

The Scottish Rock Garden Club Alpine Garden Society Newcastle Show in Ponteland 6 10 18



Since Roman times and perhaps for longer people seem to have known where Scotland ends and England begins or if you are travelling north vice versa! One of the joys of the Joint Shows held by the Scottish Rock Garden Club and the Alpine Garden Society is that members meet together as friends and neighbours. Many like me are members of both and have been for decades. In truth I am a 'joiner'.

By profession I am a dental surgeon but my direct debits and standing orders prove that I am a 'joiner'. SRGC; AGS; Royal Horticultural Society; Saxifrage Society; Cyclamen Society; Hardy Plant Society; H.P.S. Snowdrop Group; National Trust for Scotland; Scottish Wildlife Trust; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; Woodland Trust; Historic Scotland; British Dental Association [still

a member tho' I am retired!]; Rotary International; they all work to keep my memberships active. I am also a Friend of St Andrew's Botanic Garden and was recently given a year's membership of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. The last membership means that I will soon send a Direct Debit to them as well. As a confirmed 'joiner' I believe it is important that we support those organisations which reflect our interests and which improve the world we enjoy.

Of these joint ventures I get most pleasure from those organisations in which I am most active,





namely the SRGC, RHS, AGS and Rotary. This seems to prove the adage, 'The more you put in, the more you get out'. To my shame I know I no longer show plants as often as I feel I should but I did do so for several decades. My excuse....'bad knees', 'pots too heavy', 'far too early to get out of bed'. This last excuse is pitiful, I know. In spite of these excuses I enjoy driving to our flower shows. I look forward to seeing the wonderful exhibits, the fruits of other people's labours. Meeting and talking to friends from all over the country is the icing on my cake. The delicious real cakes and filled rolls, with a cup of tea, provided by hard working members busy behind the scenes, sustain me during the day. No matter how I try to resist I am drawn to the plant sales. Here there are treasures waiting to be transported to Dunblane. My miniature arboretum has been bought tree by tree from Hartside over many years. My ferns and many plants in shady troughs have come from Edrom. Saxifrages from Aberconwy and Kevoek; Primulas from Rumbling Bridge; Ericaceous treasures from Ardfearn; Cyclamen from Ashwood; Each nursery has its specialities and it is surprising how distinct are the offerings of each nursery. The table not to miss is the Club Plant Sales. Here there is an eclectic mix of treasures propagated by fellow members. It can take a long time to read the labels in different handwriting but well worth the effort. My first Cyclamen graecum came from the club sales table at the AGS Wirral show—The start of my obsession with them.

Shows are the social hub of the SRGC and the AGS. Local Groups bring the rock plants of the world to our local meetings where we mix with our group of friends, linked by our love of wee plants. Seeing wonderful pictures of distant lands encourages us all to visit them. Our Discussion Weekends and the International Conferences are opportunities to learn and socialise. I am looking forward to the next International Conference in Perth in 2021... that's Perth, Scotland! Thank goodness I joined the SRGC and that the Inverness Convenor, Jim Sutherland was so welcoming and enthusiastic. We Scots owe a huge debt to those men who gathered in 1933 in the Rutland Hotel in Edinburgh where they formed the SRGC.

The pictures on the left show some of the prominent architectural highlights of the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle. At the top is Torness nuclear power station and at the bottom is Lindisfarne on Holy Island.



The floral highlights of our autumn shows are the Cyclamen, Crocuses and Gentians. Their bright pink, white and blue flowers sit among the greens, silvers and autumn tints of shrubs and the foliage and cushion plants. The scene seems to me to reflect an image of a pastel tinted Union Flag set in the British countryside. Maybe not red white and blue but certainly rose white and blue!

Our countryside is full of colour just now but the shades are bright rather than pastel. Incredible orange and reds on the maples

and beeches; Blood red haws and orange red rose hips; brown grasses and cow parsleys. Many of these colours and tints lit up the roadside to and from Ponteland.

Ron and Hilary Price from Eccles bookended the first show bench with two large plants of *Liriope muscari*. Both won first prizes! *Liriope muscari* is a plant recommended for shady dry areas. I read that its colloquial name is 'big blue lily turf.' It is not a grass but a member of the Asparagaceae family, which includes among a great many other genera, *Muscari* itself as well as *Bellevalia*, *Chionodoxa*, *Convalaria* [lily of the valley], *Hyacinthus* and *Scilla*. You can see the resemblance to some of these in that the flowers are held on spikes.

The flowers develop into black berries like *Ophiopogon*.



Stan da Prato won the 3 pan Dwarf Shrub Class with a fine wee *Sorbus reducta* and 2 *Coprosmas*

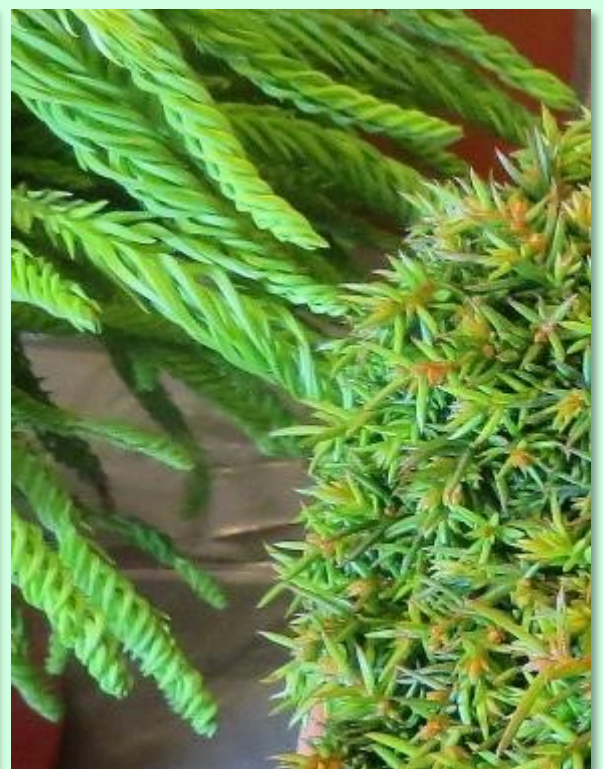


Two little trees caught my attention in the 1 pan dwarf shrub class. *Ilex x meserveae* 'Little Rascal', a tight growing sport of the blue holly, *Ilex* 'Blue Boy' from the USA. *Ilex x meserveae* was named for its cultivator, Kathleen Meserve who made the cross of *I. rugosa* and *I. aquifolium* on her windowsill. Kathleen died aged 93 in 1999. 'Little Rascal' is a male holly so don't expect berries. It is very hardy and is recommended for troughs.

The other tree I liked was *Ulmus parvifolia* 'Hokkaido', a Japanese cultivar of the Chinese Elm.

I am always fascinated by the structure and berries of *Melicytus alpinus*, an evergreen spreading shrub from New Zealand, known there as 'Porcupine Shrub'.

This look at tiny trees and shrubs concludes with four conifers, 3 *Cryptomerias* and a *Juniper*. I deduce that the judges like gin because the *Juniper* came first in the Class! *Cryptomeria japonica spiralis* [top left and its foliage on the left below], two plants of *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Tenzan' [foliage on the right in both pictures], one still in summer green and the other in its winter shade of orange brown. The *Juniper horizontalis* 'Neumann' is on the bottom left.





The large pans of Cyclamen are so wonderful that I am reluctant to write anything but just want to admire them





I like the new classes which require imagination as well as skill in cultivation. Mala Janes won the Class for 5 Named Varieties of Alpine Plants in fruit, cone or seed, grown by the exhibitor, a class which shows the beauty of the plants once full flowering is over. It also needs a gardener who can stage the seed-heads in an artistic way. Mala is such a person. These 5 pots with seed-heads careful standing at attention must have taken much thought and organisation.

Clockwise from top left :- Clematis alpina, Pulsatilla alpina, Celmisia monroi, Tulipa sprengeri and Geum montanum.







Stan da Prato and Ian & Maria Leslie showed several pans of superb Gentians. It is nice to see varieties raised by Ian McNaughton winning in the shows



Bob & Rannveig's Farrer Medal winning Empodium flexile

Bob & Rannveig won the 3 pan Bulb Class with
Narcissus obsoletus
Hyacinthoides lingulata
Galanthus peshmenii







This is the nearest I came to shooting a video at the show. Mike Dale was tasked with taking plants from the show benches to be photographed by Peter McGuire. This is not always straight forward.

The pictures on the left show Mike stretching to lift a huge pan of *Ozothamnus [Helichrysum] coralloides* from the bench and putting on the floor. The right hand pictures are of him returning the huge plant to its place on the bench.

Well done Muscle Mike!



Brian conducts John and David in a chorus of 'The Blaydon Races', while the audience in the background scurry for shelter.



Flowers aren't everything. It takes a lot of skill to produce plants with blemishless foliage like the 3 Cyclamen above and the incredible cushion plants shown below. The Cyclamen are *C. persicum*; *C. coum* and *C. graecum* ssp. *graecum*.

In the cushion classes Alan Newton won the 3 pan with *Dionysia 'Monika'*, *Gypsophila aretioides caucasica* and *Draba longisiliqua*. John Dixon's *Dionysia esfandiarii* shared the first prize in the 1 pan cushion with Ian Instone's *Arenaria alfacarensis*. It is very rare for judges to award two first prizes in the same class.





Bob & Rannveig Wallis won the E.B. Anderson Prize with 6 pans of bulbs.(left)
Their Cyclamen maritimum is below.
Don Peace won the 3 pan bulbs class. [Above]







From Left to Right. Top to Bottom
Oxalis perdicaria
Crocus cartwrightianus
Crocus goulimyi
Crocus cartwrightianus
Colchicum pusillum
Colchicum cupanii
Crocus gilanicus
Crocus xanthlaimos





Crocus niveus JCA348-906, Jan 17/12/99

The seed was collected by Jim Archibald and offered in his October 1999 seed list. Seed collected north of Pyrgos Bicos on the west coast of the Mani peninsula, Lakonia, Peloponnisos, Greece "lower facing banks in limestone scrub at 150m" * Jim writes in the field notes "From a locality where the exquisite pale lilac-pink & bi-coloured forms occur, so expect some variations in this wild collection" *. This exhibit, I think, demonstrates Jim's comments, especially with regard to "pale lilac-pink forms".

This pot of individuals have taken longer than most to mature into flowering tubs. They grow in the alpine house and have been reported annually using my standard bulb compost of 6 parts S12, 1 part loam, 2 parts coarse sand, 1 part grit and a dusting of slow release powder fertiliser.

* Quotations from the relevant seed list kept in the extensive SRGC Archibald archive

