

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

Edinburgh Show

13 4 19



The sun shone down from a deep blue sky on this bright spring April day. The exhibitors arrived early and occupied most of the car parking spaces beside the hall. Knowledgeable members of the public, who had been to previous Edinburgh shows, also arrived early to sweep into the sales areas to snap up some new plants for their gardens. While judging was going on the exhibitors either gossiped in the tea room or went for a walk on the other side of the city in the Royal Botanic Gardens. By mid-day the streets round the hall were jam packed with cars. One lady suggested to me that in future years local residents might be prepared to rent out their driveways for the day. I don't know why she picked me for her idea because this is the one show where I have no difficulty in parking. My sister lives close by and I leave my car at her house. A case of 'I'm all right Jack!'. A walk round the area proves that the locals enjoy their gardens. Most are well kept and contain some interesting plants. As soon as the show opened people flocked to see the show plants.



SHRUBS form the back bone of our gardens but can be a wee bit overlooked as exhibition plants. Most floriferous are the dwarf Rhododendrons which demand your attention. How big is dwarf? Considering Rhododendrons grow to 50 feet or more then and what you can lift in a pot is probably dwarf. Growing Rhodies in pots is not straight forward as they soon use up the nutrients in their container. They dry out quickly in hot weather, losing water through transpiration. They are not easy to water as the plants usually overlap their pot. In winter you can't let the roots freeze. With these thoughts in mind I always look on the rhododendrons as class acts in the show.

At Edinburgh several other shrubs caught my eye. *Berberis thunbergii* nana 'Tiny Gold' is exactly what it says. Watch your fingers when removing any damaged leaves! *Gaultheria procumbens* seems to be in fruit all year round and Stan keeps his *Andromeda* 'Blue Ice' in marvellous condition. It won him a Forrest Medal a few years back and still looks perfect. The Australian *Correa pulchella* 'Pink Mist' is a selected form from the southern Yorke Peninsula, near Adelaide in South Australia. *Tasmania lanceolata* 'Mount Wellington', colloquially known as Mountain Pepper comes from Tasmania, New South Wales and Victoria at 300—1400 metre altitude. It can be snow covered in winter. Dried leaves and berries are sold as pepper substitute and extracts are used in Wasabi paste in Japan.





Lithodora oleifolia, Omphalodes 'Bright Eyes', Daphne x whiteorum 'Beauworth', Anisotome imbricata, Hacquetia epipactis 'Thor'. All good plants which illustrate the width of species and varieties in our shows. Thor has particular interest for me as the late Alf Evans once told me it was one of his favourite plants! Who would have guessed that?

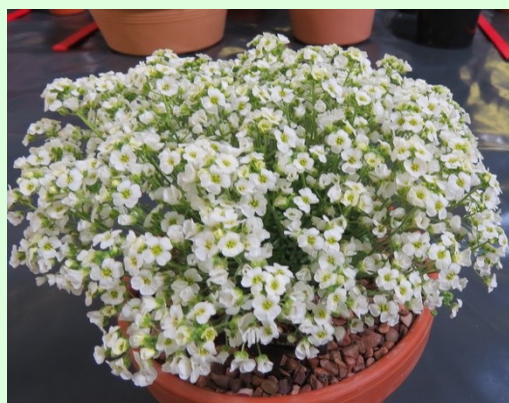


Senecio gilliesii, Senecio leucophyllus are a distant relatives of ragwort! Along with Helichrysum heldreichii and Helichrysum tianschanicum 'Icicles' they are members of the Asteraceae. With their silver grey leaves they are the aristocrats of daisies.



I am sorry that the Cruciferae family has disappeared. Now re-named Brassicaceae, it sounds far too domestic and vegetably. Children are told to eat up their Brassicas because green vegetables are good for them. They contain iron which will make them strong. These four members of the Brassica family wouldn't provide much nourishment but they are very pretty.

Iberis taurica is a posh Candytuft. Draba dedeana from the mountains of northern and eastern Spain is a plant which won a Forrest at Edinburgh many years ago for our past president the late Eric Watson. Draba 'John Saxton' is a good form which perpetuates his name.





You never know when you will come across a new name, especially for a species of which you were certain. When I looked up *Jeffersonia dubia* to check that it was native to China [and Eastern Siberia and Korea] I found it had acquired the name *Plagiorhegma dubium*; not only a name change but of sex as well. Apparently the name was first given to the species in 1859 by the St Petersburg botanist Carl Johann Maximowicz, a fine looking fellow, pictured below



Since the north American species *Jeffersonia diphylla* is still listed as 'proper' species name I conclude that the two are now to be regarded as being in separate genera.



Antipodean gems. I have not yet been to either New Zealand or Australia but hope springs eternal, though my knees and legs are very much earthbound. I would love to see these beauties in their natural homes.



Raoulia x petrimia



Helichrysum (selago var.) tumidum



Raoulia lutescens



Raoulia australis

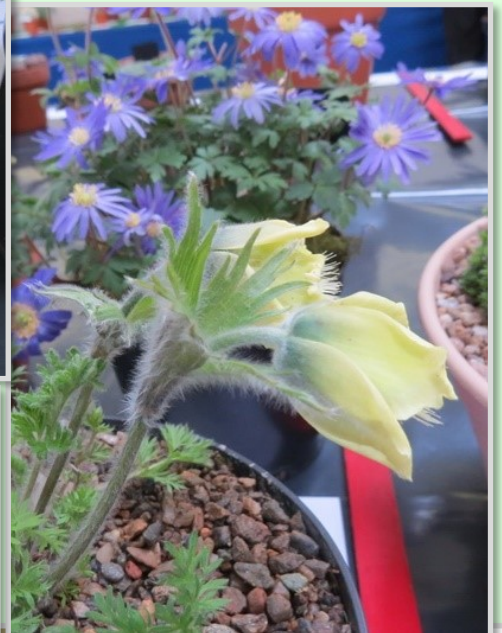


Ozothamnus coralloides



Hebe ramosissima

As I wrote earlier, I still hang on to 'old names'. When I first grew *Ozothamnus coralloides* it was a *Helichrysum*. The *Helichrysum tumidum* was *H. selago*. That is why I was confused by the label saying *H. tumidum*. The *Raoulia x petrimia* looks very like *Raoulia x loganii*, which often graced the show benches. *Hebe ramosissima* grows well for me in a trough. It is not so neat as this show plant as it scrambles about in a sagger from Stoke on Trent. **N.B.** A sagger is not an old person!



ALL CUT UP! Helleborus 'Siver Dollar' has marvellous cut leaves. This wonderful plant of *Pulsatilla vulgaris* ssp. *grandis* 'Papageno' brought an exotic feel to the bench. I like the dissected petals but others prefer their *Pulsatillas* with their petals intact. The leaves of *P. vernalis* and yellow *P. albanus* are also feathery. Only *Ranunculus callandrinoides* at the bottom left has leaves with intact edges. The Forrest winning *Clematis* at the bottom right has flowers like gypsy skirts.



The exotic Pleione Class. They are all purple pink but for a dentist like me it is important to look in their mouths and examine the throat colour



Tulipa turkestanica



Coydalis wilsonii



Fritillaria crassifolia
Turkey and Iran



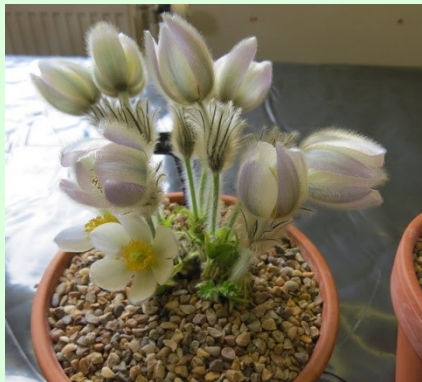
Fritillaria tuntasia
From 5/2000 - 5/2007

Sam Sutherland's pan of Fritillaria tuntasia was the Best Pan of Bulbs in the show



Just its name, Narcissus cazorlanus make you want to speak Spanish





9 fabulous plants The Henry Archibald Rose Bowl for Class 3, Three pans of different genera, was won by Stan da Prato. Sue Simpson's Best in Show Clematis tenuiloba columbiana 'Ylva' won the Forrest Medal.



Carole & Ian Bainbridge won the Elsie Harvey Memorial Trophy for 3 pans, New or Rare in Cultivation with this fine trio.

A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT Congratulations to Alex



Nototriche macleanii
 From Southern Peru, this high alpine, growing on scree mountainsides at 4300-4600m grows into a woolly, loose cushion which can display large, sessile violet-blue flowers in early summer. This plant has been grown in a very free-draining mix of equal parts: JI 2, pumice, perlite, grit, lava and lava sand.



About twenty five years ago there was a surge in the number of Petiolarid Primulas on our show benches. This reflected the increasing numbers of growers specialising in this group. They require cool, moist growing conditions, protected from the hot mid-day sun. Most grew them in 'peaty' compost [which was seen as OK back then]. I think that in part the number of species grown reflected the number of nurseries which offered them. It was not unusual to see Primulas gracilipes, boothii, boothii alba and irregularis compete for Best Asiatic Primula. Primulas whitei, bhutanica, sonchifolia and the hybrid 'Soup-plate' were almost regarded as 'common'. Primula aureata and aureata fimbriata were and still are the stars, although the clone 'Netta Dennis' seems to be the aureata which is most widely grown and shown today. They still appear with some regularity. Primula whitei 'Arduaine' regularly wins trophies. To get an idea of what the Perth and Edinburgh show benches once held look at the colour paintings by Brigid Edwards on Plates 8 and 9 in John Richard's book 'Primula'. [shown on the next page]

At the height of their popularity Gerry Munday, a grower who lived in the new Forest developed a series of hybrid petiolarids, each with the suffix, 'Tinney's'. For a few years even I grew some of them having ordered them direct from Mr Munday.

Then there was a decline in the number which I found I could grow and more widely in the number of different petiolarids on our show benches declined. My problem was that the summers seemed to get warmer and drier resulting in a less humid atmosphere in my north facing frame. I blamed vine weevils, for they did arrive. Back then even vine weevils were a bit exotic. I remember that one eminent member brought a matchbox containing some grubs and adults into a group meeting so that those of us who did not know what a vine weevil was, could recognise them in the future. I suspect that the beasties were being spread in plants from commercial sources.

Perhaps too, I should have renewed the compost in the frame more regularly or perhaps it was exhausted of nourishment. One consolation is that I did get an Award from the RHS Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee at the Harrogate show for my Pan of Primula gracilipes minor, a wee bright pink smasher which I no longer grow. Whatever the local reasons for their demise, I think that the lack of replacement stock commercially available meant that amateurs could no longer replenish their stock of Petiolarids. The real experts continue to grow them successfully. I would like to know how much their local climate contributes to their success.

All this preamble is to explain how delighted I was at Edinburgh to see a plant of Primula 'Tinney's Moonlight' at Edinburgh. It has a big yellow centre with white petals edged in pink, combining the shades of its parents. Thank you Watt for bringing it to the show. Beside it in the Class was another old favourite, Primula rosea. The class was won by Primula x 'Peter Kleir', a cross between rosea and clarkei, made in America. It is fertile and back crosses with P. rosea.

Despite the work and visual demonstrations at our shows in recent years by David Rankin, I still find it difficult to recognise the various subspecies and varieties of *Primula bullata*, my brain conflates them all into *Primula forrestii*, which is no longer even a species in its own right.

The top plant in the picture on the left shows *Primula bullata forrestii*, farinose form, the lower plant is *Primula bullata* var. *bracreata*.

On the far right is the fabulous red flowered form of *Primula maximowiczii*, named for the same botanist from St Petersburg who named *Plagiorhegma dubium*. Small world! *P. maximowiczii* can have flowers of a darker red or brown.

Below is *Primula aureata* alongside the illustrations from John Richard's book 'Primula'



On the left is Watt Russell's *Primula* 'Aire Mist' which was awarded the K. C. Corsar Challenge Trophy for best European or American *Primula*.

Below is Tom Green's spectacular False Oxlip, *Primula veris* x *vulgaris*. You have to admire the rich colour of its flowers. So much stronger than its parents.

Below left is Jim Watson's *P.* 'Herb Dickson', a nice marginata type.



Sometimes you have to smile when you come across two quite disparate plants in the same class. So it was at Edinburgh in the Class for South American plants.

Sitting side by side was the climber *Tropeolum tricolor* and the diminutive *Primula magellanica*, which I have only seen before in its white flowered form. It hails from Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland islands as well as Patagonia. It is the only *Primula* found in South America. Its nearest cousins grow 10,000 miles further north in the USA. It is thought that at one time the distributions were connected along the mountain chain of the Rockies and Andes, which at once were higher and colder. Post glacial warming interrupted the chain.



Tropeolum tricolor grows in the cloud forest of the coastal mountains of Northern Chile at 300 to 900 metres. Further south it grows at lower elevation on north facing slopes in full sun. Since its tubers are well buried it is hardier than might be expected. It is fine plant for pot culture. Its colloquial name is 'Three-Coloured Indian Cress'.



Chris Kelnar won the prize for best Plant in Section II shown by a new exhibitor with his fine pan of *Pleiones*.



Edinburgh 2019

