

Dublin AGS Show 2010

It was a warm Spring day for the Dublin AGS 25th Annual Show and while the tree buds were just opening, the hall at Cabinteely was ablaze with colour with more entries than ever and many beautiful plants on show. There seemed to be a wider range of plants than usual perhaps due to the extremely cold winter followed by a late spring. Of the two AGS Shows in Ireland, this year it was Dublin's turn to have the later date in April. There is always a friendly rivalry between the two groups and this year it was also very welcome to have entries from across the water, Wales and England, to give more of a challenge and put local competition on its mettle.



The Millennium Cup for the best plant in the Novice Section was won by Pat Kennedy, Dublin, for her *Anemonella thalictroides* 'Oscar Schoaf', and Pat also won the Termonfeckin Trophy for the most first prize points in her section. A more mature plant won an Award of Merit for Susan Tindall, Ballynahinch. Susan's beautiful exhibit is kept sheltered in a polytunnel, fortunately considering this winter, and has been chosen as background for the logo of the 'Garden Festival at Hillsborough Castle' on the 21st - 23rd May this year.



Several peonies were on show and Susan again was given an Award of Merit for her plant of *Paeonia mascula ssp russoi*, grown from seed sown in 2001. This peony is a native of Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily and the Ionic Islands and most peonies are easy from seed and quite hardy.



The perfume of daphnes permeated the whole hall and an Award of Merit went to *Daphne petraea* 'Lydora', shown by Lionel Clarkson, Blackpool, who was also a visiting judge. This daphne was introduced by Peter Erskine in 1997 and named after his two granddaughters, Lydia and Flora.



Three generations of the Moore family were at the Show and granddaughters Alice and Roisin were there to see Billy Moore, Dublin, win both the David Shackleton Trophy and the Farrer Medal for *Primula bracteata*. This plant appeared perfect from every angle, grown for four years in a mixture of one part J.I.3, one part perlite and two parts grit, and never watered from above. Billy also won the E.B. Anderson Prize for 6 pans rock plants distinct against stiff opposition.



Billy's son, Gavin Moore, has obviously inherited the family gene for growing alpines and was awarded the Waverly Trophy for his *Androsace vandellii*, best plant in the intermediate section. This is grown in a frame and time had been taken to ensure the plant was presented with perfect flowers for the showbench.



It was lovely to see Liam Byrne winning the ACC Cup for most first prize points in the Open Section - as he did last year and indeed does most years! Among his many excellent plants, *Ramonda myconi*, white form, grown from seed sown in March 1998, was a worthy winner and a true test of an experienced grower.



We are more used to seeing Keith Lever, Aberconwy Nursery, selling plants here than showing but it was no surprise that his expertise won an Award of Merit and the Margaret Orsi Bowl (best plant from North America) for *Jeffersonia dubia*. This plant is grown outside in North Wales and apparently the very cold winter this year allowed the flowers to be more obvious above the leaves.



However when it comes to growing ferns Keith's wife, Rachel, is the expert and her *Cheilanthes wootonii*, a fern with very attractive spring growth, won first prize in its section. Ruth was not there to give growing information, but apparently it is kept on the dry side over winter as one would expect from a plant from California and the west side of North America.

The Levers also got an Award of Merit for a large plant of *Vaccinium nummularium*.



There were many lovely primulae on display but the blue of *Primula x pubescens* 'Blue Timpany' caught the eye and won a first prize for Pat and George Gordon, Bangor. George noticed this plant growing in a corner at Susan Tindall's Timpany Nursery and bought it - fortunately, as he thinks Susan has since lost it. Let's hope it can be propagated and spread.



Many beautiful plants were shown by Paddy Smith, Cavan, who won the Barney Johnson Trophy (most first prize points in Intermediate Section) and among them some attractive cyclamen.



Hugh McAlister, Ulster, once again showed his skill in winning first in the class for *1 pan planted as a miniature garden*. He has often planted pans for both groups and generously donated them as

prizes and it was great to see his work recognised.

The Ulster Group Trophy (3 pans rock plants distinct raised from seed) was won by Harold McBride, the plants being of Harold's usual high standard. Unfortunately he was unable to attend the Show - unfortunate in another sense as he was originally to write the Show report and it fell into this less skilled scribe's hands at short notice.



Many more plants are worthy of note but alas time and space do not permit but they can be seen via the web.

The photographic and artistic section is always an interesting feature at the Show with a very high standard of excellence and hopefully more members will be encouraged to participate.

The Show Secretary, Val Keegan, and all her team deserve congratulations for all the work that is involved in organising a successful Show. There was great attention to detail such as the attractive little alpine floral arrangements on each 'cafe' table where public and members were treated to delicious home baked cakes.

The Members' plant stall proved a colourful entrance and the seven commercial stalls tempted everyone with good plants.



George Sevastopulo gave a practical demonstration on trough planting while both book and raffle stands were kept busy.

It was lovely to have the New President of the AGS, Mrs. Val Lee, over as a judge and so willing to talk to members after the judging, giving advice and tips to both novice and not so novice exhibitors. The emphasis was once again placed on a good plant form, in a fresh and pristine state, neatly labelled (and in a clean pot of course), rather than on rarity.

The Show came too quickly to a close and members went home tired but content after a day catching up with friends and furthering their knowledge of alpine.

Report by Joan McCaughey; Photographs Liam McCaughey