

The Newsletter of the
IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY



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EDITORIAL

Dear Members,

What a pleasure it was to find a bloom on *Iris unguicularis* 'Kilbroney Marble' on Christmas morning. A real treat! Many thanks to whoever brought it to the plant sale some years ago. Other spring bloomers are also showing, snowdrops, hellebores and daffodils, for example. All of these prompt us to look ahead to brighter days to come. While looking ahead, why not make this the year in which you give Irish plants a place in your garden and the gardens of others – by propagating them and bringing them to the Plant Sales.

This time of year inevitably involves an amount of looking back also. As I recall the past year as editor of the newsletter I realise the great debt of gratitude I owe to the many people who make the effort to provide material for each issue and wonder gratefully at the patience of some whose material has been edited perhaps a little too heavily. I would like to say a special thanks to those who have written the reports on garden visits or on winter lectures. I have not met nor corresponded with many of you and so have not thanked you personally for this vital work for the newsletter. Please continue with your work; it is truly appreciated. Above all, a very special Thank You to those who badger, sorry encourage, others to write!

Finally, I hope that during this year we will be able to read more about the work and workings of our National Committee. I know they have some very interesting and worthwhile projects in hand and I hope to coax them to keep the membership more informed about this work. Happy New Year! Paddy Tobin, Editor. January 2004

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Front & Back Cover Illustrations, by Susan Sex, show *Orchis morio*/*Anacamptis morio*, the Green-winged Orchid. The specimen is from Portrane, north Co. Dublin. The front cover has two life-sized heads among grass and the back cover shows detail of an enlarged single flower

Regional Reports

Reports from the North

O'Gradys Gardens,

Coolfore, Monasterboice, Co Louth, 6 September, 2003

Our final summer garden visit and our annual foray into the South was to the O'Gradys imaginative garden near Monasterboice. This is a garden well worth visiting and we were disappointed to see so few members. The six acre site was just a field when it was bought in the early eighties; now with good shelter belts it is a treasure house of interesting trees & shrubs. The collections of Olearias, and a notable tulip tree, are among the most noteworthy. There are also two poly tunnels for unusual vegetables and propagation. Mrs O'Grady is interested in floral art and grows a variety of flowers and greenery for her demonstrations. The real treat for us was to be handed polythene bags at the start for cuttings - I now have a dozen healthy plants in my greenhouse!

Andrena Duffin

Plant Sale,

Saturday 11 October

Our annual plant sale was held as usual in the car park at Stranmillis University College from midday until 3pm. Soon after 9am Mary Browne and her group of helpers were busy sorting, pricing and arranging plants. The standard of plants brought this year was very high, although not many Irish cultivars were available.

Unfortunately the weather was against us and when we opened for business at midday it was raining. We were kept warm by a constant supply of hot coffee from Carol Cunningham and Mary Taylor-Winter and their helpers and delicious sandwiches were produced at lunch time. We raised over £700, a good effort for such a wet day and there were very few plants left. We are grateful to all those who produced plants, helped in the setting up, selling and clearing up; also to Stranmillis for the venue and the Ulster Museum for providing the tables and transport, and especially to those who braved the weather and bought!

Andrena Duffin

At the Water's Edge – Fota Arboretum and Gardens

David O'Regan, 22nd October

David O'Regan gave the Clotworthy Lecture in Antrim on Wednesday 22 October, entitled *At the Water's Edge – Fota Arboretum and Gardens*. David has been Head Gardener at Fota since 1996, when Duchas took over the arboretum and gardens. He has continued the tradition of the Smith-Barry family in adding tender and rare plants. The last member of the family, Mrs Bell, died in 1975 and thereafter the old fruit and vegetable walled garden and the Italian Garden, near the house, were grassed over.

David concentrated his talk on the restoration work that has been carried out in these two areas. Fortunately, he had old photos of the Italian Garden in its hey-day. Steps and stone-capped brick retaining walls have been excavated. The very formal lay-out has been re-planted with yew hedges and box-edged beds to fill with spring and summer bedding. The walled garden retains the original paths, with lawns and beds of scented roses in the centre. Varied well-planted and colour-themed wall borders, such as the monocot border, shade border and South African border surround the area. Many plants came from IGPS members, both for the gardens and for the newly restored 'Orangery', which is run as a frost-free house.

The talk gave us an idea of the extensive renovation and the incredible amount of attractive planting that has been carried out at Fota in the recent past.

Belinda Jupp

Reports from Leinster

Plant Sale

Sunday, 12th October

Plant Sale in Dublin went well. Good plants, good help, great crowd. We sold out in 1.5 hours.

Mary Bradshaw.



Christine O Flynn ready for the customers and some fine "Irish Cultivars" both on and behind the tables at the Plant Sale. Photo: Mary Bradshaw.

"A Year in the Life ..."

Timothy Walker, *Horti Praefectus*, Oxford Botanic Garden, September 26th.

In his introduction, Donal Synott pointed out that the first successful seed grown at Glasnevin came from Oxford, and that in turn, Oxford got its first seeds of *Victoria amazonica* from Glasnevin. Oxford Botanic Gardens were founded in 1621 as a Physic Garden and Dr. Walker's thorough description of various developments at the gardens

since then was sprinkled with amusing anecdotes and humour. We heard of the many rebuildings of the Rock Garden and of the Riverside Walk described by Dr. Walker as being from the “Migraine School of Gardening”.

In April and May there is a large display of tulips in the gardens. At this time of year, 21 Nurseries are invited to come and sell their plants. Adult Education also gets underway in May. With 5,500 species growing in the gardens, a Photography course does not lack for material. There are also Botanical Illustration courses and the gardens find time to exhibit at Chelsea as well.

Mary Bradshaw.

A Rare Treat.

Carmel Duignan, November 6th

Carmel Duignan’s lecture to the Leinster Regional group was indeed a gem. Accompanied by excellent slides of her developing and developed garden, it demonstrated her love of experimentation with plants.

She describes *Acacia baileyana* “Purpurea” as her favourite year-round plant while *Polygala myrtifolia* has a flower every day of the year. Carmel grows many clematis species, among them *C. “Moonbeam”*, *C. fusca*, *C.versicolor*, *C. ianthina*, *C. “Rooguchi”*, *C. crispa*, *C. urticifolia*, *C.addisonii*, *C. tenuiloba*. Her favourite in this group is *Clematis* “Alionushka”. *Helleborus* “Graigueconna” first grown by Rosemary Brown and *Dahlia*. “Jim Branigan” named after the famed former Dublin policeman were among plants with an Irish connection in her garden.

I have not mentioned all of Carmel’s favourites in this short account. However it is clear that she is a person who loves her garden, a scene of challenge and experimentation. The Leinster group plans to visit her garden next season and her ability to tell us about her plants and plans will make the visit all the more memorable.

This lecture was arranged jointly with the Alpine Garden Society, which was presenting awards to members who participated in their annual photographic competition. This was an added bonus for I.G.P.S. members who were very impressed.

Mary Bradshaw.

Ireland and the antipodes: southern hemisphere plants in Irish gardens.

David Jeffrey, 26th November

This is a fascinating subject. Dr. Jeffrey began by introducing the area we call the antipodes, southern Africa, Southern Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, southern South America. Despite the fact that huge distances and a vast ocean separate these landmasses they have a common flora.

Many shrubs from these areas are evergreen, aromatic, large flowered, fly and bird pollinated. Most plants are adapted to drought and "accepting of fire ", usually caused by lightning. Many have small leaves to cut down on water loss, and are deep rooted to reach water. Furthermore, many leaves are

leathery, again to conserve water and minerals.

Because there has been less glaciation in the southern hemisphere soils are old and less fertile than those of the northern hemisphere and have very low phosphate concentration. Dr. Jeffrey stressed that we must not overfeed antipodean plants. In many cases acid soil is necessary, but drainage is absolutely vital, as plants can die from root rot rather than cold, in Irish conditions. From an extremely long list of suitable plants for the Irish garden I will mention just a few of Dr. Jeffrey's recommendations.

Crinodendron hookerianum, *Boronia spp.*, *Erica canaliculata*, *Epacris impressa*, *Richea scoparia*, *Brugmansia sanguinea*, *Fabiana imbricata*, *Drimys winteri*, *Pseudowintera colorata*, *Brachyglottis repanda*, *Restio verticillata*, *Saxothaeta conspicua*, *Prostanthera spp.*, *Sollya heterophylla*.

I know members are familiar with some of the above and may indeed be growing them successfully. Perhaps the I G P S seed list will provide some more of them now or in the future. So, after the Christmas turkey, we can start planning for an antipodean invasion of Ireland.

Mary Bradshaw.

Reports from Munster

In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry

Mathew Jebb, Taxonomist, National Botanic Gardens, October 3rd 2003

Mathew gave a stimulating start to the new season of lectures following "In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry". He gave us glimpses of the history, both geological and historical, of China, in passing giving us geological reasons why the European flora is so much poorer than the Chinese and American flora. (Why do none of the many gardening books give us this fascinating and easy to understand fact?) He explained the importance of the Yangtze as a trade route and how the climatic conditions along it were similar to N.W. Europe. Among much other plant information he told amusing stories – a hoax played by Chinese collectors who put a *Viburnum* flower in an *Aesculus* sprig and an unusual object found among unsorted botanical specimens in another country!

Some of his slides looked as though taken through a dirty lens but this was the almost unbelievable fog of smoke pollution caused by the rapid industrialisation of China and so illustrated the need for the great dam and the inundation of several cities and much land.

If you hear of a lecture by Mathew Jebb that will take place near you, make sure you get there, as his vision extends over the garden fence.

Desmond Corban- Lucas.

Gardening the Past, Preserving our Future.

Alan Power, Head Gardener, Stourhead. October 31st 2003,

On a cold night when witches and wizards were roaming the streets over forty people, of which twenty were visitors, had a spell cast on them by Alan Power and were

carried away to Mount Stewart where we were given a behind-the-scenes tour of the workings of such an historic garden. We are so lucky to have someone as enthusiastic and dedicated as Alan to maintain and enhance the gardens in which he works. It is very educational to learn the amount of research that goes in to each project before a blade of grass is touched

Alan gave us a lecture on gardening, poetry, structure, colour and humour. The lecture was so free flowing it was a pleasure to listen to him.

He finished his talk by teasing us with a few slides of Stourhead. We will certainly be keeping a close eye on his future visits home to Cork because this is certainly a speaker we will want to hear again!

Kitty Hennessy.

Tender Trees and Shrubs for Coastal Regions,

Bernard O'Leary, Head Gardener, Innacullin (Garnish Island). November 7th 2003

As it has been some time since I last visited Innacullin it was a great treat to be reintroduced to the wonders, which it contains, and especially so when your guide has an intimate knowledge of the plants and their origins. Bernard has worked on the island for close on sixteen years and has overseen its development to where it now welcomes over 80,000 visitors each year. The daily struggles of controlling introduced species of plants, which now self-seed all over the island were highlighted, *Gresilinia* being a case in point. Our Tour around the island was a tour of the globe as the range of plants grown here are from all regions of the world.

The struggles to make plants grow with a small depth of soil were indicated. Even great gardens do not have it easy which gives us all hope when we struggle to establish plants in our own patch. Bernard's talk was illustrated with slides from his own garden and Innacullin.

It has encouraged many of us to have a return visit.

Rosemary Hickey

California Carnivores and other Dramatic Americans,

Patrick O'Hara, Botanical Artist and Sculptor. December 5th 2003

Patrick is a botanical sculptor based in Currabiny, Co. Cork and works in fine porcelain. His talk was an introduction to not only his love of American plants but also gave us an insight to the work and detail which is behind each magnificent piece produced. Patrick has over 3000 indexed shades of porcelain colours, which are used in the field when details of the chosen subjects are being examined. His very precise drawings are later transformed into magical 3D. every minute detail is faithfully preserved together with its natural setting, underlay of leaf debris and the occasional butterfly.

His carnivores were the pitcher plant and *Sarracenia*. Here, his slides showing all angles would teach us all to be more observant.

His jovial manner, as he recalled his work abroad in USA and Europe, certainly put us in relaxed mood for our Christmas refreshments.

Sheila Miller

Looking Ahead

Munster Fixtures

Friday 16th January @ 07.45pm

The Rothschild Gardens. Kate Garton,

Friday 6th February @ 07.45pm

Growing Vegetables without Chemicals, Caroline Robinson, Organic Grower.

Friday 5th March @ 07.45pm

Spring Awakening, Hester Forde, Plantaholic

Friday 2nd April @ 07.45pm

‘The Spring is Sprung’, Chris Fehily, A Keen Gardener.

Sat. 8th & Sun. 9th May

IGPS AGM, CORK. Garden visits to Chris Fehily, Anne Roper, Martin & Janet Edwards and Neil Williams.

As part of the AGM weekend, which is to take place this year in Cork, a programme of garden visits has been arranged. To follow is a brief introduction to each that I hope will be both an appetiser and encouragement to your visiting us here in Cork.

The Old Deanery, Cloyne

While many of us will have heard of the gardens restored under the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme, this private garden has been quietly brought back from oblivion by a labour of love lasting ten years. With a recorded history of residence for over two hundred years this is certainly a place where the magnificent trees have a story to tell if only we could find the time to listen.

The grounds of this wonderful property cover an area of five acres but can be subdivided into Woodland, Walled and Formal Garden. The grounds still retain a large degree of the old-world feel and that sense is best appreciated by taking to the pathways that lead one to its secret hiding places.

Amergen, Ovens

There is much to admire in this garden. A large collection of unusual trees and shrubs on either side of the lawn, many of them grown from seed, a grove of interesting trees, which include *Eucalyptus cordata* and *Eucalyptus moorei* and many birch with beautiful bark. The lower part of the garden is a shady dell with lots of *Hellebore*, Candelabra Primula, Fern and Hosta with a backdrop of moss-covered rocks. A very

fine specimen of *Abies spectabilis* and *Magnolia wilsonii* can be seen on the way to the orchard.

Inniscarra House

Around this beautifully maintained Georgian house is a wonderful old garden, which complements the house and exploits all the spectacular features of the natural landscape. Among the four-acre woodland garden an interesting collection of trees and shrubs have been brought together. Down by the river, a wetland garden adds interest to an otherwise difficult area.

Close by the house, the old walled garden still maintains its original layout of box hedging but many of the old fruit trees have passed on. In recent years a programme of replanting has started and new life is re-establishing itself in this formal setting.

Cedar Lodge, Midleton

After a distinguished career in the Nursery trade what is a man to do on retirement but to create his own dream garden. And so that is what we have here. With an intimate knowledge of plants this is a special collection of herbaceous, shrubs and trees. Built on a slightly elevated two-acre green field site this project is seven years old and while much of the work is complete, will it ever really be finished? I think not. With a passion for plants there will always be new purchases requiring a home so the borders will continue to grow! (If you will pardon the pun).

There are mixed borders with many rare varieties and unusual grasses. Two ponds, a large pergola, rockery and bog garden completes the range of features. There will certainly be a number of new plant names in your notebook when leaving this garden.

Regards, David O Regan, Hon. Fixtures Sec. Munster Group.

Leinster Fixtures

Thursday 15 January

Kate Garton Presents 'Rothschild Gardens' At National Botanic Gardens. 8pm

Thursday 12 February

Prof. John Parnell TCD, 'Flora of Thailand' At Clyde Road 8pm

Will cover the issues of what we know about an important source of actual and potential garden plants and the impact of gardening on conservation.

Thursday 18 March

Peter Erskine 'Unfinished Business, 30 Years on Green Sand'

Joint with AGS at National Botanic Gardens 8pm

Saturday 20 March

Garden visit Anna Nolan. Hellebores A suburban garden for all seasons carefully tended by Anna and designed to maximise planting in areas of both sun and shade.

This is an opportunity to see Anna's wonderful collection of Hellebores and other spring treasures including bulbs, corydalis, hepatica, woodland plants etc.

Location: On N11 coming from Dublin pass under flyover at Cabinteely, turn left immediately after Esso Station into Shanganagh Vale and follow signs 1 - 14.

Admission €4.50

Northern Fixtures

JANUARY 14 - NEW YEAR LECTURE: 'The Rothschild Gardens'

Ulster Museum; 7.30pm. A passion for creating beautiful gardens in all styles, from the grand formal to the naturalistic conservation garden, characterises the famous Rothschild family. Author and garden advisor Kate Garton gives an introduction to these domains, normally seen only by the privileged few. Book sales and signing. Members €3.00, others €4.00. Tickets - Museum Reception. Joint with RHS & UM.

FEBRUARY 25 - MEMBERS' EVENING, Ulster Museum, 6.30 - 8.30pm.

Bring along your garden memorabilia - interesting books, unusual garden objects, a sample of whatever is in flower in your garden, photos of gardens you have visited; or put your friends on the spot with a request for a plant ID! More importantly - bring yourself, and get to know a few more of your fellow members - a projector and a PC will be available for showing slides/ photos/CDs. Supper - hot nibbles and dips, sandwiches, tea, coffee, tray bakes - £5.00. Use Stranmillis door (old main entrance) - ring bell. Members & guests only. *Contact Catherine Tyrie on 90-383152 to arrange to bring in electronic material c. 1 week in advance for trialling.*

MARCH 18 - THE CLOTWORTHY SPRING LECTURE,

Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim; 7.30pm. 'Good Plants make Good Gardens'. **Mary Waldron**, former chairman of the RHSI and regular contributor to 'Irish Garden', talks about gardening near Lough Owel in the midlands of Ireland and her passion to find exactly the right spot for cherished plants. Members free, others £1.00. Refreshments free. Plant sales. Joint with Antrim Borough Council.

MARCH 25 - 'BELFAST IN BLOOM', Saintfield Road, Belfast; 10.30am.

Behind the scenes at the Bryson House polytunnel & workshop, where young volunteers on the 'New Deal' training scheme, aided by Bryson House and Belfast City Council, use recycled materials and composts to help community groups create the finished planted tubs & boxes we see around Belfast. Free, but donations to Bryson House would be welcome.

Directions: Just past Woodlawn Garden Centre, turn right into the Knockbracken Park (the old Purdysburn Hospital area); follow the roadway round to the left to building 31 called Glen House, almost at the far end of most of the buildings; the Bryson House site is just before it on the right.

Seed Distribution Scheme 2004 by Stephen Butler

As always the seed that goes out has to come in first, and that depends totally on yourselves to send the seed in. Well this year you have surpassed yourselves as I have received over 400 accessions - 120 up on 2003. I still have to check over the listing, verify names, remove duplicates, and of course make sure my typing has left no spelling mistakes before I have a final tally, but it should be around 350.

A particularly nice aspect this year was all the extra seed collectors - at least double the number of last year, so many thanks yet again to our regular contributors and a very warm welcome to our new ones!

I will do a breakdown of the accessions for the spring newsletter as there are still seeds coming in (this is written in early December), and all that remains is to wish you all a Happy Christmas, and hope you enjoy filling out the request forms.

National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens

Congratulations are due to Madeline Jay and Maria Vlahos (Head Gardener) as Mount Usher Gardens recently applied for and was granted National Collection Status for their *Eucryphia* and *Nothofagus* collections. This is a reflection of the importance of their planting over many years, with fully mature specimens; some Champion specimens included, and recently planted new accessions as well. Their ongoing commitment to the collection and enthusiasm for the garden is obvious whenever you visit.

It is not always easy to appreciate individual trees in Mount Usher as they blend together so well, but within the planting, apart from the champion specimens (biggest or tallest in Ireland, and for some within the UK as well), there are original plantings dating back to the first introductions from abroad, or the original specimen of a new cultivar such as *Eucryphia x nymansensis* 'Mount Usher'.

Enjoy!

Tenderness in an Irish Winter by Paul Maher

Good gardeners will always control the environment in which they garden, some more than others, it is what it is all about. Over the years at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin we have managed temperate collections, and in caring for these we would have moved them in and out of a glasshouse environment as the seasons dictated.

Tradition has handed down the system that in late autumn before the onset of the first frost, tender plants would be moved inside and in late spring after the threat of late frost had receded, they would be moved outside once again. In a system such as this when assessing the collection we have recently started to consider what might currently survive in the unusual climatic patterns that we are now experiencing.

We are aware that one of the great indicators of climatic trends are plants and we all notice that in the last ten years alone more tender things are surviving our Irish winter. As a monitor of what is happening we started some experiments at Glasnevin in the summer of 2001. We decided to examine those plants traditionally held in our temperate collections and explore the possibilities of what might survive outside. We were lucky in so far as during the development of our new Educational and Visitor centre a small enclosed area became available as a result of the widening of the roadway forming the entrance to our new car park. It was in this area that we decided to experiment.

The list of possibilities was long and some decisions had to be made about what to try. We based our choices on plants that would be considered zone nine or ten, in other words, plants that would survive temperature lows of zero to -6°C or thereabouts. We planted such things as *Grevillea robusta*, (9), *Phoenix canariensis*, (9), *Opuntia pailana*, (9), *Leucadendron spissifolium subsp. phillipsii*, (9), *Protea cynaroides*, (9), *Banksia integrifolia*, (9), *Aspidistra lurida*, (8) *Puya chilensis*, (9), *Castanospermum australe*, (9), *Nolina durangensis*, (10), *N. beldingii*, (10), *N. longifolia*, (10), *Casuarina cunninghamiana*, (9), *Musa basjoo*, (8), *M. balbisiana*, (10), *Araucaria cunninghamii*, (10), *Agave lurida*, (9), *A. lophantha*, (9).

After two years growing outdoors without any protection they are now facing into their third winter and all are thriving. As a gardener it is very difficult to place plants in this environment without thinking of giving some winter protection at least in the first year of experimentation, this however was resisted. The one cultural step taken to assist matters was to dig plenty of grit into the soil before planting as we worried as much about winter wet as about frost. Grit gives a very free draining medium, which means the soil stays relatively warm. Temperatures did drop in the period of the experiment to a low of -10°C on one night only but we never had a prolonged period of these kinds

of temperatures and never experienced solidification of the ground in the area. This I feel held the key to success, plants can deal with short bursts of cold temperatures but, as long as this is not prolonged, damage is usually minimal.

It is too easy to jump to conclusions about climate change; personally I feel the difficulty is that the word change sounds too permanent. The fact is that we do not know if the change is actually permanent. The notion of permanence certainly dissipated this summer when after the best part of ten years of soggy wet dull summers we had a blissfully sunny dry and warm one.

Gardens and indeed parts of the country vary in what they can grow. Certainly some of the plants listed above will be surviving in some coastal gardens of the east and south-west. However it is when this had not been the case in the period prior to ten years ago and now is possible, that is of interest. What would be very useful to know is what is surviving in your garden that has not done so in the past. Indeed is there anything that having struggled for many years is now burgeoning with growth? I would be very grateful if any observations could be passed on so as a broader picture could be formed.

Special Congratulations to Paul Maher, Curator

Very special congratulations are due to Paul Maher on his recent promotion in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. Paul had been promoted to the position of Curator in the Gardens and took up the duties of this position in October, 2003.

Paul has been at the Botanic Gardens now for about thirty years progressing through the various grades within the organization, being Outdoor Foreman for the past four years, to the highest horticultural position within the gardens, Curator.

He has been a long-time member of the I.G.P.S. and has served on the National Committee for several terms. He is currently back on the committee again where his expertise will be a great benefit both to the committee and to the society in general. He has also been editor of the Newsletter in the past and, despite his busy schedule, continues to support the newsletter with his articles.

He has been to the Chelsea Flower Show with the two I.G.P.S. exhibits, "Distinguished Natives and Honoured Guests" and "In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry" which on both occasions brought honour to the country, the Botanic Gardens and the I.G.P.S. More recently he has travelled to China to collect material from the area threatened by the new hydroelectric dam scheme.

Paul brings great experience to his new position and I, and I'm sure all I.G.P.S. members, would like to congratulate him and send him our very best wishes as Curator.

Confessions of a Plantaholic by Rae McIntyre

This past year, 2003, was the 25th anniversary of my life as an addicted gardener. Like gardening itself the onset of my addiction was a fairly gradual process over the spring and summer of 1978 but I began it all very reluctantly. We had been left this place in 1973 by my husband's spinster aunt who had lived in the house, on her own, since the early 1950's. She'd had cancer for the last five years of her life so both house and garden had fallen into disrepair. Restoring the house had occupied us entirely between 1974 and 1976 when we finally moved in and, having no interest in gardening, we brought in a JCB digger in the autumn of 1976 and razed the garden to the ground. Only the forest trees were left along the western boundary.

Yes, it was the act of vandals and I wish I knew then what I know now. The garden had been a showplace in the 1920's before Davy's grandfather bought it but the previous owners had neglected the farm so much that they went bankrupt and had to emigrate to Canada. The canny McIntyres decided to neglect the garden instead although the girls in the family, who stayed at home in those days, cared for it until they married and left home. Gradually it became just too much for the one remaining aunt. The box-edged beds became weedy (both the hedges themselves and the inner planting) the unclipped topiary yews and hedges became huge and straggly obscuring all light from the south windows of the house and the trees in the orchard were never pruned so became unproductive. There was also a vast colony of Japanese knotweed. It was all a dank gloomy wilderness and badly needed light but I admit the JCB was going a bit too far. The Second World War hadn't helped either, because the conservatory had been dismantled to provide glass for the farm buildings and the cast iron seats and ornamental gates were requisitioned to make ammunition.

For about a year after the JCB massacre I didn't know what to do with the unlovely stretch of soil and actually hated looking at it through the windows. In 1977 Davy and I argued fiercely about it for three months. He wanted paving slabs or, horror of horrors, concrete although I think this was a wind-up because he's not as Philistine as that. I wanted grass. I knew I would be the one who had to sweep and clean the wretched paving and I deliberately remained ignorant of the intricate workings of the lawnmower. I won the argument but at a price. The entire months of July and August 1977 I spent picking up the 5 million (or whatever) stones from the area because the paths in the gardens' previous existence had all been dispersed through it. In September I sowed grass and had a fairly decent lawn for Davy to mow the following spring. However my back, which has always bothered me because I'm so tall, became almost unbearably painful the following winter.

In the spring of 1978 I decided to plant a few shrubs inside the hedge on the east side of the garden, mainly to provide greenery for flower arrangements. This was done

with the greatest reluctance and it's a wonder the shrubs survived because my language was foul as I bad-temperedly prepared the soil and then planted them. I ran the full gamut of Anglo-Saxonisms and four-letter words, although there actually aren't that many.

Then ... something magical happened. I suddenly realised one day that the swearing had stopped; that I was acquiring more plants from the one garden centre I knew and two small local nurseries. Friends and relations were giving me plants from their gardens. I had no idea that so much plant trafficking went on. Moreover, like someone who had just fallen in love or is besotted with a new baby, I was thinking about the garden more and more. Long boring meetings and long boring sermons in church provided splendid opportunities for garden planning so that by the autumn of 1978 the meagre border of foliage plants had extended to more than a quarter of the main garden – the only garden as it was then. My mother was overjoyed that the seeds of interest in gardening that she had sown, had germinated at long last. Instead of trailing reluctantly after her as I had done hitherto when she visited gardens I was sometimes leading the way and we visited many gardens during the late spring and summer of 1978.

One visit led me to becoming totally hooked. We went to Castlewellan in August where I saw, and was completely smitten by *Desfontainea spinosa* although it was unlabelled and we had to search many books to identify it. Gardening on limy soil, my mother wasn't familiar with it and thought that it was some kind of holly. She had found hollies difficult enough to propagate from cuttings but she showed me how to take them. I hasten to add that she was extremely reluctant to do so because she had given up her life of gardening crime in 1969 (that was the year when the river in front of her house flooded so badly that it swept away an entire border grown from cuttings taken on her travels). Anyway, the cuttings were stolen and pessimistically prepared. About two months later one had struck and a win on the lottery, even a big one, wouldn't give me half the thrill that success with that cutting did. The adult *Desfontainea spinosa* has had numerous offspring and I have stopped stealing. I've had whole plants lifted from my own garden, to my intense annoyance, so I know how it feels. Anyway there are very few gardeners who will refuse to give one a cutting if asked politely.

In the early years I made dreadful mistakes. From a small local nursery I bought a dozen dwarf rhododendrons which I planted in a rectangular bed 12 feet by 8 feet outside our kitchen window. Just wait for it ... I planted four neat rows with three rhododendrons in each – like cabbages – and then wondered vaguely why there was something not quite right about it. I must have used several tons of peat over the years when I, along with at least 95% of the gardening population of Northern Ireland, didn't realise that there was anything reprehensible about doing so or that peat was a very limited resource. The soil in the garden is cheese/plasticine-like in texture and only copious amounts of peat make it workable. If you've ever tried rolling out pastry or

dough without using flour you'll know what I'm talking about. Anyway I used peat with everything which was fine for rhododendrons but I was puzzled when a peat-laden, richly fertilised carnation refused to thrive.



Two views of Rae's garden taken in June of this year. Photos: P. Tobin

Having dabbled in interior decoration for years before I took up gardening I was very colour conscious but was assured by many experienced gardeners that mixing colours in the garden didn't matter one whit because, in Nature, all colours are found together. So one memorably awful border had orange *calendulas*, pink *Rosa centifolia*, magenta *astilbes*, purple *Campanula glomerata* "Superba", yellow *Rudbeckia* "Goldsturm", salmon pink *Godetia* "Sybil Sherwood", pale pink *Persicaria campanulata* and the unequivocally orange *Lilium lancifolium*. This lily bloomed alongside the cabbage rose. Some people said it was lovely, a real riot of colour. Living in Northern Ireland I wanted nothing to do with riots of any kind but it wasn't until I visited Mount Stewart in 1980, for the first time, that I saw how colours could be matched. Since then I have harmonised and blended and matched flower colours and would say I've got it about 70% right.

Twenty-five years ago people could offload any plant on me and I welcomed them all just to fill up spaces. And how they succeeded! *Lamium maculatum*, *Vinca major*, *Iris foetidissima*, *Sedum album*, *Tanacetum vulgare* and *Lysimachia punctata* are still here and I never can banish them completely. I am still learning how to be as ruthless as all good gardeners seem to be.

By 1984, I had become such a complete plant junkie that I had to extend. Seventy lorry loads of stones were removed from the stackyard and a garden was created there. It gently sloped south and there were no big trees there so I could grow, or try to grow, plants that found the soil in the main garden too rich. However it was never meant to be a Mediterranean garden as someone described it. Not in our cool, wet climate and over the years more and more rhododendrons have taken up residence there. Mediterranean they are not. The white garden was made in 1985; the winter garden in 1986 and the stackyard had two more beds made in 1990 and 1992. There's not much space left anywhere to make more garden which is just as well now that I'm retired, a grandmother and will be getting a bus pass in three years time!

Garden Plants Escape into the Wild! by Sylvia Reynolds

Over the last few centuries thousands of plant species have been deliberately introduced into Ireland from all over the world for horticulture, but only relatively few have then escaped from cultivation. A recent study shows that flowering plants of garden origin make up most of the non-native or alien plants found growing in the wild in Ireland *. The 'wild' means natural and semi-natural habitats such as bogs, grassland and woodland as well as artificial habitats such as urban waste ground. So, how do garden plants find their way into the wild? Any garden plant which produces spores or seeds, and/or which reproduces effectively by vegetative means can, in theory, disperse. However, to thrive outside of cultivation it needs a suitable habitat, be able to compete successfully with native plants and the climate has to be compatible.

Plants can escape by themselves, mainly by self-seeding, or by means of human activities, for example, by being thrown out from gardens. Both self-seeding, Butterfly-bush *Buddleja davidii* and Red Valerian *Centranthus ruber* produce light seeds which are readily dispersed by wind and which lodge in cracks in walls as well as on open ground. Butterfly-bush can be seen among chimneys in Dublin city. Another example is Silver Ragwort *Senecio cineraria*, a Mediterranean plant, now characteristic of the cliffs around Killiney Bay where it also hybridizes with native Ragwort *S. jacobaea*. A packet of seed of Silver Ragwort was sown at Sorrento Cottage about 1875 and the wind-borne seeds escaped and spread, colonizing the cliffs within 25 years.

Two species which also seed freely and are found dominating stretches of riverbank are Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* and Indian Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*. The seeds of Giant Hogweed can probably be spread a short distance by wind, but they are also transported by water along rivers and streams. When people come into direct contact with plants, the tiny hairs on the stems and leaves which contain a toxic sap can cause severe dermatitis, making this species a health hazard. Although an annual, Indian Balsam is also a large plant growing up to 2 metres tall. It has an unusual method of seed dispersal in that the seeds are expelled explosively when the fruits split open. Another kind of dispersal mechanism is shown by Pirri-pirri-burs *Acaena* spp. whose fruits with barbed spines can get stuck in clothing or in animals' fur. This plant is also thrown out of gardens because of its vigorous growth.

A number of other garden escapes are well established and conspicuous in the countryside, such as Traveller's-joy *Clematis vitalba* with its feathery fruits in hedgerows and Giant-rhubarb *Gunnera tinctoria*, particularly noticeable on Achill Island. Recently I was impressed, if that is the right word, by the extent of

Rhododendron ponticum in an area north of Mallaranny in Co. Mayo. The now very large originally planted shrubs, perhaps a hundred years old, could still be seen by an abandoned house and edging a track, but there were also numerous bushes of all ages spreading away from there across boggy ground. *Rhododendron* is a real problem in native oak woods in Ireland.

Birds and other animals are also important in dispersal from gardens, by eating succulent fruits and berries and depositing the seeds elsewhere. Of the many species of Cotoneaster in cultivation, a few are becoming established in natural and semi-natural habitats. One of the common species, Entire-leaved Cotoneaster *Cotoneaster integrifolius*, has been found not only in rocky places and on walls, but also on lake shores, sand dunes, railway banks, roadsides and in woodland. Bird-sown too, Gooseberry *Ribes uva-crispa* is an even more widespread garden escape.

No doubt Montbretia *Crocasmia x crocosmiiiflora*, one of the most distinctive plants in the west of Ireland, was originally discarded because of its vigorous growth in gardens. Potentially each corm can produce a new plant. Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* also spreads vegetatively, by means of thick underground stems, and continues to thrive away from gardens. Its hybrid with Giant Knotweed, *F. sachalinensis*, first described in 1983, appears to be invasive too. Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* spreads by layering from where it was originally planted. It shades out the ground flora and hinders tree regeneration in demesne and semi-natural woodlands. A less invasive shrub is Snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus* which forms dense thickets. Yet other discards, for example Greater Periwinkle *Vinca major*, tend just to persist at their new location. In coastal habitats, escaped Hottentot-fig *Carpobrotus edulis* spreads vegetatively and is capable of blanketing out native vegetation, as it does in places on the south side of Howth.

Many herbaceous plants, such as Soapwort *Saponaria officinalis*, Pink- and Yellow-sorrels *Oxalis* spp. and Yellow Archangel *Lamium galeobdolon* subsp. *argentatum*, become a nuisance in gardens and are thrown out, but they tend not to get into more natural habitats. Originally introduced from Turkey and the Caucasus as a rockery plant, it wasn't long before Slender Speedwell *Veronica filiformis*, a perennial, made its way into lawns and other grassland. It rarely sets seed but when grass is cut, plant fragments are further dispersed and root easily. While some people consider it a weed, others enjoy its bright blue flowers in spring! A pet hate of some gardeners is Mind-your-own-business, *Soleirolia soleirolia*, which also has creeping stems and is difficult to eradicate. This species has become well established elsewhere, often on damp walls and shady banks.

Another means of plant dispersal is with the movement of soil which may contain seeds and plant fragments. A few years ago, many little plants of Japanese Knotweed appeared in newly sown grass verges in Borris-in-Ossory. It is likely that fragments arrived at the new site with soil, but the plants did not survive there due to regular grass

cutting. Much discarded garden material ends up on rubbish dumps. Short-lived plants such as Nasturtium *Tropaeolum majus*, Godetia *Clarkia amoena* and Pot Marigold *Calendula officinalis* may flower and enhance the dumps temporarily, but they are unlikely to persist or spread further.

Of particular concern at present is the escape or potential to escape of aquatic plants from cultivation, including those used for oxygenation such as Curly Waterweed, *Lagarosiphon major*. Not only may they escape accidentally from garden ponds and lakes, but often there are other inconspicuous little plants such as Least Duckweed *Lemna minuta* caught up in them, and these are also then dispersed. Alien aquatic plants have already caused great problems in natural habitats in Britain, in particular New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii* (sometimes sold as *Tillaea recurva*), Parrot's-feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum* and Water Fern *Azolla filiculoides*.

New ornamental plants are being introduced all the time and it is worth noting their vigour in gardens as an indication of what they might do if they escaped into the wild. Of the plants already in cultivation here, which are likely to escape by themselves or spread once discarded - more Bamboo species? *Eucalyptus* trees? Tree-ferns in the south-west? Bulbs? Altar-lily *Zantedeschia aethiopica* from graveyards? Only time will tell.

* Sylvia C.P. Reynolds (2002) *A catalogue of alien plants in Ireland*. Available only from the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 (soft-bound 25 euro, hardback 40 euro).

**Helen Dillon, IGPS Member,
Honoured by Massachusetts Horticultural Society**

Sincerest congratulations to Helen Dillon who was the recipient of the **George Robert White Medal of Honour**, among the highest horticultural awards in America. Helen has been a leading light and inspiration in Irish gardening through her garden, her lectures and her books for many years. While we here in Ireland have enjoyed the pleasure of knowing her and realising her worth it is especially gratifying to see her being honoured by such an esteemed organisation as the Massachusetts Horticultural Society.

I quote from their press release of September last:

“This medal is given once a year to the individual, commercial firm or institution that, in the opinion of the Trustees, has done the most to advance interest in horticulture in its broadest sense. This year’s recipient was Helen Dillon, whose garden in Ireland is world-famous. Travelling the world to collect unusual plants, her ability to combine these plants in terms of colour and texture is manifested in a small home garden. Her lectures in the United States and Europe have inspired thousands of home gardeners and garden designers”.

Ed.

Cyclamen in the Garden by Paul Cutler

My fascination with *cyclamen* started in the late 1970s in Cambridge University Botanic Garden. There were a number of species expertly cultivated there, in the lovely limestone rock garden, woodland garden and alpine house. In the following years my interest increased, working with good collections, studying them on the Alpine Garden Society show benches and at R.H.S. Westminster shows.

Of the twenty or so species in the genus *Cyclamen*, only about eight are considered completely hardy and in Britain I only saw five species generally being grown in the open garden. These were *Cyclamen hederifolium*, *C. cilicium*, *C. coum*, *C. repandum* and *C. purpurascens*, their sub-species and varieties.

On coming to live in Ireland I came to realise that, in its slightly warmer winter climate, several more species could be grown in the open. There are about eight species that would come into slightly tender category. These include *C. balearicum*, *C. creticum*, *C. cyprium*, *C. pseudoibericum* and *C. libanoticum*. These species should be able to take two or three degrees of frost which equates to a temperatures of around - 7°C if they are positioned in a sheltered part of the garden and given adequate drainage.

Pot-grown plants are disappointingly difficult to obtain in Ireland, so the best way of building up a collection is to raise them from seed. Cool, airy, just frost-free conditions are necessary preferably with light shading in summer. The seed of a number of species can be obtained from seed companies and in society seed lists such as that of the Alpine Garden Society. A general seed mix, as you would use to raise herbaceous or annual seeds, will suit the woodland species of cyclamen, adding extra grit for those that require good drainage. I add a small amount of a complete fertiliser, such as Vitax Q4, to the mix because the seedlings will be in this compost for some time.

Raising young cyclamen seems to be more successful if they are left undisturbed for at least one year and sometimes two. Seedlings are only watered when the compost has almost dried out as over wet seedlings are very prone to damping off. The seedlings are kept in growth throughout their first year and pricked out when the tubers are about five to ten millimetres across. These I pot singly into a mix of two parts standard potting compost to one part well-rotted leaf mould. Those needing the extra drainage are given two parts potting compost to one part leaf mould to one part sharp sand or grit. Planting in the garden can be done when the plants are two to three years old.

One of the pleasures of growing a collection of cyclamen is that the flowering of the different species is spread almost throughout the calendar. The following descriptions are of some of the autumn and early winter-flowering species, suitable for the garden. I will cover some of the late winter, spring and summer-flowering species in the next issue.



Cyclamen hederifolium by Paul Cutler

shape and patterning is fascinatingly variable. There are some good named silver-leaved forms. This is a very easy species to raise from seed with two year old seedlings often flowering. Forty to fifty per cent of seed collected from white-flowered plants come true.

Cyclamen cilicium



Cyclamen cilicium by Paul Cutler

Cyclamen hederifolium

In the garden, *C. hederifolium* grows well in a range of conditions from full sun to full shade, as long as it has reasonably good drainage. It will even survive and flower under the deep shade of evergreens but ideal conditions are under deciduous trees in leafy soil, where it can live to a great age and self-propagate.

Flower colour ranges from deep carmine to pale pink and the white form, *C. hederifolium* f. *albiflorum*, is also common. The flowers emerge before the leaves in August and carry on in succession until October, often in great numbers on old established tubers. Leaf

This native of southern Turkey is also fully hardy in Ireland. In nature it grows on rocky mountain slopes in pinewoods and so, in the garden requires good drainage and good light. It will establish in leafy sandy soil in light dappled shade or in a rock garden in light shade or sun.

C. cilicium starts to come into flower before the leaves in late September and continues until early November. It is distinct from *C. hederifolium* in that the petals form a much narrower mouth, giving the flowers a pointed look. The flowers are usually pale pink with a

carmine spot at the mouth. The leaves are round to heart-shaped, attractively marked in deep green, pale green or silver.

C. cilicium is an altogether smaller plant than *C. hederifolium* but a ten year old corm will produce twenty to thirty flowers. It will also produce plenty of viable seed and is easy to raise provided care is taken with watering.

Two other species closely allied to *C. cilicium* are *C. mirabile* and the small-flowered *C. intaminatum*. They need the same growing conditions but *C. mirabile* is sometimes said to be slightly more tender.

Cyclamen cyprium



Cyclamen cyprium by Paul Cutler

This little cyclamen may sometimes get overlooked, as it is not as showy as some others but it does have some very attractive features and is certainly one of my favourites.

It has beautifully-shaped deep green leaves, marbled with pale green, while the backs of the leaves are deep purple. Its flowers are similar to *C. hederifolium* in shape but are always white with a small crimson blotch at the mouth of each petal. They have a delicate violate scent. Its best feature though, is that it flowers in November and December, at time when there is often no other species of cyclamen in flower. It perfectly fills the gap between the species which flower in autumn and those which flower in spring.

C. cyprium is endemic to Cyprus where it grows in woods and rocky places. It is slightly frost tender. In the garden, its small stature and need for good drainage make it best suited to the rock garden. A position under a dwarf tree or shrub will give it light shade in summer and some protection from frost in winter. Some extra protection, such as a covering of fleece, may be advisable if severe frost is forecast.

I find this cyclamen easy from seed, flowering when about three years old.

Paul is charge hand at Altamont Gardens, Co. Carlow and is keenly interested in cyclamen and galanthus.

Don't be Palmed off by Phemie Rose

Why aren't more palms grown in Ireland? For that dramatic focal point in the garden they are hard to beat and some of the species are remarkably hardy. Most like sun and free draining soil and water. Although palms are associated with deserts they only grow in oases where there is water on or near the surface.

At present thirteen palms are growing in our coastal garden here in West Cork, two of which are unnamed (a bit of research to be done here!). Unfortunately palms of any size are quite expensive, but as I feel that I do not have the years to see them reach any degree of maturity from seed it's a case of buying the biggest I think I can afford!

Our first purchase some eight years ago was of three specimens of *Butia capitata* (The Jelly Palm) from Southern Brazil. One was quite a small specimen of some two feet when bought; it is now eight feet tall with a trunk circumference of four feet and has lovely green arching leaves; it has proved to be totally wind and frost hardy to -6°C . The other two *B. capitatas* are very different in colour and habit, one having blue/grey leaves and a delicately arching habit and the other green leaves held stiffly upright. Such is the diversity of the species. A recently purchased *Butia yatay* has a leaf colour similar to *B. capitata* and is thought to be more cold tolerant. We shall have to wait and see.

Phoenix Canariensis (The Date Palm) from the Canary Islands is a fairly fast grower with arching deep green leaves. Mature trunks form a 'pineapple' shape. With us the leaves tend to get a bit burnt at the edges by the salt wind in winter, but quickly recover. It has also survived -6°C .

Brahea armata (The Mexican Blue Palm) is easily the most stunning of the braheas, with circular leaves of a lovely icy blue. It has survived -6°C , but does not like cold winds. Another new palm for us is *Brahea edulis* (The Guadalupe Palm) from California. The leaves are green and of hemispherical shape. Hardiness is as yet untested with us.

Washingtonia robusta (The Thread Palm) from California grows near springs in the desert. The green leaves are fan shaped and do not like strong winds. Not as hardy as its name would suggest. *W. filifera* (which we have not yet acquired!) is reputed to be hardier. Some protection for *W. robusta* in the winter is advisable.

Chamaerops humilis (The European Fan Palm) from the coastal areas of the Mediterranean is a clustering palm with fan shaped leaves and has proved very hardy for us.

Chamaedorea microspadix (The Bamboo Palm) from the foothills of Mexico is aptly named as it has clustering dark green stems with widely spaced whitish rings and narrow leaves up to two feet in length. We grow it in part shade and it came through last winter very well. *Chamaedorea radicalis*, also from Mexico, is most commonly trunk less but occasionally produces a light green ringed stem. It is also growing in part shade and over wintered well.

Jubaea chilensis (Chilean Wine Palm) is another fairly new addition to the collection. In maturity it has a thick trunk tapering towards the top with leaves eight to twelve feet long. It suits Zones 9-11. *Caryota mitis* (The Fish Tailed Palm) is also a clustering palm with triangular light green leaves suitable for Zones 10b-11. This has been planted on the patio in a sheltered position and wrapped up well for the winter. It may survive. It is just too big for the greenhouse.

Waiting in the wings (in the greenhouse) for planting in the spring are *Sabal palmetto* (The Cabbage Palmetto). It grows in low swampy areas and along streams and rivers in the United States. It can grow to eighty feet, despite its name being a corruption of the Spanish word for 'little palm'. It is reputedly a very hardy species but must have an adequate and regular water supply which is not a problem in West Cork! Also waiting to make their debut are *Rhopalostylis sapida* (The Feather Duster Palm) and *Archontophoenix alexandrae* (The Alexander King Palm). *R. sapida* hails from New Zealand and the Chatham Islands so should prove to be cold tolerant. When mature it has a ringed slender trunk with leaves emerging from a bulbous swelling at the top of the trunk. *A. alexandrae* from Queensland, Australia grows into a tall palm with a slightly bulbous base and beautiful arching leaves six to ten feet long. It best suits Zones 10b-11 and so will need a sheltered spot.

Livistona decipiens (The Fountain Palm) was over wintered outside in a pot and did not like our climate at all, so has had to be brought into the greenhouse for some TLC. Hopefully it will recover enough to be garden worthy.

Spring planting of palms works best in West Cork allowing the plants to settle in during the warm months and build themselves up to withstand the windy winter. I have found that autumn planting of evergreens results in defoliation and wind rock from which they take all summer to recover.

Tying in the leaves of the larger palms in the autumn to prevent them being tossed about by the wind has proved very beneficial. Even in Mediterranean countries they are tied up for the winter. The smaller, most recently planted, palms benefit from being wrapped in green windbreak material with bamboos to add strength. Fleece I have found retains too much moisture.

So don't be palmed off, go out and buy yourself a palm. You won't regret it.

If you would like to read more about palms I would recommend the following:

An Encyclopaedia of Cultivated Palms.

By Robert Lee Riffle & Paul Craft. ISBN 0-088192-558-6

Published by Timber Press

This is a great reference book with lots of good colour photographs and descriptions. As well as tropical and sub-tropical palms it includes many species that can withstand freezing. Extensive listing of palms with special characteristics, such as drought tolerance, salt tolerance, ground cover & water loving. Also notes on seed germination. Altogether an excellent book.

The Curvilinear Range at Glasnevin



The Curvilinear range in the Botanic Gardens Glasnevin, Photo: Seamus O'Brien.

The curvilinear range of glasshouses is currently undergoing restoration and when complete will again house, inter alia, the palm collection of the Botanic Gardens and will be the place to visit to see these plants growing in the most suitable conditions than we can provide for them in Ireland.

Woodland Gardening at Glasnevin by Seamus O'Brien

Woodland plants, it seems are very much in vogue at the moment, bringing a host of obscure, yet highly worthy plants into the limelight. A sign of this was in the spring of 2002 when the Alpine Garden Society staged the most amazing display of woodland plants in the floral marquee at the Chelsea Flower Show. The exhibit, without a doubt was the most interesting exhibit there and it certainly made a refreshing change from the usual alpine displays.

Across the show grounds in another marquee was our own entry, the silver-gilt award winning "Augustine Henry - An Irish Plant Collector in China". The exhibit was visited by the Duke of Edinburgh and one of the plants he particularly admired was *Cardiocrinum giganteum* var. *yunnanense*. This is just one of the many good plants donated to Glasnevin by the society and Bord Glas once the exhibit had been shown in Dublin after its return from London.

I could talk of the giant Himalayan lily at length and have done in the past, but this year two of the Chelsea plants flowered at Glasnevin for the first time and so feel justified in giving yet another sermon on this vegetable giant. To recap on *Cardiocrinum*, the more commonly seen plant in gardens is the type plant, i.e. *Cardiocrinum giganteum*, which was introduced to cultivation by Madden from the Himalaya through the Royal Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin in 1847. This giant, stately beauty has a large geographical range on the forested slopes of the Himalaya, from Kashmir, Bhutan, and Nepal in the west to south-east Tibet and the extreme north-western border of Yunnan province in the east.

In its wild native haunts this very provocative plant makes a spectacular show. In July 2001 as we climbed through forests of *Pinus armandii* and *Betula utilis* on Showa, a mountain range near the Indian border in south-east Tibet, we stumbled across a steep sided glade adorned with hundreds of soaring spikes fully in flower. The Indian monsoon had just days before crossed the Himalaya into Tibet and we were all soaked to the skin. Yet, a sight such as this made it worth the struggle, even our porters and Sherpas were dazzled by the amazing scene in front of us. In the foreground hundreds of giant lilies soared skywards fully five metres tall, their giant trumpet-like flowers filled the valley with a delicate fragrance. Above was a canopy of *Betula utilis*, its polished mahogany bark peeling in strips. In the far distance jagged snow clad mountain peaks reached for the heavens. Such a scene can never be transplanted into our gardens, yet whenever I see this plant in flower it brings back memories of the magical atmosphere of that distant Tibetan valley. How did Madden feel, I wonder, when he stumbled across it in northern India?

Travelling east into the provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan and Hubei one meets a slightly different plant. *Cardiocrinum giganteum* var. *yunnanense* differs from its Himalayan counterpart in a number of features. The most obvious are the rich burgundy-purple stems, the bronze tinted young foliage and the variety's habit of opening its flowers from the bottom of the spike upwards as opposed to the type which does it in reverse. The seed capsules of both plants differ. The variety was discovered

in 1886 by Henry in the mountains to the north of the tiny village of Liantuo (formerly Nanto) in Yichang County, Hubei, not far from the dam on the Yangtze, and he met with it again in the mountains near Mengzi in southern Yunnan ten years later. On the Glasnevin trip, Jimi Bake found it in Badong County above the three gorges.

Having flowered this dramatic yet subtle beauty I feel as though I've passed another milestone in horticulture, yet *Cardiocrinum* is not a difficult plant to grow once a few basic rules are followed. Stocks of both lilies have built up nicely over the past few years and it now flowers annually in the woodland garden at Glasnevin.

This area, located in the mill field opposite the rose garden, has matured well over the last few years though, like most other gardeners, I am never totally happy with my own work and envisage several changes this winter again. Last winters floods made this task impossible so there is plenty of catching up to do. Despite the warm summer this area stood up to dry spells very well this year

Choosing plants for the right situation in a woodland garden is important. In the bone dry areas beneath evergreen trees we have planted old stalwart domestic plants like *Trachystemon orientale*, *Vinca minor*, *Euphorbia amagdaloides* var. *Robbie*, the *Lithodora*-like *Buglossoides purpureocaerulea*, *Asarum caulescens*, *Asarum europaeum*, *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Betty Bowring' (white flowers) *Duchesnia indica*, *Fatsia japonica*, *Symphytum ibericum*, *Chelidonium majus*, *Convallaria majalis* and its pink flowered var. *rosea*, *Aspidistra lurida* and *Galium odoratum*.

Many of the cranesbills are good in this sort of difficult situation. Perhaps the best is *Geranium nodosum*, a dainty little plant, which in summer months carrying myriads of lilac-purple flowers. Any of the *Geranium phaeum* cultivars are also good subjects for relatively dry shade and a good number grow in the woodland giving a great show each summer. Shades vary from pure white in *Geranium phaeum* 'Album' to a wonderful blue-grey in 'Lily Lovell' to almost black in 'Mourning Widow'.

Stipa arundinacea, the New Zealand pheasant grass is I think one of the most versatile of all plants and will grow in just about any situation. The woodland is jammed packed with all my favourites and yet I still find room for even more. To bring such a muddle together the garden design people tell us to repeat groups of one particular plant. One of the advantages of *Stipa* is that it is not fond of nutrient rich soil and will tolerate dry shade. In the woodland this graceful grass is repeated en masse and it certainly does add an element of cohesion to a large assemblage of different plants.

I like to get as much out of a square metre of ground as possible. Beneath an old gnarled *Magnolia x soulangeana* I have planted for spring effect, *Pulmonaria saccharrata* 'Cotton Cool', which has striking aluminium coloured foliage, *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Langtrees', with silver splashed heart shaped foliage, *Omphalodes verna* 'Alba' and *Anemone nemerosa* 'Viridiflora', a real curiosity as the flowers are like delicate tufts of green leaves. *Galanthus* 'Uptcher' emerges through the white flowers of the *Omphalodes* while *Sanguinaria canadensis* 'Multiplex' is worth the year's wait for its one week display. The real jewel here however is *Helleborus x ballardiae*, (*H. niger* x *H. lividus*) named for Helen Ballard. This little plant carries more than its fair

share of pure white flowers each year. This year for the first time I see flowers emerging on its near neighbour, *Helleborus x nigercors*, (*H. argutifolius* x *H. niger*). *H. niger*, the Christmas rose, is a difficult plant to grow in some gardens and easy in others.

That little show beneath the magnolia tires in early summer and so the season is extended with *Calanthe tricarinata*, a hardy Himalayan orchid and *Aquilegia* 'Cottage Garden'. Through the magnolia is trained a tricoloured *Lonicera periclymenum*, the familiar honeysuckle. Normally tricoloured plants look sickly, but here is an exception; its flowers contrast beautifully with its foliage. In autumn the honeysuckle's place is taken by the rambling stems of *Aconitum hemsleyanum*, thus giving one small area a long season of colour without looking too contrived.

Corydalis flexuosa, despite its appearance, is child's play to grow given the correct situation and a top-dressing of well decayed mix of leaf mould, shredded bark and grit when it dies back in spring. This is an ideal plant to follow on from summer-flowering perennials. It's growing season is from late autumn through to late spring and so it is planted in repeated masses in the woodland beneath plants like *Polygonatum verticillatum*, *Roscoea auriculata* and *Hosta* 'June', for example. The A.M. form has wine-coloured foliage and flowers earlier; 'Nightshade' too, has wine-splashed foliage and mauve and purple spurred flowers. 'Balang Mist', a Christopher Grey-Wilson plant, is a new pale blue flowered selection. *Corydalis flexuosa* is native to Sichuan province in western China and was spotted by members of the Glasnevin expedition on Emei Shan on a mossy slope beneath *Acer davidii*. It is now self seeding at Glasnevin, a sign it is happy there.

Corydalis lutea is an easy to grow plant; I got one plant a few years back from Rose Sevastopulo, only for it to be washed down river by the October 2000 flood. Fortunately, some ants had kindly transported seeds to another corner (some species of *Corydalis* carry pockets of protein on their seeds to attract ants, thus aiding distribution). *Corydalis cheilanthifolia* is another easy to grow yellow flowered species bearing finely dissected fern like foliage, hence the specific epithet. It is short lived but self seeds freely, though less so in a dry situation. *Corydalis ochroleuca* bears creamy-white flowers in spring. Some people rave about this plant but I find its flowers a bit feeble so I allow one plant to flower and set seeds while I cut the others back hard and grow them simply for their handsome finely-cut silver foliage. *Corydalis sempervirens* is a North American annual bearing silvery-blue foliage and purple and yellow flowers in late summer and autumn. It reappears each year without fail. *Corydalis solida* I rate almost as highly as *C. flexuosa*. In early spring it bears salmon-pink flowers and recedes before its place is taken by hostas.

There is a long history of growing hellebores at Glasnevin and once again there is a fine selection of both species and cultivars on display. Alas, I have learned from experience not to label the more precious types or many of the snowdrops for that matter as theft is one of the problems of any public collection and labelling tends only to accentuate the problem.

I have planted all the species in one border for two reasons. Firstly, since we are here for educational purposes, students can make comparisons during the flowering

season and secondly, since hellebores are so promiscuous it is interesting to see what sort of hybrids might appear in the many self-sown seedlings. I grow the Beech Park form of *Helleborus lividus*, a superb selection of this Majorcan endemic which is lower growing and more floriferous than the plants normally seen in cultivation. It crosses easily with the Corsican *Helleborus argutifolius* to make *H. x sternii* though it has not done so at Glasnevin so I may have to move my plant closer.

Helleborus x sternii is a fertile hybrid first noticed in the garden of Sir Frederick Stearn at Highdown in Sussex. This cross combines the vigour of *H. argutifolius* with all the refinement of *H. lividus* and self-seeds sparingly true-to-type. 'Blackthorn Strain' is a fine selection with compact growth, silver-suffused foliage and pink-flushed flowers.

Helleborus torquatus is a variable species and has been crossed with *H. orientalis* to create the black-purple *H. x hybridus* types. I have planted a few forms of this species with *H. atrorubens* and *H. purpurascens* and wait patiently for crossed seedlings to flower. *Helleborus thibetanus* is an interesting disjunct species, discovered in Boaxing (formerly Moupin) in Sichuan by the French Basque missionary, Armand David in March 1869 but was only introduced to cultivation in recent years. Initially there was great interest in this species then a wane as growers expressed disappointment in its poor flowering habit. This species needs time to establish itself and from then on it puts on a spectacular display. It first flowered in Ireland at Glasnevin.

Moving into the greens, *Helleborus odoratus*, from the Balkans is a vigorous plant with large scented flowers. It has been crossed with *H. orientalis* to create yellow flowered hybrids with outward facing, rather than pendant, flowers. *H. cyclophyllus*, from Greece, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslavia, is a fine large yellow-green flowered species with a scent like *Ribes sanguineum*. It breeds with *H. orientalis* and has been used to create some of the better yellow flowered hybrids. The smallest of all hellebores is the dainty *H. dumetorum* from Eastern Europe. It is always one of the first species to flower and so misses being cross pollinated by others around it. *Helleborus viridis* is the most widespread of all these green flowered species and will grow in situations where others would fail.

Helleborus foetidus is too well known to need description here but is one of the most handsome of all at any time of year. *H. versicarius* is the black sheep of the family; rarely seen in gardens, its rather insignificant flowers appear in autumn followed by inflated bladder-like seed heads in May and June. If you have room for only one green hellebore then go for *Helleborus multifidus* ssp. *hercegovinus*, quite a mouthful I know, but for its finely dissected foliage it is worth any amount of care. I somehow think that my namesake, *Helleborus x hybridus* 'Seamus O'Brien' (raised by Will Mc Lewin of Phedar Nurseries) has a mix of *H. multifidus* ssp. *hercegovinus* and *H. torquatus*. This cultivar bears small deep burgundy flowers and finely serrated foliage. It has bulked up nicely here and should flower this spring.

And then there is the galaxy of hybrids all conveniently grouped under *H. x hybridus*. The true *H. orientalis* is a rare plant in cultivation; we grow it and the handsomely spotted ssp. *Guttatus* together. I grow all the deep purple shades together

behind a colony of *Bergenia purpurascens* 'Irish Crimson' by then turned beetroot by winter frosts. Hellebores are prolific self-seeders and by starting out with good parent stock good offspring is guaranteed.

Snowdrops are such an addiction and I look forward to their season each year. Just finished flowering (early December) is the Greek *Galanthus reginae-olgae* ssp. *corcyrensis*. This is a tough little fellow; it continued to flower for weeks on end after the November floods of 2002, having been submerged beneath half a metre of water. Many of the Irish cultivars are represented here, 'David Shackleton', 'Hill Poe' and 'Straffan', for example.

Shrubs that form the backbone of this area include a fine two metre tall *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill', *Rosa moyesii* 'Geranium', *Rosa sericea* f. *pteroantha*, (used as a substitute for barbed wire fencing in western China) *Garrya elliptica* 'James Roof', *Paeonia rockii* 'He Ping Lian', *Rubus cockburnianus* 'Golden Vale', (gold foliage in summer to brighten a dark corner and ghostly silver stems for winter effect) *Ilex aquifolium* 'Argentea Pendula', *Nandina domestica* 'Nana', *Hypericum augustinii* and *Strobilantes penstemonoides*. There are Japanese maples of course and lime-tolerant rhododendrons like *R. decorum*, *R. yunnanense*, (most of the triflorum series are tolerant of a high ph.) and *R. williamsianum*. A mature canopy is provided by existing trees of *Ginkgo biloba*, *Torreya californica*, *Thuja plicata*, *Quercus ilex* and *Populus x robusta*, for example. The poplar towers above the canopy of other trees and in spring is host to an enormous violet carpet of the parasitic tooth wort, *Lathyræa clandestina*.

To add a deciduous element I have added *Magnolia liliflora*, *M. hypoleuca*, *M. x proctoriana* and a new species of white berried *Sorbus* from Tibet. Rambling through the trees in places are climbers like *Holboellia coriacea* and *Akebia trifolia*. Irish cultivars growing in this part of the garden include *Acanthus spinosus* 'Lady Moore', *Iris pallida* 'Phylis Moore', *Geranium x oxonianum* 'Lady Moore', *Paeonia* 'Emodoff', *Garrya x issaquahensis* 'Pat Ballard', *Luma apiculata* 'Glanleam Gold', *Dactylothiza elata* 'Glasnevin', *Helleborus x hybridus* 'Graigueconna', *Omphalodes cappadocica* 'Starry Eyes' *Rodgersia* 'Irish Bronze', *Symphytum x uplandicum* 'Axminster Gold' and our own *Deutzia purpurascens* 'Alpine Magician' to mention a few.

As an aside, I wonder when was the last time the society had any of these cultivars available at the annual sales in Belfast, Cork or Dublin? Charles Nelson, in his "Heritage of Beauty," has provided us with an encyclopaedic list of the many good cultivars raised on this island, yet year after year only a handful of them appear on the sales table. The society should remember what it initially set out to do – to locate, propagate and distribute those plants of Irish origin. The annual sales are not just about fund raising. The society seems to be failing miserably in one of its primary aims. The Irish Garden Plant Society does do good work in other areas but needs to take a serious look at this problem.

To finish, a tour of the woodland garden is one of the events planned for the plantsman's day in Glasnevin this March, see the flyer for details.

Turlough – A Victorian Experiment

by Noreen Hennigan and Belinda Jupp

The National Museum of Ireland's newly established Museum of Country Life is at Turlough Park, near Castlebar, Co. Mayo. For over three hundred years, until 1991, Turlough Park was the home of the Fitzgerald family. The museum now occupies their 1865 house, together with purpose-built extensions. The surrounding 16ha of former demesne land is owned by Mayo County Council and is open as a public park. There are remnants of both the parkland landscape for the 1772 house (a handsome ruin) and the Victorian gardens for the later house. Funding to revive the grounds was assisted by the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme and FAS.

Fine trees and many shrubs flourished on the site but there were no surviving herbaceous plants. Attracted by a plan of a 'hardy plant border' in the December 8th 1883 edition of the journal *Gardening Illustrated* (illustrated below), we decided in 1999 to try to replicate the border as an experiment. It would be a way of providing an authentic border of the late Victorian period, as we had no evidence of what plants were actually grown in a sheltered and sunny spot beside the lean-to vinery (possibly by Turner). By coincidence, the plan was an exact fit for the piece of ground available. As can be seen, the border is intended to provide interest throughout a long period of spring, summer and autumn. Bulbs and small plants 'not indicated on the plan' could be added as fillers and to extend the season. This was another asset, as Turlough Park is open all the year round.

It was a fascinating exercise in detective work to interpret the plan, as the naming of the plants is inconsistent. It shows a fine mix of Latin and common names, some with very specific varieties and colours and some with none. Name changes over the years added to the complexity. For example, *Antennaria tomentosa* is now *A. dioica* var. *hyperborean*; *Iris ochroleuca* is now *I. orientalis*; *Leucanthemum maximum* is now *L. x superbum* and 'Double Ulmaria' must be meadowsweet, *Filipendula ulmaria* 'Flore Pleno'. What is St Bruno's lily? It is *Paradisea liliastrum*, the lily with grass-like leaves and scented white funnel-shaped flowers. *Myosotis dissitiflora* still remains a mystery.

At the outset, the area was overgrown with laurel, apple trees, self-seeded ash and part of a fallen *Thuja plicata*. However there was a rose arbour at the entrance nearest the house and a beautifully made iron gate at the back avenue end, both of which were in good condition. It was planned to reinstate the overgrown path leading from one to the other and place matching beds on either side. On Monday 20th March 2000 we set about cleaning the area. The first problem to be encountered was that the back avenue level was higher than that of the bed area and when it rained water ran off, flooding a section of potential bed. We decided to dig a soak pit and dug down 75cm, filling the

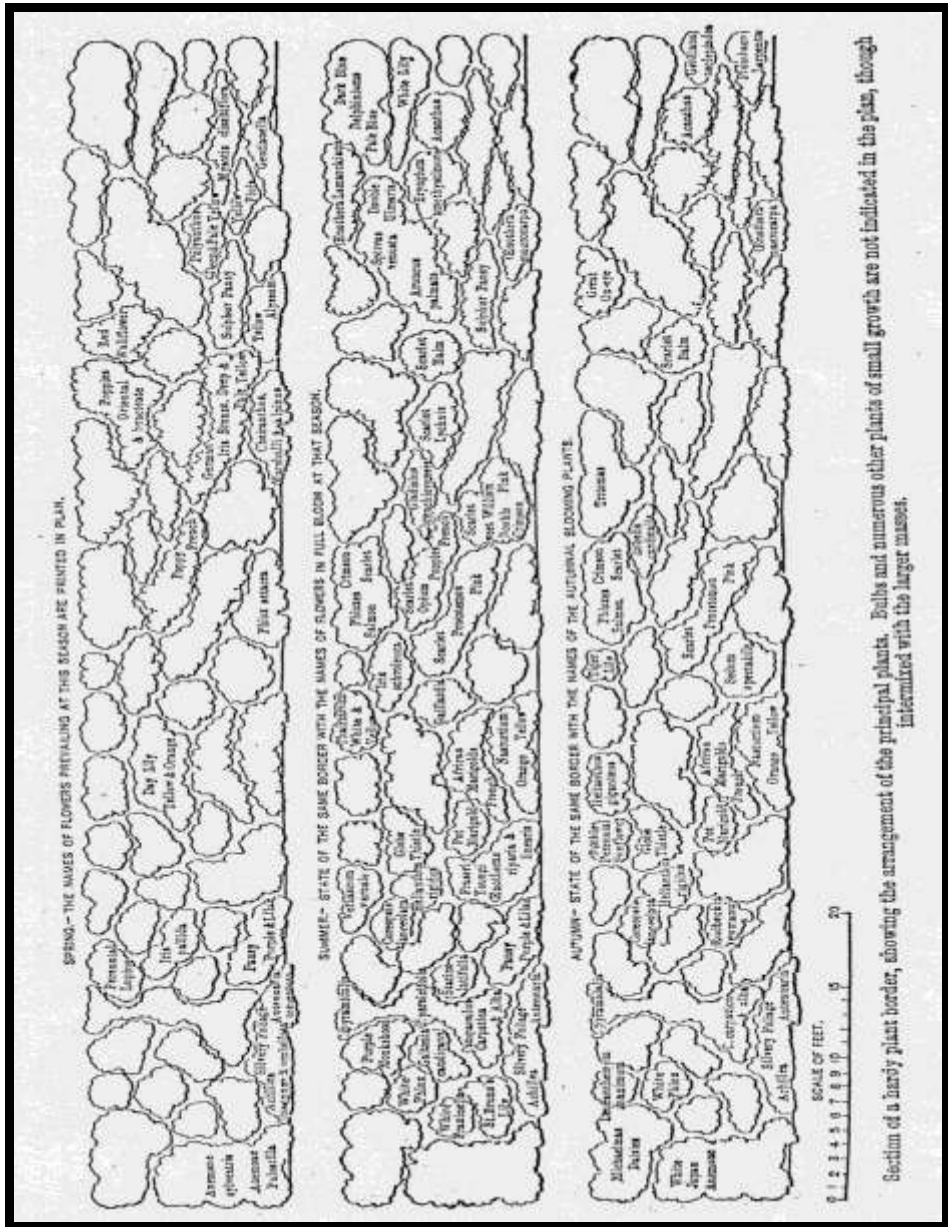
hole with stone and chip and then back-filled the pit with soil. On 27th March, having solved our drainage problem, we added well rotted farmyard manure to the entire area. Wheelbarrow load after wheelbarrow load was added to the ground that had been double-dug. The beds were then left over the spring.

At this stage it was realised that finding the plants was probably going to be the most difficult part of the project. The RHS *Plant Finder* became a bible. It not only gave the old plant names along side the new ones but was an easy indicator of availability. At the time it was difficult to source many of the plants locally, as herbaceous beds are not as popular as they once were and a very limited stock of plants was offered for sale. Many of our plants were bought from further afield or grown from seed. Little by little we were able to see the wish-list getting smaller. It was unavoidable that a few plants were replaced with alternative old varieties or new ones, as some from 120 years ago have been lost. Fortunately there are several very old varieties of '*Nasturtium*' (*Tropaeolum majus*) still obtainable but none of 'Pansy' or 'Red Wallflower', so modern substitutes had to be used.

In the meantime, we rotovated the area to mix in the FYM and to break up the heavy (neutral) soil. We returned to work the area on 29th August and dug it over again. The site was left alone until 18th October, when we edged the path with 1cm x 10cm treated timber. Behind the timber we raised an area of c.10cm and 60cm wide on either side. We then enclosed them with timber for a grass border in front of the beds. Local gravel was used on the path to allow for easy walking.



The Borders at Turlough. Photo: Belinda Jupp



This plan shows three views of the bed featuring the flowers which prevail at each season.

Section of a heavy plant border, showing the arrangement of the principal plants. Bulbs and numerous other plants of small growth are not indicated in the plan, though intermixed with the larger masses.

We began to plant the first arrivals in November 2000 and commenced again in the spring of 2001. The museum was officially opened on 9th September 2001, by which time the display was beginning to look impressive. We have continued to plant and replace as needed but we have been happy with the result and our visitors comment favourably on the area.

Though small, the border is eye-catching and always interesting, as colour begins in spring and lasts well into the autumn. The replicated border has proved a worthwhile experiment at Turlough Park and could also be adapted for other sites, using more easily obtainable modern plant varieties, to make a colourful contemporary three-season border.

Noreen Hennigan is the Head Gardener at Turlough and Belinda Jupp is an Historic Garden Consultant based in Belfast.

New Orchid Book by Paddy Tobin

Some five to six years ago Susan Sex was engaged in painting many of the tropical flowers in the glasshouses in Glasnevin. In discussion with Brendan Sayers she wondered if the native Irish orchids did not deserve a similar treatment. From such a simple beginning a breath-taking project grew which will shortly lead to the publication of what will surely rank as one of the most beautiful horticultural books to have ever been produced in Ireland.

Susan's initial intention was simply to produce a portrait of each of the Irish orchids, a series of paintings of Irish interest. Soon after, it developed into a much grander venture. Golf-playing husband, Vincent, pointed out that she need go no further than the Portmarnock Golf Course for her first subjects. Indeed there were eight species to be found there, something Vincent rather proudly points as one of the great side benefits of golf courses. They are places, he suggests, where much of our native fauna can exist in an unthreatened habitat and continue to be both preserved and available to the botanist, botanic artist and nature enthusiast at the same time.

The searches for other specimens involved field trips to all corners of the country and many visits to the Burren where 18/19 of our native species may be found. The search for some of the rarer species meant trekking to remote mountainous areas and the location of some of the tinier species was quite difficult. Special licences had to be obtained on occasion to allow the collection of material. Along with the difficulty of locating specimens was the difficulty that many of the orchid species are fleeting in their flowering period and their painting sometimes meant making a start in one year,

leaving it for a year and coming back to it in the following season when the orchid once again came into flower.

By January 2000, Susan had a series of eight paintings completed and decided to show them at one of the Royal Horticultural Society shows in London. Each subsequent group of eight was also shown in London and the excellence of Susan's work was rewarded with a Silver Gilt and three Gold Medals, a truly outstanding achievement.

During the course of the five years spent painting these portraits it became obvious that there was a valuable collection of work in the making. It was decided that here was the core of a book of lasting value and Brendan began writing the text to accompany the illustrations. As work progressed, Vincent and Brendan thought of keeping the original paintings together as a collection. Following the publication of such a book, the original paintings are normally sold to various corporations, businesses or individuals with the result that the work is broken up and lost as a unit. It was decided to try to keep the collection together as a resource in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. This preservation of the entire collection of the original paintings is perhaps one of the greatest achievements for Susan, Vincent and Brendan.

Vincent took on the task of organising sponsorship and finance for this project, initially designing a package which would be attractive to the corporate sector. He also approached individuals for pre-publication finance. He suggested to various business groups that they sponsor one painting of the forthcoming book. The future of this painting would then be secured and it would be held in the Botanic Gardens. The sponsors' generosity would be acknowledged whenever the paintings went on display. Each sponsor will receive a bound copy of the book especially presented in a leather-bound box and also a full set of limited edition prints, also held in a leather-bound box, making a matching set. To date, as I write, twenty five of the thirty five plates have been sponsored at a cost of €3,500 each. How heart-warming to see that Irish businesses are willing to contribute to worthy causes. These sponsors will be listed in the book.

Preparations for the printing of the book are well under way and the launch is planned for May 2004.

Thank You for your Time and Work.

The Plant Sales, North and South, were both very successful this year. This is entirely due to the hard work of the organisers, those who sold at the stalls and especially those who provided plants for the sales. The Plant Sales are the only source of income that the society has besides the subscription fees and, as such, are very important to the work of the society. The National Committee would like to express their thanks to everybody involved in the Plant Sales. Of course, it is now time to start propagating for next year!

Worth a Read by Mary Bradshaw and Paddy Tobin

“**Dermot Gardens**” By Dermot O'Neill (Poolbeg Press Ltd., €14.99)

Dermot O'Neill, a founder member of the I.G.P.S. is a well-known Irish gardening personality who has been gardening on television for the past twenty-one years. He believes that gardening is accessible to everyone and this, his latest book, is a manual useful for amateur and more advanced gardener alike.

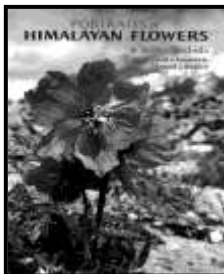


All aspects of Irish gardening are dealt with from Soil and Equipment to Pests and Diseases. An extra-long chapter on Roses includes a list of his favourites, plus his own special Blackspot and Mildew remedy. This is an excellent read, very suitable for the Xmas Stocking or the New Year Book Token!

Congratulations, Dermot, from the I.G.P.S.

Mary Bradshaw.

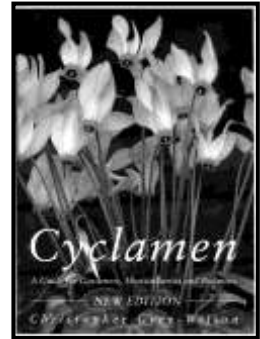
The Himalayan Garden, Growing Plants from the Roof of the World by Jim Jermyn (Timber Press, 2001). If you have had the pleasure of listening to Jim Jermyn presenting a talk you will know that here is a man with an encyclopaedic grasp of his subject. With the experience of working in Ingwersens Nursery, Munich Botanic Gardens, The Schachen Garden in southern Germany and running Edrom Nurseries for many years he brings a depth of knowledge to this book. He covers a wide range of plants with particular attention given to gentians, rhododendrons, saxifrages, primulas and androcaces. These are dealt with according to their location in the Himalaya whether in the temperate, subalpine or alpine zones. The photographs are excellent, the descriptions of the plants and the locations in which they naturally grow are detailed and the guidelines for growing the plants, the essence of the book, are remarkably helpful. An absolutely excellent book.



Another book on Himalayan plants, **Portraits of Himalayan Flowers** by Toshio Yoshida ((Timber Press, 2002) is similarly excellent. This is a photographer's book, in A4 format, with mainly full page photographs of the wide range of plants in the Himalayas. Page after page simply draws gasps of admiration at the beauty which is before one. The flowers are, obviously, photographed in their natural surroundings with the majestic scenery of the Himalaya around them, mountains, blue skies, fleeting clouds and even yaks grazing among meadows of primulas. This is one to make the plantperson's saliva run.

During the past year I have read a number of books which dealt in greater depth with one genus or family of plants and have found that they were tremendous as they contained a wider and deeper range of information on the plants in question and so were indeed a learning experience for this reader.

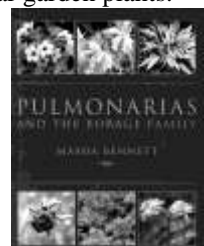
Cyclamen, A Guide for Gardeners, Horticulturalist and Botanists, New Edition by Christopher Grey-Wilson (Batsford, 2002) was one such book. This provides a completely revised and updated edition of the most comprehensive study of the genus *Cyclamen* ever undertaken. The twenty two known species, and a wide range of varieties and cultivars, are described in detail and well illustrated with clear photographs and explanatory diagrams. Despite his learned background the author avoids the use of jargon making the book comfortably accessible to the amateur while still remaining authoritative enough for the expert. There are excellent guidelines on cultivation both in the garden and under glass. This is just the book for someone who would like to extend their knowledge of and build up their collection of *Cyclamen*.



Robert Nold, who gardens in Colorado, has previously written a monograph on the genus *Penstemon*, for which he received an “Outstanding Academic Book” award. Fresh from that achievement he turned his attention to another much-loved group of garden plants: **Columbines: Aquilegias, Paraquilegias and Semiaquilegias** (Timber Press 2003). In this he treats the sixty five species of *aquilegias*, giving their cultivation needs, history and biology and gives the columbine cousins, *Semiaquilegias* and *Paraquilegias* a similar treatment. The book is beautifully illustrated by his wife, Cindy Nold and also has many exquisite photographs though I find fault with the fact that the photographs are grouped together in one place and not spaced out through the book to accompany the text. This family of plant is very popular with gardeners and this is a book would be read with interest by any who choose to purchase it. A good read and handy reference.

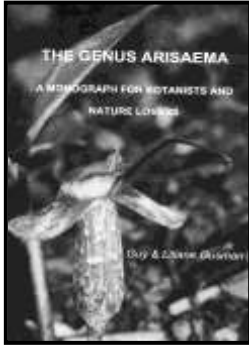


Masha Bennett, a Russian-born botanist is obviously a devoted enthusiast of members of the borage family and this comes through in her book, **Pulmonarias and the Borage Family** (Batsford 2003). *Pulmonarias*, with their great range of leaf shapes and patterns along with their pleasant flower colours, are very popular garden plants. *The pulmonaria* species are described in detail in the book as are the forms, cultivars and hybrids. This section, however, constitutes only one third of the book. It struck me that Masha had, perhaps, used the *pulmonarias* as a bait to attract the reader and then lead them to the other beauties of the borage family and beauties indeed many of them are as they excellent photographs illustrate. Though some are familiar plants, *Symphytum*, *Onosma*, *Omphaloides*,



Myosotis, *Mysotidium* and *Mertensia*, for example, she certainly extends my knowledge of these and others describing a range of species within each genus. If the *pulmonarias* and the borage family are your passion you will certainly enjoy this book. The text is clearly written, concise and well illustrated with good photographs and line drawings.

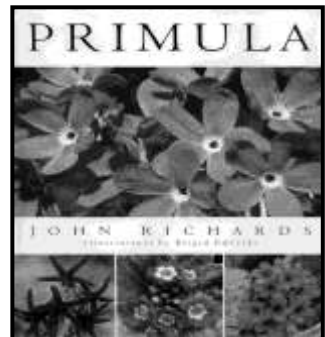
For lovers of the truly beautiful and delightful *arisaemas* **The Genus Arisaema, A Monograph for Botanists and Nature Lovers** by Guy and Liliane Gusman (A.R.G. Gantner Verlag KG 2002) is indispensable. It is written by two



scientists of the Université Libre de Bruxelles who seem to have a love affair with the genus and this is reflected in the book both in the systematic and thorough manner of the book and in the obvious enthusiasm which infects it. An early chapter on the morphology of the genus gives an excellent overview of these plants and leads on to their use in medicine and science, through their growth in the garden and in the wild, to the systematics of the genus to the descriptions of the individual species and its variations in each section of the genus. Not only are the photographs excellent; they are used with great precision to illustrate the text. These are complimented by very clear illustrations which show the

slight differences between some species and between variations within some species. Photographs of herbarium specimens are used to show the type specimen of various species. This is an outstanding text on a fascinatingly beautiful genus; a brilliant book. Watch out for the revised edition due out in 2004.

In **Primula** (Batsford 2002) John Richards has brought his 1993 definitive reference work on *primulas* right up to date and includes new information on most of the species along with extra illustrations. The book, in A4 format, includes practical information on the cultivation of the species, their evolution and the latest information from DNA analysis. However the main body of the book provides a systematic treatment of each species which includes a detailed description, its distribution, habitat, variations, cultivation and hybridisation. This is truly a comprehensive treatment of the genus primula, illustrated with over one hundred drawings and photographs including paintings by the award-winning botanical illustrator Brigid Edwards. Unfortunately, with the exception of some line drawings scattered through the book, all the coloured illustrations and photographs are grouped together in the centre which means flicking back and forth between text and picture, something I found a bit of a nuisance. Despite that, this is an outstanding book; a definitive work which would fuel even further the interest there already exists in this popular genus.



SNIPPETS

- It is with regret that we heard of the recent death of **Mrs. Cicily Hall, of Primrose Hill**, Lucan. Many of the members will have met Mrs. Hall while visiting the gardens in the spring for the annual display of snowdrops. We extend our sympathy to the family.
- **The Garden and Landscape Designers Association** has organised a seminar of exceptional interest for Saturday, February 14th at University College Dublin, entitled: “**Making the Earth Move, An Exploration of Site Generated Design**”. The key speaker will be **John Brookes** and also contributing will be **Raymond Jungles** from Florida, **Vladimir Sitta**, with a practice in Sydney and Perth, and **Nori and Sandra Pope** of the famous colour garden at Hadspen House, Somerset. This seminar is open to the public – **contact** Koraley Northen at 01-2781824, Fax. 01-2835724 or E-mail info@gllda.ie Tickets cost €125, Students €85 and include lunch and light refreshments.
- **Snowdrop Week at Altamont** Gardens is from Mon. 9th – Sun. 15th Feb. Tours start at 2pm each day from the car park. Ph. 059 9159444. This was a great success last year, both from the garden’s point of view and also from that of the visitors. Well worth making a note of this event.
- Recently spotted: *Rosmarinus officinalis* ‘**Mc Connell’s Variety**’, an Irish cultivar, at the National Garden Exhibition Centre, Kilquade. Nice to see some Irish cultivars appearing through the mainstream garden trade.
- **Plantsman’s Day at National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. March 6th.**
Talks and walks by leading Plants people.
 - 10.00 a.m. Registration
 - 10.30a.m. Denizens of the Shade, Woodland Gardening, Talk by Seamus O Brien of the National Botanic Gardens.
 - 11.30a.m. Tales from the land of the Haka, Moa and the Poor Knight Lily – New Zealand’s adaptable plants. Talk by Carmel Duignan, Plantswoman.
 - 1 – 2 p.m. Lunch
 - 2 – 3 p.m. Garden Tours with Glasnevin Staff. Curator’s Choice with Paul Maher, Curator of the National Botanic Gardens. The Woodland Garden with Seamus O Brien.
 - 3.15p.m. Playing with the Elements – Ornamental grasses in our gardens. Talk by Oliver Schurmann of Mount Venus Nursery.
 - 4.15p.m. Coffee
 - 4.30p.m. Perennial Pleasures – Good Plants for the Herbaceous Border. Talk by Assumpta Bloomfield of Irish Country Garden Plants.

Advance Booking Essential, Fee: €30, Contact Botanic Gardens,
Glasnevin, 01-8570909



Orchis morio, detail of enlarged single flower. Susan Sex, 2003

