

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

Highland Show , Nairn 2017

Forrest Medal -

Saxifraga pubescens 'Snowcap'

Shown by David Millward



David Millward won his second Forrest Medal of 2017 with his superb pan of the Pyrenean Saxifrage, *Saxifraga pubescens* 'Snowcap'. It faced stiff opposition for the medal. The judges final decision was unanimous but several excellent plants had to be examined for faults or demerits before the winner was announced! Having easily won its Class, David's big 'Snowcap' shone like a beacon on the bench along the back wall of the hall attracting much attention from fellow exhibitors and the general public as well.

Saxifraga pubescens grows wild in the eastern Pyrenees where it is a cliff dweller. It is a choice plant for cultivation in an alpine house. One warning ! It does not like strong direct sunshine, inferring that in nature it may prefer north facing or shady places in some deep Pyrenean gorge. Therefore it needs to be protected from strong summer sunshine in the alpine house, either by choosing a slightly shaded position or screening it with some green netting. If the cushion is burned in places, a section dies

and it is almost impossible to get the plant to regrow symmetrically. Its habit of growing into a perfect hemisphere is one of the reasons which make it an excellent choice of connoisseurs. Out of flower a good sized cushion of 'Snowcap' could win a class for cushion plants. Note that as it flowers, first one blossom opens at the end of each stem and is followed by others on the same stem. This gives it a longer flowering period but makes it difficult to tell when it is at its best for showing. It should be propagated regularly as older bigger plants are difficult to maintain in good health. Luckily it is one of the easier Saxifragas to root and small pieces can be quite quickly develop roots in sand. All round it is a fine plant and this one was particularly well grown. Well done David!

