



# **ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY**

## **Dublin Group**



**NEWSLETTER NO. 62 – SUMMER 2014**

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Front cover illustration is of *Trillium chloropetalum* 'Bob Gordon' (p. 19). Photo:  
Billy Moore.

## EDITORIAL

In the last newsletter I wrote about the problem of declining membership. Despite the Postcard Garden initiative this issue has not gone away. The Bloom experiment was, I think, an unqualified success both aesthetically and in terms of the response of the public to our creation. At time of writing, however, the number of new members acquired is disappointing at a mere six, given the prominent position of our exhibit and the number of visitors to Bloom who admired our garden. I am reasonably confident that there will be more, but, being realistic, it is unlikely that we will even double the number – our target was twenty. Unless we can attract more younger members, and by younger I mean under fifty, the long-term future of the group has to be in doubt. We need members who are able and willing to take on the various tasks that need to be done to keep the Group going. There was a good response from members to our request for volunteers to staff the Postcard Garden over the five days, and this is encouraging. Requests, however, for volunteers to fill vacancies on the Committee have had a disappointing response. This situation is certainly not unique to our group but seems to be common in many voluntary organizations. As those of you who are members of our parent body will know the main AGS is facing exactly the same problem.

Another point worth making is the poor attendance at some of our lectures. The cost of bringing overseas lecturers to speak to us is significant, and if only twenty or fewer members turn up it seems wasteful. It is also embarrassing when the speaker has travelled from abroad, has prepared a detailed lecture and is faced with a tiny audience. The Committee puts a great deal of effort into putting together a varied and interesting (we think) schedule of lectures each year, but perhaps we are out of touch with members' needs. We would love to hear from members with suggestions for lecture topics and would do everything within reason to respond positively. So if there is a subject that you would like to see covered, or a particular speaker that you would like to hear, please let us know. Meanwhile I appeal once again to each member to look out for any opportunity to promote membership of the Group to your friends and relatives.

## ALPINE MISCELLANY

Firstly I would like to extend a warm welcome to the new members who have joined us this year and look forward to meeting each of you at one of our upcoming talks.

As I write (late July) we are enjoying one of our better summers, and I hope you are all making the most of the good weather. Growth has been exceptional and, apart from some very warm days, we have had ideal gardening conditions, including some short spells of heavy rain which minimized watering time. Some watering has been necessary, of course, especially of pots, and as I water I wonder about the implications of

water rates on our gardening practices from next year on – fewer pots for sure.

We have had a good first half of 2014 with some excellent events. A highlight has to have been our Bloom venture which



George Sevastopulo, who directed the project, reports on below. George has estimated that it took 500 person hours to complete the project and, thankfully, the working group and members generally were not found wanting.

Following our custom of recent years Liam Byrne, George and I visited the East Lancashire Show in March and we were very impressed with the quality of the exhibits. An abiding memory for me was a magnificent specimen of *Saxifraga* 'Coolock Gem', (above) which only came second in its class, an illustration of the fierce competition at the show. The winning entry was a fine *Dionysia aretioides*; I don't envy the judges who



had to make the choice.

### **In this issue**

As usual in the summer issue there is a concentration on the shows and I hope that the show reports are of interest to readers. There are also reports on all our events so far in 2014, and as usual my sincere thanks go to the reporters. Liam Byrne writes about gypsophilas and how to grow them and as Liam writes from personal experience his advice is worth following. Congratulations are due to Liam for achieving his tenth gold bar in 2013. Ten gold bars mean that Liam has had 550 firsts in his showing career, a remarkable achievement for an exhibitor who has just two shows to rely on.

### **AGS Postcard garden at Bloom 2014**

From George Sevastopulo:

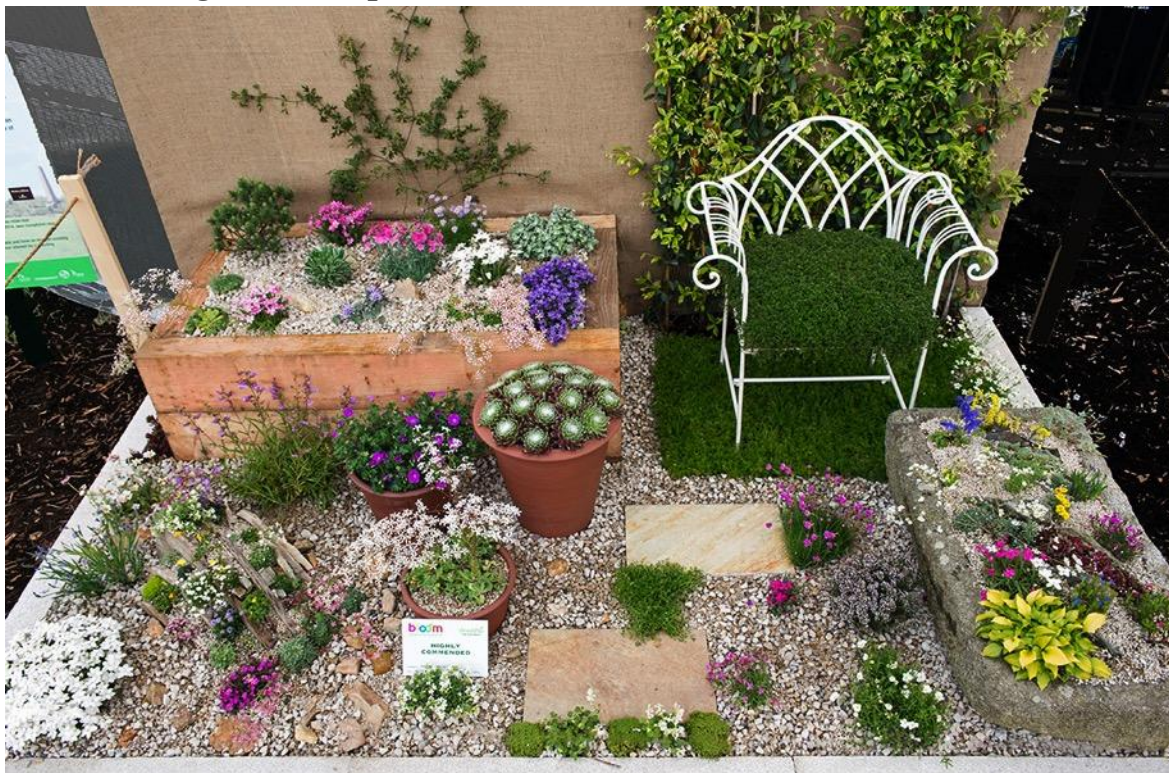


Photo: Bernard van Giessen.

For the first time in many years, our Group entered a garden at a national gardening show (our previous entry was at Bloom's predecessor 'Garden Heaven' in the RDS). The garden at Bloom was in the Postcard Garden (3m x 2m) category and had to be built from the ground up between 8am and 10pm on the Tuesday before the show opened. The

planning of the garden was entrusted to a group consisting of Fionnuala Broughan, Liam Byrne, Jamie Chambers, Val Keegan, Billy Moore, George Sevastopulo, Paddy Smith and Martin Walsh. Martin was the designer. Members of the planning group, with the invaluable help of trough mover extraordinaire, Ian Keegan, handy man Tiit Talumna and Colm Sevastopulo, constructed the garden. The garden was highly commended by the judges but more importantly drew much positive comment from numerous gardeners from all over Ireland – it was particularly encouraging to receive plaudits from members of the Ulster Group who travelled to Bloom as a group on the Saturday. The stand was manned throughout the Show by members of our Group, too many to list here, whose contributions of explanation and advice added greatly to the value of the exhibit. The two plants most coveted by visitors were Billy Moore's *Physoplexis comosa* and a large pan of *Rhodohypoxis* 'Picta' contributed by Patricia Maguire. We could have sold each of them many times over. All in all, the planning group considered the venture to have been a success and it certainly fulfilled one of the aims of the Alpine Garden Society - to popularize the cultivation of rock garden (alpine) plants. Finally, we are very appreciative of the sponsorship of Schram Plants, Moyvalley; the Patio Centre, Cabinteely; Millbrook Paving, Delgany; Snap Printing, Jervis St.; and the advice and generosity of Keith, Rachel and Tim Lever of Aberconwy Nursery.

### **Michael Higgins**

For personal reasons Michael has decided to step down as Show Secretary, and also as a member of the Committee, which accepted his dual resignation with great regret. We will all miss him greatly.

Despite severe back pain in 2013 and post-operative difficulties this year Michael ran two excellent shows in both years. He has been a member of the Committee for many years during which time he took on many jobs on behalf of the Group, including, for a period, editor of the newsletter.

Over the years also he proved a vital contact with the National Botanic Garden where he works. Up to a few years ago the NBG was a prominent exhibitor at our annual shows as well as at the Ulster shows. They also staged some excellent non-competitive exhibits at both shows.

We hope that this level of participation will resume in the future. I think it is important that we maintain close contact and good relations with the NBG in the interests of both organisations. I have no doubt that, although no longer on the Committee, Michael will help to maintain the relationship.

On behalf of all members I wish Michael a speedy return to full health; I thank him for his services to the Group for many years; and I hope that he will find it possible in the future to consider rejoining the Committee.

### **New Show Secretary**

Michael's resignation as Show Secretary came as a shock to the Committee and initially posed a huge problem. Where would we find someone who would be willing and able to fill such an important position? The problem was quickly solved when, without being asked, Gavin Moore offered to take on the job. I was at least as surprised as anyone as I never even raised the possibility with Gavin. We must be grateful to him for his offer and wish him well in his new role. I know he can count on getting the same support from members as was given to his predecessors. He will need it!

### **Dublin Show 2015**

From Gavin Moore

The Dublin Group's first show was held in Kilruddery in 1985. This was when I was first interested in growing alpines, and so I decided that I would try to exhibit one plant in the inaugural event. In the late summer of 1984, I bought about five bulbs of *Oxalis adenophylla*, put them in a pot and forgot about them for a few months. In the spring, the leaves emerged and by an amazing stroke of luck, the very first day the flowers opened fully was the day of the show. I entered it in the class for exhibitors having never won a first prize in an AGS show, and won a very nice selection of plants donated by Murphy & Wood Garden Centre. Thirty years later, including a long break from growing alpines for activities more normal for young men in their teens and twenties, I've taken the job of Show Secretary for the Dublin Group and my first Show to run will be in 2015.

Our recent shows have been very successful thanks to Michael and Val for their organization over the years. We also owe a great deal to the Northern Group for their participation and support. Although our shows have been very successful, there is a very noticeable lack of new exhibitors. This year the Novice Section couldn't have had more than a dozen plants on the bench. If we want to secure the future of the show, and indeed the entire group, we need to get new exhibitors to start showing now and be the Farrer Medal contenders of the future.

Over the next months, some of the experienced exhibitors will be giving month by month advice on what we can all be doing now to ensure we have some plants for next year. The first thing to do is acquire some plants. Show plants are surprisingly easy to acquire, and now is the time to go looking for them. Remember you must own the plant for at least six months before the show. Sempervivums are among the easiest show alpines. They are totally hardy, easy to grow, and don't need to be in perfect flower on the day, which is often the hardest part of showing. Sempervivums can be bought in any garden centre and indeed many hardware shops. Go and buy one or two; they only cost about €3. Re-pot them immediately and put in a sunny spot in the garden, and that is more or less all they need. Another good show plant that is easily obtainable is *Primula denticulata*. It is widely available even in the summer. Buy one or two, re-pot them, bury the pot somewhere in the garden to keep the roots cool, and wait for spring. The easiest show plants of all are bulbs. From late August bulbs will be available in the garden centres. Many of them are suitable for showing, and a 19cm pot of bulbs will cost less than €3. You will see advice on suitable bulbs for showing next month. You could be leaving Cabinteely next year with a first prize and a selection of plants to show for it (becoming Show Secretary thirty years later is not mandatory).

In addition to acquiring plants, remember the plant sale. If there is an alpine plant in your garden that seeds around (no horrors please!), think about putting a few in pots now to bring along to the sale in spring. Finally, look out for emails from Jamie for updates on what you need to do with your potential prize winners.



## **Website and Facebook page**

From Jamie Chambers

It's now three years since we set up our Facebook page and after a slow beginning it has become a very useful way for the Society to connect with its members, for several reasons.

First, it's a great way to keep our members informed about our own events. I put notices about our meetings on the page, and it may be more convenient for you to look there, rather than having to look for the fixtures list or the email that I also send out. Don't forget that Facebook will notify you of these notices if you have liked our page.

Next, it's the ideal way for us to share information about other events that might be of interest. I regularly get emails from other organisations about meetings, or lectures, or simply places that might be of interest to our members, so I post the details knowing that you will see them. This is useful for us, but it also means that other organisations become aware of our activities. As an example, Lorna Gannon wrote a nice piece about our Postcard Garden at Bloom in her JardinDesign blog, which I shared on our page, and I could see that 209 people had been reached by it. Even better was my posting of Angela Jupe's snowdrop day programme, which reached 720 people. So the Facebook page has a valuable part to play in publicizing the Society and bringing in new members. The more we share with other organisations, the more they will be aware of us and what we do.

Our Page also gives you the chance to share photos of your own with us, and to comment on anything you see there. Photos are a major way of interesting others - so many thanks to Michael Campbell who continues to post envy-inducing photos of a range of flowers. We are now up to 209 Likes of the page - as always, these come from all sorts of people. Recently, Hasrat Jamaldini from Pakistan liked our page, and before him Drgamal Elkholy from Egypt.

Facebook has a part to play, but it doesn't replace our website which continues to be a record of the Group's activities, with more and more information about us and what we do. Facebook can be a bit confusing,

even to experts, but I take care to make sure the website is simple to use. If you haven't looked at it yet, please do! And let me know if you have any suggestions for things you'd like to see on it.

Lastly, email. Members tell me regularly how much they appreciate the email reminders I send round about our meetings. If you don't receive emails from me, that will be because I haven't got your address. So do send it to me at [agsinfo@eircom.net](mailto:agsinfo@eircom.net), then I can add you to the email list. And if you don't have an email address, maybe a family member could receive emails for you.

## **Fixtures**

Interest in miniature gardens has been growing in recent years and indeed we have some adepts in both Irish groups. **John Dower** opens our autumn lectures on 16 October at the NBG with 'Why not make a miniature garden?'. John is an acknowledged expert on this topic and has written about it in the quarterly journal. I saw examples of his work at the East Lancashire Show in March and was hugely impressed. This lecture is a unique opportunity to hear an experienced practitioner unveil the secrets of building a beautiful miniature garden either for the showbench or to decorate your patio or balcony.

A real treat awaits us on 6 November in Stillorgan when **Brian Wood** of Murphy and Wood Garden Centre will tell us about his recent house move in a talk entitled 'Downsizing my garden'. Brian has created an absolute gem of a garden at his new home and his talk is guaranteed to be informative and entertaining. Please come along.

Our 'Alpine Weekend' in Termonfeckin runs from 14 to 16 November and this year our speakers are: **Colin Crosbie**, curator of the RHS Wisley Gardens; **Harold McBride** of the Ulster Group who needs no introduction; and **Henrik Zetterlund** of Gothenburg Botanic Garden. This is a stellar cast you will have to agree, and it is a great tribute to our Fixtures Secretary, Paddy Smith, that he managed to book all three for what promises to be one of our best weekends. Full details of the Programme and a booking form are included with your mail out. Bear in mind that members of the Ulster and Cork groups are entitled to participate and that accommodation is limited so complete the form and

send it to Mary O'Neill Byrne without delay if you want to be sure of a place.

Our final event, the Christmas Miscellany, is on **Thursday, 11 December** – note the date - and should be as convivial, entertaining and informative as usual. Jamie will be looking for contributions nearer the time and we hope to have a full house. This is a perfect occasion to reflect on the past year and to wish your fellow members the compliments of the season.

**Billy Moore**



*Pinguicula grandiflora* p. 19. Photo: Billy Moore

## Gypsophila (Caryophyllaceae)

Some species of gypsophila are excellent plants for the dry-stone wall, raised bed or rock garden. They require a limey well-drained soil and a sunny situation in the garden. Two commonplace but worthy gypsophilas are *G. cerastioides* and *G. repens*. *G. cerastioides* forms loose cushions of greyish green leaves from which emerge four inch-high stems carrying white flowers with a purple streak in late spring to early summer.

*G. repens* is a semi evergreen prostrate perennial with glaucous leaves. It produces sprays of small white, lilac or pink flowers in summer. It is an easy and most attractive plant. It should be trimmed back after flowering. It is excellent for

crevices or the tops of dry-stone walls. These two species can be propagated by seed sown immediately when ripe, by cuttings in late summer or by division of the plants after flowering.

More difficult that the foregoing are my two favorite species in this genus, *G. aretioides* and *G. aretioides* 'Caucasica'. In my view they are the top two cushion plants, making

hard domes of tiny leaves, both sparsely producing their pearl white flowers in summer. Billy Moore received an award of merit for a magnificent *G. aretioides* a number of years ago. I also got an award of merit some time afterwards for a twenty-two year old *G. aretioides* 'Caucasica'. These two are alpine house plants and, even though neither would be grown for its flowers, they make the most delightful cushions. The compost I use in the pots consists of equal parts JI 2, leafmould or peat and grit. Care should be taken when watering, ensuring that the





compost is kept moist during spring and summer, but rather



*Gypsophila aretioides* (Photo: Billy Moore)

dry, although not arid, during winter. Both kinds can be propagated by detaching rosettes in April and rooting them in a 50-50 mix of sharp sand and Perlite, placing the cuttings under the bench in the alpine house. These plants are extremely slow growing but in my estimation make superb show plants for the cushion classes.

**Liam Byrne**



## THE SHOWS

### **Ulster Group 75<sup>th</sup> AGS Show, 5 April**

The torrential rain on the drive from Dublin to Greenmount on Saturday, 5 April seemed to bode ill for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Show of the Ulster Group: visions of bedraggled exhibitors carrying equally bedraggled plants into the show hall persisted for most of the journey. But about four miles from the venue the rain began to ease, and, on arrival, stopped. So, from the outset, fortune smiled on this important milestone in the history of the Ulster Group and remained smiling throughout the day and evening.

To mark the historic occasion the Joint Rock Committee, including AGS President David Haselgrove, met in conjunction with the Show and provided six heavy hitters from across the water to augment the panel of judges, which was headed up by Ray Drew, whose efficient but unobtrusive direction saw the judging completed in record time.

Pat Crossley, the Show Secretary, and her team are to be congratulated for all the hard work that went into organizing the Show and the Joint Rock meeting, as well as the celebrations that evening to mark the anniversary. Pat has been Show Secretary for thirty-three years and the Ulster Group owe her a great debt of gratitude for her perseverance over that time. Interestingly, she is only the third person to hold that position for the seventy-five shows.

Although the number of plants on the benches was down significantly on the 2013 Show the quality of the exhibits was not, making for a display that was commensurate with such a prestigious occasion. In 2013 entries hit a record high due to the participation of a number of high profile exhibitors from England and Wales, and because the Show was much later in April. In most seasons the show held on the later date, whether in Ulster or Dublin, has more entries. While there were no exhibitors from England this year (apart from in the Artistic Section) the plants staged by visitors from Scotland and Wales made a significant contribution to the overall display.

Entries in the Artistic Section were down a bit also, and the honours went to Jon Evans for photography and Jean Morris for art, both from England, but local photographers, Joan and Liam McCaughey, fared very well also.

And so to the plants. The award for the most first prize points in the Novice Section



went to Mac Dunlop of Glenoe, Larne, as did the trophy for the best plant in that section, *Fritillaria graeca* var. *graeca*. Kay McDowell of Limavady won the Intermediate Section and her *Pulsatilla vulgaris* 'Papageno' was selected as best plant.

One would like to see

more exhibitors in these sections, as the future of the shows is dependent on new people getting involved in showing. Harold McBride can always be relied upon to have an entry in the large six-pan class in both Irish shows. His beautifully balanced AGS Medal winning exhibit included an erythronium of his own raising with upward facing flowers, *E. revolutum* 'Waverley Form' (above right). I was impressed by his large pan of *Primula* 'Peter Klein' (above) with each plant in the pot fresh and in full flower. Harold was also awarded a Silver Medal for his non-competitive exhibit entitled 'Growing Plants from Seed'. This exhibit showed clearly the path from seed, through seedlings, to a sumptuously planted trough packed with choice alpine, and should prompt visitors to the Show to think about joining the Society.



Carole and Ian Bainbridge, Edinburgh, won the AGS Medal for the small six-pan class in the Open Section, and they were also awarded the Festival of Britain (Northern Ireland) Trophy for their 3-pan entry in Class 2. Their well-flowered plant of *Saxifraga* 'Marsyandi' (below) in this entry was much admired.

Gordon Toner of Limavady received most first prize points in the Open Section. He also won the Cowan Trophy for his lovely *Gentiana acanlis*, (above) which to my eye was the most beautiful blue that I have seen in this species.

The award for the best plant in a 19cm pot went to Paddy Smith, Navan for his very floriferous *Soldanella carpatica*  $\times$  *pusilla* (below), which also was given a Certificate of Merit. Val Keegan of Bray received a Certificate of Merit for a perfect potful of *Tropaeolum azureum*. This plant was shown at the 2012 Ulster Show and was written about on that occasion. It remained







dormant last year and clearly benefitted from the holiday.

Ian Leslie's *Tulipa cretica* (photo, p.43) was given a Certificate of Merit. This delicate looking plant is surprisingly hardy and weather resistant, and is amenable to pot culture. Ian's exhibit was faultless and was considered to have a particularly nice colour. Ian is from Bangor, Wales, and exhibits regularly in Greenmount and Dublin. He had several other noteworthy plants on the benches but space does not allow me to mention them or the excellent exhibits by his compatriot, Tim Lever of Aberconwy Nursery, who along with Ian, I am glad to say, looks like becoming a regular exhibitor at the two Irish shows.

A plant that attracted a lot of attention was Susan Tindall's (Ballynahinch) gorgeous *Celmisia semicordata* subsp. *aurigans*, (below) which was judged the best plant from Australasia and got a Certificate of Merit. Susan raised her plant from seed received in 2011. This plant is a native of New Zealand's South Island growing in rocky sites in eastern and south-central Otago.



The Farrer Medal went to a yellow flowered form of *Trillium chloropetalum* (front cover) exhibited by your reporter. The type plant has been self-seeding for some years in Bob Gordon's garden in Portglenone and Bob noticed that colour variants were appearing, some with a yellowish colour. Six or seven years ago Bob gave me some seedlings suggesting that some might be yellow. In 2013 I had a fine clump with a good yellow colour in the garden and resolved to lift it for this year's show. I followed Gordon Toner's advice, given to me at the 2013 Show, by lifting and potting the plant last August, burying the pot for the winter and lifting it again in February to avoid slug and wind damage. It is a superb garden plant and was awarded an AM by the Joint Rock Committee at the Show. I was invited by the Committee to name the plant so I proposed the cultivar name 'Bob Gordon' as a small tribute to a first-rate and very generous plantsman. Yellow forms of *T. chloropetalum* have been found in the wild in parts of California near San Francisco.

This successful and enjoyable show was celebrated in fitting style by a reception and dinner in Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast, kindly hosted by Councillor Mervyn Storey MLA. There were speeches of



thanks and congratulations to everyone who helped make the 75<sup>th</sup> Ulster Show such a resounding success.

Text: Billy Moore

Photos: Heather Smith

### **Dublin Group AGS Show, 26 April**

Perhaps the most overriding impression from my first Dublin show was that, in contrast to my own frenzied activities, everyone seemed remarkably calm and the entire day was conducted with an air of relaxed tranquility that even extended beyond the official four o'clock closing time. 'This came and went with just a gradual start to the removal of exhibits - unlike the 'Le Mans' style stampede that we usually experience on my own side of the Irish Sea!

Paddy Smith won the premier award with a super potful of *Gentiana verna* (photo: p. 24) staged in the 'large – grown from seed' class, sown in the summer of 2009 and showing that, in the case of this species, seedling variation can involve a stark contrast of colours. A few white flowers intermingled with the more usual blues. These seemed to highlight the blues in much the same way that a bed of *Fritillaria meleagris* is enhanced (and much more noticeable) when interspersed with a proportion of white seedlings. Several people mentioned their delight that the award went to a plant that is native to Ireland.

Sticking with native plants and coincidentally with those raised from seed by the exhibitor – a fine example of *Pinguicula grandiflora* was shown by George and Pat Gordon. Native to the south west of Ireland, this

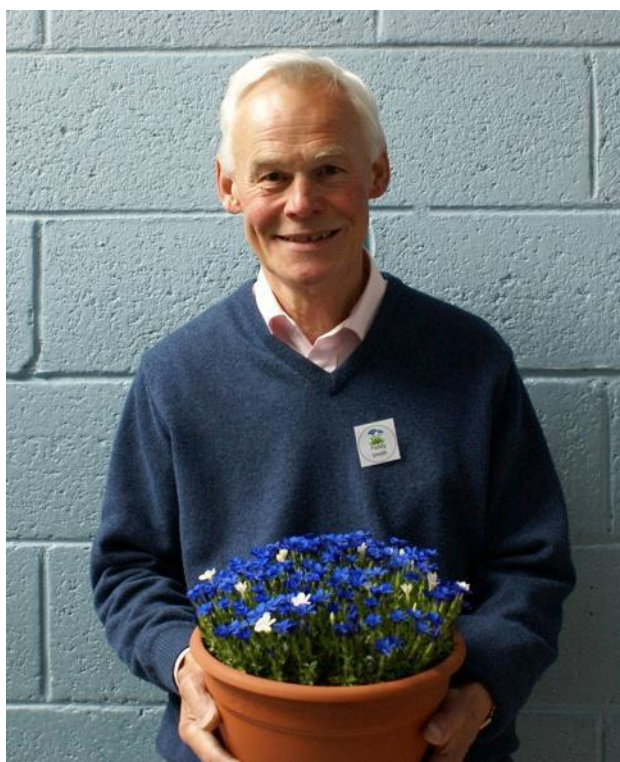


exhibit was from seed sown in January 1994, twenty years ago – a plant with staying power!

Initially sown onto sphagnum then potted into ‘old garden loam’ and covered with new sphagnum (put through the blender), it lives in a plastic pot with an inch of water in the tray at its base. It is kept outside all year apart from a brief period early in the season when taken into the greenhouse for protection prior to its duty on the showbench. It was a good panful and had already captured a good supply of fungus gnats. The exhibitors have been fortunate to see it growing wild, in a remote



area of Kerry, where there were ‘hundreds of them’ growing on open flat ground.

Three Certificates of Merit were awarded, two of them going to Tim Lever of Aberconwy Nursery. His *Sebaea thomasii* (above) had won the Farrer Medal at the Midland show two weeks earlier but was still in fine condition, impressing the Dublin judges and deserving a further accolade. Tim's second Certificate was achieved with a plant of *Petunia patagonica* (below), which was much better flowered than in previous seasons. Quite what had prompted/provoked it into such a display was

the subject of speculation and debate with the predominant theories centering on seasonal temperatures at some critical (but unclear) point during the previous year's growth cycle.



The third Certificate of Merit was awarded to Billy Moore's *Pulsatilla albana lutea* which had been pipped by the Farrer winning *Gentiana verna* but nevertheless was thought by the judges to be worthy of recognition.

My favourite in the class for Fritillaria was a pot of *F. involucrata* that struck me as being shorter and less exuberant than others I have seen. Grown by Susan Tindall from her own seed sown in 2007 (original bulbs assumed lost) in a compost of equal parts peat and grit with Osmacote slow release fertilizer. They are kept dry during the early summer months then repotted in August when watering starts again. Grown on the benching in a tunnel with rokylene/windbreak sides they are not pampered but clearly thrive. This species is one of those fritillarias that produce small bulblets (rice grains) and these are potted separately to grow on for a few years and gradually increase the stock.

As April draws towards a close, the big, blousy and gaudy Lewisias march forward for attention - I'm content with all three attributes (don't



knock them)! Declared the best of the bunch and winning the 'Margaret Orsi Bowl' for the best plant from North America was Raymond Copeland's *Lewisia cotyledon* 'Alba' (below). These large lewisias need a measured regime and can often become bloated and etiolated if overfed and short of sunlight, but Raymond's plant was a fine example of how to get the balance right.



Two of the entries in the class for plants native to North America struck me as being remarkably similar. Val Keegan had *Phlox* 'Chattahoochee' next to Gordon Toner's *Phlox divaricata* subsp. *laphamii*. Were they really different plants? Gordon subsequently enlightened me - they were indeed from the same stock and their correct (but long-winded) identifier is *P. divaricata* subsp. *laphamii* 'Chattahoochee'. Personal choice dictates how this is rendered onto the limited space of a plant label!

George & Pat Gordon won the large pan Pleione class as well as the small pan Orchidaceae, with *Pleione* 'Vesuvius' and *Pleione* 'Volcanello' (back cover) respectively. Initially I had assumed these were the same stock – since they were very similar in appearance. It was only later in the day that I registered they were sporting different (but rather similar!)

names. Since both of these are Grex names and not clonal names, it is difficult to pin down what each might be expected to look like. A quick look on the web told me that *Pleione* 'Volcanello' is (*Pleione bulbocodioides* x *Pleione* 'Soufriere'), whilst *Pleione* 'Vesuvius' is (*Pleione bulbocodioides* x *Pleione* x *confusa*). In turn, *Pleione* 'Soufriere' is (*Pleione* 'Versailles' x *Pleione* x *confusa*) and so there is clearly a fair amount of common blood between 'Vesuvius' and 'Volcanello'.

In both exhibits, the flowers were all dutifully pointing forwards – an effect that is relatively easy to achieve by repositioning the pseudobulbs just prior to the show. They have very little (if any) root at this point in their growth cycle.

George tells me he grows his Pleiones in 3 parts Verve Soil Conditioner (from B&Q) to 1 part Perlite. Whilst the exhibits were both in 'half' pots - they are normally grown in full pots - vigorous plants like 'Vesuvius' have an extensive root system and easily fill a full pot. They spend the summer in a shady part of the garden, where they receive little in the way of care except for an occasional feed.

The Intermediate section was extremely well supported with 101 plants in total and four entries in the 6 pan AGS Award class. Pat Kennedy's entry triumphed and one from the winning combination was also judged to be the best plant in the entire section. This was labelled as *Pulsatilla* 'Budapest Seedling' but most observers favoured a label of *P. albana* – it was indeed very similar to Billy's Certificate of Merit plant.

As with most shows at present, encouraging new participants is not easy but four exhibitors rose to the challenge in the Novice section with Elizabeth Ross taking three awards. Her *Aquilegia* (dwarf form) was





judged to be the best plant in that section. Perhaps the promiscuous nature of the genus was the reason why none of the judges felt moved to suggest a more precise label. I would perhaps stick my neck out and hazard a guess that *A. flabellata nana* featured prominently in its blood line.

Text: Don Peace

Photos: Billy Moore



*Gentiana verna*, p. 19. Photo: Billy Moore.

## REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

**‘Snowdrops – the delight of an Irish garden’, Paddy Tobin, January 16th.**

This talk, enjoyed by galanthophiles and non-galanthophiles alike, was timed to perfection because the snowdrop season was getting into full swing. Paddy and his wife, Mary, grow almost all the flowers that he illustrated in their garden, Gracedieu, close to the River Suir in County Waterford. The river had burst its banks not long before the talk and he showed images of the flood, which had reached well up the gateposts at the entrance to the drive. Thankfully, the snowdrop collection had not been affected.

The excellent pictures of the many snowdrops that Paddy and Mary grow were in pairs: a photograph of a clump of snowdrops in the garden, generally shot against a dark background of mulch or leaf litter, coupled with a close-up portrait of the flower. Amongst them were many good doers, such as the 'unimproved' *Galanthus nivalis* in its single and double forms, *G.* 'S. Arnott' and *G.* 'Viridapice', which should be in every garden. Surprisingly, the early flowering 'Mrs Macnamara', which is generally very vigorous, had not found 'Gracedieu' to its liking.



I could hear pencils scratching on notebook pages when Paddy turned to rare snowdrops, some of them not available in commerce, and to cultivars of Irish origin. Two extremely desirable snowdrops that had travelled across the Atlantic from west to east are *Galanthus elwesii* 'Don Armstrong', a most attractive, all white poculiform (with inner and outer petals the same length) that had been distributed from a garden in Nova Scotia and *Galanthus elwesii* 'Rosemary Burnham' one of the best cultivars with green on the outer petals, which originated in British Columbia.

Some of the rarities are distributed as a result of swaps between committed galanthophiles - Paddy still has the same number of bulbs of 'Don Armstrong' that he started with, the proceeds of the annual doubling having all gone to good homes. Others fetch astronomical prices from commercial sources. A sign of the times is the insertion in John Morley's current North Green snowdrop catalogue of a notice advising that his entire stock of *G. nivalis* 'Trimmer' (catalogue price £40 per bulb) had been stolen.

Paddy estimated that there were approximately thirty named Irish snowdrops (with several more waiting in the wings). They include familiar cultivars such as 'Straffan' (the oldest and arguably the best) and 'Hill Pöe' (a very neat double), as well as much less well-known, more recent introductions, such as Harold McBride's 'Antrym' and 'Waverley Aristocrat'. Many of them have interesting histories and people associated with their introduction. I liked Paddy's story linking the late Rita Rutherford and the distribution of 'Lady Moore'.

Let us hope that those Irish snowdrops that will be named in the future maintain the tradition of being truly distinct, so that we can be spared the plethora (plague) of names applied to cultivars, which differ in only minute details (except for price), that is currently afflicting Britain. Paddy quoted E.A. Bowles "We want to grow it and it wants to grow for us". His talk, I am sure, will promote the first part of this adage where snowdrops are concerned and the cultural advice that he provided will help us with the second part.

**George Sevastopulo**

**‘All gardening is landscape painting’, June Blake, 8 February**

AGS members enjoyed the treat of the annual lunch in Dun Laoghaire, but an even greater treat awaited them in the form of June Blake's inspiring talk on her magnificent Blessington garden. She quoted William Kent, who said, "all gardening is landscape painting", and she proved this with her superb views of her garden through the seasons, with its ever-changing tapestry of colour and texture of foliage. Her generosity with practical information on the making of the garden made her one of the most interesting of speakers.

The backdrop to the garden is her charming old steward's house, dating from 1850 and designed by a pupil of Pugin. An aerial view showed the restored farmyard and a grid system of raised flowerbeds.

The garden evolved to incorporate the Wicklow landscape, and a view was opened towards Sorrell Hill and Mullacleevaun. This was achieved by removal of trees, mainly sycamore.

A star item in the garden is the narrow rectangular pool which fabulously reflects the trees and foliage surrounding it. The pool is bordered on one side by a steep bank planted with a magnificent display of tall grasses, including *Stipa giganteum* also *Veratrum album*. On the other side is a wide colourful herbaceous border. At one end of the pool is a quirky feature – a branchless dead elm tree planted upside down!

Apart from the formality of the herbaceous borders and the raised beds, the planting is a true tapestry of colour, depending on the season. There are salvias, sambucus, *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer', *Rudebekia laciniata* – a great plant June says, paulonias and many more.

The spring display of tulips is magnificent. June has planted over a thousand tulips, mainly red colours, and adds to these each year using the same colour combinations. The new bulbs grow taller than the old ones, which are not removed.

She digs deep holes and puts 5 bulbs in each hole, and this is repeated hundreds of times over the planting area.

She grows large flowered alliums thickly, as they don't take up space. I also particularly liked the intense dark pink *Geranium* 'Mount Venus', edging a path.

There is a meadow garden too, originally a lawn, which June got fed up mowing! However, the meadow requires a lot of attention, especially in autumn when it must be raked.

This is a garden that would richly repay a visit, and one in which one would linger. Whatever the season, the rewards would be great.

**Anne Nolan**

## Show Workshop, 20 February 2014

Late February and alpine gardeners' thoughts turn to the Shows! Although many of the plants themselves still look rather bedraggled as winter turns slowly to spring, it doesn't take long for them to transform into something that just might win a place or an award at one of the AGS shows. Our own show this year was planned for April so there was plenty of time to put into practice some of the many helpful tips provided in the workshop by Val Keegan, Liam Byrne, Billy Moore and George Sevastopulo. A good number of gardeners turned out on the night, eager to learn more.

The one piece of advice common to all the experts on the night was "read the show schedule!" It's very important to know what's allowed in a certain class and what isn't, what size pan or pot can be used (and it's the outside diameter that counts), what region the plant must be from, whether it must be a species plant or not, and so on. As Billy remarked: "the show schedule is the bible..."

Val brought us through the making of a miniature garden. Remember the maximum diameter is 36cm or, if the container is square or rectangular, 1000 sq. cm. The six-month rule (for all other classes you must have owned the plant for at least six months) doesn't apply for miniature gardens and Val advised having a few spare plants on hand coming up to the show in case you need to do last minute replacements. Longevity of the garden, or at least the appearance of longevity, is always a good thing and it's good to group plants in your garden according to their preferences or habitats. The same goes for the rock types and top dressing that you use (*e.g.* don't use limestone grit to top-dress lime-hating plants!). Val also suggested checking the timing of the shows so that you can be sure you have something flowering in your garden when you put in on the bench (aquilegias are often a good bet





for our show). For a planting medium, Val suggested a mix of garden soil and grit or John Innes and grit. Blood, fish and bone meal is good as a feed. Finally, Val said that it's good to have your miniature garden 'kit' all in one place and handy and easy to use: her essentials are a fine sharp scissors, paint brush, tweezers, pencil and tiny trowel.

Liam reminded us that plants can be lifted from the garden for display on the bench. He recommended doing this at least two weeks before the show. Remember to lift only fibrous-rooted plants, not those with tap roots! And don't lift any plants you really treasure as you might lose them. He suggested primulas and ericas as being good candidates. For a re-potting medium, he suggested a mix of JI2, grit and leaf mould or peat. He said oak or beech leaf mould are particularly good, and remember to sieve it (squish/rub it through the sieve with a hammer or other blunt tool).

George brought us back to the show schedule: check the dates and decide what you want to show based on what you expect will look well on the day of the show. Our shows alternate between early and late April and remember there's always the Greenmount show too. If you're entering a plant in a flowering class, it...er... must be in flower! If you're unsure about flowering times, keep an eye on what's being sold at the shows at different times. For foliage classes, it's hard to go wrong with the Sempervivums. Other 'bankers' are the dwarf conifers, and for these it's important to remember they must be in very good shape and clean: no dead needles and in a clean pot. A top dressing of fine composted bark or pine needles is best. You should re-pot your dwarf conifers every two to three years, giving them a root pruning when you do so. Pleiones (ground orchids from SE Asia) are also in George's 'banker' category. They're showy, easy to grow and easy to propagate. Keep them in shallow pots, dry through the winter and then in early spring, divide up the pseudo-bubs/offsets into new pots, putting the biggest into your show pots. Trim back the roots to about 2cm. Grow them in a very open mix of perlite, moss and composted bark. Only when they flower should you start to water and feed them. The feeding mantra is 'weakly, weekly', with weak being defined as about 1/2 normal strength. They can

remain outside in the summer; in August, as the leaves die back, cut them off and then bring the pots under cover and keep dry for the winter. Finally, George reminded us that aesthetics are important: match the size of the plant to the pot, for example. This led nicely into Billy's part of the workshop.

Billy talked about presentation: while the plant is obviously the most important element, its presentation on the bench also plays a part. So, first of all arrive early on the morning of the show, so you're not rushed. Have your plants ready before you arrive – it's not great to be top dressing or watering them in situ! Water running out the bottom of the pot on the bench is not a good thing... Try to ensure the top dressing you use is appropriate for the plant – match the type of dressing to the plant's preferred habitat/soil conditions. Either clay or plastic pots are fine, but ensure they're clean. If you're entering a multi-pan class, make sure the display is well balanced. Labels must be horizontally displayed with the name clearly shown. Use 'butcher's pins' (available in most stationery shops) to hold the name card in place. It's not absolutely necessary to have the name of your plant; you may even request the judges to name it for you if you're unsure. Finally, remember your plant must be in excellent condition: pest-free and with no dead or dying foliage.

**Fionnuala Broughan**

### **Local Show, Workshop and Members' Plant Sale, 8 March**

There was a good attendance at the local show in St. Brigid's on a pleasant Saturday afternoon, but it is surprising that more members don't come along. This event presents an opportunity for members to see plants not normally seen at our main show in both the competitive and noncompetitive sections. Many of our best exhibitors ventured on to the show bench for the first time at a local show. The informal atmosphere makes it ideal for first time showers. There is also a section for photographs, which up to now has not attracted many entries, but provides an opportunity for members to learn the basics of exhibiting in the artistic section.

Entries in the competitive classes were down slightly on previous shows due mainly to two prominent exhibitors being away but there were plenty of fine plants on the benches.

As usual there was a very good plant sale of alpines and other plants including a selection of named snowdrop cultivars at very reasonable prices. I picked up a couple to add to my collection.

The event also provides newer members with an opportunity to get answers to any cultivation or showing problems they might have, as there are always lots of experienced and knowledgeable gardeners available. This year microscopes were provided to enable members to examine plants and plant parts in fine detail.

For the record Pat Kennedy got most points in the competitive section; Gavin Moore once again took home the watering can trophy for the best plant; and Liz Ross got the award for the best photo.

Concluding with tea and biscuits the local show provides a great opportunity for members to socialize and improve their knowledge at no cost.

**Billy Moore**

**‘A year in the life of an alpine gardener’, Diane Clement, 20 March**

I really should read the titles of our lectures more carefully. I came to Diane Clements' fine talk expecting to hear about the ebbs and flows of her garden through the seasons, and of course I did. But this was a talk about the gardener, not just the garden, so not only did we see her garden and its plants, we were given her insights into raising them, propagating them, showing them, and techniques for recording them. And beyond that, we also had an overview of Diane's work on the AGS Seed Exchange and the fantastic amount of effort and dedication involved. How she manages to fit all this into the year, as well as write an



interesting blog for the AGS (A Midland Alpine Gardener's Diary), I'd love to know.

She began with an overview of the topography of her garden and the impact that has on her growing, showing the areas of shade (tall trees), of cold (she's north-facing), illustrated perfectly by the snowline in winter, and demonstrating her awareness of the garden through the year - something we should all be able to do. Diane shared with us her recording methods: a plan of the garden is drawn in an Excel worksheet, and links are made to other worksheet tabs which hold details of the plants, with further links to pictures. She made it look easy.

We began in August with a look at *Malva moschata*, the musk mallow, but then rapidly came on to the first of Diane's two main weeds - *Cyclamen hederifolium*. Next we were in one of her three greenhouses, this one for bulbs, and being taken through her bulb repotting process, with many tips - gravel round the necks of juno irises, metal grids to stop mice from feeding. *Crocus goulimyi*, *C. nudiflorus* and her *Colchicum autumnale* all looked marvellous (with labels to track the number of bulbs). We were shown how *Pseudomuscari pallens* already has roots in growth in August, and how *M. muscarimi* sends long roots down in search of water, testament to its Mediterranean origins. Her many bulbs present Diane with quite a recording challenge, which she meets through a clever system of colour coding for easy identification of species, time of flowering, and so on.

There's of course lots of seed interest at that time of year and Diane's seed exchange work begins in earnest. The level of organization is extremely impressive, but then it needs to be, given the number of packets of seeds pouring in to the AGS. We were treated to a diversion on germinating cyclamen seeds, using the Reading Method (see the Cyclamen Society website for details) which requires adequate moisture and dark for a period of four weeks. Come winter, Diane is ensconced in the offices at Pershore, dealing with the flood of orders. The scale of this effort is hard to convey in words: suffice to say that last year Diane and her team dealt with 2,300 orders for seeds.

Into spring, and we were shown a beautiful *Hamamelis mollis*, and advised

to plant woodlanders underneath - eranthus, cyclamen, galanthus. Next Diane was sowing her own seeds, and showing us how to take leaf cuttings of *Petrocosmea cryptica*. On to the hepaticas - another self-confessed obsession of hers (and possibly the subject of her next talk to us) - and advice to take off the old leaves to avoid fungal infections, to keep shaded in summer, but not winter. Now we were looking at a truly covetable plant - *Ypsilandra thibetica*, of Chinese origin (of course) with a nice scent. But from the sublime to the ridiculous, and Diane's second worst weed was showing itself - it's hard to imagine ever minding an abundance of *Primula vulgaris*, but there you go.

Her woodland plants were glorious - erythroniums, trilliums, and my own favourite, *Sanguinaria canadensis multiplex*. But no time to enjoy these - it's time to plant out the seedlings (colour coded of course) and anticipate the variety of lewisia colours that come from seed. It's summer now, and we saw *Corydalis*, *Dactylorhiza*, and *Meconopsis*, particularly *M. punicea*, the Chinese blood-red poppy, and lilies. Throughout we saw her own showing activities - she's a fine exhibitor - and more tips, such as the use of flat-bottomed pots on capillary matting for woodland plants.

And so to the beginning of another year. This was a wonderful whirlwind of a talk, of huge variety, interest and information. Let's hope we can get her back to talk to us about her Hepaticas - or maybe the Dolomites, another love.

To anyone who has yet to use the Exchange, I urge you to try it. The 2014 - 2015 Seed Exchange will open later in the year, but you can see what has been available in the past on the main AGS website. Ordering is online, and there is a dedicated discussion group. Give it a try (but you do have to be a member of the Main AGS to participate). Diane brought a selection of seeds from the list to whet our appetites - I'm proud to say that mine were all sown within a couple of days. But then I couldn't do anything less when I saw the care and effort Diane and her team put into providing them.

**Jamie Chambers**

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## **Creative gardening with containers', Hester Forde, 10 April**

A large audience of members of the Alpine Garden Society and the Irish Garden Plant Society gathered on a pleasant spring evening for a joint meeting to hear Hester Forde speak on 'Creative Gardening with Containers'. Billy Moore introduced Hester as a marvellous plantswoman with a very practical approach. During the next hour we were treated to an entertaining and informative lecture showing a breadth and depth of knowledge about plants from a very experienced grower. Hester's insatiable appetite for plants has packed her garden, 'Coosheen', which is situated on the estuary of Cork Harbour, and she has greatly extended her seasonal displays by using containers. As well as her own garden we had the pleasure of seeing many other interesting gardens, both well known and not so well known.

Whichford Pottery near Oxford was new to me and is an obvious 'must visit' to see a large range of pots. Hester stressed the importance of investing wisely in large pots as, either on their own or planted, they can make a statement in the garden and set the scene. It is also important to spend a little more on frost proof terracotta as 'frost resistant' pots may shatter after a few years. Helen Dillon's stainless steel dustbins illustrated how unlikely containers can be very effective when appropriately planted.

A collection of small pots can also make a very effective display as seen at Great Dixter and in Beth Chatto's garden. Succulents, small hostas and even very ordinary plants were shown artistically grouped, but with a large collection Hester cautioned to be realistic about the time involved in watering, feeding and banishing pests such as slugs.

Summer containers can be used for various purposes including adding height, colour, scent or spot filling in the border. In a short summary it is impossible to do justice to Hester's extensive and unusual plant list. Here she showed combinations of dark



cannas such as 'Sunset' with dahlias including 'David Howard' and 'Moonfire', and added trailing plants all combining to give the wow factor. *Agapanthus* such as 'Mood Indigo' and 'Northern Star' are ideal for pots with salvias going on into late summer, 'Phyllis Fancy' being a really pretty one. Practical advice on over wintering, feeding and not over filling pots was all very useful.

Containers in shade had provided Hester with a solution to keeping shade loving plants in a dry sunny garden. In pots behind her garage in a north facing position she successfully grows several *Corydalis* such as 'White Knight' and *cashmeriana* along with primulas, eranthis, *Polysticum* 'Bevis' and small hostas - *H.* 'Dinner Jacket' being a favourite. *Narcissus* 'Cedric Morris' flowered here on Christmas Day and this has proved the perfect spot to grow *Anemonella thalictroides* and dicentras, often lost in the open garden.

Troughs in the sunshine are ideal to give a hot spot for bulbs that require baking, including rhodohypoxis, some fritillarias and *Pulsatilla halleri* along with cyclamen leaves to add attractive foliage. In August and September *Allium thunbergii* 'Ozawa' and *Geranium* 'Purple Pillow' add colour.

Winter/Spring pots and troughs ideally should be brought near doorways where plants can be admired at close quarters without a cold trip down the garden. Hester is a well-known galanthophile but restricted herself to naming just a few including the exquisite but expensive *Galanthus plicatus* 'E A Bowles'. Various crocus were suggested although it is important to research their individual growing requirements. This is also the ideal spot to grow choice dwarf narcissi including *N. watieri* (both white and yellow), *N.* 'Elka' and *N. minor* 'Douglas Banks' - all especially good this year.

Hester then showed us John Massey's huge collection of hepaticas in pots, many of which can be grown outside, and his innovative use of containers - she likened it to outdoor flower arranging.

We ended by enjoying pots in gardens such as Pettifers in Oxford, Great Dixter, and the Rothschild's garden among others - all, as throughout the lecture, beautifully illustrated.

Questions were lively with one unusual suggestion of the use of skateboards to move pots and prevent backache.

A well deserved thank you was given by Mary Bradshaw and this reviewer felt that the journey from the north was definitely well worth the effort. I learnt so much in such a short space of time and was completely won over to 'Creative Gardening in Containers'. Thank you Hester.

**Joan McCaughey**

**‘Cream of Alpines’ Cliff Booker, 15 May**

In thanking Cliff for his superb lecture George Sevastopulo suggested that it would have to rank among the cream of alpine talks. And so it would. It was a high-tech presentation with a musical introduction and superb photos of plants and landscapes. His wide-ranging talk was structured around his current choice of twenty ‘alpine highlights’, which included plant genera, gardens, public and private, countries and mountains. That many hours of meticulous preparation went into the presentation was evident in what came across as a seamless alpine odyssey full of interest and visual pleasure. Cliff used Apple’s presentation software, Keynote, that on the evidence of this talk is serious competition for Microsoft’s Powerpoint.

I will not attempt to cover all of Cliff’s twenty highlights but I will try to convey the breadth and variety of his talk. We spent a fair amount of time in Italy, our first visit being to the Paradisia Alpine Botanic Garden in the Gran Paridiso National Park in the north. As well as alpines (and lichens) there were many lovely hardy orchids, including one of Cliff’s favourites, the highly scented *Nigritella rubra*. Later we were treated to beautiful vistas around Lake Como along with shots of *Helleborus viridis* and various hepaticas in nearby Valmalenco. On to Gargano in Southern Italy with its lovely villages, magnificent views, more orchids, cyclamen and lots of goats. North again to the Dolomites, much visited and much loved by Cliff, with spectacular scenery and many alpines including campanulas, pulsatillas, gentians and salvias and that aristocrat of alpines, *Cypripedium calceolus*.

In the UK we had a look at Cliff's own garden, situated nearly 300m above sea level with its many troughs and choice alpines including one of his favourites, the lovely but tricky *Pulsatilla vernalis*. We also saw the new alpine house and tufa wall and a wide range of troughs at Harlow Carr, Geoffrey Smith's old stamping ground, highly recommended by Cliff. We visited the East Lancashire Show which, coincidentally, Liam, George and I attended this year, and were much impressed.

Cliff's interest in alpines started in 1984 when he visited the Liverpool Garden Festival and he established the East Lancashire Group in 1986. The members built and continue to maintain an alpine garden in Ramsbottom Civic Hall where they hold their meetings.

We saw the saxifrage collection in Waterperry Garden in Oxford noting the extensive use of tufa.

Cliff took us to the wonderful and accessible Picos de Europa with its extensive alpine flora and showed some lovely atmospheric photos of plants and landscapes.

More spectacular scenery in the French Alps above Chamonix with a sight of the lovely *Campanula scheuchzeri* and a visit to nearby Annecy.

Several locations in the US were highlighted: in Whitney Portal, California we saw *Nama rothrockii*, a lovely plant, new to me, but I can't help feeling I've heard the genus name before somewhere. In California also and in Colorado we saw that quintessential American alpine, castilleja, in variety. But the greatest interest in the US visits centered on two amazing private gardens, Anne Spiegel's in New York State and the poet, Robin Magowan's in Connecticut. The massive rockwork in the former was most impressive as was the immense range of plants with of course many North American natives including cacti. Robin's garden is very extensive, tastefully landscaped with a huge range of plants including many daphnes and paeonies. My distinct impression was that both must have cost a small fortune to build and plant.

Genera highlighted were saxifrages, gentians (*G. szechenyi* is outstanding), soldanellas, and, as a sort of running joke throughout the talk, lewisias. But, Cliff's number one genus is *Ranunculus*, and he showed a



mouthwatering series of slides of the main alpine species including what has to be the most spectacular of all buttercups, *R. semiverticillatus* from the Andes.

I hope that in this review I have managed to give a flavour of Cliff's hugely enjoyable and informative talk. I suspect we will have him back.

**Billy Moore**

### **Visit to the Dillon Garden, 7 June**

The sun deigned to put in appearance for this visit by a large group of members to the Dillon Garden, Sandford Terrace, Ranelagh, on what turned out to be a fine, warm and most enjoyable afternoon. Val Dillon welcomed us with a few inimitable anecdotes and then let us loose in the garden.

The Dillon Garden is constantly evolving – I was struck by the style of planting in blocks, a change from the last time that I was there, and the incorporation of vegetables (the carrots cleverly protected from the attentions of carrot fly by netting over the pot in which they were growing) amongst the flowerbeds. Plants, both common and rare, are used in interesting combinations to great effect. Mexican Fleabane (*Erigeron karvinskianus*) has become almost the signature plant of the garden, even being celebrated as several single plants in individual small terra cotta pots on a plant stand.

Amongst my favourite plants were the eye catching clumps of the palest yellow *Roscoeia cauleyoides* 'Kew Beauty' and purple *R. humeana* (or perhaps *R. cauleyoides*) in gravel in the front garden; the golden swags of *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* running riot through the raised beds; a large clump of the pink and white *Cypripedium reginae* (I counted over twenty flowers, all in perfect condition); and a group of fifteen or more *Arisaema ciliatum*, each with an elegant cream-striped, polished dark chocolate spathe, surmounted by a neat whorl of between ten and twenty apple green leaves.

The two green houses are home to many treasures, but lording it over them all was an *Erythrina* in full, knock-me-down, orange flower. More restrained and more of an alpine gardener's plant was the small pot of

the deliciously scented *Tulbaghia cominsii*, which reminded me of the plant that I once had and lost as a result of a foolish belief in the mildness of all Dublin winters.

After we had sated our appetite for the plants we repaired to the dining room for a welcome cup of tea and biscuits. Val had assured us that the biscuits would be very good, and they were!

**George Sevastopulo**

## **FIXTURES**

**Thursday, 16 October, 8.00 pm. John Dower,**  
‘Why not make a miniature garden?’ **Joint with IGPS, NBG, Glasnevin.**

**Thursday, 6 November, 8.00 pm. Brian Wood,**  
‘Downsizing my garden’. St Brigid’s Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

**14 to 16 November, 31st Alpine Weekend, An Grianán,**  
Termonfeckin, Co. Louth. Speakers: **Colin Crosbie, Harold McBride**  
and **Henrik Zetterlund.**

**Thursday 11 December, 8.00 pm. Christmas Miscellany.**  
St Brigid’s Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

**More details about the fixtures can be found on p. 6.**

## **OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE**

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*Tulipa cretica*, p.17. Photo: Heather Smith.



*Pleione* 'Volcanello', Photo: Billy Moore – p. 22.

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