

Perth 75th Anniversary, 12 April 2025

This year we celebrate the 75th anniversary year of the Perth Show. The SRGC Review 48/49 gives some details on page 17 of how the show came about. It says: *"In early Spring 1949 (no venue is mentioned) a meeting was held in conjunction with local members of the Alpine Garden Society (AGS) at which Major W G F Finlay, who had won the Forrest Medal at the Edinburgh and the Glasgow Shows, was present. It was decided that a Perth Show could be held in 1950 with co-operation of SRGC group members from Angus and Fife."* And so the very first Perth show was held in the Lesser City Hall in Perth over two days on 31 May and 1 June 1950. In the early years it was referred to as the *Angus and Perthshire Area Show* and between 1954 and 1969 it was held in Dundee and Perth in alternate years. No report for that first show is recorded but we do know that the Forrest Medal winning plant was *Primula dickieana* exhibited by John & Dorothy Renton of Branklyn in Perth, whose special garden we can still enjoy today. There is however a report for the second show held at Perth in 1951 – from *The Rock Garden* No 009 Vol 3(1): *"The Perth Show was opened in the Lesser City Hall on June 6th by Major George Sherriff. Members were honoured to have the show opened by one of our leading plant collectors, and it was most happy that Major and Mrs. Sherriff were able to see in cultivation some of the fine plants introduced by L. & S."* George Sherriff lived on until 1967; Frank Ludlow till 1972. This show came just after

their sixth and final great expedition together collecting alpine and temperate flora in Bhutan in 1949. How fantastic it was to have our show opened by such an iconic figure, and now, 75 years later, to remember its historical connection with Ludlow & Sherriff. Coincidentally, 2025 also marks the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Angus Group and it seemed natural, given their long association, when the two groups merged earlier this year.

So now, on to this year's show: the beautiful weather made for a pleasant journey to Perth for exhibitors, helpers and visitors. We welcomed eight nurseries this year, bringing a wonderful range of unusual alpines for sale, along with a display stand by the Branklyn team and an information stand from *The Explorers Garden* at Pitlochry. The catering stand was as popular as ever and the tables were packed with customers enjoying the rolls, savouries and home-baking, as usual generously donated by members of the club.

Margaret Taylor cuts the cake





Clematis x cartmannii 'Joe'



Iris suaveolens



Fritillaria pyrenaica

The Branklyn team organised two seed-sowing workshops, aimed at children, in the morning and these were followed in the afternoon by a trough-making workshop run by Carole & Ian Bainbridge. In celebration of the double 75th anniversary, a special exhibition was put together with the help and contributions of a number of members, showing the history of both the Perth show and the Angus group with photographs of various events throughout the years. A special video displaying photos, and PowerPoint presentations from previous Angus group meetings was expertly coordinated by Michael Almond and of course we had to have a celebration cake. This large



Daphne 'Maisy Larae'

iced confection was cut by Margaret Taylor, a member of the SRGC for many years (even decades) and a member of the Angus group since its inception. Many members have benefitted hugely over the years from the generosity and plant-raising expertise of Margaret and her husband Henry.

The show itself attracted in excess of 170 entries, with some exhibitors travelling very long distances. We also welcomed several newcomers this year, which is always great to see. What stood out immediately for us were the numerous *Narcissus* species and hybrids. A number of new classes were introduced in the show schedule for 2025 – for cut blooms of daffodils, tulips



Trillium grandiflorum forma *roseum*

and rhododendrons – and local members were encouraged to exhibit here and in the non-competitive section. Many did so, making for a wonderful variety of exhibits all of which added to the enjoyment of the day.

The most meritorious plant in the show – the Forrest medal winning plant, was a very fine specimen of *Clematis cartmannii* 'Joe'. This is not a plant that many people can grow well so all credit was due to its owner, John Lee from Glasgow. In section I, the L C Middleton challenge trophy for the most first prize points overall in section I was awarded to Tom Green. Tom won Class A, a six-pan class that included *Draba ossetica* from wild-collected seed sown in 2018.

The Dundas quach for the winner of Class 2 (3 pans rock plants of different genera) was won by Cyril Lafong for his quality plants: *Androsace villosa* var. *barbulata*, *Sebaea thomasi* and *Daphne* 'Maisy Larae'. Cyril also gained two certificates of merit – for the large and well-flowered *D.* 'Maisy



Lewisiopsis tweedyi

Larae' (*D. circassia* x *D. arbuscula*) and also for *Pleione* x Shantung 'Ducat'. The AGS Ulster group quail for the winner of Class 29 (3 pans *Primula*, distinct) was awarded to Tom Green for three *Primula* hybrids that included a lovely *P.* 'Icicle' along with *P.* 'Broadwell Milkmaid' and *P.* 'Hyacintha'. The Henry & Margaret Taylor award for the best plant new or rare in cultivation went to Nick Boss for a large pan of *Arabis bryoides* exhibited in a representation of its native conditions; Nick has a particular style that gives any difficult plant as much chance as possible of feeling at home! *A. bryoides* is a showy member of the Brassicaceae also known as Balkan rockcress.

The E H M Cox trophy for the best dwarf rhododendron was awarded to David Millward for his *Rhododendron dendrocharis* 'Glendoick Gem'. The R S Masterton memorial trophy for the best Asiatic primula went to David for his *Primula henrici*, a pink-flowered species found on limestone at around 4000 metres in Tibet and Yunnan. The Joyce Halley award for the best plant



Primula scotica and its
north Scottish habitat

grown from seed (a portrait of *Dryas octopetala*) went to Ian Christie for *Wikstromia prostrata*, prostrate form 2020. Richard Green was awarded the bulb trophy for a very fine compact pan of *Fritillaria pallidiflora*; Richard attributed its compact growth to the unexpectedly dry sunny weather we had been experiencing for the previous few weeks.

Our own local members were also prominent, and gained several awards. The Perth trophy went to Alan Weepers for the most points in show by a member of the Perthshire group, his many plants including *Tulipa cretica* 'Hilde'. The Major-General D M Murray-Lyon trophy for the best plant exhibited by a member resident in the former Tayside Region was awarded to our show secretary, Alison Hogg, for her pot of *Primula scotica* seedlings, all grown very much in character. This



Gentiana kochiana



Ranunculus alpestris

gem is often found near the sea and is endemic to a small coastal area in the north of Scotland; it is found only in Scotland, and nowhere else in the world. The new 75th Jubilee award for the best exhibit by a member of the Perthshire group was also awarded to Alison.

In section II, the bronze medal, Perth salver, special prize and John Duff memorial prize went to new exhibitors Jill & Jim Cole-Hamilton. It was wonderful to have some new blood at the show, and with offerings of some interesting plants! A silver medal was presented to the Branklyn team for their display of plants. Regrettably, the Alexander Caird trophy and the Georgina Blackwood memorial trophy for the best junior entry were not awarded as there were no entries in those classes.

Cathy Caudwell and Alison Hogg
Photos: *Liz Cole*