis* helped her to lift the James A. Wilson Trophy (most points in Section II) and the Bronze Medal. Elsewhere in Section II there were some fine plants, not least *Jankaea heidreichii*, raised from seed by Ian Brooker. Bob Edge's pans of *Primula ellisiae* and *Romulea tempskyana* were also first-rate as was Brian Davidson's *Shortia soldanelloides* 'Magna'.

JOHN LEE

## ABERDEEN - 21 May

For this late Show in what was an early season, entries were down

but the overall standard was high. Of particular interest was the number of unusual plants appearing on the benches.

In the Jubilee Class for six pans, Henry and Margaret Taylor won with an entry which included the uncommon *Phlox woodhousei* from Arizona with clear pink sprays of flowers and also the supremely garden-worthy *Corydalis flexuosa*.

In the three pan class, Fred Hunt showed an excellent pan of *Cypripedium calceolus* with 12 flowers which won the Forrest Medal (a difficult and subjective decision for the judges) and also a lovely pan of *Fritillaria liliacea*, 20cm tall with white drooping flowers which received a Certificate of Merit. Also in this class were *Globularia bellidoides*, a magnificent 25cm cushion like a lilac powder puff and *Androsace villosa arachnoidea*, 30cm across and completely covered in bloom.

Seed classes tend to bring new and unusual species. Edith Armistead showed the rare *Asyneuma trichostegium* from Turkey and the Wilsons from Aberdeen showed *Jankaea heldreichii*, sown in 1978 and flowering this year for the first time. It is always interesting to see plants from expeditions winning prizes. From the recent Chadwell & McKelvie expeditions to the Himalayas emerged *Primula macrophylla* (C&Mc 151), *Primula buryana* (C&Mc 144) and *Corydalis thyrsoflora* (C&Mc 503).

The Esslemont Quaich for rare and difficult plants is emerging as a trophy which brings out excellent plants. The Youngs from Aberdeen won with an entry which included the exceptionally difficult labiate, *Eriophyton wallichii*.

Grey-leaved plants can be a bit insipid but here we had *Argyroxiphium sandwichense monocephalum* with leaves like glistening silver swords and the splendid *Helichrysum* 'Arwar'.

Classes for American plants are always interesting. Perhaps the biggest surprise was to see a splendid plant of *Trillium grandiflorum* 'Flore-pleno' fail to win a prize. *Phlox nivalis* was eye-catching with drifts of white flowers over loose cushions.

*Daphne petraea* 'Grandiflora' was a splendid 20cm cushion with the leaves completely hidden by the flowers. Here was a plant which years ago would automatically have won a Forrest Medal but fashions change as in all things.

Ericaceous plants can always be relied upon for colour. It was interesting to note how much more straggly *Andromeda polifolia* was than its near form *nana*. *Phylliopsis* 'Coppelia' was a most striking deep pink while the white form of *Kalmiopsis leachiana* was quite breathtaking.

Rhododendrons were sparse in the Show; it was nice to see the

Simpson Salver go to a 30cm pan of 'Yaku Fairy' exhibited in Section II by Brian Bull which also won the Aberdeen Quaich for the best plant in Section II.

Bulbs were not abundant but there were some good specimens. Jean Wyllie's *Iris paradoxa* f. *choschab* from Turkey was a striking species with deep purple maroon falls.

Pleiones were mostly past but *P. aurita* with wide lilac/pink petals was magnificent shown by Glassford Sprunt and the Youngs.

Polemoniaceae is not commonly outstanding at Shows but the dwarf shrub *Collomia debilis larsenii* from North American wild-collected seed was conspicuous with striking striped lilac petals.

Primulaceae were sparse because of the late season and here again the top prize-winner was in Section II with B & C Caudwell winning the Craig Cup with *Primula reidii williamsii*. Robert Mackie won the special prize for a first-time exhibitor also with this species.

Roma Fiddes continues to produce lovely deep coloured gentians, this time *Gentiana alpina*, with deep blue goblets on nice short stalks. Ian Brooker also had a lovely *G. acaulis* with over 40 flowers.

'John's Special' seems to be the judges' favourite lewisia at the moment and this duly won when shown by Jean Wyllie but it was difficult to see why Ian Christie's *cotyledon* x *rediviva* cross with magnificent large pink flowers on short stalks failed to win any kind of prize.

The Youngs won a well-deserved Certificate of Merit for *Ramonda myconi* with 80 open flowers over lovely dark leaves. Also of a deep hue was Fred Hunt's *Meconopsis delavayi* with splendid deep velvet flowers.

For the first time ever the Walker of Portlethen trophy for the most points in Section I was shared, between the Youngs and Jean Wyllie.

Ronnie Loveland won the Bronze Medal for the most points in Section II with an entry which included *Corydalis flexuosa*, *Saxifraga 'Snowcap'* and *Townsendia formosa*.

The Special Prize for two pans in Section II was won by Ian Brooker with *Jankaea heldreichii* in a superb 'Long Tom' and *Daphne petraea* 'Grandiflora'.

Certificates of Merit were awarded to the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh for a display of plants which included a 40cm pan of *Lewisia 'Millardii'* full of large striped flowers and *Primula minor* Cox 6017 from south-west China, a 20cm pan of pale lilac flowers. Certificates of Merit also went to Bill Paton for a display of water-colours of Scottish native plants and to Heather Salzen for a display of paintings of alpine plants.

ALASTAIR McKELVIE

## ST ANDREWS - 24 & 25 September

After the glorious sunset of the Friday evening, Saturday dawned grey with a cold wind off the sea, but the quality of entries was high even if quantity was on the low side.

The Forrest Medal went to Carol McCutcheon's immaculate 30cm pan of *Gentiana depressa* grown from a Spencely cutting in 1986: the remarkable geometry of foliage and flowers was complemented by more than 60 sky blue flowers (Northern Ireland sky!). A *Cyclamen* with a tuber nearly 30cm in diameter earned a Certificate of Merit for Peter Semple but was it *africanum*, *hederifolium* or a cross between the two? Bending to appreciate a fine form of true *africanum* with attractively twisted petals shown by Sandy Leven (an Archibald collection), I caught a delicious whiff of the heather honey perfume from a pink *cilicium*. Ian and Margaret Young had glistening silver cushions which included a remarkably large *Haastia pulvinaris* from seed collected on Mount Teroko and sown in 1989. A contemporary *Raoulia eximia* from Mount Hutt was also in fine form and shown to advantage against a gravel of dark schist.

Local exhibitors were prominent and James Forbes of Dairsie had an excellent three pan exhibit including the distinctive *Rupicapnos africana*, which I find grows better from self-sown seedlings in the sand plunge than in pots. The sheen on the rosettes of *Argyroxiphium sandwichense*, raised from Jim Sutherland's collection, was intensely silver and the best plant exhibited was from Jim Cobb. Stalinists muttered darkly about ultimate size and lack of hardiness. The alpine credentials of *Hymenoxis subintegra* grown by Jean Wyllie from collected seed are not in doubt and a fine plant was on show.

In Section 2 there was was a distinctive natural presentation of high alpine cushions from Nick Bass, the plants apparently emerging from small boulders. The difficult high altitude form of *Saxifraga oppositifolia* known as *rudolphiana* caught my attention. I have not yet seen a good example in flower . . . perhaps next year?

PETER SEMPLE

# THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY'S ROCK GARDEN PLANT COMMITTEE

Recommendations made at Scottish Rock Garden Club Shows  
in 1994.

**BRAEPORT CENTRE, DUNBLANE - 19 February**

## **AWARDS TO PLANTS**

### ***Award of Merit***

To *Crocus cvijicii* shown as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition. Three pans were exhibited, one each by T. Glassford Sprunt, 17 Claremont Drive, Bridge of Allan; A. J. Leven, 2 Leighton Court, Dunblane and F. Hunt, 34 Morris Place, Invergowrie, Dundee.

To *Crocus sieberi* ssp. *sieberi* shown as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition by A. J. Leven.

To *Crocus sieberi* 'Violet Queen' shown as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition by Alexander J. Leven.

### ***Certificate of Preliminary Commendation***

To *Merendera trigyna* as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by J. H. A. Milne, 14 Riselaw Terrace, Edinburgh.

To *Crocus fleischeri* as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by F. Hunt.

To *Narcissus* 'Camoro' (*N. cantabricus* ssp. *monophyllus* x *romieuxii*) as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by J. & M. Young, 63 Craigton Road, Aberdeen. The award is subject to registration of the cultivar name.

To *Gymnospermium albertii* as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by the Regius Keeper, Royal Botanic Garden, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh.

To *Colchicum* sp. as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by the Regius Keeper, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. The award is subject to identification.

## **AWARD TO EXHIBITORS**

### ***Certificate of Cultural Commendation***

To F. Hunt, for a pan of *Crocus alatavicus* exhibited by F. Hunt.

To P. Semple, 103 Southbrae Drive, Glasgow for a plant of *Ranunculus calandrinioides* exhibited by Dr Semple.

To the Alpine Dept. staff, Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh for a plant of *Iris rosenbachiana* exhibited by the Regius Keeper.

## **ALBERT HALL, DUMBARTON ROAD, STIRLING - 26 March**

### **AWARD TO PLANTS**

#### **Award of Merit**

To *Primula marginata* 'Shipton' as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by A. R. Furness, St Luke's Cottage, North Road, Hexham, Northumberland.

To *Corydalis solida* ssp. *incisa* forma *alba* as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by F. Hunt.

To *Sisyrinchium douglasii* as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by Dr J. Richards, High Trees, South Park, Hexham, Northumberland.

### **AWARD TO EXHIBITORS**

#### **Certificate of Cultural Commendation**

To E. Stevens, The Linns, Sheriffmuir, Dunblane, Perthshire for a pan of *Kelseya uniflora* exhibited by E. Stevens.

To J. & M. Young, for a pan of *Narcissus watieri* exhibited by J. & M. Young.

To E. Craig, 9 Hillpark Road, Edinburgh for a pan of *Primula allionii* exhibited by E. Craig.

To F. Hunt, for a pan of *Fritillaria aurea* exhibited by F. Hunt.

## **MILNGAVIE TOWN HALL, MILNGAVIE, GLASGOW**

### **AWARDS TO PLANTS**

#### **Award of Merit**

To *Fritillaria pyrenaica* as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by J. & M. Young. The award is subject to the application of a cultivar name.

#### **Certificate of Preliminary Commendation**

To *Ranunculus* 'Gowrie' (*R. amplexicaulis* x *R. parnassifolius* (red form)) as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by R. J. Smyth, 239 Brenfield Road, Glasgow.

To *Clematis* hybrid cv. (*C. marmoraria* x *C. cartmanii* 'Joe') as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by J. & M. Young. The award is subject to the application of a cultivar name.



To *Clematis petrei* as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by J. & M. Young.

To *Daphne x hendersonii* 'Rose Bud' as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition, exhibited by H. & M. Taylor, 32 Morris Place, Invergowrie, Dundee.

#### **AWARDS TO EXHIBITORS**

##### ***Certificate of Cultural Commendation***

To R. J. Smyth for a pan of *Ranunculus* 'Gowrie' (*R. amplexicaulis* x *parnassifolius* (red form)) exhibited by R. J. Smyth.

To J. & M. Young for a plant of *Clematis petrei*, exhibited by J. & M. Young.

#### **DISCUSSION WEEKEND, ST ANDREWS UNIVERSITY - 24 September**

#### **AWARDS TO PLANTS**

##### ***Certificate of Preliminary Commendation***

To *Thymus* 'Highland Queen' as a hardy foliage plant for exhibition, exhibited by A. J. Leven.

#### **AWARDS TO EXHIBITORS**

##### ***Certificate of Cultural Commendation***

To P. Semple, for a pan of *Cyclamen hederifolium*.

### **THE JACK CROSLAND LECTURE**

The Aberdeenshire Group intend to hold an annual lecture in memory of that great grower, Jack Crosland. It is hoped that the date of the lecture will enable members outwith the Aberdeen area to attend.

The first Jack Crosland Lecture will be "Collecting and Introducing Bulbs" and will be given by Brian Mathew at the Late Bulb Display in Aberdeen on 7 October 1995. Full details are given in the Yearbook.

# DISCUSSION WEEKEND

1 - 3 September 1995

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The Discussion Weekend will be held in the  
Kelvin Conference Centre, West of Scotland Science Park,  
Maryhill Road, Glasgow G20 0TH

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## Friday 1 September

Evening Lecture - speaker and title to be arranged  
followed by Dwarf Bulb Group meeting

## Saturday 2 September

10 am Botanic Garden visit

12 noon Show opens

2.30 pm William Buchanan Memorial Lecture  
Jim Jermyn - Cultivation

4.15 pm Sir Peter Hutchison - title to be arranged

7.30 pm Conference Dinner  
After-dinner speaker

## Sunday 3 September

9.45 am E. Charles Nelson  
The shared flora of the Burren & Los Picos de Europa

11.30 am Henry & Margaret Taylor  
Peat, grit and manure

2.30 pm Harold Esslemont Lecture  
Tony Schilling - In the footsteps of Joseph Hooker

## Costs

RESIDENT: Friday dinner - Sunday afternoon tea .... £112  
Saturday lunch - Sunday afternoon tea . £83  
Sunday dinner - Monday breakfast ..... £29  
NON-RESIDENT: Saturday *or* Sunday day charge ..... £23  
(morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea)  
Saturday evening Conference Dinner .. £18

Payment must be made by 31 May 1995; an additional charge of £5 will be levied after that date. The number of delegates is limited to 150.

Bookings should be made on the form which can be found with the January issue of *The Rock Garden*. The booking, with the appropriate remittance made payable to the Scottish Rock Garden Club, should be sent to: **Mrs Anne Chambers, Sulven, Drumore Road, Killearn, Glasgow G63 9NX**. Accommodation for partners *not* attending the conference is available.

Anyone requiring further information about the weekend should contact Anne at the above address, enclosing an s.a.e.

# A QUEST FOR *PULSATILLA* 'BUDAPEST BLUE'

A search for the non-existent Holy Grail  
of the true (?) *Pulsatilla* 'Budapest'

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by MIKE STONE

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A LESSON I should have learned long since is that the further one delves into the taxonomy of many of our garden plants, the more complications one can uncover. This particular can of worms was opened at the 1994 Stirling Show, where Fred Hunt exhibited a truly magnificent *pulsatilla* under the name 'Buda Pest' (Fig.36, p.125). As is usual on such occasions, this superb plant triggered considerable discussion as to its name and antecedents. Back at home I turned to my reference books and started down what has turned out to be a long and confusing road. A couple of years ago Poll gave me the splendid Christmas present of a complete bound set of the *New Flora and Silva*. Founded by Peter Cox's father, E. H. M. Cox in 1928, twelve volumes were produced, until the onset of the Second World War rendered continuation impossible. Browsing through these old publications, one is struck by how little practical gardening has changed. We have machines rather than hired help, and plastics, but very few really original ideas. In Volume Twelve I found a short article on *Anemone pulsatilla*, 'Budapest var.' (sic) In this Mrs Dorothy Gorton describes how she saw the cut flowers on sale in Budapest in the spring of 1920, and subsequently discovered that they had come from the Svab Hegy (Swaben Berg), a hill west of the city. Later that year she was able to collect seed, and the issue includes a black-and-white photograph of the resulting plants in Mrs Gorton's own garden. These are also mentioned by Lady Beatrix Stanley in her Editorial, where she gives their colour as a pale mauve, *occasionally* pale blue. A plant exhibited in 1936 by Guy Fenwick gained an Award of Merit and was subsequently described as large-flowered, the broad tepals lavender suffused with mauve externally, rosy-lilac inside. A colour painting of this plant retained in the archives at Wisley is reproduced with their kind permission (Fig.38, p.126). It is clearly not the luminous soft lavender-blue so prized in current plants.

The strain survived the War, and continued to be grown all over

the British Isles, including a number of Irish gardens, from whence Fred's plant came, and the nurseries of Jack Drake and Joe Elliott. John Lawson's photograph of a plant at Inshriach (Fig.37, p.125) was taken in the late 1950s. I use the word "strain" quite deliberately, for Joe Elliott records that they had to keep it going by seed. A beautiful colour plate of one of his plants in bud is to be found in the AGS Bulletin 1986, vol.54, p.127. Our own plants (Fig.35, p.124) have two separate origins. Some are Irish, like Fred's, and some are from the Northumberland garden of John and Isa Hall who have grown it continuously for many, many years.

## THE TAXONOMY OF THE GENUS

The legend of *Pulsatilla* 'Budapest' really begins in April 1963 when an absolutely stunning clone was shown by Valerie Finnis and obtained an FCC under the name *Pulsatilla vulgaris* 'Buda Pest'. Later at Kew it was identified as *Pulsatilla halleri*; but, as Doris Saunders points out in the AGS Bulletin account (1963, vol.31, p.355), the FCC clone did not agree very well with this species as then understood. Miss Finnis' plant had particularly fine golden hairs, especially in bud, becoming sparse as the season advances, and noticeably rounded tepals. Although *P. halleri* is a highly variable species, with several regional sub-species, it generally has silvery hairs, less finely divided foliage with narrowly wedge-shaped lobes, and pointed tepals. The FCC plant had in fact been taken to Kew to be painted by Margaret Stones for the Botanical Magazine. The subsequent account by R. D. Meikle (Botanical Magazine n.5 (1964), 475) explains the association with *P. halleri*. It all hinges on the attribution of *Pulsatilla grandis*, Wenderoth. Meikle divides the complex into an Eastern group (*P. halleri*) whose coarsely dissected foliage is scarcely developed at first flowering, and a less hairy Western group (*P. vulgaris*) with more finely divided leaves which are well developed by flowering time. In doing so, he makes *P. grandis* a subspecies of *P. halleri*. This is the arrangement followed by Chris Brickell in the European Garden Flora, but I have to say that I am not entirely convinced. *Pulsatilla halleri* is more of a Southern species than Eastern. It occurs in a wide arc from the Carpathians (ssp. *slavica*), through the Balkans (ssp. *rhodopaea*), the Austrian province of Styria, which has its own local subspecies, to scattered locations in the Alps where ssp. *halleri* almost reaches the Rhone valley. There is even an outlying population in the Crimea, spp. *taurica*. *Pulsatilla vulgaris* has a more northerly distribution across much of Europe, including Scandinavia. It is not really 'alpine', in the true sense of the word, certainly far less so than the

scattered stations of *P. halleri* within the Alps themselves. When I consulted Fritz Kummert as to the status of *P. grandis*, he gave as his opinion that in no way was it part of *P. halleri*. The compelling reason given was that *P. vulgaris* ssp. *vulgaris* intergrades with *P. grandis* in Southern Germany and Upper Austria, thus forming a cline. Thus he would agree with J. R. Akeroyd who, when revising *Pulsatilla* for the second edition of *Flora Europaea*, retains it as *P. vulgaris* ssp. *grandis*. Therefore, it would appear that the *pulsatillas* around Budapest in being attributed to ssp. *grandis* are part of the low-altitude *P. vulgaris* complex, rather than the more montane *P. halleri*, which makes sense to me. It would be very interesting to know whether there is any ecological separation between *P. v.* ssp. *grandis* and *P. h.* ssp. *slavica* in the Carpathians, where their ranges overlap. Perhaps one of our Central European members can answer this question. Additionally, it would also be very interesting if someone could investigate the hills west of Budapest, one spring, and determine the colour variation in the wild plants.

#### STILL MORE CONFUSION

Returning to the plants we have, almost certainly descended from Mrs Gorton's introduction, Fritz cautioned against using their foliage when attempting to key them out. He cited a hillside where *P. halleri* ssp. *slavica* showed every variation from a ranunculus-like leaf almost to the 'vulgaris' degree of dissection. One question, however does remain to be answered. If wild populations of *P. v.* ssp. *grandis* are often gold or tawny-haired, then why are both Fred's and our plants silver? In the garden most people have naturally tended to select the bluest forms and so have caused not only drift in colour in the sixty years since the original introduction, but may well have caused a trend towards paler hairs. Mrs Gorton apparently even had white-flowered seedlings; albinos often have paler foliage, so the possibility for variation did exist right from the start. The hypothesis is supported by a herbarium specimen at the RBG Edinburgh of a plant they received from Joe Elliott in the mid 1970s. This has *both* gold and silver hairs. If, as a result of this genetic drift the plants as currently grown are considered to be sufficiently distinct from the FCC clone, then the interesting possibility arises that one could be resubmitted for a further award. Over to you, Fred. Clearly we need a name for the whole strain, and Dr Lesley suggests the obvious but apt 'Budapest Blue'. Incidentally, Valerie Finnis had obtained her FCC clone from Munich Botanic Garden, so it is possible this is a quite separate introduction and not descended from Mrs Gorton's plants. Perhaps their records could

tell us? For my own part, I should be very interested to hear if anyone is growing plants of *P. vulgaris* ssp. *grandis* of known wild origin. If so, and they can spare material, then we should like very much to grow it alongside the old 'Budapest Blue' strain for comparison.

#### A FINAL SAD NOTE

One sad and cautionary sequel remains to be recorded. Valerie Finnis had grown her magnificent FCC plant in the open ground, and against her better judgement, was prevailed upon to lift it for show. "I was young and keen at the time," she said. The inevitable disturbance, followed by the time indoors at the show and while being painted at Kew, proved too traumatic, and it unfortunately died without ever being propagated. Clearly no purpose is now served by pursuing the non-existent Holy Grail of *the* true *Pulsatilla* 'Budapest'; just enjoy the plants we still have in the garden, and on the showbench, for what they are: supreme examples of that very beauty which drives our compulsion to cultivate. If it ever comes that the name on the label is more important than the beauty of the plant, then it is time to cease growing alpines, and take up stamp-collecting.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to Dr Alan Lesley of the RHS Wisley for help and permission to reproduce the painting of the AM plant; to the Library and Herbarium at RBG Edinburgh for their assistance in researching this article; to Valerie Finnis for being so patient and frank with a complete stranger; and finally to Dipl.-Ing. Fritz Kummert for bringing me out of the literature, and down to earth.



Fig. 39 The Burren looking north (p.129)

Francis Ferns

Fig. 40 *Helianthemum canum* (p.138)

Francis Ferns







Fig. 41 *Gentiana caelestis* (p.172)

Ian McNaughton

Fig. 42 *Convolvulus sabatius* (p.171)

Harold McBride







Fig. 43 *Hacquetia epipactis variegata* (p.173)

Alfred Evans

Fig. 44 *Androsace x marpensis* (p.200)

George Smith





Fig. 45 *Blanfordia punicea* (p.171)

Harold McBride

# SPRING IN NORTH-WEST YUNNAN

A journey in May and June  
through the remarkably floriferous mountains  
of north-west Yunnan

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by RONALD J D McBEATH

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**A**FTER decades when much of north-west Yunnan was a closed area and Western tourists strictly forbidden, a recent policy change on access has been implemented and the doors flung open to this remote, mountainous region. Now, open to all with some cash to spare, are the wonderful areas where George Forrest, Frank Kingdon Ward and Joseph Rock once roamed, collecting many of our familiar and most treasured peat and rock garden plants.

## ZHONGDIAN

Zhongdian, or Chungtien as it was previously known, is the largest town in this region of north-west Yunnan and is the obvious centre to choose as a base. To reach Zhongdian it takes two long days by road from Kunming, the principal city in Yunnan. An overnight stop is required at Xiaguan, or better still at picturesque Dali (Tali), situated near the Erhai Lake and at the base of the Cangshan mountains. Here a stop is essential to inspect the three pagodas which were built in the ninth century, the tallest being 69m tall. The drive to Zhongdian, although long and wearisome, is through some fascinating and varied countryside. Where the soil is rich and can be irrigated, with great care a host of vegetables are intensively cultivated along with rice, wheat, potatoes and tobacco. The poorer lands are heavily grazed and the hillsides often covered with degraded forest and scrub, brightened up by splashes of free flowering bright yellow *Hypericum*, *Cornus capitata* and scrambling roses. Everywhere there are masses of people working in the fields, or walking and cycling along the narrow roads, as they make their way to and from their fields or local market, often appearing to be at constant risk of being swept away by the numerous, heavily laden wood lorries, trucks and buses. The majority of local people are of the Bai nationality and their national costume which is very brightly coloured is often worn when working in the fields. Hazards

for the tourist buses include pigs and chickens which saunter across the roads with little road sense, or cereals which are thrashed by spreading the straw on the road in the path of oncoming vehicles. The heads of the corn or rice are crushed by the wheels of the vehicles and the grain released, subsequently to be raked and swept up along with the grit and dust of the countryside.

Zhongdian is the main market town for our area and consists of two contrasting halves, the old town with narrow streets and houses built of wood or mud bricks and roofed with wooden shingles or stone slabs and the new town, with wide straight streets and flat roofed houses built with concrete. Each day there is a busy and noisy open air market which is very colourful; on sale are a wide range of fresh fruit, vegetables, meats, baskets and hardware.

### PLANTS OF THE ZHONGDIAN PLATEAU

Zhongdian is at 3,300m and the traveller is well advised to spend a few days here to acclimatise to the altitude and recover from the long road journey. This area is also excellent for plants. The Zhongdian plateau is relatively flat and stretches for many kilometres, extensive areas are cultivated with potatoes, turnips and cereals, or is pasture grazed by yaks, cows, sheep and pigs. In the grazed areas

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*Here Stelleria chamaejasme  
grows in great abundance*

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the soil is hard with the consistency of brick clay and relatively dry in the spring before the onset of the monsoon. Here *Stelleria chamaejasme* grows in great abundance; this herbaceous member of the Daphne family, *Thymelaeaceae*, has a stout tap root from which arise many simple stems to 30cm or so tall, each topped with a round, compact head of bright yellow flowers, opening in late May and June. This plant can only be propagated from freshly sown seeds which ripen towards the end of June and early July. As they are not generally available it remains very rare in cultivation. Surprisingly in this poor, hard and dry soil, *Iris bulleyana* is very common. It forms large clumps often many metres across, from early June covering themselves with blue-purple flowers, heavily veined with white or yellow. Several species of *Euphorbia* are also abundant and like the previous two are avoided by the grazing animals. Some species have sulphur yellow flowers and bracts, others are greenish yellow or orange brown, some species have stout tap roots, others a tuber, whereas some have a creeping root

system, but putting an accurate name to them is not easy. In the autumn many turn a brilliant, bright orange-red before dying down for the winter.

*Thermopsis barbata* is a dwarf pea with stems and leaves glistening silver under their coat of fine silk hairs, attractive enough to warrant its cultivation, but the large maroon-black or liver-purple (or whatever colour describes this unusual flower colour) flowers should put this plant high on any desiderata list. To succeed in cultivation an open sunny, raised scree bed would probably suit it best. Alongside in the turf can be found *Gentiana veitchiorum*, a strange bedfellow in this hard clay soil, which appears devoid of obvious humus and is so dry in the spring. It grows in full sun and flowers in the autumn; the long, narrow trumpets are flared at the apex and are of an intense violet-blue.

Other notable plants in this area are *Androsace spinulifera* which has an overwintering rosette like a *Sempervivum*, from which spear-shaped leaves arise in the spring. The flowers are held in rounded heads on stems approximately 30cm tall and are usually pinkish red in colour. We have found this species quite difficult to maintain in cultivation, although easy to raise from seed and keep alive as young plants. *Incarvillea* can look quite out of place on mountainsides, as their large, gaudy flowers look as if they should be held on some tropical shrub or tree in a hot sunny environment, not on an exposed plain or mountain slope, but here they grow in great

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*With luck you may find Anemone obtusiloba,  
trullifolia, rupestris and demissa*

---

abundance with huge trumpets of red, streaked white or yellow in the throat. Two species appear quite common, *compacta* and *mairiei*, distinguished from each other chiefly by the shape and form of their leaves. Several species of *Anemone* are quite common and with luck you may find *obtusiloba*, *trullifolia*, *rupestris* and *demissa*. Flower colours vary through shades of blue, yellow to white.

There are extensive areas of scrub on the plateau, in the dry areas amongst scrubby evergreen oaks *Rhododendron racemosum* dominates; reaching 1m tall it can turn whole hillsides pinkish red in May when in bloom, a spectacular sight. In the wet areas *Rhododendron hippophaeoides* finds its niche and is also often in great abundance. Its light blue flowers are amongst the most beautiful in the sub-section *Lapponica*. An occasional white variant can be spotted by the alert and sharp-eyed as you drive across the plateau.



## TIANCHI LAKE

Several localities must be visited during any stay at Zhongdian, these include Tianchi Lake which is approached from Little Zhongdian. At first one drives across the plain, then up a forestry road where the tall trees must have been felled a long time ago, as re-growth of young trees is well advanced. Amongst the trees a rich shrub and herb flora is in place. In some abundance grows *Nomocharis aperta*, in a hard red earth which turns into a sticky mud when wet, far removed from the rich, friable soil we try to provide it with in our peat beds. The flowers are pink or pinkish-red with a scattering of a few spots and flecks of darker red on the open face which are held vertically on stems up to 45cm tall. *Cypripedium* grow alongside in some abundance; normally *flavum* is pale yellow, but may have purplish spots or shading, *guttatum* is white with red spots and *tibeticum* reddish purple. All are locally common and grow mixed up with one another.

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*Open moorland where dwarf rhododendrons  
grow like Scottish heather*

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A walk of an hour or two takes us up to the lovely Tianchi Lake which is set in open moorland where dwarf rhododendrons grow like Scottish heather. Along the route to the lake *Primula sinopurpurea*, *sikkimensis* and *secundiflora* are all common along with a scattering of *Primula deflexa*. The latter is a member of the Section *Muscarioides*; the flowers are deep violet in a compact terminal head, vaguely resembling a grape hyacinth. *Arisaema elephas (wilsonii)* is prevalent; the hooded flowers of white are longitudinally lined with broad reddish purple bands. *Adonis brevistyla* is also in a particularly good form here. Above the finely dissected leaves are held large white flowers with a blue reverse.

Much of the hillside around the lake is covered in heathland dominated by the dwarf *Rhododendron complexum*, *rupicola* and other species difficult to identify. *Cassiope pectinata* dominates some banks on the moor. This is a species which quite closely resembles a large, chunky *Cassiope fastigiata*, or some of the forms of *Cassiope wardii* found in cultivation. Amongst the *Cassiope* can be found the dwarf *Lilium souliei*, which has large, solitary flowers of an incredible mahogany brown. Amongst willow scrub may be found *Fritillaria crassicaulis*, quite a tall species with leafy stems and greenish yellow flowers. Also nearby is the more graceful *Fritillaria cirrhosa*, or a close relation of it, with either yellowish green or purplish brown

flowers on delicate stems held in place by the twining, tendril like tips to the leaves which clasp the surrounding shrubs.

On mossy banks and amongst short grass are great drifts of *Primula bella*, which closely resembles dwarf forms of the Himalayan *Primula primulina*, as they have a similar tuft of white hairs in the throat of their purple flowers. Equally abundant is the dwarf *Primula amethystina* var. *brevifolia* which has nodding purple bells crimped at the tip of the petals. If one is lucky a few plants of *Omphalogramma souliei* may be found. *Omphalogrammas* are in the *Primulaceae* and have a solitary flower, which in this species is a rich violet purple on a 15 to 30cm tall stalk. Only in deep, wet moss in the dense shaded *Abies* forest and under the protection of tall large leaved rhododendrons did we find *Primula boreiocalliantha*, a nivalid

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*If one is lucky a few plants of  
Omphalogramma souliei may be found*

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which is reputed to have the largest flowers of any species in its section. The flowers are a bluish-reddish-purple and held in clusters on 30cm tall stems. If it could be cultivated it would make a stunning display. In very wet areas around the lake margin are large clumps of *Rheum alexandrae*, which sends up a flower spike resembling a lighthouse, consisting of large, creamy white, paper-like bracts, which hide and presumably protect the insignificant dock-like flowers.

## NAPA HAI

A short distance to the west of Zhongdian is Napa Hai, a large marsh area which is a nature reserve for the over-wintering cranes. High above the reserve one can follow a forestry road which passes through an area of felled forest. At first the underlying rock is limestone with oaks and a varied assortment of shrubs predominating, amongst which is a rich ground flora. Here are nice stands of *Daphne aurantiaca*, a variable species which may form low, tight cushions or can be open gawky shrubs. The best forms are superb and cover themselves with bright yellow flowers in the spring. It may be that more than one species masquerades under this all embracing name. Much to my surprise both *Nomocharis aperta* and *Lilium lankongense* grow in the heavy clay on this dry limestone slope. Some taxonomists have sunk *L. lankongense* into *L. duchartrei*, maintaining that it is only a reddish pink variant of that species.

Four species of *Cypripedium* grow in some abundance as does the

mat-forming *Androsace rigida* with its pinkish red flowers and *Androsace bulleyana* with flaming vermilion flowers resembling a *Verbena* in colour. For the more energetic the high moorland slopes are rich, with fine stands of dwarf rhododendrons including the yellow *R. rupicola* var. *chryseum*, *tapetiforme*, *nivale* var. *boreale* and

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*Both Nomocharis aperta and Lilium  
langokense grow in heavy clay*

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swarms of possible hybrids. Even a few plants of *Rhododendron roxieanum* were found. *Lilium lophophorum* only grows to about 10cm tall. For its size the nodding yellow flowers are very large, the petals often remain joined at the tip and resemble some Christmas decoration. *Omphalogramma vincaeflorum*, *Trollius*, *Corydalis pachycentra*, *Iris dolichosiphon* and *Iris goniocarpa* var. *grossa* are some of the other choice plants to be found flowering in late May and early June.

#### WHITE HORSE SNOW MOUNTAIN

The Beima Shan (White Horse Snow Mountain) is much further to the west of Zhongdian and straddles the Mekong - Yangtze divide. The eastern flank can be reached from Benzilan, a small town on the bank of the Yangtze, half a day's drive from Zhongdian, but it is still quite a journey up to the alpine meadows from Benzilan as it is situated at only 2,150m. It is much better to travel for another half day, up and over the Beima Shan pass at 4,150m to Dequin (Atuntze in the days of Forrest and Kingdon Ward), tucked away in a little narrow side valley, at 3,350m above the Mekong river. From here it is not such a long drive to the pass on Beima Shan, where one can start walking at over 4,000m from the roadside, either across alpine turf or through a dwarf *Rhododendron* heath and one can soon reach limestone screes and cliffs without too much effort. On the limestone cliffs are great clumps of *Ptraquilegia anemonoides* (*P. grandiflora*). The glaucous foliage is finely cut and the large flowers dancing in the breeze are a wonderful blue, occurring as they do by the hundred they make a remarkable sight, surely one of the choicest of all alpine plants.

In the screes are many species of *Corydalis* which have yet to grace our gardens as they are quite unknown in cultivation. Some have intense blue flowers, others in shades of purple or yellow, most have very attractive foliage, often metallic browns, purples and blue and worth growing even if they never flowered. The snowball



flowered saussureas are represented by several species but are probably ungrowable, although seeds will germinate freely and young plants are quite robust to start with. The *Solms-laubachia linearifolia* will also provide a challenge. It is a crucifer which forms tight cushions of fine narrow leaves and can cover itself with relatively large reddish pink flowers. On more stable scree and amongst open turf, *Androsace wardii* forms loose open mats, the

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*The snowball saussureas are  
probably ungrowable*

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flowers are red and held on 3 to 9cm tall stems. On open peaty banks amongst the dwarf rhododendrons are great mats of *Diapensia purpurea* forma *rosea*, a species with large, bright carmine red flowers, like the rest of its race, no doubt difficult to please and very slow growing. *Primula gemmifera* ssp. *zambalensis*, *sinopurpurea*, *bella*, *amethystina* var. *brevifolia*, *sikkimensis* and *secundiflora* are all common, as is *Meconopsis integrifolia*.

## GEZA AND BEYOND

Going back to Zhongdian and driving to the north for a day we reach Geza, a small town with rather poor accommodation. On the way it is possible to stop at many interesting places, including limestone hillsides covered with *Daphne aurantiaca*, moorland with dwarf rhododendrons amongst which can be found in damp spots the diminutive *Primula fasciculata* with bright reddish pink flowers. On some drier slopes *Rhododendron trichostomum* is common, covering itself with pale pink and white flowers and along the roadside where there is deciduous forest *Paeonia potanini* and its var. *trollioides* can be found with pale yellow or dark red flowers. On rock banks the white flowered *Androsace limprichtii* grows. From Geza it is possible to drive up and over the Little Snow Mountain and down to the village of Wengshui, then up on to the pass of the Da Xue Shan (the Big Snow Mountain), almost on the border with Sichuan. This is a long hard three to four hours' drive each way and it would be much better to arrange accommodation if possible in Wengshui.

The road goes over the pass at 4,350m from where you walk along paths which contour around the mountain slopes. Immediately on leaving the road you are amongst several species of *Primula* including *brevicula*, and *sinopurpurea*, *Meconopsis* in both blue and yellow (*integrifolia*), *Cassiope pectinata* and *selaginoides*, *Corydalis*, *Lilium lophophorum*, *Incarvillea*, and if you are again lucky

*Diapensia purpurea* forma *rosea*. If you head to the west along quite an easy path and reach the limestone cliffs, *Paraquilegia anemonooides* can be found in a similar superb form to those seen on the Beima Shan. On the surrounding screes *Solms-laubachia minor* forms small cushions. The pinkish flowers can hide the foliage in late May and early June. Equally attractive is *Erysimum roseum* forma *caespitosum* which also forms low mats or cushions and has reddish purple

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*In the autumn extensive stands of Gentiana  
sino-ornata must be seen to be believed*

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flowers. If one is energetic and traverses north around the cliffs a wide valley opens out with extensive, inviting screes and meadows. High on the slopes can be found *Androsace tapete*, a species which makes large hard cushions, grey with hairs and covered with white flowers in late May. Probably this is the first record for the species in Yunnan. Nearby can be found the loose mats of *Androsace yargongensis* whose flowers are a pale pinkish red. On the limestone cliffs and screes *Rhododendron primulaeflorum* is common and there are a range of the dwarf purple flowered species such as *Rhododendron nivale* ssp. *boreale* on the open moors.

#### BETA HAI

Returning to Zhongdian it is worth paying a visit to Beta Hai. Although I have not visited this area in the spring it is certainly rich in plants in the autumn. In the autumn the extensive stands of *Gentiana sino-ornata* must be seen to be believed; they grow in very wet bogs and meadows, where you must get your feet wet when taking photographs. The colour variation has to be seen to be believed.

#### FUTURE POTENTIAL

This is certainly a remarkable area for plants and many other species must await discovery through further searching and by visiting at other seasons. What has been recorded here all flower in late May and early June with the exception of the gentians.

I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the funding from the Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust, which made this exciting expedition possible.

# PLANT PORTRAITS

## ***Convolvulus sabatius*** (syn. *C. mauritanicus*)

HAROLD McBRIDE

There are over 250 variable members of this family including perennials, climbers, shrubs and subshrubs with a worldwide distribution. Some are well known weeds while others, particularly the montane species, provide us with a number of worthy plants for the rock garden and alpine house.

Such a choice plant is *Convolvulus sabatius* (Fig.42, p.160), a woody based, prostrate perennial which hails from N.W. Africa and Italy where it is often found growing among calcareous rocks. The leaves are oblong to obovate, mid to dark green and slightly hairy. The funnel shaped flowers, which are 2cm or more in diameter, are of a most lovely clear blue and are produced over a long period from June to September.

I grow *C. sabatius* in a calcareous trough where it creeps mildly around. It is said to be winter hardy only in favoured spots. Propagation is by cuttings in July and August which root readily without bottom heat. These should be over-wintered in a garden frame or alpine house.

## ***Blandfordia punicea***

HAROLD McBRIDE

The Tasmanian endemic *Blandfordia punicea* (Fig.45, p.162) is a spectacular and much admired plant which can be seen in several Irish gardens. It is surprising that this delightful bulb is not more widely cultivated as seed germinates readily. The rigid flowering stems in my garden reach 30cm, carrying terminal racemes of pendulous vividly coloured flowers. The bright scarlet outer surface of the bell-shaped perianth contrasts with the golden-yellow of the inner surface and the wings of the three inner perianth lobes. *B. punicea* is a perennial herb with thick, fibrous roots and a radical tuft of distichous leaves. The leaf-blades are narrow, linear and prominently veined with recurved margins; they are approximately half as long as the inflorescence.

The plant's native habitat is acid heaths or moors and subalpine regions of Tasmania. *B. punicea* is locally abundant and is known as 'Christmas Bells' as it often flowers around the festive period in its native habitat. The plant illustrated was grown from seed collected on Mt Read at 1,200m.

I grow 'Christmas Bells' in a sheltered position in a raised bed which contains a humus-rich well drained soil. It has not been given winter protection since planting out in July 1992. The seed was sown in 1987, flowering for the first time in July 1993.

*Blandfordia punicea* has been recorded growing at Bodnant in North Wales in a sheltered position at the foot of a west wall. It was given special protection of a "glass roof and curtains" which were drawn in severe weather. It has also been recorded growing at RBG Kew and RBG Edinburgh; in both cases it was given cool house culture. I am sure this delightful 'Christmas Bell' will become popular with those of us who garden in the milder and wetter regions of Great Britain and Ireland.

### ***Gentiana caelestis* (CLD 1087)**

IAN CHRISTIE

Plant material of *Gentiana caelestis* (CLD 1087) was collected in 1992 on the Chuntien, Lijiang, Dali expedition. It was found growing on mossy grassland at an altitude of 4,200m at Lijiang, Yulong Shan in the Yunnan. The name is sometimes given as *coelestis* but the correct spelling as given by RBG Edinburgh is *caelestis*.

Small thongs were given to me by Ron McBeath in April 1993. Plants were potted into 9cm pots using our normal compost mix; all survived well with some growing more vigorously than others. Plants are consistently compact with deep green foliage forming tight mounds. The flowering stems have lanceolate leaves and the vegetative growth is short with leaves appearing in rosettes. We potted three of the largest plants into 12cm pots which obviously suited the plants. During the third week in August the bigger plants began to flower (Fig.41, p.160) with superb small tubby shaped sky blue upward-facing trumpets similar in shape to those of *Gentiana ornata*. The insides of the trumpets have distinct deep blue stripes and even darker spots, the six filaments are distinctively violet, tipped by creamy anthers, the stigma being a very pale green.

Two of the plants were kept inside our polytunnel as a precaution against winter wet, the rest being left outside; all survived intact. We split up one of the plants in March 1994 and potted the thongs into 9cm pots which were then placed in one of our open frames. All the plants thrived so we decided to split up another plant in May and again there were no problems with growth. At this point we re-potted remaining stock which had all been growing well outside.

Our best plants were in 20cm pots and began to flower in the

first week of August (two weeks earlier than in 1993). Lots of barrel-shaped flowers appeared as can be seen in the photograph. Smaller thongs in 9cm pots grew well but produced few flowers in their first year.

*Gentiana caelestis* is certainly a very worthy introduction to our garden even if it means waiting a couple of years for the plant to establish.

### ***Hacquetia epipactis* 'Variegata'**

ALFRED EVANS

*Hacquetia*, named for Balthasar Hacquet, 1740-1815, author of *Plantae Alpinae Carniolicae* in 1782, is a member of the Umbelliferae although, from a cursory glance at the plant in flower, one may have to be convinced of this. It is not unlike that of Compositae, the Daisy Family. The genus is really monotypic, there being only a single species involved. The Eastern Alps – Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, E. Austria, Italy and Poland – are listed as its wild distribution.

#### THE NORMAL FORM

*Hacquetia epipactis* has been popular with rock gardeners for many years, usually being sited in a shady part of the rock garden or even in semi-woodland. It has earned this worthy reputation from the manner and time of its flowering. This occurs early in the year at a time when most other plants are still dormant. February is not too early for it to start into growth. It can happen that on a late winter's day one is suddenly made aware that *Hacquetia* is on the move. Little yellow balls appear among the soil particles and, as the days pass, these get larger and one is alerted to the fact that they are flowers, clusters of little flowers, for the pale, green, petal-like structures, surrounding the yellow centres, are not petals but are involucre of attending bracts. Slowly, what were leafless stems elongate to about 10cm but by this time the trifoliate leaves have emerged. These also arise from crowns at soil level and are deeply lobed, each lobe being variously serrated.

The roots are black and thong-like, similar to those of the hellebore, but obviously not so coarse. They penetrate deeply into the soil without showing much evidence of fine, fibrous roots. This causes old plants to suffer when disturbed, making successful transplanting a little risky.

#### VARIEGATED FORM

A most attractive, variegated form (Fig.43, p.161) has come into

my possession in recent years. It was given to me by a generous Swedish friend, Mr Johansson of Stockholm in 1988. The story of its discovery follows this pattern. The original plant was sent to Sweden from Germany at an unspecified date and it is not recorded that this plant was in any way different to the normal wild species. Some time in the mid 60s, this aberration on the part of the plant was first spotted in Mr Johansson's garden by a Mr Thor Svantesson of Alingsås, a keen amateur gardener, and, in the first instance, it was thought to be caused by some disease, a virus perhaps? Anyhow, the plant was given to Mr Svantesson and, on reaching home, he separated the offending part from the normal green portion. Apparently this variegated piece grew strongly and, by constant division, has been distributed widely in Scandinavia. It has been sent to interested gardeners in other countries and is now well established in Britain. All parts of the plant are heavily variegated, from the normal foliage through to the attending bracts, thus making this popular, early flowering plant even more conspicuous at an early stage. It remains attractive for the whole of its period above ground.

This cultivar, although variegated, has proved to be just as vigorous and winter hardy as the species and the name now applied to it is *Hacquetia epipactis* 'Variegata'. As it is a clone, and as such can only be multiplied by division of established clumps in spring, it may be some time before it is widely offered by the trade.

*Hacquetia* has sometimes been included in *Dondia*, *Dondisia* and *Astrantia*.

I am grateful to Henrik Zetterlund of Göteborg for providing much of this interesting information. He very kindly translated an article I saw in the Swedish magazine, *Trädgårdsamatören* 1987, vol.4, by Bengt Lovkvist.

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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**The Annual General Meeting  
will be held at the  
Battleby Conference Centre  
Redgorton, Perth  
on Saturday 4 November 1995  
at 2.00 pm**

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**N**OMINATIONS are required for the President, the Executive Office-Bearers and for four Ordinary Members of Council to serve for three years. All Executive Office-Bearers retire annually but are eligible for re-election.

Nominations in writing and seconded by another club member or members should be lodged with the Secretary not later than 15 May 1995. The nominator must ascertain that the nominee is willing to serve if elected.

The following having served for three years as Ordinary Members are not eligible for re-election to Council for one year: Mr I. J. Christie, Mr D. P. Howat, Mrs J. Machin and Mr J. Wotherspoon.

Secretary  
Dr Jan Boyd  
Groom's Cottage  
Kirklands  
Ancrum  
Jedburgh  
TD8 6UJ

# OBITUARIES

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## LIONEL J BACON

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IT is with regret that we have to record the death of Lionel Bacon in July 1994. He was President of the Alpine Garden Society from 1977 to 1979 after serving the society in several posts. He described his garden and plants in *Alpines* (David and Charles) but is best known for his *Mountain Flower Holidays in Europe*, the book which encouraged and informed so many fledgling seekers after mountain plants in their natural settings. This wonderful guide was compiled from the experiences of many now well known plant-hunters, but a very large proportion of the information arose from his own detailed diaries of holidays spent in the European and Mediterranean mountains with his wife, Joyce. His writing skills were complemented by his skill as an illustrator, already demonstrated in the illustration of Roy Green's *Asiatic Primulas* for which he also produced the keys and index.

But it is as a frequent participant in the autumn Discussion Weekends that we will remember him. A man of great charm, he revealed his encyclopaedic knowledge only when drawn into the discussions he so much enjoyed. He had a large repertoire of plant-hunters' tales which he would relate with great humour and gusto and particularly enjoyed those paradoxes of plant distribution and association which cast doubt on easily assumed theories. His drawings graced the walls of the Weekend Shows on many occasions.

We will all miss his knowledge, his humour and his tinkling laugh. Our sympathies go out to his charming wife.

DAVID MOWLE

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## BRENDA ANDERSON

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BRENDA Anderson, aged 79, died in her sleep on 15 July 1994 having suffered a heart attack. She gardened to the last, busy making plans for a recently cleared patch where a large sycamore had been felled.

Brenda and John started their garden in 1964. They chose a marvellous site, a steep south-facing valley with rich moist soil on either side of a small stream. One bank is in Perthshire, the other Angus. Their garden became famous for drifts of meconopsis and



primulas through extensive rhododendron plantings. In early spring *Primula bhutanica* made a carpet of blue on the east-facing Perthshire bank.

For many years the Andersons spent part of each Scottish winter enjoying summer in the southern hemisphere. They understood that plants from high altitude drawn from anywhere in the world had the potential of being hardy back home. Thus plants coming from the Drakensberg, Australia, Tasmania, the Argentine and Chile were added to their garden. The hardy yellow cactus, *Maihuenia poeppigii*, from Chile flowered each summer on the sunny rock garden, while a range of mutisias flourished on the house wall. As far back as the 1981 International Alpine Conference, the Andersons were mentioned among the notable modern plant collectors. Nine years ago Lt. Col. John Anderson died, but Brenda returned to Chile twice on her own, hiring a car to travel into the mountains. She taught herself South American Spanish to help converse with Chilean friends.

A popular lecturer with a loud clear voice, Brenda went out of her way to help anyone contemplating a visit to the Andes. Many special introductions found their way into raffles at her talks. She was one of the main supporters of the Angus SRGC group, frequently opening her garden to our members. Shortly before her death she gave conducted tours to Scottish and Japanese groups. After she died, her son and daughter, both married and living in England, ensured that many of the special plants from Wester Balruddery would be kept securely in cultivation by sharing pieces of them among Scottish botanic gardens.

Brenda's bright friendly hospitality will be greatly missed by us all.

MARGARET AND HENRY TAYLOR

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## ALEXANDER B DUGUID

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ALEX Duguid passed away peacefully on 25 August 1994 at his home in Ballater. The Scottish Rock Garden Club has lost a dear friend with Alex's death; while the latter years of his life have coincided with failing health and inactivity, the formative years were spent in a rich pursuit of his great love, alpine plants. He was always willing to impart his great knowledge to the Club and to his many friends.

Alex lived for 91 years; his career commenced on Deeside as a forester on the Royal Estate at Balmoral. It so happened that the minister of the Kirk at Crathie was married to a relative of the

Logan Home family. The Misses Logan Home had just set up Edrom Nurseries and were looking for a keen 'alpinist' to help them construct a rock garden on their estate in Coldingham. Alex had spent many a spring on Deeside helping as a shepherd and during these years he had observed and come to love the varied and unique flowers of Glengairn. Armed with this experience and his knowledge of alpines gained by his extensive reading of 'Farrer', down he went to help the Misses Logan Home at Silverwells. This was but a temporary move and he ventured south before the war to both Swansea Parks and a lengthy term serving under Sir William Milner in the prestigious estate at Parcival Hall in Yorkshire.

It was in this country that Alex met his wife Eleanor who supported him wonderfully from 1947 until his death. To the immense joy of both Miss Edith and Miss Molly Logan Home, Alex returned to Berwickshire in 1949 to manage the nursery. From this point he helped establish Edrom Nurseries as a plant hunter's paradise. His great 'forte' as a propagator enabled him to make many exciting plants available including such treasures as the once legendary *Calceolaria darwinii*, *Primulas dryadifolia*, *sherriffii* and *kingii*, *Gentiana farreri* and many exciting species of *Meconopsis*. Alex pioneered the use of such materials as pumice and sphagnum in his propagation which are widely used today.

His service to horticulture was recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society and the Royal Caledonian Society.

For many, the abiding memories of this gentle Scotsman take us back to his leading us in to the magical wood of rhododendrons with drifts of petiolarid primulas, a brief stop at a magnificent clump, of *Epigaea* or *Glaucidium* and finally a truly welcoming afternoon of scones and cake. His charm and wit were rarely hidden within his sizable frame and will be greatly missed. Alex retired in 1978 and returned to his native Deeside where he is survived by his wife Eleanor and his sons Alisdair and Robert.

JIM JERMYN



Fig. 46 *Jankaemonda vandedemii* (p.197)

Brian Wilson



Fig. 47 *Sarmienta repens* (p.198)

Maureen Wilson

Fig. 48 *Briggsia aurantiaca* (p.196)

Brian Wilson







Fig. 49 *Haberlea rhodopensis* (p.192)

Brian Wilson

Fig. 50 *Petrocosma kerrii* (p.198)

Brian Wilson





Fig. 51 *Oxalis* 'Tone Hecker' (p.184)

Lynn Almond

Fig. 52 Longer raised bed being filled (p.184)

Lynn Almond



# FORWARD THE RETREAT!

**A detailed look at the designing and establishment of a new garden in the relatively dry East of Scotland**

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by LYNN A. ALMOND

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**T**HIS year our new garden, which we bought three years ago, really began to look like a garden, and not a paddock in part of the 500 year old Carse orchard. (The Carse is the area of land between Perth and Dundee lying alongside the north bank of the River Tay. *Ed.*) We were attracted to the site because of the large mature trees – fruit trees and a 30m lime tree – and the ground was fairly level. The garden is L shaped and about  $\frac{1}{3}$ ha in size. We had visions of the front paddock being a wild flower meadow – only cut in late summer. I could already see in my mind's eye how the side garden on the west side of the house could be developed, with the larger trees and shrubs I had always longed for and space for special beds. The soil is far richer than in our previous garden and I was looking forward to growing plants which struggled or died in the sandy soil there. *Petiolarid* primulas are one of my favourites.

The vision of the wild flower meadow faded when we came back from our Easter holiday to find one metre high cow parsley and grass everywhere. It took a lot of Michael's time and effort to hack it back, but it now appears as a velvet sward – from a distance anyway. At least it proved how fertile the soil was.

We planned a six months overlap of house ownership (it ended up being 18 months), so we could move the plants gradually over the winter, some into the large vegetable plot at the east side of the house and some into the raised beds, which were one of my first priorities. The other priority was a pond for my fish.

## RAISED BEDS

The raised beds, one on either side of the front drive, divide the 'formal' area of garden at the front of the house from the paddock. I felt that the raised beds should be on two levels. This would look good and give shadier areas for some plants.

The problem was to get enough stone. An advertisement in the local paper for dry stone *walling* brought replies from three dry stone *wallers*. We had not planned that someone else would build



the beds, but as it was a daunting prospect and we wanted it done quickly, we accepted the offer of one of the dykers. At least I can walk safely on the walls of the raised beds as they were built as four separate walls. One end was blocked up. Then we and our trusty helpers filled the beds with rubble, then poor soil – mainly from the new pond – and then good soil from the veg garden. This was mixed with Edzell grit, of which I had had a lorry load (15 tons) delivered. The shorter bed (7m long) was planted straightaway. I had quite a few pieces of tufa to go on this bed, some with saxifrages already established on them. The saxifrages, of course, did not turn a hair, and I was pleased that a 45cm dome of *Pteroccephalus parnassii* transplanted quite well and has now fully recovered. The other raised bed (12m long) has been planted up gradually (Fig.52 p.182). One problem has been that the ‘shady’ side has proved to be sunnier than expected, and the ‘sunny’ side is shaded by the fruit trees. Most plants have done well, none the less.

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*Should have taken more time filling beds and  
made sure the inside of the walls was well filled*

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On the top of the shorter bed are also planted *Oxalis* ‘Ione Hecker’ (Fig.51, p.182) which gives a spectacular display of its silvery pink flowers for a long period in late spring, and multiplies well; *Aubrieta* ‘Elsa Lancaster’ with its weird, almost succulent leaves; *Bolax gummifera* – a hard green hummock of green rosettes; a small plant of *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus* which I am trying in a cleft between two tufa rocks; *Daphne cneorum* which I hope will drape itself over the edge; and *Helichrysum marginatum* which did well in the old garden unprotected, but is suffering from winter wet here. Some *Cyclamen hederifolium* and *Colchicum agrippinum* have been added for autumn colour.

With hindsight we should have taken more time in filling the beds and made sure that all the nooks and crannies on the inside of the walls were well filled. The top soil is now falling down holes near the edge. We should also have compacted the soil more as we filled the beds. The soil level has dropped about 15cm.

On the north side, which I filled with a mixture of good garden soil and compost, the plants which have done well are saxifrages of the oppositifolia type, eg, ‘Ruth Draper’; *Soldanella minima* has surprised me by expanding slowly although it has not flowered yet. Here also are *Anemone trullifolia* with white flowers with blue backs; *Primula marginata* – a form with very serrated leaves; *Primula*



*clusiana*; *P. juliae* and gold laced primulas. *Androsace sempervivoides* seems to prefer this richer damper soil. Plants on the other bed include *Saxifraga granulata* 'Flore Pleno' which gives a spectacular display of its creamy white flowers on 22cm stems and *Mimulus* 'Andean Nymph'. *Ourisia coccinea* has deigned to produce a few of its red tubular flowers. Unfortunately this side proved too sunny for an *Epigaea gaultherioides* which was brought from the old garden. This plant really needs complete shade and a moist atmosphere. In nature it grows under rhododendron scrub on the wet side of the Pontic Alps.

On the south side, the beds had a lot of grit added. The plants placed there include *Campanula carpatica* – good for summer flower; *Aethionema* ex 'Warley Rose' which has self-seeded; *Calamintha cretica* – a dwarf catmint which has been much admired; the spectacular monocarpic *Campanula incurva* with its fat tubular pale blue bells. Various dianthus extend the interest with their grey leaves and summer flowers.

On the top of the longer bed I have made small raised areas with rocks left over from the wall building. These have also sunk a little and will need to be renovated. These have been planted with several saxifrages of the Euaizoon type which have formed attractive hummocks; *Incarvillea mairei* flowered well – the first time it has survived to the flowering stage for me; *Lewisia tweedyi* has not been a success, and has started to rot away. One of these raised areas was planted with a *Phyteuma sieberi*. One half was chewed by rabbits (which only became a nuisance last winter) and that half flowered as a more compact plant.

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*Need to top dress the beds as weed seeds from the veg garden germinated rapidly and profusely*

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A few 'weeds' have seeded themselves there. *Campanula persicifolia* has been left as rabbit fodder and small pansies in yellow and mauve give colour throughout the summer.

I quickly learnt that I needed to top dress the beds as the weed seeds from the vegetable garden soil germinated rapidly and profusely.

## THE SIDE GARDEN

My plans for the side garden (an area of approximately 11m × 15m), included:

a shady rhododendron walk on the south side

a cyclamen bed under the lime tree  
a primrose bank beyond the lime tree  
a bed for my dwarf rhododendrons and other peat lovers  
a scree/Mediterranean bed beside the house on the west side  
three different 'gardens' on the north (railway) side of the  
garden; a herbaceous bed backed by a new wall with trellis set  
in it, and frames behind it; a paved area with low raised beds  
for special bulbs; and a Japanese garden.

The side garden has a 2m high hedge on the south side and on the far side of that are many huge old apple trees which shade the garden on that side. Scattered in the middle are eight old fruit trees, which give the garden a mature look. Troublesome plum suckers have been dealt with using glyphosate. To our horror we found signs of honey fungus, but were reassured that others, including the RBG Edinburgh, have it. It does not seem to be very active. We have removed one dying tree and the stumps of three others.

## THE RHODODENDRON WALK

The shady rhododendron walk was the easiest to start but will be the longest to come to fruition. I studied Glendoick's catalogue assiduously, looking for the most hardy larger flowered rhododendrons, preferring mainly pinks, mauves and whites, with scent being a welcome bonus. My initial selection included:

*RR. argyrophyllum* ssp *nankingense* with shiny rugose leaves and pink flowers; *campylocarpum* with yellow campanulate flowers; *sutchinense* – another pink one with large leaves; *smirnowii* – a Turkish species with pink flowers; 'Brown Eyes' – purple flowers with a large brown blotch which has flowered already; 'Cunningham's White' – *caucasicum* crossed with *ponticum*; and 'Fatuosum Flore Pleno' which has semi-double mauve flowers in June. All these will grow to 2 - 3m in time.

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*Some rhododendrons suffered in gales –  
meant to make windbreaks but didn't find time*

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These were duly collected and planted. Holes about 75cm across were dug into the turf, and dug to a depth of 45cm. We were pleased to find that the uncultivated soil in the garden, although clay, was friable and not sticky. About 30-35cm down was a hard pan, but even this broke up easily. We often come across the remains of burnt prunings which have lightened the soil.

Some of the large leaved rhododendrons have suffered in the gales. I meant to make individual windbreaks for them out of greenhouse shading, but did not find time to do it. Two had to be moved when we found out where the wet areas were in the garden in the floods of February 1993. Luckily the few 'ponds' disappeared quickly and it was useful seeing where the water collected naturally as we want to make a stream feature some time later.

## THE SMALL BEDS

Small beds have also been cut into the grass as parcels of plants appeared through the mail. From the start I decided that the ground must be well prepared before planting, so must be double dug. It is hard work but I should not have to do much to the ground again. One small bed has a half standard *Cornus* 'Eddie's White Wonder' underplanted with *Cornus canadensis*, which I hope in time will look as spectacular as the one seen on TV, with the large creamy white 'flowers' on the tree mirrored by the dwarf cornus below. Another bed in this area has the dark red leaved *Rhododendron* 'Elizabeth Lockhart'. It was in too sunny a place and was losing its colour. With it are *Adonis vernalis* with its feathery green leaves and large yellow flowers; *Dicentra formosa* – pink flowers and feathery grey-green leaves – it multiplies well and will grow in various situations; *Brunnera macrophylla*, which has large heart-shaped leaves and sprays of blue forget-me-not like flowers; various astilbes; and various pulmonaria, including *P. saccharata argentea* with almost completely white leaves.

Another small bed has *Erythronium* 'Pagoda' which multiplied rapidly in the previous garden. Its mottled leaves and creamy yellow flowers make an attractive show in spring. A friend at work was splitting up her trilliums and kindly gave me a large clump of the white sepalled *T. chloropetalum*. I have always envied the planting of *T. cuneatum* (?) with its mottled leaves and upright maroon sepals at Wisley, so I splashed out on some from a wholesale bulb catalogue. Some of these wholesale catalogues do not have a prohibitively high minimum order or postage and can be worth using if, like me, you are impatient. I can recommend J. Amand for specialist bulbs, and Parkers for more ordinary ones.

Yet another small bed – these beds will be amalgamated sooner rather than later – had a large clump of *Aruncus sylvestris* transferred to it. It was already in the garden, but was suffering in too sunny a spot and was too near the front of the border for its size. The one metre feathery leaves and creamy plumes will make a good background for other plantings. My mower (and labourer and landscape

advisor) does not mind these beds appearing as long as the lawn mower will go between them.

## THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER

In the far south-west corner of the garden we have constructed a stone bench out of a lintel and other large stones found in the garden. Near this I have planted a small bed of azaleas. I admired the plantings of yellow, creamy pink and dark pink azaleas at Achnacloich in Argyll. I also wanted some scent (there is a small chicken farm immediately to the west of the garden which occasionally wafts its smells into the garden). I picked up two *Rhododendron luteum* in a local garden centre's sale and hope these will be as good as the ones we have seen in Turkey. Others had to be bought in flower as I was very particular about the colours I wanted. One white *R. arborescens* was also purchased as a pleasing contrast. The seat in this corner gives a completely different and attractive perspective on the garden. It is remarkable how undulating it is from this angle. The fruit trees were planted on ridges. Behind the seat I have planted a few ferns as this is a fairly damp spot and the shadiest in the garden. These include *Asplenium scolopendrium laceratum* 'Kaye's Variety' – a form of the hart's tongue with the edges of the broad fronds deeply cut and forming small crests; *Athyrium filix-femina* 'Victoriae' – form of the lady fern with crested finely cut fronds; *Matteuccia struthiopteris* – the well known ostrich fern; and *Polystichum polyblepharum* – with stiff, shiny dark green fronds.

## THE WEST END

One other smallish bed has been made near the west end of the garden, more towards the centre and therefore in a sunnier position. It is protected to a certain extent by one of the plum trees. This bed was made partly to accommodate some of the many *Helleborus orientalis* hybrids brought from the old garden, and partly to house other more special plants. I cannot remember where I got my original *H. orientalis* plants but most were creams or light pinks. Over the years I have added a few special colour forms – including very dark ones and deep pink heavily spotted ones. These have hybridised to produce a lovely selection of pink ones with a variety of intensity of spotting. These are very underrated plants for the garden. In spite of their common name Lenten rose, they seem to flower nearly all the year round with me. If left to self-seed they produce unexpected and beautiful colour forms. I am amazed how many packed themselves into my old small front garden. I still

have many large clumps to find homes for. They do not seem to mind being moved as long as the weather is damp and they are replanted quickly. Another attractive hellebore here is *H. x sternii* 'Boughton Beauty', a hardy substitute, for me at least, for *H. lividus*. It has attractively mottled leaves and greeny flowers with a touch of pink.

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*In spite of their common name, Lenten rose, they flower nearly all year round in unexpected, beautiful colours*

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Other treasures in this bed are petiolarid primulas. In my previous garden, all the ones I bought dwindled and died in the too dry atmosphere there. To test the conditions in the new garden I bought a couple of *Primula gracilipes* (at a talk John Mattingley of Cluny House near Aberfeldy advised that the pink ones were generally hardier). These were planted on a slight slope with leaf mould added to the soil. They have done very well without any covering over the winter. This last winter has been one of the worst in the area for many years with an early frost in November and various periods of snow, rain and more frost. They have also tolerated the very dry spells we have had this spring and summer. Although they became quite desiccated, they revived when watered. I am now encouraged to buy more. Other specials being tried here include *Calanthe discolor* and arisaemas. I am fascinated by the weird spathes of these plants. These have not done as well as I hoped and I suspect that they may be planted too near the plum tree and do not get enough moisture.

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*Cyclamen hederifolium with interesting leaf forms – especially rich pink-flowered ones*

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## THE CYCLAMEN BED

This has been a great success. I love all the different leaf forms of *Cyclamen hederifolium*. I moved half a dozen or so corms from the old garden, most quite large ones plus a number of seedlings. The area under the lime tree was covered with chickweed, but it is lovely humusy soil which does not get too dry. I initially dug it over on a cold winter's day when the rest of the garden was too frozen to do anything. I have added other *Cyclamen hederifolium*. If I see any with interesting leaf forms I usually buy them, especially rich pink flowered ones (I find that many seedlings are white). These come into flower at the end of July and some are still in bloom at the end of October. For interest in the spring I have planted *Cyclamen coum*

and they are also doing well. When we have seen these in Turkey they are mostly growing in open woodland.

Apart from the cyclamen, I have planted a few Turkish *Primula vulgaris* ssp *sibthorpii* – these are a rich purple and not a wishy-washy mauve like the Greek ones – and *P. megalisifolia* which I think is a little frost tender. It grows mostly at low level in Turkey amongst shrubs and trees.

A few *Erythronium dens-canis* have also been planted here, as much for their attractively brown and green mottled leaves as their flowers. I have top dressed the bed with our own shreadings which have kept the chickweed at bay.

## THE PRIMROSE BANK

After seeing the mass of primroses in the south of France one spring holiday, I determined to have my own primrose bank. To the west of the lime tree seemed a good place as there was already a slight dip there. The soil in the dip was dug out and piled up below the lime tree in order to extend this area and form a one metre high bank. I failed to get it ready for sowing in autumn of 1992, so it had to wait until late spring. I chose a special grass mixture for dry woodland because it is under the tree. There were lots of snowdrops along the line of the ridge. Those which I did not manage to lift still struggle through, but are a little later than the others. The grass is now established but is not doing well. The area dries out quickly. The soil used to make the bank was quite poor and it is close to the lime tree. Perhaps we should have added a lot of humus to it.

So my primrose bank is not to be. I will plant some primroses in the lower, more gently sloping area to the north of the bank, and have planted several dozen cowslips (given to us by kind friends) in a similar area to the south of the bank. Maybe in time they will seed onto the bank itself, but I will not have the instant primrose bank I had hoped for.

*To be continued – Editor willing!*

## FOOTNOTE

Forward 'The Retreat'!? – 'The Retreat' is the name given to this house by the farmer who built it when he retired. It is a replica of his old farmhouse and is built in the small area of his land cut off from the rest when the railway line was built. Rainfall in this area of east Scotland is about 550mm a year, but the soil here is basically clay and it stays fairly moist much of the time. Although I would love to grow more of the rarer alpines, I work full-time so my plants have to fend for themselves.

# GROWING ALPINE GESNERIADS

**An in-depth look at how to raise and grow the  
alpine members of this mainly tropical family**

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by MAUREEN & BRIAN WILSON

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**W**HY gesneriads? It all started about 25 years ago when we bought our first house and a hitherto passive interest in plants became an active one. An article on saintpaulias in a popular gardening magazine said that they were a “challenge to grow” and thus the involvement began. Many years later we became bitten by the ‘Alpine Bug’ and it seemed a logical step to shift our interests sideways to growing the alpine members of the family.

Getting started was almost as challenging as achieving results. More specialist growers are offering plants nowadays than when we ventured on the scene about 10 years ago. Our introduction into which plants belonged in the ‘colder end’ of the growing range of this mainly tropical family was the review article by F. E. B. Ferns “Gesneriaceae of alpine affinity” (Quart. Bull. AGS 1979, 47, pp123-152) to which we still refer. Membership of the SRGC, AGS and AGGS (American Gloxinia and Gesneriad Society) is a source of seed and information, and once people of similar interests know of you, a great deal of swapping goes on.

## SEED

Seed of the Gesneriaceae is minute, and the first mistake we made was to attempt to raise plants in the same way as most alpines from seed are raised, i.e. the pots overwintered in a cold frame, with periodic inspections in spring to see what has germinated. Even with spring sowing, although germination occurred, the minute, painfully slow growing seedlings were swamped by mosses and liverworts and did not survive. After a couple of false starts we decided on a different approach:

## BASIC GROWING METHOD

The compost used for sowing consists of one third each sterilised garden loam, coarse sand and sieved peat. It is covered by a 5mm layer of coarse sand topped off with a single layer of 2mm diameter

grit which discourages moss growth. Seed is sown on top of the grit and washed in using a fine misting from a hand sprayer. The plastic pot is covered with 'cling' film with a few pin pricks made for ventilation. It is then placed in a position where the temperature can be maintained at around 18 - 20°C, this being in a shady part of the greenhouse, a propagator, or on a house windowsill.

## SEEDLINGS

Germination occurs in 14 - 28 days and it is a fair generalisation to say that what fails to germinate within this period never does. The 'cling' film remains on until the seedlings are almost touching it, when it is replaced by an upturned disposable petri dish (or clear convenience food container) with ventilation holes. Any watering necessary up until this stage is done by misting from a hand sprayer as the surface can and does dry out despite the 'cling' film. Bottom watering is only practised when sufficient growth has been achieved to warrant it. Allowing seedlings to dry out is not to be recommended, as although not always fatal, they do not have the spectacular recuperative powers shown by some mature members of the family after periods of drought.

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*Seedlings do not have the recuperative powers  
shown by some mature members of the family*

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Pricking out is done when the seedlings are about 5 - 7mm in diameter. Plastic thumb pots are used for individual seedlings, and they are kept covered as before. Timing depends on when the seedlings reach potting-on stage – if there is enough growing season left, they are potted on – if however, autumn is approaching by the time they are ready, they are left until the following spring. Individual plants are grown on, weaned off the lids, and potted up as necessary. They are given occasional dilute feeds in the growing season, initially of high N followed by high K as flowering size is approached.

## GROWING METHODS

Using the above method, *Ramonda myconi* and *Haberlea rhodopensis* (Fig.49, p.181) flowered in 3 years from sowing. Some plants were planted vertically in a north facing retaining wall in order to prevent water from sitting in the crowns and causing winter rot. In this position, they have gone from strength to strength and remain perfectly hardy in our frost-pocket garden, where temperatures



on occasion drop to as low as  $-12^{\circ}\text{C}$ . *Ramonda serbica* has been raised more recently, and some plants were put into a north facing crevice of a limestone trough in the summer of 1994. This species is reputed to be less hardy than the other ramondas, and the trough is currently covered for the winter – time will tell. Other ramondas and haberleas are kept in clay pots plunged in sand in a shady, sheltered cold frame. These plants are re-potted annually into the original mix with the addition of some crushed tufa (minus the dust) and ‘Osmocote’ slow release fertiliser.

The above growing method ‘evolved’ in the early days after the initial false starts of 10 years ago. We have not raised ramondas or haberleas from seed since, but were we to do so we might adopt the method we later used when eventually we acquired seed of *Jankaea*<sup>(1)</sup> *heldreichii*. The compost remains the same except for the addition of some crushed tufa, and the sowing, covering and germination method are unaltered. Now the difference: Brian thought that the reason for the failure of *Jankaea* seedlings in the first winter is that they remain so small for so long, and have insufficient reserves to sustain life because of the poor quality and quantity of daylight encountered at a latitude of  $57^{\circ}\text{N}$ .

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*Covered pots of seedlings were kept in the centrally heated house throughout the winter with daylight hours extended by fluorescent lighting*

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## FLUORESCENT LIGHTING AND CENTRAL HEATING

To overcome this, the covered pot of seedlings was kept in the centrally heated house throughout the winter with daylight hours extended by fluorescent lighting (900mm warm, white tube) to a maximum of 14 hours daily. The pot was placed 15 - 23cm under the lights. On very dull days the lights were left on all day. Using this method, the seedlings thrived, and pricking out was done the following spring, 11 months after sowing, into individual plastic thumb pots. As potted-on plantlets reached the edge of the pot, the whole pot was ‘double potted’ into a larger pot, the outer pot containing moist peat, and a new, larger transparent cover placed over both pots. Care was needed to avoid scorching, because the addition of the deeper outer pot raised the plants closer to the lights – we found out the hard way. Another pitfall can be avoided

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<sup>(1)</sup> The spelling of *Jankaea* was changed to *Jancaea* by ICBN in 1988 but this change has not yet been fully adopted so **The Rock Garden** will continue to use *Jankaea* for the present (Ed).

by carefully weaning the plants off the lights as the natural daylight hours increase in the spring. Occasional dilute feed was given throughout the winter as the plants were in active growth.

The plants were grown on in the house throughout the following summer and the second winter. From a 1990 sowing, one plant was transferred to the shady plunge of a (just) frost-free greenhouse in the summer of 1992 where it remained. At this stage it was weaned off the cover, and was by now in a 9cm clay pot and about 10cm across. After a winter in these conditions, it flowered the following season (1993). The same plant flowered again in May 1994 with five scapes compared with the previous year's three. Two other plants sown at the same time, but transferred to the greenhouse a year later because of their smaller size, did not flower in 1994 as anticipated. This was disappointing, as we had hoped to obtain seed from cross pollination of the different clones. Self-pollination was attempted by hand, but as anticipated, no seed was set. The secret with *Jankaea* is never to take anything for granted; success does not mean mastery of this fickle goddess. Our aim is to build on the achievement to date, and hopefully reach a stage when we shall have spare material to share around.

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*The secret with Jankaea is never to take  
anything for granted; success does not mean  
mastery of this fickle goddess*

---

Following the above method of culture for *Jankaea*, all new gesneriad seedlings are overwintered indoors with supplementary lighting. This is purely to accelerate the painfully slow growth rate and so prevent the minute seedlings from succumbing. We do not expect plants to flower under these conditions, and it is not generally used for more mature plants. Another advantage of the system is that seeds which arrive in the depths of winter can be sown immediately, thus saving valuable time. We have even potted-up seedlings to grow on under lights in winter.

## GREENHOUSE SHADE PLUNGE

The regime for plants which have been transferred from the house to the greenhouse shade plunge is to re-pot only when they have become pot bound, and only in June/July when they are in active growth. In addition to extra shading, a high humidity is maintained in summer by keeping the sand plunge well watered. The necessity for direct watering is infrequent, except in the

hottest weather – the amount depending on the species. In particular, over-watering must be avoided and care taken to prevent leaf burn from water-marking of the foliage. No water is given directly to the plants in winter, but the sand is maintained in a barely moist condition. Plants are given a precautionary spray of 'Benlate' before the onset of winter. Occasional aphids are encountered and systemic insecticide spraying is carried out in warm conditions when the leaves can dry off rapidly. Regular inspections under leaves and around the sides of pots for slugs is necessary. Why are we blessed with the most discerning race of gourmet slugs who put *Jankaëa* at the top of their menu choice?

## VEGETATIVE PROPAGATION

Gesneriaceae is one of the few families of plants which can be grown from leaf cuttings, and we have propagated ramondas and haberleas by this method. This was achieved by inserting mature but not senile leaves into a peat/sand mixture and placing them in a propagator under the bench at summer greenhouse temperatures. As we remember, rooting occurred in about four weeks, but it took a considerable time longer for plantlets to appear. As with saintpaulias, the secret of success is not to be tempted to pot them on too soon. For instance, leaves of *Haberlea rhodopensis virginalis* given to us one May were transferred to the house in mid September and put under the lights. Plantlets appeared on Christmas eve and it was well over a year from leaf insertion before they were big enough to separate. We have found that it is not necessary to have an axillary bud on the leaf stalk to achieve success. We were given two leaves of X *Brigandrea calliantha* 'Tinney's Tawny', one with a bud and one without. The leaf without produced plantlets ahead of the budded leaf.

Indeed, experience has shown that remarkably little material is required for propagation. A newly purchased plant of X *Jan-kaemonda vandedemi* did a slow dying act on us, and by the end of the growing season we resorted to desperate measures. Three pieces of green tissue each no bigger than a pinhead were excised from the otherwise dead mass and potted up individually. These were put under the lights in September, and by the following spring had become recognisable plants which could be seen without the use of a hand lens. Similarly after receiving some leaves of *Opithandra primuloides* which had been mangled by the postal franking machine, tiny fragments of undamaged tissue were cut out, dusted with fungicide, and given the same treatment. The outcome was that we now have mature flowering plants.

Plants can also be grown from offsets or side-crowns. As an insurance policy, whenever a new addition to the collection is acquired, it is propagated as soon as material can be spared. Ideally, side-crowns are carefully detached from the main plant, often coming away with small pieces of root attached. Any wound is dusted with flowers-of-sulphur as a precaution, and the offset potted up and grown on as for leaf cuttings. This has been done with *Haberlea ferdinandi-coburgii* and *Ramonda nathaliae alba*, and indeed last summer with *Jankaea heldreichii*, although this happened as a result of accidentally removing a side-crown when pulling off a dead leaf. Roots developed after 2 months in a humid, heated propagator kept at 20-23°C. The new plant was carefully 'weaned' and transferred to the greenhouse shade plunge, where it has continued to make slow growth.

### SPECIES AND HYBRIDS

So far we have dealt mainly with the Old World gesneriads, the tertiary relicts from the Ice Age. We have adopted the same basic method of culture for the other 'alpine' gesneriads from around the world, but omitted the tufa from the compost of species known not to inhabit limestone areas. Here are some observations on individual species/hybrids:

#### X *BRIGANDRA CALLIANTHA*

Raised originally by the late Otto Schwarz of Jena, this intergeneric hybrid is easily grown and propagated from leaf cuttings or side-crowns. It has a long flowering period of 6-8 weeks. Now the surprise – a plant acclimatised slowly to outdoor conditions and planted in a sheltered spot with overhead winter protection has survived for two winters and subsequently flowered. Conversely, a plant overwintered in the cold frame (not frost free) was not happy, and showed the characteristic distorted foliage of a gesneriad suffering from cold.

#### *BRIGGSIA AURANTIACA* (Fig.48, p.180)

This Tibetan endemic is another plant with a long flowering season, and is the female parent of the above. It is self-fertile, and sets viable seed. Slow at first, even under lights, it flowers in two years on small single rosettes, subsequent to which it grows rapidly. It is tricky to keep over the winter, even in the frost-free greenhouse. The dividing line between keeping it too dry when the leaves shrivel (permanently) and too wet, when it goes mouldy, is a very fine one.

### *BRIGGSIA MUSCICOLA*

This charming plant comes from the Himalayan regions of Bhutan through to Yunnan in China where it lives on rocks and mossy pine trunks in deep shade at an altitude of around 3,500m. It has velvety apple-green foliage and yellow tubular flowers, but does not make a good show plant because of its droopy habit and summer flowering. Self-fertile, and a rapid grower from seed, it did not survive outdoors, and even winter cold frame treatment results in distorted leaves.

### *CONANDRON RAMONDIoidES*

Grown from seed originally, we find this Japanese member of the family unexciting, but we keep it because it is part of the collection. It dies down in autumn to resting buds from which it is easily propagated. In spring it requires high humidity to prevent the newly emerging leaves from developing shrivelled edges. We overcame this last year by starting it off under a plastic propagator lid, but because of its cabbage-like nature it cannot be contained for long. It just survives winter in the cold frame, but this is not a practical idea, since it takes the whole of the next season to recover.

### *CORALLODISCUS LANUGINOSUS* (KEKE 1133)

Sown in 1990, one seed germinated and for 10 months remained visible only through a hand lens. It was kept under lights where it first flowered in the winter of 1992, still in a thumb pot. Two years on, it is now in the greenhouse plunge but is still a single crowned rosette with a diameter of only 11cm. Native to the Himalaya, we are told that in the wild, plants spend the dry season completely shrivelled and apparently lifeless. This could have been our difficulty, since we hadn't the courage to let our only plant go into this state. Another *Corallodiscus* sp. (SDR 108) collected by David and Stella Rankin in China in 1993 is proving to be just as slow growing.

### X *JANKAEMONDA VANDEDEMI* (Fig.46, p.179)

An intergeneric hybrid between *Jankaea heldreichii* and (it is thought) *Ramonda myconi*. It is a very rewarding plant with flowers lasting over a month, and looks good on the show bench. Despite the original near failure which we attribute to inexperience at the time, there appears to be nothing difficult or different in growing *Jankaemonda* from any of the other plants in the collection. It survives the cold frame, but the edges of the leaves can turn brown. Occasionally a second flowering occurs in late June/July, but always with fewer scapes.

## LYSIONOTUS

Coming from Asia, *LL. pauciflorus* and *montanus* are evergreen epiphytic shrubs about 30cm tall. They are easily propagated by dividing their surface-rooting rhizomes. Both have pale lavender tubular flowers with yellow throats and purple veining, the veining being less marked in *L. montanus*. They do well through the winter months in the plunge bed, but suffer some die back in the summer. A compost more suited to epiphytes and a spell outdoors in the growing season might improve this situation.

## OPITHANDRA PRIMULOIDES

The second of the two Japanese species, and the male parent of *X Brigandra calliantha*, this plant was slow to get going from leaf fragments. It is the thirstiest member of the collection in the growing season and is therefore a useful 'indicator' plant. The fleshy, hairy leaves make this species a little tricky to bring through the winter in the plunge although a 'test plant' survived the cold frame well.

## PETROCOSMEA

Of the 4 species from south-east Asia known to be in cultivation we have experience of *PP. kerrii* and *flaccida*. Both are rosette forming evergreens with fleshy, hairy foliage. Indeed, *P. flaccida* can make an attractive foliage plant alone forming a very tight grey/green rosette not unlike a sempervivum. Both plants have a striking resemblance to *Saintpaulia*, *P. flaccida* with unmarked deep violet flowers held well clear of the foliage and *P. kerrii* (Fig.50, p.181) having white blooms with a strong yellow blotch. Both flower over a long period, the latter throughout the summer, the former in the autumn, although our plants of *P. flaccida* have not been without a bloom in over a year. *P. kerrii* needs regular re-potting to keep it in a vigorous, healthy condition. Trial plants of both species failed to survive winter in the cold frame, although one American grower had an outdoor plant of *P. flaccida* which tolerated  $-6^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

## THE SOUTH AMERICAN TRIO – SARMIENTA REPENS, MITRARIA COCCINEA, ASTERANTHERA OVATA

All are shrubby, scrambling evergreens which enjoy woodland conditions. They are easily propagated from stem cuttings and in the case of *Mitraria* and *Asteranthera* make rapid growth. We grow *Sarmienta* (Fig.47, p.180) and *Asteranthera* on chunky moss poles, the latter in a hollowed out log which spends the summer months outside in a shady spot. In all 3 species, red flowers appear in summer on growth made in the previous autumn and winter. *Mitraria* and

*Asteranthera* are hardy in sheltered Scottish gardens, but will not survive beyond the cold frame in ours. *Asteranthera* is grown as ground cover at Bodnant in Wales. *Sarmienta* sets viable seed for us, which germinates in three days in warmth under lights in late autumn.

#### WHERE NEXT?

This has by no means been a comprehensive guide to growing the gesneriads of alpine affinity. While the list of other species is not limitless, there remain several of which we have no experience. There are also other intergeneric hybrids which are not commercially available. It may be that in order to acquire these hybrids, we shall have to breed our own, and this is a field in which we have started to dabble. Watch this space . . .

## GOLDEN JUBILEE SALVER

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*for outstanding services to the Club to*  
**Mr Bill MacKenzie**

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**N**OT only was Bill MacKenzie a founding member, but despite living for many years in the south of England, he had maintained a close interest in and loyalty towards the SRGC over many years. He had recently gifted the Rutland Salver to the Club and attended last year's Discussion Weekend. It would be fitting in the year that he had reached 90 years of age, for Bill MacKenzie to be given this award for outstanding service to the Club.

It was unfortunate that Bill could not be present at the AGM to receive the Salver personally but it was hoped that the Club's youngest member, Joanna Leven, would be able to present this to our oldest member with the Golden Jubilee Salver when on holiday in England.

# *Androsace x marpensis*: A NEW CUSHION PLANT FROM NEPAL

A natural hybrid, *Androsace globifera* x *A. muscoidea*  
*f. longiscapa*, from the Kali Gandaki Gorge

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by GEORGE SMITH

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THIS natural hybrid was collected in July 1988 on Marpha Fields at about 4,000m, a grazing area on a south-facing hillside on a shoulder of the Kali Gandaki gorge under the shadow of Dhaulagiri in central Nepal. Only two plants of it were seen among vast numbers of both parents in full flower in an area of 3km<sup>2</sup>. The hybrid has turned out to be vigorous in cultivation, quickly forming 5 - 15cm cushions. It is not very floriferous, but a plant in flower is quite attractive (Fig.44, p.161).

The rosettes are made up of oblanceolate leaves, 7 - 9mm long and 2 - 2.5mm wide, with obtuse tips; long hairs occur mainly round the margins and at and near the tip; they are longitudinally appressed and form tufts beyond the tips. The hairs are sparse on the under surface and on the lower part of the upper surface; there is a thin scattering of small stalked glands on both surfaces. The single inflorescence rises from the centre of the rosette, and bears one- to three-flowered umbels; all green parts are silky hairy; the 2.5mm bell shaped calyx is divided to ½ into acute lobes. The inflorescence is variable, generally with short or obsolete peduncles, and pedicels which are much longer, up to 2cm. The corolla has a relatively large limb, 10 - 11mm across, with rounded, sometimes slightly notched lobes, and has a colour intermediate between the lilac of *globifera* and the violet purple of *muscoidea longiscapa*; the yellow to ochre throat turns red on fading, and there is a marked yellowish annulus.

It is of interest to note that this is the first definite naturally occurring hybrid from the Asian region to be in cultivation.

The other possible one is *A. chumbyi* hort. (= *A. sarmentosa* var. *chumbyi* hort.) which was first described in the *Gardener's Chronicle* of 1903. Its origin, however, is unknown; there is no known location in the wild for it. If it is a hybrid, it may well have originated in



cultivation, or to my mind, it is more likely to be a natural variant of *A. primuloides* Duby (= *A. studiosorum* Kress). It has been thought to be a hybrid between *A. primuloides* and *A. villosa*, but this is entirely speculative. There are of course several naturally occurring hybrids in Europe.

The following Latin Diagnosis gives the name a formal status in the literature. It has to be published (in this case in the SRGC Journal), and a herbarium specimen designated as the Type has been deposited at the RBG Edinburgh Herbarium.

*Androsace x marpensis* G. F. Smith, hybr.nov. (*A. globifera* Duby x *A. muscoidea* Duby forma *longiscapa* (Knuth) Hand. Mazz.):

Herba caespitosa, pulvinos humiles 5 - 15cm diametro formans; folia permulta, sessilia, imbricata, oblancelata, apice obtusa, 7 - 9mm longa, 2 - 2.5mm lata, griseo-viridia subtus et supra dimidio proximali subglabra, supra dimidio distali longitudinaliter adpresse villosa. Scapus variabilis, pedunculus nullus vel brevis (ad 1cm longus) umbellam 1 - 3 flora ferens; pedicelli quam pedunculus longiores, ad 2cm longi; partes virides pilis sericeis obtecti. Calyx 2.5mm longus, campanulatus, fere ad medium in segmenta fissus. Corolla roseo-malvina, ocello flavo vel ochraceo, versus rubrum mutans, limbo 10 - 11 mm lato, lobis late obovatis rotundatis.

Hybrida inter parentes *A. globifera* Duby et *A. muscoidea* Duby forma *longiscapa* (Knuth) Hand.-Mazz., colore corollae inter lilacinum et violaceo-purpureum duorum parentium intermedio, pedunculo brevi inter eum longum *A. muscoideae* f. *longiscapae* eumque obsoletum *A. globiferae* interjecto, in coloniis magnis densis mixtisque amborum parentium pleno flore sparsissime occurrit.

C. NEPAL: Marpha Fields 4,000m, above Marpha. Type: E. (cultivated specimens propagated vegetatively at RBGE, Accession No.912921 from wild collected material).

My thanks to Dr Robert Mill of the RBG Edinburgh for the translation into Latin, and to Duncan Lowe for a second Herbarium specimen.

# RIPPING YARNS

How to pull your most cherished plants apart

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by IAN D SCOTT

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LIZ AND I have a standing joke – that Trotter used to rip his plants of *Meconopsis delavayi* apart just using a couple of garden forks. This is repeated every year as our single plant gets bigger and bigger, and we lack the nerve to split the plant for fear of losing it. We were sharing this joke with our host when he suddenly leant over into his stockbed and pulled out a superb plant of *Primula barnardoana*, which was nearly bursting out of its pot. “Do you think that this would be easy to split?” he enquired, passing the plant to Liz. Certainly it appeared to have a number of crowns to it, but whether these all arose from a single tap-root or possessed separate root systems was impossible to ascertain, even when the root ball was removed from the pot. “Well, you’d better keep the plant – but only on condition that you rip it apart and report back on our little experiment.” Rather dazed we carried the precious plant home.

For those of you who lack the nerve to split your only example of *Primula barnardoana*, this is what we found. The root system was extremely congested on this two-year-old plant and, although there were obviously three separate crowns, they would not fall apart as easily as you would expect with, for example, a polyanthus. Eventually the pieces were separated by virtually root-washing the plant. This resulted, however, in losing most of the fine roots, leaving only the thicker ones. In addition several smaller pieces were also broken off in the process. All the pieces were potted up immediately, soaked, and left to recover in a shaded stockbed. I am amazed to report that all the crowns survived this treatment, and so did some of the smaller pieces.

The first outcome from this experience was to read up about our new plant, keeping our fingers crossed that it would survive. I am told that the correct name for this plant is *Primula elongata* var. *barnardoana*. Apparently the plant exhibits two leaf-forms. In early growth the leaf blade is long and scarcely distinct from the stalk, whereas in later growth the blade becomes ovate with a heart-shaped base. Not surprisingly the two forms were not recognised as being the same species and were collected as *Primula elongata* and *Primula barnardoana*, respectively. Now here is a strange coincidence.

One of the reasons for visiting our host in the first place was to show him a rather strange primula seedling. The seed had been collected as *Primula minor* (KGB 330), but the leaf was nothing like that of *Primula minor* (KGB 600). The leaves were narrowly spear-shaped, dark green and glossy on the upperside with white farina on the underside. Even stranger was the irregular tooting along the leaf margins which was almost horn-like. What puzzled me most was how the plant could have been mistaken for *Primula minor*, which is easily recognised by its heart-shaped leaves. Well, it's only a hunch, but I'm watching the leaves of KGB 330 with interest.

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*The second outcome was that I started  
looking for another plant to rip apart*

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The second outcome was that I started looking around for another plant to rip apart. My victim was a two-year-old pot of *Primula pinnatifida* which appeared to have several crowns. Once again we seem to have been successful, and this time the roots fell apart quite easily. Now this may sound like sheer vandalism. A colleague from down south nearly choked when I told him what I was doing. "We can't even get it to produce seed," he spluttered. However, our single *Primula pinnatifida alba* steadfastly refuses to set seed and this may be the only way of multiplying it up. On a brighter note it is now obvious that this species comes in a much wider range of colours than we first thought: bright blue; pale blue; lavender; and pale pink, as well as white.

Finally, don't throw away precious plants which appear dead. Last spring I was saddened to see that the crown of my only remaining *Primula uniflora (klattii)* had rotted over the winter. However, out of desperation I pulled off the four roots and potted them up as a crude attempt at taking root cuttings. Much to my amazement all of the roots grew to produce most respectable plants. Only one question remains. Do I have the nerve to rip them apart again next spring?

# BOOK REVIEWS

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## ***Encyclopedia of Alpines***

by A Team of Specialists

Published by The Alpine Garden Society 1994

Vol.1 A-K, 709pp, 235 colour plates

Vol.2 L-Z, 1,411pp, 308 colour plates

Price £190 per set of two volumes

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**T**HIS is a mammoth task ably completed by a team of professional and amateur members under the leadership of Kenneth Beckett and Christopher Grey-Wilson, the Society's Editor.

This publication replaces the books of past decades – Reginald Farrer's *The English Rock Garden* (1919) and Samson Clay's *The Present Day Rock Garden* (1937) and many others and will be the reference book that takes amateur and professional alpine gardeners and botanists into the 21st century. Its aim is to provide a ready reference to all alpine plants and rock garden plants currently in cultivation. This is the most comprehensive and accurate reference work on alpine plants yet produced and lists almost 1,000 general world wide.

The text is arranged simply in alphabetical order by genus. The generic description includes information on the size of the genus, its distribution and principal characteristics. A glossary of botanical terms is included to allow comparison and separation from closely related genera and also to assist readers unfamiliar with complex botanical nomenclature. Rough measurements are given but as is pointed out this can vary depending on geographic location, soil/compost and method of cultivation.

Throughout, the two volumes are packed with illustrations of plants. Plants growing in the wild and in cultivation are beautifully reproduced and a list of picture credits is included. The two volumes are also interspersed with numerous line drawings by Christine Grey-Wilson which help to augment the text.

In a work of this size there are naturally a few errors but these are relatively few. Word has it, however, that the AGS intends to publish a supplement in five years which will correct errors and add further information to an already outstanding work. This supplement will also correct omissions and add further information.

The Encyclopaedia lists many plants from the Southern Hemisphere as this is the area of so many of our new plants introductions but redresses the balance as many of the European, Asian and North American alpine plants are so well known and of which so

much has already been written. There is an excellent bibliography with a comprehensive list of reference books, journals, monographs and floras to keep those seeking further information more than happy.

Although expensive, this Encyclopaedia is a must for the alpine enthusiast.

H M

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### ***Plant Care***

*Published by the Taunton Press Inc*

(Distributed by Batsford in the UK)

96pp, 88 colour plates, 86 line drawings

*Price* £12.99, published October 1994

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**T**HIS book is a collection of articles on plant care from *Fine Gardening* magazine in its first five years of publication.

Although it is an American publication, a surprising amount of the information in it is of immediate practical use for the UK and the plants included are mainly familiar to gardeners here. The topics include seed germination, taking cuttings, planting trees and shrubs, pruning and cutting back, dividing plants, moving plants and grafting. Not primarily topics for rock gardeners but I suspect that we all carry out most of the operations listed.

The operations are all described clearly and succinctly with the minimum of scientific jargon and the illustrations and line drawings are equally explicit.

It is an ideal book for a beginner in gardening but goes into sufficient detail to provide useful information for even experienced gardeners who wish to tackle some new job. It is beautifully produced and is excellent value.

P T

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### ***Garden Projects***

*Published by the Taunton Press Inc*

(Distributed by Batsford in the UK)

96pp, 104 colour plates, 48 line drawings

*Price* £12.99, published October 1994

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**L**IKE the above book, this book is a collection of articles from *Fine Gardening* magazine.

The articles are thus obviously written for American readers but, again, they are all remarkably appropriate for gardeners in

the UK. They cover the use of bricks and stone to create walls and patios, fencing with a range of materials, container gardening including hypertufa, ponds and bogs and, perhaps surprisingly, how to force bulbs.

All the articles go into great detail how to carry out the necessary operations, giving measurements at all times. It is an ideal book for beginners who are about to design and build a garden from scratch but it also contains a wealth of information for more experienced gardeners. The text is clear and understandable while the colour plates and line drawings add immeasurably to the value of the book. It is excellently produced and good value for money. P T

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***A Gardener Obsessed***

by Geoffrey B. Charlesworth

Published by David R. Godine (Boston)

245pp, 40 colour plates

(See advert on p.213)

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**T**HIS book is by the author of that excellent volume *The Opinionated Gardener* and is just as amusing and informative. Geoffrey is an Englishman now living in New England, yet the book is likely to be just as useful in the UK as in America.

All gardeners will appreciate his musings on why we garden and how we should set about it. In particular for rock gardeners this book has chapters ranging from seed-growing to troughs as well as on the keeping of records. There is a thought-provoking list of the first 100 plants to grow and why, with much useful information on plant care and on suitable sites.

The author also includes sections full of insight on gentians, succulents and composites. The book is attractively produced with excellent colour plates, mainly of alpine plants.

It is interesting to read with many helpful hints and at \$24.95 would make an attractive present for a fellow gardener. F M

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***The Encyclopaedia of Plants for Garden Situations***

by Fritz Kohlein and Peter Menzel

Published by B. T. Batsford

320pp, 1,000 colour plates

Price £19.99

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**T**HIS book is a translation from *Das Neue Grosse And Sommerblumen* published in 1992.

Here is a book which should help the inexperienced gardener to

choose the right plant for the right place as it describes and illustrates 40 different garden situations and over 1,000 species of garden plants, indicating which situation they are best suited to.

Included are biennials, bedding plants, rock plants, bulbs and tuberous plants, bog and aquatic plants, grasses and ferns, climbers and container material. Shrubs are not included.

Only one species is illustrated under each entry but a general account of the genus is usually given plus advice on growing and propagating.

It is not primarily a book for rock gardeners but will be an excellent encyclopaedia for new gardeners or those about to design a new garden.

The book is beautifully produced and the colour plates extremely clear and informative.

A S

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***Growing Winter Hardy Cacti in Cold/Wet Climate Conditions***

by John N. Spain

*Published by*

Elisabeth Harmon, 75 Middlebury Road, Watertown, CT 06795, USA

1994, paperback, 69pp, 24 line drawings, 20 photographs

Price \$10 including postage (copies may be ordered directly from John Spain, 69 Bayberry Road, Middlebury, CT 06762, USA)

---

**T**HIS book gives exactly the information needed to effectively use opuntias and other succulents in gardens. Having adapted to the Arctic, to the Rockies at above 8,000ft and to deserts, plants are included which can counterpoint alpine in bed or trough, or provide a larger exotic element when this is needed. The species description together with the excellent line drawings will be useful in matching plant to site.

All aspects of culture are fully described and in 'Twenty of the Best' an invaluable wealth of experience is deployed.

Cultivation may be more challenging in Fort William than in Aberdeen, but the vital clue could be in the book's first sentence giving the first three requirements for growing cacti in wet/cold gardens as drainage, drainage and drainage.

T S

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***Border Pinks***

by Richard Bird

*Published by* B. T. Batsford

166pp, 34 colour plates, 30 line drawings

*Price* £19.99

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THE fact that there are now well over 30,000 *Dianthus* species and varieties of carnations and pinks listed in *The Dianthus Register* makes the publication of this book on pinks extremely timely. Around 200 varieties of pinks are illustrated in colour so that the book will, if nothing else, be extremely useful in identification.

Richard Bird concentrates on varieties which are currently in cultivation or have been until recently. It is interesting that even varieties which received Awards from the RHS within the last 20 years have now disappeared from cultivation.

There are introductory chapters on *Dianthus* in general, with emphasis on cultivation and propagation; the bulk of the book deals with varieties in alphabetical order.

As would be expected from such a well-known author as Richard Bird the book is extremely well written with a wealth of well-documented information about each variety. It is sure to become a standard reference book on pinks and will be of inestimable value to everyone who grows them even if only for identification purposes. There is, however, much more useful information about pinks in the book than just identification.

S M



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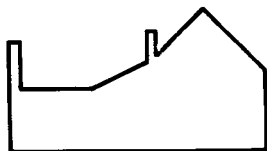
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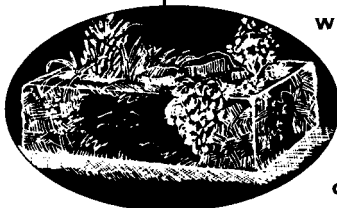
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