



# **ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY**

## **Dublin Group**



**NEWSLETTER NO. 59 – WINTER 2013**

## NOTES

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Front cover illustration is of *Meconopsis bella* (Photo: Martin Walsh) – see p. 30.  
Back Cover, Top, *Crocus sieberi* ‘Cedric Morris’, see p. 26. Bottom, Erythronium  
‘Craigton Cream’ (Photo: Ian Young) – see p. 35.

## EDITORIAL

The subject of propagation and its importance in gardening kept coming up at Termonfeckin, so some reflection on the topic seems worthwhile.

Growing plants from seed is the obvious place to start, as it gives the gardener access to a much larger range of plants at a tiny fraction of the cost of buying them. Why then do so many gardeners neglect this opportunity? Probably there are many reasons, but I suspect the main one is fear of the process, or perhaps, a view that it is too much trouble. Despite previous articles on the subject, and several demonstrations at the Local Show, which have tried to show how easy and satisfying it can be to raise plants from seed, the reluctance to do so seems to persist with many people. (The Local Show is an event where any questions that members have on any aspect of cultivation can be answered.)

An aspect of growing from seed that is not often considered was touched on by Ian Young at the 2012 weekend. Ian has found that by sowing seed taken from plants in his garden, over a few generations he often gets a strain of the species that has adapted to the conditions in his garden, and consequently performs much better than the original plant. So there's another argument for seed sowing. Also any surplus plants that you raise can be brought to the plant sale and so contribute to the Group's funds, thus helping to pay for the top lecturers that we have each year, and enabling the Committee to keep the membership fee at its current low level.

Propagation is also vital as an insurance against losing a much-loved plant. The advice is often given that as soon as one acquires a new plant it should be propagated by taking a cutting. This is excellent advice, and the rarer your new acquisition is, the more important it is to follow it. Members should always bear in mind that we pride ourselves on being a friendly, helpful Group, so anyone who wants advice or help with any gardening problem, whether propagation techniques or something else, should contact any member of the Committee, and if she or he can't help they will find someone who will.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, I would like to wish all our members the very best for 2013 and to express the hope that it will be a good gardening year, and that your plants will help you to forget the dismal economic climate we are living in, at least for a while.



## ALPINE MISCELLANY

### In This Issue

Alliums are somewhat neglected in our gardens, partly because of the bad reputation some members of the genus have for making a nuisance of themselves. George Sevastopulo has kindly contributed an article on these plants recommending some desirable species that are worth growing.

*Gentiana acaulis* is, as we all know, the emblem of the AGS, and a plant that Liam Byrne grows to perfection. Liam's article on page thirteen describes how he grows it in the garden and in pots. This is the fourteenth article that Liam has contributed to the newsletter and he is an editor's dream. I ask him if he will do an article for me, and a day or two later it pops through my letterbox. Thank you Liam.

I have written a comprehensive account of proceedings at the 29<sup>th</sup> Alpine Weekend, which I hope you will find of interest.

Many thanks to Carmel Duignan for agreeing to report on Keith Wiley's memorable talk.



Saga La Pass (Photo: Martin Walsh) – see p. 29.

***Sempervivum montanum* subsp. *carpathium* ‘Cmiral’s Yellow’**

I wrote about this plant in the last newsletter when I referred to it as 'Cmral's Yellow', the name that appeared on the Aberconwy label. I have since discovered its provenance. It is a clone of *S. montanum* subsp. *carpathium*, which was found in the wild by a Czech botanist named Otokar Cmiral. It can only be propagated vegetatively, and unfortunately it does not make new rosettes as readily as most of the genus, but it is so beautiful (I think) that it is worth persevering with. I have got another plant from Aberconwy and I will let you know how I get on with it.

### **Fixtures**

Well done to Paddy Smith, our Fixtures Secretary, for the fine programme of events that he has put together for 2013 – see p. 39. We have some really high profile speakers from overseas, and also from Ireland North and South.

You will note that all the lectures this year are in Stillorgan, so apologies to our north side members. Four talks were booked into the NBG, Glasnevin, but just before going to print we discovered that the authorities had hijacked all those dates for Ireland's EU Presidency, leaving us with no time to find an alternative north side venue.

2013 kicks off with our **AGM** on 17 January, followed by a talk from Koraley Northen entitled, 'A Little Medley of Flowers'. Koraley is a talented plant photographer and you can be sure that her talk will be visually attractive, interesting and entertaining. If you can at all, please come along that evening, as the AGM provides an opportunity for members to air their views on the Group's activities. All constructive suggestions will be given careful consideration by the Committee.

On Saturday, 26 January, there will be a **Computer Workshop** in the NBG, Glasnevin, at which Jamie will give us advice on how to make the most of some of the wonderful tools that technology has to offer the gardener, including the management of digital photos. Numbers for this event will be limited to fifteen and places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis, so if you're interested please let Jamie know well in advance at: [agsinfo@eircom.net](mailto:agsinfo@eircom.net).

Our **Annual Lunch** will be held as usual in 'the George' in Dun Laoghaire, and will be followed by a talk from Octavia Tulloch with the title 'From Castlepollard to Baba Dag: Five Years with Glorious Bulbs'. Octavia has worked in various capacities both here and in the UK, including, until recently, the management of Heritage Bulbs. We all love bulbs, and Octavia's talk will cover their use in the garden and their

origins in the wild. The lunch is always a very pleasant, sociable occasion: a nice meal, good company and a stimulating talk. A booking form is included in the mail out.

Our speaker on 21 February needs little introduction. We have heard from **Vojtech Holubec** on two previous occasions, one of them in Termonfeckin a few years ago, and all of his talks were very well received. He is a terrific speaker with huge plant hunting experience, and an excellent photographer. He is past President of the Rock Garden Club of Prague; his garden in that city has to be seen to be believed; he collects and sells seeds of rare alpine; has introduced such rarities as *Saxifraga dinnikii*; and was co-author of that wonderful book, *The Caucasus and its Flowers*. This is a rare opportunity to hear one of our modern plant explorers, who is renowned internationally, and should not be missed. He will speak on plants and landscapes of the Far East.

The **Local Show, Workshop and Members' Plant Sale** takes place on 9 March at St Brigid's. There will be practical demonstrations on showing and cultivation. Please bring along at least one plant for either the competitive or non-competitive sections of the show, as well as plants for the sale. And, don't forget the new photography classes. This is an opportunity to see good examples of early flowering alpine, such as saxifrages and hepaticas, and to pick up something rare and inexpensive from the plant stall. A show schedule is included in the mail out.

I am looking forward to hearing, on 28 March, **Liam McCaughey's** talk on 'Yunnan – in the Tibetan Marches'. Members will remember previous talks we have had from Liam, packed with information presented with great clarity and accompanied by his exceptional photographs of plants and their habitats. Liam and his wife Joan have travelled widely in the mountains of the world since their retirement, and they are both much in demand as speakers both here and in the UK. They will be the travelling speakers for the SRGC in 2013, an honour extended only to speakers of the highest calibre.

On 6 April our main public event of the year, the annual **AGS Show** will be held in Cabinteely as usual. Be sure to come and persuade your friends and neighbours to attend also. Apart from the delights on the show benches there is a unique opportunity to buy plants that cannot be had elsewhere, and to enjoy the great value refreshments on offer.

Michael Higgins has more to say about this event below.

**Christopher Grey-Wilson** is a household name in alpine circles and will talk to us on 'Pulsatillas and other Alpine Members of the Ranunculaceae' on 18 April. Christopher was editor of the AGS Bulletin from 1990 to 2011. He is the leading authority on several genera, and is the author of many books including the treasured, *The Genus Cyclamen*, and there are more, including one on Pulsatillas, in the pipeline. He is widely travelled in the mountains of Europe and Asia, and is a highly accomplished lecturer. He serves on a number of RHS committees and the Society recently awarded him a Gold Veitch Memorial Award. The capacity of St Brigid's Parish Hall should be tested for this talk.

From 19 to 22 April we are organizing a trip to **Latvia**, principally to visit the wonderland of Janis Ruksans famous bulb nursery. Full details are included in the mail out.

The **Ulster Group AGS Show** will be held in Greenmount College, Antrim, on 27 April. Each year I urge members to attend this event, if possible as exhibitors, but at least as visitors. It is a great day out with lots to see and the guarantee of a warm welcome from our northern colleagues. Remember that we depend on the participation of members of the Ulster Group for the success of our Show, and they need our reciprocation.

**George Sevastopulo** will entertain us on 9 May with a talk on his extensive travels in the region of the northern Italian lakes. Over the years George has given us many erudite talks on plants in various parts of the world, including fascinating information on the local geology. You can be sure that this talk will be no exception, and that as well as seeing beautiful plants in the wild, we will get lots of tips on growing them in our gardens.

We will visit **Frank Lavery's** garden in Donnybrook on 11 May. Frank is a life-long gardener with a keen interest in alpines, which he grows in tufa beds and walls that he has built over the past few years. He also grows trees and shrubs and other plants, and you can be sure that we will be welcomed warmly next May - and there will be some surprises. For those who wish for a guided tour please arrive by 2.30 pm.

Details of the events scheduled for the remainder of the year will be provided in the next newsletter.

**Martin Walsh**



Congratulations must go to Martin on his being selected to do a lecture tour of the western Chapters of the North American Rock Gardening Society in 2014. This is a well-deserved honour for Martin, whose reputation as a speaker has rocketed in the last few years. If you are unfamiliar with Martin's work you can read my report on his talk at Termonfeckin in 2012. It is on p. 23.

## **Gardening Courses**

Jimi Blake, the owner of the wonderful Huntingbrook Gardens near Blessington, has asked me to mention that he is offering a twenty per cent discount to members who would like to attend his excellent Plantperson's Course, which consists of twelve classes on one Sunday each month running from 17 February to 10 November 2013. This is very much a hands-on course and costs €74 per class; the yearly fee is payable in three instalments. Full details can be found on Jimi's website at [www.huntingbrook.com](http://www.huntingbrook.com).

Carl Dacus of the Dublin School of Horticulture also offers courses in gardening/horticulture, both theoretical and practical, which I know several of our members have already taken successfully. The entry-level course is the RHS Level Two Certificate in Horticulture and is internationally recognized. More information, including Carl's contact details, is available at [www.dsh.ie](http://www.dsh.ie).



*Rheum nobile* (Photo: Martin Walsh) –see p. 30.

## Facebook

Our Chairman and Webmaster, Jamie Chambers, writes:

A year ago we launched our Facebook Page, so I thought you'd be interested to know how it's going.

First off - have you visited it? If not then do take a look. Go to the AGS website ([www.alpinegardensociety.ie](http://www.alpinegardensociety.ie)) and click on the Facebook link at the bottom left. Once you're there you'll find quite a lot to see, even if you aren't a member of Facebook. It will take a little getting used to, but click around - you can't do any harm - and see what's there.

You can get a sense of who looks at our Page by seeing who Likes it. A Like means that someone has found our Page and clicked on a Like button, meaning that they were interested in, or appreciated, what they saw, and wanted us to know. There are sixty-one of those. Having done that, they will see in their own Facebook Page if there are new entries on our page. Most of those who Like us are from Ireland, of course (35), but occasionally from much further afield - recently we've had visitors from Andhra Pradesh, India and Iwate, Japan. This shows how our interests are also interesting to others.

We have also been Liked by a few organisations that have their own Facebook pages - generally nurseries such as Liscahane Nursery and

Garden Centre. I'm glad that we can share our activities with them, as it means they will perhaps take more of an interest in growing alpines themselves, and maybe even bring us members.

I now post - that is, I load up on to the Page - notices about all our lectures, meetings, and visits as 'Events', which gives you warning about upcoming fixtures. If you're a Facebook Friend of mine then I can specifically invite you so you'll get a reminder emailed to you. You can then respond to the invitation in some way - such as saying you're going to come, or posting a comment about the event. More and more, people are using their smartphones to get updates from Facebook, so this will become a great way to keep in touch with you if urgent messages need to be sent.

But the most useful part of it all for you is the ability this gives you to share things with members. Take a look at the many beautiful flower photos that Michael Campbell and others have posted, for example. Or you can put up notices yourself - about events you think we'd all be interested in, or requests to other members. Billy Moore asked on our page if anyone would write up a lecture and (to his amazement I think) got a volunteer very quickly. I put up a photo from Dermot Kehoe of a trough he had for sale (he did sell it). Gwenda Wratt let us know that she was going to bring cards to the Christmas Miscellany. Posting things - comments, photos - is very easy - you don't need to be a computer expert to do it.

As the number of our members who look at and use the Page grows, so it will become more useful still - the more people are interacting on the Page, the more interesting it becomes for everyone. We are all concerned that we need to bring more members to the Society. I think this is a great way for us to broaden our appeal and start interesting a younger generation of members.

As you'll see in the Programme next year, we're having a computer workshop on 26 January. Come along if you're interested in finding out more about getting on to our Facebook Page.

### **The Show**

From our Show Secretary, Michael Higgins:

It's that time of year once again to start thinking about our main show, which is being held on 6 April. It is an early show this year so now would be a good time to have a look at the plants in your collection, and pick one or two that might be suitable for the show bench with a bit of

TLC. Don't forget that it's not only flowering plants but also foliage plants that are suitable for showing. Maybe give them a bit of extra protection from the worst of the winter weather by placing a sheet of glass over them. Remember it is the winter wet that kills most alpine, so a little bit of extra care at this time of year can go a long way. If plants are in the ground, they could be dug up and brought into a more protective environment.

This is also a good time of year to lift and divide any herbaceous plants you might have – consider potting up a few of the divisions for the plant sale. The plant sale goes a long way towards helping with the financial needs of the society, and can only be a success with your help. But to be a really successful show, there must be plants on the show bench. I encourage those of you who have never shown before to try one or two plants in the Novice section. It is very important to get new members involved in showing to ensure the continued success, indeed, even the survival, of the Show.

Also, not forgetting the artistic section, I'm pretty certain we all have a few photos that would be worth entering into this category. If you think you have something but are not sure if it is suitable, please ask the advice of one of the committee members. The Local Show provides an ideal opportunity to obtain advice on exhibiting either plants or pictures. The Show is one of the biggest events in the alpine calendar year, but it needs the support of as many members as possible to ensure its success. So mark the date in your calendar now and let's make this the best show yet.

### **John Healy**

John was not a member but was the dearly loved son of Miriam and Dermot Healy. John died suddenly on 25 November last and our condolences go to his widow, his two children, his brother, as well as to Miriam and Dermot who are long standing members.

### **Robin Smiley 1921 - 2012**

A prominent member of the Ulster Group, Robin passed away last summer after a long illness. While unable to attend meetings in recent years Robin was well known to, and well liked by, members of the Dublin Group during the time that she and her late husband, Lex were still active.

Despite her illness Robin continued to take a keen interest in alpine affairs, north and south. She was a very knowledgeable gardener with an impish sense of humour, and we send our sincere condolences to her family.

**Michael Meagher**



We are all still shocked at the sudden passing of Michael. He died while working in his garden on 2 November last – not the worst way to go for Michael, but very tough on his family and friends. On behalf of the Group our sincere condolences go to his daughter Joan, his son Fergal, his partner, Joan and to his other relatives and friends.

Michael joined the Group when he retired in 1998, at the behest of his late wife Grainne, who thought membership would get him more involved in alpines and would be a useful distraction in his retirement. She was right. As well as growing alpines to a very high standard and having considerable success on the show bench he was also elected to the committee, subsequently becoming Chairman, a post he held with distinction.

He was an exemplary member of the Group and of the Committee taking on with enthusiasm and efficiency any task that arose and that he felt was within his competence. He was always good humoured and helpful and was very well liked among the membership.

He and Grainne were regular participants in our meetings until her death some years ago, an event that left Michael devastated. He faced up to his



loss, however, and threw himself into the affairs of the Group and I like to think that this helped him to cope with his bereavement.

As well as gardening Michael also had a keen interest in photography, not only taking pictures of plants but also of landscapes and other subjects. Sunsets were a particular obsession. DIY was another interest, but above all he was a devoted family man and, until her death put Grainne and his two children above everything. His deep friendship with Joan Meade over the last few years was a great consolation.

When his term of office as Chairman ended Michael decided to step down from the Committee but continued to help out whenever he could. Among other things, over recent years he took on the task of looking after the sale of pots to members, a job that is now vacant.

As a friend and a committed member he is greatly missed by all of us.

**Editor**

### **The Trumpet Gentian**

This is a personal record of how I grow the blue form of *Gentiana acaulis*. This gentian is my favourite plant from the large Gentianaceae family. It is understandable that this



wonderful plant is the symbol of the Alpine Garden Society.

*G. acaulis* is a native of the mountains of central and southern Europe and will be found in the Alps, Pyrenees and Cevennes up to a height of 3,000m. The name is often used for similar gentians such as *GG. clusii* and *kochiana*.

In the garden *G. acaulis* will form mats up to 30cm across. The mats are made up of lanceolate, glossy green leaves. From these rosettes arise the large trumpet shaped, deep blue flowers, green spotted within. It flowers from mid-spring to early May but can produce occasional blooms at almost any time of the year.

*G. acaulis* is best grown in the open garden. While in the wild it grows in acid soils, I find that it does well in my alkaline conditions, although I add peat and grit to the planting hole. It likes a free draining soil that never dries out and will grow in full sun or partial shade. It appreciates plenty of moisture during the growing season.

You will often hear people say that *G. acaulis* is very shy flowering. The usual advice is to move the plant around to different parts of the garden, or if you have several, try as many different sites as you can. I tried this myself without success: the plants remained almost flowerless. But then I got seed from the AGS seed exchange and to my great delight the resulting plants were very free flowering. I removed all the existing plants from the garden to avoid any cross pollination with the new strain and, to this day, I get excellent flowering from my trumpet gentians. I am now convinced that the flowering problem with *G. acaulis* is due to the fact that some clones are floriferous and some are not.

Being an avid show plant person I also grow *G. acaulis* in pots although it is far easier to grow in the garden. The compost I use is equal parts JI2, peat, leaf mould and fine grit and this gives me better results than I got from using an acid mix. If you don't have leaf mould just replace it with peat. This compost is free draining and moisture retentive. I top dress the pot with 2.5cm of grit.



*Gentiana acaulis* (Photo: Billy Moore)

I propagate my own plants from seed and by division. I sow the seed immediately it is ripe, usually in August, in clean 7cm pots in a compost of equal parts JI1 and silver sand. I firm the compost lightly, sow the seed thinly and cover it with a layer of fine grit. The seed is fine and to ensure thin sowing it helps to mix the seed with fine sand. I pot up the seedlings, which appear the following spring, into my gentian mix once the first true leaves appear. Damping off can be a problem mainly caused by over crowding, over watering and poorly drained seed compost.

To propagate by division I lift a mat in June and tease out some outer rosettes with roots, ensuring that I disturb the roots of the parent plant as little as possible. I plant up the rooted rosettes in my gentian mix and place them in shade until they are established. You will get flowering plants more quickly using this method.

Most growers buy in their gentians but miss out on the satisfaction to be had by raising their own plants. If you haven't tried to do so yourself in the past you should have a go. It is not as difficult as you may think and is easier on your pocket. Either way, given that it is our emblem, you should have this beautiful plant in your garden.

**Liam Byrne**



## Knowing your Onions

The genus *Allium* is restricted to the northern hemisphere but despite this, is the most species-rich genus of bulbs in the broad sense, with more than 500 species, ranging in size from the minute American *A. simillimum*, scarcely five centimeters high, to goliaths such as the one and a half to two meters high *A. giganteum*. Many alliums are more suited to the

perennial border or the kitchen garden than to the alpine garden, but there are numerous species which associate well with alpines and several which make good plants for the show bench.

First some words of warning: there are some species that should never be introduced into the garden, because once established they spread (some by seed, some by bulbils and some by both) and are extremely difficult to eradicate. They include those which form bulbils instead of flowers, for example *Allium vineale*, which is offered commercially as the cultivar 'Hair'. Two species that may appear harmless, but certainly are not, are *Allium ursinum* (wild garlic - a native species) and *Allium triquetrum* (the three cornered garlic - a vigorous invader).



In this article, I describe several species which I have grown, or would like to grow, and that I consider worthwhile for the alpine garden. I have set an upper limit of height of approximately twenty-five centimetres. The different species provide flower from February to November and most of those described grow best in full sun and in well drained soil. Some of them are easily obtained as bulbs, mass produced in the Netherlands; others can be found in the catalogues of specialist bulb merchants (a list of addresses is included at the end of the article) while others have to be grown from seed (the current AGS seed list has 121 entries under *Allium*).

*Allium paradoxum* ssp. *normale* from Iran is the earliest species to flower in our Howth garden. Broad, shiny green leaves appear in January and are followed by flowering stems, approximately twenty centimetres high, which carry umbels of white bell-shaped flowers, reminiscent of those of a snow flake. The plant increases slowly by division of the bulbs and more quickly (but not dangerously so in Howth) by seed.

*Allium perdulce* is a species I would like to grow. It is rare in cultivation; seed is very occasionally offered in society seed lists. It is a dwarf plant from the prairies of North Dakota to Texas, with pink flowers and, unlike most species of *Allium*, has a delightful, sweet scent. It has occasionally appeared on the show bench in Ireland.

Western North America, and particularly California, has a great diversity of small, showy alliums. The predominant flower colour is pink and species such *A. acuminatum*, *A. crispum* and *A. falcifolium* are all worth growing. My favourite is *Allium dichlamydeum*, which in the best forms has deep pink, good sized flowers that open in early summer. It is from coastal areas and may not be hardy in areas much colder than Howth.

Of the western European montane species, I like *Allium narcissiflorum* from the southwest Alps and the very similar *A. insubricum* from the mountains of northern Italy. The two can be distinguished by the orientation of the umbel of flowers, drooping in *A. insubricum* and upright in *A. narcissiflorum*. Seed in the seed lists in my experience is usually *A. insubricum*, irrespective of which name the seed packet bears. Both species make slowly increasing clumps of leaves that emerge in early summer to be followed by umbels of rich pink, bell-shaped flowers.



Relatively few alliums have yellow flowers. The most widely available species is *Allium moly* from southwest France and southeast Spain, at its best in the cultivar 'Jeannine'. It has large umbels of bright yellow flowers in early summer. It spreads vigourously by division and is good for naturalising. Much more delicate is the very variable *Allium flavum* from around the Mediterranean, which in some forms has attractive blue-grey leaves. In July, sprays of little yellow flowers dangling on long slender pedicels appear like a miniature fireworks display.

Central Asia is another centre of diversity of *Allium* spp. Many of the tall drumstick types suitable for the perennial border have their origin there. In addition there are several low growing species, such as *Allium nevskianum* from Afghanistan, which in May produces a deep reddish 12cm globe of flower on a short stem between a pair of beautiful broad, blue grey leaves. A stunning species in the same vein, which is on my wish list, is *Allium shelkovnikovii* (below) from northwest Iran. It also blooms in May and early June.



Blue flowers are not common within the genus; the most widely available blue species, *A. caeruleum* and *A. caesium*, both from Central Asia, are commonly taller than my limit. However China and the Himalayas provide three blue flowered species, *A. beesianum* (p. 17), *A. cyaneum* and *A. sikkimense*, unnecessarily confused in cultivation and in

seed lists. The most choice in my opinion is *A. beesianum*, which has narrow leaves and umbels of pure blue, cylindrical flowers in September. *A. cyaneum* is a much smaller plant with thread-like leaves and cobalt blue, star-shaped flowers, with conspicuously exerted blue stamens, in late August. *A. sikkimense* also has blue stamens but they do not emerge from the bell-shaped flowers, which open in late May and June. These Chinese and Himalayan species can cope with more water than the other species listed.

My final choice is *Allium thunbergii* from Japan, which flowers in October and November. The typical form has rose-pink flowers, with the richest colour in the cultivar 'Ozawa'. The white form (usually listed as cv 'Alba') is particularly fine.

**George Sevastopulo**

**Recommended suppliers of bulbs and seed of *Allium* spp:**

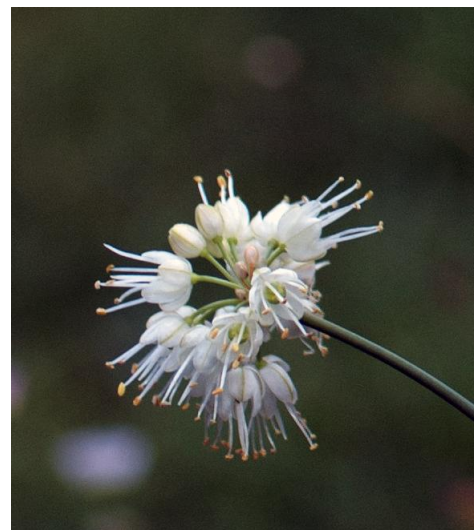
Buried Treasure, Bob & Rannveig Wallis, Llwyn Ifan, Porthyrhyd, Carmarthen, Wales SA32 8BP E-mail: [robertwallis@uwclub.net](mailto:robertwallis@uwclub.net). (No website).

Janis Ruksans Bulb Nursery (no website) P.O. Stalbe LV-4151 Cesis distr. Latvia. E-mail: [janis.bulb@hawk.lv](mailto:janis.bulb@hawk.lv).

Paul Christian RarePlants, P.O. Box 468, Wrexham, LL13 9XR, United Kingdom (website <http://rareplants.co.uk>).

Kurt Vickery, Monocot Specialist, Hill View, Shipham Lane, Winscombe, Somerset, BS25 1JU. E-mail: [kurt@kvphoto.demon.co.uk](mailto:kurt@kvphoto.demon.co.uk) (No website).

Illustrations: *Allium beesianum* and *Allium shelkovnikovii* (Photos: Robert Rolfe); *Allium thunbergii* 'Alba' (Photo: George Sevastopulo)



## REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

### **‘A Holistic Approach to Plants’,**

**Keith Wiley**, 18 October

Keith Wiley was Head Gardener and Curator at the Garden House in Devon for twenty-five years. During his time there he transformed what was already a well-known, good garden into a spectacular one – one that captured the attention of the gardening world.

When he left in 2003 he and his wife Ros bought a four-acre field in the same

village as the Garden House. Here, before they had a house to live in, they set about making a garden that is like no other. Keith Wiley is a man with a mission. He believes that in order to interest young people in gardening you have to give them their heads and release them from preconceived concepts of what a garden should be. His own inspiration comes from looking at natural landscapes and attempting to recreate them in his own garden. His explanation of this experiment in what he calls “new naturalism”, is that “by looking at the treasure trove of gardening ideas to be found in nature, from under our noses to far-flung corners of the globe; by allowing our observations of natural landscapes to inform our plantings, I believe that we can loosen the strait-jacket that



long-established horticultural practices impose, by allowing the enormous creative potential, latent within most of us, the freedom to express itself.”

To this end he set out to strip his four-acre field of its topsoil and, with a mini digger, sculpted the land into hills and valleys – sometimes going down to fifteen feet but usually around six. With these hills and bumps he not only increased his acreage from four to six, he also created conditions where he can grow tender plants and those that need cool conditions simply by planting them on the right side of the hills. He takes his inspiration from natural landscapes such as the wildflowers of South Africa, the hills of California or the canyons of Nebraska. He can grow sheets of rhodohypoxis on a sunny well-drained bank, while on the other north-facing side he plants *Shortia uniflora* side by side with the much coveted (and difficult to grow) *Primula whitei*. He grows asters with grasses, daphnes with cistus, bluebells with catmint, dahlias with trilliums and he has plans for, among other things, “canyons of Nerines and Amaryllis.”

He talks of “making plants sing, not clash”, of “the magic of grasses with the light behind them”, of looking into the face of a Livingstone daisy that “reflects the light back at you”.

Keith Wiley enthralled a large audience at the Botanic Gardens on the evening of 18 October, 2012 and, I for one, can’t wait to visit Wildside Nursery and see this wondrous garden for myself. I’m sure there were many others who have the same thought.

**Carmel Duignan**

### **‘Wild about the garden – embracing nature’, Carl Wright, 8 November**

Most unfortunately we were deprived of the pleasure of hearing Carl’s talk. Carl was staying with us, and after dinner I put the projector and stand in the boot of my car and he put his laptop, containing his talk, in also. The boot lid was closed and I looked for the car key to drive to St Brigid’s. It was not to be found and, to my embarrassment, the realization dawned that it had been locked into the boot. I did not have a spare key, so I called the AA, and despite their best efforts the boot

could not be opened (it was eventually opened by a locksmith at lunchtime the following day). The upshot was that the talk could not go ahead, and the members who had assembled in St Brigid's had to be content with tea and biscuits and a chat. My apologies to them and to Carl for the disappointment. He will be back.

**Editor**

### **29<sup>th</sup> Alpine Weekend at Termonfeckin 16 – 18 November**

Before writing this report I read over what I had written about the 28<sup>th</sup> Weekend and realized that, apart from the talks, I could have reproduced last year's report with a few minor amendments, and it would have served perfectly for a report on the 29<sup>th</sup> Weekend. But that just wouldn't do, so you are getting a completely fresh review of the 2012 event.





Rod Leeds, Martin Walsh and Ian Young (Photo: Billy Moore)

Once again it was a most enjoyable experience and the only negative feedback I got was that the vegetarian meals could have been better. The five talks were excellent and I have no doubt that each of them would get top billing at any alpine conference anywhere.

Mary O'Neill Byrne with the help of Val Keegan (Tessa Dagge unfortunately could not attend) looked after all the delegates, and the management and staff of An Grianán looked after everyone with their usual dedication. Thanks must go to Mary and Val and to the rest of the Committee for their contribution. Thanks also to Carmel Duignan and her team who looked after the plant stall; to Gwenda Wratt, who set up

and managed the stationery and *objets d'art* stall; to Nilla Martin and Marie Cunningham for the floral table pieces for the dining hall; and to everyone else who helped to ensure the success of the weekend.

There was a good attendance despite the straitened times we live in, with the usual strong support from the Ulster Group and a larger delegation than last year from Cork. Margaret and Henry Taylor from Scotland once again graced the Weekend with their presence, bringing enough free seeds, including sowing instructions, for everyone.

At the informal slide show on Friday night George Sevastopulo told us about a recent visit to Abruzzo which lies about eighty kilometers due east of Rome. We saw some lovely plants, my favourite being *Pulsatilla alba*. Liam McCaughey took us to Mendoza in Argentina which was visited by him and Joan in January 2012. The trip was led by Ger van den Beuken, who will be a speaker at Termonfeckin in 2013. Liam's photos are always superb, and, as well as wonderful plants, he showed us some amazing landscapes, beautifully photographed. Joan McCaughey followed with some of her favourite shots from the same trip as well as some from Melbourne, which they visited in March; from Janis Ruksans nursery in Latvia in April; the Burren in May; and Nepal in June. On the latter trip they saw *Primula buryana*, named after Howard Bury of Belvedere, Co. Westmeath, about whom Joan spoke so eloquently at the 2011 weekend.

After dinner on Saturday Jamie Chambers challenged us with some teasing questions in his Table Quiz which provided excellent entertainment. George Sevastopulo, as is his wont at Termonfeckin, lightened our pockets at the Auction to the benefit of the Group coffers.

Thanks to all the donors but especially to Harold McBride, who once again contributed many real treasures.

There were fewer plants at our own plant sale than usual, but the quality was high with some very good bargains to be had. Tim Lever of Aberconwy Nursery and Susan Tindall of Timpany Nursery, and our own member, Clare Beumer from Co. Tipperary, who had some lovely plants on offer, ensured that there were plants available to suit every taste and pocket.

The panel of Rod Leeds, Tim Lever, Susan Tindall, and Ian Young, chaired by Jamie, dealt expertly with our questions on Sunday morning

at the Plant Forum, which has become quite popular and will be a regular feature at future weekends.

As well as the scheduled activities and the lectures, these weekends provide a unique opportunity for delegates to share experience and knowledge not only with the speakers, but also with other very knowledgeable delegates.

The Weekend remains great value for money when one takes account of the quality of the talks, the comfort of the venue, the friendliness of the delegates and all the activities that are included. Let us hope it continues to thrive. Now to the talks.

### **Rod Leeds**

Rod's particular interest, as we know from his books, is the cultivation of bulbous plants and both of his talks dealt with this subject. (The four photos in this section are Rod's.) The title of the first was 'Winter and Spring Bulbs'. Rod gardens in Suffolk, England, on a half-acre of humus over boulder clay. It is a 'year-round' garden, and he emphasized the importance of succession planting in achieving this successfully.

Snowdrops (and Rod is a galanthophile), for example, should be grown among other plants that will fill the space when the snowdrops are gone.

He showed us a series of very desirable cultivars, my own favourite being the 'yellow', 'Ronald Mackenzie', (below), although Rod says it needs pot culture. An easier plant is 'Wasp' which Rod described as 'a delight'. 'Diggory' (p. 26) is a very distinctive cultivar with an unusual shape and puckered petals. It is vigorous, so should not be expensive. 'Straffan' is an Irish cultivar and Rod showed us how startlingly white its petals are compared to other snowdrops. Rod is Chairman of the Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee and he opposed, successfully, a recent move to deprive 'Straffan' of its Award of Garden Merit. The species snowdrop, *Galanthus krasnovii* is a late flowerer but needs a cold winter to perform well.

Rod knew the late Sir Cedric Morris, the artist and plantsman, after whom several plants have been named, including, *Crocus sieberi* 'Cedric Morris' (see back cover) and *Narcissus* 'Cedric Morris'. These are both lovely plants and easily grown. The daffodil







is particularly long flowering and the crocus flowers in December.

*Crocus tommasinianus* naturalizes readily in the garden and *en masse* makes a lovely display. Good forms are 'Pictus', 'Roseus' and 'Balkan White'. *C. malyi*, also spring flowering, is white and a good garden plant. The Winter Aconite is not as widely grown as it should be. Once established in suitable conditions it self-seeds profusely and brightens the garden in early spring.

*Eranthis hyemalis* itself is lovely, but there are a number of selections such as 'Grunling',

'Orange Glow', 'Noel Ayres', 'Schwefelglanz' and 'Hafod' that are worth seeking out. Perhaps the most celebrated *eranthis* is 'Guinea Gold' which because it doesn't set seed is fairly scarce and expensive. Another early flowerer is *Iris* 'Katherine Hodgkin' which is widely available.

Several *Hyacinthoides* and *Scilla* species are great in the garden in a sunny spot, as is *Muscari pseudomuscari*, which is small with attractive flowers.

*Cyclamen coum* in its various forms is indispensable in late winter/early spring, but *C. pseudibericum* is very good as well and is fully hardy.

*Corydalis malkensis* is easy and delightful, seeds around generously and does not outstay its welcome.

Rod showed some lovely dwarf daffodils, *Narcissus* 'Minicycla' (left) having most appeal for me, but 'Mitzzy', a *cyclamineus* hybrid is also lovely.

Fritillaries are important spring bulbs and Rod discussed seventeen species and varieties. Many require pot cultivation but some, such as *F. thunbergii*, and *F. pyrenaica* are good garden plants as, of course, is *F. imperialis*, but for the border rather than the rock garden. We also looked



at some erythroniums, with a strong recommendation for *E. californicum* 'White Beauty', about which more later, and Rod finished his fascinating talk with a few images of some fine *tropaeolum* hybrids that he has raised.

In his second talk Rod dealt with bulbs in containers. Bulbs are ideal candidates for this type of cultivation. Containers can be placed where they can be seen, and can be moved out of sight when flowering is over; pots can be placed among shrubs in the garden; and closer inspection of the flowers, and appreciation of the perfume when the flowers are scented, is made easier.

The genus *Codonopsis* offers some excellent plants for container culture – they can also, of course, be grown in the garden, allowing the climbing forms to scramble through low shrubs. Care is needed when the shoots are first emerging, as slugs love them at that stage. *C. grey-wilsonii* and its white form, ‘Himal Snow’ are excellent as is *C. convolvulacea* v. *hirsuta* but the best for Rod is *C. forrestii* (right).

Crocuses adapt very well to being grown in pots and there are many suitable species and cultivars. I like the purity and elegance of the Turkish endemic, *C. vallicola*.

*Cyclamen*, even those great garden plants, *C. hederifolium* and *C. coum* are good subjects also. *C. confusum* is now a subspecies of the former. *C. mirabile* with its pink infused new foliage is ideal. *C. rohlfsianum* which is tender must be pot grown. The pot should be submerged in water for one day in late August and given no water otherwise.

Snowdrops do very well in pots.

*Galanthus plicatus* ‘Mary Hely Hutchinson’, an Irish cultivar, flowering in October, is rare, but like the excellent *G.* ‘Godfrey Owen’, will perform well in a container. *G. reginae-olgae*, also October flowering, is actually better in a pot as is *G. elwesii* ‘Kim McIntosh’ which is tiny, and *G. e.* ‘Remember Remember’ will brighten early November. A collection of snowdrops in pots can be lovely, and interesting.

Anemonellas are long flowering and do well in pots. *Corydalis malkensis* is nice in a pot as is *Scilla melaina*. Many fritillaries need pot culture and can make a fine display. The smaller daffodils, such as *N. bulbocodium*, are good and ipheions, such as *I.* ‘Alberto Castillo’ (often appearing on the





show bench), and *I. sellowiana* (mustn't dry out and needs good light) are fine in pots.

Rod showed two lovely pots-full of a couple of Harold McBride's oxalis crosses; *O. 'Waverley Hybrid'* and *O. 'Gwen McBride'*, drawing appreciative noises from the audience.

*Tropaeolum azureum* and *T. rhomboideum* need pot culture and the latter looks well if it's allowed to trail down rather than being given a support. *Tulbaghia cominsii* is super in a pot: it is easy and long flowering. Low growing tulips like *T. aucheriana* and *T. cretica* look well in containers also, as do many alliums and colchicums.

Other candidates suggested by Rod are nerines, *Arum pictum* (smelly), *Amaryllis belladonna*, *Typhonium giganteum*, *Arisaema thunbergii* var. *urashima*, *Calanthe discolor* var. *flava* and *Lilium pumilum* with its fiery red blooms. *Narcissus 'Paperwhite'* is a classic pot plant for indoors.

On the subject of suitable containers Rod's advice was simple: "go for good ones", whether they are made of metal, clay (should be frost proof) or even concrete.

I have no doubt that the audience got lots of ideas from Rod's two excellent talks: I certainly did.

### **Martin Walsh**

'High and Low in the Himalaya' was the title Martin gave to his talk, a talk that was very well received at the Nottingham Conference in 2011, and I would refer you to his article in the April, 2011 issue of *The Alpine Gardener*, Vol. 79, no. 1. (The three photos in this section are Martin's). Martin has considerable experience of these mountains, and I think they have become almost an obsession for him. This is unsurprising given the majestic grandeur of the scenery; the huge diversity of flora – and fauna; the range of cultures; the variation in climate; and the sheer extent of the range which runs for some 2500km through Pakistan, India, including Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet. It also encompasses more than thirty peaks above 7,620m including the world's highest and third highest mountains, Qomolangma (known to you and me as Everest) and Kanchenjunga respectively. The rich flora varies from the subtropical to alpine, and includes an extraordinary and incomparable range of plants influenced to a considerable extent by the monsoon.

Martin's talk was based on eight visits to different parts of the region from 2000 to 2012. He talked about these visits and the importance of

local contacts, the crews, and the indispensable yaks that accompanied each expedition.

Martin is something of an artist with his camera, and his skill was evident from the magnificent scenic shots, the plant portraits and habitat images as well as the people, buildings and fauna. His shot of Saga La Pass brought gasps from the audience. This talk was a visual treat. Martin and his colleagues were following in the footsteps of such legendary historical figures as Hooker, Sherriff, Ludlow, Wallaston, Polunin and others.

He talked about the potential for accidents and the other challenges of these trips. We saw temples and monasteries, including the Potala Palace; some of the local populace; rice paddies; and then lots and lots of plants.

We travelled from the subtropical forest, via the cloud forest, the subalpine meadows, scrub and the alpine meadows to the alpine screes, looking at the prominent plants in each habitat. And what plants they were! I don't want this report to turn into a catalogue of Himalayan plants so I will trawl through the rich pickings and select a few that particularly appealed to me or that simply must be mentioned.





Among the woodlanders, the lovely *Streptopus simplex* (right) is Martin's favourite woodland plant. I like arisaemas and Martin recommended *A. griffithii* as a good garden plant. A real find was a pink form of *Lilium sherriffiae* (left) hitherto unknown. Among the orchids *Cypripedium himalaicum* was impressive and it's scented.

Cremanthodiums are difficult in cultivation. In the wild they protect the reproductive parts of the flower from heavy rain by holding the flowers upside down.

Among the primulas one couldn't but be impressed by the huge drifts of *P.*

*alpicola* and *P. sikkimensis*, both highly scented. Also highly scented is *P. caveana*, which grows at altitudes up to 6,100m. *P. hopeana*, (below), a plant of which I got recently, is lovely as is *P. umbratilis*. A photo of this appeared in a previous newsletter.

One of the objectives of the 2008 expedition to Bhutan was to 're-find' *Meconopsis sherriffii*, which Frank Ludlow discovered in 1949, and it was achieved.

*Meconopsis bhutanica*, Martin reckons, is the best blue poppy but is not easy. He showed terrific pictures of *M. bella* - see front cover - and *M. horridula*.

We are all familiar with *Rheum nobile* by now - Martin's photograph of it adorned the cover of newsletter no. 55 - his rather irreverent picture of the poor plant with hat and glasses is on p. 9.

*Corydalis meifolia* var. *violacea* (p. 38) is stunning and I had to include a photo of it also, although Martin was concerned that because it is a scanned slide it might not reproduce well.

Apart from the finds I've already



mentioned, Martin and his colleagues also found a new species of *Cheilanthes*, as well as *Corydalis milarepa*, which is a new species and has now been described. They also rediscovered *Meconopsis tibetica*.

Martin's superb talk was well structured, well researched, well presented and fired our imaginations as we visited these remote, and at times difficult to access mountains in his knowledgeable company.

### **Ian Young**

Ian's first talk, which he entitled 'Highland Gathering', like Martin's, was first aired at the Nottingham Conference and was highly praised there.

Again Ian's article on the talk can be found in the April 2011 Journal referenced above. (The two photos in this section are Ian's.)

The talk was something of a *tour de force* and summarized Ian's gardening philosophy and his gardening career. It was delivered fluently and authoritatively, and was based solidly on Ian's own experience and on the lessons he has learned over the years. He is a resourceful gardener, and dispensed many worthwhile tips and suggestions that will be taken up in their own gardening activities by many of his audience.

Throughout the talk Ian stressed the importance of the gardener, and believes that a garden usually dies with the owner. He is a professional artist, and sees gardening as another art form, but finds that it is easier to create a work of art on canvas than it is to do so in the garden. His objective is to create palettes of colour throughout the garden, using mixed colours more recently. But foliage is also important, as is the structure provided by trees and shrubs. Like Rod, he wants a garden for all seasons, and pays a lot of attention to succession planting so as to make optimal use of the available space.

His interest in plants started with a visit to Jack Drake's nursery in the early '70s. *Erythronium californicum* 'White Beauty' was one of his first plants and he still regards it as the best of the genus. *Celmisias* were also an early find.

Ian quoted an old highland gardener who told him years ago that "a great gardener is one who learns to grow the plants that will grow for him". Over the years he has come to realize what a wise man that old gardener was.

We all go through the acquisitive phase in gardening, when we are constantly looking for new plants, the rarer the better. (Some of us become stuck in this phase, I fear.) We have matured as gardeners when

we reach the stage that we are growing plants that, in a sense, have selected us, in other words, plants that do well in our conditions. We should never forget the simple, easy plants such as sempervivums and sedums, and, to illustrate this point, Ian showed an arresting slide of a trough with just such plants only. So, don't be a plant snob: enjoy your garden by knowing what it will grow best.

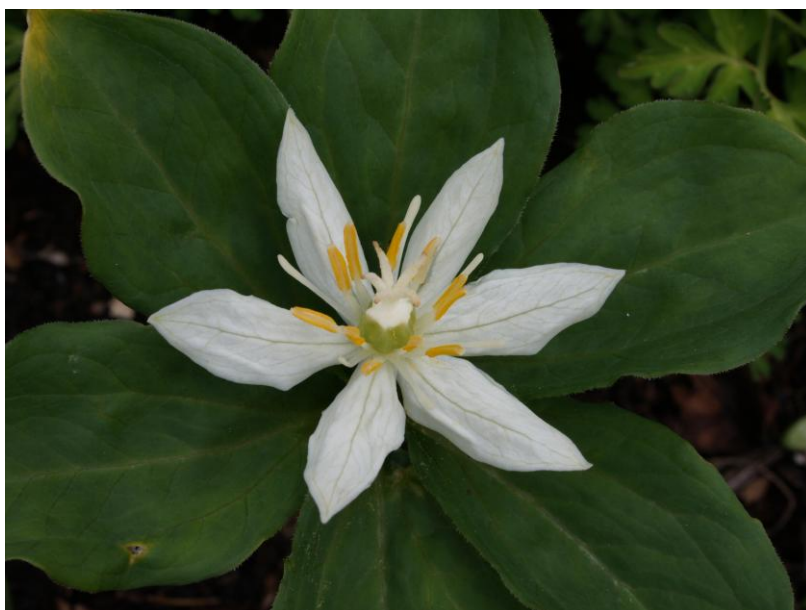
Propagation is an essential skill whether from seed or by cuttings, and Ian developed this theme throughout the talk. While he cautioned us not to take everything we read in gardening books as reliable, he said that in the early years he found that Alf Evans' book on the peat garden was an inspiration.

The books usually tell us to prick out seedlings when the first true leaves appear. Where *Meconopsis* and primulas are concerned Ian disagrees, finding that he gets far better results from potting on the pots of small seedlings, and separating them when the plants are bigger. He used this technique very successfully with the beautiful *M. delavayi* and raised hundreds of plants from seed. Recently, however, the plants are in decline due to climate change: the average summer temperature in the area has increased by one degree and this has been enough to threaten the survival of this plant in his garden.

Growing plants from seed collected in your own garden will, over several generations of the plant, give you plants that are much more suited to the conditions in your garden than the original parent. The most efficient way, of course, to increase your stock is to encourage self-seeding. In this context Ian recommends getting rid of grass and replacing it with gravel into which many plants will self-seed happily. On a visit to my garden some years ago Ian recommended that I should exchange my grass for gravel. I gave this recommendation serious consideration but met some domestic resistance. The idea hasn't gone away though.

Ian makes a lot of use of troughs made from fish boxes and other materials. These provide specialized habitats for his plants. He gets good results from inserting cuttings directly into sand in troughs and covering them in fleece.





Some plants need winter protection and Ian has constructed very useful Perspex 'hats' for this purpose. Another ingenious contraption that he has made, at hardly any cost, is a device for digitalizing slides that does an excellent job in a fraction of the time that would be

needed using an expensive commercial scanner.

He talked about the time that he and Maggi were big into showing, and were spending a lot of time carting large, heavy pots around the shows. Although they were very successful on the show bench they decided that the big pots took up too much space. They now use mostly seven centimetre plastic pots, mainly for bulbs, although Ian now plants lots of bulbs in the garden in sand beds.

Ian has been doing his world famous and highly popular bulb log each week now since January 2003, an amazing achievement. His keen observation of plant differences and his conclusions about them have been passed on to countless gardeners. The contribution that he and Maggi have made to the SRGC Forum and website is enormous.

Throughout the talk Ian showed a succession of beautiful slides of the garden and of

individual plants. He noted that people often develop a liking for a particular genus.

Ian's, as we shall see, is for erythroniums.

My favourites among the many plants we saw were the lovely *Paris japonica* (above)



and the striking *Roscoea humeana alba*.

Ian's second talk was on the genus *Erythronium*, which he loves and is quite an expert on.

He opened by showing how the genus has evolved from *Tulipa* and talked about its distribution. There are Eurasian sites and sites in eastern North America, but the most important area by far is western North America. Elmer Ivan Applegate, the 'ultimate hero' for Ian, wrote the first paper on the genus. Applegate proposed sections for the genus based on leaves.

As he indicated in his first talk, if you can grow only one species it must be *E. californicum* in the form 'White Beauty', but he has selected another form of the same species which he calls 'Craigton Beauty', and to my eye, based on the photographs, it outshines the former.

Erythroniums are not true bulbs as the parent bulb dies off each year and is replaced by new bulbs. So, is it a bulb or a corm? Ian's conclusion: "most probably a bulb".

The plants are easily raised from seed. Seed should be collected from the green stage and stored in cool, dry conditions. Sow at end August/early September, soaking the seeds overnight to rehydrate them. The seeds of the different species are distinct. For the western North American species the seed should be sown on the surface. It is not necessary to sow thinly. The young plants should be repotted in the third year after which the leaf pattern begins to develop. The aim should be to get flowers in the fifth year.

Regular repotting is essential, as the bulbs tend to burrow down, often escaping through the drainage holes. If a bulb gets broken both parts of it may grow, but one certainly will.

Most species do best in the open garden and the clump-forming ones should be split every three years.

Diagnostic characteristics in the genus are difficult to pin down as some species show wide variation in leaf, flower colour and shape and in the colour of the pollen, which is no longer considered an important diagnostic tool. Ian has studied all these characteristics over many years and is now an authority on the genus.

Ian discussed many of the species and cultivars, all illustrated with his excellent photos. The cultivars are spontaneous hybrids and Ian names the better ones. All the images were of beautiful plants and even with the limited selection I can cover here it is difficult to avoid superlatives.

As with most genera some species are easier than others but Ian has found that over generations the more difficult ones will adapt to garden conditions.

*E. revolutum* can have beautifully marked foliage and could be grown for this alone. The hybrids, 'Susannah', 'Minnehaha', and 'Craigton Cream' (see back cover) are gorgeous, especially the last, of which the scented *E. helena* is a parent. *E. multiscapoideum* is lovely and not difficult. *E. elegans* is a fine plant, better and easier than *E. montanum*.

The form of *E. toulumnense* in commerce is not great, having a disproportionate amount of foliage. There are better forms. *E. hendersonii* is highly desirable but is slow to increase.

From eastern North America, *E. americanum* is shy flowering and *E. rostratum* is nice, and it's scented.

Of the Eurasian species *E. dens canis* is closer to the eastern than the western North American species, and is a great garden plant. The pollen on this species is always purple. *E. sibiricum* and *E. japonicum* are delightful.

Ian grows his erythroniums in leaf mould and sand: they don't like moss peat. He applies some sulphate of potash when they are in growth.

This talk was a master class in the genus, and illustrated the importance of looking closely at our plants so that we can understand them better and as a result grow them better.

That was Termonfeckin 2012. Those who were there know how good it was, and I hope that my account of proceedings will give those of you who weren't a flavour of the weekend, and perhaps persuade you to participate next year when our speakers will be Ron McBeath, Ger van den Beuken and Brian Duncan.

**Editor**

### **Christmas Miscellany**

Our final meeting of the year turned out to be a very pleasant affair. The festive atmosphere was enhanced by the serving of mulled wine (non-alcoholic) and delicious mince pies, all provided by Val and Ian Keegan, who were warmly thanked for their generosity.

They were no fewer than eleven presentations, a record for this event, covering a wide range of subjects and locations.

Jamie Chambers, who had organized the event, started proceedings by reminding us of Declan Doogue's field trip to the Bull Island in May which, to our shame, was attended by just Gwenda Wratt and himself. We saw close-up images of various algae on a picnic table (nourished by bird droppings), and several orchids. Jamie himself visited the area some weeks later when there were far more orchids to be seen and strongly recommended that we should organize another Group visit soon and there was general agreement that this was a good idea.

George Sevastopulo took us to northern Italy and to the US with a whimsical presentation, linking amusing signs and other curiosities with plants. The highlight for me were some superb shots of *Daphne petraea* in the wild showing the variation in flower colour that occurs in this much admired species. He was followed by his wife, Rose, who showed some charming photos from Abruzzo of colourful groups of roadside wild flowers, landscapes, mushroom pickers and strip vegetable gardens.

We are visiting Frank Lavery's garden in May and he gave us a brief preview, outlining the evolution of the garden and particularly the recent construction of tufa walls and beds and left many in the audience looking forward to the visit. He finished with a picture of a leopard with which he had a close encounter recently in Botswana.

On a recent visit to Shrewsbury Barbara O'Callaghan stopped off at Ashwood Nursery and was lucky to find that John Massey's garden was open that day. A cloud-pruned holly hedge created a stir and Barbara's photos of the garden, its plants and sculptures were lovely. We saw some really nice saxifrages. Barbara was disappointed, however, that all the hepaticas were sold.

Patricia Maguire took us from Kerry to Italy and France and gave us a tour of some wonderful gardens including La Mortola, Serre de la Madone, the Rotschids' Garden and nearer to home the wonderful Kells Bay in Kerry, created by Billy Alexander, where the tree ferns were magnificent.

Carmel Duignan enthused about Wollerton Old Hall Garden near Market Drayton in England, which she described as very cleverly designed with great planting. Her photo of *Dahlia* 'Admiral Rawlings' impressed us all. Carmel recommended a weekend trip to see the garden, leaving on the early morning ferry for Holyhead on a Saturday and returning around midnight on Sunday, taking in Crug Farm, Aberconwy, Bodnant, and Bridgemere Nursery and Garden World, staying overnight

in Market Drayton. It could be an ideal itinerary for an organized Group trip.

Annemarie Keoghan took us to Sabah in Borneo, “a botanical paradise”. She and her husband were on a walking trip there earlier in 2012. We saw lots of plants including rhododendrons, orchids, pitcher plants and many others. The highlight of the trip was an arduous climb to the summit of Mount Kinabalu (4095m) from which there were magnificent views. The lowlight perhaps was the discovery of an Irish pub towards the end of the trip.

We are visiting Latvia in April mainly to see the famous bulb nursery of Janis Ruksans. Martin Walsh was there last year and whetted our appetites with some fine images of the nursery and its plants. *Corydalis solida* ‘Gunita’ named after Janis’ wife took Martin’s fancy.

Janet Wynne elicited admiring noises from the audience for her series of lovely images of flowering cacti.

Finally, I showed slides of a selection of plants from the two 2012 shows, and after exchanging seasonal good wishes we parted looking forward to the 2013 Programme.

**Editor**





*Corydalis meifolia* var. *violacea* (photo: Martin Walsh) – see p. 30.



*Meconopsis delavayi* (Photo: Ian Young) see p. 32.

## FIXTURES

**Thursday, 17 January, 8.00 pm. AGM**, followed by **Koraley Northen**, 'A Little Medley of Flowers'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

**Saturday, 26 January, 10.00 am – 1.00 pm. Computer Workshop.**  
NBG, Glasnevin.

**Saturday, 9 February, 12.30 for 1.00 pm. Annual Lunch**, followed by **Octavia Tulloch**, 'From Castlepollard to Baba Dag: Five Years with Glorious Bulbs'. The Royal St George Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire.

**Thursday, 21 February, 8.00 pm. Vojtech Holubec**, 'Plants and Nature of the Far East – Kamchatka, Sakhalin and Kuriles'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

**Saturday, 9 March, 2.00 pm. Local Show Workshop and Members' Plant Sale**, St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

**Thursday, 28 March, 8.00 pm. Liam McCaughey**, 'Yunnan – in the Tibetan Marches'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

**Saturday, 6 April, 1.30 – 4.00 pm. Dublin Group AGS Show.**  
Cabinteely Community School, Dublin.

**Thursday, 18 April, 8.00 pm. Christopher Grey-Wilson**, 'Pulsatillas and other Alpine Members of the Ranunculaceae'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

**Friday, 19 to 22 April, Trip to Latvia.**

**Saturday, 27 April, Ulster Group AGS Show.** Greenmount College, Antrim.



**Thursday, 9 May, 8.00 pm. George Sevastopulo,**  
*‘Nei dintorni dei laghi’* (Around the Italian Lakes). St Brigid’s Parish Centre,  
Stillorgan.

**Saturday, 11 May, 2.30 pm.** Garden Visit to **Frank Lavery**, 30  
Ailesbury Drive, Dublin 4.

**Thursday, 17 October, 8.00 pm. Brian Burrow,**  
*‘European Alpines in the Wild and their Cultivation’*. St Brigid’s Parish  
Centre, Stillorgan.

**Thursday, 7 November, 8.00 pm. David Rankin,**  
*‘A Short History of Alpines from the Big Bang to Last Week’*. St Brigid’s  
Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

**15 to 17 November, 30<sup>th</sup> Alpine Weekend,** An Grianán, Termonfeckin,  
Co. Louth. Speakers: **Ron McBeath, Ger van den Beuken, Brian  
Duncan.**

**Thursday 12 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**

|  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| <b>Chairman and Webmaster:</b>                   | <b>Jamie Chambers</b>      |
| <b>Hon. Secretary:</b>                           | <b>Mary O'Neill-Byrne</b>  |
| <b>Hon. Treasurer:</b>                           | <b>Tessa Dagge</b>         |
| <b>Show Secretary:</b>                           | <b>Michael Higgins</b>     |
| <b>Fixtures Secretary:</b>                       | <b>Paddy Smith</b>         |
| <b>Members Secretary &amp; Newsletter Editor</b> | <b>Billy Moore</b>         |
| <b>Librarian:</b>                                | <b>Anne-Marie Keoghan</b>  |
| <b>Committee Members:</b>                        | <b>Val Keegan</b>          |
|  | <b>Barbara O'Callaghan</b> |
|  | <b>Martin Walsh</b>        |



Jamie



Mary



Tessa



Val



Billy



Martin



AnneMarie



Michael



Barbara



Paddy



## NOTES



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