

# The Scottish Rock Garden Club

## Glasgow Show 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2015



### A BLUE DAY IN MILNGAVIE

Last week past SRGC President, Peter Semple drove about 150 miles, from his Stirlingshire country home to the Nairn Show, with his fabulous **Gentiana acaulis**. The judges awarded it a Certificate of Merit, one place below the top position of Best in Show. At Nairn the plant was well flowered but the blooms were not fully open. Peter worried about the weather during the following week. Might it be too hot! However, a cool week and a bit of careful attention meant that when he drove the much shorter journey to Mingavie town hall for the Glasgow show, his Gentian was in full flower. Each perfect blue trumpet seemed to be blowing its own praise. Well done Peter for raising such a perfect specimen.

The picture above shows the plant in Glasgow and that below one week earlier in Nairn. One important thing to notice is the foliage, in both pictures it is perfect. Both pictures make me want to go to the Alps!

Below is Tom Green's **Gentiana verna**, the diminutive cousin of *G. acaulis*. In cultivation *verna* seems to be a shorter lived plant and should be raised regularly from seed. Occasionally we see

white flowered specimens of both plants on the benches and probably if you are very lucky you will see them in the wild. In the Dolomites, *G. verna* occurs in various shades of blue. Several years ago, Don Stead exhibited at the Glasgow show, when it was held in Knightswood Hall, a pan of *G. acaulis* which he had named 'rainbow' because it had flowers of three or four different colours, including white; a kind of Gentian version of a family apple tree. This fooled the casual observer but a closer look showed that the old trickster had not separated the different colour forms in the pot of seedlings!





The other plant which grabbed my attention was at the other side of the hall. It was Cyril Lafong's huge pan of **Cypripedium 'Ursel'**. What a fabulous plant! It gets better each year. Sitting beside it in the orchid class was Watt Russell's fine **Calanthe tricarinata**. How can such a great plant come second? Bad luck to have to face the Cypripedium.

On the other side of the Cyp, was an impressive plant of **Tropaeolum tricolor**, native to Chile, which I think also belonged to Watt. My plant came from an SRGC discussion weekend when Ron Macbeath brought in bags of brown tubers for the Bulb Exchange. Several of us bought them, planted them and waited to see what came up. In early spring or even late winter, thin tendrils



rise from the pot and snake around, feeling for something to climb. Since most folk grow it in an alpine house it needs to be given something to climb up—the alpine equivalent of pea sticks. I well remember being sent off, as a child, to the woods to find suitable branches to support our home grown peas. With the **Tropaeolum** you soon have a mass of scrambling, intertwined brittle stems which need to be coaxed to stay together to form a decent plant. It is a good alpine house plant.

Another blue flowered plant shown in the "2 plants, not eligible for any other specific class", with the **Tropaeolum** was **Anchusa caespitosa**. This wee desirable hails from the White Mountains of Crete. It is a cousin of our forget me not but its hairy foliage reminds me of the American **Cryptantha virgata**, Miner's Candle. While the **Anchusa** has blue flowers the **Cryptantha** has white flowers.



Brian and Shelagh Smethurst showed **Veronica oltensis**, a Turkish plant which to me looked like **V. bombycina** with greener leaves. Masses of tiny white-eyed blue flowers sparkled on the loose cushion. The plant was admired by the joint Rock Committee who noted that it had received a Preliminary Commendation in 2009.

Quite a variety of plants in a couple of yards of show bench!





One of the most spectacularly beautiful plants in the show was this well-flowered **Paeonia obovata alba**, with its globes of pure white flowers encircling the boss of yellow stamens and red anthers it brought a touch of the Orient to Milngavie. Almost perfect? However, its beauty was enhanced by the red flush over the dark green leaves held on its red stems. Just the plant to celebrate the birth that morning of Princess Charlotte. Much better than a rose. Everyone famous and every occasion seems to get its special rose and apart from the wonderful 'Queen Elizabeth', who ever sees or hears of them again?



**Armeria maritima** on the right is well known from the cliffs and rocks of the seashore. It is not often seen as a show plant., perhaps because once lifted it can be difficult to re-establish in the rock garden. A smaller plant 'Bevan's variety' used to be offered more than it is nowadays. It is an excellent plant for a trough or low raised bed. I well remember a patch of coast on Loch Hourn, south of Kyle of Lochalsh where the Thrift grew and flowered in many shades from deepest red to palest pink. On the coast of Orkney, where the winds can be unbelievably fierce its flower stems are barely an inch high. It grows in turf beside *Primula scotica*.



We saw a fine plant of **Calceolaria** last week in Nairn and here in Glasgow, John di Paolo produced an equally good panful. It can't be as rare as I thought it had become! The wee **Dianthus microlepis x strictus** formed a fine eye catching magenta dome. The similarly coloured flowers of the **Claytonia nivalis** nearby reminded me of a drive up Pike's Peak in Colorado where Claytonia megarhiza grows but is a much paler wishy-washy shade.





**Clematis x cartmanii 'Pixie'** is fine example of the hybrid x cartmanii, first noticed by Margaret and Henry Taylor in a batch of Clematis marmoraria seedlings, and named for the New Zealand plantsman Joe Cartman who sent them seed many years ago. It is a hybrid between C. marmoraria and C. paniculata. The original is offered by many commercial nurseries and several other similar crosses have been named. They flower for a long time and should be in every garden. Gwen Black grew it on her hen house when she lived in Cumbria. I saw it on TV!



The Joan Stead prize for Best Primula was won by Sam Sutherland's **Primula rusbyi ssp ellisiae**, a slightly different form from that shown last week at Nairn by Olive Bryers. Ian Christie's **Primula maximowiczii** must have run it a close second. I liked the red **P. veris** below left.

**Primula 'Rufus'** is an old favourite



## *Primula bullata* var. *forrestii*

*Primula forrestii* was discovered by George Forrest early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is now known to be very closely related to *Primula bullata* and *Primula bracteata*, so all three are now varieties of *P. bullata*.

Cultivated plants now show considerable variation even within this variety.

Form 1 is typical of what has been widely grown, with a multiply branched structure, farina under the winter leaves and little elsewhere.

Form 2 has only recently been recognised, and has farina on the upper surface of the winter leaves and a lot on the under surface.

Form 3 branches rather little, and has farina on the calyx, particularly at the base of the calyx, and on the outside of the corolla, so that the opening flowers appear to be white. This form falls within the range of what was known at one point as *Primula rufa*.

David Rankin brought three plants of that well known plant, **Primula forrestii**, to show how it varies and why the species name has been relegated to sub-species.



The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh is renowned for the cultivation skills of its staff. An exquisite example

of this was the rare **Primula sherriffii** shown at Glasgow. It was first found in Bhutan by Ludlow and Sherriff and named for Mrs



Betty Sherriff. It is rarely seen in cultivation but is instantly recognisable by its unusually long floral tubes and large pale violet flowers. This plant received a Certificate of Merit from the Show judges and a Certificate of Cultural Commendation from the Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee.



**Hostas** are not often seen on our show benches but they are indeed fabulous foliage plants in spring and have wonderful lily flowers in summer. They are great plants in themselves and most are easy to cultivate. Not only that they can be grown in flower beds in which bulbs are cultivated and which you don't want to dig. Slugs can be a problem but I found that if you grow the Hostas in black plastic pots and place them where needed, the slugs tend to ignore them. If grown in a trough it is important that plants do not overhang the trough otherwise slugs will climb up the plants and abseil into the trough! When you are at Gardening Scotland this June why not buy a few dwarf Hostas and plant up a fish box trough. Instructions for making the trough are on [the SRGC web site](#).



**Helichrysum heldreichii and Aciphylla subflabellata**

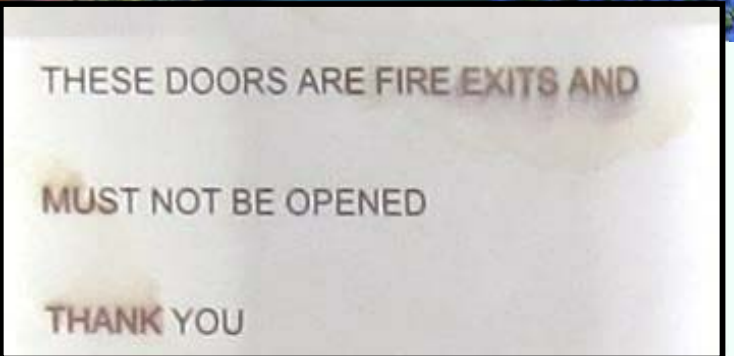
The tiny fern, **Asplenium trichomanes** won the Ian Donald Cup for the Best Scottish Native. It was shown by Shelagh and Brian Smethurst, seen on the left. Brian is partly hidden by the Arisaema leaves,

Below two favourite plants of mine **Sedum roseum** grew in my granddad's garden in Auchtermuchty and in both gardens which I have had. **Salix lanata** grows on Ben Lawers and in my garden.





Past President 'Ian the First' snaps top exhibitor Cyril expressing his admiration for Past President Peter's huge Gentian, while nurseryman and Past President 'Ian the Third' ponders how many cuttings he could get from the leviathan! Past President 'Ian the Second' was grabbing a breath of spring air, wondering why someone had contravened the 'door opening' regulations. Below: Current President 'Carole the First' seems to be in earnest conversation with P.P. Ian III and Past President 'Glassford the First of Anywhere' continued to take photos and notes.





**Uncommon Asiatic  
Primulas [L to R]  
*P. calderiana*  
*P. zambalensis*  
*P. pulchella***





**TREASURES top to bottom & L to R**  
*Ranunculus parnassifolius*  
*Cassiope mertensiana californica*  
*Cassiope lycopodiodes 'Jim Lever'*

*Anemonella thalictroides*  
*'Oscar Shoaf'*  
*A.th. 'Betty Blake'*  
**[Inset] *A.th. 'Green Hurricane'***







Stan da Prato's winning large 6 pan entry and the Dr William Buchanan Memorial Rose Bowl

NB Both KAndromedas are still in great condition

John di Paolo won the Edward Darling Trophy for 3 pans dwarf Rhododendron with 'Ginny Gee', 'Tree Creeper' & 'Wren'





**Androsaces**

**A. cylindrica x hirtella    A.hirtella**

**A.himalaica x 2**

**A. studiosorum 'Salmon's var.'**

**A. saramentosa watkinsii**

Androsaces are members of the Primulaceae. They are widespread from the Pyrenees to China and if you are happy to obliterate the genus 'Douglasia', they occur in North America as well. Over 150 species have been recorded, most from the Himalayan area. European species tend to be cushion forming while the Asiatic ones form mats. Two species probably dominate the Androsace Forrest medal table viz, A. vandellii and A. muscoidea.





*Vitaliana primuliflora*

[now an *Androsace*]

*Dodecatheon pulchellum* 'Sooke Variety'

*Corydalis* 'Blue Dragon'

*Leucojum nicaense*

*Allium nevskianum*

*Dicentra cucullaria*



SRGC Exhibitors seem to be able to get **Lewisias** to flower from Early April onwards. I think of Perth as the time for *Lewisia tweedyi* and Aberdeen for *Lewisia cotyledon*. The Ashwood hybrids are end of May plants for me, seen at Gardening Scotland. Jean Wyllie used to show a fabulous plant of *Lewisia brachycalyx* but this species is less often seen these days. The fact that at Glasgow members from further south exhibited plants at the show meant that the season seemed even more advanced and there were all sorts of *Lewisia* there. One can only wonder at plants such as the huge cerise **L. cotyledon** and Sue Simpson's Certificate of Merit winning yellow form of **L. tweedyi**. Lionel Clarkson, who used to show *Lewisias* at the Stirling show brought a fine pink flowered form of **L. nevadensis**. It had bigger flowers than I think of as usual on the more frequently seen white form.





**Saxifraga aretioides** is native to the Pyrenees and Cordillera Cantabrica. Cyril notes it is a slow grower, flowers infrequently and is 'not easy' to grow.

His **Daphne arbuscula var. alba** on the other hand comes from much further east in a restricted area of the Carpathian mountains. Several variants have been named as botanical forms. Var. alba is distinct from D. a. forma albiflora 'Czech Crystal'. The form exhibited, D. a. alba, has less hairy foliage than other forms. Its flowers may age to pink. It was introduced to cultivation by Josef Jurasek around 2008. Being more difficult in cultivation than the normal form *Daphne arbuscula*, Cyril recommends growing it in a cool shaded protected area.

**Haberlea rhodopensis virginalis**, from the Balkans, on the other hand is a beautiful rock plant which most of us could grow. The normally blue flowered species is known as 'Resurrection Plant' because of its ability to survive desiccation. It has been tested scientifically and it may come to be used in anti-aging cream and could increase skin elasticity and enhance skin radiance. Put me down for a tube!

**Saxifraga cebennensis minor** from the Cevennes region of Southern France prefers needs alpine house care. I wonder if Robert Louis Stevenson came across it in his 'Travels with a Donkey'?





JUNELLIA  
CORALOIDES

THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB

75th Jubilee Prize  
(best small pan)

awarded to  
Brian & Shelagh Smethurst  
for  
Junellia coraloides

at the Glasgow SHOW  
date 2nd May 2015

Judges signatures  
The J. M.  
Julia Gibson  
Jesey

JOINT ROCK GARDEN PLANT COMMITTEE

THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY      THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY      THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB

RECOMMENDS A CERTIFICATE OF  
PRELIMINARY COMMENDATION

Name of Plant Junellia coraloides

Particulars of Plant

Country of Origin or Parentage Patagonia

Raiser

Exhibited by Brian & Shelagh Smethurst

Address 117 Newington Drive, Bury, BL8 2EG

Gardener's name

Date 02/05/15      Chairman Alan

Good plants bring pleasure to the grower and spectator alike. Excellent plants are rewarded with honours and awards. These are some of the joys of showing plants.

Thank you to all the exhibitors for the joy they bring to all members of Scotland's top Gardening Club, the SRGC