

THE ROCK GARDEN 126



January 2011

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The ROCK GARDEN

The Journal of the
Scottish Rock Garden Club
January 2011

Number 126

Cover: *Androsace rigida* in Muli (Pam Eveleigh)

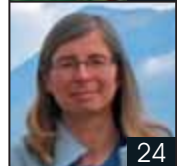
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– Tony Rymer



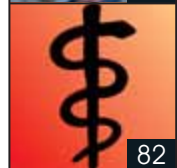
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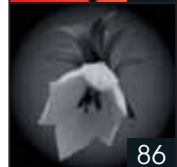
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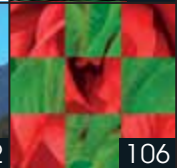
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The Editor welcomes articles, photographs and illustrations on any aspects of alpine and rock garden plants and their cultivation. Authors are encouraged to submit material electronically but articles may also be submitted in manuscript, preferably double spaced. Digital images are particularly welcome but 35 mm slides, high quality prints or drawings may also be submitted for professional scanning.

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Jewels of the Pacific Northwest



Wildflowers of Oregon & Washington

Tony Rymer

Calochortus tolmiei

In the last eight years Ruth and I together with our good friends and fellow Scottish Rockers Pat and Fred Bundy have made three trips to this florally rich and diverse area of the USA. Our first two visits were in late June and early July; in 2009 we went earlier, in mid-May. For the purposes of this article I have combined elements of the three trips (ignoring completely our time spent in California – which merits its own essay) so as to present it as one continuous journey.

We flew into Seattle on 27 June, picked up our hire car and drove to Ellensburg, where we spent the night. Next morning we headed for the Wenatchee Mountains, part of the North Cascade Range, where we had arranged to meet Richard Ramsden, a NARGS member who had generously offered to guide us to Tronsen Ridge for some good plants. The view across to the Stuart Range was stunning.

Here, in rocky detritus, among cushions of *Eriogonum ovalifolium* and shrubby *Penstemon fruticosus*, were gems such as the striking



On the ridge

Lupinus polyphyllus



Ipomopsis aggregata



Tronsen
Ridge &
Mount
Howard

Penstemon fruticosus





Calochortus eurycarpus
Cypripedium montanum



Dodecatheon jeffreyi
Penstemon davidsonii



Ipomopsis aggregata, whose scarlet flowers looked almost fluorescent in the clear mountain air, and *Clematis columbiana*. Nearby, in a jumble of rocks, yellow flowered *Lewisia tweedyi*, a rare and local species, was at its best. It would be hard to imagine a better start to a plant-hunting holiday.

Next day we had a long drive south-east, crossing the mighty Columbia River into Oregon's Wallowa County. The scenery improved as we approached the Blue Mountains where we botanized briefly, finding *Lupinus polyphyllus*, several *Penstemon* species and *Brodiaea elegans*, before driving (via Elgin!) to the homely little town of Enterprise, where we would spend a couple of days. On arrival we were trapped in our car as a torrential hailstorm greeted us. When it eased, the local police emerged onto the street, not to check for damage or injury but to photograph the golf ball sized hailstones.

Our first morning was spent on Mount Howard (2960 m), easily reached by gondola. We failed to find *Eritrichium nanum* (syn. *howardii*), though there were some choice *Lupinus lepidus*, bright yellow *Erigeron*

chrysopsidis var. *brevifolium* and other cushion plants dotting the bleak tundra. In the afternoon we drove up to Hell's Canyon Overlook, where the Snake River passes through a 2410 metre deep gorge, considerably deeper than - though not as wide as - the Grand Canyon. There were many good plants on the ascent, including a clutch of penstemons and *Allium acuminatum*. At the overlook itself, tall *Calochortus eurycarpus* waved in the gentle updraught, causing problems for photographers.

We spent our second day in Hurricane Creek - aptly named: almost every tree had lost its topmost branches to a ferocious hurricane that had swept down the valley. It was a fine walk with such diverse plants as *Moneses uniflora*, more robust than the form we have seen by Loch Fleet in Scotland, shrubby yellow flowered *Eriogonum umbellatum* and the scarce orchid *Corallorhiza striata*, but nothing could match the Forrest Medal candidate, *Cypripedium montanum*, growing in the roadside ditch at the trailhead.

Another long, hot and dusty drive awaited us as we headed west towards John Day. Acting on information from Loren Russell, we left Interstate Highway 84 and drove up to Anthony Lake in the Elkhorn Range. Millions of *Dodecatheon jeffreyi* lined the lake. Winter had only just loosened its grip as we trudged through snow up to the sublimely lovely Hoffer Lake, almost surrounded by *Erythronium grandiflorum*. Every plant, as far as we could see, had brown anthers.

Next day we were soon on our way to Newberry Crater Volcanic Monument, south of Bend in the Cascade Range. The whole of this relatively young mountain range is of great geological interest, whether it be for the variety of rock formations, fossil beds, volcanoes, fault lines, lava

flows, cinder cones or geysers spewing boiling mud. We spent a few hours here, marvelling at the obsidian beds, a barren waste of black glass formed from a molten flow 1300 years ago. No plants grow there yet. In fact, apart from splendid specimens of *Penstemon davidsonii* there was little we had not already seen.

On the wetter western side of the Cascades is Bohemia

Iris tenax



Mountain. In 2002, Loren Russell, an authority on Pacific Northwest flora, kindly escorted us on a hike on Bohemia Mountain, a few miles east of Cottage Grove in the fertile Willamette Valley. Here, *Rhododendron macrophyllum* was a surprise – one does not normally associate this genus with the United States – but it is quite common along the Cascade Range in suitable habitat. July was a little late for some of the flowers but we nevertheless saw



Trillium ovatum

Lilium washingtonianum, *Dicentra formosa*, *Trillium ovatum* and *Penstemon cardwellii*, a less commonly seen member of section Dasanthera. Again it was a privilege to be escorted by an enthusiastic expert. Together with Loren's wife Flo and well-known NARGS member Louise Parsons, we enjoyed a picnic lunch at the mountain summit.

Further south is Crater Lake. Not a brilliant plant site in July, although there were good phlox cushions in the lava field. The main attraction is the two mile diameter caldera of the extinct volcano, now a lake, which our spouses demanded to visit. And rightly, I admit.

South-west of here, in Jackson and Josephine counties, you may find an extraordinary variety of plants. South-western Oregon, together with north-western California, has the largest concentration of ultramafic soils in western North America. Soils weathered from ultramafic rocks, which are igneous rocks containing an abnormally high level of silicates, are commonly deficient in nitrogen and phosphorus.

Here, in early July 2002 we found several lilies in flower, of which *L. vollmeri* (growing in a wet roadside ditch) and *L. pardalinum* were the most spectacular. Near O'Brien were good quantities of *Calochortus howellii* and we found our target plant, *Cypripedium californicum*. Unfortunately it was long past flowering. A drive up a dirt road to Eight



Dollar Mountain yielded little of interest apart from the aforementioned Leopard Lily and a fine clump of *Epipactis gigantea* in full flower in a mountain stream. This orchid, incidentally, is very easy to grow and quickly forms large clumps if well suited.

It had been mid-May 2009 when we visited this area. We were deeply indebted to Gwen and Phil Phillips, veterans of many trips to America's west coast, for information about the local flora. "On the road from A to B stop X yards past milepost Y. Across the road in scrub you will find *Erythronium citrinum*." And so we did. What's more, we found *Calypso bulbosa* f. *alba*. It was growing under trees among discarded fencing and rusty barbed wire – horribly difficult to photograph.

The following day we took the main route up Eight Dollar Mountain Road, a good metalled road for several miles. At a wayside botanical area (not the well documented *Rough & Ready Botanical Wayside*, which had relatively little to show in bloom) we stopped to view an interesting selection of wildflowers, among them excellent forms of *Calochortus tolmiei* and *C. nudus*, as well as a single plant of the hybrid between the two. Another plant that caught our attention was *Allium falcifolium*, a neat little plant just two to three inches high, with a pair of sickle-shaped leaves and a tight head of strident magenta-pink urns.

There were more *Erythronium citrinum* higher up the mountain. A little further on huge swathes of a yellow flowered fawn lily turned out, on

Forms of *Calochortus tolmiei*



inspection, to be *E. oregonum*. These species are of confusingly similar appearance, except that in the former the stigma is entire, and in the latter it is trifid. We also found cushions of phlox, isolated *Dicentra formosa* and superb specimens of *Cornus nuttallii* in full bloom, clinging to the steep mountainside.

We left the area early next morning and headed east towards Ashland, stopping for a couple of hours botanizing at Cantrall Buckley State Park, at the top of a winding mountain road. On the way up

Lilium vollmeri



Calypso bulbosa alba

Allium falcifolium

were more *Calochortus tolmiei* and, nearer the summit, *Trillium ovatum* in good condition. Further excitement followed when Fred found a mass of pink erythroniums growing on an exposed rocky slope. They turned out to be *E. hendersonii*, which has a dark purple base to its pink petals.



Erythronium oregonum



Erythronium citrinum



Our next stop was Jacksonville Cemetery, the well-documented and important centre of the distributions of *Fritillaria affinis* and *F. gentneri*. We had seen the former by the Illinois River at Eight Dollar Mountain, but well past flowering. After much diligent searching Ruth found a decent flower of *F. affinis*, and then an all but dead flower of *F. gentneri*, whose petals parted company with their calyx when touched. Just outside the town, in dense woodland, we found and photographed a huge clump of *Trillium albidum*.

We drove to Ashland. I had previously contacted the chair of the local NARCS group and we had been invited to their meeting that evening. They were as friendly as gardeners are everywhere. Among them were the noted gardener & author Phyllis Gustafson, who invited us to visit her garden the following day, and Boyd Kline, getting on in years but still active, although his son now runs the famous Siskiyou nursery. In my



Erythronium klamathense
Hesperochiron pumilus

early years in the AGS, Dave King and the late Frank Tindall often spoke about their meetings with him.

Next morning we spent a couple of hours in Phyllis's attractively designed garden, where she grows a wide range of plants from trees to choice alpins in troughs, crevices and rocky beds in a relatively mild but dry environment. Daphnes, one of her favourite genera, thrive there.

The previous day, Phyllis had escorted local group members on a field trip to an area where the snow had only recently gone. She gave us directions to the site. We drove up to a mountain loop road off the somewhat unfortunately named *Dead Indian Memorial Road* and almost immediately were in a damp meadow with *Fritillaria pudica* dotted about. Flowers were uniformly yellow but varied in size and some pedicels held two blooms. There were plenty of *Fritillaria affinis* too – but all in bud!

We drove slowly up the loop, stopping at likely-looking sites. So early in the season there was not a great variety but we saw several plants new to us. In very damp areas were good colonies of *Olsynium douglasii*,



Erythronium hendersonii

which some of you may remember as *Sisyrinchium*. Most were pinkish red but there were a few albinos. Other attractive plants with their feet in or near water included *Hesperochiron pumilus*, *Hydrophyllum capitatum* var. *capitatum* and a very pretty annual, *Downingia yina*.

A little higher, in open and slightly drier ground we came upon exquisite little *Erythronium klamathense*. In the sparse soil of a subalpine meadow it was no more than three inches tall. It has white petals, yellow at the base, and plain bright green leaves with a slightly undulate edge.



Calochortus tolmiei x nudus

Fritillaria affinis



The final chapter of my notes takes us back into Washington State, July 2004, and Mount Hood, an extinct - or possibly just sleeping - volcano. From our comfortable little lodge it was an

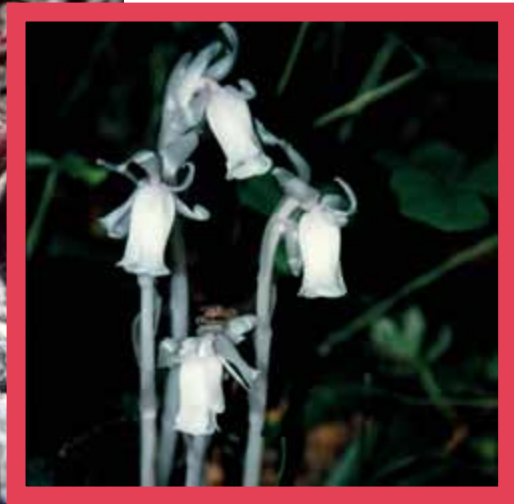
Fritillaria pudica





easy walk into a protected area of ancient conifer forest. In the dank gloom we were confronted by an astonishing plant, *Monotropa uniflora*, which appeared to have been carved from wax. We were exceptionally lucky to find this plant, a saprophytic member of the Ericaceae, in pristine condition. Gustafson describes it as “pure white, occasionally pinkish” but the plant we saw had a distinctly bluish cast, appropriate to one of its vernacular names, the Ghost Plant (a name also applied to *Graptopetalum paraguayense*). In more open situations, another ericaceous saprophyte, *Sarcodes sanguinea*, the Snow Plant, could be found, emerging from the melting snows.

Sarcodes sanguinea
Monotropa uniflora





Colours of *Phlox diffusa*

Skiers were the main hazard on the slopes of Mount Hood but away from the visitor centre where south-facing slopes were clear of snow there was a good variety of plants in flower, most spectacularly *Phlox diffusa*, whose petals in shades of pink and lilac overlap, as opposed to *P. hoodii*, whose petals do not. As usual at these levels there was an assortment of cushion plants in the screes, with lupins and penstemons wherever there was a little more humus. For the bulbaholic, *Calochortus subalpinus* was the gem. Less spectacular than some, it is subtly variable in its shades of white and in the furriness of the tiny hairs on the petals.

Erythronium montanum





Erythronium grandiflorum : red and white anthers

Our final destination was Mount Rainier National Park, where we had booked four nights at the Copper Creek B&B (a type of lodging uncommon in the US) which has an excellent restaurant and is just four miles from the park's entrance. Mount Rainier is a must-see if you visit these parts. Today it is 4390 metres high, although until it blew its top six millennia ago it was around 1800 metres higher. At subalpine levels spring arrives some time in June whereas at higher levels *Erythronium montanum*, for example, was at its peak in the first week of July.

We had a gentle hike on our first day, from Snow Lake Trailhead. After passing good stands of tall and very un-alpine looking Bear Grass, *Xerophyllum tenax*, we came across a small lake with three intermingling “wee *Ericas*” as our SRGC forum queen Maggi Young would say: *Cassiope mertensiana*, *Phyllodoce empetriformis*, and - with its feet all but in the lake - *Kalmia microphylla*.

Breakfast at the Copper Creek was good. Porridge was followed by toast and blackberry butter. Fortified, we set off to the Sunrise Entrance to the park on its drier eastern side. Apart from *Erythronium montanum* and *E. grandiflorum*, some of the alpine here had a distinctly European look about them, such as *Aster alpigenus*, *Erigeron peregrinus*, *Potentilla flabellifolia*, *Veronica cusickii* and *Pulsatilla occidentalis* (which American botanists include in *Anemone*), reflecting local variations on a group of genera with a circumpolar distribution.

In this area, the two erythroniums grow close together and flowering times overlap. The two species are superficially very similar but apparently do not hybridize. A group of local amateur botanists on a field trip told us they had never seen a likely ‘mule’.

Richard Ramsden, who had guided us on Tronsen Ridge, had given us detailed directions to find *Calochortus macrocarpus* near Rimrock in the William Douglas Wilderness Park, about forty miles east of Rainier. We found the site and after a good deal of walking up and down the road located a few plants in thin grass on a very steep roadside slope. It took



Castilleja miniata

Kalmia microphylla

even longer to wait for the wind to drop sufficiently to get a worthwhile photo.

Our final visit was to the eerily silent Mount St Helens National Volcanic Monument. This is one place where the over-used cliché ‘awe inspiring’ is appropriate. On May 18th 1980 the volcano erupted with the force of more than twenty thousand atomic bombs. The explosion robbed it of four hundred metres of its 2960 metres height, leaving a mile-wide crater on its north face. Nearby Spirit Lake is still clogged with the remains of many thousands of trees blown into it. A quarter of a century on, when we visited, Nature was fighting back. Trees were growing and everywhere we could see plant life regenerating. *Penstemon fruticosus* and *Castilleja miniata* were in flower in every available niche.

The Pacific Northwest is a superb area for plant hunting. We usually stay in mid-price motel chains such as *Super8*, which cater largely for business clients and are generally efficiently run and clean. Booking ahead online is straightforward. Car hire is essential and competition between the big companies keeps prices low by European standards. Fuel is a good deal cheaper (although a US gallon is less than its imperial equivalent). Roads are quiet outside the larger towns and cities and drivers are almost invariably courteous. We always try to make contact with local members of NARCS and have never regretted it. Online alpine forums make this acquaintance easier than ever before.

References

- Mark Turner & Phyllis Gustafson (2006), *Wildflowers of the Pacific Northwest*, Timber Press
- Theodore Niehaus (1976), *Pacific States Wildflowers*, Houghton Mifflin Co. (This guide is the most useful in the field)
- Lewis J Clark (1976), *Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest*, Gray’s Publishing, Hardback (but too heavy for your rucksack!)

Obituary: John Lawson

It is with much sadness that we report the death of John Lawson on 13th November 2010, even as SRGC members were gathering for the club's Annual General Meeting at Scone. For many of us, memories flood back to trips made to the



late Jack Drake's legendary Inshriach Alpine Plant Nursery. Customers were invariably met by an elegantly clad gentleman who would quietly enquire if they would like any help: this was John Lawson. If you decided to accept his advice you would probably end up with a selection of boxes brimming with immaculately grown and neatly labelled alpine plants. A trip to Inshriach was not only expensive (such was the array of tempting plants) but also highly uplifting, with the beautifully planted gardens in such a natural landscape offering a sanctuary for some of the most beautiful and often rare Himalayan species.

John was born in Essex and, following his formative education there, moved north to stay with an aunt in Aberdeen during the war. He was a pupil at the Robert Gordon School in Aberdeen. Having left school, he commenced a horticultural career at Ben Reid's Nursery. That job was cut short when he was called up to the RAF to serve as a mechanic at Kinloss and Lossiemouth. When demobbed, he took part in the three-year horticultural diploma course at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh.

In 1949, he moved to Aviemore to work for Jack Drake's nursery (he had spotted an advert in *The Lady* magazine). Jack and he developed the nursery and gardens into one of the most visited and best known alpine nurseries in the world. John became a business partner in 1955 and married his wife, Christine, in 1958. They have two children, Dianne and Susan, themselves both married, with children. John retired in 1999, selling the business to John and Gunnbjorg Borrowman. He and Christine then moved to Spey Bank and lived close to their daughter Susan. John was able to follow his pursuits, including golf, horse riding and making violins.

The funeral service, held at the Insh Parish Church was, quite naturally, a sad occasion where many came to offer their support to Christine and the girls as well as to dwell for a moment on John's life and to share happy memories. I had the privilege of serving my apprenticeship under John's tutelage in 1976 and followed immediately after Ron McBeath's lengthy employment at Inshriach. Ron was amongst many notable horticulturists who had the privilege of working for John. I thoroughly enjoyed my stint with John and in the exceptionally long and dry summer of 1976 we found nursery management highly challenging, as local water supplies were only just renewed on a daily basis. Many have

commented to me on their own memories of John and these are much the same as mine - most notably a naturally warm approach to customers and visitors, exceptional patience with his staff, and an unceasing ability to work long and enduring hours. As happy customers opened up their immaculately packed parcels, filled with the most sumptuous treasures including perhaps some *Lewisia* 'Sunset Strain' or a collection of petiolarid primulas, little would they know about the work that had gone into the packing of these parcels; John and Christine were masters of this art.

During John's fifty years of involvement, working and running the nursery business, Inshriach remained right at the top of the list as alpine plant nurseries went. No one could surpass their collection of *Meconopsis*, Himalayan primulas (most notably the Soldanelloids and Petiolarids), autumn-flowering gentians, *Celmisia*, compact cushion-forming phloxes, *Lewisia*, as well as woodlanders, *Nomocharis* and *Incarvillea*. I will never forget a small trough filled to the brim with a spring gentian, *G. verna* x *pumila* (only a few metres from the shop!); I smiled constantly as customers almost fell over it with wonderment as well as leaving with an extra three plants they had not planned to purchase. As I reflect on these many treasures, I will now carefully plant and look after a specimen of *Erigeron* 'Canary Bird', first brought to the fore by John Lawson in the early 1970s. His influence on the world of alpinists was highly significant and he will be sadly missed. As his daughter, Dianne commented, "My dad was dedicated to his family and work. We will always remember his boundless energy and love of the outdoors".

Jim Jermyn

Autumn bouquet at the Scone AGM (Jean Band)



Rievers Group Discussion Weekend

23 – 25 September 2011



It's all change for the Discussion Weekend in 2011. A new team, a new venue and a new date. In a unique cross-border collaboration, groups north and south of the Border have laid aside old cattle-rustling rivalries and combined as the Rievers Group to organize this annual SRGC high spot. For the next two years the Reivers will run the discussion weekend at the Cairndale Hotel in Dumfries. So please put it in your diary now!

Dumfries has excellent transport links: it is close to the major motorways (M74 and M6); it is served by a railway station close to the hotel; and it has direct connection with the ferry terminals at Stranraer, Cairnryan and Troon. The list of attractions in and around Dumfries is mind-blowing, so whether your taste is for Rabbie Burns, the Red Kite, mountain biking or Beltie Country, Galloway has something for you.

The Cairndale is a town centre hotel with a full range of facilities – a large function suite where registration, showing and sales are on one level, a swimming pool and other leisure facilities. There is one bedroom fully equipped for major disabilities and there are lifts to floors in the main hotel only. Please let us know on the booking form if you have any special needs such as a room near lifts, or other facilities.

A good number of twin or double rooms has been made available for us but the number of single rooms is very small. If you wish to share a room please indicate the other person's name on the back of the form. We will help you find a sharer if you need one. Extra nights are available at the rates quoted on the booking form. The weekend is earlier than usual so please note that the booking form and fee should be returned to Gill Lee as soon as possible and no later than 10 June 2011.

The registration secretary: Mrs Gill Lee, Inglenook Cottage, The Neuk, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7NF, 01668 213925.

RESIDENT (per person)

Friday dinner - Sunday afternoon tea, double	£198
Friday dinner - Sunday afternoon tea, single	£258
Saturday morning - Sunday afternoon, double	£140
Saturday morning - Sunday afternoon, single	£170

NON-RESIDENT

Saturday - morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea	£42
Saturday - morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner	£69
Saturday - dinner	£28
Sunday - morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea	£42

PROGRAMME

Friday 23rd September

1600	Registration
1600 - 1730	Plant Staging
1800	Dinner
1945	President's Welcome Address
2000	The Bulb Group Lecture: Kevin Hughes - 'Trilliums'
2130	Small Bulb Exchange

Saturday 24th September

0800 - 0900	Plant Staging
0830	Registration
	Visit to the Garden of Cosmic Speculation
1300	Show opens
1330	Rick Lambert - 'Dianthus'
1435	The John Duff Lecture: Stan da Prato - 'Coastal Flowers of Scotland'
1545	Ger van den Beuken - 'Kacker Mountains of Turkey'
1900	Dinner
2100	Anton Edwards - 'Making the Rock Garden'
2130	Plant Auction

Sunday 25th September


0830	Registration
0930	John Massey - 'A Garden For All Seasons'
1100	Rick Lambert - 'Slovenia'
1345	Ger van den Beuken - 'Ger's Way of Growing Tricky Plants'
1440	Maggi Young - 'Joining the dots ... connecting gardeners around the world'





Scottish Garden Visits after Alpines 2011

These illustrated gardens and many others await your visit in April 2011



The Scottish Rock Garden Club issues a warm invitation to SRGC member delegates to the *Alpines without Frontiers* conference (organised with the Alpine Garden Society, to be held in Nottingham in April 2011) to visit private and public Scottish gardens after the conference. Because of a lack of bookings, the AGS has cancelled three of the tours planned around *Alpines without Frontiers*, including the two hoped-for tours to Scottish gardens.

Happily, *all* the Scottish gardens listed in the previously proposed tours - *and more* - will be available for visiting on a private basis by SRGC delegates after the Nottingham conference. Instead of organised tours, members will have the opportunity to make their own way to these fine Scottish gardens. There will be private gardens of SRGC members and, of course, a wide choice of public gardens, many of which should be approaching their peak in April. For administrative



reasons, the private gardens will only be open to visits by SRGC members.

Details of the individual gardens, their locations and the dates they are opening are being sent to those who have contacted us to register their interest. Full road maps will be available at the conference.

We will endeavour to put delegates who wish to join others for travel in contact with each other in good time before the event.

Many SRGC enthusiasts are very happy to welcome visitors to their gardens after the conference and are looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible!

To register your interest in visiting these gardens you may email info@srgc.org.uk or, for those without internet connection, please write to:

SRGC Garden Visits April 2011
c/o Margaret Young
63 Craigton Road
Aberdeen
AB15 7UL
United Kingdom

Photos (come on the tour to find out where!) are by Stan da Prato and Angela Townsley



Galanthus plicatus



Galanthus nivalis sandersii

Galanthus plicatus

**The Scottish Rock Garden Club,
The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Cambo Snowdrops
& Christie's Nursery**

Snowdrops, Spring Bulbs & You – a Celebration of Spring

With Peter Erskine, Brian Duncan, Katherine Erskine,
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0930 – 1700 Friday 18th February 2011

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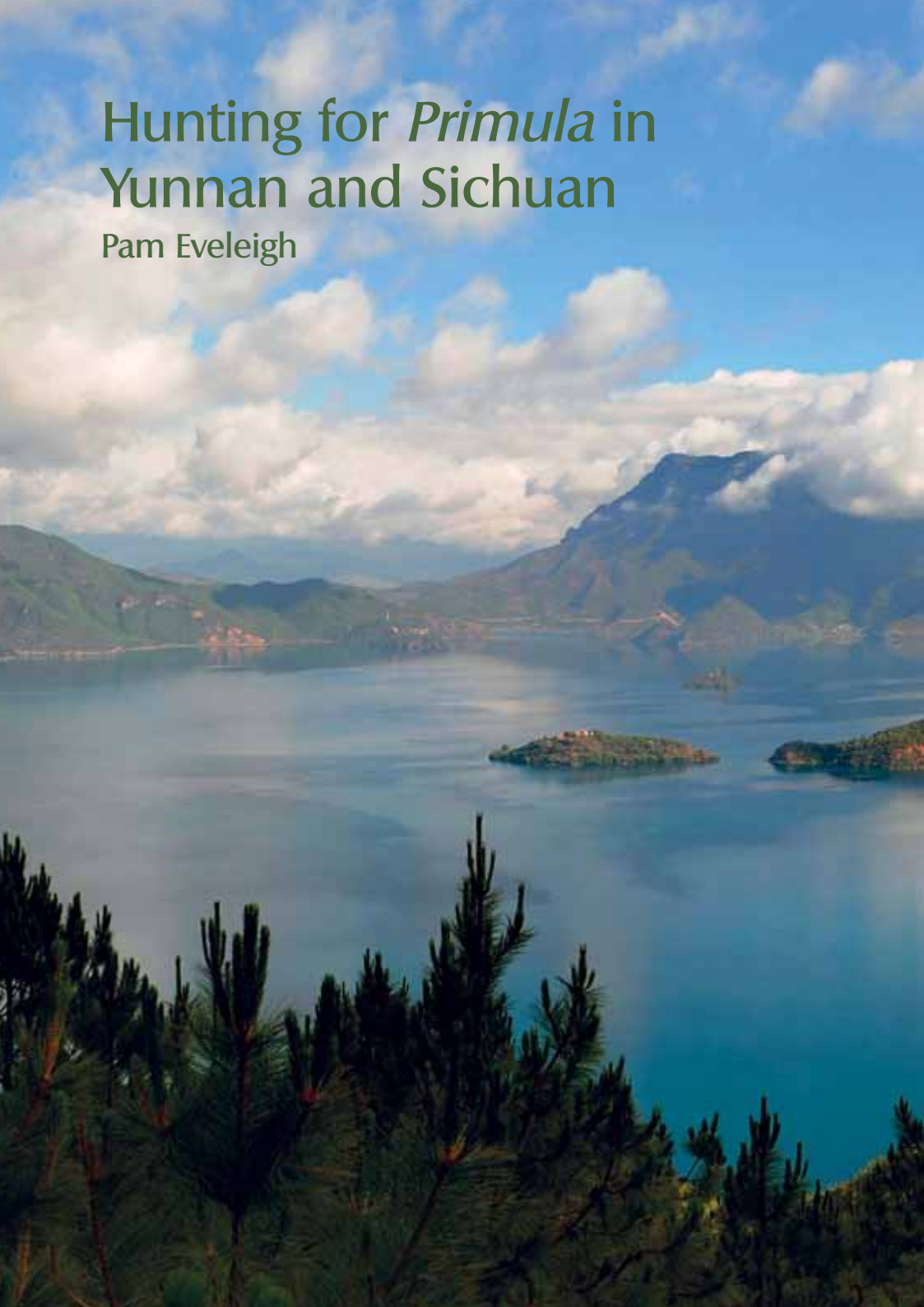
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Galanthus elwesii (a new find)

Hunting for *Primula* in Yunnan and Sichuan

Pam Eveleigh



Lugu Lake on the border of Yunnan and Sichuan





The view from the Hong Shan (4630 metres) is an alpine plant lover's dream of endless turf, screens and rocky ridges. The view at my feet is an equally impressive Smörgåsbord of choice alpine plants. Pink cushions of *Androsace delavayi* and *Diapensia purpurea* intermingle with mats of *Potentilla stenophylla*, and low growing shrubs of *Rhododendron saluenense* shelter maroon *Cremanthodium campanulatum*. Sprinkled in the scree are perfect specimens of *Corydalis melanochlora*, *C. benecincta*, *C. calcicola*, *Soroaseris rosularis* and bulbs *Lilium lophophorum* and *Fritillaria delavayi*. The only spoilers to this scene are the power lines running through the meadow, the convoy of mining trucks kicking up dust on the road and the sight of my companions disappearing over the ridge. Despite my best intentions to catch up, I'm enthralled by the sight of a shallow depression filled with the purple blossoms of *Primula nanobella*. I

Above: Hong Shan

Below: *Primula nanobella*





stop to check as many of the flowers as possible, looking for the dark purple ring around the central pompom that helps distinguish this species from *Primula bella*. Although this group of plants varies widely, all are within the parameters defining the species and I carefully document this with pictures. My companions forgive me for stopping, because this is a *Primula* trip and, since we are half way through our tour, everyone is used to my bringing up the rear.

I had been intrigued when David Rankin emailed and asked if I would come on a trip to China in the spring of 2009 - and that he wouldn't take 'No' for an answer! He further explained that all the participants would be interested in primulas: David & Stella Rankin, well known for the primulas they grow at Kevock Garden Plants nursery in Scotland; Wu Zhikun, a Chinese botanist from the Kunming Institute of

Corydalis calcicola





Route through Yunnan



Wu Zhikun & *Meconopsis*

Botany (KIB), who specializes in primulas; and me, Canadian webmaster of *Primula World* - a visual reference for the genus *Primula*. Thanks in part to funding by the SRGC Exploration Fund, I was able to accept his invitation.

The expedition route would take us through north Yunnan and southwest Sichuan from June 5th to June 22nd, 2009. This is one of the most botanically rich areas in the world, supporting roughly 40% of

Fritillaria delavayi on the Hong Shan





Diapensia purpurea
Lilium lophophorum





Corydalis melanochlora
Corydalis benecincta





Cremanthodium campanulatum
Sorozeris rosularis



Primula boreio-calliantha





A proposed new sub-species: *Meconopsis wilsonii* ssp. *orientalis*



Meconopsis wumungensis

China's vascular plant species and many endemics. It is also one of the richest areas for *Primula* species. The *Flora of China* notes that three hundred *Primula* species are found in China and over half are distributed in Yunnan and Sichuan. Our trip covered approximately 2200 km in a 4x4 jeep on highways and rough mountain roads.

The benefits of a focused expedition like this were apparent from the start. Four pairs of eyes continually scanned the roadside for *Primula* and there was no question about stopping when a sighting was made, no matter how late in the day nor how tired we were. We admired other choice alpiners but most of our efforts were dedicated to finding *Primula* specimens, looking for variation and identifying species. If the *Primula* taxonomy in an area was complex, we

Wu Meng Shan (with stairs up the cliff!)





Primula faberi

combined our expertise to formulate hypotheses and then immediately searched for specimens that could prove or disprove our notions. Wu acted as both guide and participant, leading us to *Primula* locations discovered during previous fieldwork and from sightings made by colleagues at KIB.

My website *Primula World* (www.primulaworld.com) is based on the adage that a picture is worth a thousand words. In my *Species Gallery* you can find images of *Primula* species to compare with instead of deciphering complicated botanical descriptions. After trying to identify species from single images sent to me, I realize the benefits of comprehensive photographic documentation. Over time, I have developed a list of *Primula* characteristics, which I use as a guide

for photography in the field. They include: flowers (calyx, tube, heterostyly and petal shape), inflorescence (pedicel), whorls, bracts, stems, seed capsules, bud scales, leaf detail of front and back (petiole, margin and length), plant height, farina, and general habitat. If there are insects on the plant they are also of interest. Lastly, I strive to capture an image that exhibits the beauty of the species. On average, I took fifty



Primula bulleyana

images per species, which left little time for examining other plant genera. Thankfully, all members of the expedition recognized the importance of this task and helped me to find suitable specimens and set up the shots.

It would be overwhelming for the reader to read about the fifty *Primula* species we identified or the abundance of other choice plants we encountered on this trip, so here are some highlights.

Primula aurantiaca x bulleyana





Wu Meng Shan – June 5th

Setting out at dawn to avoid traffic in Kunming, a city of six million people, we made our way north to Wu Meng Shan. Our first exciting plants weren't primulas but were magnificent specimens of a *Meconopsis*. These monocarpic plants produced flowering scapes over 1.2



Above & right:
Primula blattariformis

metres tall, covered in up to a hundred violet flowers, and had lovely dissected leaves with red ribs and long hairs. Our detailed images were the centre of a discussion about the differences between *Meconopsis violacea* and *Meconopsis wilsonii*.

They are now proposed to be a new sub-species of *M. wilsonii* ssp. *orientalis*. We also found *Meconopsis wumungensis* growing on the cliff side. This little-known species, described in 1979, is endemic to the area. Described as an annual, though perhaps monocarpic, it is a small plant with lobed leaves and a single blue flower per stem.

A series of stairs led us steeply through cliffs to a high plateau featuring wet meadows dotted with idyllic lakes. A splash of yellow caught my eye and soon I was crawling through the wet, boggy meadow on hands and knees, thrilled with this find. It was *Primula faberi*, a member of the Amethystina section, whose members are described as having involute leaves



Right & below:
Primula aurantiaca & habitat





(the emerging leaf is rolled inwards) rather than the normal revolute leaves (the emerging leaf is rolled backwards) of the majority of the genus. When in Yunnan in 2007, I examined plants of another member of this section, *P. amethystina* var. *brevifolia*, and found that it was in fact revolute, though the leaf quickly folds inwards as it ages, giving a false impression of being involute. Here I had a chance to examine *P. faberi* and confirm that this species also has revolute leaves. Recent images of *Primula kingii* from Pete Boardman (and see *The Rock Garden*, 121, p65) and *Primula dickieana* have confirmed this for these other members of the Amethystina section.

Left & below:
Primula geraniifolia





Stellera chamaejasme and variants

Yanyuan – June 8th

On the high point of the road leading from Xichang to Yanyuan we found one bedraggled specimen of *P. aurantiaca* growing in dry-looking scree. Despite its appearance, we all excitedly took many images. Of course, we had only to walk around the curve in the road to find much better specimens! Just fifteen minutes after continuing in the jeep, I spotted a flash of yellow colour beside the road. By the time we stopped we were well past the spot and had to back up; but it was worth it. The plant that caught my eye was a lone specimen of *Primula bulleyana* and, as it turned out, the only specimen of that

Arisaema candidissimum

species we saw all day. Several plants of *P. aurantiaca* were growing nearby but the superstar was a single plant that Wu and David quickly identified as a hybrid between *P. aurantiaca* and *P. bulleyana*. This hybrid is in cultivation but had not been discovered before in the wild.

Acting on information regarding primulas from Wu's colleagues at the KIB, we drove to a monastery near the town of Yanyuan. This area is at a relatively low elevation of 2660 m. After parking at the monastery we climbed the surrounding dry pine-forested hills, finding *Stellera chamaejasme* var. *chrysantha* and yellow-flowered gesneriads but no *Primula*. Finally we descended, arriving at the road a couple of hundred metres down from the jeep where, ironically, the primula we sought was growing on the road cut. This species we later identified as *P. blattariformis*. Convinced that we would also find a second *Primula* species mentioned by his colleagues, Wu speculated that a plant he found was a similar but yellow-flowered species. Promptly, we made a list of the distinguishing characteristics of the yellow species *versus* the pink species and then set out to find supporting or disproving evidence. Eventually we all agreed that we had found only one species, with cream-coloured buds that turn pink when open. Perhaps there is a second species to be found here on a future trip.

Muli - June 9th to June 12th

Until 1950, Muli was a semi-independent kingdom ruled by hereditary lama-kings. It is now an autonomous region, similar to Tibet, and becoming a more common place to botanize. A short hike from the road at the top of the unnamed pass into Muli was made miserable by the pouring rain and persistent leeches. The trail side here was carpeted with *Primula aurantiaca*, one of the few orange-flowered species and easily distinguished by its lack of farina. Here too we saw plants that could

Primula vialii





Primula chungensis

Primula cf. obconica





Primula florida

easily be mistaken for *Cortusa* but were in fact *P. geraniifolia*. This forest species has drooping flowers of lilac with a white eye.

From the town of Muli we took two days to explore further to the north. Each day we started by travelling the same road but later branched out to separate valleys. The common stretch of road was interesting for the white form of *Arisaema candidissimum*. Higher up the road, we discovered a showy primula growing on the bare banks of the road. Unfortunately this is one species whose identification is ambiguous. For now I am calling it *P. cf. obconica* though it may be *P. malvacea*; this requires more study. On the first day we stopped at a high lake surrounded by swampy meadows. By the road we discovered many *Primula* with flowers past blooming on long wiry stems. Wu called these *P. monticola* - following the *Flora of China* - but John Richards considers it a variety of *P. pseudodenticulata*. A hike up a short hill by the lake was exciting for the profusion of *Roscoea cautleyoides* mixed with a superb pale-yellow form of *Stellera chamaejasme* that looks to be distinct from var. *chrysantha*. Two *Androsace* were growing here also: *A. spinulifera* and *A. rigida*. For me, the highlight of this day was *Primula vialii* just starting to bloom in the wet meadow. This species is common in cultivation though rare in the wild. Despite

Border: *Primula rockii* after flowering



Primula dryadifolia

the pouring rain, I made a quick survey to confirm that the wild plants showed no indications of being long-lived, a characteristic of cultivated plants. The second day terminated in a high valley and was unremarkable except for discovery of a dark orange heterostylous form of *P. chungensis*. This self-fertile species varies in flower colour from yellow to orange and is usually homostylous in cultivation. The plants preferred open shade in a mixed forest.

Lugu Lake – June 13th & June 14th

Situated on the border of Yunnan and Sichuan, Lugu Lake is a scenic spot catering to tourists. Our stay featured an ascent in a cable car, followed by a hike to the top of the Shi Di Shan. Unfortunately, the plants there were not in proportion to our efforts. The most interesting was *Primula florida*, also known by the name *P. blinii* as a result of taxonomic confusion. This delicate species grew only near the summit and features pink bell-shaped flowers, with long tubes and incised leaves coated underneath with white farina.

The real treasure in this area was discovered at a pass on the road from the lake to the south-west. Wu had been advised to look for a cushion *Primula* growing in the cliff beside the road. I thought we would find *P. bracteata*, a plant that fitted the habitat





View near Yading

and which I had seen on a previous trip in Yunnan. Instead, we found plants with sticky, resinous and spoon-shaped leaves without the farina seen on *P. bracteata*. This fits the description for *P. rockii*, a species not seen in cultivation for over forty years. All specimens were past flowering but, hopefully, someone will visit earlier in the season and confirm our identification by the yellow flowers.

Hong Shan – June 16th

The Hong Shan was by far the best alpine area we visited. The route up to the pass was notable for *Primula szechuanica* growing near a roadside stream. Unfortunately, the road is being widened for mining operations and I expect these plants to disappear. *P. szechuanica* is odd-looking because the yellow flowers, borne in whorls, have petals that recurve. The roadside also featured abundant masses of *P. boreio-calliantha* on northern slopes under large *Rhododendron* trees. This was simply one of the showiest *Primula* species we encountered. The flowers

Primula species, section Muscarioides *P. muscarioides* leaves, Hong Shan





On Cang Shan

were two cm across, a lovely deep shade of pink, and slightly zygomorphic. Each had as many as twelve flowers on one or two whorls and the spear-shaped leaves, covered in white farina, framed the stems perfectly.

On the pass, Wu guided us to a steep slope on which grew cushions of *P. dryadifolia*. But most of our time was spent examining a small *Primula* species, barely three cm tall and sporting a spike of many purple-blue flowers. It was obviously a member of the *Muscarioides* section but too small to be *P. muscarioides*. Wu thought that this group of plants illustrated *P. pinnatifida* as defined by the *Flora of China*, which lumps in *P. apoclita*. John Richards defines *P. apoclita* to be a very dwarf version of *P. muscarioides*. Once we had gathered leaves to photograph, it became clear that there were two distinct leaf types, one with deeply incised margins (pinnatifid) and the other with crenate margins. Immediately we were all on hands and knees searching for examples of plants with each type of leaf and it became apparent that all the plants

Primula spicata





that were blooming had leaves with crenate margins. The pinnatifid plants were not yet in bloom, although when I examined the rosette carefully the buds were apparent. The mystery of whether this second plant type represents a second species or not must wait until someone returns to document those plants in bloom.

Yading – June 18th

The view at Yading is truly magnificent. This reserve, tourist area and pilgrimage site is dominated by three sacred peaks of 6000 metres. David and Stella had been here before and discovered plants that have since been described as the new species *P. lilacina*. This is a stately member of the Muscarioides section with lilac-blue flowers and leaves thickly coated beneath with white farina. We took the day to hike up



the main valley, passing views that were documented by the explorer and botanist Joseph Rock in the 1920s and 1930s. Here we found another *Primula* species belonging to the Muscarioides section but it was unfamiliar to us all and would wait until we returned home to find out that this was *P. gracilentia*, not the showiest of primula - with closed flowers in an unremarkable shade of purple and with no farina to add interest. Nonetheless it was an exciting find because I had never before seen images of it. Some of the images show plants that may be hybrids between *P. lilacina* and *P. gracilentia*, so further investigation here would be useful.

Cang Shan – June 21st

It is June 21st and the last day of our expedition has arrived all too



Left:
*Omphalogramma
delavayi*

Below:
*Primula
membranifolia*



soon. We are in Dali, Yunnan, home to the famous three pagodas that are over one thousand years old. However, we only see them in passing because we are on a mission to hike the Cang Shan. Our route to the television tower has been botanized many times before;

nevertheless we are anxious to spot the *Primula* species known to be in this area. Travelling through forest on the lower part of the road, David spots a flash of colour that is *P. membranifolia*, a member of the Yunnanensis section and endemic to this area. A particularly nice specimen catches my eye and as I am positioning my camera I suddenly realize I have seen this species before – in my own garden, where it briefly bloomed then died in 2000! It was like seeing an old friend again.

Wu calls a surprise halt just before the end of the road and promptly disappears through dense forest beside a small stream. He is looking for *P. taliensis* – on information supplied by his colleagues. We don't find this

species but another one, out of bloom, and perhaps a member of the Davidii section. A quick survey of the



Primula serratifolia



nearby road bank reveals another endemic species, *P. spicata*. This charming species has deep-blue bell-shaped flowers with a face covered in white farina.

The road ends and we hike up through the misty forest. At 3700 metres we spot the first *P. serratifolia*. This is a gorgeous member of the Proliferae section with whorls of bell-shaped flowers, deep-yellow, neatly edged in white. Growing through

the moss floor is *Omphalogramma delavayi* with bright purple incised flowers. Here too grows *Primula calliantha*. Unfortunately, most are past flowering but the density of flower stalks tells that this was a spectacular sight earlier in the season. The type specimen for *Primula calliantha* comes from the Cang Shan, and I document this species thoroughly.

Aftermath

Now I have returned home and the hard part is done ... right? Wrong! I have over 6500 images and together with those from David and Wu they need to be backed up and sorted. All the *Primula* images are

examined, related to species descriptions, and compared with my other images. The globe is criss-crossed with emails between participants and genus experts, confirming findings and eventually agreeing identifications - sometimes after long discussions. A selection of images is now posted at my website, www.primulaworld.com.

Careful taxonomy is not a fast process and is subject to continuous improvement as our knowledge increases. Some of our observations are just pieces of a larger puzzle but each piece of information eventually helps determine relationships between species and solidifies cases for lumping or splitting species. This is illustrated by the story of *Primula hongshanensis*. This had been described as a new species in 2002, but in 2006 another paper claimed it to be a synonym for *P. boreio-calliantha*. At that time I did not have enough information to comment. The confusion had arisen because plants growing at Tianchi Lake had long been described as *P. boreio-calliantha* in accounts of previous expeditions. In 2007, I was able to document the Tianchi Lake plants but still did not have enough information to come to a conclusion. On this latest trip, I was able to document both *P. calliantha* from the type location on Cang Shan, as well as the Hong Shan plants. Now that all of the pieces of the puzzle are assembled, we agree that *P. hongshanensis* is indeed a synonym of

The *Primula* team at Lugu Lake



P. boreio-calliantha and that the plants at Tianchi Lake that caused the confusion are *P. calliantha* ssp. *bryophila*.

Our expedition has lived up to expectations and we are all pleased with the number of primulas we have seen. Best of all, we have a legacy of detailed *Primula* images that will prove useful for years to come; and we have the lasting friendship that comes from having met and travelled with each other.

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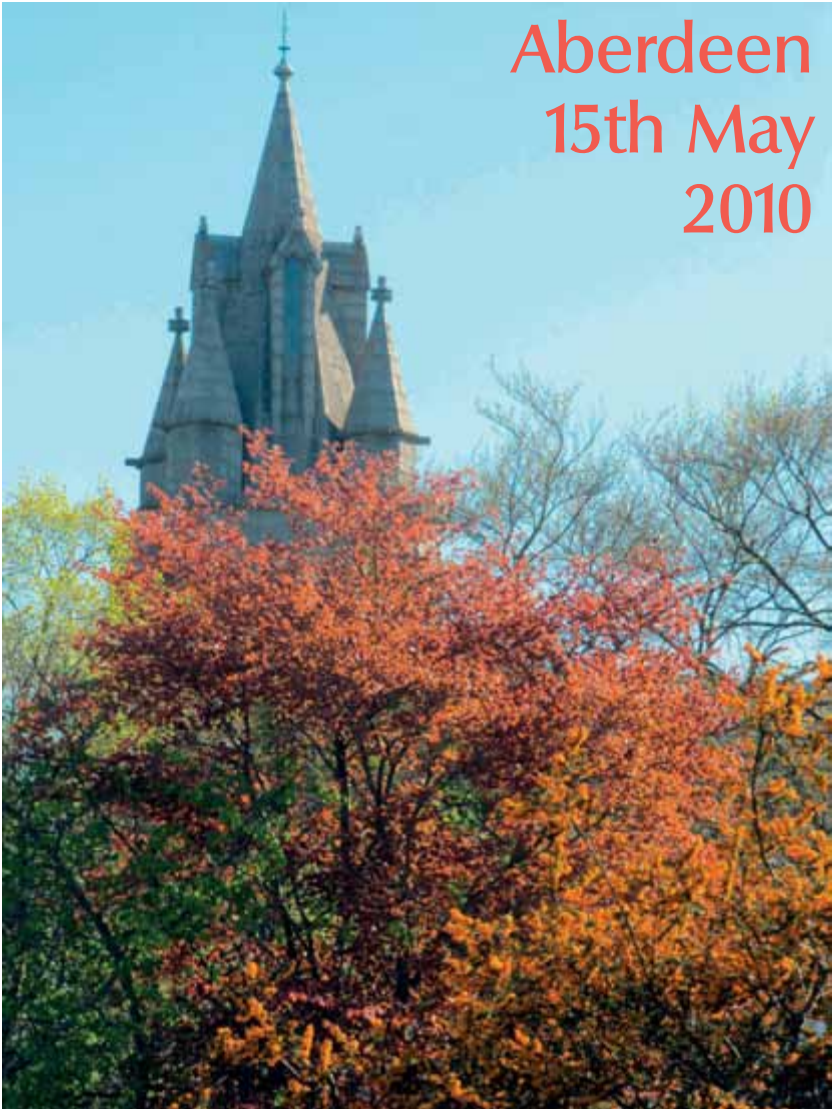
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Local Yi people, from rural areas of Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou & Guangxi



Aberdeen
15th May
2010



The home of the show: Ruthrieston West Church with *Berberis*
On the road to Aberdeen: daffodils in Angus





In the mountains with the RBGE: *Lewisia cotyledon* on the right with an apricot *Lewisia cotyledon* (Certificate of Merit) alongside

The show in Aberdeen is always very well supported by local members, who bring most of the exhibits. The quality is always very high and there is huge enthusiasm for joining in; I suspect some friendly persuasion by Mrs Show Secretary. Section 2 was refreshingly full, reflecting the number of novice exhibitors, although if a grower were only to show at Aberdeen they would remain a novice for several years unless they won first prizes with every plant. More enthusiasts come from further afield and for many this means a drive up the A90 via Perth and Dundee through the beautiful mid-May countryside. Beauty abounds: fresh leaves on trees and hedges; myriads of dandelions on the roadside; late flowering daffodils; rhododendrons; and fields of chrome-yellow rapeseed. As the shimmering sea is glimpsed south of Stonehaven you feel the tingle in the bones caused by the radioactive Aberdeen granite of the eponymous city! The last of the journey along South Anderson Drive gives you a taste of the city's floral beauty: gardens, roundabouts and roadsides bursting with flowers and bushes both lift the senses and prepare you for the floral treats ahead in the show.



The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh staged an especially wonderful exhibit. Their new backing picture sets off the plants perfectly. They were awarded a Gold Medal for the display, a Professional Forrest Medal for a large *Lewisia cotyledon* and a Certificate of Merit for their apricot *Lewisia cotyledon* ... well done John, Elspeth & Struan!

Fred Hunt won the Forrest Medal with *Lewisia columbiana* 'George Henley' - a massive plant with hundreds of perfect magenta flowers. Fred has shown this plant at Aberdeen for many years. I tried to find out who George Henley is and was directed by Google to a site for an actress Georgie Henley who appeared in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. There seem to be several George Henleys in the UK; does anyone know about ours?

It was a good year for American plants. From the eastern mountains, there were striking examples of *Uvularia grandiflora* and *Trillium grandiflorum flore pleno*, a fine *Trillium* always connected with Harold Esslemont. *Tiarella cordifolia* 'Cygnet' is a fine selection of the species. In the USA it is known colloquially as the *Allegheny Foamflower* - to me it sounds like a cowgirl in a bath. Grown as woodland plants, they are closely related to *Heuchera* and will hybridize with them. Imagine a plant with flowers like these on top of some of the new fabulous *Heuchera* foliage!



Lewisia columbiana 'George Henley' (Fred Hunt)



Tiarella cordifolia 'Cygnet'



Pteridophyllum racemosum



Gentiana acaulis (Anne and Viv Chambers)

Pteridophyllum racemosum is a species of flowering plant endemic to Japan. It is the only species in the mono-generic family Pteridophyllaceae, sometimes treated as a subfamily of Papaveraceae - so says Wikipedia. At Aberdeen, perhaps the Scottish city closest to Japan, it was superb! Not to be outdone, the Himalaya also provided a great plant,

Iris iberica ssp. *lycotis* (RBGE)



Androsace studiosorum 'Doksa' which in the past has graced these pages and won the Forrest medal for Cyril Lafong. The type species is pink. And Scotland? - Nick Boss produced a *Silene acaulis* in an astonishing fifteen inch pan. Anne and Viv Chambers showed a magnificent *Gentiana acaulis* that delighted everyone. This species is the emblem of the Alpine Garden Society and, had this plant been exhibited at an AGS show I like to think it would have merited a Farrer Medal.

As ever, the variety of plants within the granite walls of Ruthrieston Church Hall was a breath-taking tribute to the exhibitors. Among them were: *Hyacinthoides vincentina*; *Iris acutiloba* ssp. *longipetala*; *Calanthe tricarinata*; *Aeonium arboreum atropurpureum nigrum* 'Schwarzkopf' - taking me back to Tenerife with its purple-black head and very hard to beat for show and shine; *Leiophyllum buxifolium* 'Nanum', a fabulous ericaceous plant shown by Cyril Lafong; *Dryas drummondii*; *Centaurea lagascana*, a Spaniard from Margaret and Henry Taylor in Invergowrie; *Myosotis eximea* from New Zealand South Island; American *Phaiophleps biflora*; *Calochortus tolmiei*; *Iris mariae*; *Incarvillea himalayensis* 'Frank Ludlow'; *Leucocoryne coquimbensis*, a liliaceous plant from Chile known as 'Glory of the Sun'; *Allium akaka*; *Fritillaria pyrenaica* 'Picos Form'; *Primula handeliana* and *Primula gemmifera* var. *monantha*.

Come and see for yourself in 2011!

Sandy Leven



Iris mariae

Iris mariae is a rare *Oncoclycus* found in a limited area of Egypt and Israel. It has a short rhizome with 10-12 cm long leaves and 25 cm stems holding a pink to violet flower.

This is a very attractive dwarf species restricted to stable sand dunes and loessial sand in the Negev desert. In cultivation it requires very good drainage, restricted water in winter and protection from severe frosts.

Right: *Iris mariae* with its generous instructions

Below: Two medal winners: Fred Hunt and RBGE's Elspeth Macintosh





Edinburgh 10th April 2010

The generic name *Primula* derives from the Latin *primus* (first) – indicating the early-flowering habit of many European species. Indeed, *P. veris*, the common cowslip, should be considered by virtue of its scientific appellation to be the first flower of spring; *ver* being Latin for spring. So it was not altogether unsurprising after such a hard and long winter that on the first, bright, warm and spring day of the new year the show hall should be filled with an exuberance of primulas.

In Class 1, a staggering 24 out of 30 entries were primulas, with Cyril Lafong's winning six-pan containing splendid specimens of *Primula* 'Broadwell Milkmaid' and *P. marginata* 'Casterino'. Against very stiff competition, the K C Corsar Challenge Trophy for the best European or American primula was awarded to David and Stella Rankin for a bountiful *P. allionii* x *pubescens* 'Lilac Fairy'. The corresponding trophy for the best Asiatic primula was won by Geoff Hill for *Primula* 'Peter Klein', a stunning specimen whose bright pink, yellow-eyed flowers, up to one inch wide, danced in a gentle and much welcomed draught.

In Section II, competition was equally stiff, with many primulas that stood company with those of more experienced growers. Sid Lamb proved that with a good couple of pans of *PP*. 'Wharfedale Village' and 'Holden Clough'. Another Section II exhibitor, Mike Hicks, confirmed the value of the seed exchange by advising that his very fine *P. darialica* had been sown in January 2008 in 50:50 grit, John Innes No 2 compost, and had been pricked out in 2009 to flower in 2010. A mere two years from seed to show for a prize-winning plant is an encouragement to us all.

Primulas also featured prominently in the non-competitive Section IV. The RBGE showed an exquisite selection of wild-collected *P. allionii*, all in perfect compact character. Sam Sutherland provided a super selection of plants to illustrate subtle colour variation and Alan & Jane Thomson showed a delightful home-made fish box trough with a bouillabaisse of *allionii*, *marginata* and *auricula* hybrids.

But of course there was more to the show than just primulas. So what else caught the eye? To many of us, growing *Dionysia* to flowering is a Sisyphean task, but not to Bill Robinson, Cyril Lafong and Sam

Sutherland. They showed, respectively, an exquisite *Dionysia bryoides* with cloisonné flowers, the cliff-dwelling, sunny *D. gaubae* and a delectably bejewelled *D. 'Monica'*. Such successful growers of dionysias well deserve the admiration of their fellow rock gardeners for their skill and dedication.

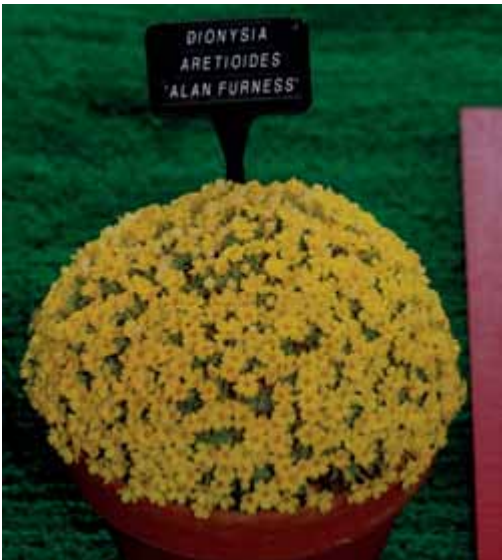
Bulbs also featured heavily at the show. John Lee was awarded the Henry Todd Carnethy Quaich for the best bulbous plant, *Tulipa polychroma*. Hailing from Iran and Afghanistan, this charming dwarf species lit up the hall with its stary white flowers complete with Cadbury crème egg yolk centres. The reverse of the petals justifies its appellation. The plant was awarded a Certificate of Merit, as were *Iris willmottiana* (a Juno iris from the RBGE) and an electrifying *Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* var. *leichtlinii* shown by Cyril Lafong. This named variety apparently only differs from the species in its greater area of white in the throat; it would be interesting to compare the two on the show benches.

The best bulb in Section II, which was also awarded the Midlothian Bowl for best plant in the section, went to Mike Hicks for a splendid *Iris bucharica*. Fellow section competitor Kathleen Hendry pushed hard with a super *Fritillaria meleagris*. It may be a common plant but, when grown well, who can resist the charm of its nodding snake's head flower? This fritillary is also known as the *Checked Daffodil* - providing a useful link to the narcissi displays. Though only two classes, there was a large number of entries - *bulbocodium*, *jonquilla*, *tazetta* and *rupicola* species, sub-species and forms as well as numerous hybrids - all jostling for our attention. In view of the number and increasing interest, perhaps the time has come for more specific narcissi classes. The petticoat *bulbocodium* species always attract much interest. Bill Robinson showed a form of *Narcissus obesus* which, to judge



Primula hirsuta and kind advice

If in doubt, read the label!





Pleione 'Shantung'

by the size of the corona, was clearly destined for the stouter figure. There were some equally delightful specimens of *N. rupicola* that were clearly enjoying the spring fiesta, together with large pans of well-grown hybrids proving once again that the commonplace can - when well presented - command attention.

Saxifrage entries were a little thin this year, though the quality

remained. Show secretaries Carole and Ian Bainbridge were awarded the Bill Mackie Quaich for a very fine *Saxifraga georgei*. There were also fewer rhododendrons than usual. Even so, Bob Meaden's winning entry *Rhododendron 'Snow Lady'* would have been a worthy winner at any time. *R. 'Snow Lady'* is a cross between *R. leucaspis* (Tibet & Yunnan, China), from which it gets its white flowers and *R. ciliatum* (Bhutan and Nepal) which has hairy bark and leaves.

Violas are underrated and - sadly - often overlooked. Henry and Margaret Taylor showed *Viola bubanii* (Violet Mountain Pansy) grown from wild collected seed at 1329 m on Picos de Europa in Spain. This would be a super plant for the rock garden as it flowers in its native habitat from March through to October and ought to be hardy even in our climate.

After such a severe winter, the quality of plants on show in Section I was truly a credit to all exhibitors. The Forrest Medal was awarded to *Jeffersonia dubia alba*, shown by Cyril Lafong. Tom Green received a deserved Certificate of Merit for his tightly flowered *Sebaea thomasii* which in the view of many was an equal to the *Jeffersonia*. Who would be a SRGC judge in such circumstances?

The Edinburgh Show is always well supported by local members. Such is the dedication to support the show that it is rumoured that Stan

Tecophilaea cyanocrocus





Saxifraga georgei

da Prato made three round trips to bring his plants. He was rightly rewarded as he took the Reid Rose Bowl for the most points in Section I. In Section II Mike Hicks won the corresponding Bronze Medal, although he was pushed by Graham Catlow who, in his first ever show, exhibited some very good winning plants, especially a fine *Pleione* 'Shantung' (*forrestii* x *confusa*), artistically presented in a hollowed tree trunk.

One of the more unusual plants shown on the RBGE display was *Brassica balearica*, which doubtless was overlooked by many. This is a cliff-hugging endemic cabbage from Majorca with yellow flowers borne in short racemes. Seed was collected by local members Struan Harley and

Androsace vandellii



Primula allionii from wild seed

Elsbeth Macintosh. It is occasionally seen in cultivation for its ornamental rather than its culinary qualities, although if the two were to be combined one could perhaps produce an edible rock-garden.

Though the plants steal the show, the event would not be a success without those who exhibit their plants, those that judge and those many local club members who provide the diet-busting catering and perform, under the expert guidance of Carole and Ian Bainbridge, all those tasks necessary to ensure that the event runs smoothly for the benefit of all exhibitors and visitors. To all who participated we extend our heartfelt thanks.

Frazer Henderson



Helleborus 'Ivory Prince'



Stirling 20th March 2010



This report appears when we are already looking forward to spring flowers, so its winter printing may be especially timely. The Stirling group show was held in Dunblane's Victoria Hall, and once again we were blessed with good weather, plenty of plants to see & to buy and excellent food & drink that kept us well fortified. I was going to say 'kept us going' but if you ate too much it was as well to have a seat and rest a while! We send a huge 'Well done!' to the catering team for their endless supply of bacon rolls for breakfast, morning coffee & cakes, followed by soup & salad rolls for lunch and afternoon tea with yet more cakes. Home-cooked food enjoyed with friends while chatting about plants was a fine way to spend a spring Saturday after the longest and snowiest winter for twenty years.

Our new president Liz Mills enjoyed meeting fellow members and took time to encourage many to attend the International Conference in Nottingham in spring 2011 (14th to 17th April 2011) – *Alpines without Frontiers* – a great name for a conference!

I usually mention the judges at the end but as they are such an important part of every show I think it fitting to thank Bette Ivey, John Lee, Fred Hunt, Bill Robinson, Neil Huntley and Peter Semple before I go

The SRGC door is always open...



on to mention the plants and winners. Judges are chosen from the SRGC list and any one person may not judge at any show on more than two consecutive occasions. Judges usually work in groups of three, so that over the years the fate of the plants and exhibitors at any one show will be in the hands of many different experts.

At the time of the 2010 show, Cyril Lafong was the SRGC's reigning champion, having received the AGS Salver at the annual general meeting as Plantsman of the Year 2009. Anyone hoping to win the AGS Salver in 2010 would have needed to produce some extraordinary plants. This year at Stirling his entry in Class 1 comprised *Corydalis popovii*, *Trillium rivale* 'Purple Heart' and *Primula* 'Broadwell Milkmaid'. The primula was judged Best Plant in the Show and was awarded the George Forrest Memorial Medal, the Spillar Trophy for Best Primula and the Ben Ledi Plants Trophy for Best European Plant in the show. One great plant like this certainly simplifies the administration! When you consider that the trillium was a previous Forrest winner you have some idea of the high standard of this entry.

Certificates of Merit were awarded to Cyril's *Corydalis popovii* & *Trillium rivale* 'Purple Heart', Jean Wylie's *Narcissus* 'Betty Mae', Peter Semple's *Iris winogradowii* and Ian & Margaret Young's *Eranthis* 'Guinea Gold'. The *eranthis* in its fish box trough reminded me of our first show when Jim Jermyn, then of Edrom Nursery, won the Forrest Medal with *Callianthemum anemonoides* in a wooden tomato box. The moral of this bit of SRGC trivia is that the plant counts, not the container. Jean's narcissus, a gift of a few bulbs from a friend in New Zealand, has been to many shows over recent years. Careful nurture resulted in the wonderful pan at this year's show. Jean has raised some promising seedlings from *N. 'Betty Mae'* and we look forward to following their progress.

Peter Semple's *Iris winogradowii* won the Institute of Quarrying Quaich for the best non-European plant in the show. There was great discussion, and advice was sought about where *Iris winogradowii* grows in

Happy gardeners: our president Liz Mills, Fred Hunt and Anne Chambers



the wild; the decision was that it is Asian. Its native home is certainly a long way from Dunblane but it grows very well in Peter's west Stirlingshire garden and, as is usually claimed, the judges decision was final. This is not necessarily true - anyone with a protest about a decision may deliver it in writing to the show secretary within half an hour of the show's opening. The show secretary appoints a sub-committee to consider the protest under rule number 11. No protest came ... although we now suspect that *Iris winogradowii* might be less Asian than first concluded.

Roma Fiddes stirred folks up with a tantalising entry in the 'Grown from Seed' Class. She entered a pan of beautiful *Hepatica nobilis* seedlings that she raised from Ashwood Nurseries' seed. What a wonderful range of colours and flower forms! The white flowers showed the biggest variation in flower form, the seedlings ranging through five spaced petals, five joined petals, five overlapping petals and ten or eleven overlapping petals. I hope Ashwood get a few orders on the back of this exhibit; they certainly deserve it. My own visits to Ashwood have been characterised by wonderful days of good food and excellent plants. On one tour with the Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee we saw fabulous single and double hellebores as well as hepaticas. Later on came remarkable lewisias, and the nurseries are home to the seemingly perpetual-flowering *Lewisia* 'Ashwood Hybrids' and to the National Collection of Cyclamen.

Corydalis popovii

Judges: Bette Ivey, Neil Huntley & Bill Robinson



Margaret & Henry Taylor regularly exhibit plants in the 'Grown from Seed' classes. This year their marvellous entry comprised their own hybrid *Primula nana* x *sessilis* and *Primula whitei* 'Sherrif's Form' that, coming from seed, brings new vigour to another generation of the popular petiolarid species. Many petiolarid primulas loose vigour because they are propagated vegetatively for too many years. Their third plant was *Viola bubanii* grown from wild seed from the Picos de Europa.

I liked Cyril Lafong's *Primula vulgaris* ssp. *heterochroma*. It is known as the Caspian Primrose and grows on the south shore of the Caspian Sea in disjunct areas of the Elbruz Mountains, Iran and Azerbaijan. The leaves are whitish-hairy beneath and the flowers may be purple, pink, red, white or yellow. Cyril treats it like a bulb, keeping it dry in summer when the leaves become limp and disappear. It is grown in a mix of John Innes compost and grit and kept in a shaded frame in summer.

Two pans of *Crocus* of hybrid origin caught my eye: Ian & Carole Bainbridge's pan of the beautiful pure white *C. x jessopae* and *C. vernus* x *tommasinianus* with two-tone lilac-purple flowers. At this time of year corydalis are spectacular and vie with each other for the title 'most complicated flowers in the show'. *Corydalis schanginii* ssp. *ainii* would win but several others such as bicoloured maroon and pink *C. popovii*, green-white *C. malkensis*, pure white *C. solida* 'Alla Vita' are also fabulous. Cathy & Barry Caudwell included a single flower of the exquisite *Sternbergia*

Corydalis solida 'Alla Vita'

Corydalis schanginii



candida in their six-pan exhibit – one of my favourite flowers in the whole show. SRGC Bulb Log guru Ian Young and his wife Maggi won the ‘three-pan bulbs grown from seed’ class with a classy entry of bright yellow *Narcissus jacetanus*, which looked like a tiny ‘King Alfred’, pale lemon *N. bulbocodium* ssp. *pallidus* & crystal white *N. x susannae*. Although no trophy is awarded to the best cyclamen in the show, in my opinion it was *C. coum* from Watt Russell. My favourite saxifrage was Tom Green’s magnificent *Saxifraga* ‘Allandale Accord’.

I want to take time and space to record my thanks to everyone who enters the ‘Crassulaceae’, ‘Foliage’ and ‘Conifer’ classes. Non-flowering exhibits are the backbone of the shows, sitting quietly on the benches while the bright flowers grab the attention like icing on the cake (here in central Scotland we go for the toppings and are less bothered about the sponge). Most rock garden plants flower for quite a short time and during the rest of the year we have only the leaves to look at. How much nicer it is if these leaves are beautiful or at least noteworthy! With sempervivums and conifers the form of the plant is most important. In the show hall, the afternoon sun brought the ‘*Semperviva*’ to life, bringing out their colours. ‘Well done!’ to Watt Russell and Carol & David Shaw for reminding us of their importance. The height of trees and shrubs contributes to the balance of the exhibits and highlights the beauty of other entries. The reflections, shadows and interactions of light as it falls through foliage and flowers can alter their appearance and these scintillating changes add another dimension to our favourites.

Bob Meaden showed a superb pan of *Galanthus* ‘Primrose Warburg’. This is a beautiful selection, even down to its name - which celebrates the famous galanthophile (named Primrose!) and captures perfectly its shade of yellow.

Border: *Picea Abies* ‘Little Gem’

Cyril Lafong’s winning trio: *Corydalis popovii*, *Trillium rivale* ‘Purple Heart’ and *Primula* ‘Broadwell Milkmaid’



Jill Lee won the Fife County Trophy for most points in Section II. She also showed one of the special *Narcissus* sold at the Discussion Weekend in 2009. At about 15 inches, *Narcissus* 'Surfside' is by no means dwarf but has an interesting flower shape and colouration. I hope that during the show season we may see a lot more of these bulbs. In the bulb classes, crocuses, irises, narcissus, corydalis, tulips and other genera formed a welcome patchwork of bright colour indoors while outside it was still winter and almost flowerless. Stan da Prato had most points in Section I and took home the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust Trophy. Notably, Stan won both six-pan bulb classes with excellent entries including *Iris* 'Sheila Anne Germaney', a lookalike of *Iris* 'Katharine Hodgkin' but less gaudy.

Elspeth Macintosh and John Mitchell set up a wonderful Gold Medal display of plants from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Pens and notepads came out as members jotted down names of favourite plants 'to look out for'. Elspeth has a great eye for presentation and her selection of plants was displayed to great effect under a west-facing window with backlight all afternoon. We send our thanks to the Regius Keeper and look forward to continued cooperation with the RBGE at our shows and events.

Worried there might be too few entries because of the especially bad weather, show secretary Sandy Leven put on a display of snowdrops and other bulbs and was awarded a Gold Medal. Despite his ill-founded pessimism, lots of great plants on the benches made this a super show. We rock gardeners are indeed fortunate to have found the secret of perpetual flowering. We can indulge ourselves by growing plants from a seemingly infinite number to provide colour and interest in every month of the year. Thank you to everyone whose combined contributions made this such an excellent show and thank you to the exhibitors for rising early to bring their plants; without you there would be no shows.

Border: *Juniperus squamata* 'Blue Carpet'

Stan da Prato's winning six-pan entry of different genera





Ian & Margaret Young's *Eranthis tubergenii* 'Guinea Gold'

This report of the 2010 show doubles as an invitation to the 2011 event. One of the wonderful things about plants is that most of them flower at the same time every year, so if you missed something in 2010, come in 2011 on 19th March to the Victoria Hall, Dunblane.

If you have previously only been a voyeur, you might also join the ranks of the exhibitors and get even more pleasure from the shows. Take time to read the show schedules and look round your garden on a nice day. You will almost certainly have some fine plants to get you started.

Sandy Leven

Opposite: Stan da Prato's light, shade, fame & beauty - *Iris reticulata* 'Edward'

Below: A gold medal for Sandy Leven's pessimistic collection



THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB



CARNSIE DUNFERMLINE TRUST TROPHY

awarded to

Stan Da Prato

for

Most Points Section I

at the STIRLING SHOW

Judges signatures

John D.
Augusta Gully
M. Smith

date 20 MARCH 2010

Newcastle 9th October 2010



Anigozanthos flavidus

The Newcastle show was the last show of the year for the SRGC and the AGS. Forty one exhibitors turned up from north, south and west to the only place in the country with rain but this failed to dampen their spirits. Although the number of exhibitors was slightly down from last year, we had the same number of plants on the bench. The hall did

not take long to fill up with plants from all corners of the world. Not knowing what to expect after a mild autumn, all the usual genera turned up, with large and small



Above: *Cyclamen cilicium*
Right: *Cyclamen graecum* ssp. *graecum*, *candicum* & *anatolicum*





Gentiana sino-ornata

pans of cyclamen, gentians and *Galanthus* - real eye openers. The first unusual plant was the winner of class 3, *Anigozanthos flavidus*, commonly known as Kangaroo Paw, exhibited by John Richards. Walking down the hall, the next plants that took my eye were in Class 8 - three pans of *Cyclamen* (*graecum*, *candicum* and *anatolicum*) from Bob and Rannveig

Enkianthus campanulatus 'Wallaby'



Wallis. Class 9 had a very large pan of *Cyclamen cilicium* from Mike and Christine Brown. Moving on, Class 16 was won by David Boyd with a large pot (or bucket!) of *Gentiana sino-ornata*. Not forgetting this is an autumn show, the winner in class 22 for one pan rock plant showing autumn colour

Narcissus miniatus



Galanthus peshmenii



was *Enkianthus campanulatus* 'Wallaby' from Keith and Rachel Lever. Class 36 was won by Bob and Rannveig Wallis and within their six pans was *Narcissus miniatus*, formerly known as *Narcissus serotinus*. Then another reminder of autumn - *Galanthus peshmenii* in class 38 from Don Peace: this pan was not by any means the largest in the show. The best small pan of *Cyclamen* (*graecum anatolicum*), the winner of the Ewesley salver and of class 45 came from Derek Pickard; the seed was



Cyclamen graecum anatolicum

from JJA (Jim & Jenny Archibald) seed sown in December 1999. In class 50, Stan da Prato showed *Gentiana 'Braemar'*, a newly released compact-growing hybrid from Ian McNaughton. *Crocus goulimyi* was exhibited by

Gentiana 'Braemar'



Crocus goulimyi - the pot



Bessera elegans





Hyacinthoides lingulata

David Boyd: another first for him in class 56. All the way from Wales came *Galanthus reginae-olgae*,

winner of class 68 and benched by Ian Leslie who has supported the Newcastle show for many years. *Bessera elegans*, class 80, was just one of the many plants exhibited by Anne Vale (Braintree) who won the Inner Eye trophy for the most points in the intermediate section. Local group member Christine Boulby won the Newcastle vase for most points in the novice section. The Millennium Trophy for the best foliage plant went to Ivor Betteridge for his *Cyclamen rohlfsianum*. A gold award was given to the local group for its exhibition of photos and literature on a *Brief Guide to Growing Alpines* put together for us by Mala Janes.

The two Welsh wizards went home very happy: an AGS Medal for the six-pan; the Ponteland bowl for the most points in the open section; and winners of the Farrer medal for the best plant in the show, *Hyacinthoides lingulata*. Well done, Bob and Rannveig Wallis!





Crocus goulimyi - the detail

My report approaches its close with many thanks to Mike and Pearl Dale who are retiring after seven years of running the show. Our thanks also go to the team that assembles and dismantles the show, to all the helpers who run it so smoothly, and to Peter Maguire for all his photos for our reports and the SRGC web site.

I have given you only a brief glimpse of the show. Beyond my words, the best thing is to visit it in 2011 and see for yourself the delightful array of colour and plants. The show is to be run by Laurel and Hardy (the two Alans); it should be fun!

Alan Newton

With photos by
Peter Maguire

The local
group's display



RHS Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee

Recommendations made at SRGC Shows in 2010

DUNBLANE – 20TH FEBRUARY

Awards to Plants

Award of Merit (as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition)

To *Galanthus* 'Lady Dalhousie', exhibited by Ian Christie, Kirriemuir.

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation (as hardy flowering plants for exhibition)

To *Galanthus nivalis poculiformis* 'Wedding Dress', exhibited by Sandy Leven, Dunblane.

To *Galanthus woronowii* 'Elizabeth Harrison', exhibited by Elizabeth Harrison, Inchture.

EDINBURGH – 10TH APRIL

Awards to Plants

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation (as hardy flowering plants for exhibition)

To *Androsace newwirthii*, exhibited by Cyril Lafong, Glenrothes.

To *Fritillaria* aff. *monantha*, exhibited by Cyril Lafong, Glenrothes.

To *Primula* 'Broadwell Buttercup', exhibited by Peter Maguire, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

To *Leontice leontopetalum*, exhibited by the Regius Keeper, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

GLASGOW – 1ST MAY

Awards to Plants

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation (as hardy flowering plants for exhibition)

To *Lilium mackliniae*, exhibited by Ian Christie, Kirriemuir.

To *Androsace* aff. *forrestiana*, exhibited by Cyril Lafong, Glenrothes.



Androsace newwirthii



Fritillaria aff. *monantha*



Primula 'Broadwell Buttercup'



Lilium mackliniae



Daphne petraea 'Idro'



Arisaema lobatum Mount Emei form

To *Daphne petraea* 'Idro', exhibited by Cyril Lafong Glenrothes.

To *Arisaema lobatum* Mount Emei form, exhibited by Anne Chambers, Killlearn.

Awards to Exhibitors

Certificate of Cultural Commendation

To Sam Sutherland, Kincardine, for a pan of *Tetaneuris acaulis* var. *caespitosa*, exhibited as *Hymenoxis acaulis* var. *caespitosa*.

Gardening Scotland, Ingliston – 5th June Awards to Plants

First Class Certificate (as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition)

To *Saxifraga* 'Nicholas', exhibited by Stella & David Rankin, Lasswade.

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation (as hardy flowering plants for exhibition)

To *Fritillaria camschatcensis* Alaska form, exhibited by Ian Christie, Kirriemuir.

To x *Rhodoxis* 'Hebron Farm Biscuit', exhibited by Gary McDermott, Stanley.

To *Fritillaria camschatcensis aurea*, exhibited by Ian Christie, Kirriemuir.

To *Arisaema mayebarae*, exhibited by Jacques Amand, Stanmore.

To *Arisaema iyoanum* var. *nakaianum*, exhibited by Jacques Amand, Stanmore.

DISCUSSION WEEKEND – 2ND OCTOBER

Awards to Plants

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation (as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition)

To *Cyclamen mirabile niveum*, exhibited by Jean Wyllie, Dunblane.

Recommendation for AGM assessment

To *Gaultheria* 'Pearls', exhibited by Keith Lever, Conwy.



Problems with Peonies?

Billy Carruthers

As a nurseryman I try to grow plants with good qualities: exciting flowers, low maintenance, disease resistant, long-living, tough and tolerant of most garden soils. Despite having all these qualities, my beloved *Imperial Flower* still has a reputation amongst the masses as being difficult. The main criticisms are that peonies flower for such a short time, flop over too easily and require staking. Now this may be true for *Paeonia officinalis* 'Rubra Plena', which is the common peony seen in gardens throughout the United Kingdom, but nowadays many varieties are bred as garden plants as opposed to cut flowers, with stronger stems that withstand adverse weather conditions. Some of these modern cultivars also have side shoots that in some cases extend the growing season to nearly three weeks and provide a better show. At the nursery we now grow around three hundred different peonies.

Spring is an exciting time - for peonies. Their strong bright red shoots, fading to green, heighten our sense of anticipation that the season

Above: *Paeonia* 'Paladin'



is just about to start. Mixed with dwarf bulbs, a spectacular display may be had. Good leaf colour - on certain varieties - in late autumn is an additional bonus but late May and June provide us with a show of blooms that is hard to beat. There are flowering forms of singles, semi-doubles, doubles, Japanese and anemone-centred in a range of colours from pure white through soft pinks to deepest red; yellows, too, are now more available than in the past.

Peonies are tough and will stand temperatures down to -15°C or even lower; they may also live for at least a century. A pH of around 7 is ideal but anything between 5 and 8 is acceptable. They will tolerate any but the wettest or driest of soils. If you ever visit an old or overgrown garden you'll see the peonies surviving where other herbaceous plants have long been choked or covered by brambles and weeds. They are tough plants: I rest my case for the defence!

However, no plant is indestructible and peonies have a few enemies. Some minor issues can be had from ants and, rarely, aphids. Rabbits and deer fortunately show no interest in peonies. Root-knot nematodes are rare and may have an effect but the main problem of

Above: *Paeonia* 'Rubra Plena' (Photo: Lars-Ole Barkar, Finland)



Paeonia 'Many Happy Returns'



Paeonia 'Early Glow'

Paeonia 'Hilary'



mention is stem wilt. As a preventive measure a spraying of good old Cheshunt Compound or Copper Sulphate solution in spring when the shoots are a couple of inches high, and again a month later will prevent early season losses of stems. Good housekeeping by removing dead or decaying organic material from the base of the plant helps; and never mulch with manure! Encourage lots of air movement around the young stems to help prevent *Botrytis paeoniae* and *B. cinerea* from attacking the plants.

As a nursery, we occasionally use other chemicals if needed, but fungicides are becoming more restricted these days. If you prefer the organic approach then, as I emphasise, good housekeeping will save any major problem. A dark brown blotch on the stem is the first sign of peony wilt: this stem should be removed from below soil level and put in a dustbin so as reduce the production of airborne spores and prevent the formation of sclerotia that contaminate the soil. The temptation is to leave the stem as a nice plump bud about to open; don't do this as it is already too late and the flower will never open fully. Peony wilt, like black spot on hellebores, is not fatal if the affected parts are removed and destroyed. If a particular plant suffers constantly it may be a sign that it should be moved to a better location, and this should be done around October. By the way, the myth about moved peonies is just that - a myth. As with any plant, if you want to move or

split, dig as large a root ball as you can while trying not to rip or damage too much root, and then replant at the correct depth.

Remember a few points when planting:

- Plant with the crown no more than five cm below soil level (a little less if you live in a very mild area)
- Feed well with a bucket of well-rotted manure or good compost mixed thoroughly into the surrounding soil as you would do for a rose or clematis; peonies do respond well to good feeding
- In Scotland try to grow them in full sun. Some red varieties like being shaded from the mid-day sun to prevent fading but, generally, the more light the better
- Don't plant peonies among tree roots or near hedges where there is competition for moisture. It causes the peony buds to turn brown and die in the spring.

Apart from herbaceous peonies, we grow intersectionals (hybrids between tree and herbaceous) and we are increasing our range of Chinese and New Generation Tree Peonies. This year for the first time we are producing a pure peony catalogue full of information and pictures of each variety. The beauty and diversity of peonies is illustrated on our website at www.binnyplants.co.uk.

Because we are trying to increase our collection of species peonies we will be very happy if any SRGC members can kindly help us with 'pure' species seed.



Did you know?

The peony is named after Paeon or Paeon, a student of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine and healing. Asclepius became jealous of his pupil; Zeus saved Paeon from the wrath of Asclepius by turning him into the peony flower.

The staff of Asclepius *Paeonia* 'Coral Supreme'





Lilium mackliniae

Ian Christie

This lovely little lily was first collected in 1946 by the great plant hunter Frank Kingdon Ward. It was found growing in a very limited geographical area in the Manipur region of northeast India on the Burmese frontier. This elegant aristocrat grew on grassy slopes at around 2000 metres and was named after Kingdon Ward's second wife (née Jean Macklin). Several forms are in cultivation, mostly less than 60 cm tall, with flowers that are very pale pink and flushed reddish without. We have several forms, one as high as 1.2 metres. Around May and June, each stem carries several flowers that are quite large and long-lasting. A clump of flowering bulbs exhibited at *Gardening Scotland* by Beryl McNaughton was given an Award of Merit in 2009 by the Joint Rock Plant Committee.

Lilium mackliniae is well suited to the cooler shaded areas of the garden with the taller forms protected from high winds. The soil type must be humus-rich that does not dry out. However, it is perhaps best suited among small ericaceous shrubs,





Lilium mackliniae



rhododendrons, *Meconopsis* and trilliums. We always raise this from seed because it takes only three or four years to flower. The seed is sown in January and covered with grit. We place fleece over the top of the pot and tie it around the rim with string. We have problems with field voles and mice that would eat all the seed over the winter but they do not eat through the fleece. Once the seed has germinated we pull the fleece up gently to give more room; this keeps out slugs and snails until the seedlings are established. We plant out the whole pot of seedlings - without disturbing them - into a prepared raised bed with some fertilizer and extra added grit. We then leave them to grow outside without protection all winter, and around July & August the next year we separate the seedlings and plant them out in rows in the same raised bed, adding a little more fertilizer. By the third year some will produce their first flowers.

Lilium mackliniae - seeds safely under fleece



Lilium mackliniae (dark form)



Lilium mackliniae 'Tantallon'



Lilium mackliniae 'Saramati' (white form)

Some New Introductions

Several years ago, a few intrepid plant hunters gained access to Nagaland in northeast India, an area that had been closed for many years. One of these expeditions brought back seed of *Lilium mackliniae* that found its way to Peter Cox at Glendoick. Thankfully, Peter has shared this seed around a number of people who now grow and flower this exciting new form. *Lilium mackliniae* dark form is a rich deep rose-pink with a delicate splash of white in the throat. I managed to exhibit five flowering bulbs at *Gardening Scotland* at the end of May, although the natural flowering time can continue well into June. These bulbs were awarded a Preliminary Commendation by the Joint Rock Plant Committee which suggested a name; after consulting Peter we agreed on 'Naga Pink', after the area where the collection was made. We are growing seedlings of this as described above and they have been true to type with us so far.

Our other good friends Margaret & Henry Taylor cross-pollinated the new form with the original pale pink one to produce a good rose-pink flowering bulb which they have named *L. mackliniae* 'Tantallon'.

In the autumn of 2009 Peter Cox showed me a picture of a white *Lilium* collected by Steve Hootman of the Rhododendron Species Foundation from Mount Saramati, the highest mountain in the Patkai range in Burma (3826 m). Peter gave me three bulbs and some seed. I potted the bulbs and as I watched them grow in a cool glasshouse it soon became evident that they were going to flower early despite the

poor weather outside. The flowers started to show colour in May on stems around thirty centimetres high, with glossy pointed leaves. I kept a close watch in case of any slug damage. It was such a perfect flower - a creamy white trumpet with outward turned petals at the tip. I was very fortunate to be able to take the flowering bulbs to the Glasgow show, where everyone asked their origin. Later in the day it was submitted to the Joint Rock meeting where it was suggested that it might be a new species; we need further observation but for now it is to be known as *Lilium mackliniae* 'Saramati', after the highest mountain in Nagaland.

Lilium mackliniae (white form)





Brian and Shelagh Smethurst

With such a multitude of alpine plants in all their various forms to choose from, why should you consider growing small or dwarf shrubs? We believe that they can be an important and interesting part of anyone's plant collection.

We grow - or attempt - many kinds of alpines, perhaps too many. But we would not be without our shrub selection, and there are plenty to choose from. So why grow them? Well, some can live for a long time; several of ours are over ten or fifteen years old and still going strong. There is permanence to them; you get used to seeing them year after year. They are versatile. They have flowers, fruit and foliage - sometimes all three - in a variety of colours and variegations. They are suitable for pot or garden. When too large for the show bench they can be planted in the rock garden or shrub border. Most seem to have been reasonably pest free although damage from Tortrix Moth has been our main problem and you should always watch for Vine Weevil - as if you wouldn't!

Our pot-grown ericaceous shrubs obviously need an appropriate compost, to which we add a little grit and, for additional feeding, a suitable ericaceous fertiliser. With non-ericaceous plants we use John Innes No. 2 or 3 with grit and composted bark or leaf-mould in proportions suitable to the particular plant. We always use Maxicrop and feed with a tomato fertiliser. Now for some shrubs that we have grown or are growing ...



Berberis x stenophylla 'Corallina Compacta' (Berberidaceae) is well known and little trouble to grow. The true 'Compacta' does not exceed 45 cm and its coral-red buds open to bright orange flowers in May. H E Bawden in his book *Dwarf Shrubs* refers to a catalogue description that says "... which conjures up dreams in perfection in diminutiveness". What else is there to say? Ours, after some years in a pot and a few trips to shows, is now in the rock garden and still only some 35 cm high.



Berberis thunbergii 'Kobold', green form in flower

Berberis thunbergii 'Kobold'

(Berberidaceae) - we raised three from seeds sowed in November 2004; one has purple foliage but the others are somewhat different shades of green and of autumn colour. One was planted in the rock garden and is now about 60 cm wide and 40 cm tall. The other two have recently been potted on to 20 cm pots; they are nowhere near as branched and are merely about 30 cm tall and 20 cm across; quite a difference!



Genista pilosa minor (Papilionaceae) was the first we grew that won a first prize. It is prostrate, flowers in May, is tidy with yellow pea flowers and is quite easy. It won again as part of a three-pan with *Syringa meyeri* 'Palibin' and *Penstemon menziesii microphylla*. The *Genista* went into the rock garden, the *Syringa* to the shrub bed, where it is now over a metre high and still flowering well. The *Penstemon* ... is long gone.

Thymus leucotrichus 'Peter Davis'

is a shrub in the Lamiaceae family (previously Labiateae). Our plant purchased some two and a half years ago in a 9 cm pot has typical thyme flowers of pale lavender blue. It is 30 cm tall and in late May is very floriferous. A cheerful sort of plant, it does need its dead flowers removing and a little trimming to keep it tidy. It was on the show bench in full flower at the AGS show on May 16th 2009 as it was on May 17th 2008. It got a first on both occasions, showing great consistency.



Satureja spicigera is another shrub in Lamiaceae that hails from Asia Minor. Perhaps its main attraction is that it flowers late, from late August to October or even November. It also very kindly self-seeds. In 1985 it won an Award of Merit. It was described thus: "this savoury forms a woody sub-shrub from which masses of wiry branches clad in lance-shaped dark-green leaves ascend to bear plenty of



small white trumpet flowers each flaring into four broad lobes from the extended mauve anthers". Paul Giuseppi wrote "It is one of the nicest September flowering alpines I know." The first that we saw was exhibited by Harry Roberts some years ago and the one we grow in a pot is nowhere near as good. It is far outclassed by a self-sown seedling we planted out in the garden and by another self-seeder that grows in a crack in flagstones. Much more floriferous, 60 cm by 30 cm across, it emphasises that Bury in Lancashire is a far cry from Asia Minor. The plant dies back in winter but returns in late spring. From a distance it could be mistaken for heather in flower. In all - with scented foliage - it is a useful and prostrate addition to the outdoor shrub collection.

Melicytus alpinus (Violaceae) was *Hymenanthera alpina*. This unusual little shrub from New Zealand is not too common. It is evergreen with tiny leaves and similarly tiny and odd flowers that clothe the somewhat stiff quill-like branches in spring. "A far cry from any conceivable violet, although it does belong to the same family." So wrote Clare Brightman in the AGS Bulletin for March 1993



- and she is right. By early summer the flowers are replaced with white berries, bigger than the flowers, which persist for several months. Although not a spectacular plant it is an interesting one that we are fond of. Judges are not averse to it - it has won a few red stickers. An excellent grower, John Dennis, gave us this plant over ten years ago; alpine growers, as is well known, are a friendly and generous group.



Melicytus alpina in flower



Melicytus alpina in fruit

Leptospermum nanum 'Pipit' (Myrtaceae), like other leptospermums, comes from Australia. Numbers of them are suitable for pots and garden, including *L. scoparium*, *L. nichollsii*, *L. nichollsii nanum* and *L. scoparium* 'Kiwi'. *L. nanum* 'Pipit' is very different; it is much smaller and very compact, rather like a cushion plant. How very different in appearance dwarf shrubs can be, even within the same genus. While the others are floriferous, our 'Pipit' has not flowered. Its charm lies in the tiny new red foliage which the plant always seems to have. After several years it is only about 8 cm high by 16 cm across. Perhaps it is not to everyone's taste, but the judges at the Discussion Weekend in 2009 seemed to like it.





Solanum pseudocapsicum (Solanaceae) we first saw on the show bench quite recently. A spectacular shrub, its foliage is brightly variegated; in spring there are whitish tomato-like flowers followed (unsurprisingly) by small tomato-like fruits. These are quite white for some weeks before turning an orange-red. This is a shrub that seems to be better with some winter protection. The growth is quite vigorous but we have yet to see if it reaches more than 30 cm high and wide. We admired Harry Roberts's plant at the Pudsey show and later in the season he very kindly presented us with one he had bought at a midlands nursery - we did say earlier that exhibitors were a generous bunch!

Correa (Rutaceae) hails from Australia. We have three: *C. reflexa nummularifolia* with lemon-green flowers, *C. 'Dusky Maid'* with deep pinkish-red flowers, and *C. backhousiana* with yellow flowers. They differ quite widely in habit. The flowers are tubular, 3 cm in length, and hang like little



Correa backhousiana



Correa 'Dusky Maid'

lanterns. All have flower-power over a long period, with some repeat flowering. In 2009, *Correa* 'Dusky Maid' was in flower at the AGS Midland show on 18th April and by the time of the SRGC Discussion Weekend on October 3rd it was in flower again, and was still looking fairly well in November. It is smaller than the other two, quite well branched and twiggy. *C. reflexa nummularifolia* has smaller rounded leaves, is a little more vigorous and spreads sideways. *C. backhousiana* is more upright and a little too tall; when shoots are pinched out it produces rather more spindly shoots so is not as attractive as the others for pot culture.

Correa reflexa nummularifolia



Coprosma (Rubiaceae) remains a favourite of ours over the years. They are grown of course for the foliage. *C. repens* 'Marble King' with creamy white leaves and green marbling is quite striking. Equally arresting is *C. repens* 'Autumn Gold' whose foliage looks as if spattered by multi-coloured paint, with gold and pink predominant. *C. repens*



Coprosma 'Marble King'



Coprosma repens 'Fireburst'

'Fireburst' has smaller leaves of a maroon-pink-red colour. Ours had - as did the others - a few outings to shows but is now not quite as compact as previously so lives outside in a container.

Coprosma repens 'Autumn Gold'



Coprosma x kirkii 'Kiwī Gold' is quite prostrate; ours comes - if memory serves right - from a cutting of an earlier plant which, having been put out in the rock garden, expired. It is happy in a pot and spends most of its time outdoors, as do many of our shrubs. It has quite small dark green foliage with a distinctive yellow band on the midrib.



Westringia fruticosa 'Smokie' (Lamiaceae) was acquired a year or two ago and has grown well in a pot. From Australia, it is rosemary-like, evergreen and well branched with grey-green and white-edged leaves about one cm long: a pleasing appearance. Flowers are described on the label as purple-blue but on the internet as white! It survives several degrees of frost but we keep it in the alpine house as we have no "warm sheltered spot outdoors". It has already been shown as a foliage plant at 20 cm high and 30 wide; we look forward to its next show season.



Verbascum 'Letitia' (Scrophulariaceae) is for those who want something really floriferous. Another wonderful hybrid with grey foliage, this small shrub usually reaches less than 30 cm after several years. The amount and duration of cheery yellow flowers it produces are astonishing. After all the flowering it can look a little bit tired in winter but come the spring it has picked up and is ready to go again. This photo is by John Dower.



All growers know that there are many ericaceous shrubs, most too familiar to need much description. We conclude with a few words on some that have been reasonably successful for us in pot culture.

Leiophyllum buxifolia

can take time to get going and ours sometimes sulks before perking up again. It is from the USA, rarely above 30 cm high and rather more across. Pink buds open to white flowers tinged with pink in May.



x Philliopsis 'Sugar Plum' has quite large attractive pink flowers in spring, although it is flowering well as we write in mid-November! It is a slow-growing tidy dwarf shrub.



Phyllodoce aleutica is another compact plant, from Alaska, Japan and the Aleutians, flowering from mid to late spring. The flowers from terminal shoots are urn-shaped and pale yellow.



Andromeda polifolia can be very attractive in flower if grown well. It flowers in May with urn-shaped pink flowers. Bawden wrote “A grand little shrub”. Ours, a few years old, is approximately 20 cm tall and 30 cm wide. *Andromeda* can be rather straggly and from time to time bits die off; careful trimming helps to keep it in good shape, both literally and metaphorically. But ... watch out for Tortrix moth.



Gaulnettya 'Pink Pixie' is from a bigeneric cross between *Gaultheria* and *Pernettya*. Ours is a little over 30 cm tall. It is attractive in early summer with pinkish urn-shaped flowers (below) and, later, almost black berries (right).



Cassiope - we have grown and shown several, but not nearly as well as others do. The following all make good show plants: *C.* 'Edinburgh', *C.* 'Badenoch', *C.* 'Randle Cooke' and *C. mertensiana*.

Cassiope 'Badenoch'





Cassiope 'Randle Cook'

All the shrubs we have mentioned need little if any pruning but judicious snipping may sometimes be necessary or worthwhile. Regarding propagation, it is perhaps better to read what experts in the field say for each species. Many of these shrubs can be raised from cuttings and a number of them can be raised from seed, reaching a good size more quickly than perhaps would be expected. Try it.

These are just a few of the small shrubs that we have enjoyed growing and showing. Most should be easily available but there are plenty of others to choose from. So if you don't already grow them you might perhaps give some a try. We hope to see them on the show bench. As if we haven't got enough competition already!

A Postscript: *Cassiope 'Edinburgh'*

from Frazer Henderson

This dwarf, evergreen shrub of about 20-25 cm with small, dark green adpressed leaves and white, waxy bell-shaped flowers increasingly catches the discerning eye on the show benches in ericaceous

classes. The plant is understated and quite demure, which is at odds with its species appellation: it is named after the beautiful but vain Queen Cassiopeia. She also gave her name to the constellation that shines near the northern pole star. Perhaps it is the ever twinkling bright lights of the stars by which the species takes its name. Anyhow, it is certainly popular: it was leaving the sales tables at the recent Edinburgh show like a meteor shower. Nurserymen, in addition to being exceptional growers, never miss a commercial opportunity: they know we will always fall for plants with names with which we can associate, be it a loved one's name, a home town or a favourite location.

Farrer, who can always be relied on to give a highly personal and entertaining view, describes *Cassiope*, in *The English Rock-Garden*, as a "specially fascinating little group of very high alpine or arctic plants ... miffy and mimpish jewels. From the neighbourhood of London it departs indignant, and having no suburban leanings it is as rebellious as a suffragette at Kew."

SRGC Vacancy: Subscription Secretary

Start date: November 2011

The SRGC invites nominations for the post of Subscription Secretary when Graham Bunkall retires in November 2011 after five years of service.

As Subscription Secretary, you will become a member of the SRGC Council and will potentially have contact with every member of our club.

Day to day activities include responding to and processing membership enquiries and applications, maintaining the membership database and other related matters. A requirement of the post is UK residence.

Our preferred candidate will be computer literate and have proficiency with Microsoft Access databases or will have the support of someone within easy reach who has that knowledge.

If you have some spare time, why not donate it to our club by taking on this important role?

A more detailed job specification can be obtained from:

Graham Bunkall (subsec.srgc@ntlworld.com)

President Liz Mills (liz.saline@hotmail.co.uk)

Secretary Carol Shaw (srgc.sec@googlemail.com)

If you are interested, please feel free to contact **Graham Bunkall** for an informal chat. Tel: **0116 221 4883** .

Perennial *Meconopsis punicea*

Ian Christie & Geoff Hill



Progress and Propagation (Ian Christie)

In *The Rock Garden* number 118 in January 2007, I described a form of *Meconopsis punicea* that had been collected from Stone Mountain on the edge of the Tibetan plateau. We had waited since 2003 for plants to flower and the first to do so was in 2005. The flowers were noticeably different from the normal scarlet-red; at first we thought they might be hybrids of some kind. The flowers look fairly standard on first opening but

after the first day or two become a sandy-pink and have longer petals than normal, with four, six or even eight petals. The plants of the normal *Meconopsis punicea* are usually monocarpic and die after flowering although we know that a few seedlings will continue for two or three years. The plant featured in *The Rock Garden* was different in several ways: flower stalks were between 60 and 80 cm tall; once flowering ended the stems elongated up to 80 cm whereas the normal stems here are 40 to 60 cm - perhaps 65 cm.



Meconopsis punicea heads

I never expected any seed from our single plant, which I thought would die after its first flowering. We were therefore pleasantly surprised to see several young green rosettes of leaves around the base of the flower spikes. The following year a good strong plant came up in spring and I decided to divide it; I lifted the clump and carefully removed one or two young side shoots. At this time I noticed that the main plant was sending out runners such as I have observed on *Meconopsis quintuplinervia* but not on *M. punicea*. The young plants grew so well that I divided them again in summer, on a very wet day. I gave a few of these rosettes to my friends Geoff Hill, Cyril Lafong and John Mitchell at the RBGE as insurance in case I lost all my plants. I continued to divide my plants every year; it was slow work - although plants produce offsets they are not so prolific that we can produce dozens. We sent pictures to Christopher Grey-Wilson and have shown the plant at the Aberdeen Show; it has also been seen by the SRGC Joint Rock Plant Committee.

I am grateful to my friend Cyril Lafong who was the first to collect seed from his plant and has given several seedlings back to me. Some have flowered and look like the parent; they are also perennial. Cyril has seen several colour variations. Other plants have flowered and died. Geoff Hill's remarks on these plants are interesting: "*Your perennial plant is thriving with lots of long broad leaves (20 cm x 5 cm). I think that it must be a hybrid as it is much more vigorous in growth than either M. punicea*

Opposite: *Meconopsis punicea*, a monocarpic twenty-one petalled example



Meconopsis punicea, perennial form and foliage

or the *M. x cookei* 'Old Rose' which is growing alongside it. It only produced four flowers this year and I had to support them as the stems were rather long and floppy. This is the first time that it has flowered for me and so I have not raised any seedling yet".

I realise that it is too early to be sure if all the seedlings will be perennial but I can now send a few seeds to friends around the world so they may enjoy what I think is a superb introduction. I continue to observe these plants, both divisions and seedlings, and keep them in a different garden area to the normal plants. It has been suggested that I cross-pollinate both forms but at the moment I am reluctant to do it because I prefer to keep them separate. I have measured numbers & lengths of petal and flowers per plant on established plants of *M. punicea*: I find flowers with four, six or eight petals 15 cm long (on one flower 20 cm); and with five, six or seven flower stems on one plant.

I split the plant into small pieces then cut the leaves down by half - this avoids loss of moisture and the plants grow new leaves fairly quickly. I usually wait for a wet day in June or July to divide the plants and immediately replant the bigger divisions in a prepared bed in the garden where they are then covered with some shade netting. We keep them watered for a few days if sunny, until established. I also pot on the very small divisions which are placed in a shady frame; most take quite well although we lost some very small plants over last winter.

I have never hand-pollinated these plants but I get a reasonable seed set. From the six or seven flowers, five produced full capsules. Weather plays its part here - especially in 2010 with its red-hot days

followed by monsoon showers that rotted some of the pods. I sow some seed as soon as it is ripe; the rest is kept in the fridge to be sown in January; germination is good with both methods. I am now keenly hoping for feedback from friends in Canada, Germany, New Zealand and the United Kingdom who have had seed from me.

When growth starts in spring the rosettes look like a shuttlecock, while in the midst of the emerging leaves several flower buds appear. I remove the first five or six buds as this seems to make the plants produce multi-rosettes with more flowers and a better chance of seed. Flowers should be hand-pollinated and having several plants gives the best chance of success. I have one or two plants of *M. punicea* that have persisted for three or four years but they do not produce runners like the perennial form. I tried to divide some but found it difficult to separate the rosettes; very few survived this treatment.

Longevity and Multi-petalling (Geoff Hill)

In cultivation, most plants of *M. punicea* are monocarpic, flowering in their second year before producing seed and dying. The plant has a single tap root and inevitably dies once it decays. There has been continuing debate as to whether or not perennial forms exist, with some observers reporting plants in the wild with large crowns - suggesting that they might have a perennial nature. One of the first plants of *M. punicea* that I grew developed a large crown and surprised me by flowering for six years. After three years I lifted the plant and on finding some fibrous roots decided to divide it into six small pieces. Three died almost immediately but three flowered as small plants the following year, two subsequently dying out. The remaining division continued to flower for a further two years but only ever produced small multi-petalled flowers. It eventually died in the dry summer of 2006.

Over the years I formed the impression that other plants in the garden flowered for more than one season but it was difficult to be certain, because new seed-raised plants were continually being planted. Eventually I investigated longevity by giving each plant its own label marked with the number of flowering stems removed during the season. By this means I identified a few plants that had definitely flowered for more than one year. Two plants that flowered well in 2008 continued to produce more foliage. They failed to flower the next year but developed big crowns that produced many strong flowers again in 2010 before dying. Another plant sown in 2002 built up its crown every year but did not flower until 2009 when it produced sixteen flowers. At the end of that summer many rosettes remained un-flowered. The plant looked good for another year but then rot spread into the tap root from rosettes that had flowered and died. Drastic action was needed. I used a scalpel to cut away the rotting part of the tap root, the wound was dusted with

fungicide and the plant survived to flower very well again the following year. The dry summer of 2010 did not encourage good crown development but nevertheless a couple of plants that flowered during the year were still surviving in the garden in autumn.

None of the plants described above was perennial in the way that Ian's stoloniferous plant undoubtedly is. I prefer to describe them as 'long-lived' and have concluded that, if young plants can be grown on to form a sufficiently large crown before they start to flower, some may flower for more than one season. For this, growing and weather conditions must be favourable, some rosettes must remain un-flowered and the tap root must be kept free of decay. My views were recently confirmed when, researching *Narcissus*, I stumbled upon the following in *The Stone Column (The Rock Garden, number 90)*: "*the four surviving plants of M. punicea from the original sowing of wild Chinese seed in 1986 are displaying their pendulous scarlet petals for the fifth year. Thus some individuals are definitely not monocarpic, once they have formed multi-crowned plants.*" Did Askival provide just the right growing conditions or has *M. punicea* lost vitality in cultivation?

A few of the plants I grow each year from seed have always produced flowers with multiple petals but this year (2010) their number has been exceptionally high. I don't find the majority of these forms particularly attractive but I realise that some people do. The number of petals per flower can be very variable and this year I found flowers with up to twenty one petals. Plants producing multi-petalled flowers usually tend to continue to do so but I don't know if this characteristic is passed on to their seed. I routinely hand-pollinate as I find that this results in more reliable seed production but I have never attempted to separate or mark multi-petalled plants - simply cross-pollinating between any plants in flower at the time. The resultant seed has been extensively distributed through the seed exchanges.

Meconopsis punicea (left) with the perennial form



In the past I thought the production of multiple petals was probably caused by stress during the development of the plant, as it was often a feature of plants with lots of small leaves. However, this year many strong plants flowered in this way and I began to fear that I was inbreeding the characteristic. I was reassured to some extent when a grower from the north-west of England told me that many of his plants had also been multi-petalled this season. Weather may well have been a factor because we had a very hot dry period as the plants first came into flower in May and a drier than usual summer thereafter. In any event I have resolved to play safe in the future and to avoid cross-pollinating from any plants that flower with multiple petals. These plants will be clearly labelled so that no seed is collected from them. No doubt there will be others who will wish to try to stabilise a 'double' form but I do not want to risk losing the simple and elegant beauty of the *M. punicea* that I grow and love.

Meconopsis punicea, twelve and twenty one (inset) petalled forms



A *Trillium* Hunt in California

Larry Neel



Trillium ovatum var. *oettingeri*

Having found *Trillium ovatum* var. *oettingeri* at nearby locations I decide to load up the dogs and look in the Sugar Creek drainage basin for that plant as well as *Cypripedium fasciculatum*, yesterday Saturday August 1st. The trailhead is four miles from my home. The Sugar Creek drainage faces east opposite the Salmon River Drainage and drains into the Scott River in Scott Valley in Siskiyou County, California. The majority of the area is included in the Russian Wilderness. This area has the most diverse population of conifers in a single area in the world. Check out location 86 at the following link provided by Russ Graham - http://www.fs.fed.us/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr188/pswgr188_textOnly.txt.



The drainage has three lakes: Sugar Lake which is accessed by a trail, High Lake, and South Sugar Lake. The latter two have no trail. It starts out as a narrow canyon and then splits after a couple of miles with Sugar and High Lakes in the northern portion and South Sugar

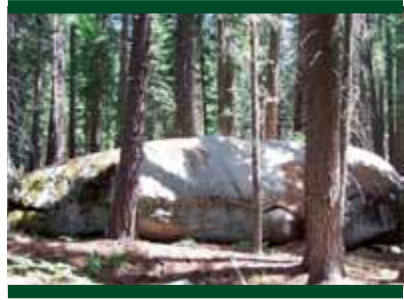
in the southern. The area is extremely steep as shown my picture.

The portion that I'm heading for today is an alpine bowl on the southern side that has a lot of moisture running out of it which is favorable to *Trillium ovatum* var. *oettingeri*. My observation in Siskiyou and Humboldt Counties is that *T. ovatum*, while growing near water, has dry feet. Oettinger's *Trillium* tolerates a lot more moisture when it blooms and even seems to prefer wet feet. I have observed it in other locations growing in seeps and bogs that were still wet in late August. Normally bogs or seeps in our area consist mostly of what I'll call mud. The wet areas that contain *T. oettingeri* are layers of tightly compacted decomposed conifer litter that contain very little soil. The elevation at the site is a little over six thousand feet and is about nine hundred vertical feet above the trail at the valley floor.

The Sugar Creek trail is accessed off the High C road. Below is a picture of Sugar Creek, just above where it crosses the road.



The dogs and I head up the trail and after a mile or so hit Whale Rock.



We hang a left and after a few hundred yards cross the main fork of Sugar Creek and then the south fork of Sugar Creek. The climb at first is moderate but full of brush and downed timber and is slow going. After a half mile or so it gets steep, real steep. My picture was taken with the camera pointed uphill so it doesn't really indicate how steep it really is. We're hugging the rocks to the left, which are the base of the cliff above.



The last portion before we crest the bowl above is even worse. Once again the picture makes it look reasonable which it was not.



We reach the bottom of the bowl and immediately find *Trillium ovatum* var. *oettingeri* in the wet areas that drain the bowl.



The ground where the little guys are growing is wet as shown below.



A short distance to the west of where we crested, are two lily ponds.



The picture below was taken from just above the second pond looking into the main canyon with the dividing ridge behind the tree to the left. You can see how much we climbed. Sugar Lake sits on the valley floor just behind the dividing ridge and High Lake sits below the little piece of exposed rock at about ten o'clock on the skyline.



As a younger man hunting deer I travelled through all this area as well as the surrounding drainages for miles on all sides. I could go all day, get up at four the next morning and do it again, then go to work on Monday. Now in my early sixties and hunting plants instead of deer, I'm lucky to go three or four hours if off the trails and have sore legs for days. Is it worth it? ... You bet it is!

Panda and Lulu are also tired.



On the way out we find a single plant of *Pyrola picta* still blooming, which completes our day.



We didn't find the *Cypripedium fasciculatum* but wait, there's always next week! I'm sure I know where it is. Right!

Larry Neel

Cypripedium fasciculatum (Photo :
Maria Mantas; US Forest Service)



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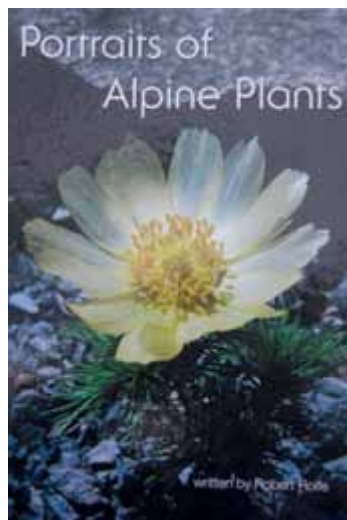
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Portraits of Alpine Plants
Robert Rolfe
160 pages & 150 illustrations
ISBN: 0-900048-86-7
Alpine Garden Society £25

This magnificent book is brand new, although it shares its title with the earlier 1965 AGS book that had several contributors and was edited by Roy Elliot with pictures in black and white. This time every word and most of the photographs are Robert Rolfe's - and thank goodness for that! The book is a delight from beginning to end. Its cover picture of a single bowl-shaped flower of the lemon form of *Adonis vernalis* sets the standard for those inside. The crisp and pin-point sharp detail in this first picture tells you this photographer is a master of his craft. Petals, stamens, anthers and foliage are perfectly lit and are all in focus.



When you open the book you find that the first pages are deep bottle green. As you turn over to page four the pure white flowers of a clump of *Trillium grandiflorum* erupt in front of you like the opening titles in a cinema. You realise immediately that much thought has gone into the smallest details of presentation. The high quality of the photographs and their reproduction strikes you as soon as you leaf through the pages. More than half the book is devoted to these excellent photos. As well as those of individual plants, photographs of mountain landscapes are scattered throughout the book. They have been chosen not only for their beauty but also to emphasise the habitats of the alpine plants. The pictures tell you this is a book to be looked at, to dip into and to enjoy ... but it is much more than that.

Once you start to read you begin to marvel at the author's grasp of his subject. The portraits in the book are also painted in words. Robert's use of English rivals that of Reginald Farrer himself and is a joy to read. How many hours of meticulous research had gone into this before anything was put down on paper? Robert quotes exotic sources such as H Selfe's address on *Viola alpina* to a RHS audience in 1893. On the chosen species, Robert's words can be read as those of 'the Authority'. His knowledge of and enthusiasm for alpine plants, their history in cultivation, their needs and idiosyncrasies are all expressed in his own inimitable style. He writes about cultivation and propagation alongside history and

geography, all subjects intertwining and linking through the pages. Robert manages subtly to combine his unrivalled knowledge of alpine plants with information essential for their successful cultivation. He presents all this in a very entertaining and readable way. You learn as you enjoy. As I read succeeding portraits I began to hear Robert speak in my head but was able - by reading slowly - to slow him down to my own intellectual pace and to savour his descriptions.

This series of essays on a host of alpine and rock garden plant species becomes magical when you find threads that run from page to page to connect his subjects in the most delightful ways. Would anyone else link *Lewisia rediviva* to *Sempervivum*, or *Epimedium* to *Jeffersonia* and on to *Dicentra*? With the succinct use of words, we learn so much about every plant that the book becomes a lively alpine adventure story. I venture to suggest that there is not one superfluous word. Each statement is considered and based on Robert's own knowledge and experience gained from his many years as a grower, shower, judge and writer on alpinists. Every line is important; every paragraph contains its own jewel. I doubt if anyone else could have written this book. The photographs are of exceptional quality and the text has flown from the pen of a master. It is both informative and entertaining.

The only jarring note comes at the end. After the index and the three wonderful double-page spreads of mountain scenes, we turn the page and are assaulted by the brash primary colours of the almost fluorescent advert for the Alpine Garden Society. Nevertheless, the AGS is to be congratulated for commissioning and publishing such an excellent book and therefore deserves 'to blow its own horn'!

Portraits of Alpine Plants should be on the bedside table of every expert and novice alpine gardener. None can afford to be without it. Discerning gardeners will take it to their desert islands for years to come.

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