

*The Newsletter of the*  
**IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY**



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## EDITORIAL

*Dear Members,*

*There are two important Society events coming up – The Plant Sales, both North and South. These are major fund-raising events for the Society and your support is very necessary. Pot up your spare plants and bring them along for sale and, of course, come along and treat yourself to something new for the garden.*

*Another thought for you as we approach the end of this year: A membership of the IGPS might be a nice Christmas present for a keen-gardening friend. Contact Rose Sevastopulo through the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin for details.*

*New Year's Resolutions! Yes, at bit early, I know but just putting the thought into your minds. Why not get more involved in the IGPS? There are many occasions through the year when extra hands are needed and getting involved is the best way of enjoying your membership and of getting to know a wider circle of gardening friends. Be active, be involved!*

*Paddy Tobin, Editor. October 2003*

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*Front & Back Cover Illustrations are by Christel Rosenfeld*

## A Word from the Chairman

Dear Members,

This year is the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the N.C.C.P.G. (National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens) and I had the honour of representing the society at their celebrations held at Hampton Court Flower Show on the press day. The opening ceremony was performed by actress Penelope Keith. The marquee had around 25 stands representing some of the National Collections held in the U.K.

We have renewed our association with the N.C.C.P.G. but will not have copies of Plant Heritage to distribute. If any members wish to receive the magazine I would suggest that they consider individual membership of the N.C.C.P.G.

We are currently working on the development of collections in Ireland and hope that in the future we can make our mark in this field, as of now the numbers are small but well worth a visit.

I would ask all members to make more of an individual contribution to the society. Members who are interested in our seed distribution can assist by sending in new varieties of seed along with your usual donation. Stephen Butler works very hard to keep you supplied with seeds, so do try to keep an interesting variety of seeds available.

As you may be aware, it has been some time since we published an edition of Moorae. This has been due to the difficulty in obtaining suitable articles. The standard of the contributions at the moment to the newsletter make me feel that it would be possible to find enough material among our members. If you are interested in having an article of 2000-5000 words approx. considered for publication, which is in keeping with previous issues, please contact Mary Bradshaw at 01 2697376. All articles are published at the discretion of the editor.

Could I also appeal to all members to encourage their friends to join the Irish Garden Plant Society?

*Malcolm Rose, Chairman*

## A Message from the Committee

The committee of the Society would like to say a very special **"Thank You"** to the many members who have given of their time to further the work of the Society over the past year. We would like to especially thank those members who gave of their time to man the Society's stall at the various shows and those who put so much work into the Annual Plant Sale. There are many others who give freely of their time for the Society and whose work is not so visible. Their efforts are truly appreciated also. Members such as you are the lifeblood of the Society and without you it would not function nor achieve its aims.

We thank you all most sincerely, *The Members of the Committee.*

## The IGPS at the Garden Heaven Show by Ed Bowden

The display of Augustine Henry plants at last year's Garden Heaven Show was certainly a hard act to follow but we knew that the standard had to be maintained and that it would be a big mistake not to proceed with a display this year.

At our committee meeting in May I took on the task of putting together a display of Irish cultivars as our project. Dermot Keogh and Mary Bradshaw offered their services, so now it was off to find plants. Starting from nothing it would be interesting to see how easy it might be to collect a group of plants that had an Irish connection.

While visiting friends in Cork I took the opportunity to visit garden centres there and en route. My first stop was Millstreet Garden Centre where I found *Luma apiculata* "Glanleam Gold" and *Rosa* "Bantry Bay". Not much more luck was had until I found myself almost back in Dublin when I came across *Griselinia littoralis* "Bantry Bay", *Escallonia laevis* "Gold Ellen" and *Solanum crispum* "Glasnevin". Always knew Johnstown Garden Centre wouldn't let me down!

After visiting half a dozen garden centres I only had success in two. This, I feel, reflects the lack of availability of plants that have Irish connections and shows the work that needs to be done by the Society.

Dermot had managed to get *Penstemon* "Evelyn", *P.* "Beechpark" and *Romneya coulteri*. These plants were donated to the Society by Berna Purcell to whom we are most grateful.

Mary was preparing herself for a trip to Cork to cover the Mallow "Homes and Garden Festival". I continued to contact growers and was delighted to track down a number of Irish heather varieties from Doran Nurseries in Lamahoe, Co. Kildare. Flannery's Nursery in Staplestown, Co. Kildare, came to the rescue with a collection of trees and shrubs which they delivered to us.

Now we had the plants but how were we going to display them to maximum effect? Our display of plants on the stand had to be uniform and we considered two options: to plant up all the plants into the same type pot or to wrap all the pots in which the plants already were in hessian. The second option seemed the cheapest and handiest as we had all the hessian in stock. Labelling the plants was done on computer, thanks to Brendan Sayers, and black felt was bought to dress the stand. It was even more convenient when the Irish Orchid Society's stand was next to ours as this meant we were able to help each other when it came to preparing the stands and adding the finishing touches.

Two evenings were spent in what was glorious weather – plants and gardeners both suffering from dehydration, but the atmosphere was great, everybody busy preparing their displays. Our stand had to be completed by 3pm on the Wednesday for judging so Mary, Dermot and I met at 11am to put it all together, wrapping each plant in Hessian and placing plants so as to display them at their best. Vases were filled with Irish rose varieties from St. Anne’s Park so as to add some variation and colour. All was in place finally and it looked well. We were a happy bunch!

Time was spent putting together a roster for manning the stand over the four days. Many thanks to all who gave their time and encouraged so many new members to join as well as promoting our book “A Heritage of Beauty”. It was so good to have been able to display *Daboecia* “Charles Nelson” on the stand as this, I feel, helped promote the book. The plants which were used on the stand are being retained with a view to propagating them. In the future, hopefully, this work will be seen at our plant sales.

Many thanks to the staff and especially to the van driver from the Botanic Gardens. I must also thank my own staff from Dublin City Council Parks who assisted in transporting the plants and material to and from the R.D.S.

All our hard work was rewarded when we received a Silver Award from the judges. This makes it two years in a row. Can we make it three? The challenge is on for next year!

We also displayed our stand at the Rose Festival in St. Anne’s Park the following weekend. Many thanks to Marcella Campbell for organising the roster and to those who manned the stand over the two days. Though it is a smaller garden show our presence was very much appreciated by many people who felt that not all can afford €12 to gain entrance to “Garden Heaven”.

### **A List of Plants displayed on our stand at the Garden Heaven Show**

*Aconitum* “Newry Blue”  
*Daboecia cantabrica* “Charles Nelson”  
*Daboecia cantabrica* f. alba  
*Escallonia* “Apple Blossom”  
*Escallonia laevis* “Gold Brian”  
*Escallonia laevis* “Gold Ellen”  
*Griselinia littoralis* “Bantry Bay”  
*Luma apiculata* “Glanleam Gold”  
*Penstemon* “Beech Park”  
*Penstemon* “Evelyn”  
*Romneya coulteri*  
*Rosa* “Irish Hope”  
*Rosa* “Lilli Marlene”

*Rosa* “Mollie McGredy”  
*Rosa* “Souvenir de St. Anne’s”  
*Sarracenia x moorei*  
*Sarracenia x popei*  
*Solanum crispum* “Glasnevin”  
*Sorbus* “Autumn Spire”  
*Taxus baccata* “Fastigiata”  
*x Cupressocyparis leylandii* “Castlewellan”  
*x Cupressocyparis leylandii* “Olive’s Green”

## On the Stand by Paddy Tobin

My wife, Mary, and I did a short stint on the stand at the Garden Heaven Show on the opening day. As Ed said, the weather was absolutely brilliant and the atmosphere inside the hall was sweltering. Ed, Mary and Dermot had done great work on the stand. Though Ed would be loath to boast, I can tell you that the stand, the display of plants and the labelling was a great credit to those who had put it together and to the Society. This was brought home to us as more and more of the people attending the show stopped for a chat and complimented the presentation of the plants and were most interested in the fact that these were plants with an Irish connection.

Beautiful colour was what most caught the eye of the viewers. *Aconitum* “Newry Blue”, with its vivid colouring was commented on by nearly all visitors reminding many older people of stands of monkshood in the gardens of their childhood. *Rosa* “Irish Hope” won the hearts of all and I felt I could have sold dozens of plants per hour if we had been in the business of doing so. It is truly a beautiful rose.

*Romneya coulteri* obliged by being in flower and, of course, was one on the top of many people’s shopping list. The *Escallonias* - “Gold Brian” and “Gold Ellen” were wished for by many and struck people as very garden-worthy plants.

The *sarracenias* could, if they had lived up to their imagined reputations, have fed well that day on the probing inquisitive fingers of an army of little boys. Some older “children” were equally fascinated by them!

*Sorbus* “Autumn Spire” was the plant I would have loved to have taken home, so strong in its growth was it yet neat and tidy in its habit, being well clothed in foliage and tightly upright in habit. This is one Irish cultivar that deserves to be stocked by the garden centres and would surely find a home in many gardens around the country.

Congratulations to Ed, Mary and Dermot on a job very well done. They certainly portrayed and represented the Society in a very positive manner.

## Garden Heaven, The Show: One Man's View by Dermot Keogh

Not everybody was happy with the Garden Heaven Show this year with many commenting on the high entry cost, the small number of garden designs and the fall off in the number of British nurseries. I'd heard all the grumbles within half an hour of arriving. My own particular complaint was the fact that purchases had to be carried out through the front and what seemed an interminable distance back to the car park. I met several very annoyed customers who, like myself, had gone over to the side entrance opposite the car park to find it locked and unmanned. I was lucky to commandeer a barrow after some time. These complaints were all justifiable and one can only hope that the downward trend is reversed next year.

Nevertheless the show gave an opportunity to see many interesting and seldom seen plants and for the smaller Irish nurseries to show how excellent they are. There were particularly good displays of perennials. It looks as if the herbaceous tide is rising again.

I finally left with the barrow loaded with some quality plants. Among them was the mysteriously named "*Kosteletzyra virginicus*", about which the seller had little information and which I have been unable to trace. Other plants new to me and which I have added to my collection were *Campanula X Symphyandra* hybrid, *Potentilla hopwoodiana* and *Geranium pratense* "Hocus Pocus". The campanula hybrid has large pale blue flowers and a flopping habit. The potentilla has red centres with a somewhat washy pink outer rim. I'm hoping that when it bulks up it will be a worthy addition to the front of the border. The geranium is almost black leaved, similar to the better known *G.* "Victor Reiter". I had been looking for *Campanula persicifolia* "Chettle Charm" for a while. In this form the edges of the usual white bells are tinged with pale blue.

Penstemons flower in July/ August and are ideal plants for a show at this time of the year. I picked up the very dark *P.* "blackbird" and *P.* "Iron maiden", a delicate addition with narrow red tubular flowers. Also new to me was *Helianthus salicifolius* with unusually finely divided foliage.

I was also glad to be able to replace a few plants which I had lost over the years. For the rock garden I found *Salix boydii* and the pink form of *Platycodon grandiflorum*. I was also glad to again find the spectacular *Salvia involucrata bethellii*, a terrific addition to the late border.

The aptly named *Achillea* "Terracotta" and *Agastache* "Apricot Spirit" also found their way into my barrow. It was a long hot sticky morning and the journey to the car park an unnecessary irritation but all in all it was an enjoyable sociable event which gave me an excellent opportunity to "top up" my garden with a good variety of plants

## Notes from Glasnevin by Seamus O'Brien

Late September 2003 and the outline of the Great Palm House once again dominates the Glasnevin skyline as it has done for almost 120 years now. Like the Curvilinear Range, this house is one of Glasnevin's architectural gems and it was through this complex of glasshouses that a host of exotic species flowered for the first time in cultivation under the supervision of father and son, Dr. David Moore and Sir Frederick Moore. Fredrick Moore brought Glasnevin's orchid collection to world-wide acclaim, I think he would be pleased to see the marvellous restoration carried out on the historic orchid house, a place no doubt, in which he spent much of his time.



Work in progress on the Great Palm House, August 2003. Photo: P. Tobin

Alas, speaking of palms and palm houses, an old tree of *Trachycarpus fortunei* planted by Dr. David Moore in the garden of the director's residence died of old age this winter. Moore had planted a pair of young trees as an experiment to test their hardiness; the second tree still thrives near the central pavilion of the curvilinear range not far from the original clump of *Crinum moorei*, the Natal lily that bears his name.

In the nursery however, is a fine batch of *Trachycarpus fortunei* seedlings raised from seeds gathered near the village of Bai Sha in central China's Badong County (formerly Patung district). The Chusan Palm is a widespread species in China and it is uncertain to where exactly it is indigenous. It is certainly very common in the three gorges district, where it clings for survival on the towering cliff walls. The fate of many of these trees today is far from certain.

On June 10<sup>th</sup> 2003, the mighty Yangtze River, the commercial artery of China's central provinces, was finally dammed and by the end of this year the new reservoir will have reached a level of 135 metres. The damming of the river will of course have a significant impact on the flora and fauna of the region. Three endemic species found in the new reservoir region face extinction, *Chuanminshen violaceum*, an important



medicinal plant grows near Liantuo (formerly Nanto) in Yichang County in the area of construction and so its habitat will by now have been erased, *Myricaria laxiflora*, a low prostrate, fluvial shrub grows on the flood-line of the Yangtze between the cities of Badong and Wushan where the entire community faces submergence beneath the new lake. *Adiantum reniforme* var. *sinensis*, a tiny maidenhair fern occupies a very narrow strip of land by the Yangtze near Wanxian and too faces definite inundation by the rising water levels.

We travelled through Wanxian last autumn as a third of the Ming dynasty city was being razed to the ground and 571,000 of its inhabitants were being relocated. If ever a city was living on borrowed time it was Wanxian. Our reason for travelling through that rather grimy city was to reach the tiny, charming village of Modaoqi in the very remote mountainous area of south-western Hubei. In the 1940's the village was brought to world-wide attention with the discovery of its most important inhabitant, the living fossil, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, a tree thought to have been extinct for five million years.

This tree then, is perhaps a good example to explain how unique the flora of central China is. Parts of this area, in particular the Metasequoia valley and the Shennongjia Forest District (to the north of Yichang) are known in China as "the Noah's Ark of fossil plants". Many thousands of plants still survive in the deeply cut valleys there, while in Europe and north America they were wiped out time and time again by the great glaciers of past times.

Geologically, the mountains of western Hubei and Sichuan are the eastern most extremities of the Himalayan range and so they are still rising. These mountains and the great mountain ranges further north have played a vital role over millions of years in blocking the advancement of repeated glaciations and this is why so many relic genera and species have survived in this part of east Asia (coupled with the fact that plants were able to retreat into Vietnam and northern Thailand).

Thus many living fossils still flourish in China, unchanged by the evolutionary process. *Metasequoia* once grew over an enormous range and fossil evidence has been found in North America, Greenland, Ireland, Britain, northern mainland Europe, Siberia and right across East Asia to Japan. Today only about 6,000 trees survive in the Metasequoia valley. Before China's civil war, the nationalist government had planned to make this valley of fossil trees a national park, the same defeated government later fled to Taiwan to be succeeded by a communist power that had more on their minds than a bunch of trees in a remote valley. The trees today no longer regenerate in the wild as intensive farm land now occupies their native habitat; it is only a matter of time before the dawn redwood is found only as a fossil record.

Within this narrow valley many ancient relic species cling to survival in the last remaining patches of naturally occurring vegetation. Magnolias boast an ancient

pedigree, reaching back more than 100 million years into the fossil record. Magnolias produce no nectar but rather a fragrance that attracts beetles for pollination and red seeds that beckon birds for dispersal. In this valley grow many of the Magnoliids (Magnolia group relatives), like *Liriodendron chinense*, *Magnolia denudata*, *M. sprengeri*, *M. officinalis*, *Michelia floribunda* var. *hupehensis*, *Michelia martinii*, *Michelia wilsonii*, *Kadsura longipedunculata*, *Schisandra sphenanthera*, *Illicium brevistylum* and *Illicium lanceolatum*, all species of ancient lineages.

Conifers, another primitive group, are abundantly represented in the associated *Metasequoia* flora with genera like *Cephalotaxus*, *Cunninghamia*, *Cupressus*, *Juniperus*, *Keteleeria*, *Larix*, *Pinus*, *Pseudotsuga*, *Taiwania*, *Taxus* and *Torreya*, for example.

It was late September when we drove across the mountains to Madaoqi, the old tree of *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* was instantly recognisable since it towered above all the buildings in the village. A golden yellow field of rice matured to the rear of the tree while chilli peppers and ears of maize dried on the walls and flat roofs on mud-built cabins and houses nearby. We guessed that not many westerners come this way as most of the villagers came out to see us. Though generally stated to be 400 years old a plaque nearby says the tree is 600 years old.

Being a sacred tree and a national monument, we were not allowed to collect material directly from the tree, but Noeleen Smyth from Trinity College soon had local children hard at work searching the ground beneath for fallen cones. From these cones a number of seedlings have been raised at Airfield Gardens in Dundrum where they have grown with remarkable vigour. This is the first re-introduction to Ireland of *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* from the type tree since the original introduction in 1948. It is hoped to have these seedlings further propagated and distributed to gardens that play an active role in ex-situ conservation.

There is also a strong connection between the floras of central China and that of the United States of America, a point that proves the existence in ancient times of a super continent before the occurrence of continental drift. For example, in eastern-north America grows the American tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, the genus is met again in central China in the form of *Liriodendron chinense*, and both trees derive from an ancient ancestral stock. Likewise, the tupelo, *Nyssa sylvatica*, is found in the eastern states of the USA only to be met again in central China as *Nyssa sinensis*. The occurrence of *Metasequoia*'s cousins *Sequoia* and *Sequoiadendron* in California and Oregon are too well known to mention.

The flora of China also exhibit's a remarkably high level of endemism. Very often a single mountain will be home to a number of plants found there and no where else in the world. Emei Shan in Sichuan province is a holy Buddhist mountain and supports an overwhelming number of such plants due to its relative isolation. The mountain is

almost totally surrounded by the red basin (also known as the Chengdu plain) and plants have evolved there in a totally different way to the flora of mountains less than 100 km away. Of the 3,200 species of plants found on its well forested slopes over 100 are found here and nowhere else on earth. The mountain's fauna is equally well represented with a staggering 2,300 species and many of these too are endemic.

A number of plants raised from seeds collected on Emei Shan are growing at both Airfield Gardens and at the National Botanic Gardens. *Cryptomeria japonica* var. *sinensis* and *Cunninghamia lanceolata*, both handsome trees, have grown slowly in their first year. The *Cunninghamia* is a relatively common tree on the middle forested slopes on Emei Shan. Some of these seedlings are destined for our adjunct, Kilmacurragh in Co Wicklow, a garden once famous for a unique collection of wild sourced conifers. The Emei Shan collections of *Clematis montana* are already almost a metre tall and are destined for the new Chinese slope at Glasnevin, as are plants of *Clerodendron trichotomum* from the same provenance.

One of my favourites amongst all of these Sichuan collections is the tiny *Rubus fockeanus*, a prostrate shrub, rising not much more than an inch above the ground. It is very like the Himalayan *Rubus nepalensis*, which I have collected in Tibet and with which I initially confused the Emei Shan plant. An ideal peat bed or rock garden subject this charming little plant looks much like a tiny strawberry with small raspberry like fruits. On Emei Shan it grew in damp moss covered boulders.

Seedlings of that other fossil relic, *Ginkgo biloba* have done reasonably well too, though as a youngster the maidenhair tree grows slowly and it may be several years before these plants make their ways to the arboretums at Glasnevin and Kilmacurragh. Another plant collected in this area were the cultivated tubers of *Amorphophallus rivieri*, an aroid with a spectacular inflorescence that is grown commercially for its edible tubers in the mountains of Hubei, though it occurs wild in the glens near Yichang. The tubers were dug for us by an old farmer whose family, as I have mentioned in a previous newsletter, have been the dynastic guardians of a nearby 800 year old *Ginkgo biloba* for that entire length of time. These tubers flowered at Glasnevin earlier this summer causing quite a stir with visitors, even after flowering the foliage of this plant is a feature of its own. Further uphill from the ginkgoes we were to stumble upon the wild ancestral form of the garden pot mum, *Chrysanthemum indicum*, how such a floriferous race of hybrids could be raised from this humble and weedy plant is beyond me but it was an interesting find.

It is also very interesting to see the enormous amount of variation within these wild collected plants. Several seed batches of *Rosa multiflora* var. *cathayensis* were raised at Glasnevin and Dundrum. Two of these grew side by side at Glasnevin, one batch, due to the hot dry summer was continually infected with mildew, the second remained unaffected. Even within a single collection the variation of leaf shape is enormous. Who knows, a new cultivar may lurk hidden in these seedlings until flowering begins.

All have grown rapidly and some have been planted out already. A batch of seedlings of a wild pear (*Pyrus* sp.) are already about 90 cm tall, some of these have beautiful autumnal tints of a deep claret colour and these forms will be selected for Glasnevin with the remaining seedlings distributed to other gardens in state care and large private collections both here in Ireland and the UK.

Many of the collections from Badong (Patung of Henry and Wilson) have done very well. It is certainly good to have reintroduced *Emmenopterys henryi*, since this handsome tree is now endangered in its natural habitat. In the whole of Badong County only two trees now survive whereas at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was a fairly common tree. The old tree by the east side of the pond at Glasnevin was received from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in 1919 and whilst being one of the largest trees in cultivation anywhere in the world it is showing signs of age so these new seedlings are an appropriate replacement.

*Actinidia chinensis*, the wild kiwi, grew in thickets as a scandent shrub near the *Emmenopterys* and seedlings of this collection have proved to be a particularly fine form in terms of foliage. Both leaves and young shoots are covered in a dense matt of fine, velvety red hairs giving the plant a remarkable reddish-purple appearance from a distance. *Paederia scandens*, a rambling climber in the coffee family (Rubiaceae), has taken on a wonderful autumnal cloak of fiery amber at Glasnevin while in its distant homeland, the three lesser gorges on the Daning River (a tributary of the Yangtze near Wushan) the Yangtze is slowly rising and in a matter of years will have submerged the parent plants from which we collected our material.

Several seedlings from the *Emmenopterys* area have grown quite well, there are fine batches of *Aralia* aff. *chinensis*, *Hosta ventricosa*, *Viburnum betulifolium*, *Camptotheca acuminata*, (an extremely rare tree in cultivation) *Diospyros kaki* var. *sylvestris*, (the wild Chinese persimmon) *Broussonetia papyrifera*, *Lonicera henryi*, various *Schisandras* and the list could go on. *Paulownia fortunei*, collected near Yichang, is a rare tree that proved easy to germinate and will probably be ready for planting out next autumn.

Plans for a return to China this autumn were forgotten with the outbreak of SARS in China, though the trip is merely postponed until the autumn of 2004. In the meantime we have been busy with a month long visit from staff from Wuhan Botanic Gardens in eastern Hubei province, an exchange visit between the two gardens to further strengthen the ties between the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin and the Chinese Academy of Sciences. Next spring staff members from Glasnevin will visit the South China Botanical Gardens in eastern China, travelling down to the island of Hainan in the South China Sea near Vietnam before finally travelling on to Wuhan Botanical Gardens for a further two week's study. The autumn expedition will travel to Shennongjia in the northern mountains of Hubei.

# **Altamont Garden – blending history and plantsmanship in the landscape** **by Christopher Bailes**

## **Introduction**

Among the most truly satisfying gardens a very special place is held by those that achieve a blend between a characterful site (one with a long history of habitation, or very special landscape), and that special skill in planting which comes from the deep knowledge and appreciation of the plantsman. In such places distinctive features, buildings and plants, often of great age, provide a sympathetic backdrop to the gardening being carried out around them. Altamont Garden in County Carlow is an excellent example of this type of garden, one thoroughly imbued with the ‘spirit of the place’. Altamont has had the privilege of being cared for by generations of plantsmen and gardeners, each of whom has left their particular legacy. Their lineage stretches back through the centuries and culminates in the stewardship of the late Corona North, Altamont’s last owner-gardener, who dedicated a half century to this historic garden from the mid nineteen-forties until her death in 1999.

## **History of the garden**

The history of habitation of the site dates back at least to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, possibly initially as a convent. It is almost certain that some of the native trees at Altamont, in particular sessile oaks (*Quercus petraea*) of great age in the garden’s Ice Age Glen, would have been alive at that time. The house was extensively remodelled in the 1740’s, at which time the planting of the avenue in front the property with beech trees took place, together with parkland specimens of lime, beech and chestnut.

In the mid nineteenth century the garden began to take on its current form. This was the result of a number of major landscape projects carried out by the Dawson-Boror family. These included the creation of the lake, a huge project which gave employment to over 100 men after the Irish Famine. The lake was dug by hand over a period of two years. The Broad Walk to the lake was created at the same time, together with various terraces and a wide range of garden features. The naturalistic style of much of the garden and the creation of woodland walks through the Glen in particular, rich in bluebells, wild daffodils and ferns, are thought to have been inspired by the gardener and author William Robinson, who helped to design a number of gardens in the locality.

## **The modern era**

It can be seen that by the turn of the nineteenth century Altamont had already benefited from nearly two centuries of gardening. The modern era for the garden at began with the arrival in the early 1920’s of Feilding Lecky Watson. His initial temporary stay was soon translated into permanent occupation. Apparently on his arrival the garden was seriously overgrown, but he and his family were struck by the house and garden, and

especially the opportunities the acid soil would give for gardening with ericaceous plants, in particular rhododendrons.

Feilding was a very serious collector and grower of rhododendrons, at an exciting time when plants were coming in from collectors in the Far East such as Frank Kingdon Ward, whose expeditions he helped to sponsor. He even named his youngest daughter after one, 'Corona', described in Hillier's Manual as 'a very charming slow-growing compact mound; flowers 5cm across, rich coral pink in elongated trusses'. Feilding also exchanged plants with many gardeners of note, not least among them Sir Frederick Moore, then curator of Glasnevin. His interest in plants from Chile resulted in some notable specimens of plants such as *Podocarpus salignus* in the garden. Corona, who obviously inherited the gardening gene from her father, is quoted as saying that 'much of my father's collection is *chilensis* or *chinensis* from plant hunting expeditions to Chile or China'.

Feilding Lecky Watson died in 1943. For a brief period the garden languished. Then Corona assumed responsibility for Altamont and began to restore the garden to its previous splendour, prior to developing it further. Not content only to retrieve the existing planting, she also began to add her own distinctive contribution to the riches of the garden we see today. Among notable plants dating from the early 1950's are fine Handkerchief and Tulip trees (*Davidia involucrata* and *Liriodendron tulipifera*), *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*, the Chinese flowering dogwood with its wonderful layered branches wreathed in white in late spring, and a number of swamp cypresses to add to the fine old trees already there.

Corona was an active and vigorous gardener. With the assistance of one 'strong man', working from a flat-bottomed punt with a grappling hook, she undertook the clearance of the one hectare lake to control reeds and rampant water lilies. (A job which required a second 'go' with more adequate machinery in 1983, yielding over a metre's depth of mud and roots across the whole lake and over sixty fallen trees!) The planting along the lakeside is rich with hostas (including the elegant late flowering *Hosta plantaginea* with its white flowers on stems to 1.2m high), candelabra primulas in typically vivid mixed colours, astilbes, giant gunneras, and blue hydrangeas. There are several moisture loving deciduous conifers, including the Swamp cypresses *Taxodium distichum* and its variety *imbricarium* (previously known as *T. ascendens*) from the USA, with the Dawn redwood, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* from China.

After her marriage to Gary North in 1966 Corona created a new garden at Keeper's Cottage (Altamont Lodge.) At this time a new arboretum and bog garden also joined the ever-increasing range of distinctive features at Altamont. The arboretum features numerous Chilean plants, including the Chilean Fire bush, *Embothrium coccineum* Longifolium Group, the fine white-flowered evergreen *Drimys winteri*, Southern beeches (*Nothofagus*) and the splendid white, summer-flowering *Eucryphia glutinosa*.

Corona's mother died in 1985, and she moved with her husband into Altamont House and began to reclaim the garden around it. New facilities for visitors were required, resulting in (amongst others) a Garden Centre in the old walled garden, and an Art Gallery and Lecture Room. New garden projects continued unabated, including a stone bridge at the end of the lake, a Temple folly in Sunset Field, and a Wisteria walk to join the bridges on the lake.

The other great distinction of Altamont, alongside the lovely features of the garden and its surrounding natural beauty, are the plant collections, particularly rich in trees and shrubs. There are notable collections of dogwoods (*Cornus*), *Sorbus* (Rowan), maples, oaks and cherries. Conifers are also presents in good numbers, both as full size trees (with a very fine specimen of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Kilmacurragh'), and dwarf conifers in variety. As already mentioned, rhododendrons are present in great numbers and roses also, extending the season of display and encompassing both old varieties and modern shrub and English roses. The classical woodland genera such as *Camellia*, *Pieris*, *Magnolia* and *Hydrangea* also add to the tremendous diversity of this remarkable garden.

Herbaceous plants and bulbs round off the picture. Amid the wide range represented including daffodils in great numbers, Corona's love of the quieter charms of snowdrops saw her collect over fifty varieties. Corona North died in 1999, having ensured that her garden would be handed over to the state. It is impossible to provide more than a taste of the floral riches of Altamont without writing what would merely be a catalogue. The skill shown in using plants in the wide range of situations on the property, from semi-wild woodland to traditional borders and the plantings around the many buildings, is remarkable and testimony to a fine gardener with the ability and talent to take such full advantage of a wonderful place.

**CHRISTOPHER BAILES Dip. Hort. (Kew); FI Hort.**  
**By Edith Brosnan**

Christopher Bailes was born in London in 1951. He began gardening in 1971. He continued his education on the Diploma in Horticulture Course at Kew Gardens between 1976 and 1979. After qualifying he was appointed Supervisor in the Tropical Section at Kew, responsible for display and research collections of succulents and general tropical plants. In 1980 he became Supervisor of the Orchid Unit at Kew, where he spent the next five years. While at Kew he travelled on expeditions to East Africa, India, Nepal and Borneo. In 1985 he moved to Jersey to assist in setting up the Eric Young Orchid Foundation, where he remained until 1988. From 1986 to 1990 he edited *The Orchid Review*.

In 1988 he joined the RHS as Curator of Rosemoor Garden in Devon, the Society's first Regional Garden. From 1996 to 2000 he was also responsible for the Society's garden at Hyde Hall in Essex. He lectures widely in the UK and overseas, and has written several books and numerous articles on orchids and plants in general.

On a visit to Ireland in 1994 he spoke to Irish Garden Plant Society and Co Wexford Garden & Flower Club. At that time he met Corona North, at Altamont and we toured the gardens with her.

Corona North left a small bequest to the Co Wexford Garden & Flower Club which is using it to host a series of lectures in her memory. The first of these "Remarkable Trees of the World" will be given by Thomas Pakenham (who was also a friend of Corona's) on 30<sup>th</sup> October in Wexford.

Rosemoor is magnificent! While being familiar with many of the developments there through regular features in *The Garden* my first visit in 2001 surpassed all my expectations. Even torrential rain did nothing to dampen my enthusiasm. In a nutshell - Interesting plants in many different planting areas and styles blended well together. Good, but unobtrusive labelling and excellent maintenance enhanced the experience. Unexpectedly, vegetables created a big impression – the vegetable garden would please the gardener, the gourmet and the floral artist! Having visited there once I want to go again and again and.....

(Anyone unfamiliar with Rosemoor could read the report of a visit there by RHSI members in the Sept 03 RHSI Newsletter.)

Co Wexford Garden & Flower Club  
presents

**Corona North Memorial Lecture**

**THOMAS PAKENHAM**

**"Remarkable Trees of the World"**

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2003 at 7.30p.m.  
(during Wexford Opera Festival)

in

The Church of the Annunciation, Clonard, Wexford.

Tickets: €15

Enquiries 053 58836; 054 83349; 051 397291

Email: [cowexfordgardenclub@eircom.net](mailto:cowexfordgardenclub@eircom.net)



## Days of Wine and Roses by Tim Cramer

WELL, they were wonderful while they lasted, those days of wine and roses, with the sun blazing down, the canopy up and the cool glass on the patio table. Towards the end of August the garden diary records: “26 days without any real rain”. Mind you, there were a few false dawns, when the Met People promised thundery showers. Once, celestial explosions did rattle the distant hills, only to die away, muttering and rumbling like a grumpy old gardener. Then it was back to near-record temperatures and a late summer which, as the song says “we thought would never end”.

But all of this unexpected exuberance of scorching days and balmy nights came at a price and we all know what it was. The blessed cool of the evenings had to be given over to tending to gasping plants which I could almost hear screaming: “Bring a little water Sylvie”. The basic task of keeping them alive and healthy became monumental. Keeping the gardener healthy was another matter. Of necessity, grass had to be cut and one sweltering morning, feeling very much like one of Noel Coward’s “Mad Dogs and Englishmen”, I just had to get out there and cut it. The garden was transformed; I was utterly knackered!

There is, of course, another side to all of this. There were days when it was so hot that any sort of gardening was impossible to the point of lunacy, so there was nothing for it but just to sit and admire the place. This is something that I, and I suspect many fellow gardeners, find extremely difficult – there are a few weeds over there, that colour combination is woeful, those roses should be dead-headed... Inactivity is akin to sinfulness and we find it near impossible just to sit still and let the garden get on with it.

To be compelled to do so, however, brings its own rewards. Lolling in the chair under the canopy I can see that the “hot” border I have striven to create has at last come good. Naturally I am pleased, not only because it looks fine, but because I’m not one of nature’s great colour arrangers and I am, in fact, a little surprised that it turned out so well.

In fact it was something of a doddle, with just a little thought, a lot of luck and a few of those “happy accidents” so beloved of watercolour painters. After all, it’s hard to go wrong with such stalwarts as *Crocoshmia* ‘Lucifer’, *Dahlias* ‘Arabian Night’, and that famous ‘Bishop’ (but not cheek by jowl, please), *Lobelia* ‘Fan Scarlet’, grown from seed the previous year and now so vigorous as to demand dividing, and some scarlet pelargoniums. A few cannas (also from seed) add a final touch of the exotic and I do not begrudge them the extra care – not to mention feeding – that they need.

And I can now fully understand why Christopher Lloyd, to outraged howls of “sacrilege” from dedicated rosarians, dug out his hybrid teas and floribundas and created a blistering palette of blazing colour. Would that I were so daring and that I had the knowledge and experience to be so successful.

Of such things, on such hot days, we sit in the shade and dream, but even dreaming can be dangerous and can lead to all sorts of excesses. On the other hand, if

we do not dare to dream nothing would ever get done; already I am casting covetous eyes at the bulb catalogues and planning great schemes for the spring garden, trying to remember all the while that ambition is fine, but every schoolboy (sorry, schoolperson) knows, or should know, that Caesar died for his ambition.

Oh shut up you idiot, go to bed and let the place rest. It will still be there tomorrow. It was, but all was changed.

Overnight, the rain had come, silently, suddenly, with no hint of the promised pyrotechnics; just a constant, all-saturating very Irish rain that appears innocuous but can soak you to the skin in minutes. What a difference it has made! Trees, shrubs and bedding raised themselves from drooping, sun-soaked exhaustion and were imbibing like horticultural alcoholics. The weather had broken at last; the long-awaited rain had come.

Now, in the way of human nature, we will doubtless be moaning: will it ever stop?

## Worth a Read by Phemie Rose

### **The Color Encyclopedia of Cape Bulbs**

By John Manning, Peter Goldblatt & Dee Snijman  
ISBN 0-88192-547-0 Published by Timber Press.

This is a beautifully illustrated easy to use book, which covers more than half the species of cape bulbs. Information includes developments in dormancy breaking and flower stimulation as well as the storage of seeds and roots, germination and smoke treatment. If you are into exotic bulbs this book is a must, the gladiolus section alone is conducive to drooling. My only complaint is that it does not cover all the cape bulb species, will have to wait for their second book.

### **Succulents for the Contemporary Garden**

By Yvonne Cave  
ISBN 0-88192-573-X

An inspiring book with descriptions and cultivation information given for hundreds of species and cultivars from Adenia to Yucca. Illustrated throughout with 350 colour photographs of old favourites and the less-common. Be you be beginner or connoisseur, you will find much to interest and tempt you.

## The Talbot Gardens, Malahide by Anne James

Gardening has always featured prominently in Malahide Demesne, the home of the Talbot Family since the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> c. In the Down Survey of 1650 William Wright, assistant surveyor to William Petty, wrote that Malahide had ‘A good Stone House slated, a fine orchard and good garden’. The garden at that time was sited to the south east of the house and only relocated to the northeast when the original tower house was enlarged and castellated. Despite this entry, Malahide Demesne rarely features in the historical reviews of Irish Gardens, no doubt due to the lack of written historical evidence. Malahide Castle did not need a designed landscape; it had a ready-made natural landscape. From the main rooms of the castle, to the south is a splendid view of the Wicklow Mountains with the Sugar Loaf Mountain almost centre stage within the picture, while to the north is a view of the Irish Sea and Lambay Island, the property of the Talbot Family until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c, in the distance. For obelisks there were several Barbican towers scattered throughout the estate, only one extant to day, the other towers being in a ruinous state by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c.

Within the grounds were native and planted woodlands and of course an ice-house and lime-kiln. The first indication of an ornamental garden appears on the 1875 ordnance survey map indicating a formal garden to the south west of the present walled garden. Lady Isabel Talbot gives an excellent account of this garden from 1902 to 1925 in her ‘Garden Diary’. It is a most fascinating read and many of the problems that she encountered we too have encountered to day. Gardening mistakes repeat themselves so often. It was this garden that Lord Milo Talbot inherited in 1948; that inspired in him a love of plants and a desire to experiment with species new to Ireland and so gradually the garden evolved until the original design is no more. It is still evolving with new introductions being made, though many have fallen to the vagaries of our climate.

Despite this long tradition of gardening in Malahide, it still surprises me that so few realize the wealth and diversity of plants within the main garden of eighteen acres known as ‘The West Lawn’ and the four- acre ‘Walled Garden’. At least 5,000 species and varieties will be found including many species and varieties of particular genera including Hypericum, Syringa, Deutzia, Philadelphus, Azara and Pittosporum to name just a few. The gardens are of course known for the N.C.C.P.G Olearia collection. It possibly has the largest collection of Australasian and Chilean plants in Ireland. The ‘West Lawn’ area is open during the summer every afternoon from May to September inclusive, though the walled garden is only open on Wednesdays at 2.00pm or by appointment. Its restrictive opening times have gained it the reputation of being one of the most secretive of secret gardens. Often, visitors and locals ask me as to what lies beyond the high walls? An ornamental walled garden I reply and they are so surprised; so let me give you a brief description of this magical place.

First I must collect that all-important key to the green door, tradition has it that this door is always kept locked. The garden is sub-divided into seven smaller gardens each with its own particular style and retaining its original name, which describe its previous function. The first, 'The Rose Garden' has now few roses but one that is much admired is *Rosa* "General Schablikine", an unusual coppery toned rose. Adjacent is a fine *Callistemon* sp. possibly *C. phoenicis* with pendulous branches and brilliant crimson red flowers. This plant was grown from seed collected from a garden in New Zealand and while it took several years to give of its best, the wait was worthwhile. In fact one of its siblings, growing elsewhere in the garden, has an even deeper shade. Probably the most revered plant here is the *Eriobotrya japonica* 'Bodnant Form' since after a good summer it will flower in winter and provide us with abundant fruits in early summer. If you haven't tasted one then it is a treat in store. 1995 was an excellent summer and in the following June we had a bumper crop of fruit. After the very fine weather we have enjoyed this year, we are expecting an equally good harvest next year. Too many plants to mention, but I could not pass without mentioning the *Prunus* 'Kanzan' so often ignored. Yet here it is the roots of the stock that intrigue the visitor. The roots of *Prunus* tend to be surface rooting and this plant demonstrates this feature remarkably. It is generally known as the 'Isle of Mann' plant since the roots have mimicked their crest.

Leaving the Rose Garden by the narrow exit in the *Griselinia* hedge we move towards our next garden 'The Haggard'. The borders here are planted in a cottage type style since often it is the temporary resting place until such time as they have been propagated. On the North wall is the yellow flowered bottlebrush, with silver leaves, *Callistemon pallidus* and another Australian plant *Acacia pravissima* with wedge shaped leaves. While it flowers very well, it does not set seed, unlike many other *Acacias*. Two relatively new species to the garden are the South American fuchsias, *Fuchsia boliviana* and its white variety 'Alba' and *Fuchsia paniculata*. Both species have survived the last two winters, but I suspect that a hard winter may eliminate them. The larger of the two glasshouses houses a few of the more delicate plants in particular *Luculia gratissima* and *L. grandiflora*, which are both highly scented, *Banksia integrifolia* and *Sparmania africana*. The smaller house, a Dutch House, is used for propagation and at the moment has a large batch of *Puya alpestris* easily raised from seed. The plants are hardy but need the heat of a glasshouse to flower and when in flower you marvel at its spectacular show.

Leaving the haggard, we pass the pond and on towards the only remaining Barbican Tower, assuming the *Gunnera manicata* hasn't taken over the path. A recent addition here is the *Furcraea longifolia*, a member of the agave family. The species has creamy white pendulous flowers, a wonderful sight when in full flower. Moving to the tower, on the north side is *Euonymus lucidus*, an evergreen small tree. The new foliage is tinged a lovely shade of pink similar to *Pieris*, and in June is smothered in tiny white flower. Close by is one of my favourite roses *Rosa chinensis* 'Mutabilis' partnered with *Hydrangea aspera*. A better association would have been the Rose with *H.*

*villosa*, a more delicate plant. *H. aspera* is a very large leafed plant, lilac-tinged. On the tower wall *Rosa* 'Blush Rambler' has ample room to spread its wings and repays its freedom by smothering the wall with its small double pink flower in June. Not a plant for the small garden.

On the eastern side of the tower are the steps up to the loft, which had once served as a Dovecote, though its last use was as an apple store. These same steps obscure another green door into the most secret of walled gardens – our 'Chicken Yard'. It may once have been used for fowl, but they are long gone. This is the garden beloved by all. It has to be seen to understand its beauty. Thriving among many fine species is *Berberidopsis corallina*, one of the most threatened plants in Chile due to the logging of so many trees. Its wiry stems are used for making baskets.

Moving on to the main alpine yard, we pass a small trial of *Olearia* species. New species and varieties are added regularly to our collection, but all too often it is discovered that the purchased plant is no different to what is already planted in the garden. Too many species or varieties are being sold incorrectly. The 'alpine yard' is an eclectic mix of plants from bulbs to grasses, dwarf shrubs to rock plants. It is our intention to use one area for true alpine. Nevertheless there are some very interesting species, including *Carmichaelia*, *Dieramas*, *Schizostylis* and *Roscoeas*. Among the grasses is *Chionochloa conspicua*, a dwarf plant flowering throughout summer and autumn, not unlike a small version of *Cortadeira richardii*. It arrived by chance, its seed being mixed with the same *Cortadiria*. It was several years before we realized what it was. Plants that I would like to build up are *Dierama* species, a few different coloured clumps are growing well in the free draining soil. To our surprise, the *Bletilla speciosa* is growing very well and has now survived outdoors for at least three winters. Opposite this area is the freestanding wall known as the Tresco Wall. This south facing wall has *Buddleja colvillei*, surely one of the best of Buddlejias. Adjacent is the rarer *Lyonothamnus floribundus aspleniifolius*; it has most attractive foliage, and small white flowers but is very difficult to propagate. Further a long is *Campsis grandiflora*.

Our next section is very different being a formal parterre of Australasian plants. The larger section has New Zealand plants of *Hebe albicans* with *Phormium tenax* 'Purpureum', *Hoheria* 'Glory of Amlych' and *Pittosporum* 'Tom Thumb' and 'Nutt's Leprechaun'. The inner circle has *Hebe* 'James Stirling', *H. edinensis* and *Phormium* 'Yellow Wave'. This section is divided from the Australian section with *Pittosporum x garnettii*. Among the choice of plants in this section are *Eucalyptus* spp. *Calistemon citrinus*, *Olearia phlogopappa* and *Dodonea viscosa* 'Purpurea'. In the centre is a smaller parterre – the design based on one of the panels from the 'Oak Room' in the Castle.

Adjacent to this garden is the very fine Victorian Conservatory, purchased by the council on learning that it was about to be demolished. It was re-erected in the gardens as a freestanding glasshouse at the end of the central path and makes an interesting

focal point. It too houses a collection of Australasian plants including *Pandorea jasminoides*, *Sollay heterophylla*, *Anigozanthos flavidus* and *Eucalyptus filicifolia*.



*A view of one of the glasshouses at Malahide*

Along the central path are some specimen trees of *Magnolias*, *Kolreuteria*, *Zelkova carpinifolia* with a selection of *Sorbus* sp. beyond two smaller glasshouses. One is a sunken house that has a selection of bulbs, *Clematis crispa*, *Paeonia cambessedesii*, *Helleborus lividus* and *Euphorbia acanthothamnus*. The next house known as the 'Ivy House' holds our collection of *Primula auricula* varieties, which flower profusely in May and from July to mid winter. *Rhodochiton sanguineum* also gives of its best here. Across the path from these houses is a lean-to, built in 1901, known as the 'Peach House'. Within are a number of *Puya* spp., but the star is *Passiflora antioquiensis* and *Thunbergia grandiflora*.

Leaving this house we arrive back to the entrance door. There are several other borders, which have fine specimens. I have only chosen a very small selection of the range of plants growing in the garden and no doubt Barbara, my colleague, would have chosen a completely different group. From June to September, the garden is possibly at its best, but no matter when anyone arrives there is always some spectacular plant to be seen.

## A Woodland Garden Vignette by Marty Adams, Maryland, U.S.A.

In a previous article, I penned thoughts concerning my garden in early spring of this year when it was still chilly and rainy outdoors. The garden was showing subtle signs of awakening, but the coming displays of spring's textures, colours and scents were still a few weeks distant.

A protracted, very cold and snowy winter over much of the eastern part of The United States passed slowly into a rainy spring this year. This moisture laden weather pattern continued even into summer and actually, to the present moment. In mid September as I am writing this, I have recorded over 8" of rain so far in the month of September. This has been the wettest growing season that novice and veteran gardeners alike can recall and a stark contrast to last season's extreme drought. Hurricane Isabel recently dumped inches of rain and her vicious winds toppled trees, caused erosion and flooded basements across a large part of the eastern US. All this moisture translated into a great growing season rife with lusty growth. Hopefully this will also produce good conditions for fall color!

Though unable to contribute a summer article to the Irish Garden Plant Society Newsletter, the additional time has allowed me to more fully consider the garden's change and development through the summer and early fall seasons. The following plants are some highlights of the native plants I know and grow. As a collector of rare North American native flora, I delight in the unusual and obscure. Some of these plants tend to be difficult to obtain commercially; therefore some of their names may be new to you.

Various groundcovers seemed to flourish this year and paramount among them was my queen of groundcovers, the *Asarum shuttleworthii*, or Shuttleworth's ginger. Gingers are a confusing bunch, but they are most easily delineated by their foliage. I recently learned that *Asarum* are evergreen and *Hexastylis* are deciduous. There are many other differences, but this is the most obvious.

*A. shuttleworthii* is generally fully evergreen in my area, and the foliage is mottled with very handsome white markings. The roots are pleasantly aromatic and spicy, and the plants have been pest free thus far. It slowly forms clumps in lightly shaded, organic soils. The unique but obscure jug shaped flowers are typical of the genus.

*Shortia galacifolia* seems content for the moment, though not exactly flourishing. Oconee bells is one of the rarest wildflowers in North America, growing in fairly isolated locales in the mountainous areas of the southern Appalachian mountains. These colonies often exist in moist areas in association with mosses. It is very slow to size up, difficult to propagate and fastidious as to cultural requirements. As a result, they fetch a ridiculously costly price, and are rarely offered in the trade. In early spring

they produce wands of stalked flowers which are white in color with yellow stamens. These last for 2-3 weeks and stand up to the cold nicely; often poking their delicate heads through the snow. The waxy, scalloped foliage is evergreen and turns maroon in winter.

Another obscure groundcover that is usually considered a more northern plant is *Linnaea borealis*, or twinflower. This plant is named after Carolus Linnaeus, the father of modern taxonomy. It is said that his most famous portrait featured him clutching a section of twinflower in one hand. This is a boreal plant which can be negatively affected by the heat and humidity of my area, so I planted it in the shaded lee of several garden boulders, and it has grown nicely, crawling gingerly between the rocks. The foliage assumes a bright red in the fall, and *Linnaea* sports deliciously fragrant pink flowers in the spring. The flowers are interesting upon close inspection, but they are generally detected by unsuspecting nostrils first.

Running strawberry bush, *Euonymus obovatus* is a rambling, prostrate shrublet that roots at the internodes and forms a slow groundcover. It survives adverse conditions, and is undaunted by drought as well as rabid, charging dogs! It is not particularly charming in terms of ornamental appearance, but has pest free foliage, interesting gaudy, bright orange “bursting heart” fruit which are brandished in late summer and good yellow fall colour. It is not an easily found plant in the nursery trade, and gets way less attention than its more showy Asiatic counterparts.

Alpine cinquefoil, *Potentilla tridentata* is a cold weather plant that tolerates sun, lean, gritty soils and windswept locations. My incorrigible plant obsession has led me to pursue this novelty, and I even located a named cultivar called ‘White Cloud’ that sports more numerous white flowers. I have this plant tucked between rocks in my stone steps, though it tends to show chlorosis in this location. The dainty foliage turns red in fall and the tiny fruit are fodder for the chipmunks and mice. This is a good plant with which to stump your local self-professed plant identification expert!

Beetleweed, *Galax rotundifolia* sports round, puckered foliage held aloft on tough, wiry stems. The foliage is glossy and evergreen even in brutal winters. It thrusts its white flowers skyward late spring through early summer, attracting scores of bees and flies. *Galax* thrives in open woodland areas in acidic soil conditions. It can be a difficult plant to make happy, but once established, it is very drought tolerant and pest free. *Galax* is obtained from the Greek word for milk; a reference to its white flowers.

Other more common groundcovers that have really been shining forth this year are bearberry, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, partridge berry *Mitchella repens*, teaberry, *Gaultheria procumbens*, Alleghany spurge, *Pachysandra procumbens* and creeping phlox, *Phlox stolonifera*.



Conversely, a few plants doing poorly are bunchberry, *Cornus canadensis* and trailing arbutus, *Epigaea repens*. These seem to languish in the heat of the mid Atlantic area, though I stubbornly refuse to accept the reality that I may never have the flourishing carpets espied in garden catalogues.

Ah, but the moisture not only blessed the groundcovers; the woody shrubs were invigorated as well!

Several native Rhododendrons were lovely this spring, including the sweet scented coast azalea, *R. atlanticum* and the Oconee azalea, *R. flammeum*. These two species collectively flowered for three weeks. Oconee azalea brandished its orange/red flowers in late spring and the cultivar 'Double Pleasure' has larger flowers with more numerous petals. Pink shell azalea, *R. vaseyi*, is an early spring flowering plant, opening its delicate light pink flowers in mid April. Cumberland azalea, *R. bakeri*, produces its unexpected orange flowers in mid summer, and it gives some much needed colour at that time. Inexplicably, the flame azalea, *R. calendulaceum* and plum leaf azalea, *R. prunifolium* did not flower this year.

Another steady performer continues to be the dwarf Fothergilla, *Fothergilla gardenii* 'Mt. Airy'. I am smitten with the Hamamelidaceae family of plants and this one shines in a woodland setting. Sporting clean foliage typical of witch hazel along with upright bottle brush white flowers in mid spring, this is a dainty, trouble free plant for acidic soil in part shade. In fall it really erupts into outstanding hues of maroon, yellow and orange, often all on the same leaf. It slowly forms a small shrub, throwing up shoots from its root system.

The Georgia Plume, *Elliottia racemosa* is a most cherished plant for me. It is an extremely elusive plant and its already small native populations are dwindling due to a combination of lack of seed viability and building development. This ericaceous gem is generally propagated by root cuttings since only four percent of seed is viable, and the seed is tiny and difficult to handle. It is a large growing shrub or small tree in its colonies in the wilds of Georgia and South Carolina, but often smaller in a garden setting under cultivation. In early July the plants erupt into a mass of pure white slightly fragrant flowers which are produced in copious amounts. The plant is magnificent in flower and an appealing plant to grow, though very rare in the trade. Last winter was tough on mine, and they grew slowly out of cold temperature injury. The foliage turns a good red in the fall. A sunny, well drained spot with acidic, sandy soil is needed for good growth.

White Wicky, *Kalmia cuneata* is the only deciduous member of the genus famed for mountain laurel, *Kalmia latifolia*. This plant exists only in scattered pocosins (linear bogs near creek headwaters) in a few counties in the southern United States. The plant has bunched white flowers typical of other members of the genus, though these are down facing and obscured by the foliage. It absolutely requires sandy, moist soil that is

sharply acidic to prosper. As fall progresses, the foliage turns a handsome maroon and persists for weeks. It is a gaunt, upright growing shrub that is not overtly showy. I grow it merely for its extreme rarity and understated charm.

The Alabama Snow Wreath, *Neviusia alabamensis* is a rambling deciduous shrub that grows in a rather Forsythia-like manner. It is closely related to *Kerria*, and quite easy to grow. It is rare in commerce, perhaps due to its fleeting flowers, which are cheerily displayed in spring, but only for a week or so. The flowers have no petals, but the stamens are so prolific and elongate that they produce an ethereal and ornamental appearance very similar to *Spiraea*. When in flower, the Snow Wreath is aptly named indeed. It forms a multi stemmed, arching mass with multiple stolons emerging from the center of the plant and is maintenance free except for occasional light pruning.

Florida Anise, *Illicium floridanum* is a broadleaf evergreen shrub for shady, moist conditions. It is tender and marginally hardy in my area, so I have it planted in the most protected spot in my yard. After last winter's punishment, it came into spring with some winter injury, but has since shown no signs of weakness and has regrown nicely. This plant has fragrant foliage that when handled or brushed against gives a strong scent of anise. The early summer flowers appear as red starfish, and some authors say they produce an offensive odor. I was ready for their appearance, and found the odour reminiscent of wet dog. Not unbearable, but far from pleasant. The seed is produced in a waxy, "cookie cutter" pod. The shrub prefers wet, acidic soils and resents drought.

Dusty Zenobia, *Zenobia pulverulenta*, is another ericaceous gem with many fine attributes. I grow 'Woodlander's Blue', a particularly lovely selection with pronounced glaucous bloom on the foliage and stems. This is an arching plant reminiscent of *Vaccinium* in its habit of growth and its need for sharply acidic, sandy, well drained soils. This plant has a somewhat floppy habit, producing canes which shoot up vertically within the plants and grow vigorously. This has been a challenging plant to establish and maintain here, but it is slowly getting larger. It sports dangling white and fragrant bell shaped flowers hidden among the foliage in early summer. The foliage is pest resistant and remains blue throughout the growing season, turning spectacular hues of reddish and orange in the fall months. In milder climes it is evergreen, but here it is tardily deciduous.

As you have gleaned, many of these plants are not overly showy or possess that serious garden flash that leaves you drooling in their wake. As stated in an earlier article, my garden seems to blend with the woods line and aside from some flowers in season and fall colour, you have to look closely to appreciate it. Such is the understated flora of our eastern US. It is there for the appreciative plant lover to admire, but does not come out and introduce itself to you.

I hope this smattering of some of the elusive and rare native plants of the eastern US whetted your appetite for more. Good searching!

## VISIT TO THE AZORES 7<sup>TH</sup> – 14<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2003 BY Clare O'Reilly

In June a very interesting visit to the Azores was organised by Dr. Charles Nelson for the UK Heather Society. We had seen reference to this trip in the IGPS Newsletter of October 2002 and decided that this would be an ideal opportunity to visit the Azores and to see its plants and gardens. We understood that a major purpose of the trip was to see the endemic plants of the islands, particularly its heathers, growing in their natural habitat. Thus we (two non – Heather Society members from Ireland) joined a very cosmopolitan group of Heather Society members from the U.S., Canada, Norway and the U.K.

We knew very little about the Azores other than they were somewhere in mid Atlantic. They are in fact a group of nine active volcanic islands about 1500 kms. west of Lisbon. The climate is warm and temperate throughout the year with average temperatures of 13° C in winter and 23° C in summer. Rainfall is considerable with over 60 inches of rain per annum on some of the islands. In some ways the Azores are reminiscent of a very warm Kerry in a wet year.

Cattle farming is the main form of agriculture with an emphasis on beef production on high ground and dairy farming at lower levels. There is very little mechanisation: portable milking machines are brought to the fields. A very noticeable feature is the almost complete absence of barbed wire for fencing.

Our group finally congregated in Lisbon airport from where we flew to Ponta Delgada on the largest of the nine islands of the Azores, São Miguel. From there we travelled to Furnas, a town located in a spectacular, vividly green volcanic valley. In Furnas we stayed in the Terra Nostra Garden Hotel where we had our first introduction to the incredibly lush vegetation typical of the Azores.

The hotel, which was built as a spa hotel in the 1930s has its own thermal swimming pool and is surrounded by its own gardens, now fully restored. The gardens were originally laid out during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19th centuries by the owner of the original house, Thomas Hickling, one of the leading families of orange farmers who made the Azores famous as a leading producer of oranges for the English market and by the da Praia family who purchased the property in 1884. The garden was laid out with canals and walks and planted with trees from all over the world.

A major project was undertaken in the early 1990s to restore the gardens based on the original 19 century structures. New trees were planted to supplement the mature specimens, a section has been established to highlight the endemic Azorean plants, a cycad garden has been planted and a selection of Vireya rhododendrons from South East Asia are being grown, some of which were in flower during our visit. We were

given to understand that this is the only place in Europe where these rhododendrons can be grown out of doors.

We spent a morning exploring the gardens, one of the highlights being a collection of tree ferns framing a terrace overlooking the canals and water gardens; another being the two magnificent Norfolk Island pines *Araucaria heterophylla* beside the thermal swimming pool.

Following our garden tour we visited the Lagoa das Furnas where there are a series of caldeiras, volcanic springs and fumaroles. Here local people come to cook a special meal, Cozido nas Caldeiros, of meat, sausages and vegetables. Containers are lowered into holes in the ground where the temperature is sufficient to cook the meal over a period of six to seven hours.

Next day we travelled from Furnas eastwards to Nordeste, a little frequented route which gave us wonderful views of the countryside characterised by small fields divided by Hydrangea hedges (we were unfortunately too early to see them in flower) and hills wooded with the introduced *cryptomeria japonica*. On our return from Nordeste we passed through one of the remaining endemic forest areas on São Miguel near Pico da Vara where we saw banks of one of the native heathers, *Erica azorica* (*Erica scoparia* ssp. *azorica*) and visited the forest park.

In several places on São Miguel the hillsides were covered with the wild ginger *Hedychium gardnerianum*, a plant which together with *Gunnera Tinctoria* was introduced as a garden plant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both of these plants have now become invasive and are posing a major threat to the natural vegetation of the Azores.

From São Miguel we transferred to the island of Pico, where we spent a full day exploring the area around Pico Mountain, a volcanic peak which dominates the island. The area is one of the best locations in the Azores to see a large proportion of the plant species of the islands.

We were very fortunate in that we had a fine day and were able to walk up part of Pico Mountain where we saw fine groups of *Daboecia azorica*, a red version of our St Dabeoc's Heath, native to the Azores. We also saw *Thymus caespititius* growing with *Daboecia azorica* and the local Creeping Jenny *Lysimachia nemorum* ssp. *azorica*.

On our descent from Pico we passed a small volcanic crater along side the road where we were fortunate to see two plants which we had hoped to find, one being the large Euphorbia, *Euphorbia stygiana*, which grows in shaded places and *Ranunculus cortusifolius*, a metre high buttercup found only in the Azores, Madeira and the Canaries.

On visiting a nearby lake, Lagoa do Capitão we saw some old examples of juniper, *Juniperus brevifolia*, which were being colonised by plants of *Erica azorica*, ferns and lichens and on a short walk round the lake we were fortunate to see the Azorean butterfly orchid *Platanthera micantha*.

The day finished with a visit to a fascinating Whaling museum in Lajes, where the exhibits included a photographic display of the history of whaling in the Azores, examples of whaling boats and a large collection of scrimshaw.

From Madalena we left by ferry for Horta and a day trip on Faial, the third island on our tour. Having changed bus because the original one was not powerful enough we travelled to the Caldeira do Faial, a crater high in the middle of the island. Again we saw banks of *Daboecia azorica* growing round the crater rim. Although the day was very misty we were able to see glimpses of the green crater floor hundreds of feet below.

From Caldeira do Faial we visited the site of the 1957 volcanic eruption at Capelinhos. It is still like a moonscape, with laval dust blowing in a strong wind, a very desolate location.

A high spot of our day in Faial was a visit to the botanic gardens of Faial, a small garden in which most of the plant species of the Azores are grown and very well labelled. At this stage it was very useful to see plants we had seen growing on Pico and São Miguel brought together in the gardens. There was also a very well produced and interesting exhibition of photographs of the flora of the islands.

The harbour at Horta is a popular stop off for yachts crossing the Atlantic. A tradition has been established whereby the harbour walls have been painted by the crews of visiting boats saying when they visited, where they going to and other appropriate comments.

The final stage of our visit was a day on Teceira, the second largest island of the Azores and the location of the historic town of Angra do Heroísmo a UNESCO World Heritage site. Angra do Heroísmo was originally the major mid-Atlantic staging point for Portuguese trading and treasure ships from the East Indies and from the New World.

Here we stayed in the Angra Garden Hotel overlooking beautifully kept municipal gardens dominated by a very large *Magnolia grandiflora* in full blossom.

From Terceira we returned to London via Lisbon having spent a fascinating week seeing beautiful Azorean scenery, visiting small towns and villages and enjoying the rich selection of plants, a large number of which are endemic to the nine islands of the Azores.

## The Benefits of Smoking by Phemie Rose

I must confess that it is my fascination for southern hemisphere plants that has driven me to smoking. No - not nicotine or cannabis. My supply comes from Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens in South Africa in the form of smoke primers, which are round discs of paper, which have been impregnated with vegetative smoke. It was originally thought that the heat of bush fires triggered germination, but further studies proved that vegetative smoke was equally effective. Ready made smoke primers are infinitely safer than lighting fires in the propagating greenhouse! They are very easy to use. Soak seeds and paper disc for 24hrs in 50ml of water – then sow as per seed requirements. This treatment usually doubles the germination rate. It's best to keep the unused primers in the vegetable compartment in the fridge. Some of the seeds, which benefit from smoking, are *Proteas*, *Leucospermums*, *Leucandendrons*, South African *Ericas*, *Helichrysums*, *Restios*, South African *Lobelias*, *Anigozathos* and *Xanthorrhoea* (Australian Grass Tree).

The main reason for my smoking addiction is that I am growing Southern Hemisphere plants from seed and am particularly interested in the Restio family at the moment. Restios are quite tricky to germinate as they need warm days and cold nights, which means taking them out of the propagating cabinet every night and putting them outside (remembering to do it is my problem as senility has definitely set in!). They are found in all the southern continents. Ca 330 species are found in South Africa, ca 150 in Australia, ca 4 in New Zealand with a single species in South America and South East Asia. The Cape Reeds form one of the most important structural components of the heath land vegetation or fynbos of Southern Africa. Even professional botanists struggle with their taxonomy and to the initiated matching males and females of the same species can be fraught with difficulty. They can be found in all habitats from sandy plains to mountain summits and from very dry places to seasonally wet or permanent marshes and are wind pollinated.

*Elegia Capensis* is a striking plant with lovely green culms, dark brown bracts, feathery tactile foliage and wonderful golden inflorescences at the tips of the culms. It is evergreen and is at present about 2 metres tall and 1 1/2 metres wide. It was the first Restio I planted and when it flowered (after several years) I carefully collected the seeds smoked them and sowed them. I was very disappointed when none of them germinated. Now of course I know why and am growing more from seed from South Africa in the hope that I will end up with a male and a female so that I can compare them and who knows I might even get viable seed.

All Restios must have full sun, plenty of air movement and will grow in almost any kind of moist well-drained soil, but grow best in acid soil and range in height from 0.5m – 3m. Most cope very well with salt wind and our 19 species all survived –3C last winter.

As you can tell I am hooked and certainly will not be giving up smoking

## Looking Forward to Winter by Rae McIntyre

At this time of year, early September, I start looking forward to winter which is a season I prefer to autumn. The older I get the more I enjoy leafless trees and spend much of my time when I'm a passenger in a car (definitely not when driving) tree spotting. This is infinitely preferable to clearing up the tar spotted leaves of sycamores and the pervasive, very adhesive, leaved of beeches, one of the many non-delights of autumn.

In the garden I view with pleasure the winter-white stems of *Betula jacquemontii*. I cleared the clutter of unworthy shrubs away from its foreground and replaced them with *Cornus alba* "Kesselringii" with black-purple stems and the black leaves of *Ophipogon planiscapus* "Nigrescens" interspersed with vermilion primroses. All rather twee but it makes a pleasing (to me anyway) winter vignette. *Betula albo-sinensis septentrionalis* is another birch with attractive bark; it can't make up its mind whether to be brown or grey or pink or cream so all four colours are suffused together in the peeling bark. I use strips of it a bookmarks. Like *B. jacquemontii* it looks much better when bare of leaves. *Alnus incana* "Aurea" is at its very best in November although it's still attractive during every other month of the year. In November the reddish catkins, exquisitely detailed when viewed in close-up, seem to set the whole tree aglow in a frost-promising winter sunset.

Conifers are still too 70's and 80's to be fashionable in the Noughties despite the efforts of many garden centre owners to promote them but the gold-toned ones are very cheering in winter. Many golden conifers revert to green when the temperatures drop but *Pinus sylvestris* "Aurea" becomes a striking golden yellow. *Cupressus macrocarpa* "Goldcrest" has rather delicate foliage in lime green during winter but this looks spectacular against a thundery, rain-laden, pewter sky. I've noticed that this tree is often being sold now for winter containers surrounded by cohorts of winter pansies bit it can grow to be a very tall tree. *Podocarpus salignus* is an elegant evergreen conifer with its drooping branches and long willowy gloss green leaves.

*Stewartia pseudocamellia* has a brief flowering period in late July, another brief spell of hectic red and yellow leaf colour in autumn and then settles down for winter with noticeable leaf buds and a very attractive flaking bark. Even though there is a wait of another five or six months for new leaves the promise is there. It's the same with magnolias that have fat, furry, strokable flower buds and obvious leaf buds during winter. The stiff little chain-like flower buds of *Stachyurus chinensis* form in late summer or early autumn but won't flower until March.

Every garden needs a goodly proportion of evergreens to form the "bones"; this is a cliché but like many clichés it makes sense. Two of my favourites are New Zealanders and are vaguely gold-toned. *Cassinia fulvida* has the common name "Golden Heather" although it is actually a member of the Compositae family. The small needle-like leaves, crowded on the branches give a heather effect. It has white flowers in July but during the winter looks perky and can withstand temperatures as low as -15C. so can *Olearia nummulariifolia*, one of the toughest of the New Zealand

“Daisy Bushes”. The “nummularii” bit refers to the tiny coin-like leaves of yellow-green that are packed on the stems. Like its sister composite, the *Cassinia*, it has little white fragrant daisy flowers in July.

*Atherosperma moschatum* is a conical evergreen Australasian shrub with green-grey lanceolate leaves that are reputed to be very fragrant, even yielding an essential oil. I find this scent very elusive. The little flower buds are forming now and will open out into cream flowers from February until April. It's not nearly as hardy as the two New Zealanders and can only tolerate temperatures down to -5C. I used to keep it in the greenhouse every winter but it has become too tall and I don't want to spoil its conical shape by decapitating it. At Mount Stewart there are two that come through winters unscathed and mine originated there. Legally! Our winters are not nearly as mild so the shrub is going to need protection from frost. *Buddleia auriculata*, a winter-flowering buddleia, is also quite tender. There is nothing elusive about its fragrance for it can fill the whole greenhouse with scent from its panicles of cream and soft yellow flowers.

I look forward to the blooming of the correas which can go on for much of the winter. These Australian shrubs bear a superficial resemblance to rhododendrons. *Correa backhousiana* has thumb-sized oval leaves and pale green flowers while *C. harrisii* has pointed leaves with pinky-red flowers. The flowers on correas are narrow tubes into which the beaks of humming neatly fit. Humming birds haven't been observed in this neck of the woods so the correas are kept inside; a few degrees of frost can kill them as I've learned to my cost.

Winter flowering rhododendrons are made of sterner stuff. *Rhododendron dauricum* “Mid-winter” is extremely hardy and deciduous. It has masses of pinky-purple flowers here in February but I've seen it blooming in a winter border in Rowallane in November. *R. lapponicum parvifolium* has tiny aromatic leaves of grey green and rose-purple flowers that are unfazed by frost when they appear through most of January and February. Already rhododendrons have formed their flower buds for next spring and during the forthcoming months will be amongst the most vibrant plants in the garden.

I could wax lyrical about rhododendrons and other winter-flowering shrubs for pages and pages but, of course, cannot do so here. What I am really looking forward to seeing is one border where the flowers are all mauvy pinks, purples, magenta and blue. Old roses, geraniums, hostas, thalictrums, asters and phlox dominate in summer but underneath the rampant geraniums, in particular, there is an ever increasing collection of *Helleborus x hybridus*. They don't seem to resent being almost smothered for five months of the year. When everything else goes dormant they come into their own and make a carpet surrounded by ordinary snowdrops and winter-flowering crocuses. That beats the so-called “sweet disorder” of autumn any day.



# Regional Reports

## Reports from the Northern Area

### Winter Lectures

The gardening fervour is at its height but two lectures I attended last winter keep coming to mind.

### A Taste of France by Mrs Barbara Pilcher

Mrs. Barbara Pilcher gave the first, "A Taste of France", on a cold December night, as the annual Malone House lecture - a joint IGPS & Belfast Parks effort. The Pilcher family has travelled extensively through rural France, especially the Loire valley, soaking up sun and French garden ideas, especially French attitudes to vegetable and herb growing. The trips were described as "working holidays with gardens on the side".

We began in Versailles in the *potager du roi* or King's Garden. This 17<sup>th</sup> century garden was originally created for the production of fruit for the court of Louis XIV. It has continued in use ever since and has now become a Centre of Excellence for the study and training of students in fruit growing - a way of retaining an old design with a modern use. Continental gardens have a tradition of mixing fruit, vegetables and ornamental flowers; many vegetables have good ornamental qualities.

The Public Gardens reflected changing tastes and labour availability, a mixture of wild areas mixed with precision formality, each a credit to the gardener's skills. There was no doubt that on a grey day the riotous colour of the annual beds cheered the heart. Then a visit to the world renowned Paris Botanic Gardens and a reminder that there is so much more to these gardens than meets the casual eye, the back up of research and archive material that is becoming more crucial in the modern world.

Then there was a visit to the top French Garden Festivals of Courson, Chaumont and then Beauregarde that specializes in the *potager* style of gardening. An array of the ordinary and the exotic vegetables and herbs brought reminders of the nourishing soups of childhood, all displayed as colourfully as an English herbaceous border. At Villandry the 19<sup>th</sup> century formal garden design is now planted with 16<sup>th</sup> century vegetables, an example of the current interest in preserving the old varieties that have survived for centuries.

In the middle of a dusty, hot landscape a look over a stone wall revealed the Aubrac Jardin Botanique, a small garden displaying all the local plants but with an unusual twist, the plants were labelled! Anyone, who has struggled with foreign floras that never show the plant in question, will appreciate what a gem this was.

Proust's English style garden, complete with stream, was an oasis in the dry dusty landscape. You could see how this style of garden could appeal in this area.

Milly-la-foret is a tiny 15<sup>th</sup> century village that exports 80 tons of dried herbs a day. A local industry where the herbs are grown and dried on the spot instead of being transported half way round the world. You could almost smell the heady mixture of bouquet garni, though the garlic seller who set up his stall under the sign to the hospital perhaps made an unfortunate choice of site!

We were taken on a grand sweep of gardens from the King to his lowest subject, through private gardens of chateau and farmhouse all with the theme that vegetables, herbs and herbaceous plants all grow together, not segregated, as in British gardens. The evening finished with Barbara providing a final taste of France, petit madeleines and lime-blossom tea, a lovely touch before facing the rigours of a Belfast December night.

### **The Joys of Gardening by Dr. Mary Toomey**

The other lecture was in April, at the close of the season, given by Dr. Mary Toomey in Cultra Manor in aid of the Camphill Community at Glencraig, entitled "The Joys of Gardening". A lecture well laced with philosophy, such as "the sign of a good gardener is broken fingernails". Dr. Toomey had lived in Ceylon until she was 17 and started by showing some of her local trees, like *Amherstia nobilis* with cascades of flame coloured flowers.

Dr. Toomey described her talk as being about the passion, the compassion and the style of gardening.

The passion was of dedicated plant hunters searching for plants in garden centres and nurseries from close to home to the furthest reaches of the universe. There was a lovely sequence of slides of four ladies from Cork whose roof rack and car were filled with all sorts of delicacies. One wondered, "*How Many Walked Home?*" Passion can be catching, for Anna Nolan's garden in Dublin, with its bedazzling array of *Hellebore sp.*, could inspire one beyond ones abilities (and space). Dr. Toomey warned against becoming a slave to the passion for then the joy was lost. Her remedy? Buy some good garden furniture and sit and enjoy your garden.

Compassion is not forcing a plant into the wrong environment. Certain plants belong in certain places and we should leave them there. Grow plants that suit your soil and climate. Recognise when a plant isn't happy, dig it up, give it to a friend with a more suitable place and visit it there.

Many common plants have style and ability (and attitude) so mix these with the more exotic, e.g. tree ferns. Older varieties have staying power; they have been tried and tested for generations, so mix old and new varieties. If you have a very favourite flower then plant three, one facing east, one south and one west, this will prolong the flowering time. It is never too late to plant a tree; *Malus floribunda* and *Prunus glandulosa* "Alba plena" produce good results within one's lifetime. Use the trees as

support for climbers; grow clematis up an apple tree. I had a friend who successfully grew "Hugh Dixon" through a conifer, spectacular, if eccentric.

Be aware of the quality and colour of light, and how plants and light interact.

Lavender in a mellow late afternoon light has quite a different colour in the harsher morning light. Plants that vibrate with colour in the Mediterranean lose something in our cooler northern light.

Include plants that mean something to you, that evoke memories of people and places.

Dr. Toomey had two criteria; can you eat it or smell it?

Finally Dr. Toomey tackled the problem of the design of large "patio" pots. Many have narrow bases and are unstable, and have necks narrower than the waist so either plant or pot has to be sacrificed. Her solution was to design an elegant pot with a wide stable base, the neck the widest part and with drainage holes a short distance up the side so the pot does not drain completely. These are available commercially.

Inspired by these lectures, we planted salad things amongst the annuals, bought some comfy garden chairs, added the G+T and watched the weeds grow in comfort. And now we can look forward to some more great lectures lined up for the coming season. I know I'll certainly be there!

*Marion D. B. Allen.*

### **Garden Visits – Summer 2003**

As the nights start to draw in and gardens take on their autumn garb, it's perhaps time to look back over some of the highlights of our summer. As always there was a good selection of garden visits arranged by the IGPS throughout the country.

#### **Lesley Casement's garden at Magherintemple, Ballycastle**

Here in the North in July we paid a return visit to Lesley Casement's garden at Magherintemple, Ballycastle where we held our annual picnic. Unlike our last visit, the rain managed to hold off while we sat on the lawn with our lunch before proceeding to the walled garden to admire Lesley's creation in all its glory. The term 'walled garden' can suggest massed orderly rows of vegetables and fruit – but here at Magherintemple, these are greatly augmented by a splendid array of herbaceous perennials and shrubs. The long central path was a delight of colours with herbaceous planting mixed with flowering shrubs – *Hypericum* 'Rowallane' was looking particularly well. Over to one side, a beautiful dahlia caught the eye – *D.* "Giraffe", its two-tone flowers indeed reminiscent of the colouring on a giraffe. (*Note to Stephen Butler – one to consider for Dublin Zoo, perhaps!*) Past the soft fruit cages and the vegetable beds, at the lowest level was the bog garden – luxuriant with hostas, astilbes, lysichiton, irises, rodgersia and massed candelabra primulas. Stunning as it was, Lesley assured us it had looked even better a short time before with swathes of the lovely black iris – *I. chrysographes*. The black flowers had faded before our visit, but as a striking counterpoint to our mental image, we could admire in another border a beautiful white watsonia – a colour I wasn't familiar with in the watsonia family. All in all, it was a lovely afternoon from

our picnic on the lawn catching up on the gardening gossip, to our tour of the garden in the company of a wonderful gardener and great friend (and member) of the IGPS – Mrs Lesley Casement.

### **Gary Dunlop, Ballyrogan Nursery**

Later in the summer, we visited another great plantsman – Gary Dunlop. Gary is renowned for his plant collections and his nursery (Ballyrogan Nursery) is a must for the plant connoisseur. It was perhaps no surprise then that there was a tremendous turnout of members (and non-members) for our visit. I suspect most had come to see the nursery rather than the garden and it certainly did not disappoint. Emerging from the car park in an adjoining field, we turned the corner to be greeted with great waves of blue agapanthus – just one of Gary’s specialities. A tantalising blue-black variety was just bursting bud for our visit (not for sale, to the disappointment of many) but beyond lay plenty of other treasures. *Agapanthus inapertus subsp. inapertus* ‘Cyan’ may be a mouthful of a name, but it’s a gorgeous plant and by the end of the evening, a sample just forced its way into my carrier bag of goodies. A. “Bressingham Blue” and A. “Patent Blue” was another popular couple which made their way home with several of our members

Further investigation of the nursery beds revealed other passions – *crocasmia* and *dierama* being very well represented, and a look though Gary’s catalogue shows a fondness for the families of *celmisia*, *erythronium*, *iris*, *phormium* and *rodgersia*. Although these are listed in great variety in the catalogue, another family with fewer varieties listed, has started to grab my attention of late – the roscoeas, members of the ginger family – the zingiberaceae. The purple *Roscoea purpurea* and pale yellow *R. cautleoides* are familiar to many of us I’m sure, and they have become more common of late in garden centres, but here in the nursery bed was a lovely red form. Unfortunately, not available for sale at the moment, it was a real stunner and one to add to my ever-growing wish list.

Tearing away from the nursery beds and out into the garden, we were amazed at the range of plants grown. Grass paths wound through a jungle of trees (the eucalypts were particularly eye-catching), shrubs, herbaceous perennials and the ever-popular ornamental grasses – all jostling for their own space in this corner of Co. Down. Many parts of the garden are well established while others are evolving works in progress – the series of linked pools will be spectacular in years to come I’m sure. But for me, the abiding memory will be the agapanthus beds - wonderful swathes of blue in all its many shades.

For those who did not make it to Gary Dunlop’s, you should be aware that this is a small part-time nursery which opens only by appointment, but it does have mail-order facilities. Details are readily available in the Plant Finder and you can access a full plant list on the Internet using the RHS Plant Finder / Nursery Finder.

***Patrick Quigley.***

# Looking Ahead

## Munster Fixtures

- **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October @ 07.45pm**

### **In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry**

Mathew Jebb, Taxonomist, National Botanic Gardens.

- **Friday 31st October @ 07.45pm**

### **Gardening the Past, Preserving our Future**

Alan Power, Head Gardener Cliveden & Regional H.G. for Thames And Solent

- **Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November @ 07.45pm**

### **Tender Trees and Shrubs for Coastal Regions**

Bernard O'Leary, Head Gardener, Innacullin (Garnish Is.)

- **Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December @ 07.45pm**

### **California Carnivores & other dramatic Americans**

Patrick O' Hara, Botanical Artist and Sculpture

**NB.** As usual, all the Cork lectures will be held at the **SMA Hall, Wilton.**

## Leinster Fixtures

- **Sunday 12 October 12 noon:**

### **The Annual Plant Sale of the Society**

**Venue: The Parish Hall, Church of Our Lady of Dolores Glasnevin** (opposite the National Botanic Gardens) Start propagating now!

- **Thursday 6th November 8 p.m.:**

**'Experimenting with the Rare and Unusual'** a lecture by fellow member **Carmel Duignan** - a self confessed plantaholic with a particular interest in tender plants.

Followed by "Alpines in Focus" – winning slides from photographic competitions.

A joint lecture with the Alpine Garden Society.

**The Institution of Engineers** 22 Clyde Road, Ballsbridge Dublin 4.

- **Wednesday 26 November 8 pm:**

A joint lecture with RHSI to be held at **Wesley House, Leeson Park, Dublin 6**

**'Antipodean Plants that Lived with the Dinosaurs'** an illustrated talk by **Dr. David Robinson.**

Dr Robinson is a well know plantsman who grows a large range of subtropical plants at his exceptionally mild Earlscliffe Garden in Bailey Co Dublin

- **Thursday, 15th January**

Kate Garton presents “Rothschild Gardens”

Venue: **The National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin.**

- **Thursday 12th February 8 pm: *NOTE CHANGE OF DATE HERE!***

A lecture on “The Flora of Thailand” by **Prof John Parnell** from TCD.

**The Institution of Engineers, 22 Clyde Road Ballsbridge Dublin 4.**

## Northern Ireland

- **Saturday 11th October. 12:00 – 3:00pm**

**AUTUMN PLANT SALE, Stranmillis College, Belfast.**

Donations of good quality plants only please; deliveries from 9:00am.

Plants and volunteers wanted. Contact Mary Browne on 028 9754 1405

- **Wednesday 22nd October. 7:30 pm**

**THE CLOTWORTHY LECTURE, Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim.**

**‘At The Water’s Edge – Fota Arboretum And Gardens’ with David O’Regan, Head Gardener at Fota.**

Situated in Cork Harbour and now under state control, this former island has an enviable climate and a superb collection of plants built up over many years by the Smith-Barry family. Members free, others £1.00. Refreshments free. Plant Sales. Joint lecture with Antrim Borough Council.

- **Thursday 13th November. 7:30 pm**

**LECTURE, Lagan Valley Island Arts Centre, Lisburn.**

**‘The Park With The Ark’ with Stephen Butler, Curator of Horticulture, Dublin Zoo.**

Dublin Zoo in Phoenix Park is one of the oldest in these islands and always needs first class gardens for its animal guests. If you thought mice were a problem in the garden, think again – this is definitely gardening on the edge! Members free, others £1.00

- **Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> December. 7:30pm**

**THE MALONE HOUSE LECTURE, Malone House, Barnett’s Park, Belfast.**

**‘Gone West – America’s Western Seaboard, From The Mountains To The Sea’ with Liam & Joan McCaughey.** Guided by Liam’s superb photography, we should meet in their native habitats, a good few plants which we are familiar with in our gardens here. Free. Refreshments free. Joint lecture with Belfast Parks.

*For further details contact the Northern Region Events Co-ordinator:*

*Catherine Tyrie, Dept. of Botany, Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast.*

*Tel: 028 90383152; Fax: 028 90383103, E-mail: [catherine.tyrie.um@nics.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.tyrie.um@nics.gov.uk)*

# SNIPPETS

- Rose Sevastopulo, the Society's Honorary Secretary, has the **e-mail addresses** of many of many of the members and sends out notices, reminders, etc. from time to time. However some of these addresses are wrong and the mail keeps bouncing. Could any members who would like to receive these occasional reminders from Rose please forward their correct addresses to her: [igps@eircom.net](mailto:igps@eircom.net)
- Seamus O'Brien has dropped a note to point out that the black Clematis that Rae McIntyre wrote about in the newsletter is his *Clematis 'Glasnevin Dusk'*. Séamus is in the process of registering this and *Clematis 'Lorcan o'Brien'* (after his brother) at the moment, but more of this in the spring newsletter.
- Queen's University Belfast Extra-Mural department hopes to run a short course (15 weeks) in **Garden Design** starting in January 2004. For further details, contact Patrick Quigley, 24 Areema Drive, Dunmurry, Belfast, BT17 0QG. Tel: 00 44 7801 299263, or e-mail [pmquigley@aol.com](mailto:pmquigley@aol.com)
- Paula Campbell (Marcella's daughter) works for Poolbeg Publishers and is presently preparing for publication a new book by Dermot O'Neill, "*Dermot Gardens*". It's to retail at €14.99 and as Dermot is a member of the IGPS it might be of interest.  
Dermot has been the gardener on RTE's Open House for the past eight years. Now, in "*Dermot Gardens*", he has put together the definitive guide to everything you need to know to create the perfect garden, from lawns to roses, from climbers to borders. Illustrated with Dermot's own colour photographs, this is a book that will be enjoyed and appreciated by both beginner and expert alike.
- Conference at Lough Crew, Co. Meath on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> October 2003, **Tree Heritage of Ireland**, with *Irish Arboreta* by Michael, *Managing Change in Historic Woodlands* by Philip Blackstock, *Current & Future Diseases & Disorders of Trees* by David Rose, *Ancient and Veteran Trees* by Roy Finch, *Beneath the Trees* by Donal Synnott, *Historic Yew, Hoary Thorns and Sacred Trees* by Ben Simon. Also site visits, dinner with guest speaker, **Thomas Pakenham**. Contact Phone Nos: U.K. 02890 668817 RoI 04890 668817. E-mail: [belindajupp@lineone.net](mailto:belindajupp@lineone.net)
- Congratulations to **Sally O Halloran** and staff at **Emo Court**. They hosted a meeting of the cabinet in August. The Waterford Garden Plant Society visited Emo in September – the gardens looked absolutely wonderful. If you haven't been there then it's time you paid a visit.

## Seed Time Again by Stephen Butler

A very, very short note to remind everyone to send seed for the 2004 Seed Exchange. This year has been rather strange, wet in early summer making it harder to get dry seed heads, but very dry and very easy to get good seed later on.

Even if you have only a couple of packets to send, they may be the only accessions of that plant – last year I had only 3 or 4 duplicates.

Please send seed, well labelled, in paper envelopes please (poly bags can make seed rot, and the static build can make it very hard to get seed out), and well wrapped in boxes or padded envelopes to:-

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

.....and of course many, many, thanks to all our seed collectors, especially the regulars!



*Seasonal seedheads by Christel Rosenfeld*