

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

Perth Show

18th April 2015



The Proclaimers wrote the very successful song and musical, 'Sunshine on Leith'. Perhaps it is time for a follow up song about another East Coast Scottish port, 'Sunshine in Perth'? Each year the SRGC show finds members carrying plants in bright sunshine into Bell's Sports Centre on Perth's North Inch [a big park beside the River Tay]. This year was no exception. Dundee, downstream on the Tay, is the sunniest city in Scotland but Perth must be a close second. After slow start the Scottish spring is 'burstin' out all over' with pink and white cherry blossom, white Amelanchier, pink Camelias, Rhododendrons in several colours, cream flowers and scarlet new leaves on Pieris and most exotic of all snow white Magnolia blossom. Primroses, forget-me-nots, celandine and dandelions pepper the roadside verges.

Along the dual carriageways of the A9 and A90 as well as the M90, in the central reservation Danish scurvy grass [*Cochlearica danica*] flourishes. This 'weed' or as I prefer to call it 'wild flower' has a wonderful tale to tell. It arrived on our shores in the middle ages and is thought to have been eaten to ward off scurvy. It is a halophyte, i.e. a plant which tolerates salt. In reality it not only tolerates salt but thrives on it. It remained a coastal plant until modern times. The advent of cars and lorries combined with the increasing amounts of salt and grit spread on the main roads by council gritters, to keep the highways free of snow and ice has provided a spectacular new habitat for this wee seashore plant. At first it was carried short distances on the tyre treads of cars and lorries. Once it became established on roadsides and central reservation its seeds are whirled into the air on vortices caused by speeding traffic and sucked a long our roadways. In 20 years it has spread so much that it can be found along nearly every main road in the country. With so many wild flowers facing difficult futures it is good to see one which is making the most of man-made conditions.





"What do you mak' o' that?"

'Whit is it?'

"A dinae ken!"

"Hiv ye ever seen ain like that afore? "

'Niver in ma life!"

"Let's hae a closer look"

"Is it alive?"

"Aye!, I think it moved"

'Whitever it is, it shouldnae be allowed"

"Maybe no! but it fairlie cheers you up when you see one?"



Judging plants can be difficult. At SRGC shows there are always three for each class. If there is a vote then the plants which gets more votes wins. Classes for more than one plant per entry are more difficult still. The 3 pan

Primula class had 7 entries, so the relative merits of 21 plants had to be considered.

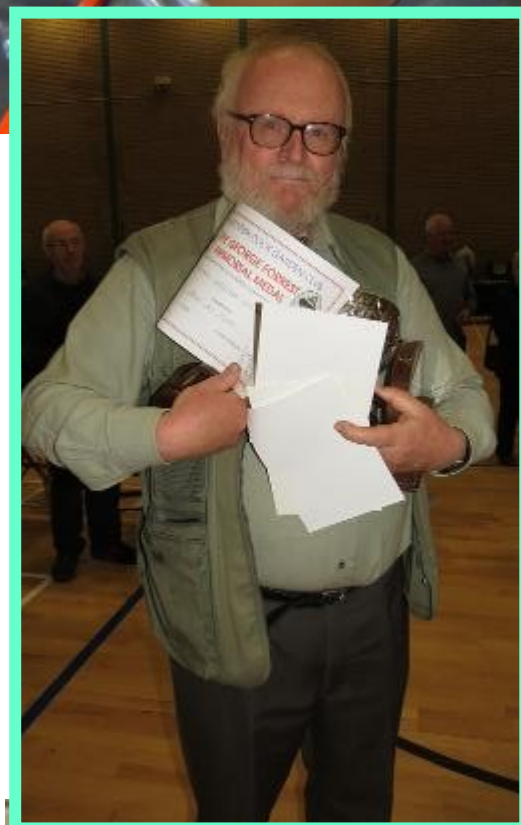
As you can see from the pics above there are lighter moments when judges can relax





WHAT A SHOW! Since our weather in Scotland varies so much from year to year, the classes at our SRGC shows are carefully chosen to allow members to enter as wide a range of plants which could be flowering at the time. There are always some classes unentered because the season is too early or too late. The show secretary takes note of which classes are well entered and those which are not and may adjust the schedule accordingly. No quick decisions are made but it is a fact that certain plants are in fashion





CRACKERJACK! Stan da Prato's super 6 pan entry includes his Forrest medal winning *Andromeda polifolia* 'Nikko' at the top left. *Rhododendron uniflorum* [bottom right] was judged Best *Rhododendron* and won the Cox Trophy. Since Stan wept the board in the show, he was loaded down with trophies and cards. I suspect he needed an armed guard for the journey home.





Refreshing to see 'ordinary' plants on the bench especially when they are well grown and presented. Have you even seen such a big Primrose [Primula vulgaris] plant? The wee one in the centre is Primula veris and the beauty on the right Primula veris x vulgaris, the False Oxlip.

I have a new lap top and it does not know all our botanical terms yet. It didn't like the word 'Primula' and offered up 'Primal', 'Premolar' and 'Primly'. Think of Primulas when you brush your teeth tonight!

As well as native primroses we had them from nearly all over the world. The 3 pan class was a real mixture of species and hybrids. A point to note is that the plant we love as Primula forrestii has changed its name to Primula bulata ssp forestii. We need more Scottish taxonomists to protect the names of our explorers. Some years ago, David Douglas lost his genus when Douglasia was subsumed into Androsace. The plants remain the same but their name changes. If you look at the show schedule you will see that whole genera have moved from their old Family into another one. Perhaps we need botanical social workers. There was no P. forrestii in the show but its new cousin P. bullata ssp bullata was there. I must confess that they do look very alike. Bullata forestii has more farina on its leaves and tends to have a 'woody stem'. Then there is Primula bullata bracteata. different leaves! If you are able to grow Asiatic Primulas that Primula aureate must be one of the best. This form shown by Henry and Margaret Taylor has wonderful fried egg yellow centres and cut petals and just look at the wonderful farina. The other at the bottom right has more white in the flowers with more dissected petal edges.





Lewisia tweedyi is a plant which I always associate with the Perth show. Even if you travel to Oregon you won't see plants like these in a colour range such as this. Jack Drake sold a deep pink and yellow form in the 1970's. The pure yellow in much more recent. Wild plants tend to be more wishy-washy in their shading.

TRILLIUMS are favourite plants both here in Scotland and in the USA and Canada where their many different species and forms are found growing in temperate woodland from Ontario to Tennessee and Oregon to Virginia, Virtually the Appalachians and Cascades. And close by. They are instantly recognisable by having their leaves and floral parts in threes. Similar in habit to the Eurasian genus Paris, Trilliums seem to have become better adapted to cultivation in our gardens. Further south in the UK, many growers have difficulty with Trilliums. In Northern Ireland they really thrive.

At Perth there was a fine mixture of species, from diminutive *Trillium hibbersonii*, sometimes looked on as subspecies of *T. ovatum*, which is native to Vancouver island, British Columbia and Washington State. Look at the label in the pan of *hibbersonii* and then at the label in Ian Christie's *T. albidum* x *chloropetalum* and you get an idea of the different growth habits of the two. Ian's plant provided scope for much discussion at the Joint Rock meeting, where it was recommended for an RHS Preliminary Commendation. Beth Chatto offers a plain leaved plant with similar flowers as *T. chloropetalum*. I grow a similar flower with plain leaves which is named *T. albidum*. *T. chloropetalum* is native to northern California and Oregon.

Below it is Stan da Prato's red flowered *T. chloropetalum*, another strong growing plant.

The bottom pic shows *T. luteum* [Smoky Mountains of Tennessee] at the back left and *T. grandiflorum* [Tennessee to Ontario] at back right. From centre and right are *T. rivale* a small plant from N. California and Oregon.





- Sanguinaria canadense fl pl
- Sarracenia sp
- Erythronium helenae
- Iris suaveolens
- Iris bucharica
- Allium paradoxum normale
- Fritillaria 'Canmore Park'





Sometimes an exhibit just hits you in the eye!

So it was with John Di Paola's piece de resistance. Labelled as a *Thlaspi* it confronted the judges with a problem about its name. In spite of the label he advised John that it was not a *Thlaspi* but its cousin in the Brassicaceae, *Alyssum serpyllifolium*. Unfortunately this plant has the common name Madwort! The *Thlaspi* name applies to a pink-violet coloured plant. Whatever the name it is a super plant and one which was very well presented. It could be my 'catch of the day'!





T. praestans 'Shogun' - orange

T. clusiana chrysantha - red / blue

T. linifolia - red

T. 'Addis' - red / white

T. tarda - yellow



Some more of the outstanding plants at Perth

Lamium sandrasicum

Sebaea thomasii

Muscari armeniacum

Corydalis wilsonii

Jeffersonia dubia alba

Ranunculus parnassifolius

Erythronium Joan? Wyllie



