

**The Northern Parks of Old Aberdeen - SRGC Aberdeen Show 2017**  
– report by Stan da Prato



To paraphrase the traditional song, the northern parks of old Aberdeen are Home Sweet Home to some very good horticulture. The city has six major parks as well as around 40 smaller ones. Aberdeen is the only place in Scotland to have entered the Beautiful Scotland competition in every one of its 50 years existence, winning the city category 37 times as well as representing Scotland on many occasions in Britain in Bloom, the last being 2016 when the city won the city category. As a result, Aberdeen is representing Scotland in the champions of champions category this year. Horticulture in Aberdeen has changed in emphasis over the years. Earlier concentration on seasonal bedding displays and rose lined streets has changed in favour of more sustainable planting and greatly reduced maintenance costs. The council has reached out to involve local communities with 25 neighbourhood/community groups. The value of such engagement with local people was demonstrated graphically late in 2015 when Seaton Park flooded as the River Don burst its banks following Storm Frank. In January 2016, 500 people turned out to help clear debris from the park which has been restored to its former glory while the area most prone to flood has been turned into a wetland for wildlife. The tradition of rose growing in the city continues with not one but two - the North Sea Memorial and Queen Mother's – large rose gardens at Hazlehead Park. Nearer the centre Duthie Park, named after a benefactor, contains one of the jewels in Scotland's horticultural crown in the form of the David Welch Winter Garden. David Welch was an inspirational figure who developed Aberdeen's reputation for excellence in its parks before he was head-hunted to run the Royal Parks in London. The range of glass-houses named after him includes a



tropical jungle, national collections of *Aloe* and *Gasteria*, some of the most impressive cacti and succulents in the country, a fern house, insectivorous plants looked after by the young gardeners group and, connecting many of these, is the Victorian corridor. This features a series of displays changed throughout the year from spring bulbs to benches of half hardy perennials. Above them are large hanging baskets which were just being changed from *Streptosolen jamesonii*, so prominent at the 2016 show, to colourful petunias and trailing pelargoniums for the summer. This is the setting for the spring and summer flower shows of the Royal Horticultural Society of Aberdeen and where the Aberdeen branch of the SRGC now stage their show. It provides a very different setting to the

church hall which used to host this show with very good light under south facing glass. This good light allows plants such as gentians and delospermas to open fully though on a sunny day it can get rather too warm! Cloud and drizzle meant this was not a problem for the 2017 show. There is no entrance charge for the winter garden so good numbers of visitors see the plants and learn about the club. This also boosts trade for the nurseries.



Show secretaries Lillian and Ian Chapman report 108 entries in the open section with 57 in a strong section 2 compared to a total of 219 in 2016. The reduction probably reflects the relatively early season this time. Sadly we must also note that Bob Maxwell, a former Aberdeen Group Convenor and a great supporter of this show over the years even when he moved away from the area, is no longer with us.

There were good trilliums including some impressively large plants on the benches in both sections. The Forrest medal plant went by unanimous decision of the judges to Cyril

Lafong for his *Trillium grandiflorum* 'Flore Pleno', below. Another large *T. grandiflorum* was second and Roma Fiddes' smaller *T. erectum*, third. Bill McGregor's very good big *T. flexipes* which has done well at this show before was just going over this time. This was Cyril's 57<sup>th</sup> Forrest which underlines the quality he brings to our shows.



Another genus that was strongly represented was *Lewisia* with a certificate of merit going to local group convenor Mike Hopkins for *L. 'Joyce Halley'* one of several good specimens he showed in the *Lewisia* classes as well as two in his three pan entry to Class 2, the other being a form of *L. columbiana*. This class was won by the convenor of show secretaries David Millward, who travelled north with another *Lewisia*, this time 'George Henley', *Dodecatheon* 'Red Wings' and *Saxifraga pubescens* 'Snowcap'. Cyril received another certificate of merit for his example of this attractive white dome which took the saxifrage class. This plant won the Forrest in 2016. He



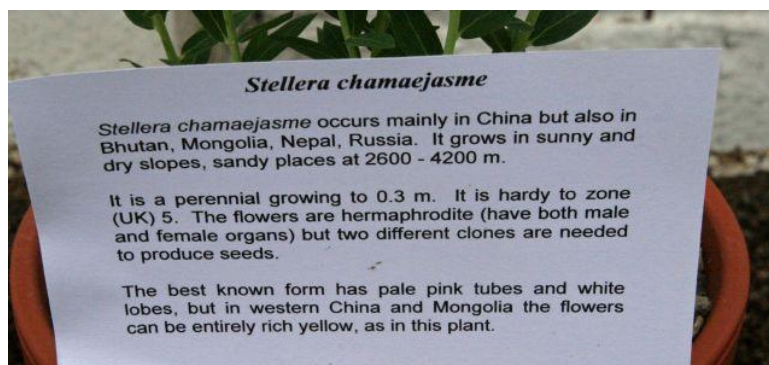
added yet another merit certificate for another white, but very different saxifrage, *S. 'Ailsa Ruth'*, from the longifolia group.



Left: three pan from David Millward  
 Centre above : *Saxifraga* 'Ailsa Ruth'  
 Right above : Mike Hopkins' entry in Class 2



Cyril always brings interesting plants for the new, rare or difficult and seed raised classes accompanied by informative cards. In class 6 he won the Esslemont Quaich with *Jankaia heldreichii*, *Stellera chamaejasme* and *Edraianthus pilosulus* (right above). Nick Boss has his own highly distinctive way of growing and informing the public about his plants. His entry in the same class comprised three Scottish natives: *Saxifraga nivalis* and *S. cespitosa* and *Draba norvegica*. Nick also received a merit certificate for the Himalayan *Leontopodium pusillum* in class 22.



Cyril Lafong's three pans new, rare or difficult – with notes – winning him the Esslemont Quaich.



Your correspondent brought the only rhododendrons - five of which made up most of my entry to class 1 for six large pots – it would once have been four but *Ledum groenlandicum* is now a *Rhododendron*. (The sixth was a *choisya*)

I also won the rhodo class and with it the Simpson salver with a *R. kaempferi* hybrid 'Hisako'. By bringing quite a lot of plants I again received the Walker of Portlethen trophy for most points in



### Section 1.

Ed.: I think we can see from this photo of Stan's car, loaded to leave for the show, that it was not simply the number of plants he brought which gained him the Walker trophy in Section 1!

Primulas were scarce as most people's plants had finished flowering. Ian Christie won the Craig Cup with *P. sieboldii*; he also brought the only androsace on the benches in A. *rotundifolia*. His nice *Meconopsis quintuplinervia* also attracted attention..



The fern class had three nice dwarf ferns. David Millward won with *Cheilanthes wootonii*, Roma Fiddes was second with *Woodsia intermedia* and third was my *Adiantum aleuticum subpumilum*. David won the foliage class with another *Cheilanthes*, this time *C. lindheimeri*. Ferns also made up the only entry in the 'three to show variation' class with three forms of the golden male fern *Dryopteris affinis* - the type as well as 'Cristata The King' and the somewhat convoluted 'Crispa Congesta'.



Three pans, to show variation



Foliage class



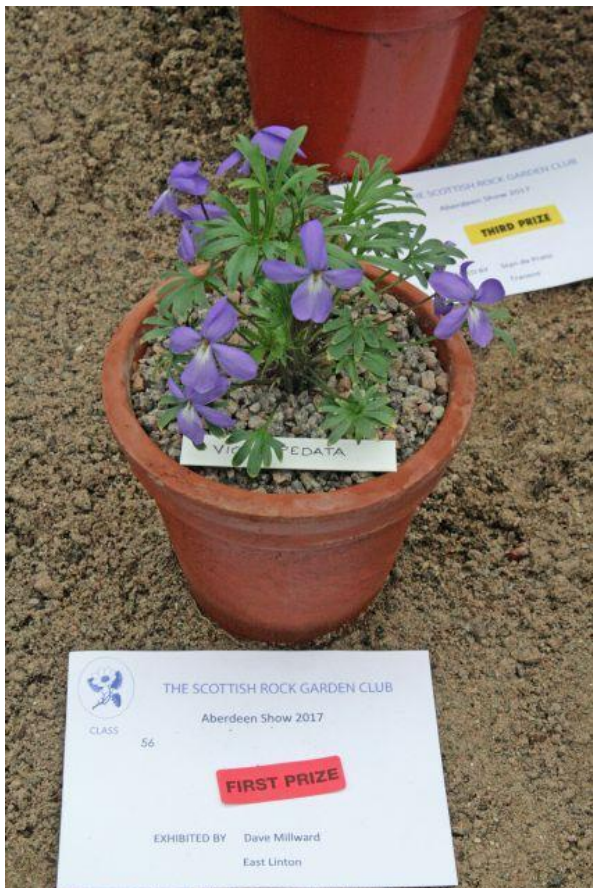
Another three pan class calls for plant from a specified country and was won by Japan – a dwarf Japanese larch, the dwarf willow *Salix nakamura yezoalpina* and the Japanese foam flower *Tanakaea radicans* – just pipping three South Africans: a *Tuhlbagia montana*, *Drosanthemum hispidum* and *Rhodohypoxis thodeana*. An interesting class of arisaemas, which included *A. griffithii* and *A. ringens*, was won by Anne Chambers very good *A. taiwanense* (below left) which received a merit certificate.



The early season meant very few bulbs were on the benches –no tulips and only two pots of narcissus both that late jonquil ‘Baby Moon’. By partnering one of these with the South African bulbous succulent *Ledebouria socialis* I managed to provide an entry for the class for two pots of bulbs. *Allium cernua* and *Calochortus uniflorus* featured in the American plants class. A few examples of later bulbous plants such as *Rhodohypoxis* and *Oxalis* provided more bulbous colour.



The catch-all class for plants not otherwise catered for in the schedule is an important one, this time won by *Viola pedata* with another viola, *V. hederacea*, second.

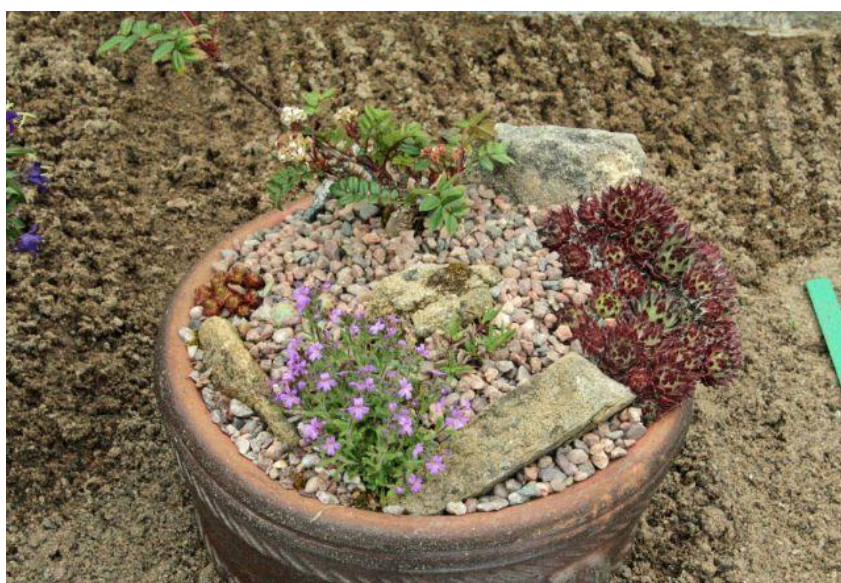


Silvers

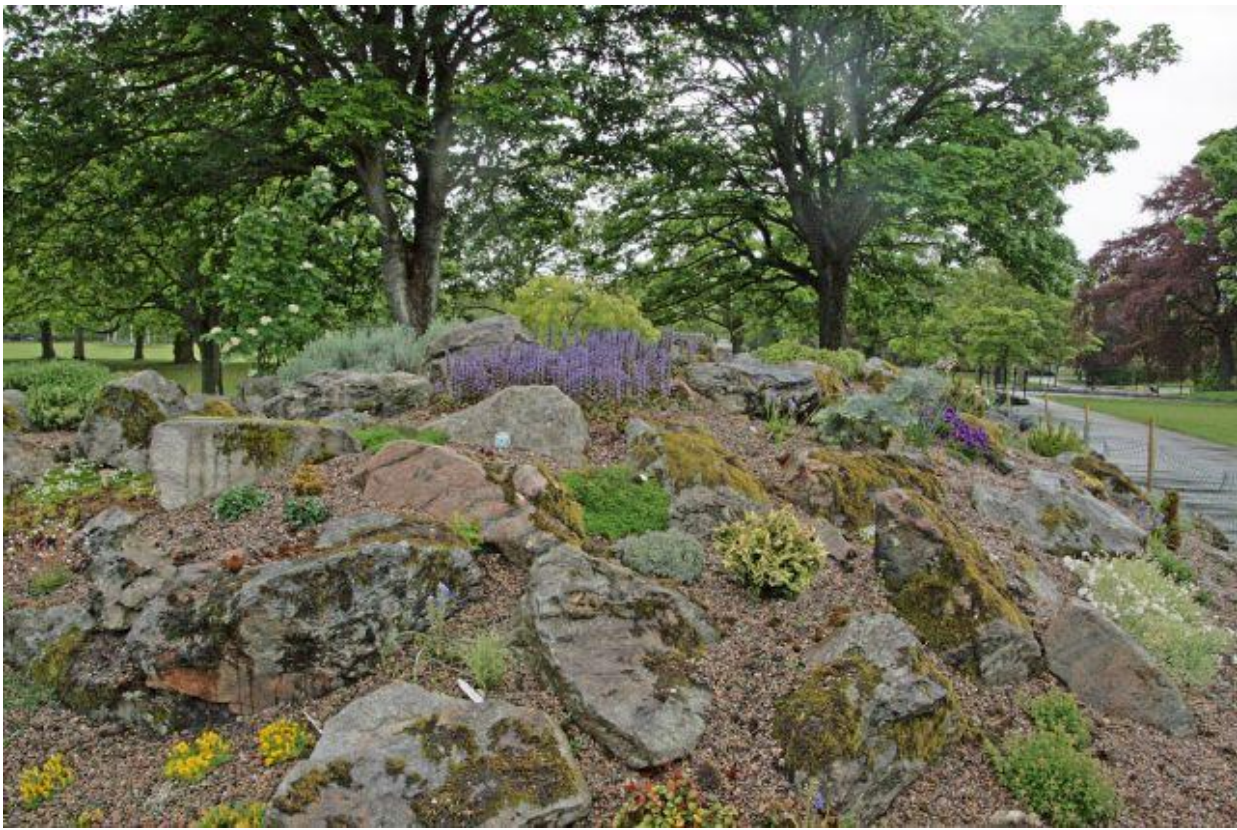
In section 2 local growers exhibited a number of good plants. Dave Aitken was delighted to win the Aberdeen Quaich for the best individual plant with an *Arisaema triphyllum* although it was in a two pan class which came second in Class 63 so another good local grower, Angela Townsley, won the class and with it the Brian Bull Trophy with a nice *Trillium* and a *Cypripedium* 'Kentucky Maxi'. Angela also showed an interesting primula with no label which everyone decided must be one of the forms of *P. forrestii*. She also had an interesting pelargonium *P. triste* in the catch-all class in section 2. Sometimes called the night-scented pelargonium this is a moth pollinated plant from the South African Cape which dies back to a tuber in the dry season there.



Erica Beaton won the junior section while two mini gardens competed in section V – from Erica and her sister Rosie.



Several of us ventured outside despite the rain to see the rock garden which has been created with help from the local group and is developing nicely. Unfortunately some rather unsightly wire netting has had to be put along the paths.



Rock garden in Duthie Park



Part of Section 2



Judging



John Owen of Askival Nursery

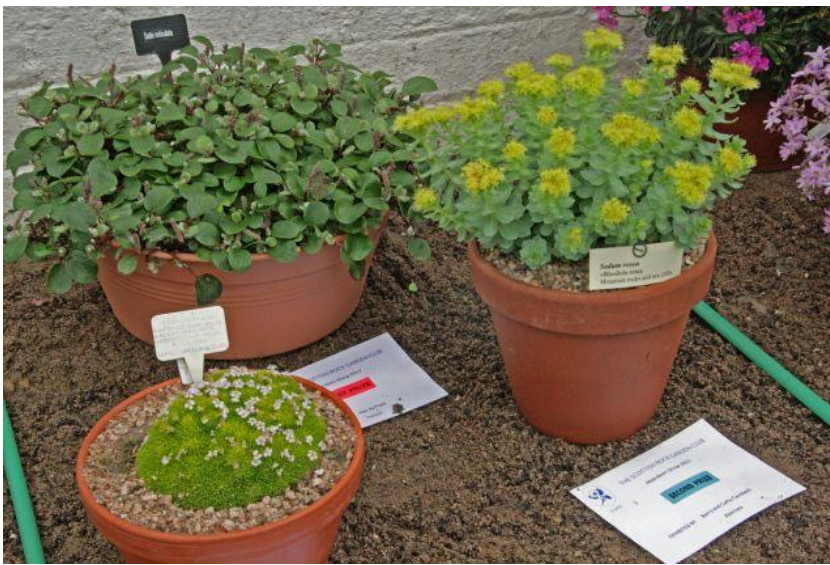




Ardfean Nursery, left and Kevock Garden, right above, Solstice Nursery, below



Convenor Mike Hopkins presided over the trophy presentation in yet another area of the winter garden; people even get married here! No-one did at the show though a vintage car arrived as exhibitors removed their plants to uplift a wedding party who were being photographed in the gardens.



Plants native to Scotland in the Show - elsewhere in the Winter Gardens the plants are more 'exotic'!

The cactus house and a lush, humid area....



Remember – you can see more reports from the shows [HERE in the SRGC forum](#) as well as in the main site.