

Ulster Show 2010

After the most miserable winter for many years the weather was ideal for the 2010 Ulster Show, held as usual in the splendid surroundings of Greenmount Agricultural College near Antrim, although the lateness of the season was very evident throughout the campus. The day was sunny, mild and calm providing perfect conditions for the exhibitors to transport their plants from car to show-bench. Worries that the Show would suffer as a result of the hard winter proved unfounded and the exhibits were well up to standard, although numbers were down a little.

There were significant differences in the range of plants shown as compared to 'normal' years. For example, there were no gentians or cassiopes, usually plentiful on the benches in Ireland, North and South, and several dionysias, which rarely appear, were shown. There were lots of primulas, trilliums and cyclamen, and pulsatillas were more prominent than usual. The overall display was very colourful and visiting members of the public were duly impressed, hopefully to the extent that some will want to grow alpines themselves. The number of visitors was well up due to the fine day and favourable publicity for the event.



There are two AGS Shows in Ireland each year, one in Ulster and the other in Dublin. They are always held in April, one early in the month and the other usually two weeks later, the early and late dates alternating between the two Groups. This year it was Ulster's turn for the early slot. The Groups are mutually supportive with members of each exhibiting at both Shows.

There was a warm welcome for the President, Val Lee, whose last visit to this Show was some



ten years ago when she was a popular Director of Shows. The panel of judges was drawn from members of the two Groups, plus Val, and she ensured that the whole operation ran smoothly.

Trilliums grow well in Ulster and a fine specimen of *T. chloropetalum* earned a Certificate of Merit for Gordon Toner of Limavady and was a contender for the premier award. His plant was much admired for its unusual colouring with one

observer suggesting that it had an aura of mystery about it.



The Alpines '96 award for the best plant from Australasia along with a Certificate of Merit went to Ian Leslie who had travelled from Bangor, (not Bangor, Northern Ireland but Bangor, North Wales) for a splendid specimen of *Celmisia spedenii*, grown from seed sown in 2003, a truly silver-foliaged plant. Ian has several plants of this species, all from seed, and finds that to avoid



losses the greatest care is needed when repotting.

Harold McBride received a Certificate of Merit for a magnificent large pan of a white *Primula marginata* hybrid, smothered in flowers as did your reporter for a pan of *Dionysia aretioides* 'Phyllis Carter'. Both plants were on the short list for the Farrer.

There were several specimens of *Primula* 'Broadwell Milkmaid' on the benches, all with the flowers completely covering the foliage, the most impressive of which was the plant shown by William & Hilary McKelvey, Newry. The McKelveys also showed *Benthamiella patagonica*, the genus making its first appearance on a show-bench in Ireland.



The President authorized the awarding of two Certificates of Merit in the artistic section and these went to David Lapsley for his three photos of *Pulsatilla alpina apifolia* and to Joan & Liam McCaughey for their striking picture of *Gentiana alpina*. Jon Evans, Farnham got the award for most first prize points in the photographic section and Jean Morris, Berkhamstead the prize for the same achievement in the art section.

Congratulations to Kay McDowell from Limavady who won the award for the best plant in the novice section in flower, a very nice *Androsace vandellii*. Kay also received the cup for the most first prize points in her section for the second year in a row; obviously an exhibitor to watch.

Paddy Smith, Navan, picked up the SRGC Quach for the best plant in a pot not exceeding 19cm for a sumptuously flowered *Cyclamen coum*. Paddy also received the trophy for the most first prize points in the intermediate section. I also liked his *Pulsatilla albana*.



The trophy for the best plant in the intermediate section went to a good *Androsace vandellii* exhibited by Gavin Moore, Dublin. Interestingly three plants were brought up by various judges for consideration for this award and the other two were Gavin's as well. He was also awarded the AGS Spoon for a first in class 65, six pans rock plants distinct.

Hugh McAllister won the Garratt Cup for his attractive group of three rock plants for foliage effect.



Liam Byrne, Dublin, is on track for his ninth gold bar having achieved most first prize points in the open section. His eye-catching large pan of *Erythronium californicum* 'White Beauty' was widely admired as was his well-flowered *Trillium rivale*. Liam's admirable record as an exhibitor has to be acknowledged especially given that he is effectively confined to two shows. This reporter won an AGS medal for the 19cm six pan class in the open section.



And finally to the best plant in the Show: Harold McBride, Lisburn, was a deserving winner of the Farrer Medal for his beautiful exhibit of *Pulsatilla alba*, grown from seed sown in 2002. He also had two other pasque flowers on the bench: a lovely pink *P. ambigua* x *rubra* and a white *P. ambigua* subsp. *ambigua* both also raised from seed. Harold is a committed seed sower and generously distributes many of the plants he raises to other AGS members and friends.

He also makes a large donation of seed to the exchange each year. Unsurprising then that he won the Phebe Andersen Trophy for the hotly contested Class 62, three pans rock plants raised from seed. He was also awarded the Festival of Britain (Northern Ireland) Trophy for his fine entry in Class 2, three pans rock plants distinct.

274 plants were exhibited by thirty exhibitors and Pat Crossley and her team are to be congratulated on a fine and immensely enjoyable Show.

Text: Billy Moore.

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