



ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY

Dublin Group



NEWSLETTER NO. 58 – SUMMER 2012

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Front cover illustration is of Ian Leslie's superb *Saxifraga diapensoides* at the Dublin Show (see p. 18). (Photo: Billy Moore).

EDITORIAL

What a miserable summer! As I write this (in mid July) the rain is pouring down, and I will be surprised if summer 2012 doesn't go down as one of the wettest and coolest on record. Certainly, my garden, which is quite free draining, and which dries out quickly because of the number of trees, has never been wetter at this time of year. There are a couple of upsides to the bad weather for me though: firstly, compiling the newsletter is somewhat less of a chore when there isn't the constant temptation to tackle the many jobs that need to be done in the garden; and, secondly, watering, a chore I detest, has hardly been necessary this year. Even plants in pots, of which I have far too many, have managed on their own.

But the exceptional growth which the rain has encouraged has required much more cutting back than in other years. And I can't help feeling that the plants, like ourselves, are missing a bit of sunshine and despairing of the constant grey skies. Flowering hasn't been too bad but many blooms are quickly ruined by wind, rain and slugs, which are having a ball: campanulas have suffered particularly badly. I fear the seed harvest will be well down this year and as the poor conditions have been widespread throughout Europe the seed lists are bound to suffer.

However, the winter is still far away and movements in the jet stream might deliver a fine settled spell over the next few weeks, and, if they do the miseries of the past couple of months will be forgotten as we get more pleasure from our own gardens and those of others.

Visiting other gardens is something I've always felt I have done too little of, and when I do make the effort I find that the rewards are enormous. New plants are encountered and, often, new ways of growing old favourites.

There are many fine gardens open to visitors all over the country nowadays, and we should avail of any opportunity to visit them. Unfortunately, there seem to be few gardens of significant alpine interest about, at least ones that I am aware of. But there must be, among our members several whose garden is worth a visit, and who would be willing to receive visitors. Any such member should get in touch with our Fixtures Secretary, Paddy Smith, or, better still, put up a post on our Facebook page indicating that visitors would be welcome.

ALPINE MISCELLANY

In This Issue

The reports on the two Irish AGS Shows which appear in this issue were, as usual, prepared by the official show reporters appointed by Pershore. Readers may be surprised to find that the report on the Ulster Group Show is twice as long as the one on our own Show. This should in no sense be taken as meaning that our Show was in any way inferior, because it wasn't. The official reporter is asked to write two reports, one for the main AGS website, and a shorter one for the Journal. Mary Ridley, who was chief judge at our Show was also the official reporter and opted to write just one report for the Journal. So there you have it. Due to the unusual weather in late winter/early spring, the number of exhibits at both shows were down, but there were plenty of fine plants on the benches.

The 2012 Dublin Show was Michael Higgins' debut as Show Secretary and he acquitted himself admirably. You can read his observations on the experience below.

Liam Byrne, who will soon be able to publish a collection of the pieces that he has written for the newsletter, has like us all, been impressed by the launch of the 'Kennedy Primulas' and gives us his views and experience of them on page 21.

My objective, which, as you know, has always been to have the reports on fixtures written by a wide range of members, is becoming ever more difficult to achieve. This is partly my own fault because on a couple of occasions I forgot to ask someone in advance, but it's mostly because I can't get volunteers. Many members seem daunted by the task but they shouldn't really. I will check plant names etc., so, what I'm looking for is your honest response to a talk or an event. The newsletter would be more interesting and, obviously, varied with a wider range of contributors.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed to this issue but I must offer a special word of thanks to Fionnuala Broughan, who, although a relatively new member, volunteered to write up Deborah Begley's talk in response to an appeal I posted on our Facebook page. You can imagine my delight when, as I was looking around the hall for a potential scribe, Fionnuala came up to me and asked if I still wanted a reporter. So

Facebook delivered and, I think you must agree so did Fionnuala. Thank you again Fionnuala.

***Sempervivum* ‘Cmral’s Yellow’**

I got this strangely-named plant, which is pictured on the back cover, from Aberconwy Nursery on a visit there last May. As the season progresses the rosette gradually turns light green. My plant developed a second rosette, but to my dismay, both it and the original rosette flowered and will, therefore, die, so I’ve lost it. I understand that it does not produce side rosettes as generously as many *sempervivums* which will mean that it is unlikely to be available in large numbers. Let’s hope that it will appear in the Aberconwy catalogue which should be posted out before Termonfeckin because it’s very desirable.

Fixtures

Our Autumn Programme must be one of the most exciting we have had.

Keith Wiley is our first speaker at the NBG on 18 October and his talk is entitled: **‘A holistic approach to plants’**. During more than twenty five years as head gardener at The Garden House in Devon, Keith evolved a style of gardening based on modifying natural landscapes from around the globe. The garden he created was described by national commentators as “one of the most exciting and innovative gardens in Britain today” and the best example of “leading-edge horticulture” in the UK. He is a regular contributor to horticultural/lifestyle magazines and has appeared on many gardening television programmes in the UK. The Wileys now run their own nursery, Wildeside, and have created an exciting new garden described as a ‘tour de force’ by Stephen Lacey. Keith has written two books and has lectured widely all over the world. He was one of the speakers at the AGS International Conference in Nottingham last year and his talk was considered by many to have been the most stimulating one at the event. This is a joint fixture with the IGPS and presents a unique opportunity to hear the views of this inspirational and truly innovative gardener.

On 8 November we have the welcome return of **Carl Wright** in Stillorgan, another innovative gardener, and someone who is well known to many of our members. Carl’s talk to us a couple of years ago was immensely popular, and was followed up by a Group visit to his

wonderful garden in the Burren last year. On this occasion Carl's talk will be **'Wild about the garden – embracing nature'**, and I can give you a personal guarantee that you will be blown away by it. See you there.

Our annual discussion weekend takes place from 16 to 18 November in Termonfeckin. Please take careful note of the dates because at the time of going to press of the last newsletter we understood that An Grianán had us booked in for the following weekend so the dates in Newsletter No. 57 are wrong.

We have a terrific line-up this year with **Rod Leeds, Martin Walsh** and **Ian Young** and I expect places will be taken very quickly so get your booking in early, remembering that members of the Ulster and Cork groups are eligible to attend also. Booking forms and full details of the programme are included in the mail-out.

Our final fixture of 2012 is **Christmas Miscellany** on 6 December in Stillorgan, and it is a very pleasant way to round off the alpine year. I described last year's event as 'interesting, enjoyable and convivial', and, no doubt, so will this year's. For anyone not familiar with the format it consists of a series of plant related (not necessarily alpine) slide presentations by members. Prospective contributors should let Jamie know in advance what they are proposing to cover so that he can organize the evening. And, of course, there will be mince pies.

Photography

On George Sevastopulo's suggestion the Committee has agreed to include an artistic section in the Local Show. George has sent me the following and I include it in this newsletter so that you will have plenty of opportunities to take suitable photos.

"Both our own and the Ulster Group Show are privileged to have an artistic section; many of the AGS shows in the UK do not. I believe that the artistic section, in which the majority of exhibits are photographs, is a valuable part of our Show. In order to encourage our own members to exhibit in the photographic classes, there will be a small photographic section in the Local Show. There will be four classes, as follows:

1 colour photograph of an alpine plant, showing the characteristic habit of the plant growing in the wild

1 colour photograph of an alpine plant, showing the characteristic habit of the plant in cultivation

1 colour photograph of an alpine garden, landscape or habitat

1 colour photograph of an alpine plant either in the wild or in cultivation (Open only to exhibitors who have not won a first prize in the artistic section at a local or main AGS show)

Details of the size of prints and other information will be included in the next newsletter.”

Facebook

From Jamie Chambers: “Our Facebook page has been growing slowly in popularity, and gradually proving its worth. There are now 51 people who Like us, and not all of them are members, which goes to show that we can appeal more broadly in this way. A number of us are posting photos - Michael Campbell must be the most active of these and I urge you to check out his beautiful plant portraits. It's also a useful place to exchange information - I've been displaying event details there and it's a great way to keep you updated with news. So if you haven't yet tried it, give it a go. The easiest way is to go to our web page - www.alpinegardensociety.ie - and click on the Facebook link at the bottom of the menu on the left. You can see what's there without joining Facebook, but if you do join then you can participate fully. Be sure to click on the Like button next to the Alpine Garden Society Ireland title. That way you'll get notified of changes to our AGS page.”

The Show

Michael Higgins talks about his first outing as Show Secretary:

“This year’s Alpine Show in Cabinteely was a new experience for me, as I attempted to take on the duties of Show Secretary. I was a little nervous as the date approached, but everything came together on the day, due to the hard work of everybody who participated. I did not realise when I took on the job, that there was so much organisation involved. There are many different sections to be looked after, from the plant sales, catering and lunch areas, to the plant and artistic exhibits, membership, and signage, not to mention inputting all the entries to the

computer and producing the necessary documentation. The judges and the stewards also play an important role in the running of the show.

I could list by name the members to whom I am grateful for help on the day, but to conserve space, I just want to say thanks to everyone who helped with the running of the Show. Without your contribution, it would not be possible to hold this event. I must offer a special word of thanks to my predecessor, Valerie, whose help and support were invaluable.

The main Show is a very important date in the alpine calendar, and presents us with a unique opportunity to promote the growing and showing of alpine plant material. Now is a good time to consider showing a plant or two next year. The Show has many functions but could not take place at all without plants on the exhibition benches and of course, exhibits for the artistic section too. I myself know that I probably have one or two plants that I could put on the bench and maybe a photo or two as well. Perhaps you have too!

The plant sale held on the day of the Show is one of our main sources of funds. There are always plenty of buyers, but to have a successful sale we need a lot of good quality plants. It is not too early to think of propagating a few things for the Show and remember they needn't be alpine.

Having broken the ice this year I look forward with less trepidation to 2013, and I know that if I get all the willing help that I received this year the 2013 Show will be a success also."

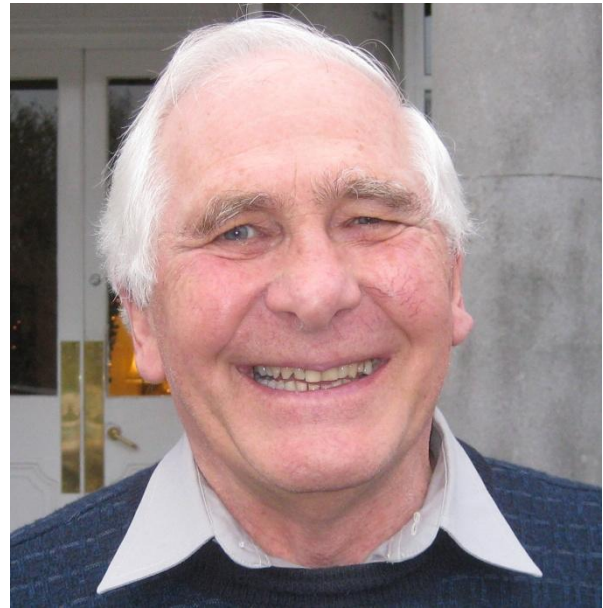
Dr Dermot Kehoe

Although in excellent health and in good form, Dermot has decided, for various lifestyle reasons, to retire from gardening. He has sold his house and lovely garden in Kilquade, which many of you have visited, and has moved into an apartment. He is resigning from the various gardening societies of which he is a member, including this one, and he will be a great loss.

Dermot has been an active member of the Group since its inception and sat on the first committee. For years before the Group was formed he was showing alpines, and had been a leading light of the Alpine and Cactus Group of the RHSI. He has made some excellent contributions to the newsletter over the years, and I shall miss him as a potential

source of material and as a reporter of Group events. As many of you will know, he was a regular contributor to the *Irish Garden* for many years. He has also served as President of the IGPS.

While alpinists were his first love Dermot expanded his gardening activities and became very interested in large herbaceous plants. In his various gardens he created a succession of colourful and spectacular herbaceous



borders. But he remained interested in alpinists and continued to grow them. He has been a judge at our Show for many years.

On a personal note I am grateful for the guidance and help I received from him when I was very much a beginner in the world of alpinists. He was generous with advice and encouragement and also with plants. I still grow plants that Dermot gave me many years ago.

He is a very knowledgeable plantsman and has a keen eye for good material. He is also expert in good cultural practice and will be a real loss to the Irish gardening scene.

On behalf of the Group I would like to wish Dermot every happiness and fulfillment in his new life, and I express the hope that we will see him from time to time at some of our functions.

Pots

Michael Meagher still has seven and nine cm, rigid, square, plastic pots for sale at ten and twenty cent each respectively. If you want any you should phone Michael (01 8382368) well in advance of any meeting and he will bring your order along.

Editor

The Shows

Ulster AGS Show 31 March

There are several obvious criteria for assessing the success or otherwise of a show (such as the number of exhibits and the quality of plants) but one factor is often overlooked: was it a happy occasion? Answers to this question can only be subjective, for one person's 'happy show' may be another's disaster, depending on how the judging turns out. In particular the bestowal of a Farrer Medal is likely to be an unforgettable event for the winner.

For me, and, I think, for most people present, this year's Ulster Show was a really happy event. Certainly the number of exhibits was down but there were numerous plants of high quality. My own enjoyment of the Show came not from personal triumphs on the benches - in fact, I managed to scrape only one first - but from seeing happy, smiling faces all around. I don't know what steps show secretaries should take to bring this about, but Pat Crossley (who after over 30 years in the job must be one of the longest-ever serving AGS show secretaries) got things just right. Thanks are due to her and her team for ensuring that everything ran so smoothly, and also to Director of Shows Ray Drew for his firm but unobtrusive direction of affairs. Before coming to the plants, mention must be made of the excellent Artistic Section where, with six firsts, Joan &



Cyclamen persicum

Liam McCaughey bagged the award for the most first prize points in the photographic section as well as Certificates of Merit for two of their entries. A Gold Award was presented to David Lapsley for his non-competitive photographic exhibit entitled: 'Spring and Early Summer in my Garden'. The exhibit was made up of a series of excellent



Draba longisiliqua

photographs, mainly of alpine, taken by David in his garden in April, May and June 2011.

The Novice Section was very good, thanks largely to the arrival of new exhibitor, Mac Dunlop, who

received most first prize points in the section and whose well flowered pot of *Cyclamen persicum* was deemed best plant in flower in that section. The cyclamen was grown from seed and the seedlings were potted on a couple of times, but have been in their present pot for three years getting just an occasional feed. There were probably four corms in the pot which accounted for the variation in flower colour and leaf pattern but the result made for an eye-catching exhibit. Mac is a very welcome newcomer as, judging by the quality of his exhibits, he will soon be competing in the Open Section.

The number of entries in the Intermediate Section was disappointing due mainly to the recent promotion of several key exhibitors to the Open Section. The award for the best plant in that section went to Joan & Liam McCaughey (they're not just photographers you know) for their *Draba longisiliqua*. From the Caucasus, this is an easy species for the alpine house needing a free-draining compost. Kay McDowell received the award for the most first prize points in the section.

Tropaeolums can be difficult to stage, often requiring elaborate structures to support their climbing growths and can look out of place on the showbench. This is especially true of *T. tricolor* which can grow to 100cm or more, but *T. azureum* (Photo: p. 39) is more modest in growth and is a more suitable subject for exhibition. Annoyingly though, even when the flowers of *T. azureum* are perfect and the upper foliage is fresh,

the lower leaves tend to turn brown, spoiling the overall appearance of the plant.

This was not a problem for Val Keegan, whose exhibit was pristine but achieved only a second in its class, an example of the stiff competition



in the Open Section. This desirable plant, which originates in the Andean foothills in Chile, is easily raised from seed and can be kept going if it is re-potted regularly and kept

completely dry when dormant. In my experience it is hardier than sometimes suggested, one specimen having survived several degrees of frost in my alpine house over a number of years.

A plant in the Open Section which I found particularly appealing was George & Pat Gordon's delightful *Jeffersonia dubia* (above) in the very



early stages of growth. As the plant ages the leaves turn light green and the flowers take on a pale lavender blue shade, but it remains a beauty. One of the aristocrats of the woodland garden,

originating in China and Korea, it likes a humus-rich soil in dappled shade and is fully hardy. Raised from NARGS seed, George & Pat's plant is kept in its pot in the greenhouse, in a typical woodland compost, and is introduced to more light as the flower buds emerge.

Hepaticas don't often feature at the two Irish Shows because they are usually over by the show dates which are almost always in April. But this year, Ian Christie showed a lovely cultivar called 'Millstream Merlin', which coming from one of the coldest parts of Scotland, was at its peak. It was judged the best plant in a 19cm pot and was widely admired. It is sterile unfortunately so can only be reproduced vegetatively.



Another exhibit from Ian was his very floriferous and vividly coloured specimen of *Primula denticulata* 'Rubin Ball' which positively glowed on the bench. It is a German selection of this well known and easy Asiatic species which varies widely in flower colour. He has had it for more than ten years and propagates it by division only. It was lifted from the garden for the Show.

Trilliums are a mainstay at Ulster shows and Gordon Toner showed a fine example of *T. chloropetalum* with really dark flowers and a wonderful spicy scent. Gordon's plant was grown from



seed sown in 2002, and was lifted from the garden about two years ago and kept in a pot since. It lives in a compost consisting of fifty percent each of leafmould and good loam, and is top-dressed occasionally with Blood Fish and Bone. As can be seen from the photograph there is more than one clone present judging by the variability in the leaf patterns, although the flower colour is uniform. But this species is notoriously variable both in flower colour and leaf pattern and there is always the suspicion that in some forms a degree of hybridisation may be a factor. Despite the different leaves Gordon's exhibit was very pleasing to the eye, and nose.



Liam Byrne once again got the award for the most first prize points in the Open Section as well as a Certificate of Merit for an excellent *Lewisia tweedyi* covered in flower. He also exhibited, as part of a multiple pan entry, *Primula vulgaris* 'Maisie Michael', (above) a plant raised by Joe Kennedy of Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, who is a lifelong amateur breeder of old Irish primroses and who was featured on BBC2's Gardeners World on the evening before the Show. This lovely primrose

was named for the late Maisie who was a prominent and most popular member of the Ulster Group until her death twenty five years ago. It is an excellent garden plant and should be more widely grown.



Harold McBride with his 'Farrer' plant and Director of Shows, Ray Drew.

Harold McBride had a great show, winning a plethora of awards including the Farrer Medal for the best plant. The judges were unanimous in giving the top honour to his sumptuously flowered *Rhododendron x ludlowii*. Harold bought this in 2005 from a Suffolk

nursery in a 10cm pot and grows it in his garden. He lifted it in February and potted it up for the Show. The plant is definitely a *R. ludlowii* cross, but which one it might be has yet to be established - *R. 'Shamrock'* is a possibility.

Harold was awarded Certificates of Merit for another well-flowered rhododendron, *R. x pumilum* and for a large pan of *Veronica bombycina* var. *bol kardaghensis*, a Turkish endemic for the alpine house, requiring perfect drainage and great care with watering to avoid botrytis. As an added precaution Harold places 5cm of grit under the plant to protect the foliage from excessive damp.



Veronica bombycina var. *bol kardaghensis*

There were, of course, many other plants that, but for space considerations, could have been included in this report and apologies to those exhibitors who have had to be left out.

Text: Billy Moore

Photos: Heather Smith

Dublin AGS Show 28 April

After the storms and flood alerts of southern England, it was a great relief to experience a trouble-free flight to Dublin and to find that the sun shines on the righteous after all.



The Cabinteely Community school hall is light, airy and well-suited to stage an excellent display of alpine plants. Even the efficient tearoom's floral table arrangements sparkled with alpines.

Ulster has a climate similar to that of Scotland, and so it was no surprise to find a number of first class ericaceous plants staged by northern exhibitors adorning the show bench. *Leiohyllum buxifolium* var. *hugeri* (above) was beginning to show its potential, and although awarded the Margaret Orsi Bowl for the best plant from North America, was beaten to the Farrer Medal by a fabulous, white-belled dome of *Cassiope selaginoides* L,S & E 13284 (below). Pat and George Gordon, the owners of both superb plants,

grow them outdoors in a raised ericaceous bed without protection. They are top-dressed and fed occasionally and lifted only for shows. Two winters ago, they survived a covering of at least 30cm of snow. The *Leiohyllum* was acquired from Ian Christie



approximately three years ago, making it probably around five years old, which represents three years of supremely good cultivation by the owners!

As the first rays of sunlight shone through the windows, they delineated a small plant of *Sebaea thomasi*. This plant, frequently seen on the show



bench nowadays, brings an infectious glow of gold to any show. Although a South African (Drakensberg) native, it really does not seem too dissimilar from that other member of the Gentianaceae, the smaller, paleish lemon, Georgian *Gentiana oschtenica*. Its

owner, Billy Moore, also showed a very deep rose form of the infrequently seen *Trillium hibernicum*. Irish Shows have long been famed for producing excellent pans of various trilliums.

From the same family, Gavin Moore won the David Shackleton Trophy for the best pan of Primulaceae with a very neat *Primula bracteata*.

Ian Leslie trekked across from Bangor with a minute, but sparkingly electric blue *Meconopsis delavayi*, flowering three years after sowing; the blueness of the petals was accentuated by a fabulous golden boss of stamens subtended from the pendant, overlapping petals. Seed has been available from the SRGC exchange in the last few years. The plant shown is from this source; the seed sown in January 2009. Grown in a slightly peaty compost and kept in a cool moist position, with some overhead protection in winter, it has flowered for the last two years.



Also shown by Ian was the European *Saxifraga diapensioides*, (front cover) the almost flawless, chalk-spotted cushion was practically invisible under



Meconopsis delavayi

the creamy-white, yellow-anthered crown of petals. This plant was obtained from Sünderman's nursery (Lindau, Germany) in the late 1990s and is very slow growing. It has flowered reasonably well in previous years but never as well as this year's display (hence the well-deserved Certificate of Merit). This may be a response to a repotting last year in a 50:50 J12 with fine grit plus lime compost and also, possibly, a more liberal watering regime than in the past. The plant has been kept plunged in an open-sided frame which receives only morning sun.

As ever where a show has an Artistic Section, it supplied an attractive backdrop to the living plants. One steward said that her local ladies had come up trumps with their entries and indeed there were some beautifully detailed watercolours. At the front of the stage, David Lapsley's photographs of flowers from his garden complemented those of the refreshments area.

Text: Mary Ridley; Photos: Billy Moore

Kennedy Primroses

Impressive numbers of different cultivars of garden plants have been bred in this country, and I believe the Kennedy Primulas rank among the best that we have produced. Primroses thrive in our Irish climate and are easily grown in ordinary soil in our gardens. Joe Kennedy originally came from Carlow but now lives near Ballycastle, Co. Antrim, where he had a dental practice for many years. I met Joe for the first time in the nineteen-eighties at an AGS Show in Greenmount near Antrim where he had staged a non-competitive display of primulas, all bred by him, for which he got the AGS special award of a gold medal. These awards of bronze, silver, silver-gilt, gold or large gold are presented to non-competitive exhibits staged at AGS Shows. Joe's colourful collection of dozens of different types of primroses was widely admired and certainly deserved the gold award.

Joe's primroses are now being propagated and distributed by Fitzgerald Nurseries of Oldtown, Stoneyford, Co. Kilkenny which also has a micro-propagating unit in Co. Wexford. This nursery exports plants to sixteen different countries worldwide, among which are the USA, Canada, Japan and several European countries



including the UK. This brings Joe's creations to a much wider audience. Two varieties, *Primula vulgaris* 'Drumcliff' and *P. v.* 'Inisfree' have been launched so far and more are to follow. Two of Joe's creations, *P. v.* 'Dark Rosaleen' and *P. v.* 'Maisie Michael' were already available commercially before Fitzgerald Nurseries got involved. I grow all four and would not be without any of them.

P. v. 'Dark Rosaleen' has glossy dark foliage and striped pink flowers with a yellow eye. I was given this by our editor, Billy Moore.

P. v. 'Maisie Michael' has foliage of a reddish brown colour, not quite as dark as the others, and carries soft-yellow flowers on dusky pink stems. Billy, George Sevastopulo and myself were given, very generously, a stock plant of this cultivar by Keith Lever of Aberconwy Nurseries.

Billy propagated it for the three of us and also gave eight to ten plants to other gardeners.

P. v. 'Inisfree' has vivid red flowers with a yellow eye over very dark foliage and is now widely available. As is *P. v.* 'Drumcliff' with similar foliage and white flowers which develop a faint lilac flush as they age.

I think that with their dark foliage these primroses must have somewhere in their parentage that lovely old Irish cultivar, *P. v.* 'Guinivere' which I also grow. This is sometimes offered under the name 'Garryard Guinivere', or even 'Garryarde Guinivere', both of which are invalid according to E. C. Nelson.*

I met Joe at the Ulster Group AGS Show this year and he told me how 'Maisie Michael' got its name. Henry and Margaret Taylor visited his garden almost thirty years ago and were given some seedling primroses by Joe. About a year later Henry was so taken by a yellow flowered seedling that he phoned Joe and urged him to name it. Maisie Michael, a great plantswoman and a very popular member of the Ulster Group had just died and Joe decided the plant should bear Maisie's name.

All these plants are easily grown and to keep them healthy all you need do is lift, divide and replant them every few years.

Finally, I recall that as young boys in Kilkenny we collected primrose flowers in the spring and sprinkled them at our front and back doors believing that they kept away evil spirits.

Liam Byrne

* E. Charles Nelson, *A Heritage of Beauty*, (Dublin, The Irish Garden Plant Society, 2000), pps., 189-190.



‘Dark Rosaleen’



‘Maisie Michael’



‘Guinivere’



‘Drumcliff’



‘Inisfree’

REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

AGM, followed by Val Keegan, 'Plants that I love'

The AGM was held on 19 January in St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan and there was a good turn-out of members. Billy Moore brought the meeting to order, using the gavel presented to the group by the Birmingham group on a visit to Dublin some years ago.

Mary O'Neill Byrne, our Secretary, gave her report on the past year's activities which were varied and enjoyable. Tessa Dagge, our Treasurer, then gave her financial report showing that the finances are in a healthy state. She explained that we have money in reserve in case we need to replace equipment or there is an emergency in the future.

The committee was returned en-bloc with Jamie Chambers as our new Chairman and Paddy Smith taking over as Fixtures Secretary.

Then followed the really enjoyable part of the evening with a talk from Val Keegan on some of her favourite plants. She illustrated the talk with some wonderful photos of these plants and also included some wildlife.



Val began with wildflowers such as *Primula vulgaris* and with such wonderful photos it was easy to appreciate the humble primrose. Among the cultivated plants, my favourites were *Saxifraga* 'Our Song' covered with lovely pink flowers in a trough, *Narcissus* 'Queen Anne', a pale double yellow, with petals like tissue paper, and a lovely selection of *Oxalis*.

Her troughs are an inspiration filled with all sorts of beauties. The close up of *Iris innominata* showed the markings on the pale yellow falls in great detail.

The wild life I mentioned included a white Scottie dog and a pond full of frogs. The heron was maybe looking for the said frogs. A beautiful picture of a chaffinch made me think that I will have to try harder to

improve my photographs. But, continuing with the plants, *Androsace lanuginosa* next appealed to me because of its palest pink petals with a dark eye; a yellow *Myosotis australis* (thought they were only blue); the delicate stems of *Acis autumnalis* and *Acis roseum*; the hairy copper leaves of *Saxifraga fortunei* 'Mt Natchi', showing drops of water caught between the hairs; and the mauve flowers and striped leaves of *Ledebouria cooperi*, which made me really envious, as I can't keep this lovely little thing going.

I thoroughly enjoyed Val's talk and wonderful photos which seemed to be over far too soon.

We ended the evening with a welcome cup of tea.

Barbara O'Callaghan

Annual Lunch, followed by Mary Waldron, 'Gardens in other lands' 11 February

After an excellent lunch in the pleasant and now very familiar surroundings of the Royal St George Yacht Club, Jamie presented the awards won by members at the 2011 Show. The worthy recipients were: Maeve Spotswood, Jimmy Lott, Gavin Moore, Liam & Joan McCaughey and Liam Byrne. Congratulations to them all, but especially to Liam Byrne, who was awarded his ninth Gold Bar. By my reckoning this means that Liam has won 500 first prizes to date. What an achievement!

The main event of the afternoon was Mary Waldron's talk on 'Gardens in other lands'. Mary was the billed speaker for our 2011 lunch but she had to pull out at the last minute due to a family illness. She is one of Ireland's foremost gardeners.

She took us on a whirlwind world tour of places she has been which are of significant horticultural interest. We visited the USA, China, Japan, New Zealand, Australia and the UK where we saw public and private gardens. We also spent a little bit of time at home. As well as talking about the wonderful range of plants that she had encountered, Mary gave us her own response to sculpture and other man-made structures in the gardens.

Mary has a real passion for plants and gardening, and she pines for her own garden when she is away. She dislikes excessive artificiality in the

garden, likes to see plants in their places, but would not be dogmatic on matters of style. Allowing Nature her head in the garden can often produce the best results. The late and much lamented Dr Keith Lamb (her great friend) was her guide and inspiration over many years.

William Rickett's Sanctuary near Melbourne, Australia, particularly impressed her. The combination of plants and sculpture make it a spiritual place and is not to be missed if one happens to be in the area. Nor is Cranbourne Botanic Gardens which is a division of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne. It lays great emphasis on native plants. Mary deplores those gardens which showcase imported exotica while neglecting the riches of their own native flora.

China was also most impressive for her and she noted the importance of vistas in Chinese gardens. But there were many highlights in this wide-ranging talk not least the few vignettes from Mary's own garden which we saw at the end and which provide some reflections of her travels.

Mary's talk, reflecting her personality, was interesting, provocative, eclectic and entertaining and the audience response showed how much it had been enjoyed. It was worth waiting for.

Billy Moore

'Terra Nova – a garden of deboradations and surprises', Deborah Begley, 16 February

If Terra Nova were a film, it would be Monsoon Wedding: a swirling mass of colour; if it were prose, it would be written by Colette, filled to the brim with delight in life. Created on half-an-acre in the middle of the Limerick countryside, Terra Nova is a garden where more is definitely more.

On a dark February evening when we were all more than ready for spring, Deborah Begley entertained (and educated) us all with her talk about the garden she and her husband Martin have created in Kilmallock, Co. Limerick. As though we were walking on the winding paths through the



garden itself, Deborah's virtual tour led us on some circuitous routes through 'mind the gap', 'the twilight zone', 'the joy of foliage' and lots more.

Terra Nova is first and foremost a plantswoman's garden. Deborah's love of plants shone through her whole talk, whether she was describing the challenge of bringing *Symplocarpus foetidus* through the ten-year cycle of seed to flower, or the satisfaction in getting over 6,000 bulbs for a knock-down €50 at a local garden centre.

First though, Deborah solved the riddle of what a 'deboradation' is: it's the name that a dear (and late) friend of hers, Nell, gave to any plant she felt was typical of the kind of plants that Deborah loves: variegated foliage, perhaps large leaves, showy flowers (doubles particularly) in sizzling colours. I think the word mutant may also have been mentioned!

Referring back to the harsh winters we had in 2010 and 2011, Deborah mourned the losses in her garden (including a Eucalyptus around which Martin had carefully built the roof of their Thai house) but she also pointed out that filling the gaps allowed her to use massed plantings of annuals such as Busy Lizzies. One of the pictures of a riot of pink and orange—or cerise and tangerine as Deborah said—gave me my Monsoon Wedding moment. Other annuals she recommended included poppies (lots of double-flowered varieties), sunflowers ('Black Magic'), cornflowers, cosmos and dahlias (which Deborah recommends growing from seed). *Nicandra physalodes* also got an honourable mention.

Far from the bright and breezy annuals, Deborah led us into the twilight zone – looking at some of her woodland favourites. There were lots of Aroids mentioned here, starting with *Dracunculus vulgaris*, a positively gothic-looking plant, which smells like rotting flesh to attract flies for pollination. Other curiosities included *Amorophophallus konjac*, *Arisaema candidissimum* (which doesn't flower until June and Deborah admonished us not to poke impatiently at it too early and damage its shoot in the process), *A. sikokianum* (a "nurseryman's dream" as it's difficult to cultivate successfully), *A. griffithii* and, a good one to start with apparently, *A. consanguineum*. As well as the Aroids, Deborah enjoys trilliums and showed us lovely pictures of *T. albidum* and *T. cuneatum*. All the lovely and illuminating photographs were taken by Martin and clearly show his love of both the plants and the garden. His portrait of *Sanguinaria canadensis* 'Multiplex' was met by a collective "aahhh..." from

the audience: exquisite double flowers of the purest white, whose petals don't turn brown and ugly as the flowers fade, but drop gracefully to the ground while still pristine.

Deborah loves foliage. And she *really* loves variegated foliage. Some of the plants that the rest of us think of eating or growing for their flowers are seen simply as holders of great leaves. So, *Armoracia rusticana* 'Variegata' that most people would dig up for its fiery root is treasured by Deborah for its large splashy leaves. Similarly, a variety of kale, 'D'Aubenton Variegated' is not for the table. *Astrantia major* 'Sunningdale Variegated' is chopped back by Deborah in early June so she'll have its foliage all summer. *Lavatera arborea* 'Variegata' is again grown in Terra Nova primarily for its leaves rather than its flowers.

There were many, many other plants described by Deborah, too many to mention here, although I think she wouldn't forgive my leaving out her favourite rose, so here it is: R. 'Teasing Georgia', a pale creamy yellow David Austen rose, that's a very floriferous and well scented Short Climber. But there were a few other things that stood out for me in Deborah's talk. One was her reminder to all of us to "let your imagination run wild in your garden!" Another was to share our experiences with other gardeners, through garden.ie or, as Jamie mentioned afterwards, through the AGS Facebook page. And finally, there was Deborah's cunning ruse to persuade other gardeners to share rare and treasured beauties: "admire to acquire". It worked for her in a famous garden in Munster and she acquired a coveted Hairy Bluebell, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* 'Bracteata'. She may yet find some AGS members standing steadfastly and admiringly beside some of her many enviable plants in Terra Nova some fine summer's day.

Fionnuala Broughan

Local Show, Workshop and Members' Plant Sale, 10 March

A fine spring afternoon brought a good turnout for the Local Show in St Brigid's. There was an excellent plant sale with some fine plants on offer at very reasonable prices, including some nice named snowdrops. Jamie Chambers, with some assistance from Amanda, gave a detailed presentation on the finer details of our web page and the new Facebook page.

The new mentoring scheme under which interested members can receive free plants, on the basis that they will grow them on for exhibition at a future show got under way. Participants will be given advice on the care of the plant by the donor if needed.

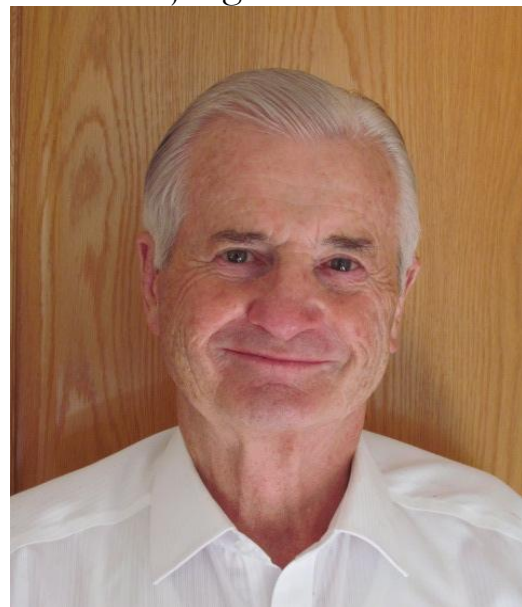
But on to the main event. There were many superb, beautifully presented plants on the benches but, unfortunately, I had little time to gather details of all the winners in the various classes as all the plants were swept away in front of my eyes as the 'Aladdin's Cave' suddenly closed. So I hope no one will feel neglected if I failed to record their excellent entries.

Gavin Moore won in Class 1 with an astonishing, truly stupendous example of *Dionysia aretioides* 'Bevere', which was judged to be the best plant at the show. What a pity this species cannot be grown out of doors. Gavin also won a first in another class with *Draba ossetica* which was in pristine condition. Nearby, Mary Glennon won third place with a fine mature plant of *Saxifraga x megaseaeflora* 'Karel Čapek'.

As always Noelle Anne Curran entered many fine plants. She won a first with her *Calocephalus brownii*.

George Sevastopulo made a huge impact, winning the award for the most first prize points. I loved his delicate *Thalictrum orientale* (Greek form). He also won a first with his *Pinus mugo* 'Mops Midget'; yet another first with a mature specimen of *Cyclamen persicum* in full blossom; and, blow me down, if he didn't get a second with his *Corydalis darvasica* with flowers of a very subtle grey/blue hue. It is to be noted that he does not have the luxury of an alpine house! In Class 2 Michael Meagher won second place with *Saxifraga stolonifera*. This was a gorgeous plant. I was also very impressed by Conchita Nolan's pot of *Fritillaria amana*.

Then to the non-competitive display. Billy Moore had a class display of a large variety of saxifrages in flower. This genus seems to have endless selections. I was very taken by the pot of *Narcissus cyclamineus*. The



flowers were grown to perfection. Nearby was a beautiful example of *Saxifraga strobilata* 'Tristan' in full flower.

Again, I hope to be forgiven for not mentioning many other worthy exhibitors. They all made a huge effort in assuring a very successful show. The afternoon was enhanced by tea and biscuits served during the judging.

Frank Lavery

'Workshop on woodland plants', Ian Christie, 15 March

Ian is a nurseryman to his fingertips and this workshop, which was profusely illustrated, dealt with the propagation and cultivation of a wide range of plants that we associate particularly with Scottish gardens. Ian's nursery is at Kirriemuir, north of Edinburgh, and I was surprised to learn that the average annual rainfall is recorded as not much more than that of Dublin, but less surprised that this figure had been exceeded in recent years.



The first genus covered was *Meconopsis*, illustrated in many cases by plants bearing seed capsules. Ian grows a wide range of the blue poppies and their yellow, cream and red sisters, including the choice, perennial form of *M. punicea*, which he had introduced from the wild. He demonstrated using digital imagery their propagation from seed and by division, those forms that are perennial.

There followed a kaleidoscope of flowers, with choice examples such as the blue and white *Glaucidium palmatum*, a mix of *Nomocharis* spp. and hybrids, sinister *Arisaema* spp., and lilies. I was tempted by *Galanthus woronowii* 'Elizabeth Harrison', the only *G. woronowii* with yellow markings and ovary, which Ian had sold on E-bay for £725 to set a snowdrop record. However, my 'must-have' plant was the white form of *Roscoea humeana*.

After the illustrated survey of woodland plants, Ian gave a practical demonstration of propagation by means of cuttings, using material from Billy Moore's garden. He showed how to prepare a cutting, advocating using a sharp knife to make a clean cut exposing the cambium on one side of the stem, rather than pulling a side shoot off to produce a heel. He inserted the cuttings into compost – a mixture of fine bark, or peat, sand and perlite was suggested - in a novel mini-greenhouse constructed from a clear plastic strawberry punnet, its lid secured with sellotape.

The evening ended with a draw for plants, bulbs and seeds of *Hepatica nobilis*, *Lilium mackliniae*, and *Trillium kurabayashii*, amongst others.

George Sevastopulo

‘Let's talk primulas’, Pam Eveleigh, 19 April

Pam Eveleigh is a primula and alpine gardening enthusiast living in



Calgary, Canada. She is a founding member of the Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS). In response to her own need she set up the Primula World website (www.primulaworld.com) in September, 2000, which she continues to administer. The website is designed for people interested in identifying species primulas and now contains over 3000 images of primulas in the wild. This is a wonderful free resource for anyone

interested in this complex and popular genus, and we must be grateful to Pam for the huge amount of work she puts into it on a purely voluntary basis.

Pam was the visiting speaker for the SRGC this year and Martin Walsh managed to persuade her to visit Dublin so that we could benefit from her knowledge and expertise without the expense of bringing her all the way from Canada.

The genus *Primula* contains more than 400 species and is divided into thirty sections. Primulas have a number of features which are useful in

distinguishing between species. Pam focused on those characteristics which make it possible first to determine the section the plant belongs to, and then to identify the species. She structured the talk around the botanical definition of the genus and illustrated it with superb images of many species both rare and well known. She also discussed name changes within the genus and the reasons for these changes.

In one sense this was quite a technical talk but the clarity of Pam's presentation and her selection of photographs and diagrams made it easily accessible and very interesting to the audience, which judging by the applause at the end also found it stimulating and enjoyable.

Billy Moore



Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens, 22 April

Despite the poor weather – cold and wet – there was a reasonable turnout for our visit to Kilmacurragh in the company of members of the IGPS. The tour was led by Head Gardener, Seamus O'Brien, whose total commitment to the gardens was evident in his comprehensive account of their history and in his encyclopedic knowledge of the plants and their provenance. The conservation work and the improvements that have taken place under his stewardship are a testimony to his vision and skills. The NBG is very fortunate to have him.

Rather than asking one person to write a report on the visit I asked a few members to send me a couple of sentences on what impressed them most. Without exception everyone enthused about Seamus and his skilful, entertaining and erudite presentation.

George Sevastopulo, who followed the brief to the letter, wrote that he was most impressed by “the broadwalk with large *Rhododendron altaclerense*; *Rhododendron superponticom*; *Primula* ‘June Blake’ in the herbaceous border; avenues of oaks and, in the future, of Chusan Palm; monkey puzzles on the hill; meadow with bluebells and *Tulipa saxatile* and daffodils to come”.

Unsurprisingly, Jamie Chambers showed an antipodean bias in his contribution. “Others can describe the many South American and Asian trees and shrubs, but I, of course, kept a particular look out for New Zealand plants. I enjoyed the many astelias, and the tree ferns, the common *Dicksonia antarctica* but also one *Cyathea dealbata*, the silver fern, national symbol of New Zealand. There were several good sized *Fuschia excorticata*, the NZ tree fuschia with its interesting peeling bark and unusual blue pollen. Another small NZ tree to be seen here is the Mountain Ribbonwood, *Hoheria glabrata*, but we were too early for its scented white flowers. In the Fossil section there's a young kauri tree - *Agathis australis* - but it will take many hundreds of years before this specimen starts to give a sense of the enormous and iconic giants of the northern NZ forests. Meanwhile, there is another good-sized NZ conifer to enjoy, the totara (*Podocarpus totara* var. *hallii*). But perhaps the most envy-inducing sight were the magnificent broad leaved cordylines, *Cordyline indivisa*, only a few years old and already of impressive size. I will be well pleased if the one I planted last year in my garden comes close to matching these.”

Mary O'Neill Byrne wrote that she “loved Seamus’s little anecdotes - like finding names of trees that had been etched on labels with acid and dated 1840s – which shows how conservation minded the team there has been. It was lovely to see the planting of so many bulbs in the front lawn area which in years to come will naturalise and make a splendid vista. Generally, I thought it was a great day and will certainly go back again at other times of the year to see how the herbaceous borders look.”

Joan and Liam McCaughey's contribution was almost a full report on the visit and included photos. "Having visited Argentina, Australia and China in the past ten months, it was amazing to see many of the trees and shrubs that we saw growing in the wild, flourishing, two and a half hour's drive from home, in Kilmacurragh.

Throughout the grounds are southern hemisphere trees, and looking up to Acton Hill, *Araucaria* are outlined against the sky. However, it was the bright bark of the Myrtle, *Luma apiculata* that particularly took



my attention. These have been introduced from Chile, but we first saw them in the wild just over the border in Argentinean Patagonia. We are at present trying to establish one at the front of our house where we can enjoy its bright trunks in the winter. Ours is just recovering from the severe winter of 2010-11; we don't have the milder climate of Kilmacurragh.

Another tree which surprised me by being in flower was *Eucalyptus pulverulenta* (above), the silver leaved mountain gum. We were keen to grow some gum trees to please our Australian daughter-in-law but struggle further north with a slightly colder climate. We might just try *E. pulverulenta*.



In Yunnan last June we photographed *Dipelta yunnanensis* (left) in the wild being visited by a bee, and while the weather on Sunday was not conducive to bees, it was lovely to see the same shrub in flower in Ireland in the Chinese section of the garden.

I was delighted to discover the name of a tree that I have seen growing in many botanic gardens, and also coveted, but never could find a label -

Podocarpus salignus - a graceful tree with its evergreen willow-like foliage, again from Chile. It was Seamus's expert and enthusiastic knowledge of all these trees, along with their history and anecdotes that really made the visit so worthwhile - well worth five hours total journey even in the rain."

Anne Nolan's piece was also characteristically comprehensive.

"Kilmacurragh Arboretum is a well-kept secret. Never having been there before, I was amazed that such a wonderful resource of rare mature trees existed, relatively unknown, so close to Dublin. In spite of the relentless rain, the walk along the tracks under the exotic trees listening to our guide's fascinating stories regarding their provenance held our attention. In sunny weather the walk would have been idyllic!

One couldn't fail to be impressed by the breadth of the collection, featuring mainly trees from China, the Himalayas, Chile and Patagonia thriving in the favourable moist acid soil at Kilmacurragh. The seed having been collected in the mid 1800's by the famous plant collectors of the period.

The then owners of Kilmacurragh, Thomas Acton and his sister Janet, were avid horticulturalists and were the recipients, together with the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin, of a share of the rare seeds. These were planted and flourished in the ideal conditions of the Actons' large estate. I was very taken with the giant 120 year old *Cryptomeria japonica elegans* seen at the start of the walk. A magnificent evergreen, it has expanded laterally and its greenery covers a huge area of ground.

The Patagonian Cypress tree, dating from 1860, was declared a 'champion' tree by our guide, meaning it is the tallest of its type in the country, if not in Europe. Sadly, in its native country it has been logged practically to extinction, as its timber is considered valuable. However, there is a conservation programme in existence among botanic gardens which should ensure the tree's survival. There are four specimens of the tree in Edinburgh Botanic Gardens. The Patagonian Cypress is a slow growing tree, but may last for 2,000 years in its native habitat.

The King William Pine (*Athrotaxis selaginoides*) also known as the King Billy Pine, from Tasmania, is a threatened species. It was named after the

last male aborigine in Tasmania, who happened to be called William. His fellow aborigines all apparently suffered at the hands of the colonisers. We saw a nice young specimen of this tree doing well at Kilmacurragh.”

I think these comments provide an indication of the pleasures to be enjoyed in Kilmacurragh and I urge anyone who hasn't been to pay a visit soon. April/May are probably the best months but the gardens are worth seeing at any time of the year.

On behalf of the group who attended my sincere thanks to Seamus.

Billy Moore

‘Garden Plants and their wild Irish cousins’, Declan Doogue, 10 May

Declan, who is passionate about the importance of protecting and conserving our native plants, delivered a whirlwind talk in which he illustrated many of our most important species and discussed the threats which they face. This was a joint lecture with the Dublin Naturalist Field Club which was founded in 1886 and many of its members attended.

One major threat to our wild plants is, of course, that presented by invasive foreigners, many of which have escaped from gardens and are now widespread throughout the country. Habitat destruction by farmers burning gorse, loss of structural diversity and changes in agricultural practices are also a serious problem. The larger plants have the better chance while smaller species are being squeezed out. Wetland plants such as *Caltha palustris* are particularly vulnerable. Bogs are being “devastated” and I suspect Declan would have little sympathy with certain turf-cutters who continue to break the law by harvesting turf from protected bog lands.

Primroses and, particularly, cowslips are declining although the hybrid between them, *Primula polyantha*, the false oxlip, is thriving. Even succulents like *Sedum anglicum* and Sea Camphire are under threat.

The deliberate planting of mixed wildflower seeds randomly around the country is a big problem as it distorts distribution patterns. Declan likened it to the headaches that would be created for archaeologists if someone were to bury Roman coins, say, in the vicinity of Newgrange.

Declan is convinced that the impending growth in agricultural production will have a negative impact on the native flora. Among other things this will accelerate the removal of hedges which he described as a “terrifying threat to many habitats”. Roadside hedges are being replaced with barbed wire fences and even hedges in fields are being grubbed out in advance of the CAP changes.

Among parasitic plants, Toothwort, an Irish native, is in decline while Broomrape, a garden escaper, may be increasing. Our native wild garlic, *Allium ursinum* is under threat from the extremely invasive, introduced, *A. triquetrum*. Alexanders, *Smyrniolus olusatrum*, another invader is now widespread and the Skunk Cabbage, is also becoming a pest. Valerian is a thug which pushes out little native plants that grow on walls. And then there’s the problem of invaders hybridizing with native plants raising the question: what is a native?

In this report I can only offer a flavour of the wide-ranging, erudite, and rather frightening presentation that Declan gave his rapt audience on a subject upon which he is an acknowledged expert, and which is clearly dear to his heart.

As you will see from the next item the subsequent field trip on 27 May was for some reason almost totally ignored as only two members turned up. Hats off to our Chairman, Jamie Chambers, and Gwenda Wratt who had the benefit of Declan’s undivided attention on the day. My excuse is that I was attending a wedding in the west that weekend and I was very sorry to have had to miss it.

Billy Moore

Bull Island Field Trip with Declan Doogue, 27 May

Declan had suggested that he follow up his lecture with a field trip to Bull Island a few weeks later, and so it was that on the most beautiful weekend of the year so far (and half of North County Dublin agreed), Gwenda Wratt and I arrived at the rendezvous point outside the interpretative centre - a picnic table. Declan awaited us, and after a few minutes waiting for others to turn up (they didn't) we began. Not by trekking off into the dunes, as we had expected, but by Declan producing some small but powerful (x10) hand lenses and inviting us to inspect the lichens on the table. To our amazement we found many



kinds, of various colours and habits, some with fruiting bodies, and all growing happily on an apparently barren foundation. It was a little disconcerting to be told that they are largely nourished by bird droppings.

This set the scene for our afternoon. We didn't go far, walking maybe eighty metres into the dunes and back, but at every step we were invited to look at what was under our noses (or our feet) and Declan's extraordinary range of knowledge informed us on everything

from the history of Dublin Bay and the building of the Bull Wall, to the subsequent, entirely natural, formation of the island, and the processes of dune formation (marram grass being a key ingredient) and plant colonisation. We looked at the flowering plants of course - and a few butterflies - but also at the grasses and mosses, and at the pattern of species in the various habitats - well established, dry, moist, and recovering from fire damage. In the hands of such a guide there is something to be seen at every step, not just the names of plants or insects, but their origins, their habits and their part in the changing environment, an ecological ramble at its best.

We finished with Declan's *pièce de résistance*, which I suggest you try for yourselves. Take a hand lens, a small bottle of water, and a hot dry afternoon. Walking amongst the dunes you will see much apparently dead moss, blackened and desiccated. Inspecting a sample through the lens, pour water over the moss and watch as it transforms to a green, healthy, living plant in a matter of seconds. A walk with Declan is as magical as that, and I urge you not to miss the next opportunity.

Jamie Chambers

Garden Visits, 9 June

On Friday, 8 June, I received a worried text message from Tessa Dagge, our Treasurer. Should we consider cancelling the garden visits the next day? I looked out of the window, and was inclined to agree. Wind and

rain were pounding the building, broken umbrellas were familiar litter, and only two weeks before mid-summer it was not advisable to put away ones winter clothes. However, you can't be a gardener without unreasonable reservoirs of hope, so I consulted the weather forecast and chose this time to believe that there might be some truth in it.

Arriving next day first at Patricia McGuire's garden, it was hard to believe we were ever worried. The sun shone out of a clear blue sky, there was not a blown leaf to be seen anywhere, the grass was immaculate, and the only hint of the recent deluge was the cheerful noise of rushing water down the stream which forms one border of the garden. I'd missed the previous visit, so had been looking forward to this, particularly after seeing some photos at the Christmas Miscellany, and reading the recent Irish Garden article. It's a lovely place to wander around in, with little paths to follow, borders full of colour and texture to be admired from the terrace while enjoying tea and delicious cakes, and specimen plants to consider in detail, such as the lovely dwarf weeping beech, or the *Cornus kousa* 'Venus' with its big white blooms. There are interesting sculptures to be seen too, and impressive architectural elements, such as the *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glaucia' with a slate-dressed bed at its base. The pond is beautiful. Patricia's alpine skills were also much in evidence, beginning with the alpine beds at the entrance, and many troughs too. All in all, a tribute to gardening skill and dedication (and rising at 6am to remove the debris from the previous day's storm).

A short walk down the road is another very interesting garden. Gavin Moore, has a completely different set of challenges: a hillside, and great view, but thereby much wind, a wild area of thistles and nettles next door (owned by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council!), with inevitable consequences for weeding, and two small children. In a much smaller garden, one adjusts to the scale and suddenly every plant matters, but there were no disappointments here. I enjoyed the different levels Gavin has introduced through terracing the centre of the garden, which make the individual plants in the alpine beds much more accessible. I admired the many daphnes, but particularly liked the wandering *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* and the *Salix reticulata*. The sloping border on the north-west of the garden complements the terracing and was dominated while we were there by a beautiful *Sambucus niger* 'Black Lace' in flower. The garden is clearly developing as time allows - there's a new bog

garden area at the front of the house, recently planted with primulas and butterworts. Last but not least, I got the chance to inspect the frames where Gavin grows his increasingly impressive alpines for showing. I look forward to many more visits.

Jamie Chambers



Val Keegan's *Tropaeolum azureum* at the Dublin Show – p. 11 (Photo: Heather Smith)

AUTUMN FIXTURES

Thursday, 18 October, 8 pm. Keith Wiley, ‘A holistic approach to plants’, NBG, Glasnevin. Joint with **I.G.P.S.**

Thursday, 8 November, Carl Wright, 8 pm. ‘Wild about the garden – embracing nature’. St Brigid’s Parish Centre Stillorgan.

Friday 16 to Sunday 18 November, 29th Alpine Weekend,
Rod Leeds, Martin Walsh and Ian Young, An Grianán,
Termonfeckin.

Thursday, 6 December, 8 pm Christmas Miscellany, St Brigid’s Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

More details about the fixtures can be found on p. 5.

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Val



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Martin



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Michael



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NOTES



Sempervivum 'Cmral's Yellow' (Photo: Billy Moore) – See p. 5.

This newsletter is edited by **Billy Moore** who can be contacted at 32 Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14. Email: wjmoore@iol.ie.

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