



# The Scottish Rock Garden Club

## Perth Show

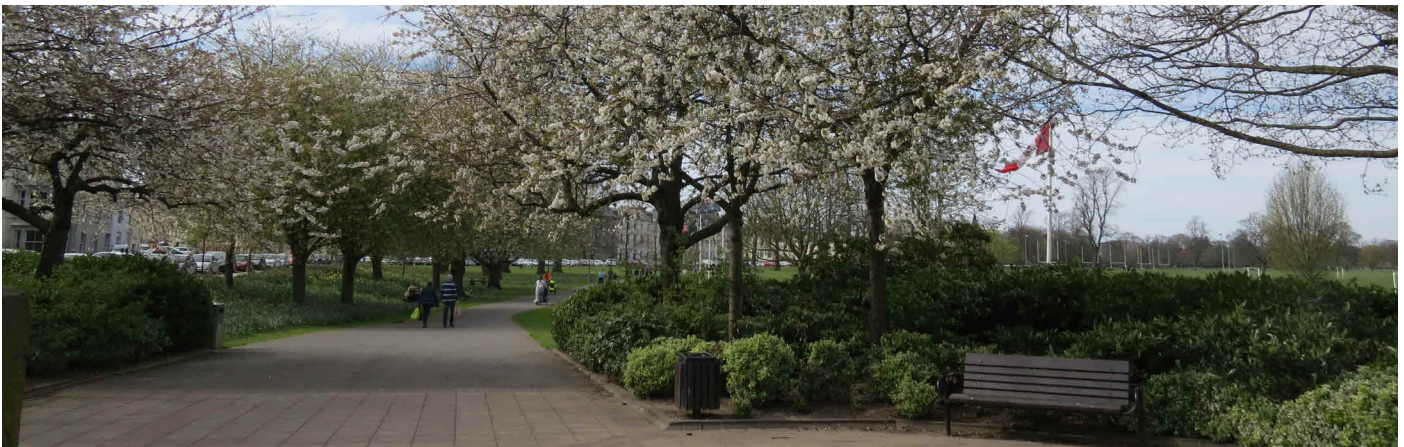
### 2014



In the city of St John, in our land of Scotland there is a wonderful old theatre in which a pantomime is held every Christmas time. We all loved pantomimes when we were young and many of us still love them when we are old [er]. . They are clever productions, with subplots and jokes galore, appealing to young and old,. Most of these dramas are based in or transport you to countries far away, to exotic eastern lands or to Gothic fairy tale towns in central Europe. A central theme is a love affair and hopefully untold wealth for the hero. The hero has to overcome several difficulties and hazards before winning his prize. We know that 'all that glitters is not gold'. Each of us recognises different kinds different kinds of treasure. People have different interests and values. What appeals to one might not appeal to another.

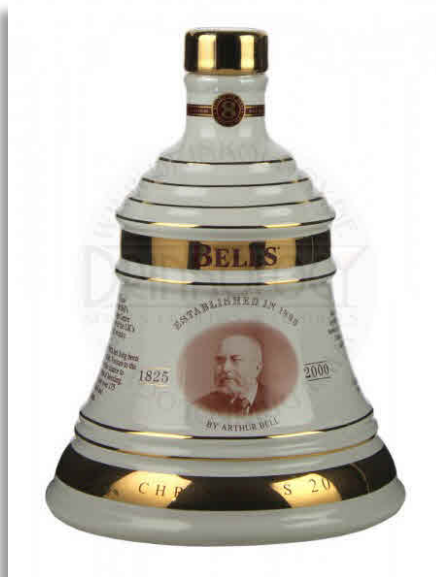
Here, I tell a tale about wonderful treasures displayed in mouthwatering spectacles and produced after endless hours of dedication and an enduring love of the natural world. You don't have to spend a lot of money to share this treasure. All you need is time and a belief in the magical power of green-fingers. A wee snip here and a wee tweak there along with attention to detail and you are on your way. An enquiring mind helps as does asking the right question to the right

person. By sending £18 to Christine Boulby each year, every 6 months you will receive a special guide book to top up your enthusiasm and hopefully hone your powers. If you can't wait for the post, The Scottish Club of Rock Gardening Magicians has a full set of guides [also known as Journals] on its website. Anyone can peruse the pages—almost 80 years of 'The Rock Garden' and with the knowledge gained and enthusiasm stirred tiny treasures will grow in gardens all over the country. This was the hope of the dozen or so men who formed the SRGC in 1933.





Once upon a time in city of Perth, which many say is Scotland's smallest, because it sits between two Inches, something magical happens every April. Just as the spring blossom opens on the cherry trees rock-gardeners from all over the country congregate in a building dedicated to its founder, another kind of magician, named J. Arthur Bell.



J. Arthur was a powerful magician who could take ordinary water and turn it into liquid gold using only some barley from the fields and yeast gathered locally.

Interestingly, another J. Arthur was a certain Mr Rank whose organisation produced many films and who is famous for his gong!

Mr Bell's liquid could fortify the weak but also cause strong men to fall over. People still buy this golden liquid in bottles and special containers which although they look like bottles are known as half bottles. Mr Bell was a man who ahead of his time forsook pints and quarts for centilitres and litres. In Scotland the liquid is sold in bottles containing 75 ml but overseas you get big 1 litre bottles. Confusingly Mr Bell's liquid is also available in bells! Many happy occasions are recognised by a peal of bells. En Ecosse! - one may be offered a dram of Bells.

Every April Mr Bell's auditorium is filled with this special treasure, a horticultural feast. Set out on benches are the accumulated diadems of numerous gardens, cold frames and alpine houses. Wonderful rock garden plants, originating from all parts of the world and grown to perfection by SRGC magicians are placed side by side on the tables, each plant enhancing the beauty of the others.

Everyone can share the magic. Just make your way to the more northerly of the two Inches. Find the big brick, glass fronted building partially hidden by trees on the western edge furthest from the River Tay; hand over £2 and you can enter. A wee problem can be finding your way past exuberant young people playing noisy

games in the bigger sports arena. [Most rock garden people have never seen the glass front or the grassy Inch, far less the silvery Tay. They enter by the special entrance in the far side of the building].



Beside this special side door, in his own special tent, sits a man with a big hat who exchanges your £2 for a ticket to the treasure cave. He apparently feels neither cold nor breeze, for he is also there when the weather changes. With a friendly word and a big smile he allows you to pass through the dark entrance into the show hall. From the outside nothing inside is visible or perhaps shadowy figures in the darkness!

If you arrive early the place is as busy as a beehive with workers charging in and out of the wee side door. Some carry individual plants other big crates with several specimens. There are usually willing helpers to assist those who are too feeble to carry their own plants. They might benefit from a dose of the J. Arthur! Leaving your car is a peril to be overcome. Perth has very efficient traffic wardens, or so the members of the Perth group tell us. Perhaps they want to increase

the cash in the council's coffers? Anyway you must note the time that your parking ticket expires or you may face a big fine. The Council does not want the same car parked for more than 4 hours, barely enough time to see the show once and have a cup of tea!

They should introduce exhibitors' rates but perhaps not. We don't want too many exhibitions of the wrong sort. So, if you arrive early 'Pay & Display' but move on by 1pm to another spot. I have heard that some drivers just buy another ticket and leave their car for another 4 hours!





The effect on entering the SRGC Perth show is truly magical. You step from bright sunshine [for it rarely rains on SRGC Saturday] into the huge sports hall with its high ceiling and electric lights. You literally have to get used to the change in light levels. At first the hall is dark in comparison to daylight. Soon your eyes adjust and there, laid out before you are the magicians and treasures of this wee tale.

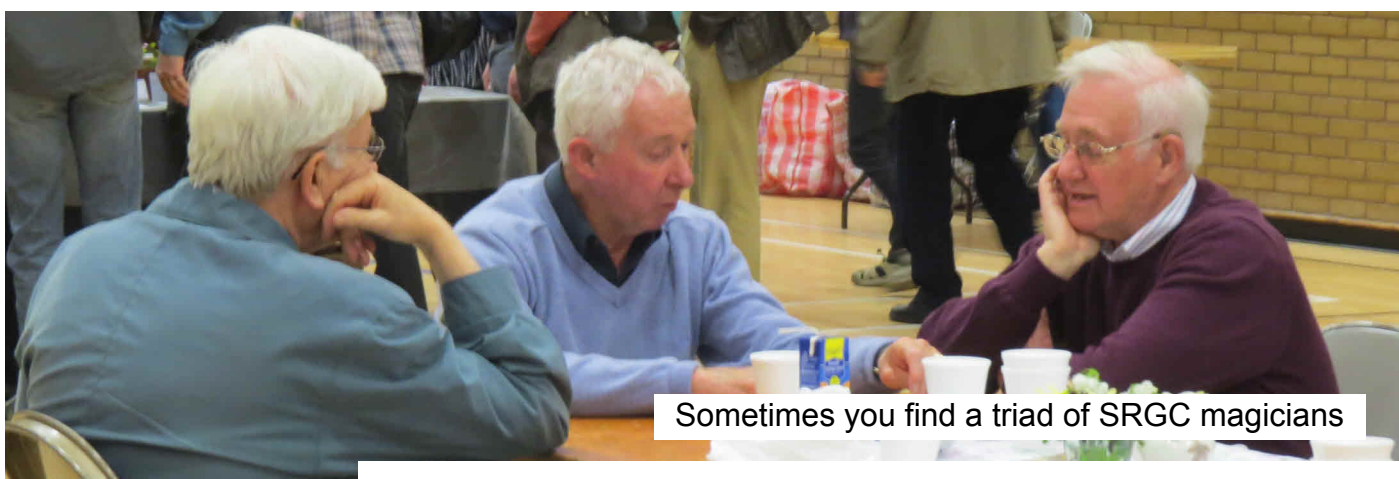
Inside the hall there is a welcome for one and all. SRGC members stand around chatting or are involved in deep discussions. A common feature of the magicians might seem to be grey or white, thinning hair but there are some with hair and even with hair that is not white! The magicians hinder your passage with jolly welcomes but eventually you can get through to the show benches.



A pair of SRGC magicians



Another pair of SRGC magicians



Sometimes you find a triad of SRGC magicians

Like all great magicians Cyril, Scotland's Grand Master of the Artes Magique de Cultivation des Plantes Alpines can work his magic on a wide range of plants. He makes difficult plants seem easy to grow and turns 'ordinary' into the extraordinary.







Row after row of wonderful plants with flowers of every colour and shade, each one grown with care and attention. Many have been lifted from their owners garden for the occasion, others have been tended in green houses and alpine houses. The real magic of the show is in the incredible range of plants grown by members of the Scottish Rock Garden Club. Occasionally you might find two pans of the same species or

variety but 90% of the plants are unique. Some exhibitors grow a wide range of plants others specialise in certain types or genera. No other horticultural event in Scotland approaches the wonder of an SRGC show. There are bigger events but I doubt if there are any better ones.

This extravaganza has been orchestrated by Show-Suprema Julia.



A magician chants a spell

Blending in with the Tulips, treasures from the East



Spell bound!



Alongside the show benches are trays of rock plants grown by our top nurseries - are there to tempt to you. Tiny treasures, lovingly grown from wee cuttings or raised from seed, twinkle and seem to plead with you to take them new home where they can grow into perfect Forrest medal specimens. These can be yours for the asking, or at least for the purchasing! Prices for rock garden plants are always modest when you consider just how much care, time and skill goes into raising the. Compared to the price of a wee pack of 4 or 6 pansies for sale in a supermarket, alpine plants are a bargain for the purchaser.

Right from the start the SRGC has had a symbiotic relationship with the specialist alpine nurseries of the horticultural trade. Sadly some nurseries close as their owners age but luckily for us SRGC members new nurseries open. Thank goodness we have these specialist magicians of the propagation art. Our plant collections and gardens would be much diminished without the input from the nurseries. Thank goodness for the wealth of plants from which we can choose, for the friendship between the SRGC and our nurseries and for the club members who work hard at our shows and behind the scenes to make our club the friendliest and most successful of its kind in the world.

I raised that from a tiny wee seed!



Professional magician and Nurseryman Graeme points to one of his greatest treasures. Primula 'Kusum Krishna' which means 'Flower of Krishna'. The plant was named so by a Hindu friend of Graeme's Nursery, as it reminded him of his beloved Lord Krishna, described in Sanskrit text as having the colour of newly arrived monsoon clouds.



Primula 'Kusum Krishna'

Once you have made your choices from the plant stalls, Margaret, Susan and their helpers tempt you with filled rolls and cakes. Take my advice. Don't dawdle! Buy the plants you like as soon as you see them. Eat the food when you see it. If you don't both will disappear and in either case you will regret your delay.

Every tale should have a moral. **'Treasures shared are pleasures multiplied'**.

Gardeners are happy people. For the small outlay of £18 anyone can share our passion. If you are married or have a partner the cost of happiness is only £10.50 each or as we say £21 per family. Youngsters £3. [View our D\[To join, not to buy!\] Other rates here](#)



**Telling Tales!** These five plants were the judges favourites for the Forrest Medal. Quite extraordinarily they are all yellow [or cream]. Did the sunny day put the judges in a sunny frame of mind which made them forget their blues? No-one could deny the fact that these were the best five exhibits. They chose Cyril Lafong's *Iris suaveolens* yellow form as the winner. It even had 'yellow' on its label! The others are *Lewisia tweedyi*, *Fritillaria pallidiflora*, *Hymenoxys acaulis caespitosa* and *Sebaea thomasii*.







Stan da Prato won the Alexander Caird Trophy for 6 pans of rock plants and Cyril Lafong won the Class for 6 rock plants in small pots. Janet and Jim Paterson included *Epimedium grandiflorum* and *Uvularia pallidum* in their 6 pan entry. Sam Sutherland was second in the 3 pan class. Note the number of Ericaceous and American plants in these entries!







KALMIOPSIS LEACHIANA  
SHOOTING STAR

Sam Sutherland's fine plant of a new variation on an older theme was this wonderful Western American shrub, *Kalmiopsis leachiana* 'Shooting Star', whose flower petals are much narrower than usual for the species.

Another American *Primula rusbyi* is in front.

*Androsace muscoidea* won the Dundas Quaich for Cyril. [3 pans different genera]. The other two were *Trillium grandiflorum roseum* and *Daphne gemmata x calcicola*. *Sebaea thomasii* gained a Certificate of Merit for Tim Lever.



*Androsace muscoidea*  
CR 188



THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB  
CERTIFICATE  
OF MERIT







*Androsace zayulensis*

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 Seeds from Vojtech Holubec sown December 2010, germinated March 2011.  
*A. zayulensis* occurs in Ngajuk La, from the Zayul Province, Southeast Tibet and inhabits exposed limestone cliffs at 3700-4000 m. In cultivation it is grown in a very gritty loam-based compost in the alpine house, given weak liquid feed Spring to Summer and full exposure.

**Some 'New & Rare' Some showing off!**



*Saxifraga aretioides*  
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*Saxifraga aretioides*  
 Seeds sown December 2007, germinated April 2008. Seedlings are initially very tiny and very slow growing. They were left in the seed pot for two years before pricking out.  
*S. aretioides* occurs only in the Pyrenees and the Cordillera Cantabrica. It is not an easy plant to cultivate. Grown in a very gritty loam-based compost in the alpine house, given weak liquid feed Spring to Summer and shading during the summer months. It grows slowly and has only been potted on twice. The flowers are not often produced. This is only the second time it has flowered.

*Daphne modesta*  
 Native to W Sichuan and Yunnan, mostly on open bushy hills, rocky slopes; 2100 m and 2900 m. It is deciduous and fruits are greenish-yellow.  
*D. modesta* has five lobed blossoms and has sometimes been placed in the genus Wikstroemia, like *D. gemmata* and *D. rosmarinifolia*.







**Peter Semple's *Gentiana acaulis* was a big favourite. Pity it doesn't grow in the Scottish hills! Watt Russell's *Daphne* 'Wilhelm Schacht' reminds us of the great alpine gardener from Munich. Wilhelm was one of people who inspired our own Jim Jermyn**

***Anemone lipsiensis* has been a favourite of mine since I first saw it on a Cruikshank Botanic Gardens display in Aberdeen. Well presented here by the Higgins' from Berriedale.**





Nick Boss has a holistic way of growing his plants. Nick always accompanies his exhibits with excellent explanatory notes. Below is his beautifully presented and well grown and presented pan of **Arabis bryoides var olympica**

Nick researches all his plants needs and cultural requirements. I would like to read a full description of his techniques sometime.



It was good to see Anne Chambers back at the shows after her recent illness. Here she is chatting to editor, Anton Edwards, behind the huge pan of **Fritillaria pallidiflora** which won the Joyce Halley Trophy for Peter Semple



This pink form of **Ranunculus parnassifolius** and the furry **Salvia argentea** on the left, helped win the Perth Trophy for Margaret & Henry Taylor

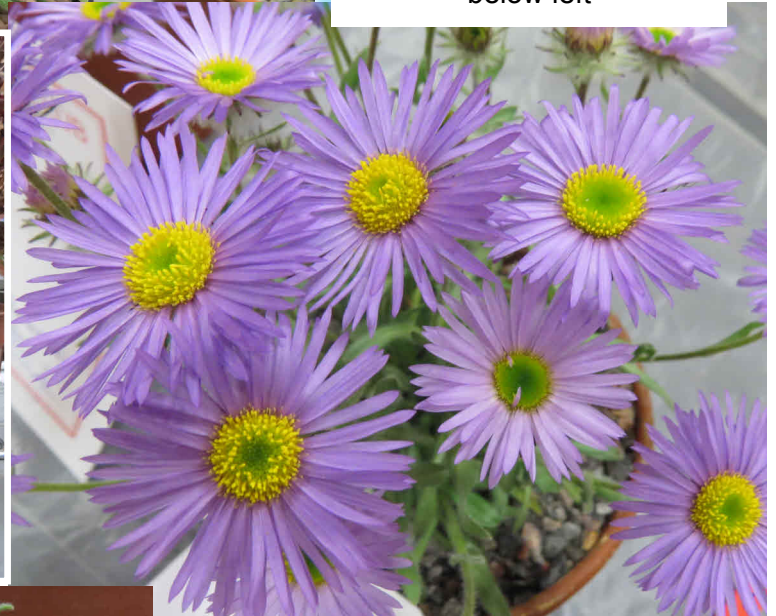






Tim Lever's **Erinacea anthyllis** not only reminds me of the Sierra Nevada of southern Spain but of a Forrest Medal I won at Glasgow many years ago. I bought a wee plant from Aberconway nursery at the end of last year. I have high hopes for it. The main disadvantage in growing it is that it has sharp spines which find the softest spots on hands and arms.

**Townsendia alpigena** is below  
**Matthiola scapifera** below left



Tim Lever also showed two of the highest growing and reputedly difficult to cultivate, European alpine:-

**Ranunculus seguieri** and **Ranunculus glacialis**.

Fine specimens both. Global freezing must be coming to North Wales!

Above is

**Anchusa caespitosa** is from the warmer climes of Crete.







It takes a long time to reach the tables on the far wall of the show hall but it is well worth getting there to see more wonderful plants. Some are from section II and others from the tail end of section I. Tail end doesn't mean also-ran but it is here you find the orchids and those plants which do not fit specific classes.

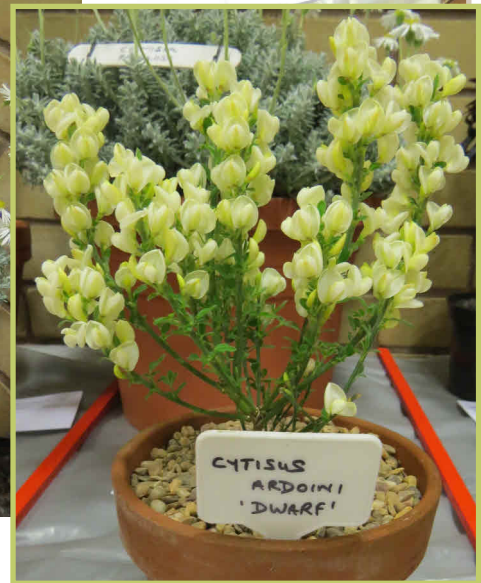
*Tropaeolum tricolor*, *Pulsatilla grandis* 'Papageno', *Calceolaria uniflora*, *Rhododendron megeratum* 'Bodnant' which won the EHM Cox Trophy for Best Rhododendron in the Show for Sue Simpson.







The John Duff Prize for the best Plant in Section II went to this fine pan of *Pleiones* shown by F & M Higgins from Berriedale. At the same time Sue Simpson's trough of *Clematis columbiana* var. *tenuiloba* 'Ylva' was awarded a Certificate of Merit. It would also have won the prize for the plant with the longest name!



The Higgins also showed this fine pan of *Celmisia ramulosa* and *Primula* 'Anne',

while Lyn Henderson's *Cytisus ardoinii* 'Dwarf' looks like a promising plant.

Sue Simpson's *Primula White Lady* helped her win The Perth Salver for Most Points in Section II