The Irish Garden Plant Society

Newsletter No. 119 *January 2011*

In This Issue

The front cover photograph of *Galanthus* 'Hill Poë' was taken by Shay Ryan

Editorial

The wanderings of the Jet Stream in the past year have severely impacted on our plants and gardens. Despite the continued threat of sub zero temperatures the days are lengthening and it is the time to celebrate snowdrops.

On page 32 is information received on *Aster* 'Little Carlow'. This is in response to a question raised by a member in the October newsletter about the possibility that it was bred in Devizes, England. Dr Charles Nelson in *A Heritage of Beauty* says that "the history of this cultivar is obscure". He also quotes the reference made in the catalogue of the Ballawley Alpine Nursery of 1952 "this plant, which might be included in the Cordifolius section, has been introduced by us". The information recently received points to very different beginnings. Any further information on this popular plant would be welcome.

In the last issue a problem with the PDF Converter meant that a large portion of Martin Edwards' article "Weed of the Year" was lost. As a matter of courtesy the article has been published in full in this newsletter, my apologies to Martin.

Wishing you a very happy New Year, and many thanks to our Newsletter contributors of the past twelve months. I would be delighted to receive material for inclusion in the newsletter at the contact details below.

Mary

Please send material for the Newsletter to: igpseditor@gmail.com
or Mary Rowe 29 Bantry Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

Copy date for the April 2011 Newsletter is Friday 4th March

Weed of the year - A light hearted look at those unwelcome guests of the plant world by Martin Edwardes

I am reading a book at the moment called "The Greatest Show on Earth" by Richard Dawkins, which gives the conclusive evidence for evolution. I would agree with him for what creator would inflict a range of plants that annoy the heart and soul and sometimes put fear into a benign group of beings, such as gardeners.

So what defines the weed of the year? If the said weed is the main topic of conversation at the dinner table for a period longer than two weeks, my good wife assumes that I now have a mild obsession with the plant and am embarking on an immediate eradication plan. The weed then becomes the weed of the year.

The first weed to receive this accolade was the infamous Japanese Knotweed, *(Fallopia japonica,* syn. *Polygonum cuspidatum, Reynoutria japonica)* which had invaded a section of the garden when we first moved to the Old Deanery in Cloyne in 1994. This plant has the ability to instill dread into any gardener, so we set about researching it's habit and to learn how to control it. It can grow to 4 metres in height and very quickly turn your plot into an area resembling the jungle in the Far East during the Second World War. We were not heartened to read that it was, to quote "easier to move house, than to eradicate Japanese knotweed". This plant has a large underground network of roots (rhizomes) and so to eradicate it one must kill the roots. After much digging, pulling and pouring Glyphosate down it's throat we have almost eradicated it from the area. I say almost, as it still tries to make a comeback. In England, it is against the law to plant it in the wild and its disposal is strictly controlled. I am not sure whether we have such draconian legislation in Ireland.

I believe that it is apparently against the law to allow Ragwort (Senecio) to grow on your land. In which case, Cork County Council will have a large case to answer, as ragwort is romping along the dual carriage near us at an alarming rate. They seem to have bias towards the colour yellow as the ragwort is preceded by large quantities of dandelions flowering earlier in the season. I was under the misguided opinion that the Cork colours were red!

The next plant to receive my attention was the Winter heliotrope (*Petasites fragrans*). For many a year being very much a novice at gardening, I did not know the actual name of this plant. My wife called it "Rats Cabbage", which I think she must have invented herself as no one else knew this name. I consulted many gardening experts to find out the name of this plant, but maybe as a result of my inadequate powers of description they were unable to give me a name. Finally I met a lady who put an end to my misery, who nonchalantly announced "Oh that is *Petasites fragrans* and that is everywhere. Fancy you not knowing that!" To this day that name is indelibly etched in my memory. Of course, we had it everywhere, but it readily succumbs to a spray of glyphosate.

The following year, I noticed an alarming increase in the hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium,*) which had invaded our land from a neighbouring field. I detest this plant with a vengeance, as it should come with a Government health warning. You might think that it looks innocent enough, but do not be fooled. Its close relative, the giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) made the headlines in England some years back by escaping from Kew Gardens, hitching a ride courtesy of British rail and populating the railway banks in the south of England.

Some children received severe burns caused by coming into contact with the sap of this plant after getting it on their skin. The mechanism for this form of dermatitis is extreme photosensitivity, causing severe burns when the skin is exposed to small amounts of sunlight.

The common hogweed has the same properties, as I found out to my cost. While strimming the plant using a nylon cord in sunlight, some sap splashed up on my face and mouth. The result was my lips swelled up to a size which would have been the envy of Mick Jagger. I will always remember this incident, as it coincided with a visit from a girlfriend of my daughters who viewed me with a certain amount of suspicion at our first meeting. Janet finally assured her that I did not always look like that.

Hogweed is a very selfish weed because it blocks out any other weed or flower that is under it's canopy and is very prolific. I was advised that a good way to kill it is to stick a spade into the crown of the plant and sever it from the rest of the root. In our case, we have so many of them that it would take an eternity, and I would probably end up with one foot shorter than the other. I take the easy option and strim it using a cutting blade quite close to the ground on a non sunny day, and do not allow it to go to seed.

In the walled garden my usually very placid wife has declared war on bindweed. She has investigated at length its rooting behaviour and has discovered that it has developed a very clever ploy to survive being dug up. It's root apparently descends into the ground vertically and then goes out at a right angle to the

vertical. Now comes the clever bit. Just before it reaches the end of the horizontal root, it puts out yet another root at right angles. You will be led to believe that you have managed to get all the root, but in fact you have not. One way to eradicate it is to let it wind around a piece of stick and then wipe it with a glove soaked in glyphosate.

Of course we have a variety of other weeds including the famous dandelion *(Taraxacum officinale)* which seems to flower and then go to seed in one day when your back is turned. It has a root that goes down to Australia and in spite of trying to remove it with a long spade specifically designed for the job, one always manages to leave behind the ever so thin final tip to the root.

When the lawn, which is a man's "raison d'être" comes under attack I go into immediate counter attack mode. The latest menace is the creeping buttercup, which hops along the ground putting a new set of roots down every few inches. If one had a timed camera to watch its behaviour over a period of days it would make very interesting viewing. I have found that D50 will quite successfully deal with this weed.

So what is the weed for this year?

I think that it has to be the thistle. Many a culinary delightful meal has been spoiled by the vision of multitudinous thistle seeds blowing all over our land as I look out the window. Our neighbouring farmer specializes in growing them. We have had a long hot summer and plenty of wind, so the thistle has had plenty of encouragement to seed all over the place, especially into small holes in the grass dug by rabbits. Now there is another proof of the non existence of a creator, for who in their right mind would design and create a rabbit. I have been observed by my wife flaying my arms about, catching a thistle seed in my hand and putting it into my top pocket. She has put this extremely sad behaviour down to a slight touch of eccentricity caused by advancing years.

In spite of all the annoyance caused by these unwelcome plants, I have actually developed a sneaking admiration for them and their cunning ability to survive. I have now in latter years come to terms with their existence, the growing realization that they will always be there come what may, and that they will more than likely be growing on top of me when I am six foot under.

Being a grumpy old woman
by Rae McIntrye

Next April I will have a significant birthday and I feel that justifies me becoming a thoroughly grumpy old woman. I spend much of my life saying nice things about other people's gardens and I truly mean anything I do say. However I assiduously refrain from saying anything nasty about anyone's garden but I am going to do so now and throw in a few more criticisms about other things for good measure.

I'm going to start with my own garden which has serious flaws, most of them due to overcrowding, in an area that is under an acre in size. I cannot resist buying interesting herbaceous plants especially when they are unusual or in colours that fit in with my schemes. Rhododendrons I love and when confronted with a tempting one I always think there's room for one more; I've been thinking that for years. When visiting other people's gardens I see roses that I don't think I can live without so I order a few every year from a rose nursery in Norfolk. And then I have a fatal weakness for magnolias and have seven in the garden. Two of them are becoming larger every year and *Magnolia stellata* 'Royal Star' has become so big that it has changed the whole character of the main garden. All this busy acquisition of plants has resulted in a cluttered garden, a northern hemisphere version of a jungle where people have to stoop to walk below overarching branches. It becomes worse with each passing year because everything grows lustily in the rain. The funny thing is I hate clutter. I have a cousin whose house is full of gewgaws and knick-knacks on every surface and I long to sweep everything into a bin bag every time I visit her. Alas, my garden is the horticultural equivalent.

I have some wildly invasive plants. There is a comfrey, *Symphytum grandiflorum* that keeps colonising places no matter how often I remove it. I fight a constant battle against *Euphorbia robbiae* although it is admittedly fairly easy to remove. Its cousin *Euphorbia griffithii* most emphatically is not. Originally it came from Christopher Lloyd's nursery and was called 'Dixter Flame' because it had dark foliage but it seems to have reverted to the norm and is just the plain green form. Glyphosate has no effect on it probably because of the irritating (in more ways than one) milky sap inside the stems. I've tried pulling it out but that only makes matters worse and I become exceedingly grumpy.

Celandines infuriate me intensely. They may have been Wordsworth's favourite flowers – not daffodils as you would think – but I loathe them. I have a spreading clump of *Scilla sibirica* 'Spring Beauty' which would be a lovely pool of pure blue if it weren't for the cheap weedy little celandines getting in on the act. Once they're in a spot it's impossible to remove them.

Convolvulus is another brute although I have found it is actually easier to kill than celandines. In Altamont last August the Corona North memorial borders were glorious and it took me ages to view them. I noticed blue polythene bags tucked in among plants at intervals and was told that these contained the stems of convolvulus that had been sprayed with glyphosate. A great idea I thought, so I came home with murder in my heart and spent a day untwining the wretched stuff that was everywhere in the garden; it had come in with a trailer load of topsoil. The untwining bit made me extremely grumpy but I had sadistic pleasure zapping the stem-filled polythene bags with weedkiller.

The sight of gravel gardens sets my teeth on edge. I am not referring here to gravel gardening as practised by Beth Chatto in her garden in Essex. Although I have never visited her garden/gardens I have read about them avidly in all her books. Her gravel garden was made on a former car park in very droughty Essex. The compacted soil was dug by machines and then the planting areas were covered with a two-spit depth of homemade compost, mushroom compost and bonfire waste before planting with plants that thrived in dry conditions. That was in early spring 1992. A 2.5-5 cm (1–2 inches) deep mulch of gravel wasn't added until a year later. As a result the plants, which have been grown hard, are able to withstand frosts and low rainfall – possibly the lowest in the whole of Britain.

Gravel gardens round here are not made like that. For a start the average rainfall in Essex is about 50 cm/20 in. whereas here it's around 115 cm/46 in. so no one here is catering for drought conditions.

Beds and borders are marked out – amorphous beds and wobbly borders – then covered entirely with a porous membrane. A Stanley knife is used to cut an opening in this and a plant is stuck in. Favourites are dwarf conifers (yes honestly!), small specimens of variegated euonymus and low growing grasses. Plants must be evergreen. They must not be colourful or ever bear any flowers. Once the whole bed or border is dotted with plants a thick layer of gravel is added, preferably colourful stuff that is almost the same colour as the plants.

I saw one such border made in April of this year and after the dry spells in May and June many of the plants had died for lack of water. It was absolutely none of my business but, because I was in grumpy old woman mode, I said to the man of the house, "Half of your damned plants have died of thirst". "No

problem", he replied. "There are plenty more where they came from". About a week later a local nurseryman arrived, dug out the dead plants and replaced them with more of the same. I notice now they have made another gravelled bed which is filled with phormiums. I seem to have gone off them too and wasn't sorry when the only one in my own garden, 'Platt's Black' died in last winter's frost.

The planting in another slightly different gravel garden, which irritates me immensely, is comprised entirely of hebes and cherry trees. The hebes survived last winter while those in my own garden expired so perhaps the gravel protected them from the frosts. Or perhaps it's because they're all cut into perfect cubes. The cherry trees are not allowed to grow naturally but must have the tops cut so perfectly level that I'm sure they must use a metre stick or even a spirit level. Quelle surprise! They never flower. The only other ornaments are smallish concrete statues that have been painted brilliant white and are washed regularly. On moonlit nights it all looks like a convocation of junior ghosts.

Garden centres are another source of annoyance. South of the border they have the sense to call them *lifestyle centres* where they sell furniture, furnishings, all manner of arty-farty stuff, soaps and scents, candles galore (does no one use electric light anymore?), books and extortionately priced cakes and biscuits often chock-full of E numbers. Then there are the plants but not as many as there used to be. It's exactly the same in the North but they're still called garden centres. I suppose no one can blame the owners of these establishments because one of them told me that he can make much more profit selling the non-living stuff than he can selling plants. Moreover the plants require a great deal more looking after and they can die. One owner filled three skips with tatty black plants last April and during dry spells many hours were spent watering the survivors.

Garden centres/lifestyle centres tend to sell plants that are in flower or well budded because presumably this is what Joe Public wants. I know from experience of National Trust Ulster Gardens Scheme plant stalls that the plants that sell quickest are those in full bloom and that, frequently, immature, non-flowering specimens of real treasures, however reasonably priced, are ignored. An alluring illustration often helps to make a sale.

What I really like, in my grumpy old age, are places like the plant centre at Altamont where plants reign supreme and only a few essential garden sundries are sold. I must confess that I always buy plants there that are in flower. I know two nurseries where the owners propagate and grow all their plants. There are probably many in the R.O.I. but I don't know them. Here in Ulster, Susan Tindall specialises in alpines in her nursery at Ballynahinch while Ann Buchanan, who lives outside Magherafelt, grows anything she can

propagate although there are more herbaceous perennials than anything else. There is also the nurseryman who sells the dull dogs of plants beloved of gravel garden owners but they don't appeal to me. Running a nursery is a highly skilled, stressful business so perhaps it's not surprising that there are so few of them.

Cats in the garden infuriate me and mine seems to be a favourite resort of visiting neighbourhood cats especially one enormous ginger and white tom about whom I have written before. He visited this morning and his presence was so threatening to the birds that none of them came to the feeders for two hours. I tried to chase him away but he just looked at me – a look that was the epitome of arrogance. Cats' speciality seems to be non-biodegradable poo. In September and October when I was planting small bulbs I regularly came across nauseating deposits of it. On one occasion I wasn't wearing gloves and actually touched the vile stuff. There was a lot of hand scrubbing and disinfecting in scalding water after that because cat faeces can cause toxoplasmosis.

And finally there is the weather. It would never do to have a grumpy diatribe without mentioning the weather. As I write in late November we've had hard frosts and crisp 'baked' snow for the past five days and nights. Each day the wintry sun thaws the ice briefly but then at sundown the temperature drops and it freezes again. Hateful. I abhor being cold. I detest not seeing green fields. I loathe slippery roads and pavements and am terrified of falling. The grumpiness would know no bounds if I had to spend Christmas with my leg in plaster. According to an article in the *Daily Telegraph* there is a saying in England

If November ice can hold a duck

Thereafter there'll be slush and muck

That would be good. However grumpiness is imbued with a good dose of pessimism so I am sceptical about the truth of this saying. I vividly remember November 1962 when we had hard frost and snow and many older people said they could never remember this happening before. The ice on pools would certainly have held a duck. Thereafter there was NOT slush and muck because it continued to freeze hard and exceptionally heavy snow in early February 1963 brought the province to a standstill.

Roll on spring.

Seed Distribution Scheme 2011
By Stephen Butler

Hopefully many of you have got loads of new plants from the seed distribution last spring – I think we all needed replacement plants after the very cold January of 2010, let alone the losses of December 2010 and whatever follows!

Seeds have been very slow coming in this year, as I write in late December I have only received 190, compared to a total of 330 last year. There has been a welcome increase in the number of people sending seeds in – last year had 17 – but the more people collect, the longer and more diverse the list. This year, for the first time, I managed to save seed of *Dactylicapnos (Dicentra) scandens*. I have it at home, in sight of the back door, easy to remember to check it, but where were the seed pods? This year I spotted some, green (even when ripe), same size, shape, and pendulousity as the leaves, you literally have to look at every old flower head and 1 in 20 had maybe one pod – with maybe 2 small seeds.

If you are new to the idea of seed collecting the points below may help. Don't forget to keep checking, many seeds, especially bulbs, will ripen quickly in sudden sunny weather, and the seeds will soon shed. Some garden plants will not set seed. Double flowers have often far less, if any, seeds as the extra petals have developed at the expense of stamens and ovary. Flowers must be pollinated, a wet summer means less bees perhaps, so do look very carefully to make sure there is seed there before you take the time to collect. Some plants have explosive seed pod mechanisms – *Geranium* and *Euphorbia* the most usual – the seeds disappear once ripe, you need to collect the day before.....

Watch your plants. Seed pods will often ripen at different times (spreading the risk of being eaten or damaged). Once you can find ripe seeds on a few pods, check to see if the others are nearly there. If so, cut them off then. If not, you may have to come back every few days and collect a few.

Before you cut the flower heads off, label and date a paper envelope or bag, really much easier than trying to remember a few months later. Place the heads in the bag, still on the stems if need be, maybe upside down, leave the bag open for plenty of air, and place in a warm dry place to hasten drying. The bag size depends on the plant – I pop round the zoo on my bike with a dozen A4 envelopes in the front basket (actually a 5lt pot!), then I'm ready for most

things. At home it may be a much smaller envelope for perhaps *Acis autumnalis*, tiny seeds and seed pods, ripening over a long time because it flowers for a long time. For large quantities, or large seed heads, a paper carrier bag is perfect – I found that the only way with a rather huge amount of *Cardiocrinum* seed – amazing how much comes out of 1 full flower head!

As the seed pods dry the seeds should fall out for you – a good thumping will help of course if needed, just watch your fingers if collecting *Onopordum* with incredibly prickly and tough seed pods – I ended up using pliers! Once seed is out, clean it up as best you can, maybe with a sieve – I have a small collection now of different size meshes, you can buy sets of them but rather pricey. I find blowing gently over the seeds often works well – even something wind distributed like *Lilium*, a very gentle blow will take the chaff and leave the slightly heavier viable seeds behind – but go very gently, like a lovers caress…….

To summarise:

Check seeds are present.
Make sure they are ripe enough to harvest.
Label the paper bag/envelope.
Clean the seed once shed.
……. And most important, send it to me!

Stephen Butler,
Curator of Horticulture,
Dublin Zoo,
Phoenix Park,
Dublin 8

SNOWDROP WEEK AT ALTAMONT GARDENS

Altamont Gardens, Tullow, Co. Carlow

Monday February 14th - Sunday 20th February 2011

Guided Tours daily at 2pm

For further details contact:

altamontgarden@opw.ie or telephone 059 915 9444

Regional Reports

NORTHERN

Scottish Garden Trip July 2010 continued

Southern Hemisphere Botanics

This garden has the wow factor as does its owner! Situated on the North bank of the River Forth in Fife, it is a walled garden acquired by Ursula McHardy and her family in 2004 and opened in 2008. Ursula has great vision and wonderful knowledge of plants of the Southern Hemisphere, her dream is to create a Botanic Garden showing vegetation patterns rather than plant collections.

The gentle sloping garden is divided by a wide grass path in a rhomboid shape, the main feature being a series of round ponds linked by waterfalls. The planting is cleverly thought out as the different regions melt into each other, the area around the ponds has mainly New Zealand alpines representing Central Otago and shrubland from the Mount Cook National Park. The top right hand side has plants from Tasmania, New South Wales and Victoria; a stand of Eucalyptus provides good shelter for two very healthy young Wollemi Pines recently acquired from Edinburg Botanics. Unfortunately the tree ferns had not survived the fierce winter.

South African plants occupied the top left hand side of the garden with Fynbos, the narrow leaved bushland plants, daisies, heathers and pelargoniums; flora of the Drakensburg and finally restios and proteas from the summit of Table Mountain. Along the edges of the paths there were many different dieramas which had seeded freely in the area. The bottom left contained a good stand of South American trees from Patagonia and Chile, including Monkey Puzzles and Southern Beeches. Finally there was a Magellanic moor with plants from the Falklands amongst others, the *Gunnera magellicana* was well contained, it can take over!

Lorna, Ursula's daughter has taken over the area to the west of the walled garden and created a wild life/bog garden with a pond, orchid beds, a carnivore swamp, all packed full of interest and colour. Up the hill behind a woodland area has been planted with trees and Rhododendrons. There is also a well stocked vegetable plot and a hen run.

The garden scored top marks from our group and we highly recommend a visit if you are in the area. It could be combined with a visit to the National Trust garden of Culross Palace, a stunning re-creation of a seventeenth century terraced herb, fruit, vegetable and flower garden which is close by.

Andrena Duffin

The Southern Hemisphere Botanics is featured in the December 2010 issue of Gardens Illustrated with photographs by Ray Cox.

LEINSTER

Thursday 18th November.

'Medical Botany in early 18th Century Dublin' with Dr Declan Doogue, Dr P J Walls, retired Dermatologist and Dr Mary Carson, Chemistry Department, TCD. This was a joint lecture with the Dublin Naturalists Field club.

The lecture, shared by our three speakers, was mainly about the work and writings of Caleb Threlkeld, a doctor who lived in Dublin during the 18th century and the use made of herbal plants in medical practice at that time. He wrote the first Irish Herbal 'Synopsis Stirpium Hibernicarum' published in 1726. A short extract from the introduction describes the Herbal beautifully, "A short treaties of natural plants and an abridgement of their virtues with several new discoveries".

The Herbal describes 535 species in Latin, English and interestingly Irish. It lists the herbs alphabetically and was the first of its kind to be printed in Ireland. The book identifies the places in Dublin where the herbs were to be found and gives an outline of their medical uses. This was of great help to the poorer citizens who could not afford the cost of going to a doctor or apothecary.

Some examples were *Osmunda regalis*, to be found growing on John's Lane, the roots of which were used to treat rickets – usually caused by diarrhoea. Dublin was a very dirty and dangerous place for one's health in those days. Another example was Water Crowfoot which Threlkeld noted was growing in the middle of the Liffey between the Barracks (Collins) and Island Bridge.

A most intriguing entry was *Cannabis sativa* which was recommended to make hens lay eggs and to make them fat!! The herb was also used to treat pox especially on the face. *Colchicum autumnale* was used to treat gout. *Galium verum* – Lady's Bedstraw - was used to stuff mattresses, the coumarin scent of the plant acts as a flea killer. The herb was used to stop flux and haemorrhage and was an herbal 'viagra'. The same herb was used in cheesemaking in

Cheshire. One can only speculate on its effects! Far more dangerous to take was *Sisymbrium officinale* - Hedge Mustard - which the Herbal noted caused "over stimulation to excess"!

The anti scurvy properties of herbs were very important and a Lenten Potage of Nettle, Alexanders - Horse Parsley - and Cress was popular though Dr. Mary Carson did make it once and could not recommend its taste! Another herb, Maidenhair Fern, was a remedy to prevent rickets. Some herbs like *Rubus fruticosus* and *Vitis vinifera* were used as a 'cure all' when the 'humours' were off kilter, the herbs helping to restore balance.

At the end of the lecture we had an opportunity to see copies of some old maps of Dublin and to examine two volumes of Threlkelds Herbal from 1726, a thrilling end to a most interesting evening.

Emer Gallagher

MUNSTER

Tuesday, 2nd November, 2010.

"Beneficial soil bacteria-protectors and promoters of plant growth." A lecture by Siva Velivelli.

Siva Velivelli, a PhD student from the School of Biological Earth and Environmental Sciences (BEES) of U.C.C. started his well illustrated talk by describing where he was born, Andhra Pradesh*; this is the "rice bowl" of India and producer of 30% of the world's chillies, a crop adversely affected by bacteria born leaf spot.

He told us that 43% of India is agricultural and, worldwide, crops are presently fed with chemical fertilizers and protected with chemical pesticides and fungicides. These, however, require constant repeat application, which, as well as effecting the environment, is too expensive for indigent farmers.

Siva continued, describing beneficial bacterias which have the potential to fix nitrogen, make phosphorus in the soil soluble and induce plant resistance to predators and disease - all this with the effect lasting, or even increasing, for years. Soil microbes can be detrimental (pathogens) or beneficial; the rhizospheric and endophytic microbes promote plant growth and health.

Siva introduced us to new terms for gardeners, ISR and SAR, Induced System Resistance and System Acquired Resistance where resistance builds up with antibodies and PGPR (Plant Growth Promoting Rhizobacteria)

Siva ended by describing and illustrating the EU funded Valoram project which is running from 2009 to 2014. This is the Valorizing Andean microbial diversity through sustainable intensification of potato-based farming systems.

There are 3,800 varieties of potatoes in Peru, an important crop! Maybe in a few years we will get some of this good bacteria for growth and anti-blight in Ireland.

Full details of the project are available on the web site www.valoram.ucc.ie

* On the Coromandel Coast, but no mention was made of Bong-trees, blowing pumpkins or the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò.

Graham Manson.

MUNSTER ANNUAL PLANT SALE 2011

At the

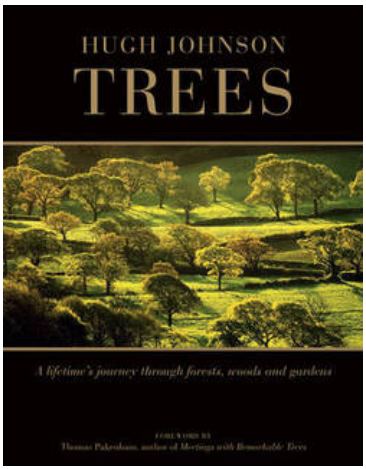
SMA Hall, Wilton, Cork

Saturday, 9th April, 2011

From 10 am

Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

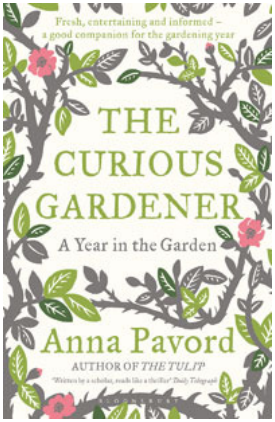
It can be difficult to create a satisfying and coherent garden design while accommodating an extensive plant collection. It is only those with great flair and ingenuity who succeed. Organising and writing a book which is essentially a list of plants presents a similar challenge and when an author manages to take such a plant list and write it into an informative, entertaining, engrossing and compelling read, then we can only admire his skill and immerse ourselves in the enjoyment of the book. "**Trees**" by Hugh Johnson is such a book.



Hugh Johnson has taken a comprehensive list of the world's trees, organised them into their families and, distilling his own great personal experience, has written a gem of a book which informs, entertains and enthuses the reader from start to finish. There is a substantial introductory and concluding section which cover the important practical aspects of tree growing: the structure and life cycle of trees, how trees are named, trees and the weather, the use of trees in gardens and landscape design and tree planting and care. The main section of the book is an extraordinary work of reference of all the important garden and forest trees of the temperate world, written in the words of a man in love with his subject. More than 600 species are described, illustrated with excellent photographs and 1,000 drawings and all bound with the text of a master writer. An absolutely outstanding book!

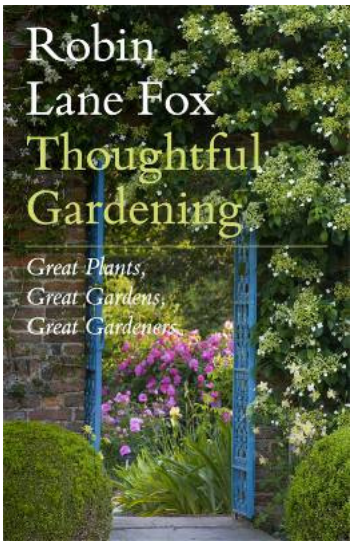
[Trees, Hugh Johnson, Octopus Publishing Group, London, 2010, HB, 400pp, £30, ISBN: 978 1 84533 0552]

Anna Pavord is one of the top garden writers, author of *The Tulip* and *The Naming of Names,* and has also been the gardening correspondent of The Independent since 1986. In ***The Curious Gardener*** we are presented with a selection of her contributions to that newspaper arranged into twelve chapters, one for each month of the year.



They present her comments and advice on various aspects of gardening, notes on visits to some well-known gardens and general reflection of joys, nuisances, successes and failures. The style is leisurely and pleasant, easy reading and very enjoyable. When the weather doesn't allow us to garden, it is good to have an enjoyable book to read and this The Curious Gardener certainly fills that need. Given the layout of the book, it is one that can be dipped into whenever one has a few minutes. Very enjoyable!

[The Curious Gardener, Anna Pavord, Bloomsbury, London, 2010, HB, 329pp, £20, ISBN: 9781408808887]



For forty years Robin Lane Fox contributed a weekly column on gardening to the Financial Times and, in ***Thoughtful Gardening***, presents us with a selection of these articles, edited and augmented with some new material to bring us on a journey through the twelve months of the year.

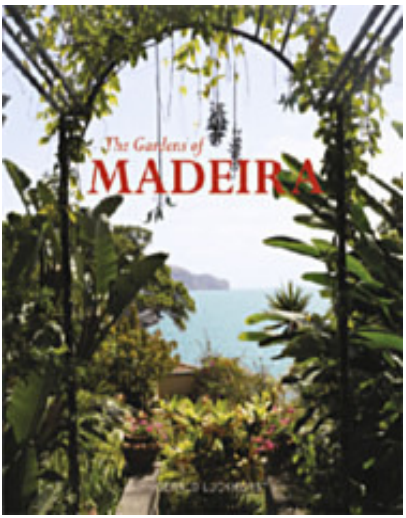
The author was Garden Master of New College, Oxford, as well as having his own garden in the Cotswolds and this practical experience informs and inspires the contents and tone of the book. He is an opinionated man and enjoys expressing his opinions strongly on a range of topics, whether it is fashion in gardening and plants, the use of weed killer or artificial fertilizers, our attitudes to rabbits and badgers or his opinions on other gardens and gardeners.

Throughout, we are urged to give some thought to how we garden and many of the commonly held beliefs and practices are prodded, poked and questioned. It all makes for amusing reading.

[Thoughtful Gardening, Robin Lane Fox, Particular Books, London, 2010, HB, 356pp, £25, ISBN: 978-1-846-14289-5]

Two wonderfully beautiful and fabulously informative guide books. First, there is ***Italy's Private Gardens – An Inside View*** by Helena Attlee which describes a selection of beautiful gardens from around Italy, excellently photographed by her husband, Alex Ramsay. Helena Attlee has been visiting and writing about Italian gardens for twenty years and, of latter years, leading guided tours. It was while bringing tourists to various gardens that a simple truth struck the author: people enjoy gardens much more when they meet the gardener and this is what she has brought to this book. With each garden described, there is also a conversation with the gardener so that the reader gains that all so important insight into the history and development of each garden. Needless to say, the gardens are wonderful - all Italian gardens seem to be beautiful - and are a selection from across the length and breadth of the country. Although the title describes them as "private", most are open to the public and this book would certainly entice you to seek them out. This was a simple idea, to have the garden owners contribute so significantly to the account of each garden, and it has made a wonderful book.

[Italy's Private Gardens – An Inside View, Helena Attlee, Frances Lincoln, London, 2010, HB, 208pp, £35, ISBN: 978-0-7112-2910-5]



Timing is everything and unfortunate timing is disappointing. Gerald Luckhurst's book, ***The Gardens of Madeira***, was published shortly after I returned from a holiday in Madeira and I believe I would have enjoyed my visit so much more if the book had been to hand.

Gerald Luckhurst is a landscape architect who has built many gardens on Madeira as well as leading specialist garden tours there.

I visited some of the twenty nine gardens described in the book and can attest to the accuracy of his accounts and that I would have enjoyed the visits even more if this book had been to hand. As with Helena Attlee above, he has had the great benefit of knowing the garden owners and of speaking to them about the history and development of their gardens. His knowledge of the social and horticultural history of Madeira means that this book goes far beyond simply a garden guide and gives the reader an excellent insight into Madeira in general.

[The Gardens of Madeira, Gerald Luckhurst, Frances Lincoln, London, 2010, HB, 176pp, £30, ISBN: 978-0-7112-3032-3]

Weeds are the bane of the gardener's life, the constant scourge which mars our enjoyment and the most persistent call on our labour to keep our gardens as we would wish them to be. These same weeds can be viewed as beautiful when growing along a country lane or in open countryside. Weeds and human activity are inextricably linked; they thrive where we want them least yet have been our first foods and our first medicines.

In ***Weeds***, Richard Mabey traces the cultural history of weeds and explores the paradox of these indomitable, opportunistic plants. To do this he draws on the insights of botanists, gardeners, artists, poets and his own life experience and interest. This is a rambling book. If it were a weed, it would be bindweed winding its way here, there and everywhere, all connected and sparkling with beauty. It might make you see the weeds in your garden in a different light but, then again, it might not; however, it will be an interesting read.

[Weeds, Richard Mabey, Profile Book, London, 2010, HB, 324pp, £15.99, ISBN: 978 1 84668 076 2]

Narcissus minimus:
A lasting legacy from the Daisy Hill Nursery
by Gary Dunlop

It is over a century since the Daisy Hill Nursery introduced this delightful dwarf daffodil into cultivation, which surprisingly Charles Nelson omits from the list of plants in his excellent book about the nursery, as he concentrated on cultivars originating at the nursery.[1] Listing the number of species that the Daisy Hill Nursery introduced into cultivation in the British Isles would have made the book considerably larger. Of the few post war Daisy Hill catalogues that I have or have photocopies of, the last one to list *N.minimus* is No 148

from 1955, which describes it as "The smallest of all the yellow trumpet daffodils: 3-4 inches tall".[2] It has survived in cultivation in Northern Ireland and beyond for generations and is one of the memorable plants that Peter McCann, the last manager of the nursery, who joined it in 1945 at the age of 14, mentions in his brief memoir of his life at the nursery.[3]

In the open ground this daffodil is a little larger than the catalogue description suggests. The flower often opens just above ground level, and the stem elongates to almost 6 inches (150mm) and the leaves also elongate even after the flowers have faded reaching about 8 inches (200mm). In a trough, or in dry or relatively starved conditions, the plant is as small as the catalogue description, a perfect miniature trumpet daffodil, which clumps up readily.

I first came across this little daffodil in the early 1970s in the garden, at Plas Merdyn in Holywood, Co Down, of my gardening mentors, the late Drs Bill & Gretta Lennon, who were leading figures in horticulture and the local Alpine Garden Society. Bill Lennon had obtained it from Daisy Hill Nursery as *N.minimus* along with a rather larger one named *N.nanus*. Their garden is no more, as unfortunately it was stripped of nearly all the worthwhile, choice and rare plants they used to grow, by the subsequent owners.

The garden was well past its prime by the time I got to know the Lennons, and for many years I helped them to maintain their 3-acre woodland garden in reasonable order, by doing some of the heavier clearance work, of brambles etc, which they could no longer manage. When the Lennons finally decided to give up their garden in the late 1980s, they allowed me to rescue bits of various plants and I also organised both Nigel Marshall, the head gardener of Mount Stewart and Mike Snowden, his counterpart at Rowallane to rescue plants as well. What was rescued was negligible as most of the rhododendrons and other shrubs were far too large to move.

One of the plants I rescued was a small clump of *N. minimus*, as well as a few bulbs of some of the other daffodils they grew, which the Lennon's had mostly obtained cheaply as breeder's rejects; despite their origin they were quite attractive, but presumably not distinct enough to be worth naming. I have no particular interest in daffodils, apart from providing some bright early spring colour and a liking for bright yellow flowers, and thus have no specific knowledge of the species or cultivars.

Over the years I have given many other people some bulbs of *N.minimus* particularly in England where I understood it to be almost unknown. I also sought advice as to what the proper identity was, as *N.minimus* did not seem to be a valid species name. *N. asturiensis* was an early suggestion but others more confidently determined that it was *N.minor,* though I can't remember who

expressed opinions and had no way of assessing their expertise, though it clearly exceeded mine.

About 15 years or more ago Capt. Peter Erskine visited my garden when the little narcissus was in flower and recognised it as the one that he remembered from childhood, as growing in his grandmother's garden, in Holywood, Co. Down, adding that he had never seen it in England. It was common in good gardens in Ulster, at least in those of members of the Alpine Garden Society, so I decided to provisionally call it *N.minor* 'Ulster Form' for want of a better name.

An early recipient of the bulbs from me was Alan Street of Avon Bulbs who thought it was the same as *N.* 'Midget'. However, it is classed in the Plant Finder and identified on the Daffodil Register as a cultivar of *N. nanus*. Another recipient, rather more than 10 years ago, was the late Kath Dryden, who subsequently told me it was the same as one she grew under the name *N. minor* 'Douglasbank', a name which meant little to me at the time.

Sometime after that and more than 10 years ago, I was visiting the garden of friends in Scotland, James and his son Jamie Taggart, at the Linn, Cove, Helensburgh. I noticed that they were also growing the dwarf daffodil, which James Taggart told me his grandmother had obtained as *N.minimus* from Daisy Hill Nursery in the 1930's, and they had been growing it ever since. I happened to mention the other name that Kath Dryden had for the bulb, and James was able to explain the background to that. He had given bulbs of *N.minimus* many years before to the late Willie Buchanan, whose garden was called Douglasbank.

Sometime later, around the millennium, I was researching early crocosmia cultivars, and working through various early nursery catalogues on periodic visits to the Lindley Library. One of the firms I checked the early catalogues of, was the Daisy Hill Nursery. It had raised and named a couple of crocosmia cultivars, as well as being the only nursery to list *C.* 'Vulcan' a distinct form of *Crocosmia x crocosmioides* (*aurea x paniculata*) raised by Max Leichtlin.

In one of these early catalogues, circa 1900 I also came across the listing of *N.minimus*, so I concluded that it was very likely that the bulb was first introduced into cultivation by the Daisy Hill Nursery.

When researching this article I checked the Plant Finder which equates *N.minimus* with *N. asturiensis* but this apparently relates to a plant under the name *N.minimus* collected by Peter Barr of the famous late 19thC bulb nursery.[4] In this context it is apparently referred to as *N.minimus* hort.

A year or more ago, I happened to do a search on Google with an approximate or partial name for a very early flowering large narcissus, which I grow. It turned up the website for the American Daffodil Society, which had detailed lists of cultivars. I found the one I was searching for, but out of curiosity investigated the site further, and was surprised to find that *N.minor* 'Douglasbank' was a registered cultivar raised by Willie Buchanan.

That prompted me to contact Sally Kington, who had recently retired as Registrar of Narcissus, and provided her with the background information of *N.minimus* and how Willie Buchanan had obtained it. She confirmed that the International Daffodil Register listed the cultivar 'Douglasbank' as a selected seedling of *N.minor* named by Willie Buchanan. However, it would seem to be identical to its parent, which should not be surprising, but does raise the question of whether it was worth naming and whether it should have been registered.

Recently I phoned Capt. Peter Erskine, to belatedly give him the background information on the dwarf narcissus, which he remembered from his youth, and the spurious name and provenance that it has acquired. He was able to tell me that *N.minor* 'Douglasbank', had been put up for assessment by the Joint Rock Committee, and when he saw it, he suggested that it was the same plant that he had seen in Holywood decades before and was common in Ulster gardens. This was apparently dismissed by the contingent of members of the Scottish Rock Society on the Joint Rock Committee.

He was also able to tell me of a second possible source from which Willie Buchanan could have obtained the plant. His aunt, who had lived with his grandmother and was a keen gardener, had subsequently moved to Bearsden in Glasgow to a house and garden only a couple of hundred yards from Willie Buchanan, and she knew him well and exchanged plants with him.

On checking the indices for the RHS Journal I found reference to another cultivar, *N.minor* 'Cedric Morris' which Beth Chatto named after her gardening mentor, and provided the background details of its origin and introduction, as well as illustrating the plant with a photograph.[5] The origins confirm it was a separate introduction from the wild, and the flowers in the photograph appear to be rather taller than *N.minor* and seem to differ in appearance to the Daisy Hill introduction. The Plant Finder only lists the plant under a cultivar name, which suggests that the original speculation about it being a natural hybrid might be correct.

The current Plant Finder also lists two other entries under *N.minor*, one being simply the species itself and the other the cultivar *N.minor* 'Little Gem', which is also registered. There is a slight difference in the description of

'Douglasbank' and 'Little Gem', the former having a slightly pale yellow perianth, the latter being described as rich yellow.

A photograph, on one nursery website, of *N.minor* 'Little Gem' suggests that it also has broader perianth segments and a larger corolla than *N.minor* 'Douglasbank'. Whether the bulbs being sold as simply the species without a cultivar name are different, or perhaps one of the cultivars without its name, is anyone's guess.

Thus the plant introduced by Daisy Hill as *N. minimus* has been recognized as a form of *N. minor*. It is probably therefore *minimus* of Haworth, treated by the Daffodil Register as *N. minor* var. *minimus*. Several other forms of *N. minor* have been selected for registration as cultivars.

It is not uncommon for a plant to acquire several different names, as it gets passed around by gardeners and its origins and original name forgotten. Chance can often intervene and the original name and background of a plant are re-associated with it. It is likely there are many other plants that originated from Daisy Hill Nursery, that have lost their provenance and even their original name.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all those mentioned above from whom I was able to piece together at least some of the history of this attractive little daffodil, and especially Sally Kington for her invaluable assistance.

References:

1. Nelson, C. 1998: Daisy Hill Nursery. Northern Ireland Plant Heritage Committee, Belfast

2. Daisy Hill 1955: General Catalogue No.148 p98

3. McCann, P 2005: The life of a Plantsman: The last days of Daisy Hill. Privately published and sold to raise fund for the Newry & Mourne Romanian Appeal Fund.

4 Pugsley, H.W. 1933: Monograph of Narcissus, sub genus Ajax. RHSJ Vol 58 pt 1 pp17-93

5 Chatto, B. 1980: Narcissus minor 'Cedric Morris'. RHS J Vol 105 pp254-5

Four Redwoods and Funerals by John Joe Costin

Seeing a plant growing in the wild in its native habitat deepens my understanding of its growing needs and offers evidence of how it should be used in landscapes. Some plants make an indelible first impression. It maybe the location, its companion plants, fortuitous timing, a peak moment in its ornamental phase or simply the circumstances the plant revealed or presented itself. What was memorable about ***Sciadopitys verticillata***, the Japanese Umbrella Pine was none of these. It was its sheer sense of differentness. I was looking at a relict that has been around for 250 million years. It has distinctions. It is not a Pine at all. It has no immediate relatives. It occupies a botanical family alone. It is like no other plant. It is a remote member of the Redwoods, with Redwood like cones.

I did not find it in the wild. Roy Lancaster and I were taken by Mikinori Ogisu to see it growing in small groups on steep, mossy slopes and rocky ridges in a remote wooded area in central Honshu, in the shade of some broadleaved trees. Mikinori says it grows best where it enjoys high summer temperatures, plenty of moisture, shade, perfect drainage and rich forest soil. We stood in a silence induced by awe of the venerable. In Japan, he says it is not a good competitor, that the competition drove it out of more favourable sites but that like all Redwoods it survives in difficult habitats because it can tolerate poor soils. Nevertheless, it has travelled well, is hardy and is a great success in the landscape and gardens of Europe and NE America, tolerating even the winter cold of Massachusetts.

Mikinori is a great modern day plant explorer, the youngest National Treasure in Japan, the first foreign botanist permitted into China after President Nixon détente in 1973 and the one who has spent most time there since. He showed us that it has two types of leaves, small scales press against the shoot and at its end an umbrella like whorl of 20-30 stiff flat leaves (10-15cm long). This arrangement inspired its botanical name, Shiados, Greek for umbrella and Pitys for Pine. He showed that each leaf is uniquely made up of a pair fused together, evidenced by being grooved on both surfaces and without a keel. Distinctive but similar ancient type of leaf is found in fossils.

For its growth habit, distinctive, dark green, lustrous foliage and texture it is an elite tree. It should be more widely used as an accent plant as it is one that will not outgrow its space. It has a neat, upright, densely clothed, pyramidal habit

For its growth habit, distinctive, dark green, lustrous foliage and texture it is an elite tree. It should be more widely used as an accent plant as it is one that will not outgrow its space. It has a neat, upright, densely clothed, pyramidal habit that does not flatten out to form an umbrella like canopy as its common name might be misunderstood to suggest. Easily raised from seed it takes about 6 years to reach 30cm. Price reflects age so it always is considered expensive for its size. Prized by discerning gardeners, it does not meet the needs of the large sector of the market that demand "fast growing dwarf conifers", 9m in 50 years and 30m in 250 years is its serene rate of growth. The Curraghmore tree measured 14m in 1976. 30 years later it is 16m, a rate of 6cm a year. Mary Forrest records that it is cultivated in 12 of the 30 Great Gardens of Ireland,

The Tree Council of Ireland list Champion Trees in:

		Girth x Height
• **Cork**	Glenville Park	2.1 x 14m
• **Galway**	Recess	1.24 x 13m
• **Waterford**	Curraghmore (Ht. Champion)	2.24 x 16m

Anthropologists identify that man is the only creature known to bury its dead and it is one of a few behavioural actions that distinguished humans. Burial was not done for hygiene reasons, it represented an instinctive feeling that the death of an individual did not represent the end of life. It was a preparation for an onward journey. The poor wrapped bodies in cloth or hay, the rich commissioned limestone sarcophagi in places where they did not have trees such as in Egypt, but the majority used coffins made of wood. Primitive people split a tree trunk and hollowed it out. Particular woods were favoured by different people in different locations, selected for their aroma, preservative or durability in water. Favoured trees included Elms in England, *Castanea dentata* and *C. sativa, Juniperus virginiana, Paulownia tomentosa, Pinus strobus, Quercus alba* and Salix was favoured for coffin baskets. There is a remarkable coffin culture in China and Japan. The timbers of four different Redwoods meet their needs.

The Umbrella Pine enjoys exclusivity. It is the specified wood that coffins for members of the Japanese Royal Family are made of. This designation has symmetry. One of our oldest of trees caters for a funereal particular of the oldest imperial lineage (2500 years). It is a strong straight grained, soft, elastic and almost white wood when cut, which matures to a light brown. It is comparable to the best spruces.

Cryptomeria japonica

The ordinary person's coffin in the subtropical south of Japan is made from the scented wood of the Camphor Tree, *Cinnamomum camphora*. Elsewhere

coffins are made from a timber they call Sugi and that we call Japanese Cedar or *Cryptomeria japonica*. It is the dominant timber tree in Japan which has 74% of its land, the highest in the world, under forest. They pioneered the concept of forestry as a slow growing crop. They have the highest population density and demonstrate compatibility between trees and people while environmental jeremiads elsewhere proclaim their incompatibility.

Many plant hunting expeditions were motivated by profit. Wealth and fame was promised to those who could determine a new use for a plant in the west. Thomas Jefferson exalted as the "**greatest service that could be rendered to any country is to add a useful plant to its culture**". Each plant collected and catalogued was assessed for its novelty value and especially for its possible utility. The timber potential of exotic conifers was promoted by selecting a common name to show an association with one of three important well know timber conifers in Europe, Fir, Pine or the prized Cedar of Lebanon. The emphasis was on marketing the potential not on botanical accuracy.

Robert Fortune while in China collecting for the RHS was the first to collect seed of the Chinese form of Cryptomeria. He sent large quantities to England in 1844. It was first described by Kaempfer in Japan in 1697. Introduced as Japanese Cedar in fact, it is not a Cedar at all, but is a Redwood that is most closely related to *Sequoiadendron giganteum*.

Cryptomeria is a 50m tall, neat pyramidal tree in their forests. In the landscape its profile is as elegant as the giant Redwood and is valued as an ornamental. It is one of the notable trees planted in the precincts of its many Buddhist Temples and Shinto Shrines. It forms no less than a 32 km. long avenue to the 8th century Nikko Shrine which is on the east coast, north of Tokyo. It was planted in the mid 17th century when the shrine was redeveloped as the site for a Mausoleum to Tokuyama Ieyasu the warlord founding father of modern Japan. Champion Tree record fine specimens growing in our damper coastal counties in

Cork	**Height Champion**	2.7 x 34 m
Waterford		5.19 x 30.5m
	Girth Champion	5.49 x 28.5m
Leitrim		3.25 x 24 m

Like Sciadopitys, it is the sole species in its family. The wood is scented by volatile oils, is easily worked, is durable and highly ornamental in colour and grain. It has never figured as a forest tree here. It is known to dislike heavy clays, and lack of summer heat restricted its use. In the comparative forest tree trial planted between 1904-1913 in Avondale it suffered bad frost damage, was of poor form, forked and did not produce sawlogs.

Mary Forrest lists it in 16 of the Great Gardens of Ireland. ***Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans'** listed in 21 gardens, is more popular and the form we normally encounter, selected strictly for the ornamental novelty of its foliage turning purple in winter. Its feathery juvenility is retained permanently. There are many cultivars in Japan but few have attained popularity here.
***C. j.* 'Cristata'** measures 2.57m x 24.5m. Is the Height and Girth Champion in Longford.
***C.j* 'Viminalis'** measures 1.35m x 11m in a Sligo garden.

***Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan Sugi'**. ('Snow Topped Cedar') refers to its new lemon white growth. I regard it as the best cultivar for Irish Gardens. Our 25 year old 4m specimens command attention. It is a graceful, slow growing, form with hanging branchlets, with soft lemon yellow foliage. The first plant I released was a 2m specimen donated to the RTE Teletron Charity Auction in 1992. It sold for £10,000. That price gave it an unwarranted exclusivity that effectively stopped further inquiries or sales.

Cunninghamii lanceolata is the most important forest timber tree in China, ranking second only to the bamboo in volume harvested and in its versatility of use. The highly prized wood is light, soft fragrant, pale yellow or almost white, and easily worked, durable and rot resistant where in contact with soil. Most Chinese are buried in coffins made of its scented wood. We were familiar with its wood in grocery stores of old, as all the tea in China was exported in chests made of its wood. It is the first wood I got to know, a recycled tea chest was the standard means to confine crawling babies in farmhouses long before colourful Mothercare playpens were affordable.

The name honours James Cunningham, a minor and largely forgotten plant hunter who found it in 1701-2. He collected specimens of it on the Island of Chusan near Shanghai and is credited with introducing the first plants from China in 1698. I am of the opinion that he was an accidental botanist. He was a surgeon at the East Indian Co base in Canton. Britons officially could not step outside their warehouse to which they imported opium (illegally) and from where they exported tea to London. They were incentivised to procure whatever plants they could. We can speculate on the incongruity of this name to the Chinese and on their chagrin that it was not named to honour one of their own greats. It was an age when Britain had an aggressive sense of its self importance and was possessed by a certainty of its superior powers. In that time of exploration and discovery, all peoples outside of Europe and the Near East were referred to as savages, exemplified by Church leaders who assured settlers that the native American savages were vermin that could be shot on sight and that it was not a sin to do so.

China was a conundrum. Undoubtedly it was an Empire, but it was built on a religion, on values and on a system alien to theirs, which could validly question their assumed superiority. It had an Emperor, a hierarchy and was administered by a meritocracy recruited through a 4000 year old mandarin examination system that selected the best and the brightest irrespective of class, wealth, or place of birth. It would be another 140 years before awareness was aroused of this monumental insensitivity in the naming of new plants. The Americans took umbrage and faced down Kew when it proposed that their great tree should be called Wellingtonia after an Irish born Duke from Trim Co. Meath. The foliage of *Cunninghamii lanceolata* appears to be prickly but is in fact pliant. Superficially, it resembles Araucaria. It is neither, but is another Redwood with similar type cones and the characteristic soft spongy red bark. It makes a pyramidal tree to 50m with horizontal branches pendulous at the extremities. The leaves, with 2 white stripes underneath, turns bronze in winter, are spirally arranged as is characteristic of all Redwoods. Its ornamental disadvantage is that it does not shed its 5 year old leaves when they die. They remain on the tree and give it a detracting ragged exotic appearance. Like Sequoia the trees grow remarkably close to each other. As with Cryptomeria it has the inestimable asset of regenerating by coppicing and sprouts new growth when cut or burned. Thus, their respective extensive forests in Japan and in China self generate.

It grows in Central, Western and Southern China in the mountain valleys of Sichuan, Hubei and Yunnan. In 1993 travelling in Sichuan, I saw extensive forests and clear fell harvesting. An entire 35 km stretch was denuded on the steep slopes on each side of the Yalong River, a tributary of the Yangste. Cunninghamii dislikes wind. When I observed roof tiles slightly askew I was told they lay roof tiles on battens but that there was no need to secure them with nails because they never experience wind. Cunninghamii also dislikes late spring frosts and grows ideally in warmer and wetter conditions that we can provide. Mary Forrest records it in 10 Great Irish Gardens, Birr, Castlewellan, Dunloe, Guincho, Headfort, Ilnacullin, J.F Kennedy Arboretum, Mount Congreve, Mount Usher and Powerscourt. It is grown by a wholesale nursery here, so your local Garden Centre can procure stocks.

Champion Trees at:

Castle Forbes, Co Longford	0.74 x 9.5m
Mount Usher, Co Wicklow	3.08 x 25.5m

Metasequoia glytostroboides

The Redwood family that once bestrode the world is now reduced to relicts. At least 12 other species are known from fossils found in North America and from the Black Sea to China. One grew within the Arctic Circle and one was found in Australia. It was in 1941 that Professor Shigera Miki a Japanese palaeobotanist created the new genus Metasequoia to describe some fossil found in Japan

from the Pliocene period (1.6- 5 million years ago) that were until then confused with Sequoia and Taxodium. Its leaves are opposite but they spiral around the stem on other Redwoods. Metasequoia fossils have since been found in North America, China, and Greenland.
In 1944 a forester discovered a tree new to him in Sichuan Province. He took it to Professor Z.Wang of the Central Bureau of Forestry who was unable to identify it. He took it to Professor W.C Cheng at National Central University of Chungking. Confused and intrigued he sent his student HsuchChi-Ju to collect more complete specimens including branches bearing male cones. They realised it was a new species, identical to the tree fossil recently described in Japan. They published their findings and sent specimens to two American tree experts. Ralph W. Chaney, Professor of Palaeobotany at the University of California found the samples remarkably similar to fossils he had found in Oregon. Professor Merrill Director of the Arnold Arboretum in Harvard University was the other recipient. Hsuch Chi-Ju returned to measure the tree. It was 37m (122ft) tall with a girth of 7m (23ft). On his second visit he was directed to another village (Shu-Se-Pu in Hubei Province), 48km away where he found thousands of trees. The villagers fed its foliage to their cattle as fodder.

In 1947 a group of Americans visited the area and fortuitously collected a large number of specimens and a great quantity of seed. In early 1948 they distributed seeds to all leading botanical institutions around the world. This accounts for its quick establishment worldwide. Within months, the Mao Red Army was in power and travel to the area was forbidden. When exchanges commenced in the late 1970's there were already sizeable specimens in many places. It is now widely planted along roadsides and as a street tree in China.

There is no ambiguity on the botanical identity of the fossil tree but there is an intriguing question to be answered as to how and why a tree which had a world distribution became extinct except in one small remote mountainous location in SW China. To answer this question hundreds of scientists from a range of disciplines descended on the area to study its habitat and people since 1973. In 1993 I got an opportunity to travel in this area with Roy Lancaster and Mikinori Ogisu. To do so Mikinori had to procure 13 licences. We were accompanied by two government minders. We had to report each night to the local police station in the area we were in, we presumed to confirm that we were safe. There were no hotels within Yi dependent area. We over nighted in a network of government hostels built to accommodate visiting mandarins. They were simple, distinctive and their design was as recognisable as the National School in rural Ireland. Each had an open outside stair and hallway, concrete floor and bedrooms with tubular steel bed frame and wire sprung base with a water jug, basin and chamber pot. We were prohibited from taking photographs of military installations, which included footbridges and graveyards.

Mikinori makes four observations. He points out that Metaseqouia's distribution in the mountainous SW China is within the land area occupied by the Yi people. Numbering 14m they are recognised as one of 58 minorities within China, are classified as of Austro-Asiatic origin and speak a distinct language with Tibeto-Burman roots. Tall, thin and narrow headed their physiognomy is distinct from the dominant Han, (your local Chinese take away proprietor). Yi society is structured on a caste system, identifiable by a dress code. Their economy was based on barter, using salt as a currency. They practiced slavery. Despite Chairman Mao's claim that he abolished slavery, they lived in an autonomous area from which foreigners were excluded. We entered their area via a manned barrier border. We dined with their leader, visited their Ethnographic Museum and a Shaman read from a 300 year old book of parchments a religious text for us. They wash ceremoniously on three occasions in their life, at birth, marriage and at death. They are hoe using farmers, cultivating on steep slopes crops of potatoes, hill rice and buckwheat. We observed them going to the slopes with their 'transistor radio', a songbird and cage.

China had been botanised extensively over the past 400 years. It seemed plant hunters could not have missed such a distinctive tree particularly in the two provinces of Sichuan and Hubei. These were and are of primary interest to Europeans as most of the Chinese plants in our garden are natives of these two provinces. Secondly, Mikinori claim that plant hunters avoided this area, warned off by their Chinese guides by the fear of enslavement. Thirdly, the Yi people make their coffins from Metasequoia wood. Cunninghamii does not grow in the area where it grows. Fourthly, to celebrate the birth of a child they take a hardwood cutting of this tree and stick it into the ground. In effect, they plant the tree that will provide the wood for their child's coffin.

Seeds offer the most efficient means of raising young plants of most conifers.
Few conifers strike from hardwood cuttings, Metasequoia is an exception. Jim Kelly in a number of trials he conducted in Kinsealy confirmed that up to 80% of cuttings taken from shoots of one or two year old wood rooted within 12 weeks. Although it can readily be raised from seed worldwide, hardwood cuttings is the favoured means of propagating new stock. These are intriguing observations. Yet it is important not to extrapolate imaginatively beyond the facts. A correlation is not a proof.

The youngest Metasequoia fossils are about 2 million years old. It is thought it became extinct in Japan 700,000 years ago. Peking Man discovered in 1927 place the evidence of the oldest human habitation in China at 350,000 years; so whatever role anthropology may have played in perpetuating the Dawn Redwood in this area remain to be revealed. Human activity can be traced back 2 million years through Museum held man-made objects. It is not unreasonable to assume that found objects may yet illuminate this question.

Taxodium, it colours well in the autumn, develops a fluted bole like it and forms a distinctive pyramid growth habit. As it ages, it may take on the mature characteristics of a splendid irregular head of the original tree. Its only drawback is that the young leaves are vulnerable and will melt in areas of late frosts. That was my experience when I planted a 200m long avenue with 3m tall trees in a frost pocket in Co Kildare in 1973. My splendid landmark imaginings regressed into the ground within 3 years.

Sichuan is the most populous state in China. Its land area approximates to that of Japan. Given that Metasequoia native habitat is on the same latitude 30° N as where New Orleans and Cairo are situated, it would have been adventurous to predict its success in the range of locations where it has succeeded. Altitude helps, as it grows above 1200m. Its companion trees include *Liquidambar formosana*, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum sinense*, *Quercus engleriana* and *glauca*, *Sassafras albidum* and *tzumu*. None of these perform near as well as Metasequoia in our climate.

Mary Forrest confirms it popularity, recording it in 26 of the 30 Great Gardens in Ireland. The Champion Tree records confirm its speed of growth and clearly show that it is very much at home here too.

Garden	County	Champion Height/Girth	Size
Mount Usher	Wicklow	**Height**	2.11 x 21.5m
Lismore Castle	Waterford	**Girth**	2.92 x 15 m
Belfast Botanic Gardens	Antrim		2.07 x 16.5m
Red Hall	Antrim		2.70 x 16.5m
Ballylickey	Cork		2.49 x 15.5m
Headfort Golf Club	Meath		2.86 x 19.5m
Belvedere	Westmeath		2.05 x 18 m
Newbay House Hotel	Wexford		2.45 x 17 m

Correspondence

Dear Editor

I think that the recent articles by John Joe Costin and Ray McIntyre are among the best and most practical I have ever read in the Newsletter. I had the same experience as Ray of saying 'Yes! Yes!' and 'Why did nobody tell me this before? as I read their contributions. My most recent failure has been with *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire' bought with high hopes of adding extra winter interest and tenderly underplanted with *Narcissus* 'Jetfire' to echo the theme. The daffs are fine but the combination doesn't work because the shrub is so pathetic.

I no longer buy lavender as it only survives for about a season and a half. I have been wondering whether this is the Belfast climate, my very acid soil, or a combination of both. Or does everyone else succeed in which case it must be me. On the other hand my *Camellia* 'Adolphe Audusson', which is a deep red japonica hybrid, blooms splendidly every year so perhaps it would be worth Ray trying one more time.

Given the practical importance of the information and the aims of the IGPS, could we as a Society collect more of this information and find ways of preserving and disseminating it, perhaps through the website?

Yours sincerely

Maeve Bell
Belfast

Aster 'Little Carlow'

This aster dates from before the Second World War and was raised by a lady called Mrs. Thornely. Mrs. Thornely was the wife of a solicitor and lived at Nurstead, near Devizes.

She was an enthusiastic collector and grower of michaelmas daisies and bred many new varieties in the 1930's. Catalogues were produced and she sold small numbers of plants to other lovers of these plants.

Eventually, many of the asters ended up in the collection formed by Isabel Allen at Wraxall. Miss Allen showed me catalogues from the nursery at Nurstead and 'Little Carlow' is listed. Miss Allen also had Mrs.Thornely recorded as the breeder.

About 15 years ago I was fortunate enough to make contact with Mrs. Thornely's grandaughter, Mrs. Alex Way, she has provided information about the asters growing at Nurstead. I have always been puzzled by the origin of the name 'Little Carlow', thinking that the Thornelys might have spent some time in Ireland. Mrs. Way believes it might be connected to a place in Poland called Carlow where the Thornelys used to visit a relative, in the years before the war.

The Polish town has undergone several name changes. One of them is listed as Carlowitz. I suppose it might have been just Carlow at one time.

It is quite possible that the Ballawley Nursery obtained stock of 'Little Carlow' from Mrs.Thornely or from Miss Allen. The plant was certainly not in the general nursery trade until the 1980's, after The National Trust had been growing it in several gardens. I hope this is of some help.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Picton
Old Court Nurseries
Worcestershire

SNOWDROPS AT PRIMROSE HILL

To view the extensive snowdrop collection the garden at Primrose Hill, Lucan, Co Dublin will be open as usual for the month of February, daily from 2 – 5 pm.

Robin Hall whose interest in snowdrops began when he was a young schoolboy still tends the garden. He continues the work started by his mother Mrs Cicely Hall in the 1950s.

For further information Phone 01 628 0373

Some Irish Snowdrops by Paddy Tobin

The cold snap of early December left the garden under snow for ten days, a blanket which covered all and hid a few gems, those little treasures of the garden which bring interest to the shortest days of the year and assure us that the seasons are on the turn with spring just round the corner. I refer, of course, to the early snowdrops, those darlings which brave the worst of the year's weather to bring interest to otherwise quite bare gardens. I find that, with the heavy soil of my garden, *Galanthus reginae-olgae* and its cultivars do not do well here and, while I am contemplating growing some in pots in an unheated glasshouse, I am simply giving up on them in the open garden. Friends in the U.K. and on the continent have reported flowering *Galanthus reginae-olgae* as early as late October, giving them a very early start to the snowdrop season. Hearing from others of the early flowering snowdrops serves to heighten the anticipation for the first to flower here.

Galanthus elwesii var. *monostictus, G. elwesii* Hiemalis Group and *G. elwesii (*Hiemalis Group) 'Barnes' normally provide the first main flush of snowdrops here though *G. elwesii* 'Peter Gatehouse' was first to flower this season. I have a special fondness for *G. elwesii* var. *monostictus* as it was the first snowdrop I grew from seed, received from the I.G.P.S. seedlist as *G. caucasicus* many years ago. There is, however, another which is watched for with great anticipation each year, a particular favourite because it is of Irish origin, found and named by Dr. Keith Lamb. This is *Galanthus* 'Castlegar'. Keith wrote to me some years back, *"In 1985, Sir George and Lady Mahon took us to see their old home in Castlegar. It was not a horticultural trip but when I looked out the window I saw snowdrops in flower under a tree and I was given a few bulbs. A year or two later Ruby and David Baker were here and were intrigued by such an early snowdrop. They took specimens to a meeting of snowdrop enthusiasts in England. They wrote back to say that no one knew what it was and that it should be named, hence the name, 'Castlegar'."* We have grown *G.* 'Castlegar' since 2004 and it has reliably flowered before Christmas each year, the first of our Irish snowdrops to bloom, a beauty and a treasure.

Although we grow quite a number of different snowdrops in the garden, it is the Irish snowdrops which hold a particular interest for us and are the ones most treasured. In this article, I will comment on some Irish snowdrops and, who knows, you may catch the bug. Be warned, they are delightful plants and, once smitten, it is very difficult not to become addicted to them. Also, you should be warned that this is a wander through some Irish snowdrops. I have not organised them into any particular order but have written of them as they have come to mind, a wandering disorganised mind.

If you are interested in Irish snowdrops, a read of the entries in "A Heritage of Beauty" by Dr. E. Charles Nelson would be an excellent place to start. Another outstanding source of information is "Snowdrops, A Monograph of Cultivated Galanthus" by Matt Bishop, Aaron Davis and John Grimshaw. I have used both sources to inform and guide my writing below and thank the authors for their work.

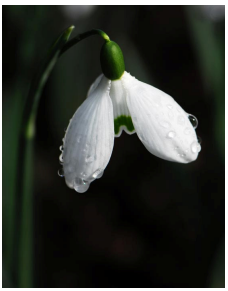
Undoubtedly, the champion of Irish snowdrops is *Galanthus* 'Straffan', a plant

treasured by gardeners abroad as well as at home. It is one of the oldest of snowdrop cultivars. It was originally noticed at Straffan House, Straffan, Co. Kildare and, to quote from "A Heritage of Beauty" is "now regarded as a hybrid between *G. plicatus* (originally brought from the Crimea by Major Eyre Massey, presumably towards the end of the Crimean War in the early 1850s) and *G. nivalis."* Frederick Bedford was the gardener at Straffan House and he is credited with tending the bulbs and distributing them. It has a rare habit among snowdrops which gives a spread of 'Straffan' a wonderful appearance in the garden. Each bulb produces a secondary flower a little later than the first so that the display is quite a long one. As *G.* 'Straffan' has been with us such a long time, and passed around to many gardens, it is no wonder that other names have been attached to it over the years and *G.* 'Coolballintaggart' and 'The O'Mahony' are indistinguishable from *G.* 'Straffan'. I have no doubt but that other names have been attached also. I grow a snowdrop, received from Bob Gordon, which he calls "Jenny Scott's Straffan". This is identical in appearance to *G.* 'Straffan' but flowers a fortnight earlier. I suppose it extends the 'Straffan' season.

G.'Hill Poë' is another of my favourite Irish snowdrops, what one might describe as a dote of a plant. It is a double snowdrop, usually with five outer segments and approximately twenty inner segments and these are perfectly regular, so neatly and so tidily arranged that it is a little jewel. It is certainly one of the finest of all the double snowdrops, a late season flower, small in stature

and deserves to be placed in a choice position where it can be admired. It arose in the garden of James Hill Poë at Riverston, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary around 1911. I have heard gardeners comment that it could be sometimes difficult to "get it going" in the garden but I have not found that to be the case. It is a small snowdrop and will never make a big impact as a garden plant but it is one of great beauty and worth the effort. I have found it not the quickest to bulk up but, nonetheless, it does so at a reasonable rate.

Similarly small in stature and deserving of special attention is *G. ikariae* 'Emerald Isle' which was discovered by Megan Morris at Drew's Court in Co. Limerick. She recognised that *G. ikariae* with green-flushed outer segments was something special and collected some bulbs. She shared bulbs with Dr. E. Charles Nelson and it passed on to other snowdrop enthusiasts. Unfortunately, many complain that it is a difficult snowdrop to keep going in the garden and I have found it very slow to increase. Willie Reardon has told me that it continues not only to grow but to thrive at Drew's Court at the base of a field ditch where, in the company of briers and other field wildflowers, it has spread to about thirty metres. In this location it is dry and baked in the summer and, perhaps, this is something we might try to replicate in the garden. We began here with one bulb in 2002 and had seven flowers last year; certainly not a good rate of increase but it is lovely. I do realise I grow it in deepest shade, apparently not the most suitable conditions but I am loath to disturb the bulbs for fear of losing them. A reason for hope is that it is a clonal variety and comes true from seed. With permission, Willie Reardon has collected seed from the plants at Drew's Court and these are approaching flowering size now so we will soon know how well these seed-grown bulbs do in the garden. Yes, it can be a bit of a bother but it is certainly worth it.

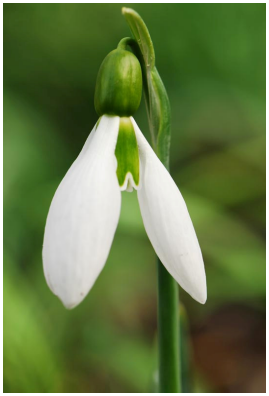


Galanthus 'Brenda Troyle' has been a cause of puzzlement and confusion as it has been impossible to confirm its origins though there is a general acceptance that it originated in Ireland and it is usually commented that a Brenda Troyle worked at Kilmacurragh in Co. Wicklow though, despite research, Dr. E. Charles Nelson has been unable to confirm this.

It is not one of the most spectacular snowdrops; rather one of the good, reliable ones which will give a good display in the garden being of good size and bulking up well. It is quite similar to that great snowdrop, *G.* 'S. Arnott', and this alone would be recommendation enough to grow it. I have certainly found it one of those reliable and appreciated plants in the garden.

While Brenda Troyle has proven to be an elusive character, there are few in Irish gardening circles who have not heard of David Shackleton and his wonderful garden at Beech Park, Clonsilla, Co. Dublin and I like the idea of remembering somebody with a plant. There are certainly doubts about the origins of this plant (*G. elwesii* 'David Shackleton') as David Shackleton scoffed at the idea that it had come from his garden. However, his name has become attached to this particular snowdrop and I think it is fair to say it is a fine one to carry his name. It flowers late in the season with pristine clear flowers which have an olive-green marking on the inner segment as well as a distinctly olive-green ovary. The whole plant, foliage and flower stalk, has an eye-catching upright habit, as I imagine David Shackleton would have carried himself.

For many years there has been one garden in Ireland which snowdrop enthusiasts have always sought to visit. This was to view the wonderful collection of Mrs. Cicely Hall and her son, Robin, at Primrose Hill, Lucan, Co. Dublin. Between them they have raised many excellent snowdrops from seed but have shown admirable reluctance to apply a name to any snowdrop which has not stood the test of time or has not been tried in other gardens by fellow enthusiasts.



Mrs. Hall regularly gave visitors some of her "Primrose Hill Specials" which was her humorous name for her seedlings. Though never intended as an actual name for any of her snowdrops, now it has been applied by some to bulbs received from her or passed on from those who originally received them. In gardening, as in other areas of life, persistence is rewarded and one of these seedlings which arose in Primrose Hill has proved to be an exceptional plant, a snowdrop of true beauty and stature and one worthy to carry Mrs. Hall's name. *G.* 'Cicely Hall' is a strong, large, late-season snowdrop with almost completely green inner segments. It is similar in appearance to *G.* 'Merlin' though of greater

substance. Robin Hall would comment, with a great deal of justification, I believe, that it is the best of all Irish snowdrops. It is certainly a wonderful plant and recalls a wonderful Irish gardener and garden.

In the spring of 2010 a *G.* 'The Whopper' was offered for sale for the first time. It seems, without doubt, to be a bulb which originated at Primrose Hill and, indeed, the name is one which had been used by Mrs. Hall as a nickname for her large 'Merlin'- like snowdrops. Some snowdrops from Primrose Hill were passed around under the name of "Whopper" in previous years and it is unfortunate that the name has now been applied to this plant as it is likely to lead to confusion as there are several "Whoppers" in circulation. Dr. Keith Lamb has told me he has been growing "Whopper" since 1989, for example.

However, once a name has been put into print and the bulb put into circulation under this name, it is impossible to turn back the clock. In the garden, it is very similar in appearance to *G.* 'Cicely Hall' but is a taller plant, with a smaller flower and is generally more lax and floppy in growth habit. I think Mrs. Hall and Robin would have gladly given it to visitors to the garden as a good plant, even a "Primrose Hill Special" but I don't think they would have put a name to it.

Robin Hall has told me of four snowdrops which he has named and which, unfortunately, I don't have in the garden. *G. elwesii* 'Robin Hall' is described in the "Snowdrops" monograph as a late flowering *Galanthus elwesii* var. *monostictus* with very large well-shaped flowers. It has wide, arching silvery grey leaves and it reputed to bulk up well to produce floriferous clumps in the garden. It arose as a seedling at Primrose Hill in the early 1970s. Robin spotted *G.* 'Mary Hely-Hutchinson' in the garden of Mrs. Mary Hely-Hutchinson in Malahide, received some bulbs and distributed it to friends.

It is the earliest flowering cultivar of *G. plicatus*, which makes it an interesting addition to any collection. Robin believes it possible the bulbs may have originated at the Trinity Botanic Gardens. Robin named another snowdrop after family friend Mary O Brien, *G.* 'Mary O Brien'. It arose as a seedling at Primrose Hill and Robin described it to me as having "a green mark up the tube of the flower". I must visit for a more detailed description and photograph. Robin has told me that unfortunately these two snowdrops do not enjoy heavy wet soils and are proving somewhat weak in growth.

Robin also named an *elwesii x gracilis* hybrid after a friend and fellow snowdrop enthusiast, Ruby Baker. As I have said, I haven't it to hand but have a photograph of a pot shown by Dr.Ronald Mc Kenzie at the London RHS Show in February, 2008.

Comments from friends growing this plant are that, while not spectacular, it is an excellent garden plant and certainly one worth growing. The photograph is from a friend, John Finch.

David and Ruby Baker have been regular visitors to Ireland, particularly during the snowdrop season. On one such visit in 1995 they wandered off the beaten path and became lost somewhere in Co. Kildare. They stopped at what looked like the remains of a gatehouse and found several different snowdrops in the derelict garden. One was a fine tall snowdrop with green on the outer segments and this they later named, *G.* 'Kildare', (see back cover). It is a large-flowered snowdrop, noticeably upright in habit and often producing a second scape. The outer segments are long and slim with thin green lines along the veins. By the way, this green marking on the outer segments has become very popular with snowdrop enthusiasts; there are some snowdrops which are almost completely green, something which does rather contradict our common perception of what a snowdrop looks like. I am grateful to a friend in Germany for my bulbs of 'Kildare'. Fortunately, it seems to be a good doer in the garden and I have been able to pass on a bulb to Paul Cutler and hopefully, between us we will be able to bulk it up.

As I am rambling along, mention of Altamont Gardens brings to mind two snowdrops from the garden. 'Skyward' is a large sized elwesii with excellent

glaucous foliage, wide and striking. It is a tall plant, up to 30cm, and carries its flowers well. I first saw it in the gardens labelled as *G.* "JR". Paul recounted that the bulbs had come from Helen Dillon and had got the impression from Helen that there was some connection with the Co. Meath gardener, Jim Reynolds. On enquiring of Jim, Paul was told that he had never had such a snowdrop and didn't know anything about it. Paul decided to give it the name 'Skyward' as it is very tall and upright in growth and holds its flowers well above the foliage. Paul gave me some bulbs in 2007 but they declined over the following years and the clump which Paul lifted, divided and replanted also dwindled afterwards so it may not be one which will thrive, unfortunately.
There is, as well, a form of *G. elwesii* which grows at Altamont, plants which Mrs. Corona North built up over her years in the garden, which is a wonderful snowdrop with excellent glaucous foliage and a good constitution and it makes an excellent garden plant.

More promising as a good garden snowdrop is *G.* 'Green Lantern', (see inside back cover) a strong growing form of *G. elwesii* with strong green marking at the apex of the outer segments. Again, it has very attractive glaucous foliage, tall and broad, while the flowers are held nicely above the foliage. It makes a very striking garden plant. Paul Cutler had hoped to name this snowdrop to link it clearly with Mrs. North but, after some research, had to decide against it. There are, apparently, a number of snowdrops bearing Mrs. North name already in circulation; probably various *G. elwesii* from the garden to which the recipients attached Mrs. North's name, as is the way with gardeners. We all have plants with the names of friends attached, which is fine until they begin to be distributed under that name, as though that name were its correct name.

Another Co. Carlow snowdrop is *G.* 'Drummond Giant' (see inside back cover). Mrs. Stasia O'Neill, of Ballon, Co. Carlow gave me the story of this plant. She bought a pot of six bulbs at Christmas 1958 at Drummond's garden shop in Pembroke, Carlow. When they died back she planted them out in the garden under a large spruce where they remained for about fifteen years before she transplanted them to a better position. Here they flourished and increased well and started to flower in January/February of each year.

Mrs. O'Neill gave some bulbs to Mrs. North at Altamont and they were distributed from there; at times even being called after Mrs. North – such are the ways in which confusion over names arises. *G.* 'Drummond Giant' is a fine form of *G. elwesii,* a fine big plant which performs well in the garden. The flowers are somewhat chunky, the petals having a thick texture, the ovary somewhat large for the overall size of the flower and the marking on the inner segments a strong green. It is treasured here as a relatively local snowdrop associated with a generous gardener.

Galanthus ‘Green Lantern’

Galanthus ‘Drummond Giant’

I shall, rather abruptly, bring this article to a close, hoping you have found my ramblings about some Irish snowdrops of interest and that it will, perhaps, prompt you to take an interest in these wonderful plants. If you know of any other Irish snowdrops I would be delighted to hear from you
More on Irish snowdrops in April.

Drop me a line at pmtobin@eircom.net with any comments or information.

Galanthus
'Kildare'

Membership Correspondence:
The Irish Garden Plant Society,
c/o The National Botanic Gardens,
Glasnevin,
Dublin 9.

Please note that staff at the Botanic Gardens cannot take telephone enquiries about the IGPS.

E-mail: igpsireland@aol.com

Website: www.irishgardenplantsociety.org