THE ROCK GARDEN 152

January 2024

Subscriptions from 1st October, 2023

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- The long number on the card
- The name of the cardholder as shown on the card
- The card expiry date
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Seed Exchange Any administrative charges will be payable at the time of ordering.

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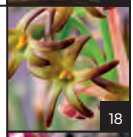
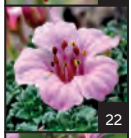
The Rock Garden

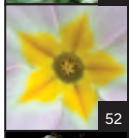
The Journal of the
Scottish Rock Garden Club
January 2024

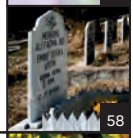
Number 152

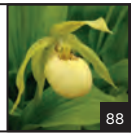
Front Cover: *Tristagma nivale* (Photo: Liz Cole)
Back Cover: *Cyclamen graecum* (Photo: Peter Maguire)

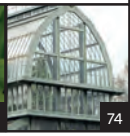


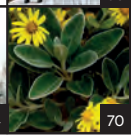












Printed by GKD, Hull.
www.gkd-litho.com ISSN 0265-5500 www.srgc.net

THE ROCK GARDEN is published twice yearly 31st January & 31st July. The Editor welcomes articles on all aspects of alpine and rock garden plants and their cultivation. Authors are encouraged to submit text and illustrative material electronically but may also submit in manuscript.

Contributions are welcome at any time of year. Submission of illustrations is taken to affirm that the author has copyright, which will be shared with the club. Permission to reproduce photographs or articles may be sought from the editor or the author. Images that are marked 🍁 are supported by the Danner bequest.

Journals usually arrive in February and August. Please contact the Subscriptions Secretary (see inside front cover) in case of non-arrival .

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Please help the Club - There are Vacant Positions to be filled:

- We will need a treasurer in autumn 2024 when our present treasurer, Richard Green, steps into the President's position.
- An indexer to prepare the biennial index of the journals is needed to replace Glassford Sprunt, who did the job valiantly for many years.
- We need a publicity manager to help promote the club to the wider world for our charitable aim of raising interest in alpines and rock plants.
- Please contact the secretary hwilson@rbge.org for more details of these positions. Your help is vital and welcomed.

Discussion Weekend

The club council is grateful to those who ensured the success of the 2023 *Discussion Weekend* despite the difficulties of its arrangement in the aftermath of the Covid crisis. It was enthusiastically received by all who attended (see page 1). Attendance was lower than usual but gave hope for re-growth in future as normal conditions return after the disruption of normal event preparations by Covid.

Because of that disruption, and to ensure that the club obtains the best possible speakers for the next event, your council has decided that there will be **no Discussion Weekend in 2024** . Preparations are already in hand for the **next Discussion Weekend in October 2025** . All suggestions and offers of help for the event are warmly welcomed.

A Newcomer at The Rock Garden Discussion Weekend, 13 - 15 October 2023

Elizabeth Galley

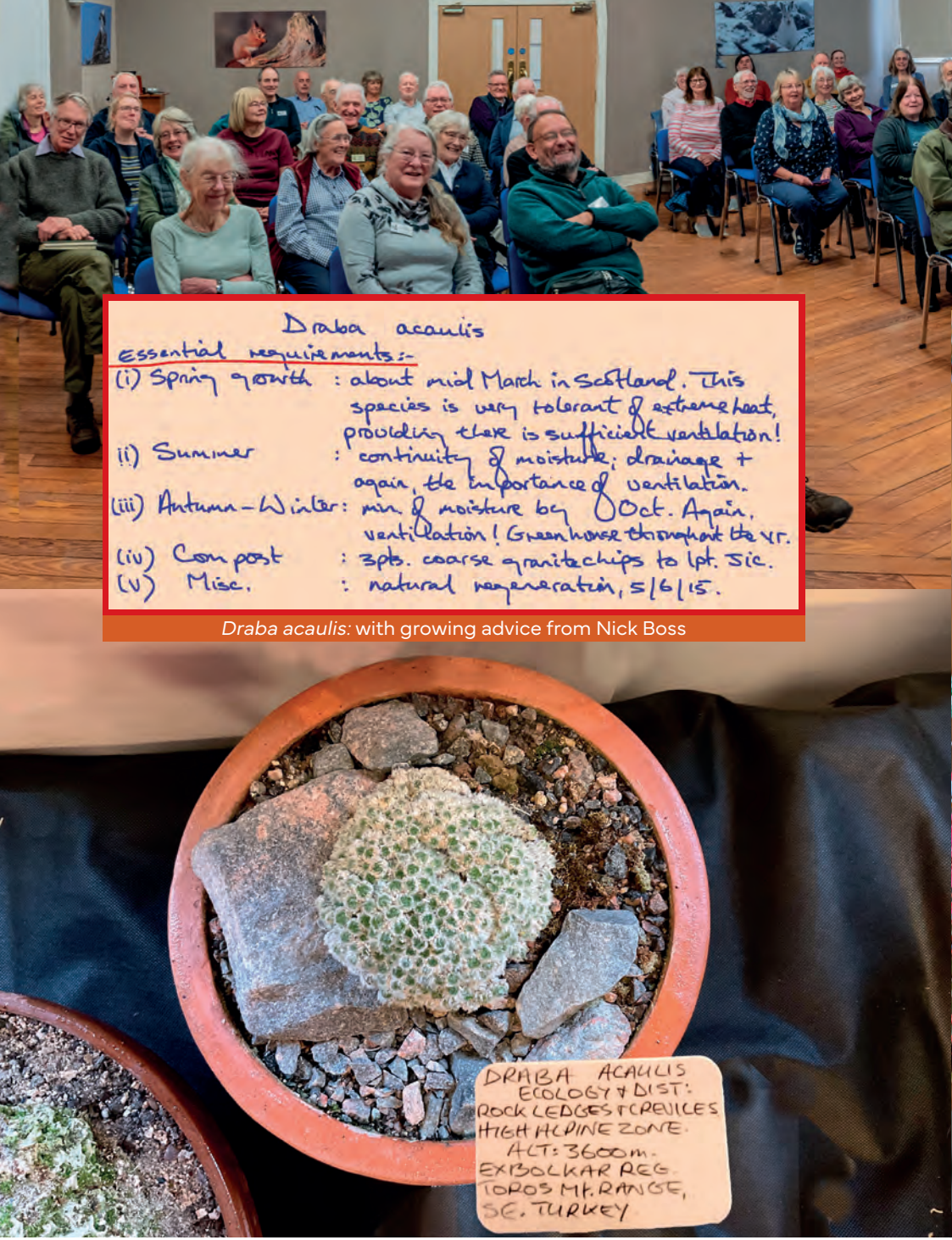
Nerine bowdenii 'Lipstick'

As a new member, having joined the club in the spring of 2023, I was excited to attend my first *Discussion Weekend*, held at the historic and elegant Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey. Spirits were high as we at last met up – for the first time in four years – with fellow club members, some having travelled long distances, and some lively folk coming from abroad. For those unable to attend, I suggested that an article outlining the proceedings of the weekend be written for *The Rock Garden*. Inevitably, I was then asked if I would write the said article!

On Friday evening, after a delicious dinner in the dining room, our president, Colin Crosbie, gave us a very warm welcome in advance of the first lecture, which showcased bulbs at the Royal Botanical Gardens of Edinburgh.

For those unfamiliar with the Grant Arms, the hotel has a designated lecture room, with an additional room for the show plants and a second one for seed and bulb sales. We enjoyed the plants from members and Ardfearn nursery, together with a wide variety of bulbs brought by Jacques Amand. Saturday morning was free time after breakfast – either to explore the town independently or to join a local walk organised by the hotel. Most people chose the former while I and three others took a short drive to the beautiful Logie Gardens, where there are many fine plant specimens to view.

Three lectures on Saturday afternoon offered excellence, variety and many beautiful photographs to enjoy. I learnt much from the content and I admired the enthusiasm and knowledge of the



Draba acaulis: with growing advice from Nick Boss

Saxifraga fortunei and friends

speakers. A Scottish piper stylishly opened our wonderful gala dinner. It was followed by the plant auction, presided over by Ian Bainbridge. Humour and jollity abounded and we raised a useful sum for funds. On Sunday, a further four fine lectures occupied the time when we were neither eating nor chatting.

Throughout the weekend, I loved travelling visually (enjoying brilliant photographs) through bulbs at the alpine house of the Royal Botanical Garden in Edinburgh, on to *A Plantsman's Garden*, then delighting in a collection of Scottish native plants, learning about cultivation and propagation, visiting a Norwegian garden and learning about its construction, hearing detailed wisdom about *Growing Alpines*, travelling botanically up the east coast of Scotland (half of the *North Coast 500*) before finishing back at the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh with a few other gardens.

We all appreciated the many detailed advance preparations, which ensured a most rewarding and educational weekend, and we were grateful to the wonderful speakers who gave so freely of their expertise and time. The weekend closed at 15:45 and it was time to say goodbye to new and old friends alike.

How fortunate we were: the weather for our event was clear, bright and sunny; the following weekend was so very different as storm Babet disrupted normal life so dramatically.

The SRGC Seed Exchange at 77: what do we do and how does it work?

Ian Bainbridge, Carole Bainbridge, Kathleen Cartwright, Richard Green, Dave Millward, Neil & Sheila McNulty

Many Scottish Rock Garden Club members gather seed in the autumn, probably from their garden or possibly from the wild. They send it to the *Seed Exchange* and early in the following year another member receives the seed and sows it. This is a deceptively simple arrangement, but one that needs many volunteers to be successful. In 2022, 239 donors and 110 volunteers were involved in gathering, packing and sending out seed.

In 2006 Jean Wyllie and Stuart Pawley wrote a history of the exchange (*The Rock Garden* 117). They described its beginnings in 1947, the early work of Bobby Masterton, and that of exchange managers who followed, including the redoubtable Joyce Halley. Jean took over in 1987 and in her second year split the process into three ("*for her own good*" as she put it). Her process is still followed today in the 77th year of the exchange (2023-24): it comprises *Seed Reception*, *Seed Packeting* and *Seed Distribution*.

In 2023-24 the Seed Exchange is centred in the West of Scotland. Here is Glasgow in a winter dawn, waiting for the work to start.

We suspect many members are not really aware of just what makes the *Seed Exchange* work, so this article aims to lead you through the process, at the same time acknowledging the crucial efforts of so many club member volunteers, efforts that were were graphically and enthusiastically described by Jeanie Jones in *The Rock Garden* 151.

An Early Task

The seed season begins for all the seed managers in May, with the brief but important job of deciding what to write about donations, packeting and orders for the summer issue of *Dryas* and for the website. We also check, clean and update the main *Seed Exchange* spreadsheet so it is fit for the next year's operations.

Seed Reception

Managed by Ian & Carole Bainbridge

During the summer and autumn, many members collect seed from their own gardens, clean it and send it to the exchange. The article by Jeanie Jones describes beautifully how she does this, so we don't repeat this stage here. In most years, seed donations begin to arrive in July or August; just a few, mostly from southern hemisphere donors who are six months ahead in seed collection terms. This early seed is checked and refrigerated to keep it as fresh as possible.

The Seed Exchange is one of the most important and visible activities of the SRGC, and serves many members, including our international ones. Seeds play an important part in beautifying all our gardens and helping conserve species. Donations are vital and all are warmly welcomed.

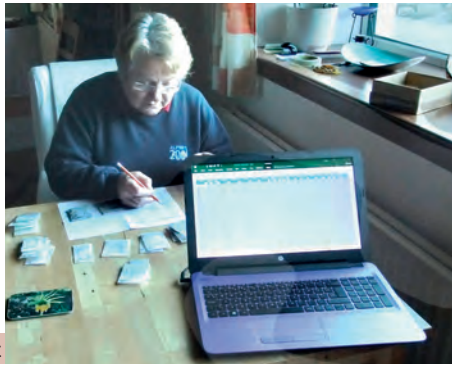
Volunteers are urgently needed for the important activities described in this article. We particularly need a new packeting manager, but if you are interested in contributing to the work in any of the roles we describe, please contact seed@srgc.net

From early September, the reception role begins in earnest. Every day, we sit down with the day's post and sort out donations. Carole opens the envelopes and checks the donated seed against the donor's list. As much as we can, we also check that the seed looks correct and is clean, dry and not going mouldy!

Uncommon Items

We always welcome donations of seed. One nice big packet of an unusual item is a lovely surprise and really useful. In general, grain-type bulb seed is in short supply: *Crocus*, *Colchicum*, *Erythronium* and *Narcissus* for example; so if you can donate that, you make us very happy. Demand for an item varies between five and eighty packets, so even modest amounts of seed can be really useful, and it's surprising what comes in only rarely – *Primula vulgaris* for example.

We then begin the data entry. Currently, we operate an Excel spreadsheet that contains every taxon and variety ever donated to the *Seed Exchange* (around 25 thousand items!), and every recent donor. We check the donor's details are current and credit them with the number of packets donated, entering details of any wild-collected seed. Then we record all the donations, packet by packet, in the spreadsheet using a data entry window to rapidly find the genus, species and varieties.



Receiving seeds and entering data for the seed list

Donor Status

The *Seed Exchange* relies entirely on the goodwill and efforts of our donors. In gratitude to them, we select donors' main seed orders first. The seed spreadsheet does a magical little sum combining the number of packets they have donated, the number of years of donation and their average donation over the years. This gives us a donor rank, with our best donors getting their seed selections first.

As part of the data entry, we check any and all unfamiliar names. The system gives us rapid access to the key websites. The main source we now use for all wild species is *Plants of the World Online* (https://powo.science.kew.org/), whereas the RHS database (https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/search-form) is best for all garden cultivars and varieties. We also use key monographs: *Primula* (Richards), *The World of Crocus* (Ruksans), *Meconopsis for Gardeners* (Grey-Wilson), and *Saxifrages* (McGregor), as well as specialist websites such as the Cyclamen Society's to help with naming. If in doubt, we check with the donor by email to resolve queries.

Name Changes

Plant taxonomy is one of the more vexing issues, and many changes are made every year by taxonomists. We usually take a conservative line on this: we are not quick to change names with which gardeners are entirely familiar and comfortable, although this will change over time. *Plants of the World Online* tends to lump subspecies whereas we tend to be more generous and leave subspecific names in the list if the donor has provided them.

Once the day's seeds are all entered, the packets are put into a set of about seventy bins that hang from a rack in the garage**.** We erect the rack in early September – another little side job to be done. The bins are labelled either for the most popular genera (about thirty bins) or alphabetically (for all other genera).

Setting up seed bins in the garage

Bins set up for common genera

Every day we acknowledge the donations with a blind copy email; we do not post acknowledgements – it is too costly and time consuming. We also acknowledge emails from donors promising seed and hold those until the seed arrives.

The time all this takes grows gradually from early September through to the end of October. On some days we will receive twenty or more donations, so we're busy for much of the day. In 2022, 239 donors provided over 5100 packets of seed. Three fantastic donors provided over 150 packets each. This generated a main list with over 3000 numbers, plus over 50 bulbils, rice, and 115 wild collections.

At the end of October, we start to sort out the seed catalogue. All the promised late donations are entered into the system, and around the 5th of November we use the spreadsheet to generate the seed list number for each taxon for the year, with separate listings for garden and wild seed and bulbils/live material. These are the item numbers you see in the catalogue.

Alphabetical bins for receiving seed

Full bin racks for filling with seed

We then print a sticky label for each item, in preparation for the first team session of the year. In 2022, fourteen volunteers joined us to sort the seed in the bins into individual 'bulk envelopes'. A large brown envelope has a sticky label attached to it – number 1 is usually *Abelmoschus manihot* (alphabetical order!), and all the *Abelmoschus* seed donations are put into the brown envelope from the bin containing all the AA to AC genera. Each volunteer is given a bin, a pile of envelopes, the appropriate sticky labels, and plays what we call 'seed snap', matching all the donations from the bin into the envelopes. This usually takes a couple of days, around the 7th of November and, when done, we have a trip to the Seed Packeting Manager to take all the seeds in their brown envelopes, in the storage bins for the next part of the exchange process.

The SW Scotland team sorting donated seed (playing seed snap)

Bulk seed ready to go to Ayr for packeting

Full seed bins off to the packeting team

In early November, we send the newly-generated seed lists and necessary details to the packeting team and to the team who put together the online ordering system for the year. Then, our remaining job is to make the seed catalogue. The Excel spreadsheet creates the seed lists, we update the text, insert the lists into Microsoft Word, edit and tidy the documents and send them off to the SRGC editor and printer with a big sigh of relief. Our target date for all this is 15th November, aiming for the catalogue to be printed by 22nd and mailed out by 26th November in time for the *Seed Exchange* to open on 1st December.

After that, we dismantle the rack in the garage and enjoy a celebratory gin and tonic. We continue to deal with late seed arrivals as necessary, and make sure these are integrated into the main exchange when the seed distribution takes place in January.

Seed Packeting

Managed in 2022/23 by Neil & Sheila McNulty

The bulk seed arrives in mid-November from Ian & Carole Bainbridge in anything up to sixty blue/green bins, with additional empty spares so we can manage the sending of seed to packeters. The bins contain brown envelopes full of donated seed in numerical order (one envelope per seed type).

Our main job is then to pack around sixty boxes for packeters all over the UK, for them to make up the individual glassine packets of seed. From our records of past demand, and by assessing the seed available for this year, we calculate how many taxa to send to each packeter. Generally, we ask them to make up around seven or eight hundred

Sorting bulk seed before sending to packing

Preparing an individual packeter's box

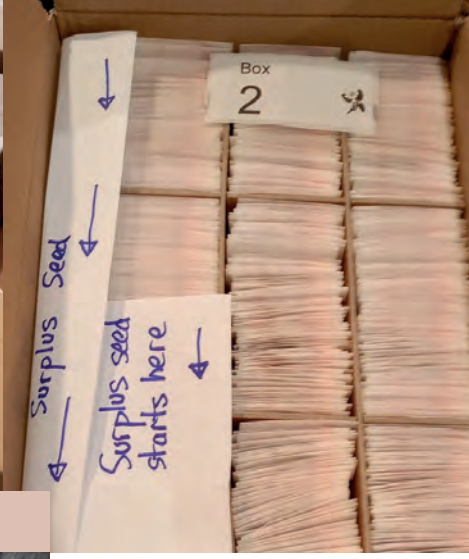
packets, which roughly gives a complete boxful. The demand for each seed item typically varies between five and eighty packets, so we usually have some calculating to do for each box.

We print a master sheet of seeds sent, a full set of instructions, and the correct number of small sticky labels for each packeter. The donated seed, labels, printed sheets, 800 glassine envelopes, return postage labels and wrapping paper are all put into the box, which is ready-divided into compartments for the packeted seed. It is then sealed and sent for them to packet at home. We aim to have all sixty boxes sent out before the end of November, which gives the packeters three or four weeks to complete their task and return the finished boxes to us.

Home Packeting

Our sixty to eighty packeting volunteers have around four weeks to make up about seven hundred packets of seed, which they do in the comfort of their own homes. Jeanie Jones's article in *The Rock Garden* 151 explains how she does this. The packeters open the donated seed packets, check that all the seed looks the same and is good seed, not chaff or debris, and put a pinch of seed into the number of glassine envelopes specified by the packeting manager. The finest seeds such as orchids and rhododendrons are wrapped in small silver foil packs. The glassines are sealed, and labels are put on the packets to go back into the box compartment in numerical order. Packeters may comment on the seed, so we know if they think any is poor or incorrect. When all is done the box is resealed and posted back to the packeting manager.

Our approach is to provide enough seed for members to sow a seven cm pot, so a nice pinch of smaller seed, fifteen to twenty larger ones, a minimum of seven of the more unusual seeds, and five for large paeony seed is what we ask for.



Checking a box returned from a packer
A perfect box of returned seed

Ready to go to seed distribution in Glasgow

All packed and ready to go to Glasgow

By early December, boxes begin to return from the packeters. They are examined and checked to ensure we have good packing quality and that labels are well-positioned, then the seeds are sorted in numerical order in each box. Returned spare seeds are sorted back into the reserve envelopes in the green bins, and everything is stored in the basement at 10°C until it heads to Glasgow for the next phase of the operation.

In 2022-23, ten Ayr Group members helped with the box sorting and mailing, and fifty-one members completed home packeting of the glassine envelopes. Thanks to all of them: we couldn't manage the *Seed Exchange* without you!

Ian Bainbridge, Carole Bainbridge, Kathleen Cartwright, Richard Green, Dave Millward, Neil & Sheila McNulty

Seed Ordering

Managed by Richard Green and Dave Millward

We have an online ordering system that allows members to order both main and surplus seed and pay for it using debit or credit cards. Using an online system has several advantages for the club. The main benefit is in reading handwriting on seed order forms. It is surprising how many different ways there are of writing numbers, let alone writing addresses, and online ordering avoids all these problems. Payments are also processed automatically, and we save considerable administrative time in banking cash and cheques.

We appreciate that online ordering has disadvantages for members without computer skills or easy access to helpful friends. We still accept paper orders and cash; they are put into the order queue allowing for postal delays so that paper members are not disadvantaged, and the first paper orders are picked with the first online orders.

In the run-up to the exchange period, we housekeep the seed web pages, deleting previous year's orders, archiving the previous seed list, ensuring all texts are up-to-date, checking settings and testing any new or modified functions. Members should note that archived seed lists from all the years back to 2007-08 are available online throughout the year. When ready, the new seed list is uploaded, checked and tested; in addition, we make copies in pdf and spreadsheet formats available for download. We hope that members find the online ordering system easy to use, but occasionally things do go wrong. Solutions to most of the common issues can be found in the 'frequently asked questions' – please try these first before contacting the administrator.

The seed list is available online well before online ordering opens. This happens at midnight UK time, and there is always a rush of online orders in the first few hours. In December 2022 the first order from an Australian member was entered, paid and completed just over 6 minutes after ordering opened! In the first hour, 36 orders were made. By the time the sun rose in Scotland at 08:45 on 1st December, we had received 93 completed orders, with 210 completed in the first 24 hours.

Of the 827 final completed orders, only 59 were made on paper, and this number is dropping each year as members discover the benefits of online ordering.

Ordering closes on a Friday night. The weekend is spent checking and printing the orders and mailing labels in advance of the team's gathering to start picking orders on the following Monday morning.

Seed Distribution
Managed by Kathleen Cartwright

The West of Scotland Group currently organises the picking of seed packets for orders. The system has been well-honed over the years by previous organisers, and there is now a strict sequence of events. We hire a church hall in Glasgow for two weeks. In 2023 we completed picking and packing all 827 orders (both main and surplus) in less than 10 working days, with 25 volunteers helping us through this phase. The first day starts with familiarising ourselves with tea and coffee making facilities ... and the location of toilets. Then we set out the tables, and by that time the boxes of small seed packets are delivered. The afternoon is spent laying these packets out in the seed trays with divider cards and marking any seed numbers banned from various countries.

By Day 2 we are well into picking the first orders from donors. It is remarkable that donors are very quick to place their orders (88 of those 210 first day orders were from donors). However, donors do not need to rush their ordering. We always pick donor orders first before non-donors, to encourage members to become donors. Main orders are picked, and then we move on to surplus orders.

Picking progresses over the next week or so, and the work is made easier by ample supplies of tea, coffee and homemade cake. As we reach the second week we start to exhaust some seed numbers. Helpers then begin to packet further supplies of seed from the bulk packets where available and to print the necessary seed packet labels.

Kit heading to Westerton Church Hall

Seed trays ready for picking requests

Seed tabs make picking correctly easier

West of Scotland group picking orders

3Ps - Picking, Packing and Posting

It is not surprising that after a day looking at numbers we all start misreading or transposing digits. The pickers assist each other by checking completed orders, and everyone circulates jobs to avoid tiredness. In this way, any errors are picked up and corrected before the orders are finalised. Completed orders are stacked in boxes by country, and the next stage begins.

Orders going to the USA require preparation of a list of seeds and the envelope is addressed to a USDA APHIS inspection station using green/yellow labels supplied by the member. Australia and New Zealand also require lists of seeds to assist their own inspection teams. All orders going to the EU are recombined, and a master list is prepared before the box is ferried to Edinburgh for the Scottish Government inspection and issue of phytosanitary certification. Helpers type and check these seed lists. Then we stocktake the remaining seed, clear up, finish the cake, and pack up things for next year.

Mailing envelopes are weighed for the correct postage, and mail sacks are delivered to Kathleen's friendly local post office. Once envelopes are in the mail, we await news of the arrival of seed in countries around the world. Occasionally envelopes are returned to sender for no

Seed orders for the USA

apparent reason, or paper seed orders are delayed in transit. We always try to help members with these problems, and we are flexible with the rules wherever possible.

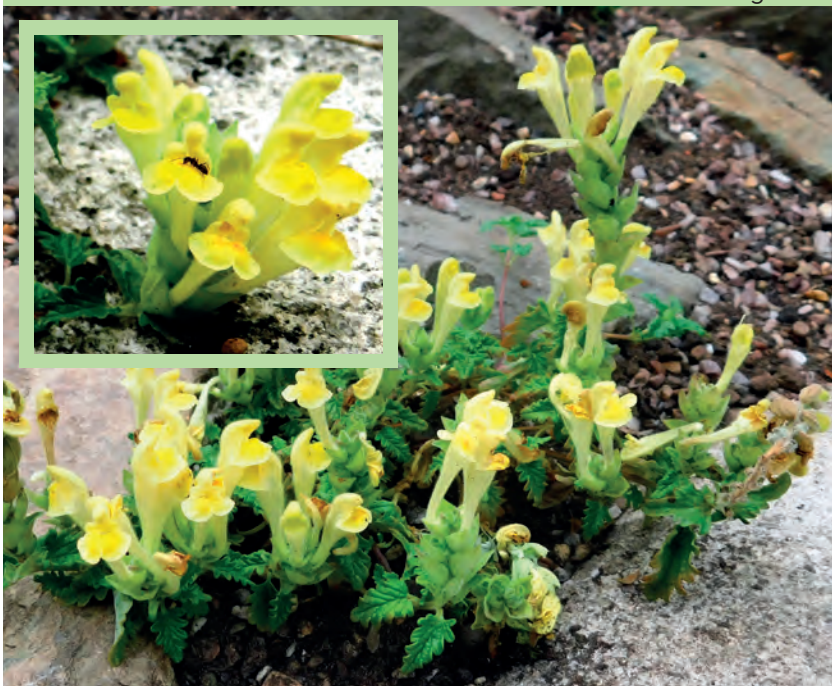
Easy Ten

One separate little annual job is the selection of the *Easy Ten* and writing the descriptions of the seed offered for the year. We look through the donated seed and select items we know are likely to germinate well, with a good amount of seed. We look for seed of a mixture of bulbs, small and larger alpines, and arrange for the right number of additional packets to be made up and labelled, print the leaflet that goes with them, and have them ready for the surplus seed picking period.

And the tidying up ...

After the *Seed Exchange* is completed, the online seed ordering system lets us check the year's demand for each item on the list. Each item on the main seed spreadsheet has a *Henry Number*, named for the late Henry Taylor who started this system of stock control. This number is the previous demand for that seed, which enables us to tell the packers how many of each item to pack this year.

Scutellaria orientalis: a seed-sown success for the crevice garden



If the demand for any item has grown or diminished significantly, we will adjust the *Henry Number* in anticipation of next year's exchange. This means we have enough seed to meet the main orders, and enough left over for surplus orders and for two trays of seed to go around the club shows for members to choose from surplus.

At the end of the day, we hope we have hundreds of contented members sowing seed for their gardens. The system is only made possible by the efforts of the donors, the three seed teams and managers, and the packeting volunteers. We hope they all enjoy playing their part in an important and integral part of the membership benefits of the Scottish Rock Garden Club.

A Surprise Packet – *Arenaria roseiflora*

A few years back, we received a box of packeted seed back from Carol & David Shaw, stalwart seed packeters for the exchange. In the box was a comment note, that they had not packeted the donation of *Arenaria roseiflora*, as all the *Arenaria* seed was tiny black grains, and the donated seed of *A. roseiflora* looked like tiny flying saucers - and surely was not correct? A check on the *Flora of China* online showed that this was indeed unusual *Arenaria* seed – little flying saucers! It was duly packeted and distributed, and we (Carole & Ian B) sowed a little, germinated it and have been growing it ever since in our tufa bed. A nice herbaceous true alpine with pale rose flowers. We think this may originally have been an Alpine Garden Society China Expedition (ACE) collection, and it's well worth growing!

Arenaria roseiflora from seed, growing in tufa in the Bainbridges' garden

Cardiocrinum giganteum, our biggest herbaceous seed plant? This is a greatly rewarding species that may be grown from seed if you are patient!

Ian Bainbridge, Carole Bainbridge, Kathleen Cartwright, 17
Richard Green, Dave Millward, Neil & Sheila McNulty

Tristagma nivale: Certificate of Botanical Interest

David Millward and Scott Cook

An outstanding and unusual exhibit of the South-American geophyte *Tristagma nivale* Poepp. was awarded a ***Certificate of Botanical Interest*** at the Edinburgh and the Lothians show on Saturday 15th April 2023. The plant formed part of the Gold Medal display of bulbous and alpine plants by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RGBE).

This new show award arises from discussion among the judges at the Aberdeen show in May 2022 about an exhibit of *Salix herbacea*. This is one of the smallest woody plants, native to the mountain tops of northwestern Britain, and to the boreal and arctic alpine regions of northern Europe and North America. Rarely seen in cultivation, it is generally not considered to be a 'show' plant because of its minute, almost inconspicuous, flowers. However, the well grown and mature plant on display was exceptionally well flowered and commendably accompanied by notes explaining its ecology and cultivation. After much deliberation, the judges awarded a certificate of merit but felt that such a plant might be recognized better for its botanical interest.

Hence a *Certificate of Botanical Interest* has been introduced to pay tribute to an exceptional plant recognised for its botanical merit rather than its show potential. This may reflect any combination of the plant's particular morphological character(s), its novelty, its taxonomical, educational or conservational value. The award is given to recognize and encourage the wider cultivation of more unusual plants, which may not otherwise be considered to be typical 'show' plants.

Tristagma nivale is a seldom-seen member of the Amaryllidaceae family. It comes from temperate regions of southern Chile and Argentina up to 2000 m. At 10-20 cm tall in bloom, its flower colour varies from bright olive green to almost black – depending on the form – and it is relatively inconspicuous even to the discerning botanical explorer or gardener.

The RBGE collection was made by Rolf Fiedler, of *Ipheion* fame, at 1500 m in Patagonia. An Austrian by birth, Fiedler moved to Argentina, became fascinated by its relatively unknown flora, and then explored widely throughout the 1960s and 1970s. He gave a lecture on the subject at the Alpines '81 Conference, a summary of which can be found in the conference proceedings. He subsequently disappeared from horticultural circles, but further details about him can be found in the March 2015 issue of the AGS Bulletin.

Cultivation at the RBGE is quite straightforward: it is grown in a standard bulb mix of 40% organic to 60% inorganic matter; although it has no problem coping with cold, it is protected from winter wet in a cold frame.

Photo: Liz Cole

7 Gardening Levels
Olga Bondareva

First-level: garden acquisition

Buy a quarter of an acre. Put up a stout fence to mark out your patch. Mow the grass sometimes. Plant a thuya. Design, plan, arrange, tend and admire the garden. Be proud of your cucumber and potato harvest. Weigh them and delight in the money you have saved.

Second level: gardening shenanigans

Sow a lawn, lay out a flowerbed around the *Thuya* 'Smaragd'. Exchange flowers and vegetable seeds with your neighbours. Let your chest swell with pride in your large clump of double red dahlias. Build your first 'Dog's Grave' rockery.

Third level: garden pranks

Revise your garden: extend the flowerbed; add and arrange other beds in places in the lawn; furiously buy up entire ranges from the garden centres. Buy a macro camera to shoot everything. Despise ordinary gardeners. Take pride in the first flowers of your double hellebores.

Fourth level: gardening pride

Buy a new plot of an acre. Acquire and fetch rare flowers, shrubs and trees. Catalogue them and make detailed lists. Build a pond and an alpine river slide. Sow, sow, sow! Look down on the ill-informed who merely buy from garden centres and thoughtlessly plant second-rate varieties. Be proud that you are now growing *Hepatica* and *Paraquilegia*.

Thuyas

Dog's Grave

Macro work: *Pulsatilla vulgaris* 'Rosea'

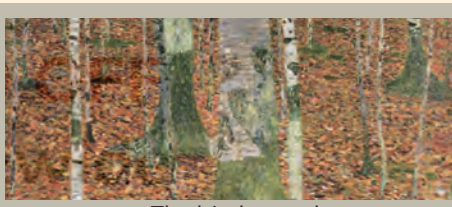
Hepatica nobilis 'Lenka'

Fifth level: garden snobbery

Go to foreign gardens to buy plants from private sellers. Despise those whose Rydal spruce is only two metres high. Feel complacently superior as you learn more botanical nomenclature about *Picea abies* 'Rydal' and *Thuya occidentalis* 'Smaragd'. Grow hepaticas. Talk easily about frits and saxes.

Sixth Level: garden status

Go out in search of new species; give your plants names and talk about them by their variety. Despise those who buy any old plant they happen to like. Be exceptionally proud of a double liverwort that you so discerningly discovered in the woods.



The birch woods

Seventh level: gardening Zen

Flatten everything in the garden; bulldoze the rockery; leave only a few trees and bushes. Mow the grass whenever you can be bothered to do it. Chuck in a few herbs. Knock all growth back to fifteen metres or less. Put up a swing for the grandchildren and be surprised at the liverwort blooming under it in spring. Never look down on anyone. Feel sympathy for those who have just bought their first ten acres.

Facing: *Pices abies* 'Rydal' Autumnal Zen

Saxifraga baltistanica sp. *nova*

Ger van den Beuken

It was 2008 when Marijn van den Brink – a Dutch climber with an interest in botany – collected seeds of this species at 3930 metres altitude in the Baltistan region near the Baltoro Glacier in the Karakorum Mountains in Pakistan (*The Rock Gardener 151*). I received the seeds from Marijn with the main objective of bringing this species into cultivation. Without knowing what the plant would look like in bloom, I was surprised years later by the beauty of this species.

I attribute the survival of this plant in cultivation since 2008 solely to the special care and attention I have been able to devote to this species during all the intervening years. However, partly in view of its very slow growth, I very much doubt whether this introduction will ever come into cultivation in larger numbers. Since 2022, only a few plants have been given to enthusiasts; I specially mention Michael Mauser, who is in charge of the alpine department at the Botanical Gardens of Tübingen in Germany.

To my mind, this nothospecies, section *Porphyrion* – subsection *Porophyllum* – series *Kabschia*, is definitely one of the all-time best species in terms of its beauty. A holotype specimen will shortly be lodged with the Oxford University Herbaria.

Description

- Forms a dark-green domed cushion. The semi-open rosettes are tightly packed together, 10 –11 mm diameter.
- Leaf 5 x 1.5 mm wide, oblong with shallow pointed recurved apex, 5 prominent lime glands above the margin, which is entire.
- Flower stem is 6 mm covered in cilia, some glandular, 2 or 3 obliquely patent stem leaves, green and red.
- Flower is uniflorous, corolla 15 mm diameter reflexed. Petals are 6 – 7 mm long x 5 mm wide, pink with three veins, roundly obovate and recurved with a wavy edge, forms a shallow U-shape in cross section.
- Sepals narrowly triangular with glandular cilia, red with green tip. Stamens protruding 5 mm from corolla.

The Flowering Atacama Desert

Basak & Chris Gardner

The Atacama is a South-American desert plateau stretching about 1500 km along the Pacific coast, west of the Andes. Every so often an event occurs that surpasses expectation. Whispers about the 2022 rains in the southern Atacama eventually became more definite fact and we took the opportunity – or risk – to organise a trip to see this rare spectacle. Anyone arriving in Antofagasta in September might have been a touch concerned at the endless dry hills and sandy plains. Indeed, our trip began with a view across the crumpled coastal ranges down to the sea of cloud that filled the lower valleys. The coastline of Paposo was impressive and the populations of *Copiapoa cinerea* ssp. *haseltoniana* fabulous, but there was not much in flower. This was to prove an interesting contrast to what followed. These very same dry areas can look utterly different following rain, and halfway through the next day the flowering desert began to reveal just how different. *Heliotropium pycnophyllum* bushes were so completely smothered in flowers that it was hard to see any leaves, and the slopes were generously sprinkled with dainty white *Leucocoryne appendiculata*. The viewpoints along the coast were magnificent. A hundred miles further down the road – and every bush was blooming, golden

Facing: *Argylia radiata*
Right: *Cistanthe longiscapa* in its coastal landscape

Nolana acuminata, white form

Heliotropium pycnophyllum

Argylia radiata was popping up everywhere, the sandy plains were so green I was asked what they grew in them – mainly sand. I've seen these areas in dry years and the contrast is stark.

A fantastic valley had slopes white with a form of *Nolana acuminata*, interspersed with amber *Heliotropium linariifolium*. Spectacular *Alstroemeria violacea* bursting from among the rocks was followed by octopoid limbs of *Oxalis gigantea* swathed in yellow flowers, and a sheet of iconic pink *Cistanthe longiscapa* stretched downslope to the sweeping coastline below. The vast plains were fast colouring up and one entire mountain was wrapped in a blanket of pink and white bands embellished with stripes of gold. This grand display stretched for miles, the deep pink of *C. longiscapa* blending with lilac *Cristaria* and then giving way to broad white brush strokes of *Nolana baccata*. The gold was provided by the thousands of *Argylia radiata*, each stem topped by big trumpet flowers. The desert 'snow' continued with drifts of *Leucocoryne narcissoides* and jaw-dropping expanses of *Nolana baccata* that extended to the horizon. Other places were dressed with varied and soft blues of *Zephyra elegans*, everything laid on in uncountable numbers. It is hard to convey the extent of the flowering, because these displays often continued for miles, repeated again and again. One almost became blasé about the whole thing until recalling that first dry day in the desert.

Alstroemeria violacea

Zephyra elegans

Leucocoryne narcissoides

Alstroemeria philippii var. *philippii*

Other gullies were choked with flamboyant *Alstroemeria philippii* and the brimstone cups of *Balbisia peduncularis* amidst billowing cerise *Mirabilis elegans*, while the impressive multiheaded domes of *Copiapoa dealbata* grew amidst an exploding sea of intense pink *Cistanthe grandiflora* just beyond the shores of the Pacific. We found blood-red *Bomarea ovallei*, more fine cacti and then – over the hills – we discovered a lovely trio of tropaeolums, all rushing to bloom in these few benign weeks.

Copiapoa dealbata with pink *Cistanthe grandiflora*

Balbisia peduncularis and *Mirabilis elegans*

Cistanthe grandiflora

Zephyranthes phycelloides

Scarlet trumpets of *Zephyranthes* (*Rhodophiala*) *phycelloides* and tangerine forms of *Argylia radiata* were sprinkled throughout, and every bush of *Cordia decandra* was encased in white flowers. Draped across the bushes in one canyon was the subtle beige beauty of *Tropaeolum kingii*, followed by the showier white-centred violet-blue of *T. azureum*. A final flourish of all the desert flowers saw us leave the Atacama proper and descend into the Mediterranean climate zone, also disarmingly green. Here, every shrub dripped with the lava hues of *Tropaeolum tricolor*. The day was completed by a few triumphant spikes of *Puya berteroniana*, its flowers an indescribably beautiful blue-green.

If we thought we had exhausted the bulb displays up to this point, we were wrong. Our penultimate day will live long in our memories as a bulb feast that is hard to match. Drifts of *Schizanthus splendens* set us up for fields of *Leucocoryne coquimbensis*, the land punctuated by stately *Leucostele skottsbergii* cacti, each bearing big white trumpet flowers while the hills beyond were painted golden-yellow by the simply vast displays of *Loasa tricolor*. The gilding continued throughout as we travelled along the main road, the sides frequently covered in thick drifts of *Leucocoryne*. Sandy flats had countless *L. purpurea*, a

Tropaeolum kingii

Tropaeolum azureum
Below: *Tropaeolum tricolor*

particularly attractive species that, with others, filled every back yard, open space and roadside verge in a mind-blowing display. I do not exaggerate; they were truly uncountable. One area had hundreds of sulphurous *Zephyranthes* (*Rhodophiala*) *bagnoldii* bursting from a dense carpet of *Nolana acuminata*. Moving away from this might have brought some respite, but the hills nearby were bursting with the most sensational displays of *Alstroemeria magnifica* I have ever seen, mainly white but with deeper pink forms. There was scarcely a spent flower – it was so perfect. To finish a day of visual overload, when deciding where to point the camera became indeed pointless and one simply needed to sit and take it all in, we sat on rocks amidst endless drifts of thousands of a handsome blue form of *Leucocoryne coquimbensis*, trying to assimilate this abundance that was being repeated hundreds of times for miles along the coast.

Puya berteroniana

Leucocoryne coquimbensis, blue form

Alstroemeria magnifica ssp. *magnifica*

Zephyranthes bagnoldii, *Leucocoryne purpurea* and *Nolana acuminata*

Tropaeolum hookerianum ssp. *austropurpureum*
Facing: *Bipinnula fimbriata*
Phycella amoena

Our brains needed a rest, the drier hills inland offered less floral vastness, but there we nevertheless found jewels hidden away, none more so than the exquisite wine-red *Phycella* (*Placea*) *amoena* that decorated the stunted Matorral scrub, and pretty mauve bells of *Tropaeolum hookerianum* ssp. *austropurpureum* lacing the roadside shrubs. Time was pressing and it became increasingly distressing to drive past the flowery masses along the coast, where every white *Bahia ambrosioides* was in bloom with drifts of rich pink *Schizanthus carlomunozii* in between. But there were early season delights that we just had to see: one was *Bipinnula fimbriata*, an extraordinary green and white orchid with fimbriate sepals. And right on the coast the first flowers of *Alstroemeria peregrina* were open near cliffs peppered with pink-flowered *Eriosyce chilensis* cacti, while foamy breakers crashed on the rocks below.

We were blessed with great and rare fortune. This expedition had been a breathless ten days of flowers, landscapes, fine wine and plenty of laughter.

Alpines on the North Coast of Scotland (The hard way to learn lessons)

Dave Savage

Having been brought up to grow vegetables and flowers in an Oxfordshire garden, I found conditions very different when I started gardening on the north coast of Scotland. Bedding annuals that I grew from seed produced their first flowers just a week before they were finished by an early frost. Daffodils grew well until a night of wind left them as an armful of broken flower stems. So began a life of learning new things about gardening.

Then I was introduced to the SRGC and with it the world of plants that have evolved to withstand exposure to wind and short, cool, summers. Talks on rock walls soon encouraged me to build one, using slightly calcareous sandstone off-cuts from an abandoned paving stone quarry. Joints were filled with fine garden soil, the core with a soil and

Facing: *Potentilla* species ex Greenland Above: The rock wall after 50 years

stone filling. The two faces were far enough apart to form a raised bed at the top. The initial plants from club members were cuttings that were rooted and then built into the joints. Fifty years later the wall is still standing, and many of the first cuttings still flower spectacularly each spring. Listening to experts and taking advice from people with local experience had worked.

Discovering the *Seed Exchange* came next. Following the advice of various speakers at club meetings, many of the seeds germinated, but many of the plants failed to survive their first winter. Next lesson: while alpine plants are able to tolerate wind and cool summers, many find a semi-maritime winter climate that randomly and abruptly swings from hard frost to wet and windy one

Saxifraga apiculata

Sempervivum arachnoideum
A cushion saxifrage

challenge too many. Of those that took to life on the north coast, many have become firm favourites, including several cushion saxifrages, *Sempervivum arachnoideum* with its red-hued rosettes all year round and *Androsace tomentosa* with its young plantlets on wiry runners soon building up a good colony. The beautiful blue *Edraianthus pumilio* was a firm favourite for many years until a neighbouring plant was allowed to smother it – another lesson learnt the hard way. Some plants turned out too large for the rock wall but have become reliable herbaceous perennials when grown in ordinary soil, including a silver leaved celmisia, believed to be *Celmisia angustifolia*, that looks nice all year round and produces a good display

Androsace tomentosa

Edraianthus pumilio

of flowers for several weeks, and a glossy-leaved *Erigeron howellii* (if my forty-year old records are correct) with long-lasting white flowers. Some *Seed Exchange* offerings are lucky dip plants. One, described as *Potentilla* sp. ex Greenland from garden seed, gave a rosette of silver-backed green leaves that produces sprawling flowering stems bearing loose sprays of eye-catching red flowers, ideal for a border of low perennials where it may sprawl over earlier flowering plants.

And of course there is the inevitable awkward plant, such as the charming dwarf blue and white *Aquilegia flabellata*, which seeds itself freely around the garden but refuses to grow wherever it is transplanted.

Erigeron howellii

Celmisia angustifolia

Aquilegia flabellata

Saxifraga oppositifolia

The north coast of Scotland has a number of Arctic or Alpine plants that grow near to sea-level, and surely some will make good garden plants. The best place to see many of these plants is around Invernaver. *Saxifraga oppositifolia* from rocky outcrops does well in the rock wall. *Dryas octopetala*, the club emblem, forms extensive carpets on the sand-covered calcareous rocks of the ridge, with some plants having more than the eight petals implied by its name. But it has proved difficult in other gardens.

Drifts of *Dryas octopetala* with distant yellow gorse (*Ulex europaeus*)

Forms of *Dryas octopetala*

One sloping area where the rock is well covered by sand has a large colony of *Erinus alpinus*, growing better than it does in the garden and suspected by many to be a garden escape. Naturally growing in well

Erinus alpinus in coastal sand

Thymus serpyllum is at home in the wild... and the garden

drained sandy places, thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*) can look spectacular, and does almost as well in the garden. *Saxifraga aizoides* grows in similar sandy places but needs a regular source of moisture. It grows well in the garden but is rather too straggly there. On well-drained stony areas topped with a thin layer of wind-blown sand are colonies of isolated plants of *Oxytropis halleri*. With its clusters of purple pea flowers on short stems above tight rosettes of hairy pinnate leaves it looks an obvious garden-worthy plant. A hundred yards away it grows amongst grasses in the sand that has piled against the rock ridge, looking as straggly as any typical roadside vetch.

Facing: *Oxytropis halleri* 🍁
Saxifraga aizoides

Scilla verna
Facing: *Primula scotica*

Some coastal grassland plants have made good garden plants. Spring squill (*Scilla verna*) seeds itself and can make spectacular clumps. Sea campion (*Silene maritima*) with its white flowers on well marked inflated calyxes gives a good display but needs an annual hard trim soon after flowering to stop it seeding freely. The local gem, miniature *Primula scotica*, is just half the size of a common daisy (*Bellis perennis*) and soon grows to flowering size from seed. It is easily lost over winter, probably by discarding the winter resting bud while controlling invasion by moss and other weeds. Some

Silene maritima

Dactylorhiza purpurella (var. *cambrensis* or hybrid)

local plants are so keen to become garden plants that they blow in on the wind. Beside the inevitable dandelions, seedlings of the northern marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*) clan appear regularly, some going on to produce quite spectacular flower spikes for a number of years.

Eventually, early retirement gave me the time to get fit enough to visit the north coast's highest mountain, Ben Hope, to look at plants in a mountain habitat. What a difference five hundred metres upwards makes, and even

Ben Hope

the sea pinks (*Armeria maritima*) look weather-beaten compared to their coastal cousins. No wonder that so many plants adapted to alpine life find a lowland existence a challenge in summer. Some fascinating flowers grow there, but I soon learnt that you have to time your visit just right to see them at their best. Most attractive are patches of moss campion (*Silene acaulis*) between the stones, and the quaint green-flowered mossy cyphel (*Minuartia sedoides*).

Silene acaulis on Ben Hope

Minuartia sedoides

Growing on thin peaty soils are the long-named dwarf cornel (*Chamaepericlymenum suecicum*), cloudberry (*Rubus chamaemorus*) and trailing azalea (*Loiseleuria procumbens*), even including at least one plant of the white-flowered form, all nice to see but probably needing special conditions to thrive in the garden.

While compiling this article I have learnt one final lesson. It is just how much I have gained through the SRGC. So I extend a thank you to the many magazine authors, seed donors and club speakers that have helped me to enjoy gardening with rock plants.

Chamaepericlymenum suecicum

Rubus chamaemorus

Loiseleuria procumbens

Loiseleuria procumbens, white form

Primula scotica: about true size

Pink Primroses in East Lothian

David Millward*, Jim Jermyn and Beryl McNaughton

The primrose is one of the loveliest and most familiar of our early spring flowers, a delight we share with much of Europe and south-west Asia. British native and naturalized populations are overwhelmingly yellow-flowered, with the occurrence of sporadic pink-flowered plants inferred to have resulted from seed or pollen from garden escapees[1].

Intriguingly, in late April a small number of sites in East Lothian known to us reveal a glorious panoply of red-, magenta-, pink-, violet- and purple-flowered primroses; along with very pale lemon-coloured forms, some yellows and sporadic white ones. Intermediate pastel shades are also present, reminiscent of a hybrid swarm involving the two subspecies *P. vulgaris* ssp. *vulgaris* and *Primula v.* ssp. *sibthorpii.* The latter taxon should now correctly be referred to as *P. v.* ssp. *rubra*[2]. The cowslip is not present in these populations and there is no evidence to suggest hybridization with *P. veris*, though this species does occur abundantly elsewhere throughout the county.

Three locations lie between the villages of Tyninghame and Whitekirk, near East Linton. The most extensive population is in the arboretum of nearly a thousand trees adjacent to Tyninghame House and Gardens, and referred to as the 'wilderness', which was a formal landscape style popular in seventeenth and early eighteenth century

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Facing and Above: *Primula vulgaris* ssp. *sibthorpii* (Photos: Liz Cole)

Scotland [3]. Robert Pace Brotherston, head gardener at Tyninghame from 1874 to 1923, described this in 1881 as a 'garden on the grass' some fifteen to twenty acres in extent and covered with primroses in shades from white to maroon[4]. Later, in 1905, Samuel Arnott, of snowdrop fame, visited Tyninghame and described the 'wilderness' as containing 'myriads of coloured primroses, snowdrops, narcissi and wild tulips'[5]. The next two sites are near Tyninghame Links and Newbyth, alongside long-established and tree-lined estate roadways. We also know a fourth site at Lennoxlove, just south of Haddington. The primroses are accompanied by bluebells, large trumpet daffodils, varieties of *Narcissus poeticus*, *Tulipa sylvestris* and, earlier in the year, by *Galanthus nivalis*.

Primula vulgaris ssp. *sibthorpii* is native to the Balkans,

In the arboretum at Tyninghame

Colours at Tyninghame Links

Greece, northern Türkiye, Crimea and the western flanks of the Caucasus. In north-eastern Türkiye, fringing the Black Sea for example, woodland populations at relatively low altitudes are typically magenta flowered, while those above the tree line on the Zigana pass, south of Trabzon, are yellow with sporadic white ones. Further west, primrose populations in oak woodland on Uludağ, south of the city of Bursa, are in shades of magenta and violet, whereas deciduous woodland south of Bolu is carpeted with yellow primroses intergrown with *Helleborus orientalis* and *Corydalis caucasica*. Perhaps the most intriguing wild populations are those found along the eastern seaboard of the Black Sea, where the greatest known variation in flower colour occurs south-east from Novorossiysk, over a distance of 250 km [6,7]. Populations in the north-west that are dominantly yellow although with local large proportions of white, pass south-eastwards into pink, violet and purple flowers with a few yellow and white.

Colours at Newbyth

Colours at Newbyth

So, how did these polychrome primulas come to East Lothian? The colour variability suggests they were originally established from seed many years ago. The populations appear to be self-sustaining: there are lots of young plants and we have observed that copious seed has set annually in the last twelve years. The original planting must predate Brotherston's time at Tyninghame because, in his 1881 article, he opined that no one seemed to know when these primroses were first planted. One possibility is that seed was introduced by either gardeners or officers serving in Scottish regiments during the Crimean war campaigns of 1854-56. However, were that the case, surely this would have been known to Brotherston?

More likely then is that seed was brought to Tyninghame much earlier. *Primula vulgaris* ssp. *sibthorpii* had been in cultivation since at least the mid-seventeenth century. It was described as 'Tradescant's

Primula vulgaris ssp. *sibthorpii* (Photo: Liz Cole)

Turkie purple primrose' in John Parkinson's *Theatrum Botanicum* of 1640 and was known by him as originating from Türkiye. According to Jacob Bobart the Elder's *Hortus Siccus*, this taxon was growing in the Oxford University Botanic Garden in 1658.

The 'wilderness' at Tyninghame was originally laid out by Helen, wife of Thomas the sixth Earl of Haddington, around 1707. Helen was known to be 'a great lover of planting'[3] and perhaps the pink primroses are part of her legacy, though we have no evidence to prove that this is the case. The abundance seen today at Tyninghame does not necessarily reflect the original plantings because the original formal layout has long gone through tree felling and replanting, not least following the disastrous 'great gale' of 1881 which decimated many trees in the Scottish Borders and this part of East Lothian. Whereas the location at Tyninghame Links was part of that estate, that at Newbyth was owned from the mid seventeenth century by the Baird family, originally from Aberdeenshire[8]. In the mid nineteenth century, Newbyth and Lennoxlove became linked through marriage[9]. Perhaps these pink primrose occurrences are relicts of a more widespread planting in the area. Although it remains a mystery how these plants came to us here, they are a welcome and uplifting sight each spring.

Primula vulgaris ssp. *sibthorpii:* pale pink form (Photo: Liz Cole)

In view of the interest of botanical detective work like this, we offer a list of references so that others may share the pleasure we had in it.

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Autumn in the South-West

Michael* J B Almond

For eighty kilometres or so east of Antalya in south-west Turkey, the sea is lined with sandy beaches. The high mountains, which come right down to the coast beyond Antalya to the west and well before Alanya to the east, hold back from the shore for between five and thirty kilometres. If you stay too near the sea you will be caught up in a throng of tourists and, if you are interested in flowers, it is better to go out of season. Spring comes early and autumn late – and the high summer is definitely to be avoided – in this area, one of whose main crops is cotton and where the *average* temperature rises to 30°C or over for four months of the year. In the second half of October 2013 we spent two weeks based at the resort of Side, about half way between Antalya and Alanya. We used it as a base to explore the area and as a jumping off point for a foray further inland. Our two main objectives were to find *Galanthus peshmenii* and to see the whirling dervishes in Konya. We had also visited the area in November 1991, travelling a little further to the west into the bargain (and also in the springs of 1978, 1989, 1991 and 2002 – but that's another story).

South and west of Antalya the great mass of the Bey Dağları tumbles down to the sea; this is ancient Lycia and it abounds with fascinating and little-visited classical remains. In November 1991 we visited several of them and were rewarded with a bonus of some wonderful flowers. At the ancient theatre at the Letöon in the lower valley of the Xanthus (Eşen) river, masses of *Cyclamen graecum* forced their way out of the cracks between the ashlar blocks forming the seating; at Xanthus itself there was *Sternbergia*, possibly *S. fischeriana*. Along the road near Kalkan we found *Narcissus tazetta* in flower while at the ancient theatre at Kaş, *Cyclamen graecum* was not coming through the cracks between the stones but was forming pink sheets across the top of the theatre and into the scrub behind. We found some autumn-flowering arums

Cyclamen graecum flowers between the stones of the theatre at the Letöon near Xanthus

**Photographs by Lynn and Michael Almond*

Colchicum stevenii

above the road at the ancient site of Cyaneae, the dark maroon and rather sinister-looking *Biarum bovei*. Further along the road, beside the magnificent Lycian tomb of Hoyran (Kapaklı), diminutive *Colchicum stevenii* was in flower, as it was also next to Hadrian's granary at the Roman port of Andriace. Above the tiers of Lycian tombs carved into the cliff at Myra we found some fine specimens of *Colchicum variegatum*.

Biarum marmarisense

Galanthus peshmenii

The most memorable find in this area, however, came at the top of the theatre at Limyra: a fairly large group of *Biarum davisii*, not recorded in the *Flora of Turkey* as occurring this far east (presumably, as it was in Turkey and not Crete, this should now be considered to be *Biarum marmarisense*, split off from *B. davisii* in 2006). The little off-white or pinkish flowers gave the impression of monks in a cartoon film, moving forwards with their heads bowed. There was a mass of *Cyclamen graecum* in the scree-like rocks below the theatre. This cyclamen was also much in evidence throughout the woodland beside remains of the ancient city of Phaselis on the rocky coast south of Antalya, and there were some particularly good leaf forms in evidence, many with large silver centres.

Just north of Phaselis, and about 40 km south of Antalya, is Kemer. Near here there is a steep-sided valley coming down to the sea, with a Roman bridge near the bottom. We had been told to look for the autumn-flowering snowdrop *Galanthus peshmenii*, which has been found in south-west Turkey and on the offshore island of Kastellorizo. It was split off from *G. reginae-olgae* in 1994 (before which it was usually referred to as *the Turkish reginae-olgae*) and "these species are easily distinguished because *G. peshmenii* has leaves that are glaucescent to almost glaucous, not green to glaucescent with a prominent grey central stripe as in *G. reginae-olgae*. The leaves of *G. peshmenii* are also narrower and usually longer than those of *G. reginae-olgae*." (citesbulbs.myspecies.info/category/galanthus-wild-species/galanthus-

Scilla autumnalis

peshmenii, based on A P Davis, *The Genus Galanthus*, 1999). Be that as it may, it was easy to find an abundance of the snowdrops in the gorge. We started off with statuesque and photogenic clumps and graduated to whole hillsides festooned with them. Alongside we also found *Cyclamen graecum* (with both flowers and some very attractive leaves) and occasional clumps of *Colchicum balansae*, with its moderately robust pale-pink flowers. There was also *Scilla autumnalis* and a pale-pink *Dianthus* flowering among the pine needles beneath the trees below the gorge. In 1991 we had visited the ancient theatre of Termessus where, instead of seeing cyclamen forcing their way up between the stone seats as at the Letöon, we found a mass of *Colchicum baytopiorum* doing the same thing.

The area between Antalya and Alanya, known as Pamphylia to the ancients, is well-endowed with very impressive archaeological sites and, despite the fact that most are definitely on the tourist circuit, they are well worth visiting; you may also see some interesting flowers even at the low altitude most of them occupy. Much of the sites of Perge and Aspendus were coloured mauve with *Scilla autumnalis* when we were there and there were clumps of the more blue-coloured *Muscari parviflorum*. It is better, however, to head further inland into the hills to see more interesting and varied flowers. As we searched out the site of the ancient city of Pednelissus, for example, above the village of Gebiz, we saw lots of *Colchicum baytopiorum* at the side of the dirt road and in the bordering woodland. At the site itself, as well as *Scilla autumnalis*

Colchicum baytopiorum

we found *Biarum pyrami* and a considerable number of very striking *Colchicum variegatum*. To reach the site of Selge, you must drive over the Roman bridge at the Köprülü gorge, which is a rather alarming experience, as it is high and narrow, and has no parapets. At Selge, near the ancient theatre, we found more colchicum, probably *C. cilicium*. One of the most spectacular of these little-visited sites in the hills inland is undoubtedly Lyrbe (also named on maps as Seleucia-in-Pamphylia), only about 20 km north of Side, beyond the waterfalls at Manavgat but completely off the tourist trail. Here, in addition to other scattered remains, is preserved virtually in its entirety the forum of a small ancient city with its buildings still standing two storeys high. Unfortunately, the only flowers we encountered at the site itself were *Scilla autumnalis* and several stands of *Urginea maritima*. But in the hills above Lyrbe, on the back road to İbradı, in addition to a superb view down to the coast we also saw *Cyclamen cilicium* and *Crocus asumaniae* in considerable numbers.

The citadel rock of Alanya rises about 260 m out of the sea at the eastern end of an almost unbroken line of beaches stretching all the way from Antalya some 130 km to the west, although the mountains start to come down close to the shore forty or fifty kilometres before then. There are some picturesque

Colchicum variegatum

old buildings on the top of the rock and also some interesting plants, including a lot of *Cyclamen graecum* and *Sternbergia lutea*. We found *Scilla autumnalis* and a very attractive pink *Dianthus* growing on a rough stone wall with lots of limestone mortar. On the slopes above the eastern outskirts of Alanya we explored the remains of the ancient city of Syedra. Here was a wealth of *Cyclamen graecum*: the plants in full sun were in flower but not yet in leaf, whereas those in the partial shade of the scrub of evergreen oak and *Erica arborea* had both flowers and leaves – and many had superb leaf forms. In 1991 we had encountered lots of *Cyclamen graecum*, in all shades from deep pink to white and with various leaf patterns, all along the coast east of Alanya as far as Silifke. Near Anamur, half way between Alanya and Silifke, we had also found *Narcissus miniatus* and an example of *Crocus pallasii* ssp. *dispathaceus*, with its narrow, deep purple petals.

Although the main road north up into the hills to Beyşehir and the Turkish lake district turns off the coast road about 50 km west of Alanya, there is a more minor road off the coast road only about 10 km from Alanya. This road heads up into the heavily wooded hills and eventually makes its tortuous way, via the village of Güzelbağ, to the little town of Gündoğmuş.

Crocus asumaniae, Lyrbe

We found plenty of interest along this route. In and around a cemetery in the woods near Güzelbağ, we found *Cyclamen cilicium*, together with *Crocus cancellatus* ssp. *pamphylicus* and *C. speciosus*. Further along the road there was *Colchicum variegatum*, more *Crocus speciosus* in large numbers and a large clump of *Colchicum decaisnei* (= *troodii*) or possibly *C. balansae*. Then from Gündoğmuş we continued round our circular route to head back to the main Beyşehir road as it climbs away from the coast.

Sternbergia lutea on graves at Emiraşıklar

On the way we saw a lot more *Cyclamen cilicium*, some bushes of *Thymelaea tartonraira* and, on a field margin, an attractive, light-pink scabious, possibly *Pterocephalus pinardi*.

Sternbergia lutea alone at Emiraşıklar

Colchicum balansae

We have travelled along the main highway from the coast near Manavgat up to Akseki and Beyşehir on several occasions, in spring and autumn, and there is always plenty of interest to see. In late October 2013,

Colchicum balansae

Crocus speciosus ssp. *speciosus*

for example, in the woods beside the road just above the village of Güçlüköy, we found spikes of the previous spring's *Limodorum abortivum* together with *Cyclamen cilicium*, *Crocus cancellatus* ssp.

Crocus cancellatus ssp. *pamphylicus*

Cyclamen mirabile

pamphylicus, *C. speciosus* ssp. *speciosus* and *Colchicum balansae*. Opposite the turning to Akseki (which has been bypassed by the main road for several years) we turned off on the road to İbradı and stopped in the little village of Emiraşıklar. Here, in addition to the wonderful old wooden buildings preserved in the local folk museum, we were able to see more *Crocus cancellatus* ssp. *pamphylicus* and *C. speciosus* ssp. *speciosus* together with a multitude of *Cyclamen cilicium* and *Sternbergia lutea*, much of these last two species growing in the old cemetery surrounding the rather unprepossessing building housing the Genç Dede Türbesi (*Tomb of the Youthful Elder*); this Muslim

Biarum pyrami

holy man is one near whom many people clearly wish to be buried. Around here there were also numerous flowers of *Biarum pyrami* with its long black spadix and dark-red, almost black, spathe. There was a clump of seed which might have been the remains of *Lilium candidum*. Further along the road to Beyşehir we found large quantities of *Cyclamen cilicium* with considerable variations in flower colour, leaf shape and patterning. In places there were considerable quantities of *Crocus speciosus* ssp. *speciosus* and *C. speciosus* ssp. *pamphylicus*, both in shades of violet from almost white to a rich deep hue. In 1991, at the Sertavul Pass north of Silike, we had also found *Crocus cancellatus* ssp. *damascenus* and *C. pallasii* ssp. *turcicus*.

Our main floral objective in the Turkish lake district was the lakeside north of Eğirdir; here there is a colony of *Cyclamen mirabile*. Although the flowers of this plant are much the same as those of *C. cilicium*, it can be recognised by the red pigment in its leaves. It is endemic to south-west Turkey; we have only ever seen it in one other location, about 250 km to the west between Aydın and Muğla – and it is not common. We were glad to discover that it was still thriving beside Lake Eğirdir where we had found it (exactly as reported in the *Flora of Turkey*) 22 years earlier.

When we were (all) younger

Singing in the Sunshine
Brachyglottis
(Dunedin Group)
'Sunshine'
Grahame Ware

Facing: *Brachyglottis* 'Sunshine' (Burncoose Nursery, www.burncoose.co.uk)

'Sunshine' is a great Mediterranean shrub that flourishes in the dryish highbanks (natural bluffs following the contour of the shoreline) of the Georgia Strait in British Columbia and Washington State as well as many other maritime temperate climes around the world. According to Graham Stuart-Thomas in his *Perennial Plants* (1989, 2nd edition), 'Sunshine' derives from a group of New Zealand species (*Brachyglottis laxifolia*, *B. compacta* and – according to some – *B. greyi*). They were originally known as the Dunedin hybrids. In 2006, the name *B.* x *jubar* was proposed by P D Sell but it has since been shown that this name is "unplaced" according to the horticultural nomenclature guidelines, meaning the appellation may neither be accepted, nor be put into synonymy. Botanists call 'Sunshine' a nothospecies. The Dunedin hybrids were the result of the amateur horticulturist, W A Thomson, who had an estate at Half Bush near Dunedin, NZ. 'Sunshine' arose in the 1930s as a spontaneous cross in his extensive gardens. Because of the uncertainty of its actual origin – likely a natural hybrid – as a nothospecies, it should properly be referred to as *Brachyglottis* (Dunedin Group) 'Sunshine'. It has received an Award of Garden Merit (AGM) from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS).

'Sunshine' is considered hardy to -15C°, making it hardier than either of its species parents. Is this an instance of so-called paleo-botanical hardiness for this distinctly New Zealand genus? It arose as a seed sport and selection in Thomson's gardens. But, regardless, it also comes quite true from its own seed, although sterile seed is not uncommon from poor pollination allies (insects) or short growing seasons where the embryo lacks time to fill or set seed. It has been listed in the Hardy Plant Society's seed exchanges several times. In my experience, the characteristics of this hybrid selection seemed to have been stamped and they are definitely 'locked in'. Their offspring seedlings are quite uniform.

It was undoubtedly named for the great yellow colour of its profuse flowers, in an enchanting clear and acid yellow. They are profuse, well-shaped and long-lasting. I hasten to say that this is a shade of yellow you won't forget, once seen in the sunshine or even in the muted notes of twilight. In my own garden, 'Sunshine' was a pleasing echo across the path from *Rudbeckia* 'Chim Chiminee', a fine double-quilled cultivar developed by Thompson & Morgan. My flowers of 'Sunshine' have stamina likely because it is not planted in full sun. Later in the summer, they give a little rebloom as well. It is an altogether pleasing small shrub with an unassuming but bright and gracious presence. It is also a great seaside plant and can be massed to great advantage in many situations: especially as a drought-tolerant, coastal forest hedge leading to a house, shed or gardens. It needs to be clipped yearly but this is an easy chore that doubles as a seed collecting moment. Some clipping may can be done in the manner of 'training' in early Spring.

The plant has broadly elliptical leaves that are felty and silvery; the attractive fuzzy foliage is gracefully shaped over a low, wide shrub that typically grows to about 60 cm high x 120 cm wide. It may make greater dimensions than this if it gets happy. 'Sunshine' is a great vibe in the garden because it acts as a light foil, amplifying the sunshine and making those granite gravel paths sparkle a bit more. This is especially appreciated in late winter and early spring when light (not only direct sun but also reflected and refracted light from rocks and gravels) and heat are very desirable in kick-starting and promoting growth.

Ecologically, 'Sunshine' is a real winner because its low water requirements and good soil erosion stabilization make it a prime pioneer plant. Once established, it is a good neighbour with other plantings such as *Narcissus*, *Tulips* and *Lilium*, which all work well with it. Think of 'Sunshine' when establishing new garden areas where you want (or will have) dry conditions such as a Mediterranean design. It is a solid choice for many long term and low maintenance situations, working well with all manners of bulbs, especially *Agapanthus, Muscari,* and *Ornithogalum* as well as dryland perennials of distinction such as *Rudbeckia* and *Verbascum*. Harmonizing colours is important in the garden and 'Sunshine' gives you a great mirror to work with: silver-green and yellow are terrific foils for blue, purple and green coloured flowers.

Because it has been used excessively in commercial settings such as car parks and shopping malls, it has acquired the feel of a 'whatever' plant. It shares this dismissive status with *Cotoneaster*. Nevertheless, when they are used properly they can both be wonderful landscape components and not just commercial monoculture afterthought.

Brachyglottis is a genus only found in New Zealand, where about 29 species occur in a variety of habitats. This cultivar is a native of North Island, where it grows in rocky places on coastal bluffs in poor soil, patiently forming sizeable mounds. *Brachyglottis* were historically included within the wide-ranging Asteraceous genus, *Senecio*, which has now been reduced to synonymy. *Brachyglottis* is a genus that is still being played, with many hybrids and selections trickling into horticulture. One such is a sport of 'Sunshine' called 'Moira Reid', which originated in that late Irish lady's garden in Liskeard, Cornwall. Its main feature is the irregular and interesting cream leaf markings. 'Moira Reid' made the rounds originally as 'Sunshine Variegated' before changing to tribute the name of the gardener who discovered it. There are also two compact forms in circulation: the first is 'Drysdale'.

The second is the AGM winner, 'Walberton's Silver Dormouse'. This comes from David Tristam of Walberton Nursery in West Sussex. It was selected in 1996 as a sport growing among a batch of tissue-cultured plants. Obviously, it shares parentage with 'Sunshine'. It is a compact and bushy cultivar. *Kernock Park Plants* in Cornwall says, "*An attractive, compact, dense and bushy plant with very*

Leaves of *Brachyglottis* 'Walberton's Silver Dormouse'

silvery foliage - much more compact and more brightly coloured (silvered) than 'Sunshine'. In addition, it freely produces showy rich golden yellow daisy flowers. Walberton's Silver Dormouse also does not suffer from brown and dead leaves in the centre of the plant." I'm not sure that it is more brightly coloured (or silvered) than 'Sunshine'" but its leaves are definitely blunter. I have never experienced any problems with dieback with 'Sunshine' and its growth can be used to advantage in a new garden, where it may make a fine hedge. To do this you need wires and posts in the manner of training raspberries. Once the plants are established, however, the wires may be easily removed as the strength of the branches and growth will sustain the shape.

With 'Sunshine' and its kin, mulch twice per year and fertilize with an organic slow release every mid-spring. It comes easily from cuttings and seed isn't too difficult once you are past the vulnerable seedling stages. Be patient and let it grow into your garden with its vectors and shapers of wind, shadow and light. All in all, it is a very nice plant for the gardener who values a low-water, low fertilizer Mediterranean or alpine style of plant. And, who could argue with that ecological aesthetic in this day and age?

Across the garden path: *Rudbeckia* 'Chim Chiminee' and *Brachyglottis* 'Sunshine'

The *Tropaeolum* Collection of Lyon Botanic Garden

Jean-Patrick Agier

Lyon Botanic Garden is included in the Tête d'Or park, one of the biggest in Europe. Covering a 105 hectare area it offers visitors several points of interest: an international rose garden, a huge lake, a zoo, woodland spaces, meadows and thousands of trees. Admittance is free to the park and the botanic garden. Lyon has one of the most important botanic gardens in France. It has an alpine garden, a Mexican garden, a woodland area, frames for culture and plant production – not opened to the public, glasshouses, trial beds for new plants and flowers. There is a huge array of plants grown in all these areas, from the commonest to the rarest ones. The botanic garden is also – of course – invested in the protection and conservation of plants that are rare or endangered in the wild.

Hundreds of visitors take advantage each day of the unique and wonderful spot of nature offered by the Tête d'Or park, which is nestled in the heart of the city: joggers, pedestrians, rollers, families having a moment of leisure on the numerous lawns or along the paths winding through the park.

History of the Collection

By 2004, having gathered a small *Tropaeolum* collection at home, I went to find out whether the botanic garden had species in cultivation. David Scherberich, the botanist in charge of the plant collections, had also developed an interest in *Tropaeolum*. He very kindly led me through the glasshouses to discover the few species that were cultivated there. The huge cultural possibilities offered by the botanic garden led me on to ask about the option of introducing new species and requesting access to technical areas although not being a member of the botanical staff.

The large glasshouses at the Lyon Botanic Garden

In 2009 the botanic garden's director agreed to the introduction of new plants as an experiment. I've been allowed to get access to technical areas not open to the public and have introduced several *Tropaeolum* species. But things didn't prove easy at the beginning. I had to take care of the plants (watering) although unable to do anything else. Anyway, the first trials proved interesting enough to allow the little collection to go further. Initially the plants had been settled in a small glasshouse. But it began more and more difficult to deal with the rising temperatures in spring and the aphid invasions that went quickly out of control. The botanic garden doesn't use classical pesticides anymore. The rules are mainly based on biological control against pests and diseases, as for many other botanic gardens.

In 2013, thanks to the botanic garden director's support, the CCVS awarded this young collection an official label (CCVS is the French equivalent of the UK's Plant Heritage). This opened up more possibilities and helped develop relationships with many members of the botanic garden's staff. I've been nicknamed *Mr Nasturtium*.

Regular efforts on growing new species, developing cultural methods, harvesting seeds and finding the best spots for the plants, finally led to the collection's being recognized in 2022 as a national one (CCVS). So far, I've written a few publications on the genus for French and UK magazines.

The Botanic Garden

The garden runs ten official plant collections, nine of which have been awarded national status by the CCVS, the *Tropaeolum* collection being one of these. The collection area is eight hectares within the Tête d'Or park. There are various zones, some not opened to the public:

- A technical zone including several frames
- An international rose garden
- A Mexican garden displaying drought tolerant plants and also including a hardy palm collection

The Mexican garden

The technical area with frames and sand plunge beds

- An alpine garden
- A woodland area with a small brook
- A bamboo garden
- Several gardens and trial beds in which are displayed various plants – stalwarts and new cultivars
- Glasshouses covering a total area of 6500 sq metres. Some of them are awaiting refurbishment.
- The botanic garden doesn't have an alpine house.

The *Tropaeolum* Collection

The collection initially mainly included species. The 2023 enrichments are *Tropaeolum majus* and *Tropaeolum minus* hybrids and cultivars. Their botanical names are often uncertain, as many are referred to either as *T. majus* or *T. minus* cultivars, depending on the seed suppliers. There is sometimes more than one cultivar name for the same hybrid plant.

The botanic garden's situation in the Tête d'Or park

Tropaeolum polyphyllum

The Alpine garden

Tropaeolum sessilifolium

offers a great diversity of growing conditions. This is perfect for *Tropaeolum* species, which originate from extremely diverse geographic and climatic zones, some in need of particular growing conditions. One major concern to be faced from now on is climate evolution; milder winters and hotter summers will probably lead Lyon botanic garden to deal with Mediterranean conditions in the near future.

The tropaeolums have been divided into two categories: those hardy enough for outdoor cultivation and others that cannot stand the cold weather; that said, some species considered tender might be quoted as half-hardy in our trials, depending on growing conditions.

Tropaeolum incisum

The Frames

Plants are potted in plastic pots plunged in sand. Temperature is kept at a minimum 5°C in winter by a heating mat. The advantages of cultivation in frames are protection when climate conditions are unfavourable (rain, frost ...) and the possibility of outdoor culture when the frames are open compared with a glasshouse, even an unheated one.

Tropaeolum repandum

The drawback is the open pollination: even if carefully hand-done it can't avoid the bees' natural quick actions. We've had many surprising and frustrating results in the past. Controlled hand pollination has been tried two years ago to try to collect true seeds. Several Chilean and Argentinian tuberous species are settled in these frames and are repotted each year in a well-drained compost. The botanist in charge of the frames area has now successfully and skilfully undertaken most of the tasks involving many *Tropaeolum* species.

The Alpine Garden

This garden has been refurbished several years ago. Three Andean species thrive in ideal conditions that mimick their natural habitat: *Tropaeolum polyphyllum*, *Tropaeolum incisum*, and *Tropaeolum sessilifolium*. They've been planted deeply in a sharply draining soil including a lot of pozzolana. *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* produces a stunning display each year.

Tropaeolum peltophorum

The Glasshouses

Some small glasshouses are waiting to be refurbished. Several *Tropaeolum* species were cultivated there in the past They particularly included high-climbing annuals planted directly in the glasshouse beds.

Tropaeolum ciliatum

These plants used to flower profusely, mainly in autumn and winter. They reached several metres (*Tropaeolum huigrense*, *T. smithii*, *T. moritzianum*, *T. fintelmannii* var. *olmosense*). After their cultivation having been neglected for some years they have been trialled outside – with no satisfying results except for *T. moritzianum*, which seems able to bloom over a long period. This species also surprisingly withstood some low temperatures, down to 0°C.

These species have now been tried again in big pots, where they grow quite well to limited dimensions in spring and complete their growth cycle within a few months in an area of a glasshouse partly dedicated to propagating plants. *T. repandum*, a rare species belonging to the serrato-ciliata section, is also grown here.

The glasshouses are the preferred site for hand pollination and for keeping cuttings taken from species and cultivars that are rare or sterile, and for all those showing erratic germination.

Another glass house welcomes *Tropaeolum peltophorum* and *T. pentaphyllum*, where they have huge development, easily reaching the top of the glass within a few weeks. The former blooms profusely in winter and spring whereas the latter begins flowering in spring. *T. pentaphyllum* is well-known and it may be kept in growth for several months.

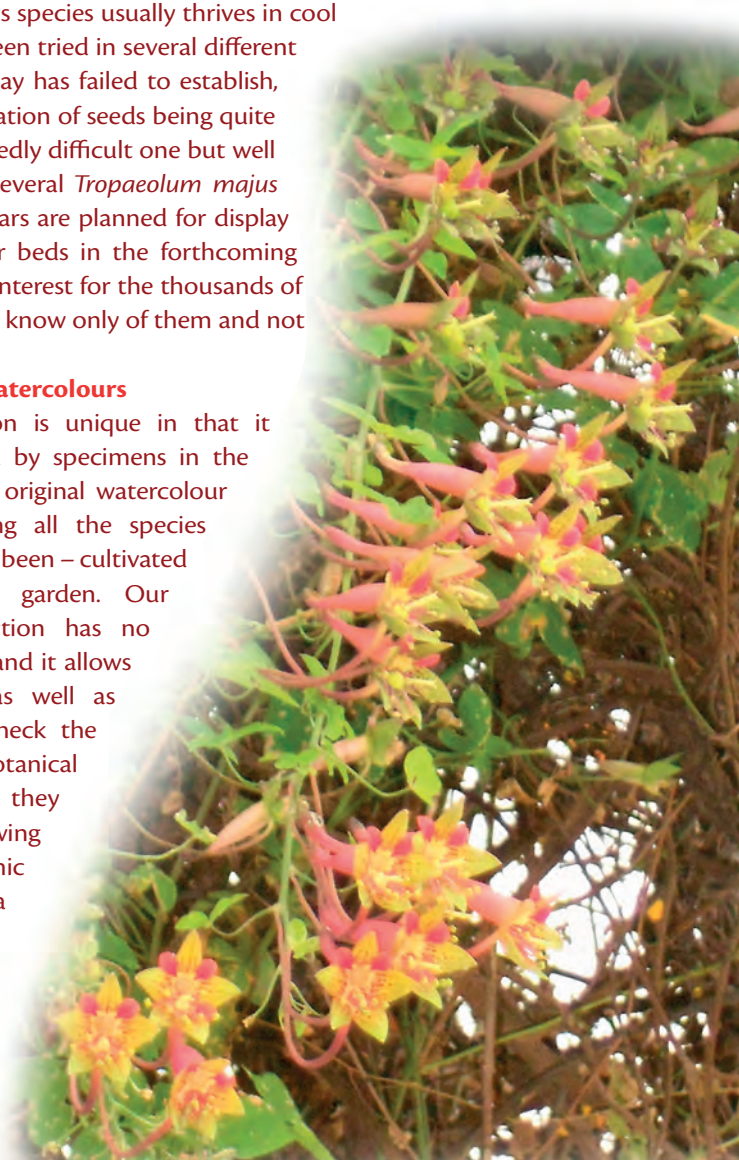
The main concern in these glasshouses is aphids. Traditional pesticides are no longer used in the botanic garden and aphids may multiply uncontrollably despite the use of biological treatments.

Outdoors

The botanic garden offers various areas in which lots of plants are displayed. The woodland zone includes plants that thrive in such conditions. *Tropaeolum ciliatum* has been settled there in a spot receiving some sun and has invaded its surroundings. *T. tuberosum* is also grown there in the same conditions but flowers shyly every other year. *T. argentinum* self-seeds and blooms each year. Unfortunately it is quite prone to attack by slugs, which can completely destroy the young seedlings. *Tropaeolum speciosum* has been – and is still – a challenge to keep growing at the botanic garden. This species usually thrives in cool climates and has been tried in several different spots but to this day has failed to establish, despite the germination of seeds being quite easy. This is a reputedly difficult one but well worth the effort. Several *Tropaeolum majus* and *T. minus* cultivars are planned for display in various spots or beds in the forthcoming years and will add interest for the thousands of visitors who mainly know only of them and not of the others.

Herbarium and Watercolours

Our collection is unique in that it has been enriched by specimens in the herbarium and an original watercolour collection depicting all the species which are – or have been – cultivated at the botanical garden. Our *Tropaeolum* collection has no French equivalent and it allows plant specialists as well as keen visitors to check the plants in all their botanical aspects even when they are out of their growing season. The botanic garden also runs a seed bank.



Tropaeolum pentaphyllum

Tropaeolum beuthii

Maintaining such a diverse collection needs a lot of effort, work and investment. Most of the species are duplicated by my own collection at home. Even though I don't benefit from ideal growing conditions (a limited space balcony), this has allowed replacements of species lost in the past from the garden.

Obtaining new and rare species is becoming a challenge under new phytosanitary and customs regulations. Restrictions on collecting seeds or plant materials in the wild make it even more difficult nowadays, so we have decided to initiate hybridization trials that involve carefully chosen species or cultivars.

I am grateful to M. Jean-François Christians, in charge of the frames area, and to all members of the botanic garden for their help. We would all be pleased to receive any comments or feedback that you may care to offer on this article via the editor.

Controlled pollination with protective bags in place

Tropaeolum looseri

Tropaeolum hookerianum

A display area with some hybrids

On reading 'Sugar Limestone' (Andrew Jones, *The Rock Garden*, Issue 148)

Jackie Sutherland

SUGAR LIMESTONE – the words jumped off the page as I flicked through a copy of *The Rock Garden* that I was given at a Kinross Garden Group meeting. It was a phrase I had not heard for many years, and yet I was immediately taken back to Upper Teesdale where, over fifty years ago, I spent many days crawling the turf on Widdybank Fell.

My late mother, then Betty Petrie, was always a keen gardener, trained in horticulture in Edinburgh during the 1920s. When the SRGC was formed, she became a member. One particular outing was to the gardens at Glamis Castle. Arriving by train, the group was met by the head gardener and was taken by pony and trap to the castle where, after a garden tour, the visit finished with tea inside.

Realising that it was only young men who were sent on plant-hunting expeditions to the Far East, she retrained as a nurse – and worked in Hong Kong and Singapore as a nanny. With the invasion of Malaya, she returned to nursing where, just before the Fall of Singapore, she met and married a young doctor, Jack Ennis. Both were captured and interned in Singapore for the duration of the war. Post war, alpines continued to feature. A postponed honeymoon in Kashmir, a first holiday to Switzerland and, once finally settled in Durham, a chance to develop her own garden. One acre with lawns, orchards, herbaceous border, vegetable patch and, of course, a rock garden.

As my sister and I grew up, the rock garden became a wonderful play area. We were not allowed to climb over it but there were enough pathways to play, chase and hide & seek. Retaining walls were built, almost entirely by my mother, from granite setts as cobbles were replaced in the old streets of Durham City. A palette of colour in spring and early summer had the yellows of miniature narcissus, the pinks, whites and purples of primulas and pulsatillas, reds of dwarf rhododendrons. There were edelweiss and gentians, and spectacular *Saxifraga longifolia* 'Tumbling Waters' cascading into the cool blue of *Lithodora*.

My late school days included 'A' level Botany and extra-mural classes at Durham University with inspirational teaching from Dr Margaret Bradshaw, who led many excursions. Outings to Upper Teesdale took on heightened importance in the 1960s when, to ensure a water supply for Teeside industries, a new reservoir was proposed. The assemblage of arctic-alpine plants had long been recognized, but now it became urgent to map distribution of nationally rare and scarce species. With other volunteers, my weekends and holidays were spent crawling painstakingly over the short turf of the limestone fell. Mapping continued whatever the weather – I remember flicking snowflakes

off leaves to allow identification, only pausing once during a thunder storm when the hillside opposite (Meldon Hill) was struck by lightning ... character-building. Despite appeals to both Houses of Parliament, construction of the dam began in 1967 and parts of Cow Green were flooded. In 1969, remaining areas were taken into the enlarged National Nature Reserve of Moorhouse – Upper Teesdale. These were indeed formative years for my own interests. Many years later, while house-hunting, it was the garden that 'sold' me my present home. Arriving early, I wandered through the garden. There was a tree peony (*Paeonia ludlowii*) with fruiting heads and, in a shady overgrown corner, the striking deep blue of *Gentiana asclepiadea*. My search for a new home was ended.

The work in Upper Teesdale continues. Surveys and monitoring are carried out by Dr Bradshaw's Teesdale Special Flora Research and Conservation Group ('Teesdale Special Flora'). Sadly, comparisons with the 1970s show decline in most of the rare species including *Gentiana verna*, *Saxifraga aizoides* and *Potentilla crantzii*. If you would like more details or would like to support the work of the Trust, please visit *www.teesdalespecialflora.uk*

Meanwhile, the 'rock gardens' of the sugar limestone and the spoil heaps of the old lead workings of Widdybank Fell will always remain the first rock gardens I ever loved.

The sad decline of Teesdale species counts (Teesdale Special Flora)

Species	Common Name	1968-75	2017-19	Extent
Potentilla crantzii	Alpine Cinquefoil	133	2	-98%
Draba incana	Hoary Whitlowgrass	75	8	-89%
Juncus triglumis	Three-flowered Rush	215	24	-89%
Antennaria dioica	Mountain Everlasting	1,285	211	-84%
Saxifraga aizoides	Yellow Saxifrage	83	25	-70%
Armeria maritima	Thrift	16	5	-69%
Galium boreale	Northern Bedstraw	950	331	-65%
Equisetum variegatum	Variegated Horse-tail	173	63	-64%
Thalictrum alpinum	Alpine Meadow-rue	506	231	-54%
Gentiana verna	Spring Gentian	839	389	-54%
Bistorta vivipara	Alpine Bistort	1,085	524	-52%
Carex ericetorum	Rare Spring-sedge	75	41	-45%
Plantago maritima	Sea Plantain	606	342	-44%
Sabulina stricta	Teesdale Sandwort	61	35	-43%
Primula farinosa	Bird's-eye Primrose	798	480	-40%
Tofieldia pusilla	Scottish Asphodel	394	246	-38%
Polygala amarella	Dwarf Milkwort	28	18	-36%
Viola rupestris	Teesdale Violet	398	322	-19%
Viola x *burnatii*	Hybrid Violet	38	46	+21%

The *Rubus* of the Rock Garden

Connor Smith

Recommending *Rubus* almost always carries a sizeable caution. These are plants that gardeners spend much time removing – why knowingly plant one? Of course, like all plant groups, '*there must be some beautiful ones to change your mind*'. For me, this moment came while walking the British National Collection of *Rubus* with its guardian, Barry Clarke of the Hillier arboretum. This broadly versed plantsman has five national collections of his own on top of preservation of one of the finest tree collections in Britain. I knew *Rubus* to be abundant from North America to Asia but did not know its southern hemisphere extent. Some truly remarkable species can be found in New Zealand, Tasmania, Southern Africa, and South America. A few of these I believe could be well suited to our gardens.

A species familiar to most rock gardeners is *Rubus taiwanicola*, a small explosion of leaves no bigger than your hand, which forms colonies of evergreen tufts. This obedient species only grows to 10 cm high. It does not spread as quickly as others and is easier to maintain. Few of us will know of *Rubus parvus*, a wonderful little species that hugs the ground as it grows. It is endemic to the South Island of New Zealand and is reportedly hardy. The foliage is shaped like a double-edged saw and during the colder months can turn bronze- to purple-coloured, but only if in a sunny position. It is accommodated to most soils, situations and conditions, as are many of the *Rubus* species. It produces large flowers in relation to its diminutive stature, and these later turn into large fruits that glow red. This is greatly attractive to the eye of both gardeners and birds. A sterile hybrid called *Rubus* x *barkeri* is a great ground cover for any challenging areas that are exposed or require regular weeding.

I was introduced to *Rubus geoides* by Martin Sheader on Facebook. From Southern Chile, this charming little species produces attractive red fruit that is, like many (if not all) of the genus, very tasty. As for many smaller ornamental *Rubus* species, for reasons that are completely unknown to me they are practically never found in gardens. Consequently, information on how these species adapt to growing in other countries is purely hypothetical, with minimal proven success.

Rubus taiwanicola Above: *R. geoides*

One species I have high hopes for is the Tasmanian endemic, *Rubus gunnianus*. This is found abundantly in the alpine and subalpine areas of Tasmania. It is somewhat similar to *Rubus taiwanicola* in both habit and appearance but is much smaller, with its flowers nestled within the foliage. Tasmanian species may be troublesome in gardens in the northern hemisphere, while others are more than accommodating. If collected from the higher parts of the country (1400 m) I think it may easily find a home in British garden, in between rocks or perhaps in the corner of a trough.

By far the most bizarre and illuminating species is *Rubus squarrosus*. A small bundle of near leafless crisscrossing stems that has deceptive prickly spines, as I found out trying over-enthusiastically to make its acquaintance. As with many of these unconventional New Zealanders, I find myself oddly attached to them. It would be well placed on top of a rock garden where children should not venture for risk of falling, or by rare plants to stop prying hands taking seeds without asking.

I advise giving these species room to stretch their legs because, as with all plants of their nature, they will be happy to explore a garden. In a shady part, woodland area or a site you are happy to see colonised you will soon find them treasured guests rather than unwanted weeds like some of their less civilised relatives. These are very accommodating plants in a range of soils and conditions, although they seem to have a lull for a few years after planting before establishing properly and beginning to spread. It will surprise no-one that they can really take off in small gardens or once happily settled. Seeds from fruits are straightforward but are often plucked by birds, kids, visitors, or simply knocked off. Some species are shy to bear fruit while others require the presence of both parents to raise young. For the home gardener, cuttings or divisions are useful; or simply lifting a layering plant is the easiest route for the busy or idle gardener such as me.

I am greatly in debt for the few treasured days that I spent in the company of Barry Clarke, the owner of all these wonderful plants. His knowledge and passion for this terribly overlooked genus has really enlightened my perspective on the variability of forms available for many a garden situation. There is now good reason to think there is much more to the humble bramble than you may think.

(Cut-outs: Wikipedia Commons)

Above: *Rubus. parvus* *R. nepalensis*

Perth 22 April 2023

This was the second SRGC show to be held at the Dewars Centre in Perth. The venue was the large bowling hall, giving us – as before – plenty of room to spread out and to invite several nurseries. A new idea for this year was for Pam Ferns to bring along her botanical illustrations of *Iris* species, which made a most welcome addition to the hall. There was also a seating area where our own Nicola Macnee and Audrey McColl led a demonstration and interactive workshop involving members of the visiting public. Children and upwards had the chance to sow seeds and explore propagation methods – maybe the exhibitors of the future!

Primula ex 'Delight'

The usual great home baking materialised as if by magic and there was more than enough room to sit down for refreshments. None of the show could have been possible without the support of Perth Group members and other members of the club, so we extend very many thanks to all who helped, including judges and stewards. The biggest thanks are of course due to our own show secretary Alison Hogg for keeping all of us focused and organised.

Cypripedium 'Ursel'

Section 1

The most meritorious plant in the show – and the one of particular interest of course - was the spectacular pan of Cyril Lafong's *Cypripedium* 'Ursel'. There were at least 30 lovely yellow-green blooms on this plant, which is a hybrid of *C. fasciolatum* and *C. henryi*. Cyril also gained the Henry & Margaret Taylor award, which is awarded for the best plant new or rare in cultivation, with a seedling of *Primula* ex 'Delight'. Not content with that, Cyril also went away with the Major-General Murray-Lyon trophy and the Dundas quaich. The winning plants for the latter were, as well as the *Cyripedium formosanum*, a *Trillium grandiflorum* f. *roseum* and a pale-yellow *Lewisia tweedii*. Another plant of Cyril's of particular note was *Hymenoxys lapidicola*, for which the Joyce Halley Award was presented. Cyril's interesting notes, which he usefully places alongside his plants said:

"*Hymenoxys lapidicola, described in 1986, is a narrow endemic to Uintah County, Utah, growing on sandstone cliff terrace sites. It was treated as a synonym of H. torreyana in 1994, but the treatment of H. lapidicola as a species distinct from H. torreyana is supported by a recent study of genetic variation*

Cypripedium formosanum

using isozyme analysis in 1995. The plant is very slow growing, forming neat cushions to 15 cm across with congested rosettes and solitary sessile yellow flowerheads. It was grown from seeds from Alplains, sown 14 December 2016, germinated 3 March 2017. The compost is very gritty John Innes and the plant is grown in the alpine house with full exposure to sun."

Hymenoxys lapidicola

Rhododendron 'Amateis'

Where would we be without Stan da Prato's plants? It was great that he could bring so many along that helped to fill the show-benches which, sadly, are a little emptier than they used to be before Covid. Let's hope some more exhibitors will be inspired by our show to come along and bring plants. Stan won the Bulb trophy with a very attractive pot of narcissus – *Narcissus* 'Angel's Whisper'. Stan also had the Alexander Caird trophy with his usual excellent display of showy plants that included *Iberis sempervirens*, magenta-coloured *Primula marginata* 'Adrian Evans', a cream *Lewisia* cultivar, a *Phyllodoce* and *Phylliopsis* 'Askival'. Stan won the L C Middleton trophy with 126 first prize points.

A spectacular white cloud on the show benches was created by David Millward's *Rhododendron* 'Dora Amateis', an impressive winner of the E H M Cox trophy for the best dwarf rhododendron. The R S Masterton cup was not awarded – so please grow your Asiatic primulas for next year. As to our local prize-winner, Alan Weepers carried away the Perth trophy for the most points in show by a member of our local group. Well done Alan!

Fritillaria acmopetala

Narcissus canaliculatus

In addition to the trophy winners, three certificates of merit were issued. One went to Margaret Taylor for her attractive and unusual dwarf shrub *Tasmannia lanceolata* 'Mount Wellington'. In the wild it grows in Tasmania as well as south-east Australian rainforest. The second went to Ian Christie for a large *Trillium albidum* and, lastly, our own *Erythronium helenae* excelled itself by being in good shape for the show and producing close on forty flowers. This erythronium grows well in a pot but is also happy in the garden.

Some other plants that caught the eye? One of these was the unusual *Bellevalia romana* that was brought along by Ian & Carole Bainbridge from Gatehouse of Fleet. They said: "*Sown at least 15 years ago as B. dubia, this group came from a single seedling. Grown in a cold bulb frame in JI/grit mix. Bulking up slowly ...*"

Section 2

It was a good thing that some of our own members decided to enter Section 2 this year. The more new exhibitors the better it is for our Perthshire club and the SRGC. Section 2 was very thin at most of the shows this year. Among the exhibitors were our own show secretary Alison Hogg, Anton & Margaret Edwards and show steward Richard Salvin. It was with pleasure that we also had entries from Struan Harley and Trevor & Kathleen Wenham

Gentiana delphinensis Facing: *Muscari* 'Night Eyes'

Erica darleyensis 'Kramer's Red'

(Lochearnhead). Struan entered the plant for which the John Duff prize was awarded, a lovely *Trillium grandiflorum*. The prize for the best plant in Section 2 from a first-time exhibitor was awarded to Trevor Wenham for *Narcissus* "Moonlight Scene". Trevor & Kathleen won the Perth salver for the most points in Section 2, but the Bronze medal was not awarded as no single exhibitor gained 20% of the total points available in Section 2.

All in all, it was a very enjoyable day that attracted 146 members of the public and, although the number of entries for the show benches was down on previous years, the quality of the plants remained high – a great tribute to all exhibitors.

Cathy Caudwell

Salix reticulata

Aberdeen 13 May 2023

The Aberdeen Show was once again held in the Victorian corridor of the David Welch Winter Gardens at Duthie Park in Aberdeen and our thanks go to the Duthie Park staff for preparation of the bench space. Both Sections 1 and 2 contained a good selection of plants. The weather on the day was bright and dry, showing the plants at their best.

Stan da Prato put many excellent plants on display, winning the Walker of Portlethen trophy for gaining the most points in Section 1. His *Rhododendron* 'Madame van Hecke' (Class 27 1 pan dwarf *Rhododendron*) was the best rhododendron in show and won the Simpson salver. The Craig cup for the best primula in show was awarded to Mike Dale for his *Primula kisoana* (Class 36 1 pan *Primula*, Asiatic).

Section 2 had a good selection of plants with a number of new exhibitors. Jill & Jim Cole-Hamilton won both the Aberdeen quaich (best plant in Section 2) and the Brian Bull trophy (winner Class 63 2 pans rock plants distinct). An example of *Androsace sarmentosa* was awarded the Aberdeen quaich and the two plants awarded the Brian Bull trophy were *Dianthus freynii* and *Lewisia tweedii*.

Four certificates of merit were awarded to Stan da Prato for his *Enkianthus* dwarf form (Class 25 1 pan Ericaceae, excluding *Rhododendron*), Dave Millward for *Ramonda nathaliae* (Class 53 1 pan Gesneriaceae) and Ian Christie for *Trillium grandiflorum* (Class 56 1 pan *Trillium*) and *Cypripedium parviflorum* (Class 33 1 pan Orchidaceae).

***Paris quadrifolia* (Forrest Medal)**

The George Forrest memorial medal for the best in show was awarded to John Lee for his *Paris quadrifolia* in Class 3 (1 pan rock plant native to Scotland). *Paris quadrifolia*, a perennial herb commonly known as Herb Paris or True Lover's Knot, was first documented from European woodlands in 1753. This habitat defines its needs for shady humus-rich growing conditions. Growers are rewarded by the quartet of broad, glossy leaves and a solitary, star-like flower.

Adrian Banks

Ian Christie's *Cypripedium parviflorum*

Above: *Paris quadrifolia*, John Lee's Forrest medal. Below: From 1885, Wikipedia

Glasgow 29 April 2023

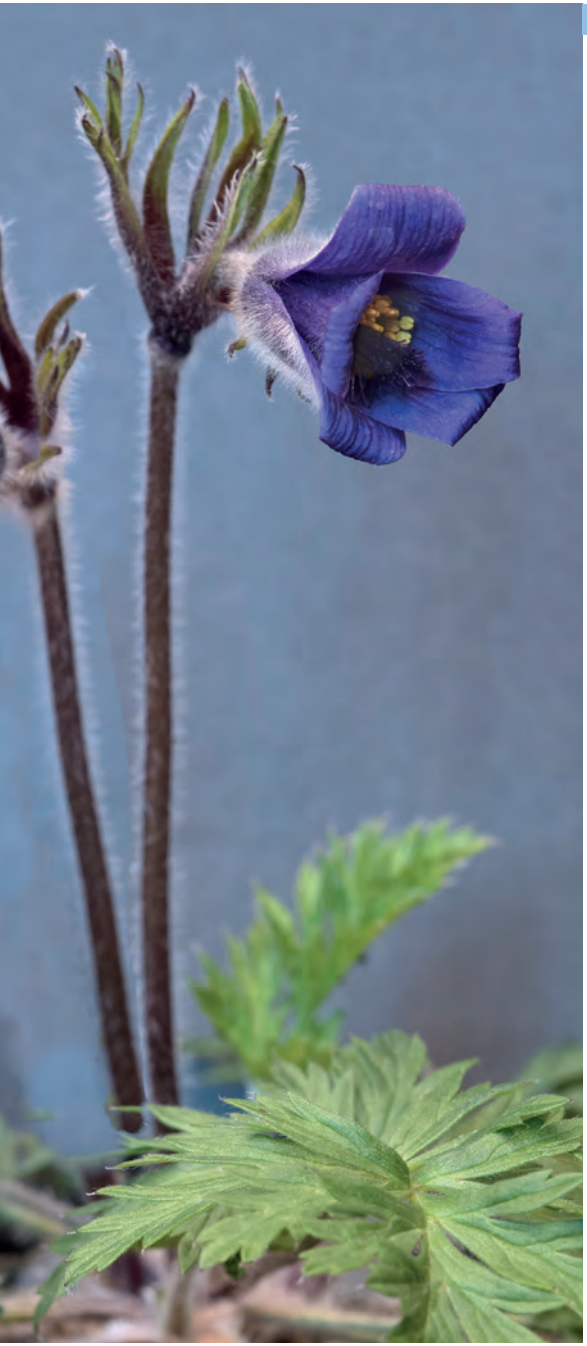
The shadow of the recent pandemic was still lingering over Scotland in April, but many thanks are due to the fourteen exhibitors who nevertheless attended the show at Baljaffray. Several of them had travelled across the country to show their plants. Those who stayed at home missed a botanical and floral treat, as well as the indulgence of excellent home-cooked goodies served up in the tearoom by the West of Scotland club members. Most exhibitors gathered to enjoy the ample hospitality while judging was taking place in the hall.

This show was one week earlier than usual to avoid causing any difficulty for those travelling to Prague to attend the Czech Rock Garden Conference on our usual show date of the first Saturday in May. In the end, our exhibitors showed 161 pans of plants stretching over 101 entries.

Stan da Prato took home five trophies and an award card, including the Edward Darling trophy for three rhododendrons in class 4. His *Salix reticulata* in Class 6 was judged *Best Scottish Native Plant* and won the Ian Donald memorial trophy.

Stan also gained the Urie trophy for best Ericaceae with his pink flower-studded *Andromeda polifolia* 'Blue Ice' and the Don Stead prize for

Facing: *Ranunculus gouanii* Above: *Fritillaria collina*



Pulsatilla turczaninovii

most points in bulb classes. He had the winning 6-pan group in Class 1 for the Buchanan rose bowl. Finally, his many entries gave him most points in Section 1, and consequently the Crawford challenge cup.

However, the Forrest trophy deservedly went to David Millward for his magnificent pot of white *Rhododendron* 'Dora Amateis' which must have entirely filled his car, for it made a very bold statement in the hall itself. This also gave him the *Rhododendron Perpetual Challenge Trophy*, which was recently redesignated for the best rhododendron in show, there no longer being a section 6 for cut rhododendron blooms.

Leucoraoulia loganii

Primula zambalensis

David & Stella Rankin won a group of awards: Class A for 6 small pans with its Diamond Jubilee card for a nicely balanced exhibit that included two trilliums; Class 2 and the Henry Archibald Challenge rose bowl for three plants of different genera; and the William C Buchanan challenge cup in class 3 for three pans of distinct genera. The star of this entry was a nice dark blue *Pulsatilla turczaninovii*.

However, shows are not all about winning prizes. They also present an opportunity to glimpse rarely-seen plants. A nice yellow *Fritillaria collina* was shown by the Rankins along with *Fritillaria affinis* var. *tristulis*, which also gained a

Saxifraga pubescens 'Snowcap'

Joint Rock preliminary certificate. They also showed *Ranunculus gouanii* from the Pyrenees, along with the Scottish native *Trollius europaeus* in their 2 pan Ranunculaceae Class 23 entry. Their 3 pan *Primula* class 16 entry comprised *Primula zambalensis*, a local Chinese plant, with *Primula bullata* var. *bullata* and *Primula sieboldii* 'Snowflake'.

David Millward's entry of two cushions in Class 13 kept the classifiers busy. A lovely bun of x *Leucoraoulia loganii* made one half, believed to be an intergeneric hybrid. The other half of his entry was *Raoulia* x *petrimia*, the very similar natural hybrid between *R. petriensis* and *R. eximia*. All these species hail from high levels in the South Island of New Zealand, where their cryptic colouration blends in with the colour of the screes on which they grow.

Plants of *Saxifraga pubescens* 'Snowcap' are usually well in evidence at the Glasgow show, and Cyril Lafong's example won the revolving

Awards for *Rhododendron* 'Dora Amateis'

Arisaema griffithii

Rhododendron 'Snipe'

Alpines 2001 trophy for best cushion plant, along with a certificate of merit. Cyril also won the SRGC 75th Jubilee prize award card for the best plant in a small pan for his *Hymenoxys lapidicola*. This is a rare and narrowly endemic plant, native only to a few sites on Blue Mountain Plateau, Uintah County, in the state of Utah in America.

Cyril also provided considerable interest with his lovely lemon-yellow seedling of *Primula* ex 'Delight' that he raised in 2014. The original 'Delight' was a *Primula auricula* crossed to *P.* x *pubescens alba*, and backcrossed to *P. auricula*. Cyril believes that his plant results from a further backcross, with a nearby *P. auricula* acting as the pollen parent.

Steven Macfarlane showed a beautiful pan of *Trillium grandiflorum* 'Flore Pleno' and it was a pleasure to see this well-grown plant at close quarters rather than in the usual garden setting. This particular plant impressed the judges enough to gain the award of a certificate of merit. Another certificate went to our show secretary Richard Green for his

Clematis marmoraria

statuesque *Arisaema griffithii*. This plant was also shown to the Joint Rock committee and was awarded a preliminary certificate. The plant was lifted from the open ground of Richard's garden although, like its other fellow species, it is more at home on the slopes of the Himalaya in damp moss under rhododendron forest.

The *Best Plant in Section 2* – and indeed the only entry in the entire section – was Peggy Anderson's *Trillium luteum*. In consequence, Peggy took home the James A Wilson trophy. *T. luteum* is one of the most attractive trilliums, with pale lemon flowers backed by dappled foliage. We emphasise that there is plenty of scope in this section for new exhibitors to start their showing careers with a good chance of taking home first prizes. We hope that this will encourage more entries next year.

Sandy Leven and *Richard Green*
Photos: *Liz Cole*

Hexham, 1 April 2023

The joint show at Hexham is always a visit to be relished. The farmer's fare at the Auction Mart canteen attracts the road-weary exhibitors, many of whom spend at least as long in the car as at the show itself. However, the nurseries, the exhibitors and high quality exhibits always lift spirits after a long journey. This joint SRGC/AGS show alternates the rules and ran under AGS rules this year. The differences include: Farrer (not Forrest) medals; the 'bulbous' definition includes rhizomes such as *Trillium* but excludes *Cyclamen*; there are also size limits on pans.

A worrying feature of current shows is the lack of new exhibitors, there being no entries in the beginners section C, a trend also apparent in Scottish shows. However, there were 34 exhibitors who between them staged 354 plants. The open section held 247 entries of 314 plants and the intermediate held 40 plants in 36 entries. No AGS Medals were

Narcissus obesus 'Lee Martin', Farrer medal winner Above: judging

Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem', certificate of merit

Mukdenia rossii, certificate of merit

awarded because there were no entries in the 6-pan classes in either section. David Millward took the prestigious Farrer medal for the first time. His stunning pan of *Narcissus obesus* 'Lee Martin' is David's pride, and I counted well over 170 blooms in this one pan. Coincidentally, Alan Furness won the Sandhoe trophy for the best plant in a 19 cm pan with the same cultivar.

The aggregate prize points award of the R B Cooke plate was won by Don Peace with 22 open firsts. Raymond Hurd took an SRGC bronze medal and the Gordon Harrison cup for 16 intermediate firsts. Don also took home the Ivor Barton memorial trophy for 6 pans of monocots with the sole entry in class 103. The E G Wilson trophy gave him a third award with his class 100 entry of 3 pans of new or rare. It was interesting that his 9 pans comprised entirely fritillaries!

Four certificates of merit were awarded. Frank Hoyle gained one for his large *Saxifraga* 'Coolock Gem'. Mike Dale's *Mukdenia rossii* stood out on the bench, as did Ian Kidman's extensive *Viola brevistipulata* var. *hidakana*. Anne

Viola brevistipulata var. *hidakana*, certificate of merit

Wright showed a large range of uncommon daffodils throughout the show classes, including a fascinating potful displaying variation from seed. However, it was her elegant *Narcissus* 'Giselle' that deservedly gave her the certificate.

At the entrance door there was a huge exhibit of information boards, books and information about the Teesdale & Swaledale heritage programme. The North Pennine Partnership put this together and it gained them a large gold award that was richly deserved for the depth of coverage of the holistic approach to this area's ecology.

Looking for the more unusual plants, a splash of shiny yellow with distinctive olive leathery leaves made me check that this was indeed the New Zealand native *Ranunculus crithmifolius*; Don Peace grew it from AGS seed in a gritty compost in similar conditions to those where I have seen it growing wild on the edge of a ski slope approach road. My attention was also attracted by Frank Hoyle's *Kelseya uniflora*, an inhabitant of limestone in the USA's Bighorn Mountains.

I also admired a fiery and glowing *Lachenalia aloides* shown by Diane Clement that was displayed in the 'native to Africa' class.

Finally, I could not leave without purchasing far too many plants from the attentive nursery folk lining the entrance hall, so overall this was a very good day for me, and I believe for the many who attended this magnificent show.

Richard Green
(Photos: Peter Maguire)

This page: *Narcissus* 'Giselle', certificate of merit
Facing: *Primula henrici*, David Boyd award

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