

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

Dunblane Early Bulb Display

22nd Feb 2020

FLOODS AND FLOWERS

Most rock gardeners like to grow plants which are hardy. It is not always easy to lift plants from the garden, pot them up and take them to a show. It is easier if they are already growing in pots. Not everyone has time or even the inclination to look after potted plants, whether they be more tender plants in an alpine house or hardier ones in a cold frame. This February our SRGC members proved to be every bit as hardy as their plants. Despite amber warnings of flooding and snow, despite several roads being closed by floods and landslides and despite the railway line being closed, over 100 members attended the annual Early Bulb Display and lectures in Dunblane's Victoria Hall. Seven top nurseries tempted then satiated members' desires with their wonderful plants. We are fortunate indeed that we have these specialist nurseries. Ponder for a moment the work, time and processes involved in producing rock plants in 3 inch pots. It is amazing that we can then buy them at a very reasonable price. Next time you peruse the



The Allan Water at Dunblane

labels on the nursery stand, take a minute to remember how much a small pack of Pansies would cost in a supermarket or garden centre. You used to get a dozen plants in a box, then it was half a dozen, now you usually get four plants. How many for £5? In every case these are treated as disposable after they have flowered. Your cherished rock plant will live for a long time and grow into a fine specimen. A single bulb will usually multiply in to a pot-full in a few years. The moral here is ***"support your local nursery"***

Despite the weather several members brought many fine plants for the display. I must admit that I, for the first time at our Early Bulb Day was not an exhibitor. Age brings its own problems! One advantage of having fewer plants in the show is that those which are on the



Captain Bulb Log, Ian Young



bench can be spaced out. This is especially good when it comes to snowdrops. We could appreciate the differences between the varieties more easily. Colour was provided by the bright flowers of bulbs such as Narcissus, Crocus, Cyclamen, Iris as well as Saxifrage and Hepatica. Thank you to everyone who brought plants. You make the day: you are our heroes.

David Millward gave two splendid lectures [or as he said a lecture in two parts] on bulbs of Turkey. The first part covered autumn flowering bulbs and Cyclamen and the second the spring flowerers. In this way he covered the whole flowering season from Autumn, through winter to spring. David chose excellent pictures from his several trips to Turkey to show us the diversity of its flowers. As you might expect for geologist he took great care to explain how geology, topography and altitude determined the distribution of species. Turkey has over 9000 species, about one quarter are endemic. Geographically, Turkey sits between Europe, Russia, Africa and Asia, thus it contains aspects of the floras of all of these. I was especially impressed by his selections of Colchicum and Crocus species. Who knows how many different Turkish species are in these genera? I always enjoy his explanation of how geology in particular affects the plant varieties. Where most of us see wonderful landscapes and views, David recognises rock types, signs of glaciation and erosion. His eye for detail was revealed as he pointed out salient features of each species. Many pictures showed us both the plants and the terrain in which they grew.

While David fed our minds Anne and Marion & Hamish led the sustenance team in the kitchen. Starting with bacon rolls, followed by sandwiches, members proceeded to enjoy scones and cakes. A big thank you to all the members who contributed and helped during the day. Fred looked after the plant sale and Anne, Liz and Maureen ensured that the hall could be paid for by selling lots of raffle tickets. Coming full circle, thanks to the nurseries who contributed plants to the raffle. They were greatly appreciated by the prize winners! Our nurseries were Jacques Amand, Hartside, MacPlants, Rumbling Bridge, Ardfean, Kevock and Johnathon's snowdrops.





Ipheon uniflorum 'Tessa' is a shorter stemmed plant than Ipheon uniflorum 'Charlotte Bishop'. I like the dramatic stripes on each petal. Like most Ipheon uniflorum selections, this should be a good garden plant, although sometimes it would appreciate a bit of shelter. I find Ipheons flower most profusely under frost free conditions but tend to flop about on weak stems. I have been told the secret of keeping them compact is to grow them in an alpine house but to take the pot outside every day, as soon as growth starts, returning the pot to the shelter at night.



Just like a spring garden, no spring show would be complete without Cyclamen coum. It stands up to the worst of the weather Scotland can throw at it. It probably won't like floods though!

It makes a great plant for growing in a polystyrene trough. Grow it in a woodland soil, full sun in winter and a bit of shade on hot summer days, [remember them?] Several colour forms are available and there is always seed in the SRGC seed exchange. I even have some plants which I bought in full flower, from a nursery. They don't mind frost and snow but can get a bit battered by rain and hail. In the murky dim days of January a these wonderful jewels lift the spirits. 'Cheers to a cheery wee plant'



Crocus cvijicii from Northern Greece, Serbia, Albania and Macedonia is a plant from the alpine meadows. Appropriately and according to the Pacific Bulb Society and as the talks at the show were being given by our geologist plant hunter, David, this *Crocus* is named in honour of Joran Cvijic, a leading authority in the 1920's on the geology of Macedonia. *C. cvijicii* can be found in several shades of yellow. This is an especially bright clean yellow form.

Glassford Sprunt was one of the first to grow it successfully in Scotland. He used to show an interesting hybrid as well.



In complete contrast, *Crocus etruscus* from woodlands Tuscany in north-western Italy, is an easier plant to grow and to increase than *C. cvijicii*. Some clones will thrive in the open garden but will no doubt be battered by wind, rain and pheasants. The last of these pose a challenge on the edge of Dunblane! This is a nice pale form. The selection Zwanenburg, chosen by Thomas Hoog and named after his nursery, is much darker and more frequently offered for sale commercially.

Thlaspi densiflorum, also from Turkey, flowers when other alpines want to keep sleeping!





Narcissus jacetanus on the left with N. asturiensis inset and the accompanying notes. Both pictures are at the same scale. Narcissus eugeniae, below, is a bigger plant. Once named N. confusus, it is sometimes listed as N. hispanicus subsp. eugeniae. It grows in north west Spain, inland from Barcelona and south of the Pyrenees.

COMPARE

Narcissus jacetanus grows on limestone in the Aisa Valley, N.W. of Tala in the Spanish Pyrenees.

WITH

Narcissus asturiensis grows mainly on acidic soil but occasionally on limestone. Widespread in the Picos de Europa.

These high mountain bulbs are frequently dug by ZARD, some eaten some left drying. The best N. jacetanus, the one here, was a dry dug by animals in 2002.

Bottom right is Narcissus minicycla bulked up from a self sown seedling. The name is applied to the hybrid between N. asturiensis and N. cyclamineus. This one's a spectacular potful. Well done for recognising and growing on the seedling!

Although there were fewer Narcissi this year, these four make a nice 'family' grouping





Every now and then a really new exciting plant sits modestly on the bench, waiting to be discovered and adored. One such was this fine new *Galanthus* hybrid. It is a cross between *G. plicatus* 'Wendy's Gold' and *G. nivalis* from a seed sowing in 2008. It is much stronger plant than Wendy's Gold and is yellower in its parts than the picture shows. If it ever came on the market I suspect bulbs would command quite a premium!





Close ups of some of Ian Christie's spectacular snowdrops





Iris 'George'



Iris 'Shiela Anne Germanay'



Iris reticulata ex Adinan

Despite all the wet weather we've had quite a mild winter with very few frosty nights and scarcely any when the ground froze for any length of time. Snowdrops and the Iris reticulatas flowered much earlier and many were past by showtime.

The two old favourites above were impressive but the single bulb of I. reticulata ex Adinan was especially attractive. It looks quite delicate and I don't suppose it would last long in the garden but I was intrigued enough by its name to find out Where Adinan is, so I consulted Wikipedia.

Adinan is a village in Saheb Rural District, Ziviyeh District, Saqqez County, Kurdistan Province, Iran. At the 2006 census, its population was 212, in 42 families. *Note that it does not grow in the country Kurdistan but in Kurdistan province in Iran.* The main industry there seems to be petroleum refining, so perhaps the standards are petrol blue in colour?

As you can see it is not a woodland plant!





Another early riser was Ian & Carole's *Ranunculus calandrinoides*. This magnificent white buttercup comes from the Atlas mountains. In previous years they have shown it at the Stirling show in March.



In spring time the name Ian Christie is synonymous with snowdrops. However he has another passion, this time for Hepaticas. These wee flowers provoke a collecting passion in their admirers. No matter how many one has in a collection the range of flowers in the genus is so diverse that it would be impossible to own them all. Even hardened gardeners are captivated. I am sorry that I did not capture close ups of the individual varieties. There was a constant crowd of admirers round the hepaticas that I could not get close enough for long enough.



Brighter than bright on the table for Saxifrages, Sue Simpson staged a quartet of her collection. Pink was the order of the day.

From deepest to palest and top to bottom they are

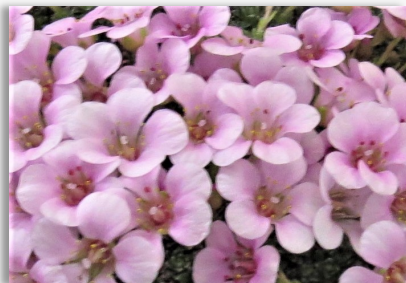
Saxifraga 'Coolock Kate'

Saxifraga 'Your Smile'

Saxifraga 'Cranbourne'

Saxifraga 'River Thame'

Again these were in flower about one month earlier than I would expect





Daphne bholua
 "Jacqueline Postill"
 (RUMBLING BRIDGE NURSERY)

Something old /
 something new from
 Rumbling Bridge
 Nursery.

The wonderful winter
 flowering, *Daphne*
bholua 'Jacqueline
 Postill' and the brand
 new white *Primula*
 'Almond Milk'



• PRIMULA VULGARIS "ALMOND MILK" •
 (*P. vulgaris* "ghia" x *P. vulgaris*)

Few pure white Primrose cultivars exist nowadays. The cultivar, "ghia", being sterile, is made available through divisions only, whereas *P. v.* "Almond Milk", being both fertile & vigorous, offers the grower the chance to increase, by the means of self-sown seedlings in moist, shady areas.

The plant exhibited was lifted from open ground, one week ago.

Rumbling Bridge Nursery wish to thank Lynn & Michael Almond, for offering the chance to trial this attractive, new *Primula*.

