

# The Scottish Rock Garden Club

## Discussion Weekend – Pitlochry

### 13 & 14 10 18



No matter how you get to pitlochry , whether by rail or by road, from north or south, even from east or west, you pass through magnificent scenery, this autumn the colours on the trees were spectacular. Even the dark brown crumbling fronds of the bracken added to the tableau. In recent years I have been more aware of field maples planted along our roadsides. Their rich reds and oranges mix well with beech, oak and rowan. The Horse chestnuts kind of missed out as their leaves started to shrivel and dry out before they had a chance to show their true autumn colours due, I suspect, to the dry summer. On TV and radio [I usually say wireless!] news and weather bulletins by mid summer the usual doom merchants were predicting droughts and water shortages. There was certainly no shortage of water in Scotland recently. Beside the A9 the Rivers Tay and Tummel were as full as I have seen them. Road travel whether on Friday, Saturday or Sunday was tricky because of the torrential rain and spray from other vehicles. Caution was needed to ensure that everyone arrived and returned home safely. Because of the weather, members at the Discussion Weekend were denied views of the spectacular Perthshire hills and mountains around Pitlochry.

Our venue was the fairy tale castle like Atholl Palace Hotel, which sits in its own grounds high on a hillside looking down the Tummel valley. Much of the hotel retains its Victorian splendour with chandeliers and high moulded ceilings. The show plants looked a bit out of place in this regal setting which contrasted with the usual church and town halls. The lectures and main meals were held in the modern extension which sits lower than the main building so as not to detract from it when viewed from a distance. Out thanks go to organiser and multi-factotum Julia Corden for securing the venue despite the heavy demand for rooms in Pitlochry from visitors to The Enchanted Forest.







The show was held in this palatial room, painted in colours sympathetic to Stan da Prato's Forrest medal winning *Larix kaempferi* 'Nana' which he is holding while Past President Liz Mills looks on in admiration. Their happy smiles say everything about the camaraderie at the SRGC events. The picture on the left illustrates the diversity of plants grown and shown by our members. Some are specialists, others generalists, who enjoy the wide variety of plants suitable for growing in northern gardens.



Stans showed his *Larix* in the class for 2 pans with autumn coloured foliage. Sitting in front of it was a plant of Dwarf goat's Beard, *Aruncus aesthusifolius*. It takes on wonderful shades of red in autumn, just before its leaves fall. I admired the *Roscoea purpurea* shown by Roma Fiddes in the 1 pan autumn foliage class. It is an inspired entry. Look and admire how the central yellow and green stripe in the leaves blends into orange and is edged in red. Fabulous! I have always thought of *Roscoea*s as early and mid-summer flowering plants but now I have learned that they have two seasons when they can shine in the garden.





**CONTROVERSIAL AND CONVERSATIONAL PLANT** We had a good selection of plants showing autumn colours and others in fruit. I was delighted to see a nice big plant of *Houttuynia cordata* 'Chameleon'. I have always liked this plant, although some folk regard it as invasive and so it may be in some gardens. In my cold clay it stays under control. It spreads by underground rhizomes. It will grow almost anywhere, even in water, where as in moist soils it may become a nuisance. If it were hard to find or difficult to grow it would be much sought after. What other herbaceous plant has so leaves with so many colours? With its heart shaped leaves it is a polychromatic cyclamen hederifolium. I just wish it had blue flowers instead of white. There again, in many species it is the white flowered form which is much desired. Con-

strained in a pot it poses no problems. Unruly plants can be controlled by digging up at the unwanted edges. In the USA there can be a problem with the unattractive plain leaved form which can be more rampant. 'Chameleon' with much less green in its leaves has less chlorophyll and is less vigorous. *Houttuynia* has been given many nick names:- fish mint, fish wort, rainbow mint and Chinese lizard tail as well as Chameleon plant. There is a u-Tube video on how to eradicate it from a border. In spite of its detractors I like it.







Roma Fiddes's magnificent *Cyclamen mirabile* won the Jim Lever Trophy for Best Cyclamen and a Certificate of Merit. This one of the biggest plants of *C. mirabile* which I have seen. It has perfectly wonderful leaves to compliment its flowers



Stella & David Rankin won the small 3 pan class with three Primulas: - capitata ssp. mooreana, mairei and bullata bracteata. However this was really **The Stan da Prato Show!** He had seven pans of Gentians in the first two classes;- Iona, 2 plants of Troon, Berrybank Sky, The Caley and two plants of Oban. These were all raised by our famous Scottish raiser, Ian MacNaughton whose family run MacPlants at Berrybank Nursery near Pencaitland, south of Edinburgh. Stan grows them well and he had more of these Gentians in the species classes.

**Who do you think won the East Lothian Trophy for three pans of rock plant?**

**Which plants did he enter?**

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Stan da Prato's East Lothian Cup winning Gentians  
Margaret & Henry Taylor won the AGS Ulster Group Quaich with *Senecio leucophyllus*





### *Centaurea bagadensis*

This is an unusual late flowering of a species that normally flowers in late spring to early summer.

In the wild it is known from a single location, in Abkhazeti in the Caucasus. It is also known as *Psephellus bagadensis*. It has been grown in gritty soil, outside, although cover in winter can be beneficial.



This was unexpected! Stella and David showed the sole plant in the new and rare class, but it was a wee stunner. Perfectly balance in flower and leaf colours it grabbed your attention the flowers were of a 'full sized' Centuarea but the plant was much smaller. Even out of flower it should be grown for its intricate leaves. I hope it takes to cultivation and propagates easily. It will be a worthy introduction as a trough plant.







*Lachenalia* [Polyxena] *ensifolia*

*Oxalis polyphylla* var. *heptaphylla* (2 views)

*Massonia pygmaea* ssp. *Pygmaea*

*Oxalis perdicaria* [double form]

*Allium thunbergii* album

There were fewer bulbs this year except for *Colchicum* which were well represented. I liked the regular planting of Darren Sleeps' *Massonia pygmaea*, little shaving brush flowers erupting between twin leaves. His *Lachenalia* was just coming into flower and the pale pink *Oxalis polyphylla* is one of the prettiest in the Genus. David & Liz Livermore from Barley in Lancashire showed the wonderful *Allium thunbergii*. It is an excellent autumn flowering onion. Coming from Barley I trust they enjoyed their miniatures of Edradour Whisky in their goody bags.







COLCHICUMS from John Amand and Nesta Jolliffe of Jacques Amand International

- byzantinum            Violet Queen
- autumnale fl. plena    Water Lily
- byzantinum album [Innocence]
- cilicium purpureum
- Spartacus







A general view of the Cyclamen hederifolium Class above and below Lionel Clarkson's Cyclamen colchicum and Roma Fiddes' Cyclamen cyprum







A big thank you to Conference organiser Julia Corden [pictured above with Gerben Tjeerdsma], Show Secretary Matt Topsfield and the local group members who helped to ensure the smooth running of this excellent Discussion Weekend in Pitlochry !