

The Scottish Rock Garden Club & The Alpine Garden Society Kendal Show 15 3 20 part 3



Hepaticas combine spectacular colours with a seemingly infinite number of combinations of petal and sepal form and tint. Brian & Shelagh Smethurst won their 3 pan class with 'Blue Sandon', 'Ryugetsu', 'HoHo Beni' [top row below]. Hazelwood Froggie, Touryoku' and a blue H. japonica are below.



Doubles or singles, take your choice. You might have to be guided by your wallet!



Most of the 'fancy' Hepaticas on the benches were forms of *H. japonica*. However we had the lax growing *H. transylvanica* and *H. nobilis*; both good garden plants.

The Clarkson Trophy for Best Ranunculaceae won by *Hepatica acutiloba* shown by Bob Worsley, so this is the Best Hepatica in the show!

Both Ends of the Spectrum



Bob Worsley's winning trio to the left, illustrates perfectly the beauty and attraction of Hepaticas. This is why we grow rock garden plants. This is what we share with friends. If the general public had any idea that flowers such as these are available, why would they grow bedding plants? At the top right is show secretary Alan Oatway's young plant which took first in Class156; even younger are the germinating seedlings in Alan's pot!



Hepatica x schlyteri is hybrid between H. nobilis and H. maxima

Below, I quote a passage from the Dutch 'newPlantsandFlowers' web site, " Ashwood hybrids Mixed Shades, have been bred by nursery owner John Massey for their garden worthiness. These hybrids combine together the bold flower colours and form of the European H. nobilis and the vigour and large handsome, evergreen foliage of H. maxima. According to the nursery they have the superb large leaves of H. maxima and either blue or pink flowers from February to March. Ashwood Nurseries recommends in its consumer information that European hepaticas should be planted on a cool, well-drained slope in a light 'fluffy' soil rich in leaf mould. "It is essential that they are exposed to early spring sunshine, but they must receive plenty of shade immediately after flowering and especially during the heat of the summer. They will thrive under deciduous trees and shrubs or in crevices in the rock garden, performing best where there is good humidity. They respond well to a top-dressing of leaf-mould in autumn and an annual feed of fish, blood and bone in late winter. Height: 15-30cm (6-12 inches)." Hepatica x schlyteri Ashwood hybrids Mixed Shades are listed as hardy plants."

On the right the old time favourite, Hepatica "Millstream Merlin is photographed in front of H. x schlyteri to give an idea of their comparative size. Referring to relative sizes of two Dionysias aretioides in Part 1 of the Kendal report, even tho' Millstream Merlin is closer it is still smaller than x schlyteri. H. Millstream Merlin' was raised by the late President of NARGS, Linc Foster and his wife Timmy.





Hepatica 'Tamakujaku'



This fine lilac flowered Hepatica won 1st for John Bunn. Take a wee while just to study the intricate differences in flower, anther and sepal colours, shape and number in the various Hepaticas in this report. There is an infinity of possible combinations. Nurseries like Edrom are distributing wonderful selections each year. You can choose them in flower at Kendal most years.



Hepatica pubescens from John Savage is a new plant to me. Once again I sought Ashwood's advice. Here it is 'H. pubescens is well worth trying in a sheltered position on the rock garden but they are much better grown in an alpine house, where they will flower to perfection. We prefer to grow H. pubescens in clay pots with a free draining compost. The simple elegant flowers are white, pink or a pale reddish violet, but not blue, and can be beautifully bicoloured. They have the least number of sepals, pistils and stamens of all the Japanese hepaticas; the sepals are oval and the pistils are dark red in some populations, flowering from February to March The evergreen foliage can be beautifully marbled, with rounded lobes and is densely covered with very fine hairs in most populations'

Ranunculaceae Where would we be without members of the buttercup family? Our gardens and countryside would be much duller without the star-spangled members of the Ranunculaceae. Many such as wood anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*) behave like bulbs, in that they pop up, flower, hang about photosynthesising for a couple of months and then die down till next spring. Other members of the family wake up in late spring and provide wonderful plants for herbaceous borders. To me Spring is when they dazzle. Their flowers come in all colours of the spectrum. Take the wood anemone as an example. In early March they are underground but by the end of the month their white bowl shaped flowers lighten up the woodland floor. As they age most of



Anemone nemorosa



Anemone nemorosa pink

the white flowers take on a tinge of pink, as do trilliums. Eventually the flowers can end up entirely pink. I have a clump, in the loosest sense of the word, whose flowers open pink. This selection was found years ago in the Sidlaw Hills. Another, from Harold McBride in Lisburn, had a blue blotch on the flower. I fear this treasure may have disappeared under a *Rhododendron* or *Pieris*. There is a nice white double named 'Vestal' and a weird one with all green flowers named 'Viresens'. In the garden varieties like the blue 'robinsoniana' can carpet a whole flower bed. They cause no harm to anything else. If you were to dig in the border all you would find would be lots of twig-like brown thin [?] rhizomes.

In early summer buttercups clothe grassy meadows and if you are not careful lawns as well. The buttercup along with the daisy are the two flowers most easily recognised by children. Who among us seasoned old fogies did not try to find whether or not we liked butter by having a friend hold a buttercup flower under our chin? If there was a yellow reflection under your chin, then you were assured that, 'Yes, you did like butter!' It would have easier just to have asked the question but only way to know for sure was to test. If, sadly, you did not like butter, I am sure you made daisy chains or in the case of our most macho members helped a sister or friend, pick and join dozens of wee crimson tipped flowers into a chain. This slaughter of daisy blooms never seemed to reduce their number in the grass. Daisies were a problem in my garden in Falkland but they don't seem to like my Dunblane soil. Perhaps they find it impossible to compete with mosses?



Anemone nemorosa 'Viresens'



Celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) is another spring woodland flower which defies the last cauld blasts of winter. It may be taken for granted. These wild ones, with their citrus yellow flowers, herald the arrival of British Summer Time. Miraculously they transfer areas of brown dead leaves in deciduous woodland into a verdant carpet studded with yellow. In a good year there can be more yellow than green! Gwen Black encouraged me to look at Celandine leaves. Many have intricate dark patterns on top of the green. Their flowers range from cream, almost white flowers to a deep marmalade orange. Look out for 'Brazen Hussey' a wonderful plant which I got from Graham Butler but whose name I am sure does not refer to anyone in Rumbling Bridge! Hussey's golden petals age to white at their tips. I have a cream flowered Celandine with blueish backs on its flowers. I let the plants seed around as they seem to find the most appropriate places. Many seedlings are just as interesting as their parents.

Gwen told me that she plants hers alongside Hostas. As the celandines die back, the Hostas unfurl. Between them they provide a long season of interest. Incidentally when I looked up 'Celandine cream' on Google, I found an array of creams for treating warts.



Now, even though we are older, members of the Ranunculaceae can still mesmerise us.

The first half of this report has been devoted to Hepaticas. Even though there are several species, they are instantly recognisable as Hepaticas, in flower or out of flower, by their lobed leaves. The flowers are much more interesting. Most have simple six petalled flowers with prominent stamens. Their petals are shiny like buttercups. Has anyone tested a red hepatica under a chin to see if a friend liked strawberries or a purple flower to test for a fondness for blackcurrant jam? Back to Hepaticas. Their attraction as alpine house plants is due to the extraordinary number of possible variations especially in *Hepatica japonica*. We in the UK are only about 500 years behind the Japanese when it comes to finding and propagating these intriguing flowers, one could reasonably expect them to have double flowers but until seen with the naked eye many of the 'complicated' flowers are unimaginable. Unfortunately because of their rarity one has to pay a premium price for the most exotic variants. Conversely, if they are expensive they are probably well looked after. However when Ian Christie or John Massey tells you that when repotting them that you must saw off the bottom third of the plant's roots, one feels like calling in the RSPH [the Royal Society for the Protection of Hepaticas!].



The pictures on the following pages show some of the variety of genera in the Ranunculaceae family exhibited in flower at our spring shows. At our shows the Ranunculaceae are often grouped with Fumariaceae. If one climbs back up their family trees from Genus you find both are in the Ranunculales Order along with Papaveraceae. *Corydalis* are even more extraordinary than the buttercups. They expand in full flower apparently overnight. Leaves and flowers spring from a pot which days before seemed only to contain soil. Thanks to Janis Ruksans, we have many species of *Corydalis* to choose from. His work on *C. solida* has given us a plethora of varieties. It is lucky that he chose a big book like *Lord of the Rings* as a source for his *Corydalis solida* selection's names. Janis was celebrated as 'Mr Crocus' by the RHS in February 2020 edition of *The Garden*. He could just as easily be 'Mr Corydalis' but he seems to have ceded this title to Gothenburg.



If you are self isolating or just confined to your home during this corona virus pandemic why don't you choose a plant you like or one with a 'funny name' and research it on the internet or even better through the pages of your own books. The advantage of the internet is that it is more likely to be up to date and although occasionally it might be misleading, usually in a fascinating way, it will definitely offer you many diversions as you pursue your flower.

Here is an example:- I looked for info on 'Kusnetzov botanist'. I was directed to Wikipedia, which I like, and found the barest minimum of information. There 14 Nikolai Kusnetzovs listed but only 1 botanist. The inclusion reads only '[Nikolai Kuznetsov \(botanist\)](#) (1864–1932), Russian botanist' there is no picture, no CV. I was invited to write an article on him! Try Sewersov. Even less information! When plants are named after where they come from this is just as enlightening and in the name even the smallest villages can be marked on maps.

Sandy Leven



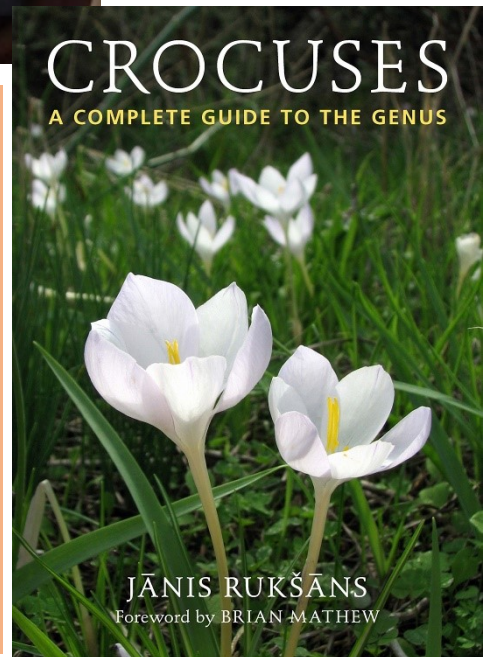
Dinner in the Dunblane Doubletree by Hilton Hotel.

On the left Kit Strange of Kew and her partner Steve, sorry Steve, I cannot remember your surname! In the centre is Alan McMurtrie the Canadian Iris hybridiser, then Janis Ruksans and me after a recent Early Bulb Display day in Dunblane.

Remember when we could associate freely and travel without hindrance.

The SRGC sponsored Janis' recent book 'CROCUSES'. He has travelled to Scotland give several talks to the SRGC at our Discussion weekends and Early Bulb Days. Several years ago I went to Latvia with other Scottish Rockers on a visit to Latvia which was organised by the AGS Fritillaria Group. Riga is a beautiful city. We attended an evening of dance in Riga Concert hall. Also there was the president of Latvia and the Mayor of Riga. We did wonder why Janis told us bring a good suit!

We stayed in the hotel Katrina in Cesis. At his near-by nursery we saw the results of his work on Crocuses and Corydalis in particular. I was fascinated and not a little surprised to see that Corydalis solida grows wild in Latvia, as does yellow Anemone ranunculoides. Perhaps these plants encouraged Janis to seek out the bulbous treasures of Turkey, Greece and central Asia. We also saw a statue of Lenin in a big wooden box! Few people have introduced so many wonderful plants in recent years. Why not buy CROCUSES and get absorbed in his world?





Pulsatilla vernalis



Anemone pavonina



Anemone caucasica



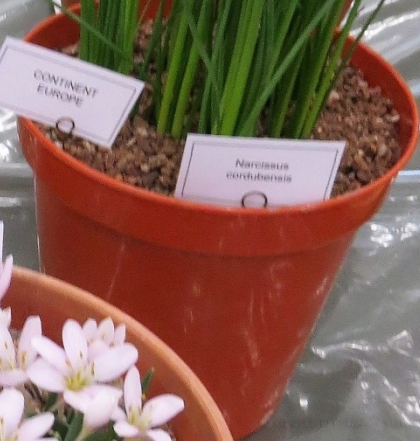
Anemone apennina 'Petrovac'



Callianthemum anemonoides



Anemone ranunculoides



Diane Clement's 3 pan entry in the class for 3 pans from 1 continent, in this case Europe, shows how it is possible to mix disparate looking plants.

Isopyrum thalictroides

Narcissus cordubensis

Colchicum hungaricum





Corydalis solida 'Dieter Schacht'



Corydalis sewerzowii





Corydalis 'Lentune Rouge'
(kusnetzovii x solida)



Corydalis solida



2 plants of *Corydalis macrocentra*, with slightly different coloured leaves. Is this due to cultivation or do some plants have bluer leaves than others?



Corydalis malkensis which vies with *C. solida* for the title 'Best Corydalis for the Scottish garden'.





The incredible sight of rows of *Corydalis solida* at Janis' Nursery in Latvia



**Here I am with the *Corydalis*
and with Lenin in his box.**

