

The Scottish Rock Garden Club Alpine Garden Society Forrest Medal - Hexham 2016 Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem' Shown by Mark Childerhouse



Even before I knew the results of the judging, I could tell that I was admiring a spectacular plant in the 1 pan Saxifraga class. I was so impressed by it that the first picture I took was to show how much bigger it was than all the other Saxifragas in the show. [bottom left]. Since the AGS have a maximum pot size of 35 cm outside diameter, we will not see a bigger dome of Coolock Gem, unless we visit Mark and find he has repotted it into a trough.

S. 'Coolock Gem' is a hybrid plant. It is a sister seedling of 'Coolock Kate' [pink], both seedlings of S. 'Myriad', which is S. georgei x S. poluninana. You can see its S. georgei ancestry in the shape of its flowers. They are slightly flattened circles with turned over edges and its green centred flowers.

Mark told me his plant is 17 years old. A few years ago he had trouble with red spider on the plant but with expert care he has nursed it back to health. That a plant from the high Himalaya in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan as well as Sichuan and Yunnan can give rise to a hybrid which grows so spectacularly well in Brigg in Lincolnshire, an area as different from mountains that it is possible to get, shows how lucky we are to garden in the UK. Another well known exhibitor told me that in a recent winter he had lost 3 big plants of Coolock Gem. Since Mark is secretary of the Saxifrage Society it is very appropriate that his Sax was Best in Show.

Well done Mark!

