



**THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY
ULSTER GROUP**



Newsletter No. 15 August 2016



Alpine Garden Society
Ulster Group
Greenmount Show April 2016



Primula Netta Dennis, Susan Tindall, SRGC Quich (H5)



Dionysia aretioides 'Phyllis Carter', Billy Moore, Farrer Medal (H5)



Gentiana scabra - Paddy Smith



Erythronium Stargazer, Harold McBride



N. bulbocodium conspicuosum, Mac Dunlop



Fritillaria meleagris, Gordon Toner



Saevitraga Dimicki, Kay McDowell



Vaccinium nummularia, Janet Mathias



P. Broadwell Milmas, Raymond Copeland



Pulsatilla 'Butapest', Gordon Toner



Tillium, Kay McDowell



Cyclamen persicum, Mac Dunlop



Fritillaria drorowskyi, George Sevastopulo



Erythronium mandatum, Harold McBride



Leontopodium pusillum, Paddy Smith



Primula gracilipes, Gordon Toner



Saevitraga Ladalev, Raymond Copeland



Rhododendron, Frank Lavery



Tillium rivale, Gordon Toner, Probe Anderson Trophy



Erythronium californicum White Beauty, Liam Byrne



Primula allison Joe Elliott, Lawrence Kane



Pulsatilla vulgaris, Paddy Smith



Fritillaria affinis var. *fruticosa*, George Sevastopulo



Cassiope mertensiana var. *gracilis*, Gordon Finch



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Editorial

We are living in changing times – changing politics – changing climate – tragic world events. What a relief sometimes to be able to step out into a garden to get some solace from it all. I heard a snippet on the news about new diseases and pests brought in on pot plants and in the future there may be even restrictions on the import of plant material and perhaps our exit from the EU will also have an impact on plant availability. Fortunately the AGS, while emphasising conservation and responsible plant selection, has always encouraged its members to grow from seed which seems a very appropriate policy at the present time.

Locally, rather than breaking up, the Ulster Group has been forming links with fellow gardeners in the Irish Garden Plant Society and the Northern Ireland Daffodil Group. We had a very successful joint meeting with the IGPS when Richard Baines, Curator of Logan Botanic Gardens, kindly stepped in at very short notice (due to the unavoidable postponement by Colin Crosbie who comes later this year). Richard's talk on recent developments at Logan Botanic proved of interest to both groups and a return visit was made by the Ulster Group to the IGPS meeting with Jimi Blake later in the year. The NI Daffodil Group also invited our members to their Winter Show and hopefully we will continue to share our expertise and learn from the friendship with other societies. Our links remain strong with the Dublin AGS Group, especially on their help and support at Show time and we look forward to their enjoyable alpine weekend at Termonfeckin every year. This year our Newsletter even has a link with the Antipodes. Thanks to our President, Harold, writing an article for the New Zealand Alpine Gardeners they reciprocated and Doreen Mear (originally from Yorkshire AGS and whom we got to know on an AGS expedition to Colorado) very kindly sent the article on Turkish Irises.

As noted later there are a few changes on the committee, Harold McBride, takes a rest from Presidential duties, Kay Dunlop stepping into his shoes. The Group has been very lucky in having at the top two members like Harold and Kay who both over many years have shown such loyalty and enthusiasm for the Ulster Group.

Thanks to all our members for their continuing support and look forward to meeting up with both old and new members at the interesting year ahead.

Joan McCaughey

Growing and Showing

Pat and George Gordon



Ulster Show 2006 with Patricia keeping a watchful eye

I must admit that when Joan asked me to write something for the Ulster Group Newsletter on growing and showing I had doubts. It's not that Pat and I do neither, just that we do not consider ourselves experts, and no we are not hiding our light under a bushel. Through the AGS Shows at Greenmount and Cabinteely we have met growers who consistently produce show plants to the highest standards, and we do neither. Not that we haven't had success, just that we have "learned to treat (triumph and disaster) these two impostors just the same".

AGS Shows are important to us as a Group because it is where the public probably meets us for the first time. Patricia Crossley, again and again, tries to encourage new members (and older ones as well) to give it a try. If you do I can assure you will (if bitten) be taken on a journey of discovery. You will meet some of the most experienced and friendly alpine enthusiasts in Ireland (and farther afield) who are only too willing to impart their knowledge. You will also find out things, hard won through experience, that you are not likely to read in books. As in life no two experts hold exactly the same opinions, but take whatever advice you are given (including our own) and try it out yourself.

So if we want to do anything in this short article it is to encourage beginners to take the first steps. It's not difficult and you will be made more than welcome.

There are a few ground rules to learn, and these are best appreciated at our own Members Show held in March every year, in advance of the main shows. The Members Show, after all, has been designed to encourage newcomers to bring in a few plants. It is a mirror image of the main show, with its own schedule but on a much smaller scale. Every year our Show Secretary Patricia will appeal and distribute a schedule of the classes you can enter.

First of all you need to consider the plants themselves, pots, labels and how to stage your plants and we intend to give a few pointers to each of these.

So where do you get alpine (in the broadest sense) plants from, The Ulster Group has its own plant sale every meeting over the winter and early spring months with a wide selection. Look out for plants grown from seed by Harold McBride – some of them his own cultivars. They may not be in flower and are easily overlooked, but take a chance and you will be richly awarded. Many of the plants in our own garden, and numerous others, have come from this source.

If you want to see a wide selection in flower try Susan Tindall at Magheratimpany Nurseries near Ballynahinch. If you are interested the time to go is early spring (March and April). You will be spoiled for choice. Peninsula Primulas has a wonderful selection of Primulas – a staple of AGS Shows. Both Susan Tindall and Phillip Bankshead regularly attend shows and both have websites you can browse:

Susan at www.timpanynurseries.com

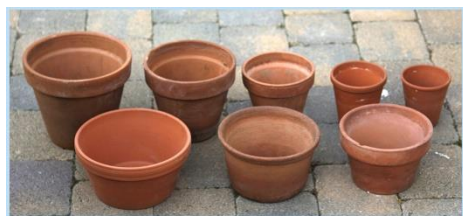
Phillip at www.penprimulas.com

Other specialist nurseries are found at Greenmount and Cabinteely – Aberconwy springs to mind – and of course with the Internet the choice is only limited by your wallet.

I would also recommend growing from seed. The AGS has a seed exchange open to all members. At first it is daunting with 5-6,000 choices in the list, but don't be put off. You will soon narrow your choices down to those plants that interest you the most. One of the advantages is that no two plants you grow yourself will be identical. Don Peace had three *Androsace vandellii* at Cabinteely last spring, all grown from the same seed batch sown at the same time, and one had grown to

twice the size of its siblings under the same conditions. Judges, like the rest of us, like to see something new. Try the odd alpine you do not know much about and see how it turns out.

The plants you put on the bench probably account for 90% of what the judges are looking for, but you can do yourself a few favours by having them in a clean pot, well top-dressed and presented. Kath Dryden was Director of AGS Shows for many years, and often used to write about how she cared for her collection of clay pots. They were important to her and she spent a lot of time looking after them. I know Pat has found many of the clay pans we use at car boot sales. They had been hand thrown and cost next to nothing. Keep your eyes open. For preference we would use clay pots but they are a lot of work. Lime scale builds up (try lime scale remover from Lidl and a pot scourer). Red plastic pots are easier to clean but suffer with age and have to be replaced. Our least preferred pot is black and the only time I have used it is as a last resort – perhaps with long toms I have grown bulbs in. Work in advance of yourself and have a few clean pots available for shows when you need them. Be sure however that your pot is not too large for the class you are entering – normally 19cm for beginners. This is the outside measurement and must be strictly adhered to. Anything larger will be judged “Out of class”. If in doubt measure it.



Clay Pots

We use clay pots for preference. All these all suitable for beginners as they are less than 19cm outside diameter. Hard to keep clean however.



Plastic pots

These are equivalent plastic pots. Cheaper and easier to use. The drainage holes are more abundant than in clay pots, and they are less prone to drying out.

There is only one firm rule concerning labelling. It has to be legible and horizontal. There are many ways to do this, indeed as many ways as there are exhibitors. We have settled into using cut-down white plastic labels, garden wire and whitetac, and write the name with a permanent black marker pen. If you are of a very neat and tidy disposition you can print the names from your computer. If you are not entirely sure of the proper botanical name for your prized plant don't worry. It will not count against you and judges can be asked to put a name if they are able.



By now you should have your plant in a clean pot and labelled. Look at the flowers and foliage with a critical eye. After all this is what the judges will do. Remove any dead or damaged flowers and foliage, as judges can spot these a mile away. Exhibitors will do this right up to the last minute as they stage their

plants, and it is remarkable how often you can spot a dead flower (or two) in a plant you had gone over with a fine tooth comb the night before. It only takes a few minutes and will more than repay you. Judges are looking for a healthy plant, and if in a flowering class, coming into flower rather than drawn and going over. A healthy plant seems to speak for itself. It just has that look. You don't have to have a flowering plant. There are classes for dwarf ferns, foliage plants and many others. AGS Shows are broad churches.



Show plants Dublin 2016

Four Erythroniums, two Saxifragas, two Pleiones, a Primula, Ranunculus and Pinguicula. All the Erythroniums have been grown from seed. The white Saxifraga pubescens "Snowcap" is kept in the greenhouse. It soon outgrows a small pot but rosettes root easily in summer to produce new plants. The same plants could be entered in many different classes (or combinations) for AGS Shows, and only one is in a pot over 19cm. Its up to you to decide.

This is the stage to decide in what class to enter. The same plant can go into different classes as defined in the Show Schedule. The Members Show has an abbreviated schedule but the Main Shows have a dedicated booklet containing all you need to know. This used to be distributed with The Alpine Gardener to all members of the AGS, but now you should ask for it if you never exhibited before.



Pinguicula grandiflora

Pinguicula grandiflora is considered one of the most beautiful members of the Irish Flora (it grows in abundance in Kerry). We have had it many years in the same pot. Sphagnum moss is the secret to its cultivation, and it is kept out all year apart from a stay in the greenhouse in late winter. Otherwise the Blackbirds use it for nesting material.



Primula

Primula x pubescens "Timpany Blue". Raised by Susan Tindall it can be kept going by rooted cuttings. Watch out for root aphids if it starts to look unhealthy.



Ranunculus montanus

Ranunculus montanus is a good beginners plant. However notice the weather damage to the flower. Always look closely for this before you exhibit a plant and remove any flowers and foliage that are not perfect.



Saxifraga pubescens "Snowcap"

As a cultivar *Saxifraga pubescens* "Snowcap" is kept going by rooting rosettes in the summer. It is fast growing and soon fills a 19cm pot.



Erythronium hendersonii

All Erythroniums are desirable and hendersonii is one of the most pleasing. Again this was grown from seed. If you buy a bulb it will set to back £5 or so as hendersonii does not multiply except by seed. You have to be patient.



Erythronium revolutum

A good beginners plant, Erythronium revolutum multiplies readily (either in a pot or in the garden). This was grown from seed.

If in doubt ask our Show Secretary Patricia or any exhibitor. They will be only too glad to help.

For instance your plant can be defined as “rock plant in flower” or “grown from seed”, or “native to North America” to name but a few. There are endless combinations in AGS Shows. The place to learn all this of course is at the Shows, even if you don’t enter. Take a note of the plants that both yourself and the judges like. A camera is a valuable method to record (and eventually remember) all that you see.

If all this sounds complicated, it really is not. AGS Shows are judged in order to maintain the high standards established over many years. They are essential. They are competitive – the Farrer Memorial Medal is an honour not lightly bestowed. But they are also very friendly and encouraging. A journey begins with a few steps, and if Pat and I can give you any advice it is to take them for yourself. You will not look back, and hopefully one day you yourself will “win the Farrer”.

Beginners Luck with *Oncocyclus* Irises

Doreen Mear

My elder sister often used to say, pencil poised, when the seedlists arrived in the post, “Remind me again, what’s that black and white iris that I like?” People’s names go straight in one ear and out the other with me, but plant names, especially the ones on the wish-list, are easily retrieved, so I would rattle off, “*Iris iberica elegantissima*.” We must have seen it at an AGS Show, inveterate showgoers and keen exhibitors that we were in the late 1980s and 1990s. A decade or so later, by which time I had moved to the end of the earth (New Zealand), I spotted this iris on Jim and Jenny Archibald’s seedlist, bought a packet from them and more by luck than green fingers, in 2004 raised the princely total of one seedling.

Lord knows how this one seedling survived my ignorance, mistreatment and the local pests and diseases for the next few years, but it did. I don’t have an alpine house or greenhouse so it lived outdoors all the year round, at the mercy of whatever the elements threw at it. Fortunately in the centre of South Island, New Zealand, the summers are hot and dry (up to 30°C), and the winters cold and dry (regularly down to -6°C), with only 670 mm rain a year, so the elements were in its favour. It got the usual potting mix, and an occasional feed or a spray for greenfly when I remembered, but otherwise benign neglect. Finally in 2009, five years after sowing, two fabulous flowers unfolded, more rusty brown and cream

than the black and white I remembered, but I was over the moon.

The following year, I was booked to go on a flower trip to Canada but due to lack of numbers it didn’t materialise, so at the very last minute I switched to a trip to Lake Van in Turkey. Seeing *Iris iberica elegantissima* as a roadside weed and dotted about the pastures was an amazing experience; I was hooked



Iris iberica elegantissima 2009



Photographing Iris paradoxa in Turkey in 2010

Brian Mathew's book on irises was hunted down on eBay, old AGS Bulletins and numerous websites and forums were studied, and gradually I started learning. And worrying. Does anyone else find that ignorance is bliss, that once you learn that something is supposed to be rare and difficult and fraught with major hurdles to overcome, you get nervous and risk killing your protégé with kindness? The iris survived this period, but took a sabbatical for a couple of years before once again producing two flowers.

The next stroke of luck, in fact the major turning point, was a visit to New Zealand in 2013 and a talk to the NZ Iris Society by Tony Hall, juno iris expert recently retired from Kew. Tony stressed that growing these irises is not for the impatient, that iris seeds germinate erratically over a long period, so seedpots need to be kept for at least 5 years, 10 years would be better, and ideally 20 years or more if you have the space! And since I read that the all-time record for lying dormant before germinating is 28 years, it's obvious I should have got started with these irises half a lifetime ago!

Tony also told the story of how on his retirement he left 70 pots of junos to the tender mercies of the staff, and the following spring received a plaintive phone call asking for any suggestions on why 68 of them weren't flowering. Tony's diagnosis was starvation, that because these irises are grown in such a lean gritty potting mix, they soon exhaust the mix and must have regular heavy feeding. His advice was to dose with tomato fertiliser at every watering, adding that a dash of

dolomite lime in the potting mix would be beneficial. He was pleased to get a follow-up phone call the next season to say that all 70 pots were flowering.

I took this on board, repotting the iris in late summer into two-thirds grit/pumice/perlite/sand plus one-third potting mix, with the rhizomes just covered with 5 mm grit. After a dry winter rest under the shelter of the house eaves, watering with tomato fertiliser commenced, plus lots of warmth, sunshine and fresh air, and regular spraying for greenfly to prevent transfer of aphid-borne viruses.

With all this sudden t.l.c. the iris romped away, last year producing an unbelievable total of 14 flowers. Suspecting this might be better than average, I took a (not very good) photo and on the spur of the moment entered it in the 2015 AGS On-Line Show. You could have knocked me down with a feather, when it won Best Plant in Show.



Prize-winning Iris iberica elegantissima 2015

I'm so envious that you growers in the UK, if you have deep enough pockets, can choose from the vast array of oncos and junos on offer from Paul Christian Rare Plants and other nurseries. Unfortunately here in New Zealand we aren't able to

import plants so have to search out sources of seeds. These included the AGS, NARGS, the Aril Society, and private seed collectors such as Kurt Vickery and Vlastimil Pilous.

To my astonishment, a 2013 sowing of seeds of *Iris paradoxa*, *Iris acutiloba lineolata* and *Iris iberica elegantissima* x *I. iberica lycotis* from Kurt, produced their first flowers in 2015, the latter just in time for some cross-pollination experimentation.

Transferring pollen from this onto my plant of *I. iberica elegantissima* resulted in six fat pods and enough seeds to share between three or four growers here. Six seedlings are up already.



Left to right: *Iris paradoxa*, *Iris acutiloba lineolata*
and the hybrid *Iris iberica elegantissima* x *Iris iberica lycotis* 2009

Having cross-pollinated six flowers by hand, I was surprised a few days later to note that the *I. iberica elegantissima* decided to join in and do its own thing, promptly producing another eight pods from the remaining flowers, with no help from any other irises nearby, or from me. The resulting seeds looked good and were sown, but nothing is emerging as yet. If they are fertile, it will be interesting to see what results from the d.i.y. pollination, but I'm hoping for pure *Iris iberica elegantissima*.

Recently I discovered Alan McMurtrie's Canadian website and was blown away by his wonderful new reticulatas and have ordered seeds from him too, so that's a whole new avenue to explore. I just have to live long enough to see the results!

A Trio of Trilliums – David Ledsham

Accurately naming Trilliums can be a bit of a frustrating business. Even the best of experts beg to differ on occasion. Nevertheless, when treating the genus broadly, we can at least separate the sessile species from the pedicellate species. For instance, the well-known *Trillium chloropetalum* belongs to the sessile group, all of which lack a pedicel or stem between the flower and the leaf bracts, and most of them can also be distinguished by their beautiful mottled leaves. Meanwhile the pedicellate species can be seen to possess such a stem which often allows their flowers to nod. They can be generally found in the swamps and forests of the South Eastern States of America. Nevertheless, they are quite at home in the light shade of an Irish garden.

But if anyone is duly inspired to grow these plants from seed then a word of warning is required. Extreme patience is something of a necessity. Germination of seed may take place only after a number of years, and thereafter it may be five or six years before a flower is obtained, and this is why some Trilliums can appear so expensive in nursery catalogues. However it remains an inexpensive way of obtaining a good number of plants to play with. But don't throw away those weedy old pots !

Trillium erectum



Commonly known as Birthroot in its native home. It is extremely variable in both stature and flower colour. They may be deep red or white or any shade in between. It is a member of a confusing group of species or sub- species which is often referred to as the *Trillium erectum* Complex.

Trillium simile

Gardeners who believe they are growing this species may be innocently growing *T. erectum* (... and I'm aware that this may apply to me !) It hails from the mountains and forest margins of Tennessee, Georgia, and the Carolinas. It is said that one of the best ways to tell the difference between *T. simile* and *T. erectum* is to smell the plant. *T. simile* is locally known as Sweet White William and the clue to its odour is in this name. In contrast, *T. erectum* is said to smell of 'wet dog' I'm happy to say that my plant doesn't even smell of a small wet doggie !



Trillium pusillum

This is currently my favourite species. It is a notably dwarf plant, attaining a height of approximately 12 to 14 cm, and it quietly creeps around by means of slender rhizomes. The flowers are white or occasionally pink and they are extremely beautiful. It is an ideal species for growing in a trough.



If anyone wants to become better acquainted with the genus *Trillium* then it might be worthwhile checking out the relevant Flickr albums of Alan Cressler and Jim Fowler where you will find some stunning images of *Trilliums* in habitat ... enjoy!

(This article originally appeared as a 'Plant of the Month' for the website)

Highlights – AGS Garden Trip 2016 – Kay Dunlop

Our garden visit this year took place in one of my favourite parts of Ireland – Dublin through Wicklow to Wexford. Our first visit was to Helen Dillon in Ranelagh.

Helen and Val have sold their house and garden, so this was an opportunity to visit a wonderful garden possibly for the last time. Through the front garden, dominated by *Betula utilis*, with grasses and cool naturalistic planting into the house for coffee, tea and the obligatory visit to the “shell” toilet – what will be its destiny? Viewed from the house the garden was a hazy sea of blue, from *Hesperis matronalis* which Helen grows from seed, and plants en masse each year. Helen makes great use of planting in containers – alliums, lilies, dahlias, which are inserted into the borders just as they are about to bloom for short term effect.



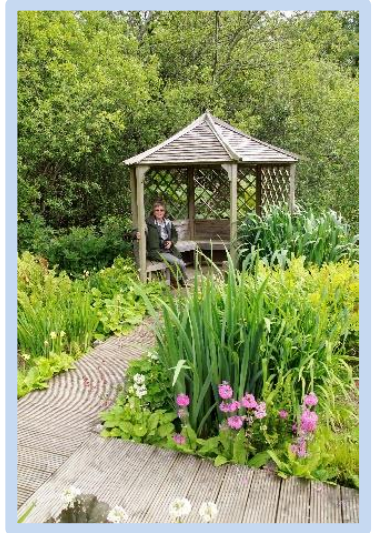
Next visit was to Carmel Duignan who like Helen is a great plantswoman. We were struck as we entered by a massive *Echium pininana* dominating the front garden. What welcomed us more kindly was *Psoralea pinnata*, covered with blue and white pea flowers and exuding a strong scent of honey. Carmel’s garden is one I visit often, and I never fail to be enthralled by it – clematis, tetrapanax, roses, fuchsias, pseudopanax and more and more.

We stayed in Whites of Wexford. Very good, and there we visited another eight gardens. One of my favourites is Coolaught, where the garden has developed greatly since our last visit. The mass of aquilegia was most impressive, as were the laburnum trees trained hard against a wall, which were in full bloom. It was of course the nursery that attracted full attention. I think this was when David, our coach driver, had an inkling of what was to come. Shrubs, trees, roses, ferns, plants usual and unusual - many many



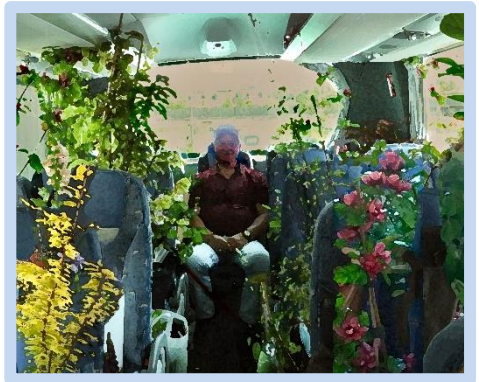
plants were bought, and there was an air of happiness and satisfaction.

Frances and Ian McDonald have created in the Bay Garden a series of rooms, each with a distinctive style, which urge you to travel to the next space. I love the final section, through the woodland to a boggy marsh filled with primulas. Behind this marsh is a gazebo where it is pleasant to sit and view the garden stretching up from you.



The icing on the cake was our visit to T.J. Maher's garden in Kilteggan. Cobbled courtyards, homebaked banana bread and brownies. Garden rising steeply behind the house, exotic plantings. I loved it.

Finally, the buying spree. There were literally hundreds of plants bought, of every size and shape. Problem: how to get everybody and everything home ? Solution : all plants were taken off the coach and spread over pavements in Wexford – how the natives must have loved this. They were replaced in order of departures. The back of the coach was like a garden in full bloom, with an occasional face spied through a sea of roses, azaleas, hydrangeas and whatever.



It was a most enjoyable trip with good gardens, good plants and good memories. I have a lasting memory of Aileen, on her electric scooter thing boarding the Belfast/Bangor train in company with the shrub calycanthus – six feet tall !!

History – recent memorable members

While some older members of the Ulster Group might feel that in the past it was full of memorable characters here I am highlighting a few names that newer members may come across and wonder who they were.



The name of **Dr Molly Sanderson** has been mentioned before in our history and she is remembered every year by a memorial lecture. She left a small bequest to the Ulster Group to ensure it could continue to afford a high standard of lecturers and, although in poor health, attended the first lecture in 1995 given by Helen Dillon. That high standard has been maintained with speakers ranging from Sir Roy Lancaster to Peter Korn from Sweden and most recently to our own Harold McBride, to name just a few. Molly also introduced many plants into cultivation and is remembered worldwide by *viola* ‘Molly Sanderson’.

Years ago the BBC did a series of programmes on Ulster gardens and Liam had recorded some including that of the late **Miss Maisie Michael**. On watching it recently I was amazed at her wonderful collection of alpines and also her great knowledge of old roses – truly a dedicated gardener. At the instigation of Margaret Glynn, Maisie’s complete collection of AGS bulletins was gifted to the alpine gardeners of the Czech Republic who at that time had difficulty accessing the relevant reading material. She is also remembered by a primula and here I have taken words from the Dublin Alpine Group’s Newsletter.



Primula vulgaris ‘Maisie Michael’- Liam Byrne from the Dublin Group tells the story of how this plant got its name. ‘Margaret & Henry Taylor were visiting Joe Kennedy’s garden and were given some of his seedling primulas. Henry was so taken by one yellow seedling that he urged Joe to name it after Maisie Michael who had just died in 1998 and whom he

remembered as a very generous and wonderful plantswoman’. I was very pleased to win the Waverly Trophy (given to the Dublin Show by Harold McBride) at the

Dublin Show this year with a plant of *primula v.*'Maisie Michael' – it illustrates how one plant can unite so many gardeners!

John McWhirter served the Ulster Group for many years as secretary, show committee, chairman and President and during his time the group increased in size and popularity. He was always there to welcome new members with a twinkle in his eyes, a joke and share a lifetimes' experience in gardening. (An obituary was published in the 2006 edition of this newsletter). On his death he left his plants to Margaret Glynn and Bob Gordon and as a memory to John, they had the inspiration and generosity of selling them to members and the money raised went to a travel bursary in John's name. This legacy was increased by members and is now part of the travelling bursaries run by AGS Pershore. John would have been pleased to hear this year's recipient, Gary Mentanko, a Canadian now living in Dublin, give an excellent lecture at our luncheon, well planned and beautifully illustrated – a worthy recipient and I hope we have more like him from Ireland.

John was also a keen photographer and gave a most attractive inscribed award for the most firsts in the photographic competition – alas just discontinued this year so the show committee will have to reconsider the criteria for this award.



I hope these historical reminiscences will have helped to show some light on some of the names mentioned in the group and if anyone feels strongly about any omissions please forward them for inclusion next time!

Obituaries

Susan Montgomery, 1916 - 2016 A Service of Thanksgiving was held in Fisherwick Church in memory of our past **Vice President, Susan Montgomery**, whose life spanned an interesting century in history. I first met Susan with her husband Desmond on an Alpine Plant holiday in Switzerland where she, along with other local members, encouraged us to join the Ulster AGS Group. Many of us will have memories of Susan's beautiful garden where no one left without cuttings or seeds of plants, and while she was able Susan always appeared at AGS events. We send our condolences to her son and family circle.



We also send our deepest sympathy to other members and friends who have had recent family bereavements – I know some of our members have lost close relatives in the last few months including Des and Conor who were personally known to many folk in our group.

- to Sheila Price on the death of her husband, **Dr Des Price**, who many of us will remember bird-watching while Sheila went flower hunting
- and to Margaret Glynn on the sudden death of her son, **Conor Glynn**, who we remember meeting on many of the memorable visits to Margaret's home and garden.



Alpine Cuttings -- News Items

Show Time

Members' Show – March 19th -

I realised that in all our Newsletters there has been no report on the Members' Show so perhaps someone could make a note to correct this omission. It is an opportunity for newer members to 'dip their toes in the water' and gain experience for the open shows. While June Blake gave a beautiful photographic display of her garden, a



small but very attractive display of plants was shown on the benches. Above is Pleione 'Silver Wedding' shown by Gordon Finch. Don't miss this opportunity next year to show what you can grow and this time you have the help of the excellent article by George Gordon – so no excuses!

Ulster and Dublin AGS Shows - April - Full reports with pictures and results can be found on the Alpine Garden Society website and once again both Irish Groups supported each other in April.

The **AGS Ulster Group Show at Greenmount** was the earlier show this time (we alternate each year) with Billy Moore being awarded the Farrer Medal for his *Dionysia aretioides* 'Phyllis Carter' (and the Frank Walsh Cup). It was great to see Gordon Finch, one of our newer members take prizes in the Novice C section (members who have not yet qualified for a Bronze Medal) against stiff opposition from Dublin, so more encouragement for others and congratulations to all on their awards.



The AGS have discontinued the Show Photographic Competition except for online showing. However the local Groups enjoy the background presentation of alpine photographs, feeling it adds to the whole atmosphere by illustrating alpin

growing in the wild and Liam was given a gold award for his display 'Alpines on Five Continents'. We were pleased to have some younger visitors show an interest in joining the local group but it would be encouraging to have a larger attendance. Our outgoing President, Harold McBride, featured on two Gardeners' Corner broadcasts around show time which created a lot of interest but there are a lot of competing events in Northern Ireland in April.



The **Dublin Show** had the later time this year and did attract a large attendance. Here Paddy Smith was awarded the Farrer Medal for his pan of *Gentiana ligustica*, gentians being a particular love of Paddy's as seen by his skill in growing them. Once again awards went to members of both Ulster and Dublin Groups – indeed quite a few members have dual membership.

Both Show Secretaries deserve congratulations on running very efficient and happy shows but cannot do so without the help and support of all the members – so please continue to help in any way you can.

Belfast Spring Fair & Flower Show – April - The Ulster Group once again had a small stand at the **Belfast Show** at Malone House in April, largely to advertise our existence in the province. Ann McCaughan again led a small team of helpers all doing sterling work to demonstrate sowing and growing plants to the younger generations.

NI Daffodil Group Winter Flower Show - February - Many of our members are keen growers of snowdrops, miniature daffodils, small bulbous plants and hellebores and the Northern Ireland Daffodil Group gave them the opportunity to show off their skills at their Winter Show in the Ballance House, Glenavy. Everyone enjoyed the relaxed, informal attitude at the show with experts like Anne Wright from Dryad Nursery, Yorkshire, and Brian Duncan, our own world expert on daffodils, on hand for gardening tips and advice along with

members and visitors of both groups from all over Ireland - I hope this will become a date for our calendar in the future.

Out and about

Unfortunately this year Liam and I were unable to join our own Group's Wexford Tour but along with some other members managed to visit the Burren, Co. Clare, with Dublin AGS Group and Holland with The NI Daffodil Group. So here are a few notes on two very different plantlovers' destinations.

AGS Dublin Group

In the middle of May the Dublin Group organised a 2 day visit to the Burren under the guidance of Carl Wright from Caherbridge Garden. The weather was warm and



sunny and Carl proved an excellent teacher on the plants and geology of the Burren. We began by visiting a garden and nursery at Doolin but of course the highlight was the visit to Carl's garden which continues to expand into the Burren in a complementary way. But perhaps the highlight for Paddy Smith was the blue gentians growing wild – my last view of Paddy was photographing his favourite plants near Blackhead.

40th Anniversary Holland Trip with NI Daffodil Society

At the end of March a party from all over Ireland joined up with the NI Daffodil Group on their 40th Anniversary Tour to Holland. Having never visited the Keukenhof Bulb Fields before, even though early in the season, I was very impressed with the perfect arrangements and displays of all the early flowering bulbs. We were very privileged as we had coffee and an introductory talk in the Nassau Pavilion (overlooking part of the gardens) with Jan Pennings, one of the main people behind Keukenhof, and whose wife added home - baked cakes.



We also visited some of the bulb growers and gardens where two were of special interest to alpine enthusiasts, having collections of greatly coveted small bulbs such as tecophilaea, fritillaria, species tulips and miniature daffodils. Our well organised tour ended with a 40th Anniversary Dinner in the hotel, attended by many Dutch daffodil growers, and bringing our visit to a splendid end.

Committee Changes

Our thanks to Heather Smith who has been Programme Secretary since the beginning of the 21st century and it probably feel like a century to Heather who deserves a well-earned rest or at least some help. A small sub- committee is being formed to liaise with the programme. Thanks also to our outgoing Treasurer Nancy Derby who hands over the financial cares to Hilary McKelvey. Of course thanks goes to all on committee especially our hard-working Hon. Secretary, Cilla, and we have a new Membership Secretary – a post kindly taken by Sandra Munro. Our programme card is printed just before the AGM when new committee members are officially elected but the committee would welcome new faces and new ideas to refresh the society and keep it alive.

Afternoon Tea

Many thanks to all our members who so kindly both provide and help with the afternoon tea - an important part of our meeting. A friend once remarked that gardening was a lonely occupation and I think newer members get to meet the group over a cuppa where, as well, many astute folk pick up a good gardening tip. Hilary Dornan had so many requests for her Paradise cakes that she suggested it would be easier if I included the recipe in the Newsletter - so from Hilary:-

Paradise Cakes - Hilary Dornan

Ingredients: Pastry Base - 4 oz marg, 2 oz c. sugar, 6 oz flour OR use Jus Rol shortcrust pastry & Get a Life!

Filling - 4 oz marg, 4 oz c. sugar, 1 oz ground almonds, 2 oz ground rice, 2 oz chopped walnuts, 2 oz chopped cherries, 1 teacupful sultanas, 1 egg, Jam & flaked almonds

Method for filling - Beat marg & sugar well. Add egg then all other ingred. Spread over jammed base & sprinkle with flaked almonds. Bake in oven at 180 degrees or 4 for approx.. 25 min. Take out & leave in tin until cool then cut into squares. Enjoy!

Late Summer Outing

At the time of writing we have still to look forward to our summer outing with visits to the Co. Antrim gardens of Dorothy Brown, Ian Scroggy and Glenarm Castle – report and pictures next year!

Information

Venue **St.Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast - 2.30 p.m.**

Dues - Local current subscription rates are £10.00 single, £15.00 family (to be ratified at the A.G.M.), due at the A.G.M. or before the end of the current year. Cheques should be made out to '**Alpine Garden Society Ulster Group**'.

****Please give or send subscriptions this year to the Membership Secretary, Mrs Sandra Munro, who will update the records before forwarding the money to the treasurer, Mrs. Hilary McKelvey.**

This subscription is for the local Group only and subscriptions to The Alpine Garden Society must be sent direct. A limit of one year's grace is given.

With the increasing cost of postage it is helpful to have as many email addresses as possible and this year, to update our records and have accurate information, we ask everyone to fill in the membership forms. It is hoped in the future by either emailing or texting to be able to keep members in touch with both events and unexpected news. If you are not receiving emails, please send one to the secretary (secretary@alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk) so that she is sure of having the correct email address or let her know your preference for keeping informed.

Web

Programmes and Newsletters can all be found on the website where 'Plant of the Month' is archived since 2006 - Contributions are always needed, so if you have a plant and a picture - in the garden or in the wild, please send it in. The website is visited from all over the world, so you can be assured of an appreciative audience. To visit the site, go to www.alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk

Programme 2016 - 2017

2016

September 17th **Ulster Group A.G.M.**; Members Plant Sale.

Heather Smith, “Remembering our Garden Trips –
Wicklow, Wexford and the North-west”

October 22nd **Dr. Molly Sanderson Memorial Lecture**

John Amand, London

“Unusual bulbs and how they get to your garden”

November 12th **Hester Forde**, Cork

“Small Treasures, Troughs and Raised Beds”

November 18th -20th **Termonfeckin Weekend – Dublin Group**

December 10th **Tim Lever**, Aberconwy

“The Kingdom of Bhutan – In search of the Pink Poppywort”

2017

January 21st **Colin Crosbie**, Former Curator, RHS Wisley

“Shady Characters”

February 11th **Snowdrop Day - Outing by coach to Dublin**

February 18th **Malcolm McGregor**

“A World full of Saxifrages”

March 18th **Members’ Show**

Dave Hardy, Tyrone

“Making a garden from scratch”

April 8th **AGS Dublin Group Show, Cabinteely, Dublin 18**

April 22nd **AGS Ulster Group Show, Greenmount, Antrim**



Above - Jeffersonia dubia
Susan Tindall, AGS Ulster Show 2016

Front Cover - Gentiana pyrenaica
Dombaj, Russian Caucasus, 2013

