SRGC/AGS

Hexham early spring show

28 March 2026



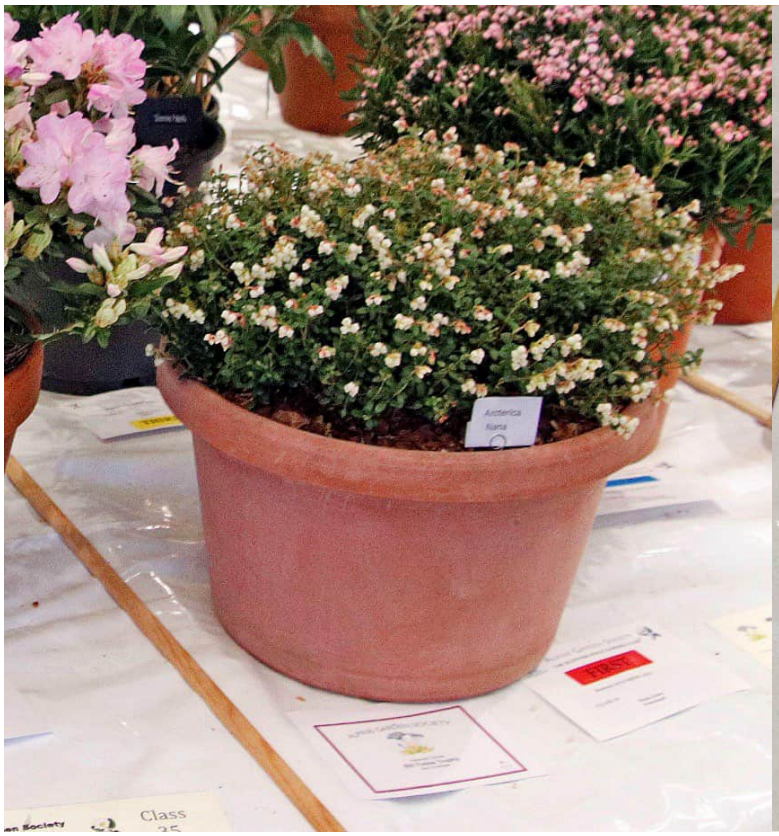
The word early in the title acknowledges the fact that the enterprising NE England group of the Alpine Garden Society run two shows each year, the other in October. They attract exhibitors from all over the country; Essex to Perthshire this spring. Added to a core of very good growers from the north of England this makes for a competitive event with lots (409 pots) to attract both alpine specialists and the general public who filled the hall as soon as judging finished by late morning.







There were fewer large cushion plants still in flower compared to the Kendal show a fortnight previously, but there were some very good plants, notably a pot of *Viola brevistipulata* var. *hidakana* from mountains in Japan. Shown by local grower Ian Kidman, it took the Forrest medal, this being a year when Scottish rules apply. Other eye-catching large pots included a heavyweight pot of the yellow -flowered *Muscari macrocarpum*, which gained another local stalwart, Mala Janes, a certificate of merit. About a metre along the same bench she exhibited a well flowered *Arcteria nana* which deservedly took the Bill Tubbs trophy for the best ericaceous plant.





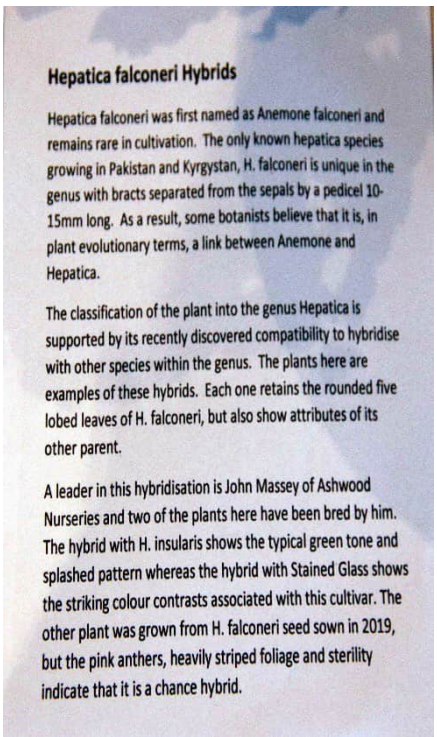




Mala's was one of two entries of six mini vases of cut flowers from the rock garden. Should we have more cut flower classes as they could involve gardeners who don't grow in pots? The public enjoy mini gardens though there was only the one with saxifragas growing in tufa. However, another local grower, Alan Newton, showed the European high altitude *Androsace va*ndellii in an alpine landscape within an artistically broken pot. One interesting innovation was a people's choice award which went to Dave Millward's *Narcissus bulbocodium* 'Lee Martin form'. Another bulb, *Fritillaria bucharica*, which, as its name implies, hails from central Asia, gained the Sandhoe trophy for best plant in a 19cm pot for Bob Worsley. Bob also took the EG Watson trophy for three pans of rare or new plants with three forms of *Hepatica falconeri*.







Hepatica falconeri Hybrids

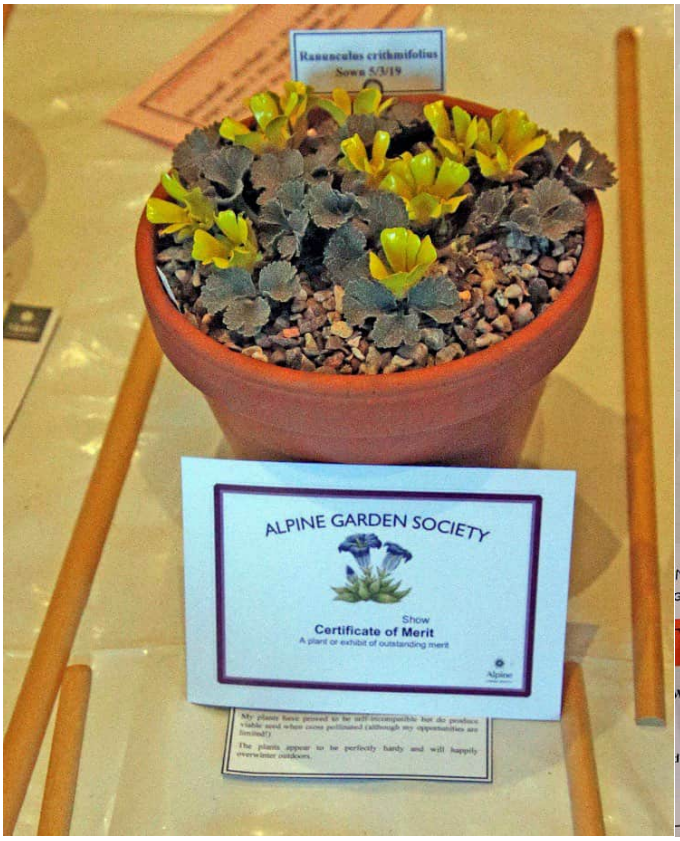
Hepatica falconeri was first named as Anemone falconeri and remains rare in cultivation. The only known hepatica species growing in Pakistan and Kyrgystan, H. falconeri is unique in the genus with bracts separated from the sepals by a pedicel 10-15mm long. As a result, some botanists believe that it is, in plant evolutionary terms, a link between Anemone and Hepatica.

The classification of the plant into the genus Hepatica is supported by its recently discovered compatibility to hybridise with other species within the genus. The plants here are examples of these hybrids. Each one retains the rounded five lobed leaves of H. falconeri, but also show attributes of its other parent.

A leader in this hybridisation is John Massey of Ashwood Nurseries and two of the plants here have been bred by him. The hybrid with H. insularis shows the typical green tone and splashed pattern whereas the hybrid with Stained Glass shows the striking colour contrasts associated with this cultivar. The other plant was grown from H. falconeri seed sown in 2019, but the pink anthers, heavily striped foliage and sterility indicate that it is a chance hybrid.


Primula 'Lindum Eros'
Saxifraga quadrifaria
ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY
THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB
FIRST
Hexham AGS SHOW 2026
CLASS 50
Mark Childerhouse
Brigg
ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY
Show
Certificate of Merit
A plant or exhibit of outstanding merit
ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY
Hexham Show
AGS Medal
6 pans rock plants (not more than two of any one genus)
Alpine Garden Society
&
Scottish Rock Garden Club
Class
50
6 pans rock plants
(not more than two of any one genus).
AGS MEDAL

Don Peace is known for his interest in the genus *Fritillaria* and staged a six-pan entry of six of his Lentune hybrids. As at Kendal, he received a certificate of merit for a pot of *Ranunculus crithmifolius*. Mark Childerhouse's small 6 pans won an AGS medal; one, the Himalayan *Saxifraga quadrifaria*, received a certificate of merit.





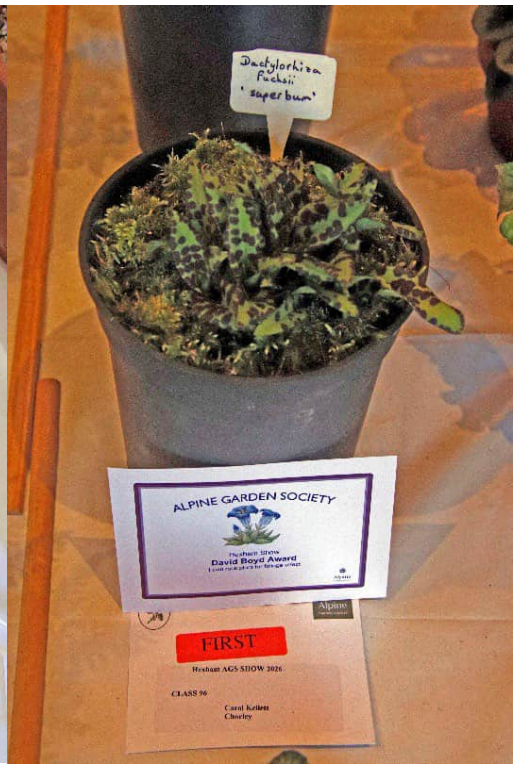






John Dixon took the RB Cooke plate for most first points in the Open section. John Richards' Turkish *Draba rosularis* won a certificate of merit as did Alan Newton's *Epigea repens*.





Carol Kellett 's common spotted orchid, *Dactylorizha fuchsii*, with intriguingly dark marks on the leaves, won class 96 for foliage effect and the David Boyd award, named for a popular former member of the NE group.

Other British native plants scattered throughout the show included a couple of examples of the dwarf mountain willow, *Salix reticulata*, as well as cowslips and primroses, reminding us just how attractive these common plants can be.

Special mention must go to a pot of *Primula scotica,* one of our very few British endemics and confined to Scottish northern coasts and Orkney. It was formerly the symbol of the Scottish Wildlife Trust but then replaced by an otter which the trust's management thought had greater public appeal. Botanists beg to differ. It's short lived so plants on the show bench will have recently been raised from fresh seed.

















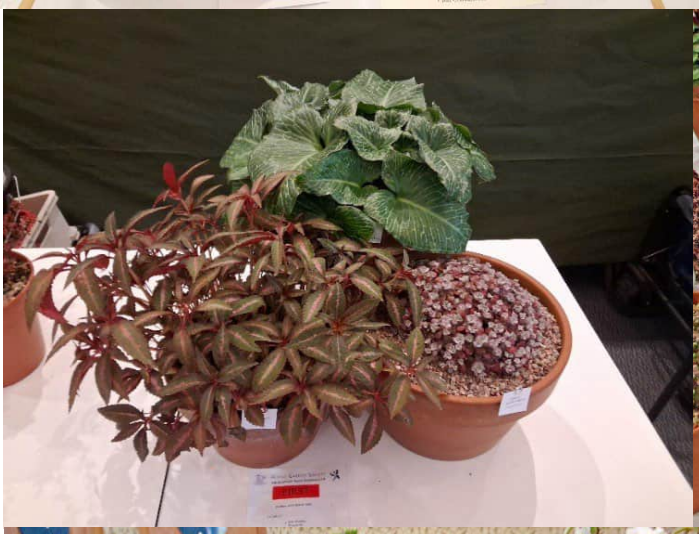




















Flowers predominate at spring shows but pots of impressive foliage included Podophyllum, Arums, a dark leaved form of *Impatiens omieana* (hardy busy lizzie) as well as many groups of hardy succulents and conifers. One large pot of *Mammillaria hahniana* , from mountains in Mexico, stood out in an American class. Many cacti can take cold conditions provided they are kept free from winter wet.







Alan Ward staged some nice plants in section 2 so took the Gordon Harrison cup home to Wisbech while the Northumberland cup for a new exhibitor went to Stuart Jagger's *Pleione*.

Underlining the skills of north east enthusiasts, five of the 11 Open section awards went to Northumberland growers. Scottish representation was limited to five exhibitors plus some others, including current club president Richard Green who did the honours at prize giving time. Helen Knowles again took a section 3 trophy (The Cyril Barnes) back to Canonbie.





Practical considerations can make a big difference to how well a show runs. Hexham auction mart has excellent parking and access as well as plenty of room for nurseries; there were nine who did good business letting the public buy plants you are unlikely to get in garde centres so they are very much part of the overall day. The popular café serves farmers' portions.

The uncertain weather deteriorated into hail showers which, fortunately, eased just as the show closed but were a reminder of the conditions alpine plants have to cope with. Driving back north, dramatic skies illuminated the border at the Carter Bar; a fitting end to another good day with our colleagues in the north-east of England.

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Local branch of the BCSS display


The Maurice Reed Room


North East of England Group
of
The Alpine Garden Society
Welcomes You
We hold monthly afternoon meetings from September to April.
We hold 2 AGS National Shows in the Spring and Autumn.
Talks on alpines and other plants given by experts in their fields, share extensive knowledge from within the group.
Visitors are Welcome.



