



# THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

DUBLIN JANUARY 1986

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## THAT WAS THE WEEK-END THAT WAS

The last week-end in November saw a capacity gathering of enthusiasts once again at Termonfeckin. Our friends from across the border were present in full force.

Six lectures, a question time and a plant sale all within two short days may sound to the uninvolved to be too much of a good thing. That would be to ignore the quality and range of the talks, which covered such diverse topics as 'Alpines for Middle-brows' given by Bill Moore to Michael Upward's 'Himalayan Adventures'. Brian Wood described his natural rock garden, and, not to be outdone, Maisie Michael and John McWhirter from the North gave excellent talks on their plants.

Over three hundred plants disappeared from the plant sale within an hour. Prices were reasonable and the quality superb. Rarely if ever have I seen so many scarce alpines at a sale, and so widely distributed.

The bare facts give little idea of the 'buzz' which was characteristic of the entire week-end from the start. Many old friendships were renewed, and new ones formed.

Other events which helped greatly to cement the sociability were the raffle, John Mc Whirter's hilarious quiz, and naturally, the bar.

The organisation was so smooth that it wasn't noticed. Once more we owe a great deal to Joan for so much work so unobtrusively done.

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## SEED EXCHANGE

Unfortunately not all our ventures are so successful. Carl Dacus reports that only two promises of seeds were received this year. The exchange must therefore be abandoned this time round. This is a great pity. Many good seeds were distributed last year. Growing from seed has to be the most satisfying way of building a collection. Hopefully the seed went to the main A.G.S. seed distribution.

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## THE PARENT BODY

Our group membership scheme has been a good success and I hear that thirteen new members have joined the parent A.G.S. as a result. Funds permitting, this experiment will be repeated next year. It is hoped that eventually all the members of our group will also be members of the A.G.S.

Look out for more details in the next News-letter.

Valerie Keegan tells us what it was.

- AMOENA:.....Pleasing or Lovely.
- ARBORESCENS.....Tree-like growth.
- DECUMBENS.....Prostrate stems with ascending tips.
- GLACIALIS.....Growing in icy regions.
- LANATA.....Covered with long wooly hairs.
- MINIATA.....Colour of red lead or cinnabar.
- RETICULATA.....Netted-usually leaf veins.
- RUPICOLA.....Growing on ledges or cliffs.
- SARMENTOSA.....With long slender runners.
- TENELLA.....Delicate or Soft.
- TRIQUETRA.....Three angled (Stems)
- VILLOSA.....With shaggy hairs.

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FAVOURITE ALPINES

Some years ago the B.B.C. asked its listeners to nominate their 6 favourite rock plants. Most votes were cast for Lithodora diffusa, Aethionema 'Warley Hybrid', Saxifraga oppositifolia and Gentiana verna. The remaining plants nominated were legion in number.

Recently the I.G.P.S. asked their members to name 20 of their favourites, but remarkably did not include Alpines in the major categories covered.

This omission must be rectified, and all members are therefore asked to submit their 5 favourites, with a short pithy sentence saying why, but not describing the plants.

The results of this research will be published in the next issue, and a prize awarded for the most apt reply.

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LOOKING AHEAD

Your committee have arranged no less than eight fixtures over the next six months. These include Talks, Shows and Garden Visits. Full details are on the Fixture Card, which please retain.

Two speakers I would like to particularly mention are Howard Pfeifer and Christopher Norton.

Howard Pfeifer comes from the U.S. and has been for over two years a Director of the American Rock Garden Society. He will talk on 'Plants of the Eastern U.S.A.' on April 14th.

Christopher Norton is A.G.S. assistant Show Director and will be a judge at our main show. He is staying over the week-end and will address us on 'Showing and Growing' on Monday May 12th.

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LOOKING BACK

The American Rock Garden Society celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1984. In a special issue of their Bulletin there is an article which describes the early history of rock gardening both in Europe and North America. Can any member provide any information on early rock gardens in Ireland?

Richard Sullivan showed a magnificent pan of Phlox adsurgens, 'Waggon Wheel' at Kilruddery 1985. He now writes...

This most beautiful of Phloxes is often called Periwinkle Phlox due to its scrambling habit and the shape of its flowers. It is, alas, by no means a common plant and generated much interest at the show. The flowers are a rich salmon pink, star shaped, and are borne in corymbs at the tips of trailing stems. Each petal is ray-like and narrow with a maroon stripe near the base and a cream reverse. A succession of flowers opens over a period of nearly six weeks.

Phlox adsurgens is found in the wild at the edge of woodlands in Northern California and Southern Oregon. The clone 'Waggon Wheel' was selected by H. Crocker of Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery, Oregon.

In cultivation the plant thrives in an acid peaty soil in good light. It doesn't relish Irish Winters (Who does?) and it's wise to cover it with a pane of glass. In severe Winters it may be killed in the open, but makes an excellent pan plant for the alpine house.

Propagation is easiest from cuttings taken in July/August (but not May/June). Keep close in sharp sand for best results.

I will show a slide of the plant on February 20th.

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KILRUDDERY AGAIN

There is a fine old natural rock garden at Kilruddery which with an enthusiastic input of manpower and expertise could become a showpiece for Irish rock gardening.

The restoration could only be undertaken by a large group of twenty to thirty people willing to devote several afternoons to the work.

The project is at present at the ex oratory stage and no details have been finalised. It is envisaged, however, that a large group would spend time clearing the site. Smaller groups would then take over the planting and maintenance.

Our group would also have to donate plants, mainly round cover, and of easy cultivation.

This now requires sufficient volunteers who are willing to commit their time. It could be a very satisfying project and provide much fun. All interested please contact Ken Kinsella.

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CHRISTMAS CROCUS

C.imperati, one of the most beautiful of the species has opened its petals for me in the open garden one mild Christmas Eve. As I write, in mid December, another of the species new to me is in flower. This is C. goulimy, discovered in the South of Greece in 1955.

A most delicate beauty pervades this plant which is said to be 'easy'.

Both are best grown in the Alpine house to protect the petals from our wet and windy climate.

The Group A.G.M. will be held at Wesley House, Leeson Park on January 23rd. at 8 p.m. Nominations for the committee may be submitted to the Hon. Secretary up to 7.30 p.m. on the night. All committee members retire annually and are eligible for re-election.

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NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

Please pay your subscription promptly. It's due on January 1st., and is still only £4.

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SHOW TIME

In these dark January days members may like to recall that glorious May day in Kilruddery. Richard Sullivan and others were capturing it all for posterity, and on February 20th. a selection of slides will be shown.

The same evening will also feature our first ever Mini Show. This event is intended to act as an informal introduction to showing. Anyone who has a good looking plant is invited to bring it along. Classes will be arranged on the night, and at this time of year we do not expect to have flowering plants in great numbers, so all plants are welcome. Prizes will be awarded.

The Greenmount Show is on April 26th. Because of the lack of response last year we have not at this stage organised a coach, If, however, sufficient members contact Joan Carvill immediately a group may be arranged.

Exhibitors at Greenmount who might be interested in travelling together early in the morning of the show are invited also to contact Joan, as one of our members is willing to drive a minibus.

Our main show this year is on May 10th. For practical reasons not unconnected with the uncertainties of the Irish weather we have decided this year to stage the show at Cheeverstown House. This venue is situated on the left hand side of the Templeogue-Tallaght road just beyond Templeogue Bridge.

This is our first official show and the details will appear in the A.G.S. Yearbook. We hope to surpass even last years splendid display, and have been assured of keen support from the North. NOW is the time to plan your exhibits.

As usual there will be a plant sale in conjunction with the show, and this will be once again an opportunity to get those rarities that you read about. Last year over 1300 plants were distributed. We will again reward plant donors with vouchers and priority entry to the sale.

All enquiries regarding the shows to Ken Kinsella.

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NEWSLETTER NEWS

This newsletter is now compiled by Dermot Kehoe at 3 Rostrevor Terrace, Rathgar. Articles on rock gardening or plants are very welcome. Replies regarding 'Favourite Alpines' to above please.