

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



**ISSUE NO. 93**      **JULY 2004**

## EDITORIAL

*Dear Members,*

*On your behalf allow me to express a very heartfelt "Thank You" to Rose Sevastopulo who after years of dedicated service has resigned the position of Executive Assistant to the IGPS. Rose has been the one who has provided continuity and cohesion in the society over many years and who has guided this faltering editor in his stumbling efforts. The new Executive Assistant is Angela McCrone Donnelly. Congratulations to Angela on her appointment and best wishes to her in her work.*

*It is a matter of great sadness that we recently heard of the death of Dr. David Robinson. Dr. Robinson had been a long-time member of the IGPS and held a pre-eminent position in Irish and international horticulture. Many will remember him fondly from his television appearances, his regular articles on gardening matters and for the pleasure of visiting his garden. On behalf of the IGPS I would like to extend our sympathy and gratitude to his family. I'm sure there will be echiums blooming in heaven's green garden shortly.*

*Briefly, on other matters, watch out for the IGPS stand at forthcoming gardening events and introduce yourself to those on the stand. Do prepare some plants for the plant sales in the autumn; I'm sure you will have surplus from those propagated from the seed distribution.*

*Enjoy your gardening, your summer garden visits and drop a line to tell us about it all.*

*Please send material for newsletter to Paddy Tobin, "Cois Abhann", Riverside, Lower Gracedieu, Waterford. Phone: 051-857955. E-mail: [pmtobin@eircom.net](mailto:pmtobin@eircom.net)*

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*Front Cover Illustration: Rosa canina by Janet Butcher*

# Annual General Meeting Report

## from Patrick Quigley

The 23<sup>rd</sup> AGM of the Irish Garden Plant Society was held in Cork on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2004. Thanks must go to David O'Regan and the Munster Regional group for all their hard work in making the whole AGM weekend such a success.

The meeting marked several changes in the composition of the Executive Committee – we said goodbye to Malcolm Rose as Chairman, and to John O'Connell as Hon. Treasurer. Dermot Kehoe was elected Chairman, with Mary Bradshaw moving into his previous position as Vice-Chair. Ed Bowden agreed to take on the role of Hon. Treasurer, and Patrick Quigley was re-elected as Hon. Secretary. Brid Kelleher, familiar to many long term members of the society, especially in the Leinster area, was newly elected to the committee.

One major change to personnel and probably the one which will have most impact, (no disrespect to any other committee members), was the official retirement of Rose Sevastopulo as Executive Assistant. Rose has worked diligently for the society for longer than she would care to contemplate, and will be greatly missed by us all. Over the years she has looked after the membership records, the publication of the Newsletter, looked after a lot of our correspondence and has been a font of information. But perhaps most importantly, she has provided a great source of continuity in the administration of the society, working away as committee members moved in and moved on. In recognition of her huge contribution to the IGPS, above and beyond the call of duty, the society has awarded Rose Honorary Life Membership (proposed by Patrick Quigley and seconded by Malcolm Rose). It was not officially announced at the AGM, but we now welcome Angela McCrone Donnelly as our new Executive Assistant, and wish her well in the role.

John O'Connell had prepared copies of the annual Treasurer's Report, but in his absence, Ed was not in a position to discuss this in depth as he had only just taken on the role. However, the figures indicate that we have been eating into our reserves and we need to start looking at ways in which we can raise more funds to support our programme of activities.

Other items of interest which arose at the meeting included the possibility of producing an issue of *Moorea*, the society's journal. This has not been published for several years due to the difficulties in getting members to contribute suitable articles. However, Mary Bradshaw has been working as our '*persuader*' recently and we are reasonably optimistic that the next *Moorea* will not be too far away.

Sally O'Halloran queried what work had been carried out on the conservation of Irish cultivars – a key role of the society, made easier in recent years by the publication of *A Heritage of Beauty*. The committee is currently working on a strategy to pursue these aims; it will be a long term project but it is hoped that with the help of as many members as possible, we can start to identify cultivars which are in danger of being lost from cultivation, and, in partnership with interested commercial growers, we can start to re-introduce them to the gardening public. If anyone has a particular interest in this aspect of the society's work, please get in touch and offer your help.

George Sevastopulo suggested that we should prepare a target list of plants which we would like to work on. He pointed out that this had been very successful some years ago when some members propagated *Campanula garganica* 'W. H. Paine', and managed to bring it back into commercial production.

In addition to this, there has been some work in the Northern Region, where the long-standing project at the Lismacliskey Rectory Garden in the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum has been adapted so that we can develop the garden as a home for old Irish cultivars. These can then be propagated for distribution through the society's plant sales. (Further details of this project appeared in the April Newsletter)

With the official business of the day complete, Dermot closed the meeting and we moved on to the fun bit of the weekend – the garden visits.

## **Committee Members: 2004 - 2005**

***Chairman:*** Dermot Kehoe  
***Vice Chair:*** Mary Bradshaw  
***Hon. Treasurer*** Ed Bowden  
***Hon. Secretary & Northern Rep.*** Patrick Quigley

***Publicity Officer:*** Sarah Ball

Brid Kelleher  
Paul Maher

***Ex officio members:***  
***Munster Rep.*** Kitty Hennessy  
***Collections Co-ordinator*** : Stephen Butler

***Executive Assistant*** : Angela McCrone Donnelly

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

Almost a year later and I find myself in the driving seat of managing our stand at the Garden Heaven Show again. And after getting two Silver Awards in the past two years (though I can only claim credit for one) the challenge is for us to make it three. So at this stage I'm calling on all members who might have a number of good specimen plants that have an Irish connection and wouldn't mind lending them to us for the Garden Heaven Show. All plants will be treated with care and returned after the show. Any interested parties can contact me at 01-8436297.

The stand also has to be manned over the four days and Rose Sevastopulo has volunteered to put together a roster for both the Garden Heaven Show, which runs from Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> July to Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July, and the Rose Festival at St. Anne's Park, Raheny, on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> of July. Contact Rose at: 01- 8324598

I did a number of shifts on the stand last year which was very busy. However not many people who approached the stand made it known that they were a member of our society. So, this year please don't be shy and make yourself known. We will also be selling copies of "A Heritage of Beauty" at a special price, excellent value for the definitive and outstanding book on plants with an Irish connection.

### **St. Anne's Rose Festival, 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July**

As a Dublin City Council employee I would like to take this opportunity to inform our members of the Rose Festival which takes place in St. Anne's Park, Raheny. This festival is held at a time of the year when roses are normally looking their best. A number of Irish rose breeders will be present selling their stock. There will also be other traders selling garden products such as, plants, furniture etc. Arts and Crafts displays and exhibitions by horticultural societies, including our own IGPS stand, are other attractions.

Entry to the festival and car park is free, so make a note of the dates which are the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of July. And, don't forget to make yourself known at the stand.

### **Garden Heaven Show**

- RDS from 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> July, Thurs 10 -9, Fri & Sat 10 – 7, Sunday 10 – 6
- Appearances by Diarmuid Gavin, Helen Dillon and Dermot O'Neill.
- 12 Show Gardens in the Outdoor Arena
- Seminar area with wine tasting courtesy of O'Brien's Wines.
- Stuarts Landrover Design Clinic: expert help to plan/design your own garden.
- Kiddies Farm courtesy of Airfield Trust and Kid's feature from Naturally Wild
- 200 Exhibitor booths
- Plant Creche

*Admission €12, Children under 12 free.*

## Diarmuid's Little Helper! By Annette Dalton, Kew

It all feels like a distant memory already – a period of three weeks during which the days melted into one another, and the passing of time grew exponentially faster! Having attended the Chelsea Flower Show as a punter for the first time last year, I was delighted when, last July, Diarmuid Gavin asked me to be part of his Chelsea 2004 team.

I was on board to help on the plant side of things. We had various brainstorming sessions, and new plants and new ideas would come into the mix each time, particularly if Diarmuid had visited an exciting nursery. My part is best explained with the saying “two heads are better than one” I suppose, but ultimately all the decisions and choices were the master's! We knew that our site would be partly shaded by the great London Planes, and also that we would be adding trees, so we would need a number of shade-loving plants. Diarmuid also decided to have damp and dry areas, created by the irrigation system, so that we could show plants from a wider variety of situations.

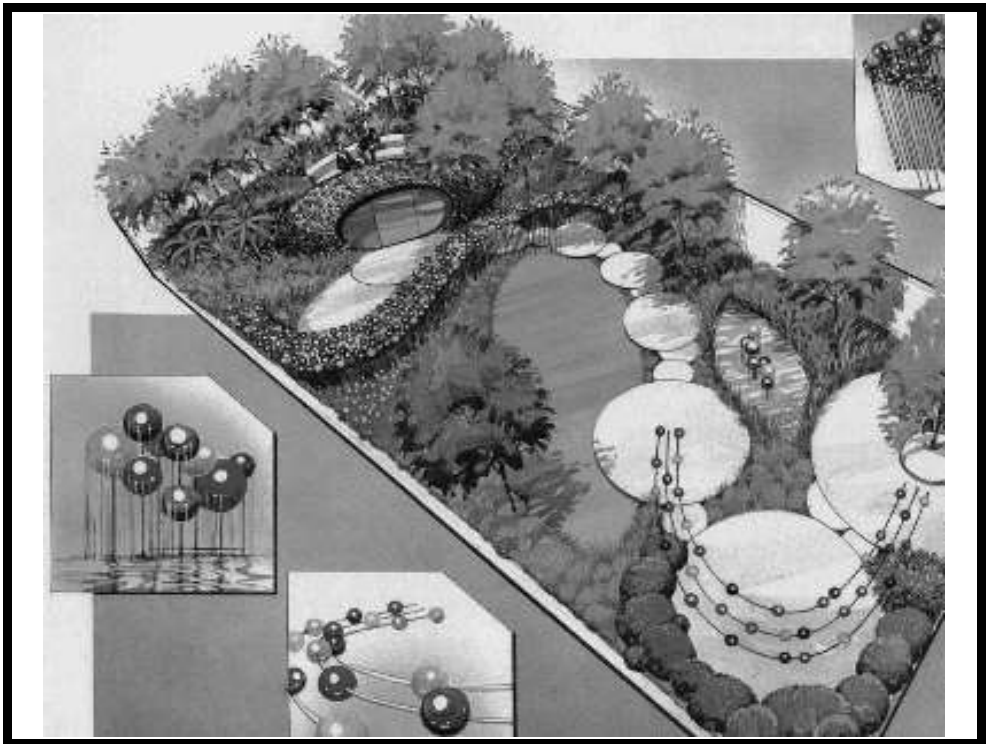
The more unusual of our shade plants came from Crug-Farm in Wales: *Beesia calthifolia*, *Disporopsis pernyi*, *Farfugium formosanum* & *Speirantha convallarioides* for dry shade, and *Diphylleia cymosa*, *Ligularia japonica* ‘Rising Sun’, *Mitella makinoi* & *Myosotodium hortensia* for damp shade. Bleddyn and Sue Wynn-Jones, when not running this busy nursery near Holyhead, go on collecting trips in search of these unusual plants.

Many of our plants made the trip across the Irish Sea, from Costan's Nursery in Kilcock, Co. Kildare. These included the beautiful single specimens of *Inula magnifica* & *Chionochloa flavescens*, as well as the delicate *Epimedium grandiflorum* ‘Lilafee’, stunning steely grey *Astelia banksii* and the lovely purple-leaved *Ligularia dentata*.

The planting plan existed as a list for most of the planning stage. Although we may have identified areas of shade, sun etc, the only plant positions we could decide on initially were those of larger trees, shrubs and tree ferns. There was a time when I felt we should have a planting plan, but this passed. Once the planting began, I realised how visual a process planting up a garden really is. Although you can get a collection of plants together that suit your circumstances, and will, in your mind, work well together, you cannot make your final decisions until you have the plants on site. Also, the site felt different at the various stages of the build. The really dramatic change for me was when the large trees were in. They provided a great framework, both for the fledgling garden and for the imagination!

When the hard landscaping, large trees and structures were finished, Diarmuid focused on plants and started the placing process, which resulted in some inspired combinations. The favourite for many was the large clipped box balls, surrounded by *Stipa arundinaceae*. Once everything was placed, the planting began. It is amazing how much more time it takes to plant up a bed when it is a show garden and your planting density is dramatically increased to give the look of a somewhat matured garden. It took time, work and a few late evenings, but nothing could compare to the reward of standing, or sitting, in the garden that your team had built and just admiring it!

We had really good fun building the garden because we had such a good team, but also such a fun design. As always, Diarmuid managed to marry a unique style with an unerring sense of proportion, and, of course, to choose the best possible people to make his vision a reality!



*The plan of Diarmuid Gavin's garden at Chelsea, "A Colourful Suburban Eden"*  
Courtesy of the Royal Horticultural Society.

## La Mortella – an Ischian Idyll by Patrick Quigley

Have you ever visited a place and experienced an overwhelming sense of oneness with your surroundings, an urge to capture all the sensations of a moment and hold them to you for as long as you can? It's happened to me a few times on holiday – once when I happened to catch an orchestra rehearsing a Haydn Mass in an almost empty Duomo in Pisa; another time listening to the voices of the choir reverberating through San Marco in Venice. In both these cases it was music which seemed to encapsulate the experience, so it is perhaps ironic that the same sensation came to me in silence in the gardens of La Mortella in Ischia, the home of the late composer Sir William Walton and his wife, Susana.

The garden was quite busy, but the people seemed to melt away as I sat in the Thai sala (an oriental gazebo) looking out over the lotus pool to the distant hillside. As the other garden visitors wandered off, I remained in stillness – surrounded by various lotus species (*Nelumbo* 'Rosea Plena', *N.* 'Pekinensis Rubra' and *N.* 'Alba Striata'), the large leaves of alocasias, the rice paper plant, *Tetrapanax papyrifer*, and the wonderful scented white flowers of *Hedychium*. Embracing the handrails of the sala were jasmine and *Clematis armandii*. It was such a wonderful moment, I could have sat there for hours, and this, as I found out later, was surely a measure of the design skills of Lady Walton, for she had planned this area as a place of meditation. It is also worth noting that Russell Page, who helped guide Lady Walton in the creation of the garden, intended the theme of the garden to be '*one of peace and unity, serenity and silence*' so that Sir William could compose his music without distraction. [Walton, S. (2002) La Mortella – An Italian Garden Paradise, p. 24]

The entire garden is the creation of Susana Walton and Sir Russell Page who worked in partnership from the gardens inception in the 1950s. When the Walton's bought the property their friend, Laurence Olivier, described the site as a stone quarry. Undaunted by the harshness of the location, with little water, fierce sun and massive rocks, Susana started to build a garden alongside what was to become the Walton home. Russell Page visited in 1956 and provided instructions for the development of the site, proposing a roughly L-shaped axial arrangement. The garden is situated in a steep sided gully, so terrace walls to hold pockets of planting were built from the abundant supplies of stone. The only positive indication that the creation of a garden was a possibility was underfoot - a great layer of fertile black volcanic humus-rich soil, about 7m in depth. After many years of backbreaking, gruelling work, the installation of water reservoirs and irrigation pipes, the garden had taken shape under the skilful guiding hand of Lady Walton.

In the early days, there were few plants – mainly the surrounding native vegetation, including *Quercus ilex* and the common myrtle, *Myrtus communis*, whose name in the



local Neapolitan dialect is *la mortelle*, which gave the garden its name. Now the garden has enough to hold the attention of even the keenest plantaholics for hours.

Shortly after entering the garden, you reach a fine *Gingko biloba*, which has sentimental attachments for Lady Susana – it was planted in memory of a good friend, Nino Mattero. In fact, if you read her book on La Mortella, you will find that there are many memories attached to plants in the garden and in many ways, the entire garden is a memorial to her and her late husband. From underneath the Gingko, you look onto one of Page's main axes - a small circular area with a pool and fountain, leading onto a long straight path with a narrow rill running its entire length. The edge of the path is lined with a band of *Liriope*; there are many types of ferns under the shade of a range of trees including the tulip tree and the evergreen *Magnolia grandiflora*. To the right *Hibiscus tiliaceus*, *Dioon edule*, *Encephalartos lebomboensis*, *Macrozamia communis* and *Cycas circinalis* add a sense of the exotic to the rather more mundane Japanese anemones. To the left are stands of *Hydrangea quercifolia* and a fine specimen of *Chorisia speciosa*, with its unusual prickly bark. (I cannot see the name of this tree without thinking of the Spanish sausage, chorizo – I must be food obsessive!). As with many of the plants in the garden, the *Choriosa* was grown from seed by Lady Walton. At only 20 years, it already has a large stout trunk and towers over this part of the garden.

Moving along the axial path, you come to a second octagonal pool designed by Page for Sir William's eightieth birthday. Sadly neither of them lived to see the pool's completion. Here you will find the wonderful dramatic foliage of *Xanthosoma sagittifolium* and *Colocasia esculenta* 'Black Prince', the latter with dark arrowhead leaves, beautiful when set against a pale caladium. This is a 'must have' plant for those of you who have a passion for black foliage or flowers, and the facilities to over-winter it. To one side of this pool is the 'rainforest' - a collection of *Dicksonia antarctica*, *Cyathea dealbata*, *C. cooperi* and various other ferns with shots of colour provided by *Anthurium andreaeanum* and several bromeliads. *Liriodendron tulipifera* and *Metrosideros excelsus* provide shade and suitable trunks for attaching stagshorn and birdsnest ferns, tillandsias, and a range of epiphytes while a specially constructed overhead watering system provides the necessary humidity.

The rainforest area lies to one side of the main pool – a large, egg-shaped pond, with a tall central jet of water whose spray provides added humidity for gunnera and papyrus. The planting around this open area has a more arid feel to it – lots of spiky yuccas, *Dasylyrion*, aloes in variety, puya, and *Kalanchoe beharensis* with large felted leaves. Towering over these are several Mexican blue palms, *Brahea armata*, and a fine *Syagrus romanzoffianum* (a rainforest palm) backed by a tall *Araucaria heterophylla*.

A few steps and a short path lead from the main pool to the Palm Court where another fountain splashes over a rock set in a small pool. A crescent shaped band of planting around this pool includes the fishtail palm, *Caryota 'Himalaya'*. Close by, another

palm, the silver *Bismarkia nobilis*, picks up the silver grey foliage of lavender and sage underneath it. To one end of the terrace the Victoria House provides a home to *Victoria* 'Longwood Hybrid', a cross between *V. amazonica* and *V. cruziana*. A stone 'Bocca' mask fountainhead forms a dramatic backdrop to the pool, while side beds and old olive tree trunks are covered in mosses, orchids and ferns. The stunning *Medinilla magnifica* grows in three large hanging baskets – the fantastically exotic bright pink flowers hanging in stout panicles, part shaded by some ferns. Humidity is kept at 95% by a very effective misting system – the dampness and shade being welcomed not just by the plants, but by visitors scorched in the hot summer sun.

Moving back down the steps to the main pool, you face the Walton home – perched halfway up the walls of the ravine – and you realise that the garden stretches well beyond that building, with a series of steps and paths leading up through the stone terraces. Climbing the network of paths to the Upper Garden, you reach a very poignant feature – William's Rock - a naturally pyramidal shaped rock which has been cut to enclose Sir William's ashes and forms a beautiful memorial to him, perched high on the hill looking out to sea. A carved stone arch frames the approach to the Rock, slowing the pace of visitors. Sir William is also remembered in the Recital Hall in the Upper Garden, where students from Naples, just across the bay from Ischia, play regularly for visitors throughout the summer.

Along the side of the valley, lies the Nymphaeum – a green arbour of clipped *Rhamnus alaternus* with a very modern polished stainless steel fountain and pool, reflecting the sky. Four canopied wrought iron seats arranged around this pool add a quiet structure, while four paths lead to symbolic artworks. Around the pool there is an inscription 'This green arbour is dedicated to Susana who loved tenderly, worked with passion and believed in immortality' and indeed, this has been planned as her memorial, positioned just like that of Sir William with views looking out to sea.

Above William's rock is the *Tempio del Sole*, the Sun Temple, an unusual building with 1.5m thick walls converted from an old water cistern, which you enter through a truncated triangular doorway, as if entering an ancient pyramid. An automated sliding door moves with a quiet whooshing noise – making you feel as though you have stumbled onto the set of Star Trek or Stargate. Inside, light pierces the shade from jagged openings cut out of the roof; an artificial stream with cascade and decorative misting unit provide welcome coolness. On the walls the artist Simon Verity, who has created many of the artworks in the garden, has added relief sculptures of Apollo riding his chariot above the golden rays of a huge sun, while couples cavort in a series of quite explicit scenes celebrating life and its earthly pleasures. To either side of the doorway are vertical rods, linked by spirally arranged bars representing the structure of DNA, each of the horizontal bars providing a support for bromeliads and orchids.

Climbing further takes you to the Crocodile Pool – a large pool with figures of crocodiles slipping into the water, through great clumps of water lilies, including the

rare Egyptian blue lily, *Nymphaea caerulea*. Beyond this, a lovely shrub with soft earthy red flowers, *Bauhinia galpinii*, sometimes called the Nasturtium bauhinia provides a long season of gentle colour along winding paths which lead to a new section of the garden the Glorieta – so new that at the time of my visit it still looked very raw and bare. Not for the fainthearted, this highly contemporary design features a dry pool of vivid blue glass gravel beside an oriental style pergola. Surrounding planting, when mature, will add lots of blue flowers – which may help to offset the harsh colour of the glass. I applaud Lady Susana's courage in installing such a controversial style of garden, but in its raw state, this particular feature left me cold. However, given her extraordinary vision and artistry, I hope that time will prove me wrong and when I visit again some time in the future, I will be able to appreciate it in its maturity.

Working back along the winding paths, you pass stands of Japanese maples, bamboos, and *Nandina domestica*. Passionflower drapes itself over rocks, and finally you arrive at the Thai sala where my story began.

The gardens of La Mortella are truly delightful and I highly recommend them to anyone travelling to the area around Naples. I arrived at the gardens around 10:30 – 11:00 am and noticed there was a music recital later that afternoon, starting around 5:00pm. This was dismissed out of hand as I assumed I would be long gone before it started, but the garden was so interesting that the guests for the recital were arriving as I was leaving. Many of our Irish garden owners, both state and private, who open to the public, could learn a lot from the extremely high quality of the visitor facilities at La Mortella. The attention to detail is outstanding in the décor, the structural details of the buildings, the seating and so on. Plants were well labelled throughout the garden. All of the staff was efficient, friendly, and courteous. In the shop and bar area, seeds from the garden were available to buy – carefully packaged in specially made 'La Mortella' envelopes - alongside botanical paintings, recordings of Sir William's music and various other high quality souvenirs. A small orchid house with humming birds flitting amongst the plants adjoins the shop and bar.

So if you ever find yourself in Naples, forget about taking the ferry over to Capri (grossly over-rated, over-priced and overcrowded in my opinion). Take the Ischia ferry instead, and pay a visit to La Mortella; bring a notebook and pen to record the names of all the exotic plants, bring lots of films (or several memory cards for those in the digital age), and allow yourself lots of time to sit in contemplation and to indulge in a cooling glass (or two) of the 'house white' as you sit on the terrace looking out over the valley garden.

(Further information on the garden can be found in the recent book by Susana Walton, *La Mortella – An Italian Paradise Garden*, published 2002 by New Holland Publishers, ISBN 1-85974-916-X)

## Leaves from a Sunlounge by Charles Nelson

The three dashing, out-of-focus zebra on the cover do not signal a book about Ireland, and to a large extent *Leaves from the fig tree*, by Diana Duff, is about Africa – Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa.

It is also more autobiography (“an utterly beguiling memoir”, is the publisher’s puff) than travel, although it is marketed as a travel book. The African portions are certainly interesting, ending with the dawn of the new “rainbow nation” South Africa and Nelson Mandela as its first non-white president.

In some ways, the Irish dimension is even more fascinating. Mrs Duff’s father was an Annesley, a Grove Annesley, eldest son of Richard Grove Annesley who’s sponsorship of men like Frank Kingdon Ward endowed Annes Grove, County Cork, with its splendid collection of rhododendrons. Irreconcilable differences between father and son over the younger man’s marriage lead to Diana’s father losing his expected patrimony. Annes Grove passed to the younger son and, as Diana mused, that was for the best.

*Leaves from the FigTree* provides tantalizing glimpses of Annes Grove in the middle of the last century. Visitors included ‘tall and majestic’ Elizabeth Bowen with her hands bespangled with ‘barbaric jewellery’. Once she brought the indomitable gardener Vita Sackville-West for tea. Diana remembered only Vita ‘great vitality’. She remembered two other ladies – ‘I have no idea who they were’ - but clearly they were garden-lovers. One of the pair smoked a ‘large black pipe’ which she pronounced was “Excellent for keeping the midges away” while her unknown companion was remembered for her ‘bright sky-blue hair’ and for having ‘had a number of husbands’! The rhododendrons are always in the background.

I know of no other book which provides such an intimate glimpse of a great Irish garden and, especially, the family that is its guardian. Writing of 2003, Diana Duff records that ‘... Annes Grove was still the same when I saw it, the house solid and welcoming, still like an old lady with a hat pulled down over her eyes. Some of the old copper beeches were still standing. A few rhododendrons were out and the key beds in the walled garden were still in place.’ Edmund Spenser wrote *The faerie queen* thereabouts: ‘Fierce wars and faithful loves shall mortalize my song’, he sang, and Diana Duff’s book, remarkably, unconsciously, echoes that line.

Remaining in southern Africa, Pitta Joffe’s *Easy guide to indigenous shrubs* is a handy, soft-back gardening guide, illustrating a handful of the country’s incomparable flora. A few of the shrubs (a category interpreted very broadly) are already familiar – *Strelitzia reginae*, *Euryops virgineus*, *Plumbago auriculata*, *Mackaya bella*, *Leonotus leonurus* and *Melianthus major* which is one of the finest foliage plants available and perfectly hardy. A few more, like *Mackaya*, bear the names of Irish botanists including *Sclerochiton harveyanus*. As is obvious from that short selection, some of these shrubs will survive out-of-doors in the mildest parts Ireland; most others will thrive in frost-free conservatories. A colourful book for day-dreaming!

D. Duff, *Leaves from the fig tree* (2003). Summersdale Publishers, Chichester (www.summersdale.com). ISBN 1-84024-363-5 (UK£7.99).

P. Joffe, *Easy guide to indigenous shrubs* (2003). Briza Publications, Arcadia (www.briza.co.za). ISBN 1-875093-40-0 (R159.95).

## Once again to China: a note from Séamus O'Brien

Briefly, we are travelling to the districts of Fang, Xingshan and the Shennongjia Forest District, to the north of Yichang in Hubei. These are the highest mountains in central China and the area is known as "The roof of Central China".

The reserve is the largest remaining area of primeval forest in central China and Augustine Henry was the first foreigner to enter the area (in autumn 1888). It is home to, among others, *Acer griseum*, *Acer henryi*, *Aconitum henryi*, *Emmenopterys henryi*, *Aesculus wilsonii*, etc.

The bulk of our time in central China will be spent there. We then sail down the Shennong River (A tributary of the Yangtze) and sail through the Three Gorges again (where we will see how flooding has progressed).

At Yichang we plan to visit the Monastery Valley & Goat Glen (last visited by Ernest Wilson). Between these areas and the Yangtze is the "Dome" where Henry discovered *Lilium henryi*. We will climb this low hill that overlooks Yichang.

From there we venture on to the Cave of the Three Pilgrims and the San Yu Tung glen. Henry collected here and the last person to collect there was E. H. Wilson.

From Yichang we travel on to Wuhan Botanical Gardens to sort seeds and herbarium specimens. Then we fly to Shanghai. Afterwards it is on to Canton to visit the South China Botanical Gardens.

From Hong Kong we fly to Kaohsiung in Taiwan. Henry was based there in 1893-94 when it was a small town. It's now a city of 1.5 million. We plan to visit areas he collected in e.g. Ape's Hill at Kaohsiung and the tropical forests on the southern tip of the Island.

## Christmas in San Diego by Anne James

Christmas 2003 was very different having been invited to the States for the festive season. Never having visited this continent I decided it would be nice to have a few days in New York and see some of its most famous sites. The Brooklyn Botanic Gardens and, of course, Central park were included but alas the weather and traffic jams prevented my trip to the former. Central Park provided us with a most enjoyable walk and appears to have a great variety of oak trees, which I would have loved to have identified. Next time I hope my visit will be in late springtime.

After that short sojourn I was off to San Diego where the weather was much kinder, at least during the day. Stepping out of the Airport my first plant introduction was the Bird of Paradise, *Strelitzia reginae*. It was flowering beautifully and, needless to say, this introduction augured well for my ten-day stay. Later, I discovered it was the most popular plant in the area. Travelling along the boulevards the streets were planted with Palms in variety from the Phoenix - *Phoenix canariensis* to the Mexican fan Palm – *Washingtonia robusta*. This latter species was thriving and was most impressive. A very interesting ground cover plant for the banks was the Hottenot fig, or ice plant as it was generally known by – *Carpobrotus edulis*, though a native of South Africa, it has naturalized here. Often pieces fall on to the road and are a cause of cars skidding. By the time I had reached our destination I wished I had spent a few days in the Palm House of the Botanic Gardens prior to my trip, so that I could have identified the palms more easily.

My first outing was to the Torrey Pines State Reserve. This reserve is one of the last remaining untouched native plant communities in coastal Southern California. It contains a unique blend of pine trees, sagebrush and chaparral communities, numbering close on 400 species of flowering plants. The torrey pine, *Pinus torreyana*, is a magnificent tree so tall and stately and definitely one to be purchased for Malahide, it should be hardy with us. Unfortunately, being wintertime there were no native flowering plants to be seen and alas I didn't find a trace of the *Dendromecon rigidum*, which use to thrive on the south walls of Malahide Castle and the Walled Garden. The original plants died and their replacements are only struggling. However, that disappointment was more than compensated for when I saw several specimens of the century plant - *Agave shawii*. The genus is mainly native to Mexico. It is now some years since the *Agave parryii* at Malahide flowered. It was a fascinating experience watching its flowering stem as it elongated by 10" to 12" or 27 to 30 cms in every 24 hours. Its progress was measured each day until it reached 15' and then simply had to be moved very gently to the dome of the Victorian Conservatory. Alas the growth more or less stopped then and we will never know if it could have grown taller had been in the dome originally. It then took several weeks before the flower buds opened

out and when they did, the smell (not the scent) was overpowering. The specimen growing outdoors in the reserve was much more pleasant. I would recommend a visit to the reserve and avail of one of the tours.

My next trip was to Quail Botanic Gardens – a small botanical garden supported by memberships and donations and volunteers. The garden was originally a private residence of Ruth Baird Larabee an avid plant collector and naturalist. The garden was donated to the public in 1957. Today it grows a very wide range of plants from all the continents from desert plants to sub-tropical species. Species that took my fancy were *Osteomeles anthylidifolia*, *Pittosporum crassifolium*, and *Crassula obovata* known as the Jade plant and very popular in San Diego. One of the more striking plants was the *Dracaena draco* of which there many specimens. However the most striking will be found within the garden of the Coronado Hotel. This hotel lies at the point of the Coronado peninsula and is the oldest wooden structure in the area. A magnificent building, the interior walls of the corridors and reception areas are all lined with carved panels. Again the *Dracaena* is also reputed to be one of the oldest. These are truly landscape and specimen plants their form and shape is breathtaking. Two lovely gardenias were *Gardenia thunbergia* – white flowered and *G. blakyeana* – red flowered. The plant I would love to have taken home was an *Acacia podalyrifolia*, yes common and possibly growing well here in some garden in Ireland. Of all the specimens I saw, this plant had the most beautiful soft silvery downy leaves with pale citrus lemon coloured flowers, it was beautiful. There were several plants of this in the garden but all had less silvery leaves and deeper yellow flowers. Another surprise was to see a shrubby Poinsettia in the shade – *Euphorbia pulcherrima* growing up to at least 12' (3.8m) flowering in all its glory the deep red bracts making a great splash of colour.

Both in New York and San Diego the street trees were festooned with fairy lights and this garden was no exception. It appeared that there were thousands of lights in all of the main areas and as dusk was falling it was like walking through an enchanted garden - just magical.

A trip to the Bilbao Park was very different. On entering there was a lovely Spanish quarter of craft shops – good craft shops from jewellery to paintings etc. But with only two days left I had no time to admire all. To me it was a most unusual park; obviously a designed park with one area very formal with beautiful stone buildings, one of which housed the Natural Museum. At the time of visiting it had an exhibition of Californian Native Plant Portraits by A.R. Valentien 1862-1925. There was a very large Victorian Glasshouse similar to the Palm House in the Glasnevin Botanic Gardens. It was purely a display house with Orchids and Begonias, Pelargoniums etc. Wandering on I came across a small but authentic Japanese Garden, very well sited as the contemplative area was well removed from the general bustle of the park. I would recommend a trip to this park but leave ample time to see all.

On the penultimate day I took a trip to two nurseries just to see the range of plants offered for sale. Needless to say the *Dracaenas*, Bird of Paradise and the Palms were much in evidence, though one of the nurseries had a very wide range of Australian shrubs from Acacias, to Callistemons and Eucalyptus. Interesting plants were a *Tecoma* sp. with red and yellow flowers, *Michelia doltsoy*, *Cycas revoluta* and *Myrtus boetica*. Alas neither had any native seed. Their range of seed was just what we could buy here in Ireland.

If I were to choose two plants, the first would be the lovely silvery *Acacia podalyrifolia* and the Dragon Plant *Dracaena draco* for its sheer size and branch formation.

I thoroughly enjoyed my stay, the public transport system was excellent particularly for tourists as many of the bus routes served a large area that meant I saw lots of areas that would have been denied to me had I been chauffeured around. In fact I was quite glad that my nephew unlike his aunt loves his sleep. Well worth a visit.

## The Great Palm House Renovated and Reopened



*The Great Palm House at Glasnevin has been completely restored and officially reopened by the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, TD.*

I have used Séamus O'Brien's excellent winter photograph to illustrate the beautiful Great Palm House and must apologise that I incorrectly labelled this as the "Curvilinear Range" in the January newsletter, a terrible bungle and my sincerest apologies to Séamus and those at the Botanic Gardens. I expect it will be a beautiful place to visit during the summer. Ed.



# Seed Distribution 2004 by Stephen Butler

Well here we are at the end of April (as I write), having suffered delays with our postal dispute, but finally the last seed request has gone out – I think. If a few stragglers pop in the letter box I'll still send them out!

Total numbers of requests this year was 170, only one more than 2003 and still 25 less than in 2002, which is a shame as we had so many more seeds on offer (321 in 2004, 232 in 2003, 218 in 2002). The main reason we had so many more seeds in was the increase in contributors – thanks again to all of you. With so many seeds to select from we raised the number of packets per request to 16, so with simple maths we can work out, allowing for a few people who requested less or did not get the full allotment, that about 2700 seed packets were sent out – so definitely no excuses come plant sale time please!

I ran out of item 196 during the distribution, more than half. Again the range of requests was dramatically different over the course of the distribution – for instance *Anemone rivularis* and *Antirrhinum nanum* 'Black Prince' both had only 5 requests in the first 50, but 11 each in the last 70. There were only 2 seeds that no one requested at all – quite remarkable out of 321 – and as I mentioned in the last notes, we at last had someone ask for *Allium subvillosum* which had had no requests for years!

Requests 1-50, most popular were *Astrantia maxima* 'Hadspen Blood', *Clematis viticella* 'Little Nell', *Rhodochiton atosanguineum*, *Aster x frikartii*, and *Veratrum album*.

Requests 51-100, most popular were *Paeonia cambessedesii*, *Aquilegia vulgaris* var. *flore-pleno* 'Tower Light Blue', *Cyclamen hederifolium*, *Orthrosanthus multiflorus*, *Astrantia major* 'Sunningdale Variegated', and *Nicotiana langsdorfii*.

Requests 101-170, most popular were *Antirrhinum nanum* 'Black Prince', *Astrantia maxima* 'Hadspen Blood', *Rhodochiton atosanguineum*, *Clematis viticella* 'Little Nell', and *Anemone rivularis*.

As usual, a good mix of the easy and hard, quick and slow. And overall which was most popular? – read on!

*Astrantia maxima* 'Hadspen Blood' (30)

*Clematis viticella* 'Little Nell' (27)

*Rhodochiton atosanguineum* (26)

*Paeonia cambessedesii* (25)

*Cyclamen hederifolium* (23)

*Papaver somniferum* (dark shades) (21) – the only one listed most popular last year!

*Rudbeckia x 'Autumn Sun'* (21)

.....and no requests for only 2

*Atriplex hortensis*

*Eccremocarpus scaber* (but we did have both *E. s. 'Aureus'*, and *E. s. 'Carmineus'* on offer which were requested).

As usual if you grow plants from seeds collected from named cultivars you may not get exactly the same plant, and should not pass them on as such. On the other hand you may get something different or even better.

I am really enjoying the seeds coming up this year that I sowed last year – *Paeonia*, *Cardiocrinum*, *Leucojum*, *Narcissus*, and *Tulipa* for instance. Patience as ever is rewarded – I enjoy checking the details of the plants beforehand so I know what to expect and how long they may take to grow.

It may be early yet, but I'm starting to look at seeds to collect already. I'll stick to my easy system, walking (or at work, cycling!) around with paper envelopes or bags (write the plant name on first). The method of collection varies according to the plant and the seed type. For wind spread seeds like *Hieracium lanatum* or *Tragopogon crocifolius* I collect as the seed head fully opens – this ensures that the seed is ripe. For seeds that shake out of ripe pods like *Linaria triornithophora* I collect the whole shoot with seed pods attached as soon as a few pods have fully ripened and opened – placed upside down in the paper envelopes they can ripen further, fall out when ripe, and you get a lovely clean batch of seed. This is particularly useful for *Geranium* as the seed is shot out up to 8 metres away – if you are not careful all you get is the empty pod!

Part of the pleasure of collecting seed is seeing how different seeds mature, and the varied seed distribution systems, though as a final thought, can anyone explain the absolutely vicious seed head I have mentioned before on *Silybum marianum* which I eventually got seed out of with barbed wire fencing gloves and 2 pairs of vice grips. The seed is germinating well however.....

Stephen Butler  
Seed Exchange

# *Wind, Women, Rain and Botanical Gardens*

By Robert Bradshaw

The island of Jeju off the south tip of Korea is noted for the first three things. While the climate is wet and windy, it is also mild, averaging 15°C; - Jeju grows the finest big oranges you have ever eaten. You can add to that botanical gardens, - there are two very different ones on an island roughly the size of the Isle of Man.

Both gardens charge admission, both are serious places; they label plants properly in Latin and in several languages and both play music in the gardens. The music is a somewhat disturbing practice, but it is one that is also shared by some hotel gardens in Korea. Apart from that the gardens are very different.

The **Yeomiji Garden** is relatively new. It is in a tourist area, close to the sea and it centres around one really huge greenhouse, one which makes Dublin's restored Palm House look like a garden shed, as the photograph may show. Around the central viewing tower, there are various indoor planting zones arrayed like petals. One reminder of Ireland there was *Rhapis excelsa* - a Henry! Outside the greenhouse there are a series of gardens planted in differing styles, some featuring the rare local plants, for Jeju was until recently very unspoilt.



*Greenhouse at Yeomiji Garden, Jeju, Korea.* Photo by Robert Bradshaw.

Lots and lots of Hostas - no snails - but pines and camellias are in abundance too. Some 3,700 species of plants in the gardens give enough to hold your interest. Perhaps

the most interesting garden for me was the Korean Garden, a softer, less structured version of a Japanese Garden. As we find exotics interesting, they try to replicate French and Italian Gardens, with some success. No English borders or wild planting were being attempted. There are many places where plants are set out for photo taking, as Koreans are inordinately fond of being photographed. The *Teletubbies* graced one bed, - that would hardly do in Glasnevin!



Part of Korean Garden - Yeomiji Botanic Garden, Jeju, Korea. Photograph by Robert Bradshaw.

If you like Cycads and Palms, **Hallim Park** is for you. Developed since 1971 and created by one individual who decided to create a world-class recreational park next to his home, Hallim has been adding features to attract tourists ever since. The subtropical botanic garden opened in 1986 and other features keep arriving, a folk village, bonsai, and a big and rather splendid water garden in 2002. It is more touristy but not without interest, especially for mass planting effects. Why have just one or two *Cycas revoluta thunbergia* when you can have an allée of them?

While Yeomiji encourages you to wander, Hallim forces you on to a preordained circuit, through a series of garden rooms, with much use of Palms and Bougainvillea and through a series of relatively small greenhouses - Cacti here, Tropical Fruit Trees there. I managed to give my guide the slip by peering long at plant labels, - *Bletilla striatus* is an interesting plant, wonder would it do at home?

I barely had time to rejoin the bus by a sprint through the volcanic cave. A mere glance at the large bonsai collection and most regretfully I was out the door, passing the large water garden, filled with lotus and water lilies. I had, of course, no time for the women either, but the rain and wind eventually caught up with me.

# **“Be not afraid...”**

**by Tim Cramer.**

Like many gardeners, I suspect, I have a reluctance bordering on paranoia when it comes to removing plants that have outgrown their space. Some brave souls, like the great Christopher Lloyd (who famously rooted out his whole rose garden) seem to have no such inhibitions. “Plant them, enjoy them and when they get too big, yank them out”, seems to be the dictum.

Last autumn a young nursery friend from London called while on a short visit to Ireland. She wandered around the garden making encouraging noises – until she came to the conifer, originally planted to mark a sharp turn in the border.

“That thing”, she said emphatically, “should come out. It’s too big, too fat and it’s shading your border badly”. I looked at the ten-foot height and five-foot girth of the chamaecyparis, for such it was. “That’s fine for you”, I muttered, “but you’ve got diggers and all the heavy gear. I haven’t and I’m not getting any younger”.

Quietly she pointed out that the tree was shallow rooted and that if I chopped through the roots in a circle around the trunk I should have no great problem. She was right. In fact, fifteen minutes with spade and axe (to cut through a few roots) a bit of levering back and forth and, with scarcely a sigh, down it came.

This did not happen, however, without a great deal of soul-searching.

Bought originally (when I didn’t know any better!) as a fastigate tree – “It will be pencil slim” – it expanded over the years and, like Topsy, just grewed and grewed, in every direction. But for almost ten years it had been a sort of garden sentinel, a striking presence and indeed something of an old friend.

Moreover, how would I explain its absence to my little grand-daughter who, on her occasional visits, would run across the lawn to stroke lovingly its golden-green foliage with the words “nice tree”?

As it transpired, she did not seem to notice, but I certainly did. When the area had been cleared up and the root remnants removed, the place was transformed. Light and space replaced border gloom and there was even a little room for some new planting.

The whole episode made me realise that at times we gardeners have to be ruthless, because no garden is static and there are times when we have to try to control nature, even if it does go against the grain.

In fact, so impressed was I with the result that I once again (!) cast a critical eye on the old circular “jam tart” bed of hybrid tea roses which were beginning to look more and more tatty and jaded. The evil day was put off no longer; the roses came out and the bed was grassed over.

The garden – it is but a smallish urban plot – looks better, the lawn is easier to mow and the “old” roses in the border more than compensate for the loss of the hybrid teas.

All of this is not to be taken as advocating a mad dash around the garden with shears and axe. What it does mean is that I will not again be so afraid to act when the need arises.

## **William Robinson, an Introduction by Kevin Halpenny**

William Robinson's life spanned almost 97 years. He is credited with 19 published books - several of which ran to many editions during his lifetime. In addition to his books, Robinson was editor of some 9 periodicals. His contribution to the world of horticulture was simply enormous.

Before his death in 1935, Robinson was offered and refused a Knighthood saying that he wished to leave life as had entered it. The obscurity which marked his early life may have held some attraction. The exact location of Robinson's birthplace remains uncertain. Geoffrey Taylor writing in 1951 on some 19th century gardeners suggests that he came from Co. Laois or Co. Dublin. Mea Allan in her 1982 biography of Robinson identifies Co. Down as his place of birth. An extract from an unpublished biography of Robinson by Michael Haworth Booth directs us to a comfortable old house in Baggot St., Lucan, Co. Dublin and mentions The Hermitage as one William Robinson's early garden interests. It has so far proven impossible to confirm any of these diverging opinions.

### **Curraghmore, Ballykilcavan and Robinson's Irish Roots**

The lack of certainty about Robinson's birthplace perhaps indicates his understandable desire to draw a veil over his early childhood. When William was still quite young his father fled to America with a young woman from the St. George Family, his father's employers.

It is believed that Robinson's gardening career started, probably due to economic necessity, when he was about 15 years old. His apprenticeship began at Curraghmore, Co. Waterford. Robinson himself admitted to having lived in the gardener's bothy at Curraghmore and to having to draw water to the glasshouses there. A suggested apprenticeship at the Botanic Gardens Glasnevin is difficult to verify but there is little doubt of his friendship with Dr. David Moore, the then director at Glasnevin.

We have good evidence also for Robinson having worked at the estate of the Rev. Sir Hunt Johnson-Walsh at Ballykilcavan near Stradbally in Co. Laois. The 1855 estate map for Ballykilcavan shows the large walled Garden and two reasonably large lean-to glasshouses, both heated structures, and it is said that Robinson, following a dispute, doused the fires and left them open to the mercy of a bitter January night early in 1861 when he struck out for Dublin en-route to London and the start of a new and highly successful life as one of the foremost gardening theorists and writers of his day. Interestingly we know that Robinson's mother ended her days in the townland of Browne's Hill, Co. Carlow only a few miles from Ballykilcavan.

### **Robert Marnock and the Regent's Park Botanic Gardens**

Robinson's innovative approach to gardening is often traced to his first truly professional position in The Regent's Park Botanic Gardens which were then under the

curatorship of the famous Scotsman, Robert Marnock, whose very successful plan for the garden was along natural and informal lines. Robinson's duties at Regent's Park included the care of the Herbaceous Ground and a collection of British native plants. These are areas in which Robinson duly became expert. We can speculate that this experience was an important formative influence in Robinson's career.

The extract from Haworth Booth's unpublished biography also records that Robinson, on arriving in London, enrolled in the "Working Man's College" at Great Ormond St. to study English Composition. The hours of study were 8-10pm and he was taught by Vernon Lushington QC a founder member of the Pre-Raphaelite Movement with its motto, "*To encourage and enforce an entire adherence to the simplicity of nature*".

John Ruskin, the influential writer and artistic theorist, was also a teacher at the college. Ruskin in particular was part of a movement against the industrialisation and materialism of the Victorian era.



Robinson's travels around many of the important gardens and nurseries in Britain and Ireland on behalf of the Royal Botanic Society brought him into contact with many of the garden owners, curators and important plantsmen and women of the time and gave him a particular insight into the various garden styles and gardening techniques then in fashion. On one of his trips to Ireland in 1863 he re-visited Glasnevin and was delighted to report that some ten to fifteen thousand and upwards visited the gardens on a single Sunday. Never one to let an opportunity pass, Robinson wrote up his gardening tours and these were published in twenty-six issues of the *Gardener's Chronicle*, quickly establishing him as a regular contributor. At the age of 25 Robinson's writing career had begun.

From this start in writing, William Robinson went on to write some of the most influential books in horticulture. In the next issue of the newsletter I shall outline this most important contribution.

*Kevin will continue this article in the next issue with an account of W. Robinson's writings. Ed.*

## Considering the Iris...Rae McIntyre

When you start gardening people are fond of dishing you out little morsels of garden lore. I remember being told that all rhododendrons hate lime in the soil but all irises love it. The moral of this was to fill the garden with lime haters and eschew all irises; I've done the former but stupidly didn't attempt to grow irises for years. Nonsensical or what?

A friend dug out a sizeable clump of bearded irises from her Edinburgh garden and gave them to me. They did particularly well in the *acid* soil of that garden in a raised bed and the friend's husband said that they thrived on being watered every day because he always emptied what was left in the dog's drinking bowl over them. I noticed that their Scottie dog, Dougal, was diligent about watering them too with recycled water. These irises were in a rich shade of blue and I looked forward to having them in my own garden. I did everything that one is supposed to do with bearded irises i.e. plant them with the visible rhizomes facing south in sharply drained soil with a touch of lime added. They lived here for three years but they proved to be much more trouble than they were worth with their fleeting and gradually decreasing blooms. With no regret I dug them out and gave them away and the garden was irisless for a year or two.

Then I discovered that there are irises that love damp soil. *Iris sibirica* is not in the least bit fussy, except in wanting to be in the sun, and will thrive in moist soil or any garden soil as long as it doesn't dry out. The flowers are about 2 ½ feet tall, borne with grassy leaves so it is quite graceful. The ones I have are either blue or rich purplish blue; there are whites but they're not nearly as robust.

*Iris kaempferi* not only needs moist soil but requires it to be lime-free as well. The flowers are much bigger than those of *Iris sibirica* and follow after these have finished. They are a sumptuous purple in colour and the petals feel like velvet. *Iris chrysographes* also likes damp soil. The form "Black Knight" is particularly striking with flowers of such deep purple that they are almost black and are exquisitely marked with gold.

*Iris setosa* enjoys moisture in the soil. Its flowers are of rich purple with falls that are white in the centre delicately lined with yellow. It flowers in late May and early June. *Iris forrestii* is supposed to be closely related to *Iris chrysographes* but I can see little resemblance. It has an offbeat colour scheme of yellow finely lined with murky purple that gives an overall effect of brown-ness and is very evocative of the Art Nouveau style. It grows in rather poor stony soil but seems to thrive on it.

One iris that will grow in any soil ranging from damp, through to squelch and even in shallow water is *Iris pseudacorus* commonly known as the "Yellow Flag" or "saggans"



in parts of Ulster. In the form “Variegata” it is most attractive with creamy yellow striping on the sword-like leaves although these become plain green as summer wears on. Moreover it forms large seedpods which, if not removed, will drop their seed on the ground and the resulting progeny will have plain green leaves.

*Iris graminea* is often referred to as the “Plum Tart Iris” because of its scent that resembles freshly stewed plums and is very like that of *Centaurea Montana*. As its name suggests it has grass like foliage and the purple blooms demurely hide within this. Like most of its clan *Iris graminea* prefers full sunshine but will grow happily in well drained acid or alkaline soil.

The “California Hybrids” prefer acid soil although they will tolerate a certain amount of lime in the soil. Any that I have are prefixed with “Broadleigh” because they come from the nursery of that name (Broadleigh Gardens, Bishops Hull, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 1AE – [www.broadleighbulbs.co.uk](http://www.broadleighbulbs.co.uk)). The exception is “Agnes James” which has lovely flowers on 18 inch stems, white with a yellow flash. The Californian Hybrids flower at the same time as deciduous azaleas and look perfectly at ease with them. In the Broadleigh catalogue it says that these irises are ideal mixed with shrubs in light shade. That may be the case in sunny Somerset but here in the far north I plant them in as sunny a spot as possible.

There are some irises that demand plenty of sunshine and very sharp drainage preferably with lime rubble added to the soil. *I. japonica* and *I. tectorum* are typical of these so I don’t attempt to grow them but I take pains to provide such conditions for *Iris unguicularis* which flowers from late autumn, through winter and early spring. The lavender flowers marked and lined with gold and deep purple are delicately scented and nestle within slightly coarse evergreen leaves. The clump I have bears about 5 – 7 flowers at a time from November to March and then produces up to 18 before it settles down for a well-earned summer snooze. Slugs and snails love it to bits and will eat the flowers as they emerge so this is one time when I scatter five slug pellets within the leaves.

The bulbous reticulata irises are one of the delights of winter although they are not reliably perennial. The lemon-flowered *Iris danfordiae* is the earliest to bloom, even in January in mild winters, but it is best treated as an annual. The plain *Iris reticulata* has purple flowers with orange, white and purple markings and roughly half of them will reappear the second year. Some beautiful hybrids such as “Cantab” (Cambridge blue with orange) “Harmony” (sky blue with yellow) “Joyce” (sky blue with orange-red) and “J. S. Dijt” (red purple and deep yellow) are liable to fade away after the first year. However these are not expensive to buy especially from a wholesaler such as Peter Nyssen Ltd., 124 Flixton Road, Urmston, Manchester, M41 5BG – [peternyssenltd@btinternet.com](mailto:peternyssenltd@btinternet.com) Katharine Hodgkin is more expensive but worth it for her fabulous flowers in a blend of sea-green, pale gold and cream.

*Iris bucharica* is tuberous with creamy yellow and deep yellow flowers in April. It likes a hot sunny position or it can be grown in an alpine house. I treat it like an annual and buy a few each year. *Iris foetidissima* is a fairly reliable grow-anywhere plant with evergreen foliage and dingy flowers that become handsome split seed pods packed with orange berries in autumn. For years I grew the variegated form with cream and grey green striped leaves but, alas, it's disappearing off the face of my garden because it has leaf-spot disease.

## HERBACEOUS BORDERS ♣ HISTORIC PERSPECTIVES

### Conference at Castle Upton, Templepatrick, Co. Antrim

10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2004

A note from Belinda Jupp and Anne Carter.

#### Friday 10<sup>th</sup> September

**David Gilliland** Chairman's Welcome

**Reg Maxwell** Yesterday's Borders Meeting Today's Needs

#### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September

**Tony Lord** An Overview of the Herbaceous Border

**Assumpta Broomfield** Plant Selection for Modern Borders

**Peter Hall** Evolution of the Herbaceous Borders at Powis Castle

**Rachel Lamb** A Planners' Perspective

**Visit to Benvarden**

**Dinner Speaker Brendan Sayers** Reminiscences

#### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September

**Patrick Swan** Arley Hall, 'its finest incarnation'

**Ann Golden** Re-creation of the Victorian Double Herbaceous Border at Kylemore Abbey

**Daphne Shackleton** Considering Colour in the Herbaceous Border

**Mike Snowden** Practicalities of Working with Herbaceous Borders

Visit to the herbaceous borders at **Belfast Botanic Gardens**

The conference will cost £160/Euro E215, including all meals.

Send booking to: N.I. Heritage Gardens Committee

Tracy Hamilton, Ringdufferin, Toye, Killyleagh, County Down. BT30 9PH

Tel: (UK) 02844 828276 (RoI) 04844 828276 e-mail: [ringdufferin@aol.com](mailto:ringdufferin@aol.com)

## Regional Reports

### Reports from the North

#### **The Big Dig at Lisnacloskey** *Report by Catherine Tyrie*

Well – we did it! On Saturday 3 April, 15 of us, both members and friends, rolled up, and cleared, double-dug and replanted the north bed at Lisnacloskey Rectory, and in the process got very, very wet and muddy. We took the opportunity to remove vast quantities of *Lysimachia punctata* and *Oenothera* roots, and later to incorporate a great load of rich compost brought to the site for us by the gardening staff at Cultra. Everything that was to be put back was divided and cleaned before it was put back; new plants were introduced as part of the overall re-design of the bed, including *Agapanthus campanulatus* 'Mooreanus' and a double-flowered white lilac, and a lavender hedge on both sides of the central path was planted. We also took the opportunity to move snowdrops into the bed from elsewhere in the garden.

Soup and sandwiches for lunch had been organised for us by the Ulster Museum at the Manor House, and it gave us a welcome respite from the relentless heavy showers. So hugely muddy were we, that we abandoned our boots and coats at the door and paddled about in our socks; much anguish was expended (unnecessarily) by the muddier of us about getting other people's cars dirty.

Starting in mid-afternoon, the replanting was accomplished in record time, and we were finished and cleared up by about 5.00pm. Everyone worked like Trojans, in spite of the heavy rain, and all are to be congratulated on the truly splendid result.

Come wind or shine, a stalwart group of members continues the regular monthly maintenance programme to keep it neat and tidy for the public to enjoy.  
More anon.....

Patrick Quigley later sent this note on to me (Editor):

*Speaking about getting people involved - I haven't had a single response to the appeal for plants for Lisnacloskey following the last newsletter. The only plants which we have received / been offered are snowdrops from yourself & Mary, more snowdrops from a friend of a member in England, an un-named white syringa, a few bits from my own garden and the ones which we purchased. Do you think it would help if it was a request for a specific plant, rather than a general request? Or do you think there is just apathy amongst our members?*

Obviously this is very disappointing, especially given the amount of work that has been put into this project, so if anybody could help out with plants please do so as soon as possible. You can contact Patrick directly or through me, Ed. Patrick's home number is: 048 90225484, Work: 048 90590898, E-mail: Pmquigley@aol.com



*The group hard at work in atrocious weather conditions but spirits are still high.*

*L – R: Andrena Duffin, Aleen Herdmann, Eleanor Burnett, Moti Shah, Thea Allen, Vivienne Lomey (just visible at the back), Gareth Burns (Developa Garden Care), Patrick Quigley, Catherine Tyrrie, Maura Shah, Agnes Peacocke, John Peacocke, Patrick Brunskill.*

*Working too hard to have time for photographs were Victor Wilson and Mark McIvor.*



*Happy as a pig in...Thea Allen happy at her work.*

## Reports from Leinster

### Multiplication, Paul Maher, National Botanic Gardens

*Report by Mary Bradshaw*

Paul Maher “pulled out all the stops” for the society at a well-attended demonstration of propagation techniques at the NBG on April 17<sup>th</sup>. He began by telling us that propagation is easy and by the end of the session we believed him.

According to Paul, propagation can take place anywhere in the home, on a window-sill, in the porch, in a corner of the garage, provided certain principles are adhered to:

An area must be set apart as a Potting Bench.

Strict hygiene must be practised. Pots should be washed. Knives, secateurs, surfaces must be sterilised at least daily. Patience is an essential virtue!

Instructions on seed packets must be read carefully and believed!

People must be prepared to have a go. Trial and error are wonderful experiences.

Cutting material and seeds are all around us if we know how to deal with them.

Seeds:

John Innes Seed Compost must be used and seeds covered to a depth of about half their size. If light is to be excluded for a while, place an ordinary wall tile on top of the pot.

As soon as germination takes place, remove the tile. After seed germinates, move plants on to the next stage of potting as soon as possible.

When pricking off, separate plants out carefully. Handle them by the seed-leaf and tease them apart at the roots. Use fore-fingers to replant the seedling. If they are delicate, transfer them outside to a cold frame for a week or two. No cold frame?

Simple- use a white plastic bin liner. Slugs eating your young plants? Invest in a good

Hosta and place it in your vegetable patch.

Cuttings:

The Ziploc bag is a modern essential for keeping cuttings moist until you get them to the potting bench. Use a sharp knife and cut just below a node, which is the centre of growth activity. Use a propagating compost of 50% peat and 50% sand. Do not attempt to get flowering shoots to root, they won't.

Put cuttings around the edge of the pot. Why? It's warmer there. Rooting hormones are unnecessary, except for Camellias and Rhododendrons, but it is easier to buy these than to root them.

Two-litre plastic lemonade bottles can be cut in half and used as cloches.

Quick Tips:

Propagate grasses including *Cortadeira* sp. by division.

Propagate *Clematis* by internodal cuttings; ensure you keep them the right way up!

If layering *Clematis* leave the layered piece in place for a year.

Take *Pelargonium* cuttings in April. Cut below the node in the morning and leave all day to dry out. Do not cover the cuttings, do not mist them. *Pelargoniums* like a dry atmosphere.

Take *Penstemon* cuttings in April and place in a cold frame.

Take *Iris* cuttings in July, reduce the foliage and pin the rhizome down with a wire.  
Take *Exochorda* soft cuttings in April.  
Take *Lonicera fragrantissima* cuttings in May.  
Allow *Philadelphus* cuttings to root for a full year without disturbance.

Paul could have gone on all night with this demonstration; such is his knowledge and enthusiasm. The IGPS should be grateful that he chose to impart this knowledge to us in such an encouraging and light-hearted manner. So, members go forth and multiply. No, not you, the plants!

## **Dowdy Plants? David Simpson, National Botanic Gardens.**

*Report by Mary Bradshaw.*

David Simpson, Botanist and Principal Scientific Officer at Kew Herbarium, spoke to us on April 21<sup>st</sup> at the NBG. His topic was “Ornamental Grasses-their Origins and Uses” He made it clear that there are three main groups- Grasses, Sedges and Rushes and that his speciality is Sedges. Some fascinating facts came to light about these weird and wonderful plants.

“Sedges have edges”- their stems are often triangular. Their flowers are minute, often 6/7 flowers on a spikelet. Their fruit is also minute, 1-2mm long with attractive patterns when seen under a microscope. Sedges are wind-pollinated, hence the tiny flowers. Their pollen is pear-shaped therefore more aerodynamic. Sedges will grow anywhere from the Arctic to the Tropical Rainforest. They prefer swampy areas, by the sides of rivers and lakes or, for example, Irish peat lands.

However there are exceptions to every rule. Take *Mapania macrantha* which grows in Tropical Rainforest in West Africa. Growing on the forest floor it has, of course, a problem with wind-pollination. So, it grows tall. Its white stamens stand out against the dark rainforest, so it will be noticed. It has adapted to being insect-pollinated in these circumstances, so its pollen is now rounded and it will allow slugs and snails to help it propagate. Surely a plant like this must give us pause for thought as it struggles to survive.

Another family worthy of note in the Caricoid Group is *Carex* with 2,000 species worldwide. *Carex pendula* spreads rapidly in gardens. *Carex elata* ‘Aurea’ has male and female inflorescences. *Carex gregii* has an inflated utricle. *Carex juvenilis* grows in the rainforest in Thailand. It has a very bright white inflorescence with a strong perfume described as being between Rose and Skimmia. Why? Because it is insect-pollinated.

About 10% of the sedge family are used economically, worldwide. They are especially important in the tropics in local and regional economies. Some examples include: *Cyperus esculentus*, the tubers of which are Tiger Nuts; it is cultivated in Spain and manufactured into a non-alcoholic drink, Chufa de Valencia. *Eleocharis dulcis*, its

tubers are what we call Chinese Water Chestnuts. *Cyperus alternifolius* is used for basket-weaving in Ethiopia. *Cyperus papyrus*, the original paper, also used ornamentally in temperate gardens of late, is used in Africa for fibreboard, boat-building and fuel. The largest of the 600 species, it forms almost impenetrable swamps so economic uses are vital for the local environment as well.

So, the next time someone says “Botany contains no dowdier plant than the Sedge”, IGPS members will know differently, thanks to this fascinating lecture.

## Reports from Munster

**Neil & Sonia William’s Garden, Midleton** Report by Rose Sevastopulo

On the second day of the AGM weekend we visited the garden of Neil and Sonia Williams near Midleton. The 2 acre garden, created on fresh pasture, is only 7 years old but already the trees and shrubs have matured beautifully.

The entrance to the garden is very nicely marked with a wonderful piece of bog oak - as good a garden sculpture as one could wish. A *Dodonaea viscosa* ‘Purpurea’ was flourishing. An *Embothrium* flowered magnificently on its south side; it doesn’t like the north wind. There are borders down either side of the front garden and two enormous island beds cut into the beautiful lawn. One is planted with shrubs and herbaceous plants and the other with grasses which were just coming into growth and promised to make a wonderful display later. There is a long raised bed in front of the house where phloxes and *Lavandula stoechas* were growing very happily. There were so many wonderful shrubs in the front borders that it would be impossible here to give even a small impression of their impact. It seemed that Neil Williams’ knowledge as a nurseryman stood him in good stead when choosing plants for the garden. He seemed to have the best form of everything he planted. We saw *Cornus* ‘Eddie’s White Wonder’, *C. alternifolia* ‘Variegata’, *Toona sinensis* with its beautiful new leaves, *Olearia scillianensis* covered with blossom and bees, *Magnolia wilsonii* in bud; *M. stellata*, *Laphomyrtus* ‘Kathryn’ with its crinkly glossy leaves, *Pseudopanax*, *Hoheria lyallii* and many more. On our way to the back garden we passed *Dendromecon rigida* in flower and it flowers right through the summer.

The back garden consists of a large vegetable ‘patch’ with very healthy looking rows of vegetables and strawberries. There is a double pond, rockery built of the local limestone, a waterfall and a bog garden. Water lilies grew in the still pond. There were 2 *Paulonia* in flower, also *Dipelta floribunda* with its white flowers, salmon pink in bud. After much admiring on we went through the pergola walk covered in *Clematis*, *Solanum*, *Wisteria*, *Akebia quinata* and through to the terrace where *Lonicera etrusca* was just opening and giving off its heady scent. A lasting memory must be of the *Xanthorrhoea* (Blackboy) in a pot on the terrace with its beautiful head of grass like leaves looking as though it had just been groomed. It remains outside

through the Winter. A very interesting garden and well worth visiting if you get the chance.

### **Christine Fehily's Garden, Amergen, Ovens.**

*Photographs by Mary Bradshaw.*



*Cornus 'Eddie's White Wonder'*



*Iris 'Real Coquette'*

### **Inniscarra House Gardens**

*Photographs by Mary Bradshaw*



General garden view



*Rhododendron luteum*

### **The Old Deanery, Cloyne**

*Report by Anne Cronin*

The last garden to visit on this sunny May afternoon was that of Janet and Martin Edwardes at the Old Deanery, Cloyne. Some of the gentle magic of this old garden must surely come from the fact that it was allowed to speak for itself during the eleven years of sensitive restoration by its owners. The word “serendipity” springs to mind to describe the results of their labours.

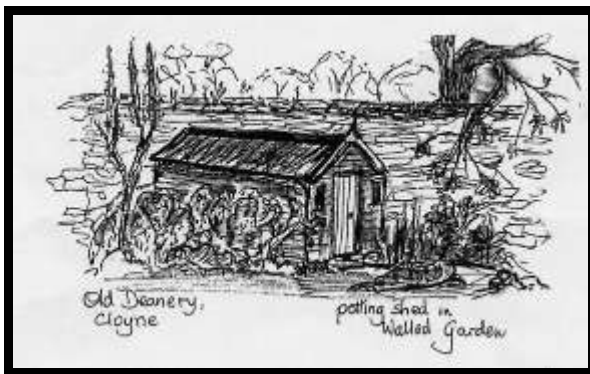
From the front lawn one's eye was led gently o past the little lake, past the ducks and waterhens swimming happily there, past the peacock who wanted us to pause to admire his magnificent tail and on to discover the glade where the entrance was partially concealed by a luxuriant hoheria. Once inside this woodland a statue beckoned invitingly beyond the azaleas and over a carpet of wild garlic, ivy and *Geranium macrorrhizum*. To quote Janet Edwardes, “a big planting of something quite common



looks more spectacular than a single specimen of something exotic”. The foxgloves which spiked the groundcover of the glade were not “common”. They were magic.

Here and there throughout the garden, one discovered little seats which seemed to have just “happened” where a tired gardener needed to sit or just simply stumbled across the raw materials. No Lutyens-style seats here but ivy-clad tree trunks, lying just where they had fallen, inviting one to sit. A few casually stacked bricks rose out of a tapestry of symphytum, prunella and ferns and were capped by a flat stone. One couldn’t resist having a rest there while contemplating the loveliness of the foaming lace curtains of *Clematis Montana*, both pink and white varieties, covering the two hundred year old walls of the house.

The walled garden was straight from the pages of Frances Hodgson Burnett and in fact this secret garden was discovered in much the same way as the fictional one. Here, against a sheltered wall, an exquisite pale mauve *Abutilon vitifolium* ‘Veronica Tennant’ rose out of a sea of delicately coloured aquilegia. In another corner *Clematis* ‘Duchess of Albany’ and *C. ‘Comtesse de Bouchaud’* romped together. *Lamium maculatum* seethed around clumps of hardy geranium. In a flash of inspired colour combination a dark smoky blue camassia stood beside a purple leaved lysimachia. Giant *Echium pininana* vied in height with the beech and horse chestnut trees beyond the walls. A lupin avenue, not yet in flower, gave promise of delights to come. Amongst all this floral profusion artichokes, rhubarb, raspberries, kale, peas and old varieties of potatoes grew in ordered rows. Clumps of sage, marjoram and chives softened the lines.



Sketch by Anne Cronin

We wandered back through the quiet calm of the front lawn to the house where we had delicious afternoon tea. Then, in a gesture that seemed to echo the warm, sharing spirit of the garden, our host asked if we would pause for a photo on the front steps. We were only too glad to have our visit to this lovely old garden recorded.

# Looking Ahead

## Northern Fixtures

### July 25th

#### **Annual Picnic/Garden Visit, Nelson & Elinor McCracken, 1.00 pm**

Queen Mary House, 13 Rowreagh Road, Kirkubbin, Co Down. A delightful 4½ acre seaside garden claimed from a shallow sandy soil with island beds, natural rock pools, a potager and areas of quiet seclusion. Bring your own picnic. No admission charge, but donations to local charity. Members and guests only.

### August 21st

#### **Garden Visit, New Walled Garden, Greenmount College; 11.00am.**

A chance to see the newly redesigned walled garden in all its splendour, guided by the Estate Director, Paul Mooney or Manager Alan McIlveen. No charge, but donations towards student travel funds would be welcome. Coffee & scone can be pre-booked @ £1.00.

### September 11th

#### **Garden Visit, Johnny & Lucy Madden, 2.00 for 2.30pm.**

Hilton Park, Clones, Co Monaghan, Gardens have been made on this dramatic site since the 1730's, including a parterre designed by Ninian Niven (who designed Iveagh Gardens in Dublin); herb garden, herbaceous border backed by wall with figs & roses, natural lakes, fine oak woods and N. American trees, formal yew and box hedges etc. €5.00 per person, non-members €6.00.

### September 29th

#### **RHS Regional Lecture, Ulster Museum; 7.30pm. 'Gardens of the**

**French Riviera'.** Louise Bustard, trained in London's Royal Parks and Kew, has travelled widely to research various plant groups and gardens. She has studied the many great gardens of the south of France – this should be a most interesting lecture. Members £3.00/non-members £4.00. Tickets from Museum Reception. Joint UM/RHS.

### October 9th

#### **Plant Sale, Stranmillis University College, Belfast, 12.00-3.00pm**

Good-quality plants only please; deliveries from 9.00am Plants & volunteers wanted.

## Leinster Fixtures

### Saturday 24 July , 2pm – 4pm

#### **Garden Visit, Carmel Duignan , 21 Library Road, Shankill, Dublin**

This is an opportunity to visit the garden of plantswoman Carmel Duignan. Carmel grows a wide variety of plants from Agapanthus to Watsonia. All are grown with an enthusiasm and skill that makes this a garden visit not to be missed. Carmel hopes to have some plants for sale.

**Directions:** Turn off N11 at Loughlinstown Roundabout, take Shankill exit, first right into Stonebridge Road, Library Road is next left. Please park on Stonebridge Road outside school. Admission: €3

### Thursday 30 September

#### **Louise Bustard, ‘Gardens of France and the Riviera’**

(Joint with RHSI) At National Botanic Gardens 8pm

Louise is a Londoner born and bred and did her horticultural training in Londons Royal Parks. She studied at Kew where she looked after their cactus and succulent collection. She is currently Assistant Curator (Information and Customer Services) at Glasgow Botanic Gardens. This promises to be an interesting lecture from Louise who has a wide knowledge of plants and gardens.

### Sunday 17 October Plant Sale

In the Pyramidal Church, Glasnevin. Doors open at midday. Members with plant donations will be very welcome earlier. Come early, plants sell fast!

### Saturday 6 November

#### **Flower Photography Workshop with Grace Pasley N.B.G.**

At National Botanic Gardens 2pm members only.

Grace has been taking photographs for 10 years as part of her work and we are very honoured to have her do this workshop for us. As well as this being part of her work it is her hobby and we look forward to a very interesting afternoon.

### Thursday 25 November

#### **Tom Hart Dyke, ‘The Cloud Garden’**

Joint with the Orchid Society at National Botanic Gardens 8pm

Tom Hart Dyke is a plant hunter, plantsman and lecturer. His illustrated slide talk usually lasts about an hour (with questions afterwards) revealing how he had all things botanical instilled in him by his grandmother from a very early age. This led to trips to South East Asia (searching for orchids care of the Merlin Trust in Sumatra, Indonesia) & Australia, in order to establish NCCPG collections at his home at Lullingstone Castle. His lecture is rounded off by extracts from his book *The Cloud*

*Garden* which tells the story of his capture in Colombia at the hands of armed rebels while orchid hunting. He will bring some books for sale so come early.

**Thursday 14th October**

**Stephen Butler, "The Park with an Ark"**

Illustrated talk by, Head Gardener, Dublin Zoo. at 8p.m. in The Friends Meeting House, Templeshannon Quay, Enniscorthy Co Wexford.

Joint IGPS / Co Wexford Garden & Flower Club All IGPS members welcome.

**Munster Fixtures**

**Friday 1st October @ 07.45pm**

**Louise Bustard, Gardens of the French Riviera**

A Londoner born and bred, Louise did her initial horticultural training in Londons Royal Parks. She went on to take a three year Kew Diploma Course and was then invited to take over the care and maintenance of Kews' Cactus and Succulent collection. During this time Kew sent her to Scandinavia, Europe and America on research tours.

She left Kew to take a full-time degree course at the University of London culminating in an MA in social anthropology. Currently she is the assistant Curator (Information and Customer Services) at Glasgow Botanic Gardens where tours, lectures, the education programme, exhibitions and library are among her responsibilities.

**Friday 5th November @ 07.45pm**

**Mary Walsh, A Seaside Garden**

In our efforts to create the perfect garden, we all have to deal with the natural elements of nature. Some of these are our companions while others can certainly destroy our years of toil in an instant. Many would be disheartened by the effort required to overcome the adversity of their location while others rise to the challenge. Through careful plant selection and design their efforts are rewarded and we are left to gasp in awe at a special creation.

Mary Walsh is one such person who took up that challenge and has created a garden, which has rightly drawn both national and international attention.

Situated in West Cork on the edge of the Atlantic this garden has to contend with the severest conditions nature can throw at it, and it does so admirably.

Come and learn from a master who has overcome adversity.

**Friday 3rd December @ 07.45pm**

**Tom Hart Dyke, "The Cloud Garden"**

See above for further information of this speaker.

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

## Snippets

**IGPS on the Web:** [www.igps.ie](http://www.igps.ie) A new internet site has been launched for the IGPS. At present the site is just being developed but from first viewing it looks very promising. Surf along.

**Heritage Bulb Club** has launched its 2004/05 list of rare and historic bulbs. New introductions include: *Pleione bulbocodiodes*, a rockery orchid; *Tulipa schrenkii*, an early dwarf tulip; the species *Dahlia coccinea*; and *Lilium henryi*, of Irish renown. Heritage have also produced a new catalogue called 'Wild About Bulbs' for Irish gardeners who want lots of bulbs at wholesale prices for naturalising in their gardens. Either catalogue can be obtained for free by calling Heritage Bulbs on 044 62744 or emailing them at [info@heritagebulbs.com](mailto:info@heritagebulbs.com).

**HNC Garden Design.** This is a new course in Garden Design, run by the North Down & Ard's Institute of Further and Higher Education. The course will give the students a professional qualification and will provide them with the knowledge and skills required for employment in the Landscaping and Garden Design Industry. Duration: Three years (part time) Location: Newtownards College  
Further Information:

Contact: Rhoda Robb, Course Co-ordinator, 028 91276600 or 028 91276741

**Plant Sales:** Now is the time to start your planning and preparation for the Plant Sales in the Autumn. As you are propagating you might set a few plants aside for these events. The Dublin Plant Sale will be on October 17<sup>th</sup> and the one in Belfast will be on October 9<sup>th</sup>. See "Looking Ahead" for details.

**New Members:** A very special welcome to the following who have recently joined the IGPS. Hopefully you will get involved in events, come along to garden visits and winter lectures. Get to the Plant Sales for good value and good plants. Write for the newsletter!

Sabine Reber  
Therèse Duffey  
Emer O'Reilly  
Jim & Rita O'Regan  
Nancy Tingle  
Mary Coakley  
Imelda Flanagan  
Eileen Reid  
Patrick G Kelleher  
Séan Ó Ceallaigh

Aisling Kilcullen  
Stephanie Booth  
Pamela O'Shea  
Máirin Delaney  
Anne Marie Woods  
Margaret Gibson  
Billy & Anne Moore  
Mary Gilligan

## Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

One is immediately struck by the quality and quantity of photographs in “*Native Trees for North American Landscapes*”. Each tree is given full page, while other photographs show close-up features. Furthermore, each tree and related species is described in detail in a clear and concise style by authors who both have a lifetime of experience, interest and enthusiasm behind them. More than 650 species and varieties and more than 500 cultivars are described. Each tree profile describes the flowers and fruit, native and adaptive range, culture and problems as well as pointing out the best seasonal features, good bark, bright fruit or autumn colour, for example.

This is a book which is both beautiful and eminently useful, especially as the range of trees described would, almost all, be hardy in an Irish garden. I thoroughly enjoyed it and recommend it highly.

Guy Sternberg with Jim Wilson, *Native Trees for North American Landscapes* (2004), Timber Press, Portland & Cambridge ISBN 0-88192-607-8 (\$59.95)

What a great pity George Forrest never wrote the book that he was so often urged to write. His is a tale of great adventure, dedication and industry in the pursuit of so many of our now familiar garden plants. However, Brenda McLean, following exhaustive research with access to George Forrest’s voluminous correspondence, has given us a truly excellent book, ***George Forrest, Plant Hunter***, to celebrate the centenary of George Forrest’s first setting out for the mountains of Yunnan in south-west China, the first of seven expeditions. He introduced hundreds of plants new to cultivation, collected seed by the mule load and over 31,000 herbarium specimens. The book shows his relationships with his patrons, advisors and family, his excitement at plant and animal discoveries and reveals his rivalry with other plant hunters such as Reginald Farrer and Frank Kingdon Ward.



Brenda McLean, *George Forrest, Plant Hunter* (2004) Antique Collector’s Club, Suffolk, ISBN 1 85148 461 8 (£29.50)

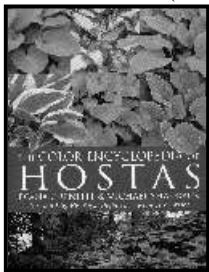
Vita Sackville-West is as well known to us as the creator, with her husband Harold Nicholson, of the famous gardens at Sissinghurst Castle as for her novels and



collections of poetry. She also wrote a gardening column which appeared in *The Observer* from 1946 until 1961. These gardening articles were later collected in a set of

books, the *In Your Garden* series, published between 1951 and 1958 and have now been re-released. Despite being a collection of disparate articles they gel together into very interesting and readable books, full of the wisdom of the experienced gardener, all expressed with a lively literary flair. They are very readable, enjoyable and provide a tremendous insight into a renowned gardener as she is, above all, perfectly honest and straightforward in her writings and comments. Very relaxing and enjoyable reading. Vita Sackville-West, *In Your Garden*, *In Your Garden Again*, *More for Your Garden*, *Even More for Your Garden*. (2004) Frances Lincoln, London. ISBN 0 7112 2354 8, 0 7112 2355 6, 0 7112 2356 4, 0 7112 2357 2. (£14.99 each)

*Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition* covers material from Britain and Ireland but because of the rich source of Irish records available in the Folklore Collection (researched by Sylvia Reynolds) this book contains much that will be of interest to Irish readers. In 1937 – '38 the Folklore Commission requested the Primary Schools around the country to collect local folklore under a number of headings, including the use of plants as cures. When, last year, I read the material collected in my own school I found that Herb Robert, *Geranium robertianum*, was used to treat “red water” in cows while wild garlic, *Allium ursinum*, was tied into a slit cut in a cow’s tail to treat black leg. This is a book that most of us will simply dip into to enjoy entertaining gems or look up the attributes of a certain plant but it also serves to record this fast vanishing traditional plant lore. David E. Allen & Gabrielle Hatfield, *Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition, An Ethnobotany of Britain & Ireland* (2004) Timber Press, Portland & Cambridge. ISBN 0-88192 638 8 (£22.50)



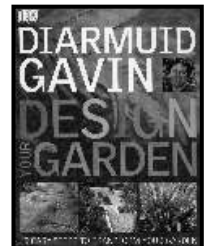
**Hostas:** Hostas have outlived the fad phase of the fashionable plant and this book does justice to a most valuable garden species. The illustrations are excellent, the descriptions are clearly written and the book will be a valuable resource for anyone who enjoys hostas in the garden. The body of the book deals with hostas grouped by leaf colouration while other chapters deal with hostas in the wild, in cultivation, their pests and diseases etc. Diana Grenfell founded the British Hosta and Hemerocallis Society, while Michael Shadrack is the current

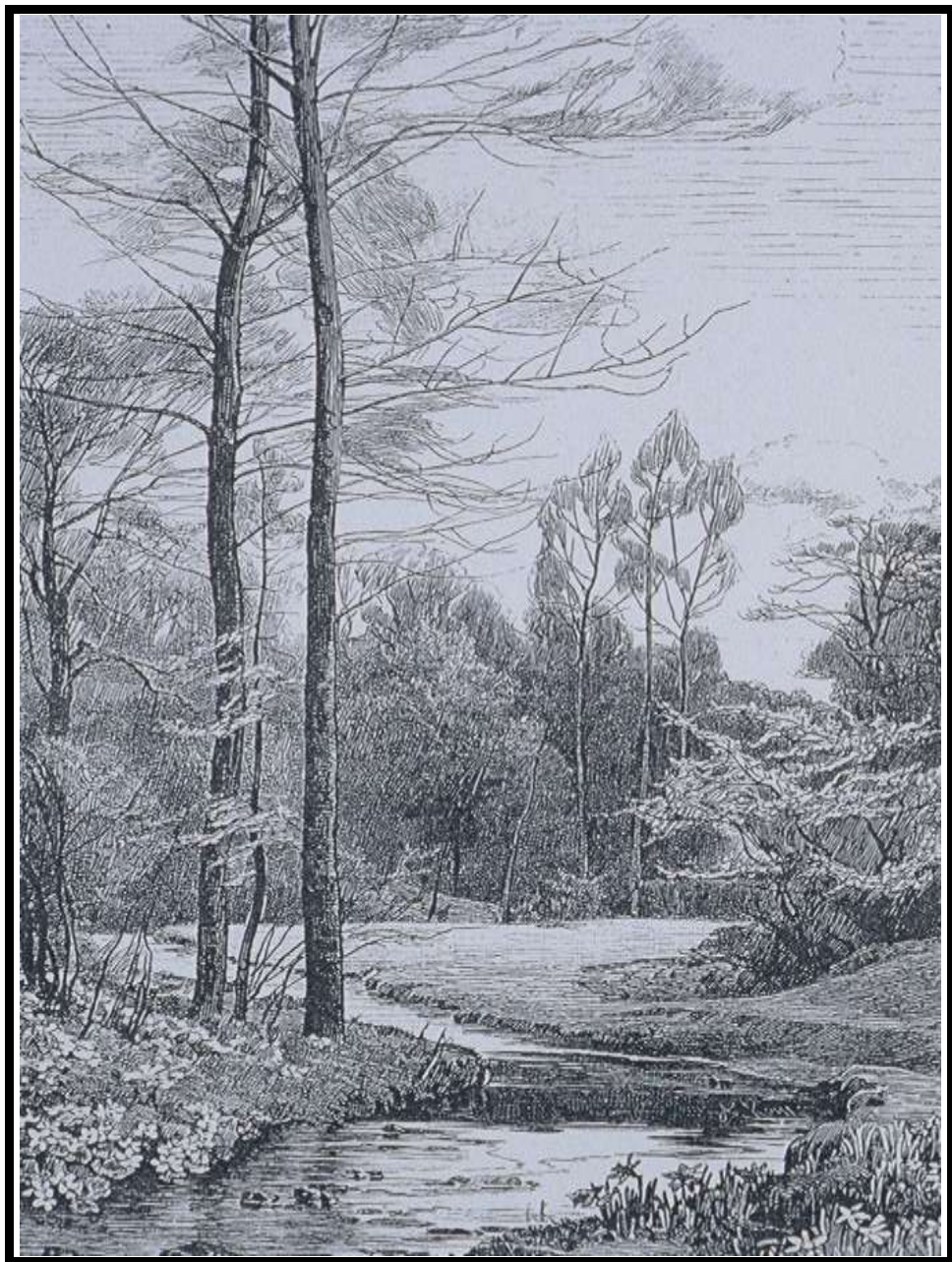
Chairman so both were well experienced to write this authoritative book.

Diana Grenfell & Michael Shadrack, *The Colour Encyclopedia of Hostas* (2004) Timber Press, Portland & Cambridge. ISBN 0-88192-618-3 (£35)

Having presented a garden at the Chelsea Flower Show Diarmuid now tells us how to *Design your Garden*. It sounds basic and indeed it is but is presented skilfully, is well organised, visually attractive, more complete in its text than his previous books and both the beginner and the more advanced gardener will find much here that will be of use.

Diarmuid Gavin, *Design Your Garden* (2004), Dorling Kindersley, London. ISBN 1 4053 0545 2 (£16.99)





*Frontpiece from William Robinson's "The Wild Garden"*