



# THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY CENTRAL SUSSEX GROUP



NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2007

CAPT. PETER ERSKINE  
THE SMALLER DAPHNES

Daphnes belong to the Thymelaeaceae and although they are capricious and may not grow for you, few other genera in the family are so attractive. Of the latter we were shown two *Pimelea P. ligustrina* from New Zealand and *P. oreophula* from New Zealand and *Ovidia andina* from the southern Andes. Most Daphnes are Eurasian, from Western Europe to Japan and are absent in the New World. Their variety was seen in a slide of pot grown ones at Blackthorn Nursery. The typical flower has four spreading sepals (there are no petals), eight stamens in two whorls of four and a single seed or rice grains within a berry at the base of the calyx tube. Although some Daphne grow to 3m. or more, the talk was concerned with those of much smaller stature.



*D. x transatlantica* 'Jim's  
Pride' - Arrowhead



*D. x transatlantica* 'Jim's Pride' - Pennsylvania  
Hort.Soc.

The first species seen was *Daphne x transatlantica* 'Jim's Pride' a *D. caucasia x collina* cross. *D. mezereum* is very useful as a grafting plant since stock is readily raised from seed as are *D. longilobata*, *D. giraldii* and *D. tangutica*. The self fertile, winter deciduous, long-tubed, yellow flowered *D. giraldii* (213/223,258/).

A view of the Corno alle Scala at 1945m in the Northern Apennines close to the Mediterranean in 2005. *D. oleoides* (210/269, 275/81) is a circum-Mediterranean species, extending into Bulgaria, Turkey and the Caucasus. It forms a low dome with orange seed and grows well on sandy soils. Some are self fertile and there appears to be two different clones in cultivation. *D. demini (kosaninii)* (210/269, 260/114) is distinguished by its pinkish-orange flowers appearing as if permanently in bud and *D. malyana* are related. *Daphne jasminea* (169/211, 236/110, 275/146) can be found on Parnassus (Delphi), on the walls of the Corinth Canal and in Libya. Harry Jans grows it on the top of a wall and is good for showing, but note that this is a crevice plant and cannot stand drought at the roots; A cross with *D. petraea grandiflora* has produced the gorgeous *D. x whiteorum* 'Beauworth' with pink very fragrant flowers. It grows outside at Blackthorn (but the Junkers website says that it has a particular dislike of winter wet).

With *Cyclamen repandum* around Naples in southern Italy, *D. sericea*, (or *D. collina* as claimed in older Italian floras). What were seen, grew in the Abruzzi at 800m and on coastal sand dunes and were not *D. collina hort.* (197/262) The latter is certainly a lovely plant growing to two to three feet across and quite hardy given sunshine and well drained soil of almost any type and has given rise to

hybrids such as 'Cheriton' (*arbuscula* x *collina*) (251/34), 'Lawrence Cocker', *D. rollsdorfii* 'Wilhelm Schacht' (*collina* x *petraea*) raised by Kummert in 1979 with pinkish-purple flowers and *D.* x '*Susannae*' Anton Fahrdrich (*arbuscula* x *collina*) (306/449).

In 2004, a visit to a very limited area around Muran (established in 1997 the Muránska planina - Muran Plateau - national park is situated on the boundary between Central and Eastern Slovakia in the western part of the Slovenské Rudohorie Mountains) to see the endemic *D. arbuscula* (241/262, 275/82, 284/163, 291/60, 304/260) where it grows in fissures in near vertical limestone cliffs (and occasionally back from the cliffs with *Pulsatilla halleri* ssp. *serbica*) at 900 to 1100m) in several forms. We were shown typical cliffs and plants in their natural habitats. They have terrific root systems delving in search of moisture. In a Steyning garden it was grown on clay over chalk (photos were shown from 1963 and 1972 and in Peter's present garden on Chichester grit between sandstone blocks). *D. arbuscula* 'Diva' from *D. schlyteri* (*arbuscula* x *cneorum* x *sundermanii* (*arbuscula* x *petraea*)) grows nicely in 6-10mm Cotswold pebble. Blackthorn uses potting compost over clay. Air and drainage is essential for surface roots. Fungal disease can affect neck and roots. Garden plants are top dressed every year..



*D. arbuscula*



*D. blagayana*

*D. blagayana* (169/207, 222/350, 253, 258-9 from eastern Italy, Croatia and northern Greece is always a woodland or scrub species which hates wind. It received an FCC in 1880 and re-affirmed in 1985 as a *Daphne* par excellence. It carries a dense head of creamy, very fragrant flowers. Of the clones, 'Wells' Variety' is a more compact form, while 'Brenda Anderson' is straggly and needs to be cut back after flowering. *D.* x *eschmanii* 'Jacob Eschmann' is another complex cross (*blagayana* x *cneorum*)– which is itself *blagayana* x *arbuscula*.

Photographed on the Col du Nageat at 1664m in the Devoluy north west of Gap on 17 May, mat forming *D. cneorum* (241/271, 275/84, 302/449 - 'Alba'), one of the most loved species, is a sub-alpine plant to be found from the Pyrenees eastwards through the Alps to Bulgaria and as *D. juliae* (242/366) into Russia. It is alleged that it grows at almost sea level in south west France. There is considerable variation in growth: they are more prostrate on Monte Baldo on the east side of Lake Garda than the west – 'Benaco' (the old name for Garda) (294/387, 306/449) was introduced



*D. cneorum*



*D. cneorum* 'Benaco'

by Peter and has long and narrow bright green leaves and 50 to 60 terminal flowers. Those from the Spanish Pyrenees around Lake San Mauricio in the Encatados Moutains are grown under the name of *var. pygmaea* (236/95, 239/54, 246/372) . Paler forms occur in the Dolomites as at 1445m on Monte Nota. In the wild they can be associated with *Fritillaria tubiformis* and *Pulsatilla alpina ssp. millefoliata*.. In cultivation, the variation continues – a variegated one from the Czech Republic, *pygmaea* 'Blackthorn Triumph'; originally a seedling from *D. cneorum var. pygmaea* (236/95, 271/51); this selection is very prostrate and compact, yet a much more vigorous and better behaved plant than its parent. with pink flowers in May. Other forms are 'Eximea' (224/137, 266/402) four feet across; *D. x napolitana* (probably *cneorum x collina hort*); the Romanian *D. cneorum* 'Stasek' with deep pink flowers from rose-purple buds. *D. x rossetii* (*laureola phillipii x cneorum*) from the Pyrenees was introduced in 1927 and later re-collected and described by Halda. The flowers are green tinged pink and honey scented, and the foliage is excellent even when out of flower, but it has a reputation for being shy flowering;

*S. striata* (260/115, 275/83) differs from *D. cneorum* in that there are no hairs on the foliage and except in the Dolomites it is probable that the two are not found together. A pale form was seen from the Valle di Foderia near Livigno, large patches on limestone karst in the Venetian Alps, on Croce Podici and below the Sasso Lungo in the Dolomites. In cultivation it must be grown on its own roots, although not to maturity, but it is not an exciting species – stick to *cneorum*! Recorded by Farrer in 1911 on one precipitous pinnacle of Cima Tombea west of Lake Garda, *D. x thauma* (169/210) has the habit of *D. striata* and the neater foliage of *D. petraea*; it is not a first rate plant, but was still there in 2006 when seen by some Czechs. Robin White at Blackthorns reports it occasionally drops all of its leaves without warning in late summer although it usually recovers; flowers are a soft light pink with deeper tubes in clusters of 5-8 and when grown well in a trough it is incredible.

Above Limone sul Garda, an old military road climbs the Val di Bondo used by cyclists and mad Italian motorists, so take care if you use it as a plaque to one Enrico tells of his sticky end. Here there is *Physoplexis comosa* (304/178) and higher up, more importantly one of the few sites for *D. petraea*, (169/206, 229/198, 239/52, 241/267, 246/372, 269/296, 289/369, 278/361, 303/70, 304/177, 178) scattered (sometimes accompanied by *Primula auricula*) on cliffs away from the sun. Like *D. arbuscula*, it is a fissure plant, but one is completely prostrate with many pink flowers of varying shades. There are several forms such as 'Grandiflora' 275/77) discovered by Robert Tucker of Brookside Nursery in 1914 and many more now in cultivation – 'Flamingo' pale pink with bigger flowers and long tube, an unnamed T6/97, NES99-50, 'Punchinello' (294/389, 303/71) – Peter's own plant in which the two outer lobes are purplish-pink and the two inner ones almost white, NES 99-50 with pale flowers, pale pink 'Michele', (285/292, 286/529) with a trailing habit; pure white flowered 'Tremalzo' (258/434) introduced over 30 years ago by Ernst Hauser, 'Persebee' white and quite vigorous, 'Lydora' (294/387) – another of Robin White's plant at the Midlands 2003 show and



*D. petraea* 'Tremalzo'



*D. x hendersonii* 'Aymon Correvon' - AGS

'Lydro'. *D x hedersonii* 290/492) discovered in 1930 is *petraea x cneorum* and is better in the garden than in pots. Cultivars include 'Aymon Correvon' (290/494, 497, 296/213) the shell-pink illustration here of Robin White's Farrer at the April Midland Show is much paler than that in the Bulletin, 'Kath Dryden' (290/495, 498, 302/413) and 'Marion White' (290/497-8) with crystalline, intensely fragrant white flowers. Also found west of Garda is *D. reichensteinii* (241/266) which may be a hybrid between *petraea* and *alpina*.

The Truso Gorge below 5033m Mount Karbek in the Caucasus proved that *D. glomerata* (254/365, 277/216) was not eaten by sheep and therefore persists. In cultivation it doesn't like cold, but survives in the wild because it is snow covered. This species is a slightly more compact than *D. blagayana* and forms large clumps crammed with large, sweetly scented, creamy-white flowers in early summer. It is also found in N.E. Turkey where var. *nivalis* is a high altitude form, very floriferous and generally less than 20cm high.

The Japanese *D. jezoensis* (170/325, 207/320, 275/85), not introduced to Britain until the early 1960s, is a summer deciduous, woodland species, its yellow flowers appearing in late winter and early spring. In the Big Snow Mountains of Yunnan, there are also woodland Daphnes growing with *Rhododendron wardii*, *R. oreotrephes* and *Androscae rigida*. *D. acutiloba* has white flowers and the form 'Fragrant Cloud' (289/373) introduced by Rix has a lovely perfume. *D. wolongensis* is a mountain wood species, almost white inside but deep pink on the outside. Growing rapidly, it is in cultivation as Kevlock Star SDR2.



*D. wolongensis* 'Kevlock Star' - Kevlock Nursery

*D. retusa* (169/210, 272/157) from western Szechuan has been known for over 100 years and forms mounds of shiny dark green foliage and very fragrant purplish-rose and white flowers followed by red fruits. Growing at 3500m it is perfectly happy in open, sunny positions in the garden. Introduced by Forrest in 1906 *D. aurantiaca* (232/117) is an evergreen species with yellow or orange-yellow flowers where it grows on ledges and crevices on limestone cliffs. *D. calcicola* is a compact form which grows at the edges of woodland. In 1997, on the last day of an expedition, seed was found developing and of seven scions taken, six were successful; two were selected out for growing on – one with big flowers and foliage was named 'Gang-ho-ba' (306/467). *D. calciola* 'Sichuan Gold' (287/59) with smaller flowers is proving more compact at three years of age.



*D. calcicola* 'Gang-ho-ba'

On cultivation, we learnt that with fresh seed (June-July), germination can be expected in the following April – as suggested by being cleaned by birds, a 24 hour soak may help.

Do not expect anything from seed distributions! See 275/81. Dieback can occur for a number of reasons, fungal disease (Peter has a 6 week anti-fungal regime) and neck rot, the first sign of which is branches dying. In a pot compost becomes less aerated and can readily lead to water logging with usually fatal consequences. It is better to grow Daphnes in the garden as re-potting can be tricky, but is desirable if you do. Re-pot in March and water the plunge and not the pot, preferably a clay one. Either re-pot regularly or don't do it. A hefty liquid feed is given when new growth appears in June. 6-10mm gravel is used in the garden as a top dressing and do not let the roots dry out. - Daphnes root straight down and rarely go sideways. *D. arbuscula* (hard wood cuttings) must be grown on their own roots. Cuttings taken in mid-July or late August when it is cooler will start rooting in February or March.

Thank you Peter for a fascinating and well illustrated introduction to the smaller Daphnes. We can

now go forth visiting their habitats, daphne gardens and nurseries and trying grow them much better informed!

### **Articles in the AGS Bulletin**

In praise of a green goddess 169/206  
The propagation of Daphnes 173/244  
Vichren Daphnes 210/267  
Dates with Daphnes 236/95  
Some notes on the genus Daphne 241/266  
Daphne seed 275/81

### **Other articles**

The New Plantsman 7- pages 6...., 114...., 236....  
Bulletin NARGS v.43 no.4 pp.292-302 – *D. arbuscula*, v.60 no4 251  
Grey-Wilson, C. 2000, April. Daphne demystified. The Garden (RHS) 125(4): 248-251  
[www.srgc.org.uk/discus/messages/139/12131.html?1115698471](http://www.srgc.org.uk/discus/messages/139/12131.html?1115698471)

### **Books**

The smaller Daphnes – Summary of Conference proceedings April 2000  
Brickell, C.D. & B. Mathew 1976. Daphne: the genus in the wild and in cultivation.  
Daphne arbuscula, Its Biology and Distribution by Peter Turis and Olga Erdelska  
Daphnes A practical guide for gardeners by Robin White (of Blackthorn) –  
<http://www.timberpress.com/pdfs/excerpts/9780881927528e.pdf> shows contents page, pp.85-96  
(most of petraea), and 223-25 (useful addresses).

### **Society**

The Daphne Society, Membership Secretary Shelley Herlich, 43 Greenfield Lane, Commack, NY 11725, USA

### **Nurseries**

Blackthorn Nursery, Kilmeston, Arlesford, Hampshire, SO24 0NL. Tel: 01962-771796. Does not have a web site!  
[www.arnottower.co.uk](http://www.arnottower.co.uk)  
[www.junker.co.uk/daphne](http://www.junker.co.uk/daphne) PMA Plant Specialities, Junkers Nursery, Lower Mead, West Hatch, Taunton TA3 5RN, 01823 480774 – large number of Daphne for sale with brief entries and cultural information  
<http://users.sagehost.co.uk/junker/daphne31.htm>  
[www.adhocplants.com.htmlhttp://www.darrelltrout.com/dtartdapgro.asp](http://www.adhocplants.com.htmlhttp://www.darrelltrout.com/dtartdapgro.asp)  
<http://www.kevockgarden.co.uk/>

### **RM**

**MEETING 17 FEBRUARY  
COLIN KITCHNER  
PICOS DE EUROPA AND THE WESTERN PYRENEES**

**To add a social element to our meetings and as an addition to our usual talk, we should be pleased if any of you could bring along to a meeting, a plant to talk about, or an idea, topic or a problem you may have to which other members may like to contribute.**

**OPEN GARDENS**

**PEMBURY HOUSE – park in car park opposite the church in Underhill Lane**

**13 to 15 february 11.00 – 4.00**

**20 – 22 february 11.00-4.00**

**20 may 11.00-5.30**

**GREAT DIXTER will be open out of season in February and March**