

Kendal  
14 March 2026  
(AGS/SRGC)



Frank Hoyle with the Farrer medal winner *Saxifraga* 'Coolock Gem'

The first joint show of the year with the Alpine Garden Society made a most welcome return to the show circuit in March after a year out in 2025. Held in a local high school, this is the first competitive show of the season for Scottish growers, though our AGS colleagues have already staged four others south of the Border. Colourful cushions,

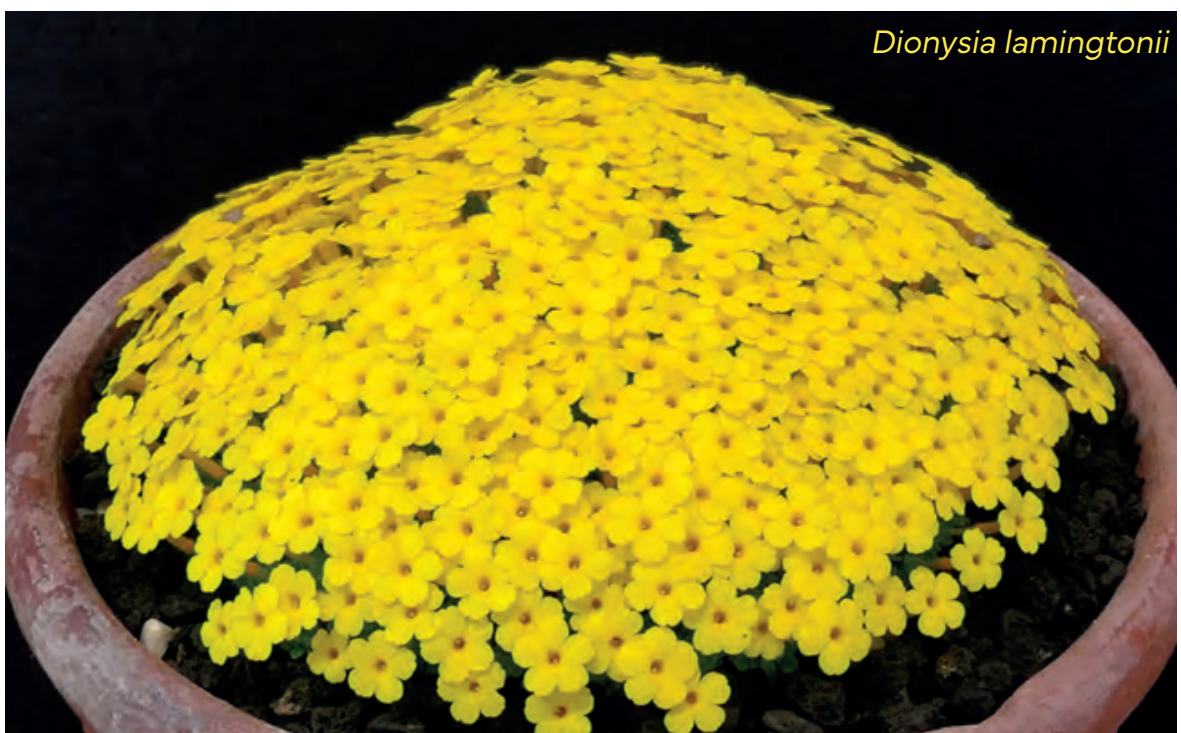
*Dionysia tapetodes* from John Dixon





Among the six-pans

mainly *Dionysia*, *Saxifraga* and forms of *Primula allionii* are a feature of these March shows. Some are impressively large, filling their 36 cm pots, the maximum allowed by the AGS. Wooden templates are on hand to check (outside edge) measurements! This can mean that a perfect specimen outgrows its show life. That may explain why Class 1 for six large pans attracted no entries this year.



*Dionysia lamingtonii*



There were still many fine entries in the three and single pan classes, none more so than the immaculate *Saxifraga* 'Coolock Gem' which won yet another Farrer medal for Frank & Barbara Hoyle. It was raised by Jim Almond and named after Coolock in Shrewsbury, where he lived, and his daughter Gemma. A fine

*Dionysia esfandarii*

*Primula allionii* 'Alice Evans'





Roy Skidmore's Kirby cup winner, *Cyclamen maritimum*

large pan of the dark blue *Hepatica japonica* 'Anstonian' won the Clarkson trophy for Chris Lilley. *Dionysia esfandiarrii* in the wild is confined to a small area in Iran. John Dixon's plant won the Alpines 2001 SRGC travelling award for the best cushion plant. Laughter from those in the know greeted the announcement as the award is a coprolite (dinosaur poo); it also gained a certificate of merit. Of the six certificates of merit awarded on the day, five went to large pots on the first bench with two to Geoff Rollinson for the Pyrenean *Androsace ciliata* and *Primula allionii* 'Alice Evans' (named for the wife of Alf Evans, late of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh) and the other two to Don Peace for *Corydalis sewerzowii* from Central Asia and *Ranunculus crithmifolius* from the screes in South Island, New Zealand. Don had a very good show, also taking the AGS medal for six pots 19 cm max with two *Fritillaria*, two *Primula allionii*



*Ranunculus crithmifolius*

*Corydalis sewerzowii*







Heather Barraclough's David Mowle trophy winner *Narcissus fernandesii*

cultivars, *Dionysia tapetodes* and *Corydalis* 'Lentune Red'—which I believe is one he raised himself, and the Hollett trophy for most (24) first points from winning 12 classes. The smaller pot classes were a mass of colour on rather crowded benches; entries were higher than anticipated, with 37 growers staging 254 pots in the open section. Some attributed this to the recent Gardeners' World TV feature on the AGS but I think it was simply that many plants came into flower at the same time. Again, *P. allionii* were prominent with 24 pots in the two relevant classes with more in mixed classes. Some nice small *Dionysia* included a pot of the Iranian *D. lamingtonii* that gave Mark Childerhouse a certificate of merit. Unusually, a section 2 plant, Roy Skidmore's *Cyclamen maritimum*, took the Kirby cup for best foliage plant. There were some good large pots of *Narcissus*

*Narcissus* 'Giselle', the Narcissus salver winner from Steve Clements





Chris Lilley's Clarkson trophy winner *Hepatica japonica* 'Anstonian'

but two smaller pots won trophies. Steve Clements won the Narcissus salver with Anne Wright's graceful white *triandrus* x *cantabricus* hybrid 'Giselle' while Heather Barraclough won the David Mowle award with a species *N. fernandesii*. Another good pot of bulbs, *Fritillaria bucharica*, won the Duncan Lowe award for best plant in a 19 cm pot for Bob Worsley. Show secretary Alan Oatway was a popular winner of the Michael Roberts trophy in section 2. By taking the Reginald Kay cup for section 3, Helen Knowles from Canonbie was the only Scottish trophy winner on the day.

The competitive classes are not the only attraction at these shows. RBGE's customary display of plants in pots, mainly bulbs, received a gold medal as did Ashwood nursery's display of *Hepatica* set around a dwarf cherry in full flower. A third gold went to Syd Cumbus for a very good photo set of alpinists growing in the Julian Alps, dolomitic mountains in Slovenia. However, for many the most entertaining exhibit was Anne Vale's mini-garden (accessories allowed class) with a woman hanging out her washing line in her garden. Smaller displays included one on the Lakeland Horticultural Society's nearby Holehird garden. Six nurseries and the club members' bargain stand offering plants you won't see in a garden centre did good business, judging by the empty trays by the end of the afternoon.

The plants are the *raison d'être* for a show but it's meeting up with friends that makes the long drive worthwhile. This year the customary banter was enlivened by the possibility that an English victory over France in rugby's Six Nations decider could give Scotland the title (it didn't). It was encouraging to see more (sixteen and five) exhibitors in sections 2 (intermediate) and 3 (novice). This reduced the age profile of exhibitors though there was still a considerable contrast with the photos of the sixth formers on the walls of Kirkbie Kendal school.

Stan da Prato

Photos: Don Peace and Jon Evans

