



ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY

Dublin Group



www.alpinegardensociety.ie

NEWSLETTER NO. 69 – WINTER 2018

CONTENTS

Alpine Miscellany-----	3
Watering alpine in pots by Liam Byrne-----	8
Daphnes by John Good-----	10
Review of Recent Group Events-----	17
Fixtures-----	41
Officers and Committee-----	43

Front cover illustration is of *Daphne cneorum* 'Eximia' (Photo: John Good).

This newsletter is edited by **Billy Moore** who can be contacted at 32 Braemor Park, Dublin D14 YX39. Tel. 086 8183140. Printed by **Snap Printing, Sandyford**, Tel. (01) 2958860.

ALPINE MISCELLANY

Best wishes to all our members for 2018.

My thanks to Professor John Good for kindly agreeing to write an article on daphnes for this edition of the newsletter. I think every alpine grower has an interest in this genus and will benefit from John's expertise. He will be talking to us in May about his fine garden in North Wales.

The absence of an editorial in this issue is due to space constraints.

My most loyal contributor, Liam Byrne offers us some advice on watering alpine based on his long experience of growing and showing.

My thanks to George and Triona for their reports on the talks by Julian Sutton and Neil Huntley.

Readers may remember the little photo competition that I announced in the last newsletter. The winner is Dr Willie Reardon, and the winning photo is on the back cover. Congratulations to Willie who also wins a free year's membership. The competition is now closed.

Website and Facebook page

From Jamie Chambers:

I'm delighted to say that we've begun the process of building a new website. Built over ten years ago, the current site is not as flexible as we'd like, and doesn't work well on smartphones and tablets, which is how many of you now see it. The new site will work well on all these different devices, and will give us some new capabilities too. Most importantly, it will be easier to make changes and updates. I haven't had so much time to do that recently and I'll be glad to involve others.

Some of the important new features which we'll gradually get around to using will be a blog for posting articles and updates, a members' area, and an integrated window on Facebook, so you'll be able to see the latest posts made there. It will take a couple of months to get this all in place, so we are hoping to launch it in February.

Our Facebook page continues to attract viewers. We've over 1700 likes now (from around 1400 this time last year). Billy's photos always get really good reactions and we hope he'll continue to post, and encourage others to do so too. (He will. Ed.) Our upcoming events can always be found here, as well as other posts we think you'll be interested in from the main AGS and other sites. If members have anything they'd like to see on Facebook (or the website for that matter) do let us know.

And speaking of that, the Society's contact email address is changing to info@alpinegardensociety.ie though the old address will work for a while longer. Try to use the new one if you can.

2018 Show

From Gavin Moore

In the *Winter 2017* (No. 67) issue of the newsletter I had a lengthy piece on showing, and all of it is still relevant so I will confine myself to a few exhortations. We need more exhibitors so please have a go; as I've explained it's not difficult, and once you take the plunge you won't look back. Jamie Chambers made his first serious outing on the show bench last year and came second in the top five first prize winners in the Novice Section in the entire AGS. Congratulations Jamie. Even better, Paddy Smith has only been exhibiting for a few years and in 2017 he came ninth in the top twenty Open Section first prize winners in all AGS shows. Well done Paddy, a great achievement. There will be a workshop on showing at the Local Show. We also need more visitors to the Show so please encourage family, neighbours, and friends to come along for a great afternoon. We also need good plants for the plant sale and you should look around now for possibilities; leaving it until the last minute doesn't work. We will also need helpers on the day so please let us know if you can assist. I will be twisting arms as the day approaches.

Membership fee

The Committee has decided to increase the single membership subscription to €20; student and family rates remain unchanged. Our rates have stayed at the same level for years and this increase is minimal. It has the advantage of making it easier for members to pay, as a €20

note can be popped in the post. I think it's undeniable that we offer better value than any other horticultural society in the country. While our finances are in good shape, postage rates and other costs have increased significantly.

Fixtures

We have a very full and varied programme this year (amazing value for €20!). Our thanks are due to our new fixtures secretary, Triona Corcoran, who has been doing a great job. I must also mention her predecessor, Paddy Smith, who, before he stepped down had done considerable work on 2018. Triona is now busy on the 2019 programme.

The year opens with the AGM on 18 January and the formal (short) proceedings will be followed by a talk on 'Irish wild flowers' by **Zoë Devlin**. As many of you will know Zoë is an acknowledged expert on the subject and she has received great praise for her latest book, *Blooming Marvellous: A Wildflower Hunter's Year*, which was published last October. I have no doubt that this will be an interesting and enjoyable talk and I anticipate a large attendance.

For lovers of snowdrops especially, but also for all gardeners, we have a visit on 10 February to the superb gardens, in Clonsilla and Celbridge respectively, of our members, **Emer Gallagher** and **Eileen Collins**. Our visit in 2015 was a huge success: you can read all about it in Dr Willie Reardon's fine report in the *Summer 2015* (No. 64) issue of the newsletter. The visit has to be by coach due to extremely limited parking. Full details and a booking form are in the mail out.

On Thursday, 15 February at NBG, Glasnevin, **Adam Whitbourn**, Head Gardener at Blarney Castle will tell us about the history and development of the gardens in one of Ireland's best-known tourist attractions. He will also take us around the garden while explaining the new areas and ongoing projects that have made Blarney's gardens almost as famous as its castle. This talk is joint with the **IGPS**.

Our annual lunch is on 24 February in the Royal St George Yacht Club in Dunlaoghaire. It starts at noon with a talk by **Philip Hollwey**. Philip is a part-time garden designer, and full-time gardener. His talk is based

on the making of his garden, Cromogue, in Co. Wexford. The talk has been well received by the other societies who have heard it. He opens the garden by appointment and has recently been featured in Shirley Lanigan's new book *The Open Gardens of Ireland*. He is also involved in the restoration of the walled garden at Russborough. The lunch is always an enjoyable occasion and we look forward to a good attendance.

On Saturday, 3 March at 2 pm we have the **Local Show**, workshop and members' plant sale in St Brigid's. This should not be missed by anyone interested in learning more about growing or showing alpine. It is a very informal occasion and unmissable for regular attendees. There are also good plants, including named snowdrops, for sale at very reasonable prices.

Cliff Booker is our speaker on 15 March. He will talk on 'Outstanding gardens home and away'. Cliff is a great grower, shower, traveller, photographer and lecturer. His previous talk to us was much admired and I expect that this talk will be at least as good.

On Saturday, 7 April, the **Ulster Group AGS Show** will take place in Greenmount College, Antrim. We always have a strong presence on the show bench up there. Visitors from Dublin are given a warm welcome so if you haven't been you should give it a shot: it's a great day out.

The **Dublin Group AGS Show** is on 28 April in Cabinteely and should not, under any circumstances be missed. The Show itself is a visual treat; our plant sale is always a source of good alpine; and we will have at least seven commercial plant stalls including, this year, Aberconwy Nursery. Refreshments are available throughout. As Gavin has said we need exhibitors, helpers and plants for the plant sale. Come along and bring your friends and neighbours. You and they will be delighted.

Frank Lavery has kindly invited us to visit his garden on 5 May from 2 to 4 pm. Many of you have been to Frank's garden before but as he is constantly striving to improve it there will be plenty to be seen for everyone. He now has a very fine collection of excellent plants and will let us know how he grows them. You should come.

On Saturday and Sunday, 12 and 13 May, we go west to visit the **Burren** and the wonderful garden of **Carl Wright**. Our trip two years ago was superb and everyone who participated supported the idea of going every second year. Numbers are limited to thirty; full details and a booking form are in your mail out.

John Good is coming on 24 May to talk to us about his superb garden in North Wales. John is a noted plantsman; author; a prominent member of the AGS; a much sought-after speaker; and a great gardener. He is also a very nice man. You can be certain that you will be entertained and will learn a lot from this talk.

Stephen Butler has gained much fame for his imaginative and innovative planting in Dublin Zoo. He is retiring next year so we have arranged for him to give us a guided tour of his work in the Zoo on 9 June before he departs. If you are interested just turn up at 9.30 for 10 am on the day. There will be a charge of €15 per head. Stephen has been giving this tour for some years and I have heard great things about it.

On Saturday 14 July, there is a very special opportunity for our members as we are privileged to be invited to the gardens of **Kilquade House** in Co. Wicklow. This is a unique opportunity to visit these private gardens as they are not ordinarily open to the public. There are two walled gardens: the first of these is a large naturalistic garden with a stream flowing through its centre. It has a distinct character of its own and is quite different to the other walled garden. The main walled garden has undergone major redevelopment in the past five years, and the design for this garden was created by Martin Walsh whom we can thank for the invitation. The gardens now consist of many spectacular displays, including substantial herbaceous planting schemes, colourful annual and tender perennial displays, mixed borders, a fruit and vegetable garden as well as a rose-clad pergola, a formal pond and more. Unfortunately, cars are not permitted so we have to travel by coach. A booking form is included in your mail out.

I will provide details of the autumn fixtures in the next newsletter.

Billy Moore

Watering alpiners in pots

I believe that more alpiners in pots are lost through faulty watering than through any other single cause. This not only occurs with beginners but also with experienced growers. The trick is to know when to water and how much to give: this is not easy. Pots plunged in sand need less water than free-standing pots as there is less evaporation from the sides. Plants with a lot of fibrous roots need more water than tap-rooted specimens. It is also important to know how the plant grows in the wild. For example, *Primula allionii* grows on cliff faces usually protected by a rocky overhang and therefore can survive on very little water, whereas *Trollius europaeus* often grows in standing water and hence must be kept well watered while in growth. The lesson is: know your plant!

Generally large-leaved plants are thirstier than plants with small leaves due to evaporation from the leaf surface. Likewise, evergreen plants need more water than deciduous species.

Dormant plants need very little water, but when they are in full growth they must be kept moist. Seedlings and plants in flower need plenty of water. It is often better to stand the pots in a few inches of water than to water from overhead. This ensures that the roots are kept moist while the top growth remains dry. This is essential for most high alpine and cushion plants. Woodland plants in general should never be allowed to dry out. Deep rooting plants tend to need more water than those with surface roots.

If watering is necessary in winter it should be done in the morning on a dry day. In summer water in the evening. In the alpine house a light



overhead spray is beneficial during very hot weather provided that the plants are shaded from direct sunlight.

Plants in pots are in a very artificial and vulnerable situation so attention to detail is important if they are to survive. Knowledge of how your plant grows in the wild and common sense are the most important requirements. It is often said that over watering kills plants more often than under watering and my experience tells me that this is true.

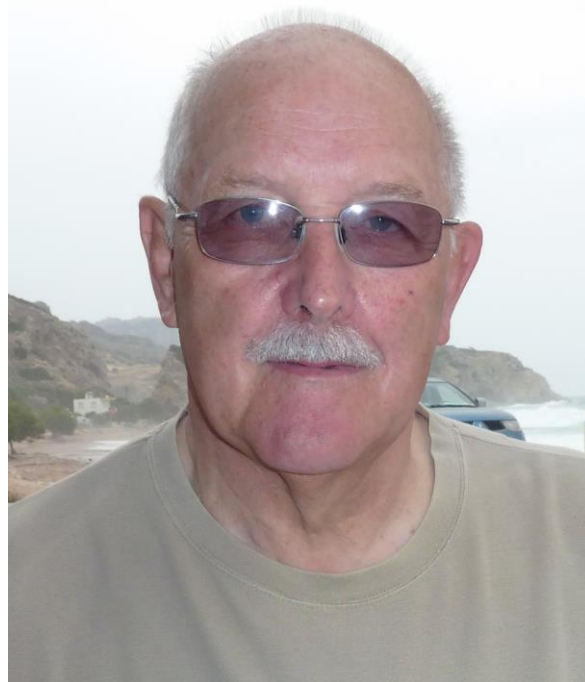
Liam Byrne



Primula allionii (Photo: Billy Moore)

Daphnes

The elusive nymph, Daphne, a daughter of the river god, Peneios, is reputed to have escaped the persistent and dishonourable attentions of Apollo only after Zeus took pity on her plight and transferred her from the animal to the plant kingdom by transforming her in mid-flight into a small tree. Alas for the legend, this plant known to the Greeks as Daphne was in fact *Laurus nobilis*, the Bay tree, whose leaves were used of old

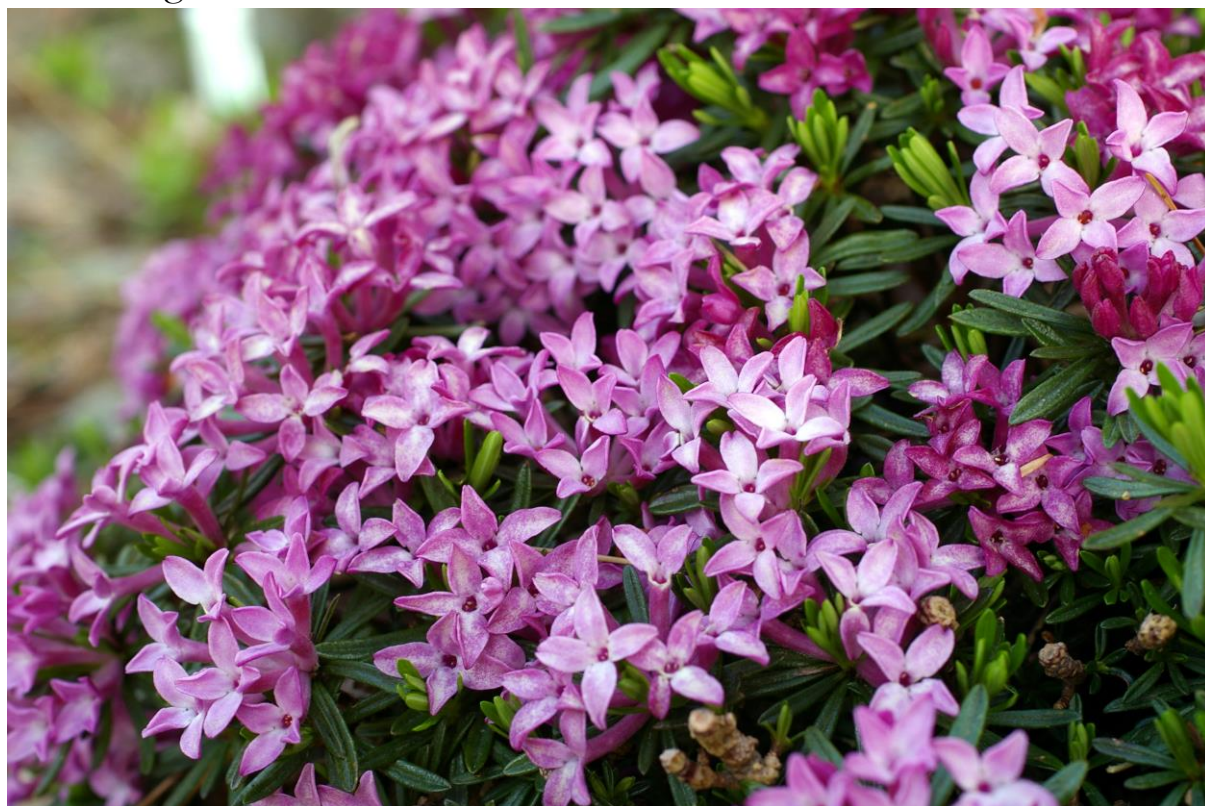


in the crowns of emperors and victorious athletes, but are now chiefly employed in a much humbler capacity for flavouring stews and other culinary delights. Never mind, the daphnes of botany and of our gardens are a wonderful tribe of much loved, mostly dwarf shrubs, especially valued by alpine gardeners who admire their generally compact growth form and undoubted beauty, enhanced by some of the most delicious perfumes in the whole plant kingdom. The fact that they have a (largely unfounded) reputation for difficulty in cultivation only enhances their appeal!

Daphnes belong to the *Thymelaeaceae*, which includes about fifty other genera, most of which are unknown to temperate gardeners as they are chiefly distributed in the African and Australasian tropics. Exceptions may be found in the genera *Thymelaea* and *Pimelea* which are also occasionally found in alpine gardens.

Most daphnes are small enough for even the tiniest garden so nobody can have an excuse for not growing at least a few. By choosing carefully, that astonishing scent may be enjoyed from the darkest days of midwinter, when the eagerly awaited Mezereon (*D. mezereum*) and *D. odora* burst into flower, through spring when most of the many species and hybrids including the much-loved Garland flower (*D. cneorum*) and

the exquisite miniatures *D. arbuscula* and *D. petraea* are at their best, until late summer when *D. acutiloba* and the closely related *D. longilobata* take centre stage.



Daphne arbuscula. (Photo: John Good)

While the Mezereon and Garland flower are easy to obtain, along with various excellent hybrids including selections of *D. × burkwoodii* (*D. caucasica* × *D. cneorum*) such as ‘Somerset’ and ‘Albert Burkwood’, others, including a range of miniature hybrids mostly involving *D. petraea* but easier to grow, such as clones of *D. × hendersonii* (*D. petraea* × *D. cneorum*) including ‘Kath Dryden’ (dark rose), ‘Rosebud’ (pale pink) and ‘Marion White’ (white) are only available from a few specialist nurserymen. A slightly larger plant (75cm x 50 cm in 10 years), and as good as any, is the *D. rollsdorfii* (*D. petraea* × *D. collina*) hybrid ‘Arnold Cilharz’, which has shiny dark evergreen foliage to complement its large, almost crystalline flowers. Larger again, but one of the very best and gradually becoming more widely available, *D. × transatlantica* (*D. caucasica* × *D. collina*) ‘Eternal Fragrance’ is very aptly named as it is hardly ever out of flower. Obtainable everywhere and a most beautiful addition to the winter garden where space permits (it will exceed 2m x 1.5 m in 10 years) is *D.*

bholua, generally available as the named selection 'Jacqueline Postill', which flowers continuously from December to March, announcing its presence from afar on a waft of delicious perfume. The albino form is much slower growing and almost as good.



Daphne bholua 'Jacqueline Postill'. (Photo: John Good)

There are many and varied suggestions in the literature for successfully cultivating daphnes, many of which are in my opinion fallacious. Most are not, as is often stated, intolerant of lime in the soil as long as the pH is not too high (>7.5). Peat or other organic matter is neither anathema to them nor essential, but is best kept to a small proportion, with mineral material, which can include such materials as ordinary garden soil, grit, crushed brick or even concrete, tufa (if you can get it) forming the bulk of the growing medium; in pots a John Innes type compost (no. 2 or 3) enhanced with plenty of added grit, perlite or other artificial drainage materials will suffice. What they will not tolerate is even short-term waterlogging or severe drought, either of which may lead to the sudden death that sometimes carries off mature specimens in a few

days. Most daphnes (unless known to be woodlanders such as *D. blagayana*, *D. laureola*, *D. odora*) are best grown in full sun, but as they do not have many fine roots it is important to cosset them a bit during establishment by watering regularly, adding liquid feed occasionally until they settle down and start to produce new roots and top growth.



Daphne 'Eternal Fragrance'. (Photo: John Good)

Apart from the sudden death syndrome which probably involves one or more soil pathogens, viruses may cause problems. Some species, notably *D. giraldii* (a yellow-flowered species), *D. mezereum*, *D. laureola* (our native Spurge laurel) and *D. odora* are prone to a range of viruses which may or may not be damaging, in the worst case perhaps leading to early death. If you suspect your plants are virused (common symptoms include reduced vigour, leaf deformity, uneven leaf coloration, early leaf senescence) you can either accept the situation, in which case the virus may be spread to uninfected plants (not only daphnes) by aphids, or you can dig up and burn the plants. Fortunately, the virus diseases attacking daphnes appear not to be seed-borne, so new plants can be raised from

seed from virused plants before perhaps destroying the parent. Do not on any account, however, vegetatively propagate from infected plants as the virus will be transmitted along with the cuttings or grafts.



Daphne \times *hendersonii* 'Kath Dryden'. (Photo: John Good)

Daphnes are undoubtedly best grown from seed when available and it is generally easy to get flowering-size plants within 2-3 years. Fresh fruits should be soaked in water overnight to remove the fleshy pericarp, which is poisonous as are all parts of the plants. Cleaned seed stored in a refrigerator at c. +4C will retain its viability for several months, perhaps longer, but it is probably best sown immediately, covering to twice its depth in compost, with a thin covering of coarse grit to reduce growth of mosses and liverworts. Any freely draining but reasonably water retentive seed compost will do. Water the pots and place them outside in a shady place and make sure they do not dry out. Germination is likely to take place in early spring and the seedlings may be potted up individually when they have the first pair of true leaves fully expanded. Plants should be well established in five inch (125mm) pots (smaller for

the miniature alpine varieties) before being planted out. Once planted it is better never to move them unless it is inevitable.

If seed is unavailable, as in the case of most hybrids, or in short supply or a particular clone is the subject, cuttings may be tried. These are best taken in late June to early July while still semi-ripe, which allows the rooted cuttings to make some top growth before the onset of winter. Trimmed cuttings are inserted in a well-drained rooting medium in a shaded propagator. Equal parts of sieved (quarter-inch) peat and Perlite works well, but any well drained but moisture retentive mixture will probably do. Rooting hormones are not strictly necessary, although I always use a liquid hormone dip, which is definitely to be preferred to powders that cannot possibly supply much hormone to the cuttings. Bottom heat is not necessary, although it may hasten rooting, but supplementary lighting will improve rooting and hasten new top growth. A simple system can be rigged up in a frame or on the glasshouse bench using fluorescent lights specially designed for enhancing plant growth. DO NOT be in a hurry to pot up rooted cuttings, they are better left in the propagator all winter than potted up too soon, when many will die. It is important that when they are potted up they grow away immediately.

Daphnes have traditionally been propagated by grafting, especially *D. petraea* which is difficult but not impossible to propagate from cuttings, but also any species or hybrid of which very limited propagation material is available. It is fun to have a go and not as difficult as some would have you think. The key requirement is a supply of seedling rootstocks onto which the scions are grafted, generally in early spring when the stocks and scions are just starting into growth, or later if needs be. *Daphne mezereum* is the most commonly used rootstock and it works well in most circumstances, even with evergreen species such as *D. petraea*, but recently I have tended to use the semi-evergreen *D. longilobata*, which regularly produces seedlings around the parent plant in our garden. There is not space here to describe the method in detail but it will be found in the 'bible' for daphne growers (White, 2006), along with much other valuable information on all aspects of daphne

selection, cultivation and propagation. Grafts should be placed in a shaded propagator until new growth is well established and the graft union swells noticeably. Again, it is better to leave well alone rather than disturbing the grafted plants too soon.

Finally, what about pruning daphnes? Well, it is not usually necessary to prune them and most growers suggest that it is best avoided if at all possible. However, if a plant grows tall and gawky, or dead wood needs to be removed, the best time to do it is in spring when the plant is growing strongly. I have pruned daphnes really hard on occasion and I have only once lost a plant by doing so. I always give the plant a good feed with a general liquid fertilizer immediately after pruning and I think this helps it to get over the shock, often with the added benefit of a celebratory flush of additional flowers.

White, R. (1996) *Daphnes: A Practical Guide for Gardeners*. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, USA

John Good

Penmaenmawr



Emu Valley Garden, Tasmania (Photo: Kenneth Cox) – see p. 26.

REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

Making sense of the Iridaceae, Julian Sutton, 20 October

Hardy members of the Dublin Group and of the Irish Garden Plant Society travelled to the 'Bots' on a wet and windy evening and were rewarded with an outstanding lecture by Julian Sutton.

Julian is a botanist turned nurseryman, who, together with his wife Sarah, runs 'Desirable Plants', a nursery in Devon with an eclectic mix of interesting herbaceous perennials and bulbs. He was a speaker at the Snowdrop Gala in Carlow last year and amongst the enticing range of bulbs that he brought

for sale after Thursday's lecture were many excellent snowdrops.

Unfortunately (fortunately according to my wife), I had neglected to bring any money with me!

Giving a lecture devoted to a particular group of plants and keeping the attention of a largely non-specialist audience is notoriously difficult.

Julian succeeded in this by discussing some interesting and in most cases garden-worthy examples of the approximately seventy genera and 1,800 species assigned to the Iridaceae, at the same time as linking their morphology to their ecology, and particularly to aspects of their pollination biology.

The Iridaceae, characterized amongst other features by an inferior ovary and sword-shaped leaves, is divided into four subfamilies, the largest two of which are Crocoidea and Iridoidea. The Crocoidea are typically cormous and the flower commonly has a long perianth tube. Although



the subfamily takes its name from the genus *Crocus*, relatively few of its members (*Crocus*, *Gladiolus* and *Romulea*) occur in Europe; its centre of diversity is in southern Africa, where it includes such well-known garden plants as *Crocasmia*, *Dierama*, *Freesia*, *Gladiolus*, *Hesperantha* (in which '*Schizostylis*' *coccinea* is now placed), *Lapeirousia*, *Romulea*, *Tritonia* and *Watsonia*. *Gladiolus* is a species-rich genus (approximately 260 species in sub-Saharan Africa), which has a wide range of flower structure, colour and scent that reflect different pollination mechanisms rather than closeness of relationship. Julian showed images of several species to illustrate this. *Gladiolus carinatus*, the Blue Afrikaner, and many other species are pollinated by large-bodied, long-tongued bees which are attracted by scent and are rewarded with nectar when they insert their tongues into the narrow perianth tube, coating their bodies with pollen as they insert their head and thorax into the flower. The audience was intrigued by the low-growing, strongly scented, cryptically coloured, *G. nysiae*, which is also pollinated by long-tongued bees. Some nice potfuls of this plant have been on the show bench at recent AGS shows. In contrast, *G. floribundus* is scentless and is an example of species with long perianth tubes pollinated by long-proboscid flies (horse flies and tangle-veined flies) whose reward is nectar. A few species, including *G. priorii*, have small almost radially symmetrical flowers with short perianth tubes and little nectar and are pollinated by worker bees which forage for pollen. *G. tristis*, which is a good (almost too good) garden plant in Ireland, is an example of several species with white or cream or dark brown flowers, that are richly scented, in some cases only in the evenings, and are pollinated by moths. Julian showed several nice hybrids that he had raised from crosses of various species with *G. tristis*. Two groups of species with bright red flowers have contrasting pollination systems. *G. splendens*, which would probably grow outside in milder parts of Ireland, is typical of a group of species that are pollinated by sunbirds, African analogues of American humming birds. The flowers are scarlet with a very long tube, lack nectar guides and are scentless. The flowering stems are robust, allowing the sunbirds to perch on them to access the copious amounts of nectar in the perianth tube with their long narrow curved beaks. By contrast, species with superficially similar

scarlet flowers except for the presence of nectar guides are pollinated by a single species of butterfly, the aptly named Mountain Pride Butterfly, which uses its long tongue to access nectar.

In the subfamily Iridoidea the storage organ is typically a rhizome or less commonly a bulb. The subfamily takes its name from the genus *Iris*; it is geographically much more widespread than the Crocoidea with numerous representatives in Europe, Asia, Africa and North and South America. Julian reconstructed the complex flower of *Iris*, the most species-rich genus, explaining how the tripartite division of the flower provides feeding stations for three individual pollinators, which are typically bumble bees looking for nectar. Interestingly, the magnificent *Oncocyclus* irises do not produce nectar and they are pollinated by male solitary bees seeking overnight shelter. Julian showed some most attractive members of the Iridoidea. I particularly liked a blue form of the Widow Iris (*Iris tuberosus*), *Tigridia vanhouttei*, which Julian grows on the rock garden, and *Herbertia lahue*, which is available from the seed exchanges and would make a nice exhibit in the Spring shows.

I hope we can entice Julian to visit us again. He would be a splendid speaker for a Termonfeckin weekend.

George Sevastopulo

Alpines with altitude, Neil Huntley, 9 November

Neil and Sue Huntley run Hartside Nursery in Cumbria. They grow many rare and unusual alpines alongside many old and reliable favourites. The nursery at 1050ft is the highest nursery in the UK. It sits in a valley and in summer is quite idyllic as it is sheltered and often sunny but, come winter, it is a frost pocket. Most of the plants are grown with little or no protection so should be able for all the vagaries of the Irish climate.

Neil and Sue arrived at St Brigid's with a wonderful selection of plants from the nursery. Such was the enthusiastic response from members that the talk didn't get started until well after eight o'clock.

Neil gave a very interesting and informative lecture supported by Sue operating the beautiful slides. He kicked off the talk with the wonderful

autumn Gentians and moved to the very desirable, summer flowering *G. syringa*. He suggested hand pollination and saving seed as it is biennial. Next came *Iris* ‘Katherine Hodgkin’, recommended for early flowering and reliability. He suggested a number of *Lewisia*s and particularly recommended *L.*



nevadensis rosea. As it dies back in winter there is nothing to rot off and so it comes back reliably in spring.

Although the plant list had over one hundred plants Neil gave us endless snippets on the history of the plants and their growers. He mentioned the Allendale saxifrages and the way in which Ray Fairbairn named the more than seventy hybrids he has introduced. For every hybrid, save the very first, ‘Kathleen’, which was named for his wife, he has used the same prefix ‘Allendale’ followed in year one with a name beginning with A such as ‘Angel’, year two all begin with B, ‘Allendale Bonny’ etc. By now he may have run out of alphabet.

Neil showed us a number of oxalis and assured us that not all of them live up to their rampant reputation. The fragrant *O.* ‘Sandy’ struck me as particularly beautiful with its crinkly foliage and purple flowers.

Among the many plants he recommended were *Cassiope* ‘Muirhead’, a heather lookalike but more compact and very tough; and *Gaultheria sinensis* quite showy with blue fruits in July. If you fancy growing a gunnera but don’t have a few acres try *G. prorepens* with leaves less than an inch across and red fruits, or *G. magellanica* which looks much more

like the well-known and invasive *G. tinctoria* but with leaves only three inches across.

Another lovely recommendation was *Codonopsis forrestii*. It is a relative of campanula and has open flowers and fine growth that twines up through other plants. He showed us a number of corydalis and recommended the hybrids like *C. 'Craigton Blue'*, raised by Ian Young, over species such as *C. flexuosa*, as being far better doers.

Mice and voles are a problem around the nursery and have been known to chew plants right back to ground level, but one plant that has benefitted from this treatment is *Phlox 'Wagon Wheels'* so don't be afraid to cut your phloxes back hard. They'll thank you for it.

Neil recommended *Iris cristata* as having a longish flowering season but also mentioned that when they use this in a display at a flower show they tie a thread around the unopened blooms and then snip off the thread just before judging. Apparently, the flowers just pop open right on cue.

Neil's father who founded the nursery was very keen on primroses and he showed us a very wide variety. Among my favourites were *P. kisoana alba* which is tough and easy to propagate; *P. 'Tantallon'* with numerous purple flowers and silvery farina; and *P. clusiana 'Murray-Lyon'*, which flowers well over many years.

Among the trilliums, *T. grandiflorum 'Snowbunting'* was the most stunning, but Neil warned us that the magnificent clump he showed us was there for 30 years. So, I'd better get planting.

Finally, Neil showed us a selection of galanthus. He claimed not to be a galanthophile but admitted to having well over a hundred varieties. My favourite was *G. 'Spindlestone Surprise'* with its elegant yellow markings. It wasn't among the varieties he had with him but it's on my wish list.

Compost mixes are always a great source of fascination and Neil did not disappoint. He is currently using a sheep's wool and bracken mix produced in the lake district by Dalefoot Composts. But nothing is ever simple, he mixes this with coarse bark and granite chippings in a ratio of 20:60:20, the Dalefoot compost being the 60% ingredient. He is very pleased with the results and maintains that plants grown in this mix last

better in the pot for a few years if he doesn't get around to repotting. Dalefoot are looking at exporting to Ireland so 'watch this space'.

We rounded off the evening with a cup of tea, compliments of Tessa, and another scrummage at the plant sale. A very enjoyable evening.

Triona Corcoran

34th Alpine Weekend at Termonfeckin, 17 to 19 November

The 2017 Alpine Weekend was well up to the usual high standard. Apart from five great lectures, this annual event is most convivial, and allows delegates the opportunity to discuss their hobby with like-minded gardeners and, indeed, with the speakers.

Barbara O'Callaghan and her team ensured that everything ran smoothly. Val Keegan managed the plant sale and Miriam Cotter from the Cork group ran the auction with great aplomb with George Sevastopulo providing technical guidance. Susan Tindall of Timpany Nurseries, Tim Lever of Aberconwy and Brian Duncan of Omagh brought a mouthwatering selection of plants which received a lot of attention over the few days.

Our thanks are due to all those mentioned and to everyone else who helped to make the weekend such a success, not forgetting Jamie Chambers who chaired proceedings with humour and efficiency, and presented his cleverly designed table quiz which is now an indispensable and enjoyable part of the weekend.

An Grianán is an ideal location for our weekend and the friendly and helpful management and staff contribute significantly to our enjoyment, so our thanks go to them as well.

We had five interesting presentations at the informal slide show on Friday evening. Heather Smith got the ball rolling with some gorgeous photographs of irises taken in SE Turkey. The plants were all beautiful but the best for me was *I. iberica elegantissima*.

George followed with some fine photos taken in northern Italy in 2016. On what has become an annual pilgrimage for George he found *Daphne petraea* in rude health, but, shockingly, when he went to visit a large

specimen of *Cypripedium calceolus* that he had photographed in 2014 with at least fifty flowers he found just a hole! He pointed out that many digital photographs have embedded location information and this can be accessed and used by unscrupulous plant thieves when posted on the web. I liked his shot of *Linaria alpina*, one of my favourite alpines, and was impressed by the image of *Trollius europaeus* in a stunning landscape.



Ian Young, Tim Lever and Ken Cox. (Photo: Billy Moore)

Liam McCaughey then took us to Australia where we visited Flowerdale (Liam's son has a house here), the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne and the Grampians. In the course of this tour we saw lovely plants including orchids, the Spider Orchid being outstanding. The Vireya Rhododendrons were also impressive. Liam showed us several species of birds including the Lyre Bird, the Blue Wren and the Eastern Spine Bill. His talents as a photographer were in evidence throughout.

The Picos de Europa proved a delight to Joan McCaughey and she gave us tantalizing glimpses of the plants, history, architecture and geology of the region. She and Liam went on the recommendation of Jamie

Chambers. The Picos is one of the most accessible European alpine regions – a short Ryanair flight from Dublin – and has much to offer the visitor. The guide written by Henry and Margaret Taylor proved very useful. The trip was a great success and Joan urged us all to consider a visit.

Ferns have been with us for 300 million years. They were popular in Victorian times during which frenzied collecting depleted the wild population. Margaret Kennedy is an inveterate fern enthusiast and grows many in her large garden in Holywood, Co. Down. There are two parts to Margaret's garden, the tame and wild areas and she grows ferns in both, as well as in pots. She has joined the British Pteridological Society and has encouraged a few other people in Ireland to join. Margaret showed us many of the ferns that she grows, including her favourite (and mine), *Dryopteris wallichiana*. I think her presentation will have encouraged many of us to look more positively at these useful and often beautiful plants.

Kenneth Cox

'Rhododendrons and Azaleas on four continents' was the first talk on Saturday morning by Ken Cox of Glendoick Nursery. I cannot imagine



a more informative presentation on any plant genus than Ken's on rhododendrons. It was delivered with consummate professionalism by someone whose deep knowledge of the genus in the wild and in cultivation was evident throughout. His family background would suggest that rhododendrons are in his blood. Both his grandfather, Euan, and his father, Peter, were plant hunters and prolific authors and Ken, who has been called 'the Scottish Indiana Jones', has followed in their footsteps. Euan was a close associate of Reginald Farrer, went plant hunting with him and wrote a book about him. The nursery at Glendoick was established in 1953 and still flourishes under Ken as Managing Director

The *Rhododendron* genus is difficult and complex. It contains around 1,000 species, 550 temperate and 450 tropical. Most come from Asia, especially the Himalayas, and North America (deciduous azaleas). The reasons for the large number of species are: isolation; evolution; and hybridizing. They grow from about 2,000 to 4,000 metres and we saw several images of the plants in the wild in various parts of the world. We saw a nice shot of *R. arboreum* in Kilmacurragh with Seamus O'Brien (above).

Rhododendrons are grown for decorative foliage (*R. bureavii*; *R. pachysanthum*), some with attractive indumentum underneath, coloured bark (*R. thompsonii*), and of course flowers, some of which are scented (Fortunea series). There are dwarf forms such as *R. forrestii* and *R. primuliiflora*.

Many dwarf hybrids have been bred at Glendoick like 'Curlew', 'Plover', 'Egret', 'Wheatear', 'Brambling' etc. A particularly nice one is *R.*



‘Tinkerbird’ with white scented flowers (above). The hybridizing programme is long-term.

R. ‘Graziella’ is a very nice narrow leaved form and R. ‘Viking Silver’ has striking silver foliage. The red leaved forms, ‘Everred’, ‘Wine & Roses’ are attractive. R. *augustinii* is typical of the small-leaved Triflora section.

Rhododendrons are not difficult from seed, which is tiny, but may need some bottom heat. Only wild seed should be used.

The deciduous azaleas mostly from North America are great plants with bright flowers and good autumn foliage. The species are better than the hybrids which can be gaudy. R. *luteum* from Turkey is one of the best for scent and autumn colour. The Japanese azaleas are quite different being evergreen with smaller less flamboyant flowers. Glendoick has bred many hybrids of these, named after mammals, such as ‘Panda’, ‘Wombat’ etc.

Ken showed a number of shots of Rhododendron and Azalea gardens all of which were colourful, some perhaps too colourful. In Tatton Park the bright colours are softened by an abundance of green on surrounding plants.

The Vireya rhododendrons from Malaysia and Indonesia are beautiful but need frost-free conditions. There are about a hundred species, many scented.

R. *yakushimanum* is a fine plant and the parent of many hybrids. For me, a good form of the species is hard to beat but some of the hybrids, especially the newer ones, are very good.

To grow well, rhododendrons need acid soil; moist conditions but good drainage; and plenty of light. If you have limy soil they can be grown in raised beds or containers in suitable compost. Most are amenable to quite severe cutting back if they become too big. Apart from those with peeling bark they rejuvenate well. There are some very good rhododendron gardens such as Caerhays and Heligan in Cornwall; Mount Stewart and Mount Congreve in Ireland; Calsap in Germany; Jardin du Pellinac in Normandy; Longwood Gardens in the USA and others. Ken is a patron of the Emu Valley Garden in Tasmania (see p. 7)

and it is a favourite of his. His absolute favourite, however, is Bodnant Garden in Wales.

His new book, *Woodland Gardening*, will be published in May 2018.

Ken's second talk titled 'Frank Kingdon Ward's riddle of the Tsangpo gorges' has to be the most thrilling plant related talk I have ever heard. Yes, there are plants, but there's also an adventure story that would not be out of place in an Indiana Jones movie. Ken provided an enormous amount of historical information on Frank Kingdon Ward (FKW), one of the great plant hunters, and on the many attempts to explore the gorges, starting in the 1870's right up to modern times. It would be impossible even to summarize all this in the space available, so the best I can do is a brief overview. If you want to learn more you need Ken's book on the subject – he had some for sale in Termonfeckin and



I wish I had bought one. The book incorporates FKW's original book, edited by Ken with a lot of additional material from Ken and others.

The first expeditions were to establish that the Bramaputra and Tsangpo rivers are the same. They are. The Tsangpo Gorge in south-east Tibet is the world's deepest gorge and is almost inaccessible. Through it flows the Tsangpo, Tibet's great river, emerging eventually in the Bay of Bengal. One of the heroes of the story was a Sikkimese man called Kintup who made his first journey in 1878 and a second one in 1880 accompanied by a Chinese Lama. The idea was to place logs in the

higher reaches of the Tsangpo to see at what point they would reach the sea. The plan failed due to a sexual indiscretion with a local chief's wife on the part of the Lama who compensated the chief by selling poor Kintup into slavery at Tongyuck. In 1882 he escaped, eventually getting back to India where he dictated a report on his travels including a very good map. For various reasons this report was mislaid. In 1911 Noel Williamson went up the gorge but was killed by villagers. A punitive expedition of two hundred Ghurkhas was sent up the river to avenge the killing, resulting in the Abor massacre.

In 1913 two English officers, Morshead and Bailey, went up the gorges, wrote an account but then found Kintup's report and were so impressed by it that they arranged a pension for him. They also found the Himalayan blue poppy, *Meconopsis betonicifolia* (*M. baileyi*).

In 1913 FKW headed for Tibet but his explorations were interrupted by the Great War. In 1924, accompanied by Jack Cawdor who provided finance, he returned. They found many plants including *Berberis timolaica*, *Fritillaria cirrhosa*, *Primula cawdoriana*, *Rhododendron laudandum* (very difficult), *R. wardii* (above) among many others. Apart from plants, FKW believed that hidden in the depths of the gorge was a great waterfall, but he didn't find it. He published his book on the trip, *The Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges* in 1926.

From 1995 to 2005 Ken led nine expeditions into the region following in FKW's footsteps so the plant images he showed were mainly his.

The Doshong La is the lowest pass in the Himalayas and here FKW found what he called his 'Rhododendron Fairyland', which he describes eloquently in his book.

Dwarf rhododendrons in flower just after snowmelt included *R. forrestii*. Ken showed us images of FKW's campsite of 1924 alongside his own of 1998.

From the top of Doshong La the route heads into Pemako, a revered pilgrim



site for Tibetan Buddhists, where there are more rhododendrons including *R. cinnabarinum concatenans*. Among other plants found were *Primula dickeana* (above) and *P. falcifolia*. *Podophyllum auranticaule* is good in cultivation. Ken showed two photos of a glacier in the gorges, one taken by FKW in 1924 and the other in 1996, which show the extent to which climate change has reduced the glacier over that period.

In 1996 the expedition split into two groups; the group led by Ken were arrested by Chinese soldiers but were released after much questioning and the payment of fines. Around this time Ken met Ken Storm and the idea of a new book on the gorges emerged. Storm and his associates were in the gorge looking for waterfalls; they found one of 120 feet. Throughout the talk we saw many images of wonderful, if forbidding, landscapes and of local people.



Namche Barwa at 7,600m is the highest peak in this part of the Himalayas and towers over the gorges.

In 1996 Ken set out on an expedition to find *Lilium paradoxum* (below) which has never been in cultivation. One eccentric member of the group found it but told no-one until after their descent. In 1997, accompanied by a journalist from the Telegraph, Claire Scobie, he tried again, without success, but managed to get arrested by Chinese soldiers. The Chinese are highly sensitive about this region and resent any foreign intrusion. Subsequently Claire went again with Ken Storm and found the lily. In 2007 she published a well-received book on her travels, *Last Seen in Lhasa*.

FKW served in Special Operations in Burma and Assam in WW2. He married Jean Macklin (*Lilium mackliniae*) in 1947, he was 61, she, 25. He was the author of twenty books and discovered c. 100 rhododendrons. He died in 1958.

On 10 June 2,000 a Himalayan megaflood changed the gorge dramatically. The region is now closed to Western visitors.



I mentioned at the outset that Kintup was a hero but the same applies to FKW and to Ken Cox and the other explorers who visited this inhospitable, but dramatically beautiful part of the world.

(Photos by Ken Cox.)

Tim Lever

Tim's talk was titled: 'Walking the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh: Jewels in the rain'. There was a lot of rain and Tim showed us many of the 'jewels' encountered on the trip. He ensured that we knew where we were at all times by starting with a map showing the route, and, throughout the talk, regularly including shots of the terrain in which the plants grew. Unfortunately, because of the poor visibility most of the time we were deprived of clear views of the majestic landscape that they were traversing, but on the few occasions when the mist cleared we saw what we were missing. Ponies were used to transport the baggage. Apart from the ponies we saw photos of birds and animals, including the ubiquitous yak.

The trip took place in 2012 and involved trekking up to 7,000m covering many habitats on the way. It started in Dirang and finished at Se La.

Everything was very green at the outset and in the thick mist leeches were abundant. Tim showed us 109 images of plants so I have to be selective in those I mention, and my selection can only be subjective.

Magnolia globosa with flowers similar to *M. wilsonii* was very attractive, as was white *Pleione hookeriana*. *Gaultheria trichophylla* has striking blue berries. The first meconopsis seen were yellow *M. paniculata* and blue *M. sinuata* and, later, *M. prainiana* var. *alba* with shining white flowers; a fine red form of *M. paniculata*; a nice compact plant of *M. bella*; and a lovely pale blue *M. horridula*.

Of the primulas we saw my choices were: *P. jigmediana* with many tiny plants (1.5cm tall) studding a mossy rock; a nice group of *P. wattii* with its blue/purple flowers; a river of the lovely cream orange-centred flowers of *P. dickeana* (the flowers in this species can be yellow, cream, purple or white), indeed, later Tim showed a yellow form; *P. monroi* with scented white flowers here growing in a boggy area; two lovely groups of *P. sappharina* and *P. hopeana*; and, for me, the best of all, *P. soldanelloides* (see p. 40) with beautiful white flowers.



There were fewer saxifrages and I liked *S. tangutica* (above) growing with *S. andersonii* and *S. engleriana*, and also the lovely, tiny *S. perpusilla*.

Pedicularis roylei (below) is a very attractive plant but probably very difficult in the garden. A large red and cream specimen of *Swertia pseudo-hookeri* was a bit too garish for me but other members of the audience liked it.



I liked *Androsace hookeriana* and *Diapensia himalaica* with lovely pink flowers on the cushion.

An extensive swathe of pink-flowered *Rhododendron fragariflorum* was magnificent as was a floriferous specimen of the lovely *Chionocharis hookeri*. The Thread Leaf *Corydalis*, *C. meifolia*, has lovely foliage, and striking yellow flowers. The abundance of *Paraquilegia anemonoides* (below) at one site caused a stir in the audience; while it is firmly in cultivation it is not easy to grow well.



This was an excellent talk from Tim and he gave the audience a clear sense of the conditions on this gruelling trek and showed us fine photos of the many ‘jewels’ that he encountered. (Photos by Tim Lever)

Ian Young

Ian is no stranger to Termonfeckin, this being the third time he has featured, an indication of how popular he is with our members. Usually he is accompanied by his wife, Maggi, who tends to interject humorous comments on his talks adding to the appeal. Unfortunately, she was unable to attend on this occasion but sent her greetings, and we send her our best wishes. Ian is a skilled speaker, an outstanding plantsman and grower and his talks are always instructive and stimulating. He is also an artist and print maker and this is evident in his gardening and photography.

His first thought provoking talk, ‘Nature: gardeners’ tutor’, dealt with his desire to copy nature in his garden. It consisted of a series of images from nature in Scotland, and as far away as New Zealand, many very

beautiful, contrasted with his attempts to reflect these at home. For example, he feels that a flat surface in a trough is an opportunity missed so he includes height which not only makes the trough more interesting but provides a variety of habitats for the plants.



The trough above is one of many examples he showed of how varied landscapes can be created in troughs and raised beds.

Plants are tough and many grow in what seem like hostile conditions in nature and Ian thinks we are often too soft with ours. We need to learn from how they grow in the wild and try to simulate those conditions in our gardens. This not only must take account of what the plant needs above ground, e.g., shade, sun, shelter from wind etc., but also the substrate that it grows in. Some grow among rocks in pure sand - and sand does hold moisture. Ian is fascinated by soil profiles and experiments continually, based on what he sees in the wild.

Humus is extremely important for many plants and Ian provides it by mulching regularly with garden compost including shredded woody

material – “nothing leaves the garden”. He is a “habitat manipulator” and as well as adding humus he uses sharp sand as a top dressing for some plants: *Cyclamen coum* loves it. He showed us Peter Korn’s system of raised sand beds and illustrated the importance of aspect and how better results can be obtained by moving a plant by even a few centimeters.

Mosses, lichens and even liverwort have their uses in the garden; over time they will create humus into which plants can seed. This is what happens in nature. He showed an image of pinguiculas growing happily on a mossy rock. If you want to kill liverwort deprive it of light and moisture. He also uses broken concrete in the garden and cautions against obsessive tidiness.

He advocates mixed planting: specimen plants can look artificial. In the wild, plants grow in communities but in the garden care must be taken to ensure that plants in a group are of similar vigour. In the right situation carpeting plants like *Ranunculus ficaria* have their place. We should encourage self-seeding in our gardens to create a more natural feel and also to take advantage of variation in the seedlings. *Trillium rivale* would be a good example, where the flowers range from pure white through varying degrees of purple shading. The best examples can be selected and increased. The benefits of self-seeding are particularly evident in Ian’s driveway, the centre of which is rich in plants of many types which have developed over the years into a most appealing tapestry of colour.

Ian’s approach consists of observation and interpretation leading to appropriate action. A gardener needs two lifetimes, one to learn, one to do. He now is pleased that his efforts over the years have resulted in a much more natural feel to his garden which was clear from his pictures. I think everyone in the audience will have learned something from this fascinating talk.

Woodland bulbs were the subject of his second talk and as anyone who is familiar with his famous Bulb Log, which can be found on the SRGC website, knows, Ian is into bulbs. His e-book on erythroniums is also available free to download from the website.

He started his talk with galanthus and, while he likes snowdrops, he does not consider himself a galanthophile but uses these plants to provide interest in winter and spring, valuing most those that are obviously distinctive. He considers leucojums at least the equal of snowdrops and notes the variation that can be found in their seedlings. There were some striking photos of species of both taken from underneath.

Eranthis are perfect for associating with snowdrops, crocuses and other bulbs in early spring. *E. hyemalis* will seed around. *E. cilicicus* is not hardy for Ian, but the cross with *E. hyemalis*, *E. x tubergenii* 'Guinea Gold', is wonderful although it is sterile. *E. pinnatifida* and *E. hyemalis*

'Schwefelglanz', one of the newer introductions, are very good also. All these bulbs are best in a good leafy humus rich soil. Dwarf irises like *I. histrioides* and *I. 'Katherine Hodgkin'* are lovely. Ian recommends lifting and separating your bulbs regularly – do it whenever you remember. The wood anemones also need regular dividing.



The early corydalis species start as the snowdrops are fading. White *C. malkensis* is very easy and seeds around. *C. 'George Baker'* and 'Craigton Red' (above) are excellent. Seed is best sown fresh and deeply - two inches or so. Ian recommends dividing corydalis annually, around mid-May. He likes to grow them in mixed colonies with other bulbs such as colchicums, dicentras, fritillarias and erythroniums. The latter are, of course, a particular favourite of Ian's and he discussed a number of species and cultivars. *E. 'Minnehaha'* is a "brilliant" garden plant; *E. revolutum* is best for seeding around; *E. toulumnense* is a wonderful species and good in the

garden, but it is important to get a good form; of the hybrids, ‘Susannah’ is the best, ‘Joanna’ is lovely, and ‘Craigton Cover Girl’ is very good and an excellent increaser.

On to trilliums. They should be lifted and divided when the flowers fade, replanted immediately and watered well. *T. ovatum* is best grown under a shrub. Ian raised a cross between the usual white form of *T. grandiflorum* and *T. g. roseum*, which he called ‘Flush’ – some people have told him that the name is inappropriate because of the lavatorial connection. *T. g.* ‘Gothenburg Pink’ is gorgeous. The larger leaved trilliums like *T. erectum* are more woodlanders than others and need some shelter from wind. Trilliums are easy from seed and some species hybridize.

Paris species like rich loamy soil; *P. japonicum* is the star of the genus. Yellow *Fritillaria pudica* is a lovely small plant. *F. camschatensis* with yellow or black flowers is a good garden plant. *Dicentra cucullaria* will flower only if it is planted shallowly; to increase it the ‘rice grains’ should be removed and sown separately. Good arisaemas are *A. nepenthoides*; *A. griffithi*; *A. wilsonii*; *A. ciliatum*; and, of course, *A. candissimum*.



The later corydalis are indispensable. *C. x 'Craigton Blue'* is one of the best and *C. pseudobarbisepala* and *C. mucronipetala*, new to me, look lovely. Ian has just released a new cultivar, *C. x 'Craigton Purple'* (above), which is gone on my want list.

Dactylorhiza 'Eskimo Nell' must be lifted and divided annually. Roscoeas are good garden plants and are becoming more popular. *Lilium mackliniae* is lovely and nomocharis flowers can be plain or heavily spotted.

Ian finished by reiterating his liking for mixed planting, emphasizing the importance of foliage, including ferns, – it's there longer than the flowers. (Photos: Ian Young)

This was the last of five brilliant talks over a very successful weekend. My reports on them only skim the surface: to appreciate them fully you have to be there.

The **Plant Forum** on Sunday morning was a lively affair with questions on suitable plants for a trough; the best rhododendrons to buy; dealing with moss and liverwort; when best to use fertilizers; ways to deal with shy-flowering plants, among others. Jamie will put the questions and answers on the website.

Next year we have **Brian Burrow**, **Mike Keep** of Shady Plants, and **Bob** and **Rannveig Wallace**. I'm looking forward to it already.

Billy Moore

Christmas Miscellany

Though the evening of 7 December was bitterly cold we had a reasonably good turnout for our annual pre-Christmas get-to-together, and in a festive atmosphere, enhanced by mince pies and a seasonal (non-alcoholic) beverage, we enjoyed nine interesting presentations from members. Gwenda added to the occasion with a table of beautiful cards and some objets d'art for sale. It was very nice to see the return of Ricky Shannon, a loyal and longstanding member after her recent illness.

Jamie opened proceedings with a preview of our ambitious programme for 2018.

The first presenter was Frank Lavery who gave us a tour of his garden with the emphasis on recent changes. Frank now has an eclectic range of fine plants in tufa beds, a peat bed, crevice beds and more. I'm sure many in the audience made a mental note not to miss the visit to him on 5 May. He was followed by Fionnuala Broughan who showed pictures from her holidays in May/June last year in the course of which she took us to England, France, Spain, Wales and Donegal. She enjoyed Sissinghurst, Bodnant, and Seamus O'Donnell's Cluain na d'Tor garden in Donegal very much, Great Dixter less so. She and Bernard were delighted by the variety and quality of roadside flowers in France.

Then came Sandra Fowler who brought us around the Japanese garden in Tatton Park where she was deeply impressed by its peacefulness and serenity. Triona Corcoran holidayed in the US last year visiting a number of National Parks all of which impressed her greatly. Highlights were a flowering agave in the Grand Canyon and the magnificent trees in the Sequoia National Park. On a visit to Bull Island on her return she was delighted to find a flowering Marsh Helleborine. Barbara and Peter O'Callaghan visited Croatia and enjoyed the Botanic Gardens on the island of Lockrum. No-one in the audience could identify an attractive yellow, crocus-like flower which she saw in abundance. On a visit to Krka National Park she was impressed by cyclamen in abundance and by the wonderful waterfalls.

George Sevastopulo took us to Northern Italy where we saw lots of the shy-flowering, sweetly scented, *Cyclamen purpurascens*, the hardiest member of the genus. He pointed out the wide variation in leaf patterns in the species and showed us a plant with white flowers. He amused the audience with a sequence of gnome-like figures of Snow White and her dwarves which proliferate in the region.

Carmel Duignan sang the praises of *Lunaria* 'Corfu Blue' which is an outstanding garden plant. She also grows *L.* 'Chedglow' which has chocolate coloured foliage and managed to produce a hybrid between the two with 'Chedglow's' foliage and blue flowers. *L.* 'Carmel'? She has yet to establish if it will come true from seed.

Jamie Chambers visited his daughter, Alice, in Berlin last summer and went to the International Garden Exhibition there. They enjoyed the mushroom exhibition and the ‘Christian Garden’ with its serene atmosphere and, like Sandra, the peacefulness of the Japanese garden. The highlight of the visit, however, might have been the grave planting competition in which the participants showed great creativity, and we were assured that there were no bodies involved. As a foretaste of the amazing talk that he plans to give us in November Jamie showed us a fine photo of *Cypripedium tibeticum* which he had taken in Bhutan.

Koraley Northen showed a series of shots of plants and people at the 2017 Dublin Show, finishing with one of Peter O’Callaghan entertaining customers in the ‘café’ on the piano.

Among a flurry of seasonal good wishes, we headed out into the cold looking forward to meeting again in the New Year.

Billy Moore



Primula soldanelloides – see p. 31 (Photo: Tim Lever).

FIXTURES

Thursday, 18 January, 8 pm. AGM followed by **Zoë Devlin**, 'Irish wild flowers'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 10 February. Snowdrop garden visit to the gardens of **Mrs Emer Gallagher** and **Mrs Eileen Collins**. Coach departs St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan at 10 am sharp, returning by 5 pm.

Thursday, 15 February, 8 pm. Adam Whitbourn, 'The Story of Blarney Castle Gardens'. Joint with **IGPS**, NBG, Glasnevin.

Saturday, 24 February, 12 noon, Annual Lunch, commencing with **Philip Hollwey**, 'Developing my rural acre'. Royal St George Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire.

Saturday, 3 March, 2 pm. Local Show, members plant sale and workshop. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Thursday, 15 March, 8 pm. Cliff Booker, 'Outstanding gardens home and away'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 7 April. Ulster Group AGS Show, Greenmount College, Antrim.

Saturday, 28 April, 1.30 to 4 pm. Dublin Group AGS Show. Cabinteely Community College, Cabinteely, Dublin.

Saturday, 5 May, 2 to 4 pm. Visit to **Frank Lavery's** garden at 30 Ailesbury Drive, Dublin 4.

Saturday and Sunday, 12 and 13 May. Visit to the **Burren** and to **Carl Wright's** garden.

Thursday, 24 May, 8 pm. **John Good**, 'Alpines through the year in North Wales'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 9 June, 9.30 for 10 am. Guided tour of Dublin Zoo planting with **Stephen Butler**.

Saturday, 14 July. Garden visit to **Kilquade House**. Bus (no cars) from St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan at 12 noon.

Thursday, 18 October, 8 pm. **Ian Christie**, 'Thirty-five years and still growing'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Thursday, 8 November, 8 pm. **Jamie Chambers**, 'Insane? Or an ardent botanist?'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

16 to 18 November. 35th Alpine Weekend. **Brian Burrow**, **Mike Keep**, and **Robert and Rannveig Wallis**.

Thursday, 6 December, 8 pm. **Christmas Miscellany.** St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

More details about the fixtures can be found on p. 5.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Chairman and Webmaster: Jamie Chambers
Hon. Secretary: Barbara O'Callaghan
Hon. Treasurer: Tessa Dagge
Fixtures Secretary: Triona Corcoran
Publicity: Patricia Maguire
Members Secretary & Newsletter Editor: Billy Moore

Committee Members: Fionnuala Broughan
Val Keegan
Martin Walsh

Show Secretary: Gavin Moore



Jamie



Barbara



Tessa



Triona



Patricia



Billy



Val



Fionnuala



Martin



Gavin



Gentiana acaulis and *Paeonia mlokosewitschii* in Willie's garden – see p. 3 (Photo: Dr Willie Reardon).