



*The
Irish Garden Plant Society*



Issue 111

January 2009



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Front Cover Photo:

Ruscus aculeatus ‘John Redmond’

The late John Redmond discovered this plant in 1987 in front of the statue of St. Joseph at St Joseph’s Church, Berkeley Road, Dublin 7.

John worked for Dublin Corporation, now Dublin City Council as a Charge hand Gardener. I had the pleasure of working with him for six months as part of my Horticultural Apprenticeship in the early eighties and can say that he was a very keen gardener.

Part of the original plant was passed to Marian Nurseries in Lusk, Co Dublin for Commercial Development. It was granted Plant Breeders’ Rights in 1988. A small evergreen plant no more than 20cm.tall with red berries 1.5cm. across, it is very hardy, tolerating dense shade and dry soils.

It can be seen in many nurseries at this time of year. However the original can still be seen at Berkeley Road Church.....don’t tell anyone.

Ed Bowden



Editorial

The start of a new year is a good time for a challenge!

My challenge is to maintain the standard set by Paddy Tobin over the last twenty-five issues of the Newsletter, and to remind members as he did, of our heritage of garden plants with Irish connections. What an enormous contribution Paddy has made to the Society. He has promised to continue writing for the Newsletter and his choice of books is included as usual.

In this issue Esther Schickling shows what we can do as individuals to increase the availability of Irish cultivars. *Gloxinia sylvatica* 'Glasnevin Jubilee' is a plant she grows well, and through propagation she is making it available at Plant Sales. I would be delighted to hear from other members with similar hints on growing or propagating other cultivars. Likewise if anyone needs advice on propagating a particular cultivar please get in touch.

To cheer us in these days when leaden fiscal clouds hang over us we have introduced colour, a change of printer and a very competitive price has allowed us to do this.

Congratulations to Brendan Sayers and Susan Sex on the publication of 'Ireland's Wild Orchids, a field guide'. Both the limited edition Library copy and the waterproof!!!! field guide are truly magnificent. The combination of Susan's artwork, Brendan's knowledge and the excellent photographs make this a book to treasure.

Thank you to all the contributors who made my first issue as Editor so easy and especially thank you to Paddy Tobin for all his support.

And finally, my best wishes for sunny and successful gardening in 2009, I hope you will get an opportunity to attend some of the events organised by the Society during the year, and don't forget to check the Seed List.

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Conservation – never simple.

Brendan Sayers

Since the formation of the Irish Garden Plant Society the word conservation has been used. Firstly in the definition of the role of the Society and secondly in the proposed activities of the Society as a whole and supported by the activities of individual members. The word today has increased in everyday usage compared with the period when the Society was formed.

The fact that plants with Irish connections, either developed in our gardens, orchards, fields, or whether of a particular interest due to their association with Irish people, were in need of conservation was the driving reality that motivated the first gardeners to action. Today the pressures and threats on plants in the wild are beyond the projections of any of those people. Habitat destruction is still commonplace and climate change has increased the number of plants under threat to unimaginable numbers.

Methods of conservation range from the simple propagation and distribution of plants to cryo-preservation of tissues and seed. In the case of the plants that the IGPS focus on, there is little choice in the methods employed for conservation. By their nature, most of the plants within our focus exclusively have to be propagated by vegetative means, this can be a small or large-scale affair, but the conservation by means of seed is not for consideration. There is also the question of when there are so many wild species under threat, is the conservation of garden plants a worthy exercise?

My answer to the above question is an affirmative one. Irrespective of the efforts made towards the conservation and preservation of wild species, gardeners have means and motives to preserve garden plants. The means are the everyday chores of a gardener; cuttings, layers and grafts of species they enjoy, and the distribution of the successful propagations. The motives are that they like to see plants that have given pleasure in the past available for the same purpose in the future. They are gardeners, and garden plants are their 'palette' of choice.

But where are we falling down? I expect that like most members who wish to achieve more in this regard, I share the feelings of quiet dismay when the time for supply of material for the annual plant sale comes around. Another year has gone by and what spare time I had has been lost to other things. If I can address this shortage of time I may be able to make a better contribution. However the answer I feel lies in the collective efforts of us all and not in propagating collectively. The focus of the Society members should be on 'professionalising' the conservation of Irish Cultivars. If we use the template of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) whose action plan for conservation of plants in cultivation was the result of their need to address the issues of how the Convention of Biological Diversity and its component policy papers impacted in horticulture, we can be helped along the way. They have highlighted knowledge, education, strategy, enhancing diversity and best practice. Do we need to do the same kind of thing?

And what is the IGPS doing to address its failure? In 2009 the Society will hold a one day Conference on Irish cultivars and hopefully address and debate a way forward. Key speakers will include Dr. Charles Nelson, the driving force on information of our garden plants and some enthusiastic amateurs who have successfully addressed the preservation of endangered cultivars.

There will also be a plant sale exclusively for plants with an Irish connection. The intended audience is members who need support in their own efforts in the preservation of cultivars and members of other organisations who have an interest in specialised groups of cultivars. The horticultural industry must also be encouraged to grasp the rich heritage of Irish cultivars and to keep these plants in circulation and available to a wider audience.

So for members who responded to the questionnaire on Irish cultivars and who agreed to propagate material we will be happy to have your material during 2009. It is for everyone to get involved and even the smallest contribution can go a long way. A small increase in the numbers of a rare cultivar is a considerable achievement. Details of the Irish Cultivar Conference will be publicised in early 2009.



Under the Beeches by Keith Lamb

On the approach to our house we have a group of large beech trees. Over the years a number of different plants have shown that they can grow well in the exacting conditions under the trees. In fact this area has become an attractive part of the garden and one that requires little maintenance.

Some of these plants do well by coming into growth early in the year before the trees come into leaf, others in autumn at leaf fall. Among the former there are of course the snowdrops. An especially early one is *Galanthus* "Castlegar", which originated in the west of Ireland. It is usually in flower by Christmas. It thrives on the outskirts of the beech wood but so far we have not tried it further in since as yet we have not enough stock to try it there. The common snowdrop, both single and double, makes a great show everywhere, the white flowers contrasting with the golden yellow of the winter aconites, which seed themselves freely. Bluebells increase rather too much, being apt to seed themselves into the territories of their neighbours.

A bulb to be avoided is the white flowered triangular stemmed *Allium triquastrum* which can become a pest. It occurs as a roadside weed in Co. Wexford.

The snowdrops are followed by wood anemones. Over the years *Anemone appenina* has spread into sheets of blue, with occasional white flowered specimens. It is followed by the larger form of *A. ranunculoides* (often with two flowers on the stem) and the large flowered form of our native *A. nemorosa* 'Lady Doneraile' as well as the double flowered *A. Vestal*'.

A great success has been the spring flowering *Cyclamen repandum* with its scented pink flowers. The tubers of the species are so deep in the soil that even the seedlings can be quite hard to dig up without breaking the leaf and flower stems. The form called 'Pelops' has not done well here.

In summer time the arching stems of Solomon's Seal are attractive with dangling bells of white flowers. We appreciate this plant for the clear pale yellow autumn

colour of the foliage. A plant of similar habit is *Smilacina racemosa*, with plumes of scented flowers at the end of the stems.

The familiar *Cyclamen hederifolium* does well under the trees. Quantities of seedlings come up in the heart of the parent plant and need to be rescued. The botany books tell us that the sticky substance coating the seeds is attractive to ants who carry them away, thus distributing them about. There is little evidence that this occurs in our garden. Perhaps we have not got the right sort of ant.

Adjacent to the living trees is a decayed stump. We hollowed this out and filled it with lime free compost. In this *Narcissus cyclamineus* has done well. It would not like our alkaline soil but here delights us every spring.

Notes by Esther Schickling on Gloxinia sylvatica ‘Glasnevin Jubilee’

I have been growing this Irish cultivar for several years now and have adopted this plant for propagation purposes to increase stock and to supply future IGPS plant sales. *Gloxinia sylvatica* ‘Glasnevin Jubilee’ (Gesneriaceae) is a perennial herb, which is deciduous in cultivation. It produces tubular deep orange coloured flowers roughly 2cm long, which flower for several weeks usually in the autumn. It makes a reasonable houseplant provided it is kept out of direct sunlight and not too warm. As soon as flowering stops I reduce watering but do not keep it completely dry. Plants are over wintered in an unheated greenhouse with the exception of one, which stays in the house (just in case). I hope that most if not all plants bought at this year’s plant sale in Glasnevin are flowering happily in their new homes!

According to Charles Nelson’s ‘A Heritage of Beauty’ this particular *Gloxinia* has been grown in the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin since 1969, where it was first grown from seed, which came from Montreal Botanic Gardens. It was then known as *Seemannia latifolia*. I was curious to find out what the difference might be between the original *Gloxinia sylvatica* and the cultivar ‘Glasnevin Jubilee’. I contacted Charles Nelson and later contacted Montreal Botanic Gardens and received an interesting reply from Monsieur Stéphane M. Bailleul. This is what he wrote (via email):

”Actually, no remarkable trait seems to distinguish this clone. The cultivar name ‘Glasnevin Jubilee’ appears to have been attributed simply as a matter of

convenience by the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin in order to easily distinguish it from other clones that may exist in cultivation”.

I was also told that Montreal Botanic Gardens do not have the cultivar ‘Glasnevin Jubilee’ in their collection and that *Gloxinia sylvatica* was removed from their collection between 1994 and 1997 because of an infection.....

Oh dear. I hope that my plants won’t face the same fate. Who knows, maybe this is the distinguishing character between the two plants; ‘Glasnevin Jubilee’ is the tougher of the two which doesn’t suffer from infections. Well, not yet anyway.....

Come to think of it, maybe I should pop a rhizome or two in the post (phytosanitary regulations permitting of course) and send them off to Monsieur Bailleul at Montreal Botanic Gardens.





Ulster's Aristocrats *Peter Milligan and Nicola Milligan*



Agapanthus 'Mount Stewart'

Many plants, or to be accurate many cultivars, owe their origins to the work of the head gardeners of the 'Big Houses' – the stately homes of the aristocratic or well-off families. Examples of this work abound and many would be aware of the developments in sweet peas brought about by Henry Eckford, head gardener to Dr Sankey at Sandywell in Gloucestershire (Eckford's mixture can be purchased to this day), and Silas Cole, the head gardener to Countess Spencer at Althorp Park (after whom the Spencer Sweet Pea range was named) [1].

While the First World War brought an end to the source of cheap labour and thereby an end to many of the large, and walled kitchen gardens the

development of new cultivars continued through the work of plantsmen and nursery owners.

A good example of this latter group is the late Alan Bloom, creator of the famous Dell Garden at Bressingham and the breeder of an astonishing range of plants including one of my favourites, the *Crocoshmia*. Mr Bloom's introductions include the well-known and popular 'Lucifer' and several others including 'Emberglow', 'Bressingham Blaze', 'Jenny Bloom' (named after Alan's daughter) and his favourite 'Firebird' [2]. This work is reflected in Ireland and in this article we will focus on a few of the plant introductions arising from the work of the head gardeners in some of the stately homes of Ulster and in particular Co Down.

On the eastern shore of Strangford Lough we find Mount Stewart. Originally called Mount Pleasant, the demesne land was purchased in 1744 by Alexander Stewart. The estate has remained in the family ever since, the gardens becoming prominent under the care of Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry. Subsequently, the gardens were offered to the National Trust, which accepted them in 1957. A fine range of cultivars have been named from the garden including some of my favourites, *Agapanthus* and *Crocoshmia*. *Agapanthus* 'Mount Stewart' is an evergreen cultivar, which occurred on the estate, with a beautiful violet-blue flower. Snoeijer [3] notes that although it is regarded as a cultivar of *A. africanus* it seems more a selection of *A. praecox* subsp. *orientalis*. This plant was named by Gary Dunlop of Ballyrogan Nursery.

Crocoshmias seem to hold a fascination for many gardeners and it seems that the gardens of several of the old houses produced cultivars. Mount Stewart is no exception and a cultivar existed named 'Mount Stewart'. However, this plant was identified subsequently as an older cultivar called 'Jessie'. However, we feel that some confusion surrounds this cultivar.

Goldblatt, Manning and Dunlop [4] describe 'Jessie' as a cross between 'Sunshine' and 'Pocahontas' having medium sized flowers of an orange shade tinged with pink while the centre is yellow. Nelson [5] records the following "C. *x crocosmiiflora* 'Mount Stewart' = 'Jessie'. Obtained from Mount Stewart and renamed and introduced by M. Wickenden (then of Kircubbin, Co Down). It is now known to be an old cultivar named 'Jessie'. Wickenden listed 'Mount Stewart 1' (maroon buds, flowers larger reddish orange outside, orange inside) and 'Mount Stewart 2' (clear bright orange)." Note that neither of Wickenden's descriptions mentions any pink tinge. We grow both of these plants and the colours shown by our plants match Wickenden's descriptions in that neither has shown any pink colouration over several years of growth and flowering.

So we leave it to the readers to make up their minds on this one. You can, with a little diligence, obtain C. 'Mount Stewart Late' and perhaps the best way

forward is to buy some of these plants and grow them on, and once in flower, you can make your own mind up.

While visiting Beth Chatto's garden at Elmstead Market just outside Colchester we saw a beautiful Oxalis. Closer inspection revealed that it was labelled as *Oxalis* 'ex Mount Stewart'. We bought one of the plants from the nursery and, when home again, spoke with Mr Nigel Marshall, recently retired as head gardener at Mount Stewart. Mr Marshall remembered Beth Chatto visiting the garden and recalled giving her some of the Oxalis which still grows in the formal gardens at the house.

Another of our favourites are the various members of the Geranium family. *Geranium pratense* 'Mount Stewart' was named by Mr Marshall. According to Nelson [5] Jamie Blake (Curator of the Dell Garden at Bressingham and Alan Bloom's son-in-law) reported the following "It was a plant I saw in Mount Stewart. The Head Gardener, Nigel Marshall, gave me some material of it as a swap. I believe that he had the plant many years ago as *G. pratense* 'Mrs Kendal Clark'. When he realised that it was neither this nor anything else he knew it was re-named. It looks like *G. clarkei* to me, but I have kept to his nomenclature as that is how it has been passed around I think". Now it is believed that this plant is a cross between *G. pratense* and *G. clarkei* having flowers in keeping with a *G. clarkei* parent but with much broader foliage in keeping with *G. pratense*. Whatever its parentage we believe it is a beautiful plant. Associating plants with the gardens at Mount Stewart is an on-going process and a recent introduction is *Rhododendron* 'N. Marshall' named after the aforementioned retired head garden Mr Nigel Marshall.

If you leave Mount Stewart and continue southwards along the shore of Strangford Lough you can cross to the western side of the lough by means of the ferry service between the villages of Portaferry and Strangford. A few minutes from Strangford lies Castle Ward the former country home of Lord and Lady Bangor. While Castle Ward would have been known for its fine forests and Rhododendrons its small formal gardens did yield another Crocosmia, 'Castle Ward Late'. *C. latifolia* 'Castle Ward Late' is identified by Goldblatt, Manning and Dunlop [4] as a pre-1895 Leichtlin introduction. This is a beautiful plant with cerise flowers with a central orange stripe.

Leaving Castle Ward and travelling north towards Saintfield we arrive at Rowallane. This garden was created in 1860 by the Reverend John Moore and further developed by his nephew Hugh Armitage Moore - a famous plantsman - who took over the garden in 1903. Noted for its fine tree and Rhododendron collections the gardens have yielded a range of choice plants.

Once again, Crocosmias are well represented. *Crocosmia* 'Rowallane Yellow' appears to be the first of the 'family'. This is listed [4] as a good chrome yellow

form, presumed to be a naturally occurring sport of *C. masoniorum* that made an appearance around 1980. This was followed in 1985 by *C.* 'Rowallane Orange' which is considered superior to *C. masoniorum* because it is a slower growing selection of the species. Finally, in 1990 came *C.* 'Rowallane Apricot'. This is a really beautiful soft apricot orange form with a much longer inflorescence than normal and it is very slow to increase. The plant appears to have arisen as a self sown seedling from a cross between 'Rowallane Orange' and 'Rowallane Yellow' [4]. These are truly beautiful plants.

We can testify to the slow reproduction of *C.* 'Rowallane Apricot'. We obtained one corm of this plant five years ago and now have five flowering spikes. In other words, one new corm per year. Rowallane has named a number of well-known plants including *Chaenomeles* 'Rowallane Seedling', *Primula* 'Rowallane Rose' and the very popular *Hypericum* 'Rowallane'. This *Hypericum* is wonderful and it seems that our specimen, grown in a sheltered south facing bed, is always in flower. There is one Rowallane plant that is proving to be very elusive. *Galanthus* 'Rowallane' was named by the now retired head gardener at Rowallane, Mike Snowden. Apparently this cultivar was spotted growing in a border, and having distinct characteristics was named by him. However, despite considerable searching we have been unable to acquire a specimen of this snowdrop.

Up to this point we have concentrated on some of the plants produced from the gardens of the 'big houses' and it would be unfair not to mention several of the excellent nurseries that existed in Co Down and in one case, continues to function. We would argue that four nurseries obtained international status in their day as producers and introducers of plants. The first two were general nurseries in that they produced a wide range of trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, and bulbs – Daisy Hill Nursery Newry and Slieve Donard Nursery Newcastle achieved a status unmatched by any other nursery at the time. Between them they introduced a wide range of plants and numbered royalty, members of the aristocracy and leading botanical gardens among their customers. Rather than try to list the plants introduced by these nurseries we would recommend Charles Nelson's excellent books [6, 7] as a very useful source of information. For those interested in roses the work of Dicksons and McGredys will need little mention. Again, these nurseries gained an international standing for breeding and introducing excellent roses. Dicksons was founded in 1836 and it was from this nursery that my family purchased most of the roses we grew. I remember both my grandfather and father growing such roses as 'Hugh Dickson', 'Grandpa Dickson' and 'Red Devil' and a rose, bred by Barbier of France, but introduced by Dicksons, 'Albertine'. For some reason we did not buy many roses from McGredys – perhaps the proximity of our country cottage to Dickson's rose fields at Newtownards was the reason – McGredys being based at Woodside in Portadown. Nonetheless McGredys bred and introduced many fine roses including 'Bantry Bay' and 'Chanelle'. Again, to

list all of the roses introduced by these nurseries would take too long. If you ever visit the Botanical Gardens in Belfast be sure to take a stroll around the extensive rose borders – they contain many Dickson and McGredy introductions.

As mentioned above, recent developments come from nurserymen and interested gardeners. Once again in Co Down, Plas Merdyn, the garden of the late Bill and Gretta Lennon in Hollywood produced two fine *Agapanthus* – *A.* ‘Plas Merdyn Blue’ and *A.* ‘Plas Merdyn White’. These plants were introduced by Gary Dunlop who obtained them from his friends, the Lennons. It appears that the Lennons who grew *Agapanthus* for years had obtained the plants from a neighbour who in turn had grown them from before World War Two, predating the Lewis Palmer introductions [3]. Mr Gary Dunlop (of Ballyrogan Nurseries) is one of an increasing rare group of people worthy of the title plantsman. Mr Dunlop has bred and introduced a wide range of plants including *Crococsmia*, *Agapanthus*, *Roscoea* and *Schizostylis* to mention but a few. We recommend strongly that you obtain his plant catalogue – there are many treasures listed therein. As usual, we have included a few book references and it is pleasing to note that in the short list presented below four of the texts are by Irish writers.



Crococsmia masoniorum ‘Rowallane Apricot’

We hope this view of Ulster cultivars, albeit a few, will encourage you to at least visit the gardens that gave rise to these excellent plants and hopefully to

purchase some of them to grow on in your own garden and thereby help perpetuate our wonderful plant heritage.

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Photographs Nicola Milligan



Seed Distribution Scheme 2009

I'm astounded, really astounded. I almost gave up hope of getting seed in this year, the weather was so bad I found it hard to get good seed myself, and reckoned our members would too. Oh, how wrong can you be..... We had 300 accessions this year, of which about 20 were duplicates, the other 40 or so, to my judgement, had no seed, or insufficient naming information to include. I always list the seed as it arrives, and on the envelope note the sender's initials, and date it. I physically check the seed and sometimes repack, doing any extra cleaning as I go, though this is best done near the back door as a lot of cleaning seems to be a well judged puff of breathe – an operation that is frowned upon in the kitchen.....This year I did have far more packets with no seed at all – I even wrote to one of our regular donors to explain why so many of her list would not be on my list!

I always check the names listed, and of the seeds listed this year several gave me a lot of checking to do – it is the best part when I get seed of a plant I've never heard of! These included *Beesia calthifolia* (Ranunculaceae, nicely veined leaves, woodlander), *Trifurcia lahue* ssp *lahue* (Iridaceae), *Pasithea caerulea* (Anthericaceae – South American, weird 'bulb'), and *Drymophila cyanocarpa* (like Solomons Seal but with blue berries like *Dianella*, which of course is the same family). The last one gave me most fun looking up. Usually, if the books fail me, I simply Google on the web. *Drymophila* came up as a small bird like a wren, and indeed they have the same genus name.

Apart from the 3 listed above, other unusual plants this year have to include *Polylepis australis* (Rosaceae) – apparently this small tree holds the record for growing at the highest altitude, in the Andes. The bark is incredibly papery and loose, like tissues around it. The green pendulous flowers are well hidden – you need to know it's in flower to go and look at it! Another real rarity must be the King Billy Pine *Athrotaxis selaginoides*, listed on the Australian endangered plant list. Can anyone explain the common name to me please? Look at the list of bulbs – 57, including such great lookers as *Cypella* and *Tigridia*.

So enjoy picking out your ration, and do try something this year, reverse the trend each year of less and less people requesting seed from us! As always many many thanks to our donors, each of whom has spent many hours collecting, drying, cleaning and posting the seeds in. I look forward to getting the requests in, with many a note of how well seed germinated last year – always a good sign!

Stephen Butler Seed Distribution Manager December 2008.



Shrubby Potentillas *at Ardgillan Demesne, Balbriggan.* *Kevin J. Halpenny*

The National Plant Collection ® of Shrubby Potentillas at Ardgillan Demesne, Balbriggan came about as a result of a number of happy coincidences.

In 1996 an invited RHS Woody Plant Trial of *Potentilla fruticosa* L. commenced at RHS Wisley. Staff from the Parks Division of Fingal County Council visited the trial and met with the RHS Trials Officer Linda Jones and a Potentilla specialist Wilfrid Simms (now sadly deceased) who himself held a collection of more than 100 cultivars for which he wished to find a new home. Plants provided by W.F. Simms together with material from the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin and the RHS trial material formed the initial core planting of the Ardgillan Collection.

W.F. Simms continued until his death in 2005 to assist Fingal County Council Parks Division with the enlargement of the collection and on behalf of Fingal made contact with and obtained material from many European growers specialising in shrubby potentillas including the famous Dutch nurseries of Darthuizer and P. Kolster. The collection now boasts more than 200 cultivars and varieties of shrubby potentilla and has been further augmented in June 2004 by the inclusion of some 61 unnamed seedlings from the Orkney breeder Alan Bremner, which will be trialed at Ardgillan over the coming years.

Botanical Information

The shrubby potentillas are members of the family Rosaceae, and are densely branched deciduous shrubs of erect or spreading habit with peeling bark which can exceed 2m or more in both height and spread under ideal conditions (most modern cultivars are of far more limited proportions ideal for the smaller town garden). The leaves are numerous, each composed of between three and seven (usually five) leaflets.

The generic name is taken from the Latin 'potens' meaning powerful, this is an allusion to the medicinal properties attributed to some of the species in the genus.

Potentilla fruticosa L. is commonly known as Shrubby Cinquefoil (Tor Cuigmhearach) in Ireland, Fingersträucher in Germany, and Gold Hardhack or Widdy in America. The botanical nomenclature for shrubby potentilla is unfortunately rather confusing with botanists divided as to which should be given specific status.

Today botanists favour grouping the shrubby potentillas into four species, *P. fruticosa*, *P. parvifolia*, *P. arbuscula* (synonym *P. rigida*) and *P. davurica*.

However for the purposes of the National Plant Collection ® all have been placed under *Potentilla fruticosa* and the other species given varietal status.

Under cultivation the botanical classification has become further confused by the development of many hybrids, usually resulting by chance from unknown parents; the earliest examples of which were confusingly given names of Latin form.

It is unlikely that any of the commercially available plants in Europe now represent the wild species or its natural varieties as originally described in botanical literature.

With a world-wide circumpolar distribution in the Northern Hemisphere through America, Northern Europe and Asia it is natural that many regional variations exist – even a single local population (such as in the Burren) exhibits numerous individual differences both in flower, leaf size and colour.

Their natural habitats vary considerably and they can cope with a wide range of conditions varying from wet wind-swept locations in England, seasonally flooded limestone pavements in Ireland and Scandinavia to dusty prairie-like parts of the Caucasus.

It wasn't until the introduction of seed from Asian populations by such plant hunters as Forrest, R.S. Farrer, Joseph Hers, E.H. Wilson and Kingdon Ward in the 19th Century that serious development of the species as a ornamental plant commenced. Today over one hundred and fifty cultivars have been recognised although few nurseries offer more than a dozen or so.

With such a wide range of shapes and sizes the cultivars have found many uses in the garden. The prostrate types are ideal for the alpine rockery, on low hollow walls or as groundcover; the medium height spreading forms as specimen shrubs and those that are tall and upright are useful as low hedges or screens.



Potentilla fruticosa 'Abbotswood' one of the older good white varieties.

Why a National Shrubby Potentilla Collection ?

Potentilla fruticosa L. occurs naturally in four counties in Ireland being especially prevalent in the Burren area of County Clare. Dr. E.C. Nelson formerly taxonomist at National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin was instrumental in establishing a collection at Glasnevin (a precursor of the National Plant Collection ® at Ardgillan). In his publication A Heritage of Beauty (The Garden Plants of Ireland an Illustrated Encyclopaedia) he lists all cultivars of Irish Origin.

In the collection at Ardgillan the Irish form of *Potentilla fruticosa* L. (described as *var. hibernica* in some literature) is represented as well as a number of selections; some of which have yet to be introduced to Irish horticulture such as **‘Burren Blue’**, **‘Ceo Gorm’ (Blue Mist)** and **‘Ór Bhoirne’ (Burren Gold)**. This material although not yet introduced commercially has definite potential for landscape use.

Other shrubby potentillas classified as of Irish origin are usually the result of accidental hybridisation of mainland European or Asian material. Many of the cultivars listed below originated from the famous Slieve Donard Nursery.

The following are some Shrubby Potentillas of Irish Interest:

Cultivar	Date	Introduced By
‘DAYDAWN’	Pre 1968	Slieve Donard
‘DODONA CAMEO’	1980’s	Lynn Mitchell / NBG Glasnevin
‘ROWALLANE SEEDLING’	Pre 1955	Slieve Donard Nursery as ‘Donard Gold’
Peach Pink / Cream	Branch sport of ‘Tangerine’	Northumbria Nurseries U.K.
Pink fading to white	‘Snowflake’ x ‘Royal Flush’	Slieve Donard Nursery
Golden Yellow	Chance Seedling	Blooms of Bressingham U.K. as ‘Red Robin’
Orange fading to golden yellow	Chance seedling	Abercorn nursery
Mid-yellow	Chance seedling	Slieve Donard Nursery
Deep Cherry Red	Chance seedling	Kevin Lawrence Nurseries, Tilford, U.K.
Shell pink fading to white	Chance Seedling	NBG Glasnevin
Tangerine-orange	Seedling selection	
Creamy – white	Chance Seedling	
White	Seedling of <i>var. davurica</i> parentage	

Note: Unfortunately the cultivar ‘Daisy Hill’ a yellow flowered variety which originated in the Daisy Hill nursery, Newry Co. Down appears lost to cultivation.

Design and Layout of the Collection

Ardgillan Demesne a 185 acre public park with an important period residence is situated in a dramatic coastal location between Skerries and Balbriggan in north county Dublin. It has been under the control of Fingal County Council (formerly Dublin County Council) since the early 1980's. As well as restoring the original formal Rose garden and Victorian Walled Garden at Ardgillan, the County Council Parks Division has been steadily increasing the plant collection. The establishment of The National Plant Collection ® of Shrubby Potentillas at Ardgillan is in line with this programme. Dominica McKeivitt; the head gardener at Ardgillan has been involved at all stages in the setting up of the collection. The purposes of the Ardgillan Demesne collection are: A) to preserve as a "living library" all known varieties and cultivars of shrubby potentilla. B) to assess and compare both existing and new introductions for garden suitability. C) to determine correct nomenclature. D) to provide both an ornamental and educational feature.

Potentilla fruticosa has a great propensity to set viable seed and can produce prodigious quantities of seedlings during a single growing season. Due to the large numbers of very similar named cultivars it was vital that the layout of the collection would help avoid confusion between varieties or mistakes due to the emergence of seedlings in the collection. To this end an alphanumeric grid system was devised with 3 specimens of each variety having a grid location within the collection. As an insurance policy against disease or other problems a backup collection of 2 stock plants of each variety is maintained at the county council nursery at Turvey some distance from Ardgillan. The collection has been planted in the small rectangular paddock at Ardgillan which at some stage was an orchard for the castle. Financial assistance for the restoration of the path system was provided under the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Programme and the main planting of the collection took place between the years 2000 and 2001. During 2002 National Plant Collection® status was granted by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens.

Other design issues of key importance were the minimisation of maintenance, allowances for size changes within the collection, plant material requirements including irrigation and the provision of easy access for visitors. On account of the very seasonal aspect of the collection it was vital to provide good structure to the collection layout and a flattering backdrop to plant material was provided by a grid of yew hedging. The provision of accurate interpretative material is also essential and a brochure listing the types of potentilla in the collection is available. The collection has been themed from bed to bed on the basis of country of origin and or time of introduction and due to the proximity of the various varieties it provides excellent opportunities to compare one against the other and this aspect will it is hoped lead to the sorting out of some nomenclature issues.

Advantages of holding a National Plant Collection®

The advantages of holding a recognised national collection are many. At Ardgillan the potentilla collection provides an additional new dimension to the gardens. It is an important attraction for visitors to the gardens and it is in keeping with 'Centre of Horticultural Excellence' ideal for Ardgillan. The Potentillas complement the national collection of Olearias at Talbot Botanic Gardens Malahide Castle. It is source of inspiration and pride for staff involved in the project. It is an important educational resource and provides a focus for contact with other collections and experts in various related aspects of horticulture and botany. The collection is helping to conserve some of the now very rare varieties of the species as well as demonstrating the wide range of varieties which exist both new and old. It is a very useful focus for publicity for attractions and events at Ardgillan.

The collection does however require a long-term commitment of resources and in particular is demanding in terms of the discipline required when it comes to the maintenance of accurate records and the ongoing need to source and or propagate new material. It is essential to maintain enthusiasm for the project over the long term

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Nightmare exams by Rae McIntyre

In a fairly frequent recurring bad dream that I have I am sitting in a huge desk-filled room trying to do an exam. Everyone else is busy writing away but I know that I haven't done any revision whatsoever and I cannot seem to understand the paper. If I can then I don't seem to be able to write anything down. It's twenty-seven years since I last did exams (I was a mature postgraduate student lest you think I am lying about my age) and I managed to pass them all so I cannot think where the overwhelming feeling of inadequacy comes from.

The last exam dream I had was actually about gardening. The question, which I couldn't even begin to answer was: Compare and contrast the Ulster Gardens Scheme and the National Gardens Scheme. It rattled through my mind all night, or seemed to, and it was such a relief to waken in the morning and realise that there would be no problem answering this question. It solved the other problem of what to write for the January IGPS *Newsletter* too!

In my conscious mind I had been comparing the two after watching a late night programme called *Open Gardens* on the Sky Gardening Channel (248 if you're interested although much of the channel is tacky and very repetitive). *Open Gardens*, one of the better ones, is a series of programmes about the National Gardens Scheme – commonly referred to as the *Yellow Book Scheme* because of its yellow-covered directory – which has been in operation in England and Wales since 1927. The *Yellow Book*, a sizeable volume, lists over 3500 gardens that are open to the public for charity every year. There must be considerable kudos attached to having a garden listed in the *Yellow Book* because apparently 800 new contenders are each year earnestly striving to be in it but only half pass the stringent test. There is great rejoicing among those who are accepted but equally great misery among those who are turned down.

The programme *Open Gardens* reveals all. Most of them have been presented by Carol Klein whose own garden at Glebe Collage in Devon opens frequently for the N.G.S. Carol has short sticking-out hair that can be coloured anything on the continuum between cream and bright orange-red and she speaks with a throaty northern English accent (Lancashire, I think) which is a real cinch to mimic and which I do shamelessly. However she is a thoroughly nice woman and I warmed to her immediately when I met her at Hampton Court Flower Show some years ago. She is an ideal presenter for *Open Gardens* because she always knows the right thing to say.

Let's do a run through of one of the programmes. Carol introduces it and presents the two contenders for entry into the N.G.S. Norma, a busty blonde of indeterminate age, has a half acre garden in the north of England while Sally from somewhere in the Home Counties is as stick-thin as Carol herself but has unadulterated grey-white hair. She has a .75 acre garden that includes some woodland comprised of a couple of beeches and a dozen silver birches. We are also introduced to the county organisers for the respective counties in which Norma and Sally live. These women, although there is the occasional male, always have beautiful and apparently perfect gardens themselves. It is Barbara who will decide Norma's fate and we are shown a shot of her clutching a copy of the *Yellow Book* to her stomach and standing with the exquisitely designed mixed borders and manicured lawns of her garden at 'Rolling Acres' in the background. Pamela who will judge Sally's garden is also shown clutching a copy of the *Yellow Book* to her stomach; that particular stance must be obligatory. Behind her, and stretching into the far distance, are the herbaceous borders, half a mile of precision-clipped box, roses on obelisks, pools with fountains, mellow brick walls, York stone paving and a summer house to die for in her garden at Hedgefund Hall.

Up north again, Barbara arrives in her large grey Mercedes to view Norma's garden. She walks slowly round it pointing out various flaws while Norma makes excuses and tries not to revert to her old habit of nail-biting. She thinks she might be able to correct the flaws but then Barbara walks across the lawn and sinks halfway up to her knees in the squelchy grass. 'There's been such a lot of rain recently', Norma explains. She has a furtive nibble at her nails but knows with sickening prescience what the outcome will be. Later Barbara and Norma are shown sitting outside Norma's house. It's obviously winter but still they sit in coats with cups and saucers on the table in front of them. Barbara discusses the good points of Norma's garden but then returns to the boggy lawn, dwelling heavily on the health and safety aspect of it. 'I'm afraid', she says (they all say this) 'That I'm going to have to turn you down'. The cameraman, at this point, focuses cruelly on Norma's face. Her lip trembles, her eyes water but she manages not to cry.

In the Home Counties Pamela arrives at Sally's house in her large grey Mercedes. What is it about these Mercs? And why grey? They do the slow stately tour round the garden and Pamela seems to be reasonably satisfied until they come to the woodland bit which has only trees and a few brambles growing in it. Sally has been so busy in the rest of the garden that she just got her husband Henry to spread a couple of tons of forest bark on the ground. Later, at the coffee drinking session outside, Pamela points out that visitors to the garden during summer would want to see more plants in the woodland. Provided Sally sees to that Pamela declares that the NGS would be happy to have Sally in the scheme. Joy and elation are shown on Sally's face.

Enter Carol (horticulture's answer to *Jim'll fix it* or Cinderella's fairy godmother) into Norma's garden to see what can be done to get it into the NGS the following year when it will have been reassessed by Barbara in three months time. Carol suggests that the squelchy lawn should be turned into a bog garden and Norma agrees. It shows them marking out the area and starting to dig. Fast forward and the whole area, turned into a bowl-shaped depression of squelch, is ready to plant. By the time Barbara returns it has been planted with Rodgersias, hostas, astilbes, darmeras, ferns, persicarias, irises – all plants that love moisture. Barbara invites Norma to open her garden for the NGS the following year and, this time, when Norma's eyes fill up it's with tears of joy.

Sally has to plant up her area under the beeches and birches before the open day in June. Both types of tree are shallow-rooted and greedy so planting among them is well nigh impossible. Sally's husband Henry kindly pays for a seep-hose system to be laid over the whole area and then spreads on top several lorry loads of imported best topsoil and good compost. Enter Carol to advise on the planting and we see drifts of different lamiums, variegated vincas, pulmonarias, brunneras, campanulas, geraniums and ferns. Hardly an inch of bare soil shows and visitors on the open day all comment on the beauty of the woodland. Sally is pleased, Pamela is pleased and the NGS is pleased. It doesn't mention Henry whose cheque book is considerably thinner but it's all for charity, isn't it? Sally agrees to open her garden again the following year.

The Ulster Gardens Scheme is a bit like the NGS in microcosm. Very microcosmic, but then Northern Ireland is roughly the same size as Yorkshire with a population a tiny fraction of that county's. The UGS comes under the aegis of the National Trust and its sole objective is to pay for special projects – not routine maintenance – in National Trust gardens open to the public, the main ones being Rowallane, Mount Stewart, Castleward, Ardross House, The Argory, Springhill House and Florence Court. One recent example of a special project was the provision of quantities of *Rootgrow*, a friendly mycorrhizal fungi, for Rowallane Garden which has a notable collection of rhododendrons. There is an ongoing programme of propagation and renewal but Averil Milligan, the Head Gardener, found that young rhododendrons didn't thrive when they were transplanted from nursery beds into the open ground. They did when she experimented with the ericaceous form of *Rootgrow* but it's very expensive stuff. The UGS Committee was pleased to supply it.

The UGS in 2008 had a total of seven gardens opening in different parts of the province. Perhaps that was a good thing because 2008 will be memorable for its dismal, sodden summer and two out of the seven gardens were drenched. There was severe flooding in many parts of the province and the last garden to

open had so few attending that the owners kindly agreed to open again in 2009. Normally there's a three year interval, at least, between openings of individual gardens.

In 2009 there should be ten gardens opening although most of them will be over two days. There are also fifteen gardens on the 'By Appointments' scheme. The owners of the gardens, in the latter scheme, will open their gardens for groups of varying sizes and these make a fairly substantial contribution to the overall scheme. The UGS can raise, after expenses, anything between £7,000 and £17,000 each year. Charities, other than the National Trust, benefit from UGS garden openings by serving teas on the day. In 2008 one charity raised £1,100 over two days. In the NGS teas seem to be an integral part of the day's fundraising.

Unlike the *Yellow Book Scheme* it's becoming increasingly difficult to find people who are willing to open their gardens for the UGS. I've been on the committee since 1993 as a county organiser and, believe me, there is none of that business of swanning around someone's garden and saying, 'I'm afraid I'm going to have to turn you down'. People who actually WANT to open their gardens are as rare as hens' teeth. Here are some of the reasons people have given for not opening that I've had over the years.

(1) There's no place for cars to park and the local farmer won't let us near his fields.

(2) We've too big a problem with ground elder / mare's tail / scutch grass.

(3) We're going to stay with our relations in Queensland during the summer.

(4) Our relations from Queensland are coming to stay with us.

(5) I'm waiting to have a hip-replacement operation.

(6) Our daughter is expecting a baby next summer.

(7) We don't want strangers tramping all over our garden – maybe even stealing things.

(8) Burglars could use seeing round our garden as a good opportunity to 'case the joint'.

(9) My husband won't allow me (common).

(10) My wife won't allow me (rare).

Perhaps one of the adverse effects of *The Troubles* has been to make us a province of reluctant garden-openers and I've been told that in the earlier days of the Scheme there could be twenty gardens opening for it. Northern Ireland has a population of only 1.8 million and there are many glorious gardens in it but I know that, four times out of five, when I ask the question, 'Would you consider opening for the Ulster Gardens Scheme?' what the answer will be.

P.S. When I did real exams the answers given were not fictitious. Norma, Barbara, Sally, Pamela, Henry, 'Rolling Acres' and 'Hedgefund Hall' are figments of my imagination.



Looking Ahead

NORTHERN FIXTURES

Thursday 12th March 7.30 pm - THE CLOTWORTHY SPRING LECTURE
Clotworthy Arts Centre, Randlestown Road, Antrim; Joint with Antrim
Borough Council.

'Saving Ireland's Wild Plants Through Horticulture' Speaker
Dr. Matthew Jebb, Horticultural Taxonomist at The National Botanic
Gardens Refreshments provided. IGPS Members free, non-members £2.00.

**Saturday 9th May – ANNUAL PICNIC & GARDEN VISIT, *Mary and
Peter Browne, 3 Mahee Island, Comber, Co Down, BT23 6EP***

1:00 pm for picnic; 2pm for garden visit
A beautiful informal garden situated on the shores of Strangford Lough with
pond and a good mix of mature and new plants. A garden room is available for
the picnic if the weather is damp.
Members £2.00, Non-members £3.00

From Comber take the Downpatrick/Killyleagh road (A22) and 200yds from
the roundabout (just past Texaco garage) turn left (signposted Mahee Island 6).
After 3 miles turn left, following the Mahee Island signage and follow the
narrow winding road to Nendrum Monastic site car park. Park here (picnic
items may be dropped off at the garden, right fork of road). NB Car share if
possible as parking is limited

**MAY 23-25 – AGM, Based around Mid Antrim. Full Details to
follow in the April IGPS Newsletter**

LEINSTER FIXTURES

All lectures will be held in the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin at 8 pm

Thursday 22nd January

'Rare and Unusual Plants for your Garden'

A lecture by Paul Maher, Curator of The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

Thursday 19th February

Lecture by Dr. Daragh Lupton

'Irish Botanists in Jordan'

A lecture on the role of The National Botanic Gardens of Ireland in the establishment of The Royal Botanical Gardens, Jordan.

Thursday 19th March

A lecture by Wol Staines 'The Garden Year at Glen Chantry'

Glen Chantry in Essex is a plantsmans garden, from the perennial borders and shrub roses of summer, to the smallest bulbs. A joint lecture with RHSI

Thursday, 7th May,

'On top but never in control - Tales from a small garden' with Timothy Walker

This is a joint lecture with The Alpine Society.

MUNSTER FIXTURES

Tuesday 13th January

'Pushing the Boundaries' Hester Forde

Tuesday 3rd February

'My Garden through the Seasons' Carmel Duignan.

Tuesday 3rd March

'Irish Ferns, and Ferns for Irish Gardens' Jim Dennison

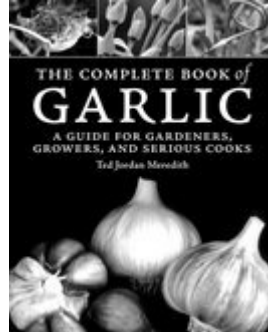
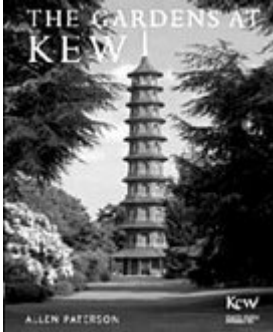
Tuesday 7th April

'Out of the Frying Pan' Donal Synott.



Worth a Read

by Paddy Tobin



Kew Gardens must surely rank among the great gardens of the world. They certainly are a most fascinating place to visit with a fabulous range of plants, glasshouses, archived resources and access to the very best of horticultural practice while, behind the scenes, its work as the world's leading botanical research institute continues. It is one of the world's horticultural treasures indeed.

“The Gardens at Kew” by Allen Paterson is the first major review of Kew by a former director of another botanic garden and is published to mark the 250th anniversary of the of the garden in 2009. Mr. Paterson was Curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden, Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Ontario and is presently Distinguished Advisor to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. He traces the development of Kew from private pleasure ground to tourist destination (1,000,000 visitors per year) and conservation organisation. Along the way we are given the stories of many people connected with the gardens over the centuries, royalty, scientists, gardeners and landscape designers along with artists and architects.

The work of the Herbarium, Jodrell Laboratory and the Millenium Seed Bank are also covered. The story goes from the beginnings of the garden right up to the present day and also looks to the future.

As befits such an institution the book is a large one, large in the range of the material covered and large in format. It is generously illustrated with excellent photographs though I would have liked to have had the photographs of plants labelled more specifically, a small grumble on my part but not one which took from an excellent book.

I have always enjoyed a visit to Kew Gardens and reading this book brought much of that pleasure back to me but, more importantly, will allow me to enjoy future visits in a far more appreciative and informed manner as this is, I suppose, a guide book extraordinaire.

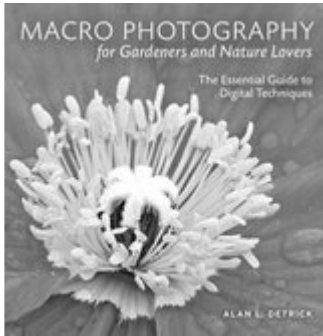
[The Gardens at Kew, Allen Paterson, Frances Lincoln, London, 2008, HB, 352pp, £25,

ISBN: 13: 978-0-7112-2536-7]

The Complete Book of Garlic” by Ted Jordon Meredith is obviously a book aimed at the garlic enthusiast. However, as attitudes to garlic have changed quite an amount over past years it will, perhaps, appeal to a significant number of people nowadays. Worldwide, about two and a half million acres are given to commercial garlic production, yielding approximately ten million tons each year and while this commercial production of garlic is of immense importance the main thrust of this book is aimed at the domestic grower. If you are growing your own garlic I think you will enjoy this book and find it informative and helpful. The earlier chapters cover what seemed to be considered some necessary topics, natural history, therapeutic benefits and the like before going on to discuss in excellent details the best approaches to cultivation and then an excellent section on garlic groups and cultivars with excellent descriptions, photographs and details of cultivation, storage and use.

A drawback of the book is that it is based on the author’s American-based experiences, which obviously influenced his choice of cultivars described. Despite this, there is much to recommend the book and much in it which is of use to the garlic grower here in Ireland also.

[The Complete Book of Garlic, Ted Jordon Meredith, Timber Press, London, 2008, HB, 330pp, £25, ISBN 13: 978-0-88192-883-9]



I have had an interest in photography for many years. Many years ago I had a good 35mm SLR and developed and printed my own black and whites. The years of family and children photography followed and I moved to digital equipment about ten years ago, a point and shoot camera for many years and then on to a digital SLR and, as happens, to a bigger and better one. My photography has followed my gardening interest since the children grew up and I have a particular interest in close-up photography of flowers.

“Macro Photography for Gardeners and Nature Lovers” was recently published by Timber Press and has been the best instructional manual I have read to date though I must clarify immediately that this is instruction lightly delivered and easily digested. The author is a keen gardener and many of his photographs are taken in his own garden, like many of us I imagine, which makes his writing particularly relevant.

The book is in fact two books delivered in a parallel fashion and is very effective in the delivery of its message as a result. There is the main body of the book dealing with equipment, the techniques of taking macro photographs, the management of digital files etc.

Parallel to this almost each page has a large photograph or two smaller ones and these are all accompanied by lengthy details of how and why each photograph was taken so that a great deal of information is given with each.

I found the book well organised and particularly well illustrated and recommend it to readers who have an interest in macro photography particularly that of flowers.

[Macro Photography for Gardeners and Nature Lovers, Alan L. Detrick, Timber Press, London, 2008, SB, 176pp, £17.99, ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-890-7]

“10 Years On”, I just received, is a wonderful publication from the Limerick Garden Plants Group to mark their tenth anniversary. It contains a collection of 19 essays from a range of authors many of whom had given talks to the group over the years and others who wrote by invitation. Such an eclectic collection is sure to have something to suit everyone and this volume will certainly not disappoint.

The articles are short and each offers a quick and informative read though some are I feel, perhaps, a little too short to do justice to the efforts of the local group which compiled and edited the material. Dr. Peter Wyse Jackson wrote both the foreword and a very interesting article on the National Botanic Gardens. Some contributions came from the group itself; others from well-known Irish gardeners and professional horticulturalists and some from internationally known personalities.

It is an outstanding achievement for a local gardening club to produce such a publication and, for what it is worth, I offer my heartiest congratulations and also recommend it as a worthwhile read.

It is available for 20 euro with P&P 3 euro to Ireland and 5 euro elsewhere. Further details can be found on Deborah Begley's website: <http://www.terranovaplants.com/> or by contacting Deborah directly at: terranovagardens@eircom.net Copies can also be collected at Stephen Reddan's Hillberry Garden Centre at Crecora, Co. Limerick.

[10 Years On, Limerick Garden Plants Group, edited by J. Dennison and J. Baker, 2008. €20, SB, 116pp, ISBN: 978-0-9561103-0-5].

Leinster

Cultivation of Asian Alpines in Northern Norway

Finn Haugli, Director of Tromsø Botanic Gardens (established 1991) spoke to a combined audience of Alpine Garden Society and I.G.P.S. members on Thursday 18th September. He began by stating that Alpine gardeners, and I suppose all gardeners, seek the exotic, and the lecture set out to examine whether plants which grow in the Himalayan Mountain chain at 27° N could be grown at Tromsø, one day's journey north of the Arctic Circle, taking into consideration the fact that Tromsø is situated on the coast, although surrounded by mountains. Tromsø is also influenced by the Gulf Stream so that at coastal level temperatures even out. At Tromsø, temperatures in January average -4.4C. In July, the average is 11.8C. Precipitation is given as 90 mls per month. In January, November and December there is no light at all. In May, June and July there are supposed to be 700 hours of sunlight, but in practice, the weather is often overcast. Sunlight is always low with a lot of red light even in summer. As proved by Finn's wonderful photographs the answer is emphatically yes! He showed us examples of Asian alpines from his own garden and also from Tromsø Botanic Garden. He made it clear at the outset that most of his favourite plants are low-growing, and pointed out which ones do well and which do not.

He then moved on to *Cremanthodium*. These grow best in cool climates with snow in winter. Here he likes *C. ellissii* as it is "very easy and a lovely yellow colour". He considers *C. reniforme* as the Queen of the genus. It is late-flowering, August, but will last into September. This plant does not like temperatures above 12° and it loves drizzle. It is very sensitive to direct sun and heat. It sounds just right for an Irish summer. He also described *C. rhodocephalum* (red form) as "extremely charming and beautiful".

Moving on to orchids, *Cypripedium* species essentially, he describes *Cypripedium farrerii* as slow growing but doing well at Tromsø and *C. flavum* as a "good doer". *C. guttatum* was purchased from a lady who lives near Anchorage, Alaska. It likes mineral soil, coarse humus, needs to be moist but well-drained and will grow in semi-shade. He says "it runs around like crazy". *C. macranthos* (white form) does very well but *C. yatabeanum* is very stoloniferous and can be a nuisance. Orchid lovers please take note!

Finn had some magnificent photographs of the *Meconopsis* collection. *Meconopsis aculeata* is described as monocarpic but self-sowing. *M. latifolia* has been lost to collection (monocarpic also). Everyone in Tromsø grows *M. betonicifolia*. *M. 'Dalmaine'* is one of the best Scottish cultivars – quite distinguished with a touch of purple. He also admires *M. 'Mrs Jebb'*, another

lovely Scottish cultivar. *M.delavayi* is “an absolute treasure”, very well established in Tromso and solidly perennial. *M.integrifolia* and *M.pseudointegrifolia* (both yellow) are monocarpic and need lots of nourishment. *M. punicea* needs lots of water and nourishment in its 1st summer, will flower in the 2nd summer and then die. It is totally monocarpic. *M.quintuplinervia* however is soundly perennial. *M. ‘Marit’*, a hybrid has a pale cream colour. Finn sees great potential to hybridise *Meconopsis* and aims to make them all perennial.

Finn’s favourite Asian paeony is *Paeonia veitchii*. *Picrorhiza kurroo* is an unusual alpine from Nepal. He says it thrives on “benign neglect” and creeps over rocks at the Botanic Garden. Next, he moved on to Primulas. He finds *Primula japonica* unreliable in Tromso but loves *P. pulverulenta* and also the yellow and orange forms of *P. cockburniana*. His total favourite in this class is *P. ioessa*. It is easy, floriferous and long lasting. *P. calderiana* is also beautiful, easy and produces lots of seed. *P. tannerii* is a good yellow colour, easy to grow and flowers early May. *P.deuteronana* from Nepal is not hardy at Tromso. *P. gracilipes* is hardy but not easy to divide. He describes *P. brevicula* as “exquisite” and very tiny. *P.stuartii* clumps up very well. *P. reptans* likes to grow in wet gravel but needs full sunshine. There is a very prestigious collection of Saxifrages at Tromso Botanic Garden. Plants have been contributed from many countries. *Saxifraga hypostoma* and *S. lowdesii* are early flowering and both Asian. *S ‘Kay Bacci’*, a lilacina hybrid has been used to make hybrids. No fewer than eight different crosses have been made with this plant.

Finn concluded with his “stars” among the Asian alpine cultivated at Tromso, 70°N. in northern Norway. These were as follows: *Meconopsis ‘Marit’* and *M. ‘Lingholm’*, *M.delavayi*, *Cremanthodium reniforme*, *Primula sonchifolia*, and *Gentiana ornata*.

Mary Bradshaw.

October 2nd From Jekyll to Jellicoe and Beyond – The Story of Sutton Place

John Humphris, President of the Professional Gardeners’ Guild, visited Ireland for their AGM and spoke to the IGPS. He worked for eighteen years as Garden Manager at Sutton Place which he described as “a small estate” on a bend on the river Wye between Guildford and Woking. His lecture dealt with one

thousand years of history dating from St. Edward the Confessor (died 1066). This was a fascinating story.

The Manor remained in royal hands down to Tudor times when it was gifted to Richard Weston by Henry VII. Richard decided to build a new, unfortified manor house of brick and terracotta with an enormous Gate House. Richard's eldest son was executed because of his involvement in a plot against Henry VIII and, eventually, the Gate House was badly damaged by fire.

Sutton Park was originally a walled garden with a summerhouse. The walls were also of brick and terracotta. John described how agriculture and trade were conducted with crops of clover, flax and hay being carried down to London on the river Wye. The Westons, a Roman Catholic family, were left in very reduced circumstances after the Cromwellian Revolution and by the time the last family member died in 1760 the place was falling apart. Various tenants came and went during the next 200 years. Around 1900, Lord and Lady Northcliffe took over, he a newspaper baron, she a keen gardener. Lady Northcliffe called in Gertrude Jekyll, living locally at Munstead Wood, to advise, and the present extant wisteria dates from 1902. Jekyll also designed the gates to the estate and planted buttressed hedges around the Great Lawn. Thousands of daffodils were planted. It became known as "the field of the cloth of gold", a reference to its Tudor ancestry.

The house changed hands again in 1918, this time to the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland. The Duchess planted many more daffodils and cherry trees in the 1930s. She also planted *Rosa 'Madame Caroline Testout'* which is still showing great vigour. An early *Campsis* hybrid *C. 'Madame Galen'* was also planted at this time. This still flowers well. A huge woodland garden which has rich alluvial soil was also established. Paul Getty took over the estate in 1960. Surprisingly little was done to either house or garden in his time. Then, in 1978, the estate was bought by Stanley Seeger, a very wealthy, reclusive philanthropist who wanted a newly designed garden. Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe, then aged 80, met Stanley Seeger and the work was agreed. Jellicoe produced models and plans, not all of which were carried out. Henry Moore produced a sculpture which was not bought, ultimately. A new lake was dug 13.5 acres in extent. It has three islands and supplies all the irrigation to the gardens.

On the east side of the house a new walled garden was constructed. Red bricks were especially fired to match those of the house. A new summerhouse was built. This formed the new end of the South Walk. A new avenue of limes was planted. Semi-mature *Tilia americana* trees were imported from Italy. At the far end of the Great Lawn a new Ben Nicholson sculpture of Carrara marble was placed. This, as we know, became the hallmark of Sutton Place in modern times. The pool was left unchanged from Gertrude Jekyll's time. A giant rill was planned but never installed. Many millions of pounds were spent. Then Stanley

Seeger decided he could not afford any more and sold Sutton Place to Frederick Coke. Mr. Coke, also a philanthropist, interested in the arts, a hard-headed businessman, did not wish to continue with Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe's scheme and decided that the house was in need of huge restoration- the most major restoration work ever done to date in England. All the brickwork was restored. The work took up to 10 years but the house is now good for another 500 years! Frederick Coke never intended to live in the house yet he spent £ 10,000,000 restoring it.

The garden now encompassed 60 acres. Jellicoe had only carried out work on a third of that. There were now 5 acres of daffodils. Coke wanted a new development, a 19th century type orchard in the traditional grid style. As the soil was very poor, a huge project of soil and sub-soil replacement was carried out. 258 apple trees, some pears and plums were planted. Coke also wanted a new avenue of trees to form the new boundary and lead down to the woodland garden. He decided against advice that he wanted *Acer brilliantissimum*. This proved disastrous as the trees had to have palisades constructed to protect them from deer. However, the pears and plums flower at the same time as the daffodils, a fine sight in the first two weeks in April.

The Old Walled Garden was now to become a Rose Garden. Sixteen beds were laid out with a temple at the garden's centre. Each bed was surrounded by dwarf box hedging. Also, a new Rose arch was constructed to divide the Rose Garden from the old Vegetable Garden. Frederick Coke wanted an "Eclipse Garden", a copy of that designed by Beatrix Farrand at Dumbarton Oaks, in the old orchard area. He wanted a thicket of scented plants. Here there is a fountain of Portland stone and an aerial hedge of 76 English Hornbeam trees, which works well as they are pruned by hand, with secateurs! "The Paradise Garden" is the new East Wall Garden. Laburnum arches have been a great success here. Stanley Seeger had planted a wild flower meadow of 15 acres which was also successful. Nowadays, ten gardeners tend Sutton Place, owned by a wealthy Russian oligarch and alas, alack, not open to the public!

Louise Butler.

October 3rd A Visit to Ham House

The visit to Ham House was a most pleasant and enjoyable evening. It was a damp afternoon and while I arrived in time for the proposed tour of the garden at 4.00pm the welcome and blazing fire was a bigger enticement to stay indoors rather than venture out. However a few hardy souls did venture out and oh! what we could have missed? The description in the newsletter stated the "The

gardens developed with a conifer walk, many interesting shrubs and spring bulbs, plus a walled garden and rock garden'. A true statement, as there was very fine mature specimens of both conifers and deciduous trees. Conifers included Pines (alas, I left my Hillier's behind), *Sequoiadendron gigantea*, *Podocarpus totara*, *Cupressus cashmiriana* and varieties of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*. The most notable mature trees were *Euonymus*, *Aralia*, *Davidia involucrata*, *Abutilon* 'Jerymms' - a very good form, *Kolwitzia amabilis*, *Hamamelis* 'Purpurea' and *Crinodendron hookerianum*. Leaving the conifer walk, we made our way to the Walled Garden; entering by a small door it had all the ingredients of a secret garden. However, our real purpose that night was to participate in the Quiz so a hasty retreat back to the house.

Twenty four tables were set out with four people per table. Each group sat down to try and answer some very varied questions with just two sheets of horticultural questions. Half way through we were given much needed refreshments to stimulate the brains cells and then back to the quiz. At intervals our quiz master Peter Martin gave us the answers to the previous sheets amid howls of laughter as well as groans and total frustration at not interpretation the hidden meaning. At no stage was there a clear winner, first place vacillating between several tables. But the final winners were Andrew Craigie and his partners, Diane and Sid Nagle and Stephen Buchanan who won a set of troughs. Second place was tied between Petronilla Martin our Chairman with Rickey Shannon, Barbara O'Callaghan and Breda Handley, and Corinne and Richard Hewatt and Vera Huet. They received Mugs and an Owl Keyholder. While third place went to Therese and Dan Murphy from Cork and their partners Mary Forrest and Anne James who each received a Trug Basket with daffodil bulbs. I can say that I was thrilled with this prize since I have long wanted one. Mention must be made of our Quiz Master Peter Martin, who was most entertaining.

Rita Craigie and Sarah Angel must take a bow for an excellently run evening, it was extremely well organized and everyone was delighted they had braved the weather that evening. Special thanks are of course due to Anne Hamilton who loaned Ham House for the evening. It was a lovely venue. I do hope another trip will be arranged to visit the garden during the summer months.

Anne James



Ed Bowden National Treasurer working at the Leinster Plant Sale

October 12th Annual Leinster Plant Sale

For the plantaholics among us and for the many more sane members the annual plant sale is counted as one of the highlights of the gardening year. Mary Bradshaw rallies the troops from early on in the season and we are guaranteed a display of really good plants every October.

The regular clearing of the rare and unusual table within minutes of the opening has become legendary and if this was a little slower in 2008 perhaps it was an early sign of the impending economic problems which beset us. Although I spotted many of our regular customers, the crowds were thinner than usual.

Most of the regular helpers arrived early in Glasnevin, setting up the sales tables and furiously pricing as opening hour approached. The kitchen crew led by Petronilla and Marie provided most welcome sustenance in their usual efficient way, conscious of Napoleon's dictum that an army marches on its stomach!

Apart from keeping us financially afloat the sale serves one of the most important functions of the society, the distribution of good garden plants. Naturally Irish cultivars are important in this context. Apart from more usual

(but never -the - less important) plants such as *Primula* “Guinevere” and *Saxifraga* “Lissadell” I also saw *Escallonia* ‘Apple Blossom’, *E* “Donard Radiance” and *E*. “Gold Brian”. This latter is also known as “Hopley’s Gold” and may be more “Irish” than Irish? Ed Bowden had imported an array of bulbs bearing Irish cultivar names. *Tulipa* “Galway” and *T*. “Maureen” looked interesting and I couldn’t resist a bag of *Narcissus* “St.Patrick’s Day”.

Among the other plants I bought was the black flowered *Viola* “Molly Sanderson” to remind me of my old friend from Co Antrim. The strongly scented *Lavandula multifida* was another new plant for me. I also acquired the stunning white *Echium simplex*, *Salvia bicolor* and an unnamed Cassia species. All these latter three are of borderline hardiness and the *Salvia* is looking the worse for wear already, even though it was in my cold greenhouse. The Cassia and *Echium* have at least survived the first two severe frosts but we have a long way to go before St. Patrick’s Day.

Dermot Kehoe

The Leinster Plant Sale raised a total of €3,712.73

October 23rd “Beautiful Irish Bogs”

Dr. Catherine O’Connell, Chief Executive of the Irish Peatland Conservation Council spoke to the Leinster Group at the National Botanic Gardens on the 23rd of October. Catherine began working for the IPCC as a volunteer while studying for her doctorate. The organisation is now 25 years old and employs seven people full-time with many volunteer workers as well.

Ireland is very well suited to bogs. Our climate is mild and wet. In areas of poor drainage, “rich in water”, bogland occurs. Peat forms when incomplete decomposition of plants due to a stagnant or high water table takes place. Water, peat and vegetation are strongly connected. Bogs form in acid- rich conditions. Fens are alkaline, formed in a basin with water run-through. Fens are younger than bogs.

In Ireland we have “blanket bogs” in the West and in Wicklow. Our midland bogs are “raised bogs”. Bogs can take 10,000 years to form, can be 10m. deep and form at the rate of 1 mm. per year. In Ireland, our bogs are about 10,000 years old, our fens 7,000 years old. We can expect to find substantially more plants on fens than on bogs.

On bogs expect to find “Ragged Robin”, Horsetails, Alder, Willow, Marsh St. John’s Wort, Bog Pimpernel which loves coastal peatlands. At Fenor Bog, Co. Waterford, recently protected by the IPCC expect to find the Marsh Pennywort, the Marsh Cinquefoil, the Fen Thistle, Angelica used for cake decoration, Lady’s Smock, visited by the Orange Tip butterfly, Devil’s bit scabious, food for the threatened Marsh Fritillary butterfly whose caterpillars overwinter as a colony. Many varieties of sphagnum moss grow in Ireland. These plants which hold up to twenty times their weight in water, form colonies of millions in a small area. They reproduce by spores but can also reproduce vegetatively.

Expect to find Butterwort, an insectivorous plant in bogs in the West. This was used in the past to make milk curdle. It is a very active trapper. Another insectivorous plant, Drosera has three different species on Irish bogs. These trap by means of tentacles on their leaves. Everyone is familiar with the many-headed Bog Cotton, the roots of which go down about 60cms in Finland fibres from this plant were used to make fabric. Lichens are also an amazing group of plants. They have no real roots and have been used as a fixative in perfumes and in the manufacture of dyes.

Heathers on bogs flower in autumn. They provide food for the Emperor Moth and its caterpillars. The female grouse nests in heather. Cross-leaved Heath which is scented grows near bog pools. Bell Heather has flowers all down its stems and is common in Connemara and Wicklow where it is used for honey. The Crowberry has tiny inrolled leaves, the Blueberry has green stems which enable it to photosynthesise all year. The Bog Asphodel has orange seedheads in autumn. The 3-leaved Bog Bean also has orange seeds which float away on the peat. Also expect to find the Heath – Spotted Orchid and the Bog Myrtle, formerly used to flavour beer.

These are just some of the beauties to be found on Irish bogs. The IPCC message is that bogs must be conserved to prevent loss of habitat for so many species of flora and fauna. Bogs control flooding and store carbon, so they must be kept alive. Cut away sections can be turned into wetlands. Alien species e.g. *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Gunnera manicata* must be excluded. Do not place windmills on bogs or on nearby hills as they are deemed responsible for “bog bursts”.

Visit the Bog of Allen Nature Centre at Lullymore, near Rathangan. This has a Museum and a fascinating insectivorous garden. Many volunteers work here, involved in wildlife monitoring and education. Contact www.ipcc.ie for more information.

Mary Bradshaw.

October 29th “The Contemporary Mixed Border”

Jimi Blake spoke to a combined RHSI / IGPS audience at the Wesley Centre, Leeson Park on Wednesday, 29th October. His is an amazing story of how he set up his garden at Hunting Brook, near Blessington and its development over the last six years. His photos began with land clearance, the arrival of his wooden house from Poland, its construction and then, of course, the planting. He describes this as “manic” in its initial stages and planted far too closely. His slides were magnificent and his plant combinations really striking. Jimi uses many grasses in different combinations with perennials and he reminded us never to feed grasses. *Cortadeira richardii* must be grown in full sun and cut back to two feet in early spring. He does not like to combine Miscanthus and Stipa species as they do not look well together. *Paulownia tomentosa* and *Stipa gigantea* do combine well. He is also a great fan of Dahlias- *D.excelsa*, *D.australis*, *D.‘Chimborazo’*, first seen at Great Dixter. Jimi grows his dahlias from seed. Other recommended plants are *Sedum ‘Joyce Henderson’* to encourage bumblebees, *Agastache ‘Heronswood Mist’* and *A.urticifolia ‘Liquorice Blue’* grown as annuals, *Canna musifolia* and *C. ‘Panache’* for its ability to flower all summer and *Senecio petasitis* because it flowers all year. *Astrantia ‘Boo Anne’* is also praised for its long-flowering season. He likes *Aconitum ‘Royal Flush’* because it flowers in September–October. He recommends that gardeners grow trees in their borders for their foliage effects and remove them when they grow too big. One such is *Salix magnifica* which he pollards in spring. He has excellent *Thalictrums* especially *T.diffusiflorum*.

Many of us know of Jimi’s long list of courses developed over the last few years, but, probably most exciting of all, Jimi is putting in a number of allotments which will be available from March 2009. This was an inspiring lecture and a great example of what a creative gardener and plantsperson can achieve in a very short time. For further information contact www.huntingbrook.com or jimi@huntingbrook.com

Mary Bradshaw.

“The Fashionistas, the tried and trusted, future trends and hens”

This was Carmel Duignan’s personal and witty “take” on the state of gardening, and her garden at the end of 2008. It was a refreshing lecture on a cold winter’s night, just what we needed to boost midwinter spirits.

Carmel began with some photographs of developments at the Bay Garden, Camolin, at Hunting Brook and at Great Dixter. She pointed out that although she does not combine perennials and grasses, she can appreciate what other designer/gardeners can achieve with them. She referred to the work of Christopher Lloyd who began combining big-leaved Cannas and Dahlias in his Exotic border. Particularly outstanding are Dahlias 'Soulman', 'Tally Ho' and 'Admiral Rawlings', which will grow to 12 feet tall.

Carmel likes *Tetrapanax papyrifer* 'Rex' for its 1m. long leaves and *Schlefflera tawainiana*, available from Crug Farm Nurseries, for its splendid leaf formation and the fact that it is hardy to -10C. *Schlefflera macrophylla* and *S.impressa* also get mention, the latter for its silvery new growth.

We all know her great appreciation of Pseudopanax species. She grows 12-13 different varieties, none of which have ever flowered. They drop their leaves in summer and are practically uncompostable. *Notopanax laetus* has great big glossy leaves and navy berries in winter. *Kalopanax pictus* is a deciduous tree-very spiny. *Senecio petasitis* is also welcome in her garden because it presents a yellow flower in January just when colour is needed. *Acacia baileyana* 'Purpurea', as old as the garden (21 years) also flowers in January. These are truly "tried and trusted" plants.

Carmel adores *Psoralea pinnata*, the South African blue pea shrub which flowers for six weeks, is quite hardy and easy from cuttings. She is very fond of *Indigophera pendula* and *Buddleia agathosma*, which has blue flowers in winter. *Polygala myrtifolia* flowers all year in her garden. Another beauty is *Poliomintha bustamanta*, found by Dan Hinkley in Mexico. It has very aromatic leaves and flowers from August to January. *Salvia corrugata*, also late-flowering, has stubby, dark blue flowers, but did suffer in last winter's frost. Carmel lost a great favourite *Salvia* 'Limelight' which has some leaf variegation, in the winter of 2007-2008. She has found it impossible to replace. Here I would like to make a special plea to members who believe they may have this plant to contact her with a view to providing cuttings.

Carmel would like to recommend the following roses-*Rosa x beanii*, which grows rampantly like a vine, *Rosa* 'Narrow Water' is very thorny, will grow six feet in one season, has no scent but also no blackspot! *Rosa* 'Verschuren' has variegated foliage and a slight scent. *Rosa* 'Bengal Crimson' has single flowers, no scent, but flowers all year round and has welcome flowers at Xmas and New Year.

Clematis features highly in Carmel's garden. She likes *C. williamsii*, which is Japanese, evergreen, flowers early and is easy to grow from cuttings. *Clematis* 'Glasnevin Dusk', collected by Seamus O'Brien is favoured for its dark, tight

flowers. Her favourite fuchsias are *F. affloensis* grown from seed collected by Carl Dacus in Ecuador, *F. 'Gesneriana'*, *F. boliviana* and *F. boliviana 'Alba'* and a hardy hybrid given to her by David Robinson.

As to the future? - well grounded in vegetables whether in pots, borders or allotments it seems. Carmel already has her allotment at Goatstown so she is well ahead of the trend. Hens and other poultry? - beautiful when displayed ornamentally as at Tomberg gardens in Co. Wexford, but really they cannot be let loose unless wholesale destruction is envisaged. So, no Scottish baronial style henhouses in Carmel's garden, and as a person who never, even accidentally, eats eggs, I heartily agree with her!

As stated earlier, this was an enjoyable evening and our little Xmas celebration afterwards with catering provided by the Leinster Committee left us all in good spirits.

Mary Bradshaw.

Northern

‘Bantry House – A History of the House and Garden’, with Nigel Everett

The Bantry House estate dates from the 17th century and passed into the hands of the White family from Limerick. This was a family with character, a son became a smuggler, another led a rebellion against beatings by school masters, and one helped set up Trinity College. The family seemed to all have chaotic affairs and were spending £7,000-£9,000 a year by the end of the 18th century. Part of this expense was the provision of elegant uniforms and dinners for the Bantry Militia who were billeted there. By 1834, the family was £80,000 in debt. However, some rich marriages kept the family solvent. Wolf Tone tried to visit but was kept out in Bantry Bay by storms. Zebra pulled the coach and buffalo grazed on the lawn. The White family tried to introduce other types of farming to try and lower the dependence on the potato.

In 1760 the house was built, and added to and subtracted from by successive generations. By 1905, the garden was growing well; plants thrived in the mild climate. However, the mid 20th C. was not kind to Bantry House, the decay began and the enormous conservatory that covered two stories at the front of the house had to be demolished in the 1920's. Ten years ago, restoration began. The parterres were reconstructed from photographs, lace terracotta pots were

copied in Italy, the circular flowerbeds restored, the balustrade overlooking the bay replaced and steps re-laid.

The walls of the 6 acre walled garden were repaired, including a triumphal arch with roman heads. The walled garden appeared to be the sump for all the drainage of the surrounding countryside and the earth was wet and stale. A new drainage plan was drawn up but there was a major problem: large machine, small gate. However, by taking the tracks off the digger the problem was solved. The soil was aerated ready for planting, and paths laid down.

Another problem was the age-old mix of iron and water. A very large ornamental ball quietly rolled off it's perch on top of a pillar leaving behind a rusted iron pinion. The wonderful copper-domed cupolas on the stable block seem to be standing out of force of habit rather than anything structural. There is much more to a garden than paths and flowerbeds.

Nigel Everett showed us that the restoration of an old garden needs time, records and ingenuity, quite unlike the 2-3 days a television make-over needs!

Marion Allen

July 8th Garden visit to a secret garden

I had pulled my Achilles tendon and as I limped into Ken and Dawn McEntee's garden in Hillsborough, I was in a fairly high state of grump.

This is a secret garden hidden behind a high wall and as soon as I humped into the paved courtyard, the garden began to cast its calming spell. This is a garden of circles, a gravelled area, and then a lawn surrounded by deep herbaceous boarders and the final circle is a seriously big fish pond, the kind you sit on the edge, dabble your fingers in the water and play with the fish. The pool was fringed by ferns and shaded by trees, including the cut-leaf and crimson forms of *Sambucus*, and the majestic *Gunnera manicata*.

Plump Hostas, (*does nobody else have slugs?*) and other herbaceous plants crowded the boarders and the elegantly tiered *Cornus controversa* will look good into the autumn when the leaves deepen into reds and purples.

Interesting paths slipped between plants, under arches and led to more circles. I liked the tree in its circle of slate. Even the seats were gracefully curved, a place just to sit (*I played the "wounded soldier" card!*). As the evening cooled, the air became scented with Rambling Rector and Philadelphus.

The evening finished with tea and biscuits and then Dawn told us about their work in Goa that arose from a chance meeting on holiday. They are using the money raised from opening their garden to help a family in a remote village with practical things. Descriptions of helping to prepare vegetables using only a machete and their journey by a three-wheeled taxi deep into the mountains were worth the trip alone! It is sobering that what to us is almost loose change can make a tremendous difference to lives in poorer places and that a beautiful garden in County Down is working its magic thousands of miles away.

Marion Allen

“Tender Plants at home in Irish Gardens” with Paul Maher

As most of us, whether because of visits to gardens abroad or because we hope that global warming will allow us to grow even more tender plants, have tried pushing the boundaries; it was wonderful to hear the results of some serious experiments.

Paul started by explaining the classification of Climate Zones as set out by the United States Department of Agriculture. Through time this has become more or less universally accepted. Under this scheme, areas - U.S.A. Europe or in our case the British Isles and Ireland are divided into climatic zones as defined by average annual minimum temperatures. This is obviously not entirely foolproof and a number of other factors also have a bearing. Possibly most important among these are altitude, soil types, drainage and shelter which all go to determine a garden's own microclimate.

Having accepted this we can happily plant specimens from Zone 9 knowing that they will usually perform perfectly and with some additional shelter or drainage we can also grow Zone 10 plants in Irish gardens. Paul showed some lovely slides, as he described work at Glasnevin and his own garden, where plants previously thought to be too tender to grow outside or at least outside all year round, were happily growing without stress.

The slides from his Front Yard Project were truly amazing and showed clearly that with a little thought and planning it is possible to have the most lush and inspiring display of plants which our forebears would never have thought possible to grow outside.

Paul gave us an extensive and useful list of these and as I looked sideways I realised that my better half was already looking forward to the time when many

of the plants which he currently moves in and out for me would be outside permanently and looking the better for it. This list includes *Melaleuca wilsonii*, *Buddleja farreri*, *Grevillea robusta*, *Phoenix canariensis*, *Cycas revoluta* and *Aloe striatula*, which every garden should have for its healing properties, and others too numerous to specify.

This was a most inspiring talk and I am sure that I will not be alone in following his advice, with I am sure, great success. There was an excellent attendance despite the rather 'seasonal' weather.

Our grateful thanks for a most enjoyable evening.

Maura Shah.

Munster

October 7th "Fota, a decade of change" David O'Regan

Unfortunately, there was a very poor turnout for an excellent talk given by David O'Regan on the first meeting of the autumn. A combination of the change of night for the meeting and the fact that a number of members were unable to come for various reasons meant that our numbers were reduced.

David O'Regan is the head gardener at Fota and under his stewardship, there has been a dramatic improvement in the gardens over the last ten years. Janet and myself are regular visitors to Fota and can certainly bear witness to this change. The storm of 1997 caused a lot of damage to the arboretum and some specimen trees were lost, but a large number of new trees have been planted to replace and add to the fine collection.

The Orangery, a magnificent building with a glass roof has been fully restored. This building dates from the 19th century and situated 150 metres from the back of the house. Alongside the Orangery there is a very fine specimen of the Canary Islands Date Palm, *Phoenix canariensis*. Within the Orangery, David had to introduce blowers to control the dampness and keep the air moving. He also exercises a non-chemical approach to the control of the red spider mite and white fly by cutting plants back at the appropriate time to break the lifecycle of the pests.

In 1998 work started on the sunken Italian garden which is situated within the walled pleasure garden. Pictures of the original Italian garden were found in old editions of the "Times Past" section of the Evening Echo newspaper. More

valuable information on the planting came in the form of a letter from England written by a person who used to work in the garden.

Restoring this Italian garden to its original state took a great deal of work. The original walls of this garden were discovered, so this was a good basis for the start of this part of the restoration project. Over one thousand yews were planted to provide a border for this garden.

The walled garden contains an exceptional rose collection which dominates the central area. The borders of the rose beds are planted with box hedging so that the eye does not take in too much of the display at one go. All around this section of the walled garden there is a large mixed border in which are planted Agapanthus, Crocosmia, Kniphofia, Phormium and Irish-bred narcissi, the latter providing a beautiful display in the spring.

David gave us a good insight into how to deal with a garden of such magnitude with very few staff. He has shown great courage throughout the garden for example in severely cutting back Wisteria and yew hedges so that new growth can come forth.

We all thoroughly enjoyed the presentation and I hope that it will inspire people to visit Fota more often and pay it the respect that it rightfully deserves.

Martin Edwardes.

November 4th “Plant Hunting in Chile” with Seamus O’Brien

Quite a good number of people arrived to hear Seamus give his lecture "Plant Hunting in Chile". He began with a slide of the broad walk at Kilmacurragh, the arboretum of which he is the curator. He explained how plants which cannot be grown at Glasnevin Botanic Gardens due to the climate and soil type can be very successfully grown in Kilmacurragh, although it is not too far away in terms of miles. And it is to this arboretum that Seamus can bring the specimens he has collected on his plant hunting trips to various continents of the world.

This talk dealt with the plants specific to Chile. Seamus told us that the original owner and developer of the garden, Thomas Acton, had the philosophy of planting everything in threes. One where the great gardener and friend of Thomas Acton, Thomas Moore, advised, one where the gardening books advised and one where it would be difficult for the plant to grow. This led us to a slide of a very healthy grove of the giant monkey puzzle trees perched on a high ridge in Co. Wicklow.

The estate changed hands several times due to the tragic deaths of the sons in the Great War and so one of the greatest private collections lay neglected until the purchase of the estate by The Botanic Gardens in 1996. From this point onwards, the plants come from The Botanic Gardens or from expeditions mounted by them. Some of the plants such as the Araucarias are threatened in their natural habitat, but we can grow them successfully in our gardens and climate.

Seamus then took us through many plants that have become familiar to us in our gardens as we are growing more and more of these plants from the temperate rainforests of Chile because of our ever milder climate. *Puya berteroniana*, he said was one of the easiest to grow from seed and one of the hardiest. *Nothofagus* was another specimen of the temperate zone which grows well here, but how wonderful to see Seamus' view of these beautiful trees forming rivers of colour visible from a height where you could tell where the rivers ran according to which species has seeded themselves.

Other memorable slides were the *Pseudopanax laeteverens*, the only one native to Chile, *Puya alpestris* which was growing well above the tree line and an unusual form of mistletoe, which lives on Poplars. It was strange as Seamus moved further south in his tour to see our common pampas grass growing in the volcanic tufa. We saw the *Drimys winteri* var, *andina* growing in the understory of the forest. *Eucryphia cordifolia* is one the biggest timber trees in Chile.

Seamus pointed out the importance of conservation ex situ in places such as Kilmacurragh, because the laws protecting trees in Chile and other parts of the world often do not work. For example, the *Podocarpus nubigenus* which is grown at Kilmacurragh is critically endangered in Chile as it is used as a Christmas tree. A quirky point to this tree is that the bark spirals in the opposite direction in Chile to that in the arboretum in Wicklow.

Along the coastal area the *Ugni molinae* grows abundantly as does *Blechnum magellanicum* which Seamus thought was a better form to *Blechnum chilense*. Then we saw beautiful specimens of *Fitzroya cupressoides*, the Patagonian Cypress, which led us to end of Seamus trip through Chile.

A wonderful evening made possible by the passion and knowledge which Seamus has for his subject and his Arboretum.

Janet Edwardes



Snippets



Geranium pratense 'Mount Stewart'.

Nicola Milligan

Snowdrop Week

Venue: Altamont Gardens, Ballon, Co Carlow

Monday 9th – Sunday 15th February 2009

Guided Tours each day at 2pm. €2 per person.

Free admission to garden. Groups please book in advance.

For further information contact Altamont Gardens:

059-9159444 or altamontgardens@opw.ie

Bellefield Plant Fair

'A celebration of spring and woodland plants'.

This will be an opportunity to acquire rare woodland plants.

Venue: Bellefield House, Birr Road, Shinrone, Co Offaly

Saturday 28th February 2009 from 11am to 4.30pm

Further details : www.angelajupe.ie



The Irish Garden Plant Society

The Aims of the Society are:

- The study of plants cultivated in Ireland, and their history.
- The development of horticulture in Ireland
- The education of members on the cultivation and conservation of garden plants.
- To research and locate garden plants considered rare or in need of conservation, especially those raised in Ireland by Irish gardeners and nurserymen.
- To co-operate with horticulturalists, botanists, botanical and other gardens, individuals and organisations in Ireland and elsewhere in these matters.
- To issue and publish information on the garden plants of Ireland and to facilitate the exchange of information with those interested individuals and groups.

Membership Correspondence:
The Irish Garden Plant Society,
c/o The National Botanic Gardens,
Glasnevin,
Dublin 9.

Please note that staff at the Botanic Gardens cannot take telephone enquiries about the IGPS. They simply facilitate by providing a postal address for the convenience of committee members.