

The Newsletter of the
IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY



ISSUE NO. 95 *JANUARY 2005*

EDITORIAL

"Isn't it lovely to see the stretch in the evenings?" Have you, like me, heard this said again and again over the past while? And, one cannot but agree that it is indeed lovely to see the stretch in the evenings. This is a time of year with promise of better times to come. The dark days of winter are on the retreat and there are signs of new growth in the garden. This year's weather conditions provided perfect conditions for excellent photographs of the winter solstice at Newgrange and that event marks the turn of the year and bring that much appreciated stretch in the evenings.

May I wish all members a very Happy New Year, every success and enjoyment with your gardening during the coming year and I do hope you will come to the IGPS organised events during this coming year.

But, most of all do make a New Year's resolution to write a nice article for the newsletter!

Paddy Tobin, "Cois Abhann", Riverside, Lower Gracedieu, Waterford.
Telephone: 051-857955 E-mail: pmtobin@eircom.net

In this Issue

- Page 3:** The Glasnevin China Expedition 2004: An account by Seamus of Brien of the trip to China last September.
- Page 11:** The Glasnevin China Expedition 2004: A Note from Emer O'Reilly who accompanied Seamus.
- Page 12:** Win Some, Lose... a lot: Rae McIntyre on the trials of being a gardener.
- Page 15:** A Wee Bit of Plain Planting: Stephen Butler on gardening in the Zoo
- Page 16:** Seed Distribution 2005: Stephen Butler with an update
- Page 17:** The National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG): a note from Stephen Butler.
- Page 18:** The Autumn Plantsman's Day at Glasnevin: Reports from various people who attended this wonderful day.
- Page 24:** Leaves from a sun-lounger III: Charles Nelson drops a line from sunny climes.
- Page 26:** Regional Reports: Members report on winter activities throughout the country.
- Page 32:** Looking Ahead: See what's coming up around the country and mark your diary.
- Page 34:** Snippets: Notes and notices received along with items of interest.
- Page 37:** Worth A Read: Paddy Tobin looks at some books for your consideration.

Front Cover: Deborah Lambkin's beautiful painting of *Cyclamen pseudibericum* and *Hepatica nobilis*. This painting is the first prize in the raffle announced in the last issue of the newsletter. Don't forget to send on your tickets immediately.

The Glasnevin China Expedition 2004

by Seamus O'Brien

In September and October of last year an expedition from the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, spent five weeks in China. As with the 2002 trip, the aim of this expedition was to retrace routes taken by the renowned Irish botanist and plant collector Dr. Augustine Henry.

Our planned route brought us over an enormous area of China and necessitated taking nine flights and a riverboat trip to complete the route. In consequence, our collecting was carried out over a wide range of vegetation types, from temperate to tropical.

Our first port of call was to Hubei province in Central China, in particular to the Shennongjia Forest District in the extreme north-west of the province. This was perhaps the most exciting part of the expedition. Augustine Henry's historical links with this region stems from the fact that he was the very first foreigner to visit the area. In 1888 Henry was granted six months leave from the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service and spent the latter part (July to August) trekking with his native collectors through the mountains to the north of the Yangtze, including present day Shennongjia.

The Shennongjia Mountains are the tallest peaks in the central provinces and the region is known as "The roof of Central China". It is also home to Central China's last remaining tracts of virgin forest and in recent years it has become a UNESCO site and a man and biosphere reserve.

We were completely spellbound by Shennongjia's spectacular location. My abiding memory of this region will be the magnificent landscape of towering peaks forested with a great belt of primeval forest that had taken on an autumnal cloak of fiery crimsons and golds. The biodiversity of the region was simply amazing. Just as the Burren National Park is the headquarters of our native Irish flora, Shennongjia too holds the greatest concentration of Hubei's flora and some of Asia's greatest rarities find refuge here.

One of the highlights of our visit to Shennongjia Forest District was to see the tallest peaks absolutely decked with great masses of *Allium henryi*. One of the aristocrats of the onion family, *Allium henryi*, is a beautiful little plant, about 15 cm tall, and carries, in late September, a myriad of globular blue flower heads held on slender pendulous stems. What a stir it would cause if it were ever introduced to cultivation.

The meadows and glades beneath the peaks were full of good plants. One meadow was speckled with the stems of *Veratrum album*, *Anemone hupehensis*, *Geranium sibiricum* and *Saussurea veitchiana*, a species first brought to flower by Sir Frederick Moore at Glasnevin from E. H. Wilson's collection for the Arnold Arboretum. It was illustrated in Curtis's Botanical Magazine from Glasnevin material.

Cirsium henryi, a beautiful thistle with a handsome very decorative lace-like calyx, abounded. We later found it growing in nearby Xingshan (our collection permits did



Ilex pernyi at Shennongjia. Photo: S. O'Brien

not cover Shennongjia) and I look forward to growing it at Glasnevin this year. On damp mossy boulders another Henry plant, *Sedum major*, grew in great sheets creating a carpet of pink blooms alongside *Leontopodium japonicum* and a purple *Impatiens*. The annual gentian relatives, *Swertia bimaculata* (white) and *Swertia punicea* (black) were also common inhabitants of these high altitude slopes.

The forest cover below the peaks was mainly composed of *Abies fargesii* (first found in this region by Augustine Henry and described from material later collected by the French missionary Paul Farges for whom it was named). Interspersed through it were trees of *Sorbus hupehensis*, *Betula albosinensis*, *Betula luminifera* and *Acer franchetii*. On the verges grew thickets of *Rhododendron oreodoxa*, one of the most beautiful and reliable of the early flowering red rhododendrons.

This was also my first encounter with the plume poppy, *Macleaya cordata*, in its native habitat and it was soon to become a familiar sight. At lower altitudes we met with three magnificent monkshoods. *Aconitum henryi* made lax plants to about a metre long (long

rather than tall, the plant's habit is lax as it normally grows off cliff faces). *Aconitum sinomontanum* on the other hand made sturdy upright plants to 3 metres tall by a river's edge and carried spikes of intense, deep blue flowers. Best of all was a great thicket of the scrambling *Aconitum hemsleyanum* in a variety of shades of blue. All three species were first discovered by Henry.

It's not until you visit the regions of China in which Augustine Henry was based that you come to appreciate the scale of his work: almost every plant we saw during our travels in Central China is represented in Henry's herbarium collection and so, many are named in his memory.

We met several of the local Shennongjia residents and had a number of good meals (with lethal Chinese whiskey!) in their welcoming homes. One old peasant lady we encountered wore a shawl made from the trunk fibre of the Chusan palm, *Trachycarpus fortunei*.

Familiar garden plants were everywhere to be seen, e.g. *Kerria japonica*, *Akebia quinata*, *Akebia trifoliata*, *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*, *Viburnum betulifolium* (laden with enormous corymbs of fleshy red fruits), *Acer davidii*, *Acer henryi* (with brilliant red/purple autumn colour), *Chimonanthus praecox*, *Iris japonica*, *Clerodendrum bungei*, *Pinellia ternata*, *Arisaema erubescens*, *Duchesnia indica* and *Parthenocissus tricuspidata*, enough to make any enthusiastic plantsman's pulse race!

Great rarities also grew here; we had the privilege to visit a mammoth 45 metre tall, one thousand year old tree of *Emmenopterys henryi* and a 1,200 year old tree of *Keteleeria davidiana*, a humbling experience. *Emmenopterys* finds refuge in these high mountains and it was locally common by streams and grew alongside *Davidia involucrata* var. *vilmoriniana*. Another rare tree in this area is *Tapiscia sinensis*, a monotypic genus discovered by Henry and now endangered in the wild. The pinnate leaves of this tree bear a resemblance to *Pistachia* and the generic name *Tapiscia* is an anagram of *Pistachia* as a consequence.

Illicium henryi, an evergreen shrub rarely met with in Irish gardens, was common along watercourses where its companions included *Rubus ichangensis*, *Hydrangea longipes*, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* and *Notopanax davidii*. The countryside here is formed of enormous interlocking mountain peaks and massive cliffs and from these peaks *Rubus henryi* var. *bambusarum* threw down masses of 10 metre long stems. The rainy season had just ended and spectacular waterfalls plunged from the summits of many cliffs and rock faces.

It was above one of these waterfalls on a damp mossy boulder that we spotted the glorious *Lilium henryi*, thus making our journey to China more than worthwhile. Roses were everywhere and *Rosa cymosa* cascaded from the most massive of trees. It is

simply impossible to convey by means of mere pen and paper the wonderful atmosphere, spectacular scenery and abundant biodiversity in this small corner of China. This is the sort of terrain that was commonplace with early plant hunters like Henry and Wilson, though it is now rapidly disappearing.

Our next port of call was Xingshan, a mountainous county to the east of Shennongjia; this region was also part of Henry's 1888 route. Xingshan was equally beautiful, richly forested and it was from this county that our expedition introduced a new teasel to cultivation. We found a whole meadow of *Dipsacus asperoides* (first described as a

new species in 1985) in a mountainous forest glade and it is just one of many Chinese rarities to form part of the Glasnevin collection.



The Yichang tassel bush, *Itea ilicifolia* scaled the towering faces of damp cliffs here as did other good garden plants like the dainty ragged-robin-like *Silene fortunei* (a widespread species in China). The foliage of *Euonymus alatus* was by then decked with fire-like autumnal tints. On the verge of *Castanea seguinii* and *Pinus armandii* woodland, *Ilex pernyi* made fine specimens to 5 metres tall and supported vigorous vines of *Lonicera henryi*. *Chrysanthemum indicum*, the ancestral stock of the florists' chrysanth was everywhere to be seen. In marshes, *Ligularia dentata* gave a good, albeit late show of golden-yellow blooms.

My favourite plant from Xingshan had to be *Halenia elliptica* var. *grandiflora*, a small annual gentian relative to 45 cm tall and carrying blue-white, spurred Aquilegia-like flowers. Another new introduction to cultivation from this region is *Saussurea populifolia*, a stately biennial which we are confident will become popular in contemporary planting schemes.

The Xiang Xi River at Xingshan Photo:S. O'Brien

Double flowered forms of *Rosa chinensis* were often cultivated close to rural hamlets, as were *Eucommia ulmoides*, *Magnolia officinalis* (for medicinal use), *Camellia sinensis* (tea), and *Trachycarpus fortunei*.

Abelia chinensis was abundant on the lower slopes, the sweet scent of its flowers lingering in the humid mountain air. *Cotoneaster henryanus* was far from common and we were to see *Parthenocissus henryana* only once. *Paulownia fargesii* made fine trees by riversides and *Trachelospermum jasminoides* proved to be an abundant climber throughout these massive mountain ranges.

Other good garden plants collected in the Xingshan region included, *Sarcococca ruscifolia*, *Sycopsis sinensis*, *Pittosporum illicioides*, *Citrus ichangensis* (has fruited out of doors at the Hillier Arboretum for over four decades now), *Cinnamomum wilsonii*, *Phoebe zhenan*, *Eriobotrya japonica*, *Polygala wattersii* (commemorating Thomas Watters, another Irish plant collector once based at Yichang), *Stachyurus chinensis* and *Osmanthus armatus* to mention a few!

From Xingshan we sailed down a flooded tributary of the Yangtze and entered the Xiling or Yichang gorge below the city of Badong. We were at last heading for Yichang, that Mecca of plant hunters. The level of the Yangtze had risen considerably since our last visit and in the intervening two years the habitat of a tiny rare fern, *Adiantum reniforme* var. *sinensis* (endemic to the gorges at Wanxian), has been covered by the floodwaters and this species has become extinct in the wild.

Above Yichang, at the mouth of the Xiling Gorge, we visited the Cave of the Three Pilgrims in the San You Dong Glen (San Yu Tung of Henry and Wilson), being the first group of western plant hunters to do so since E. H. Wilson. This beautiful glen, like many others above Yichang, has been badly flooded but is still worth a visit. This was one of Henry's (and later Wilson's) favourite hunting grounds. The cave was still there just as Henry, Pratt and Wilson described it. So also were a number of handsome Taoist shrines and temples.

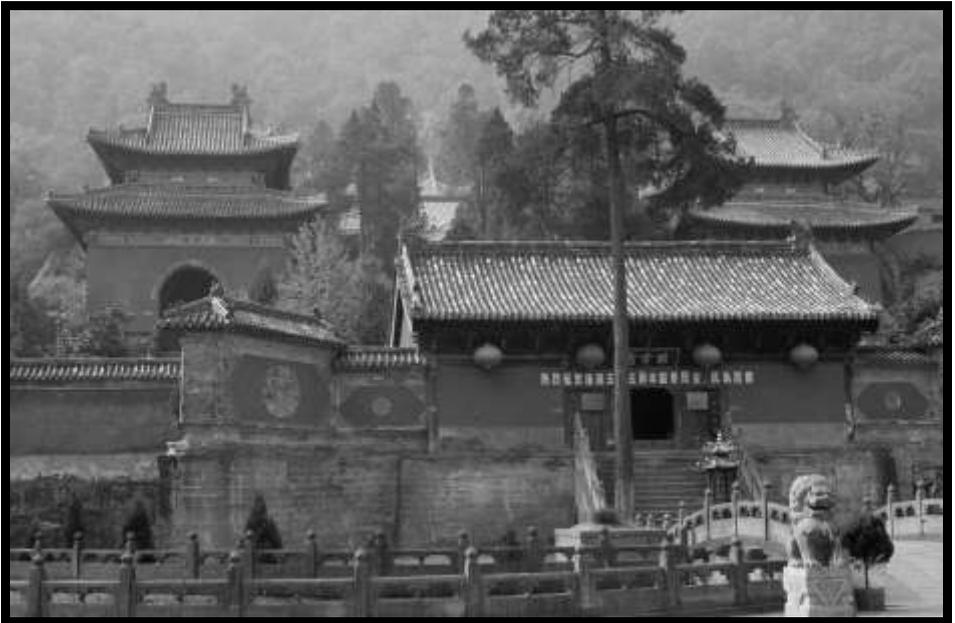
Yichang of course is a boomtown and a much changed place to what it had been when visited by Delavay, David, Faber, Farrer, Henry, Maries, Meyers, Pratt, Watters and Wilson. Dominating the city on the opposite bank of the Yangtze is a pyramidal-shaped hill known to the small 19th century community at Yichang as "The Dome". It is known nowadays as Moji Shan and is famous for being the type locality of *Lilium henryi*. We climbed the hill on the 4th of October and photographed Yichang from the very point Wilson took his snap in March 1908. It was nice to see that the wild form of Lady Bank's rose, *Rosa banksiae* var. *normalis* still grows there.

Once again, the Glasnevin Expedition made history by being the first western botanical party to collect plants in Changyang since the days of Ernest Wilson. Changyang lies to the south-west of Yichang and is a landscape of massive interlocking mountains and

steep-sided, deep valleys. We were surprised to see how well its flora had survived despite its relative proximity to Yichang.

Henry had based a native collector here in 1887 and I was curious to see what plants still grew there. Our Chinese hosts from Wuhan however, were far from impressed with the local hotel arrangements and I wonder if I will ever be forgiven for taking them to such a God forsaken town.

Whatever discomforts we faced at Changyang were more than compensated for by spectacular countryside and the host of exciting plants. A small selection of our collections from here includes, *Camptotheca acuminata*, *Codonopsis cardiophylla* (a gorgeous plant), *Crataegus cuneata* (laden with fruits at only 60 cm tall), *Salix fargesii*, *Arisaema sikokianum* var. *henryanum*, *Zingiber mioga*, *Sargentodoxa cuneata*, *Cardiocrinum giganteum* var. *yunnanensis*, *Lilium henryi* (again!), *Sassafras tzumu* (wonderful autumn colour), *Liriodendron chinensis*, *Disporum cantoniense* and *Patrinia scabiosifolia*.



Monasteries on Wudang Shan. Photo: S. O'Brien

From Changyang we drove to the extreme north of Hubei, to the sacred Taoist mountain of Wudang Shan, the birthplace of Taiji kongfu and a famous centre for martial arts in China. During the Ming Dynasty 300,000 men worked for 13 years on

the construction of the mountain's many monasteries, temples, palaces, pavilions and convents. We chose the easy route to the summit, via cable car, which gave excellent views of untouched forested areas on the steep slopes, though Wudang Shan's ancient forest cover has suffered much over the past century. Beneath the temples however, fine trees survived, among them *Aesculus wilsonii*, *Castanea henryi*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Pseudocydonia sinensis*, *Platycladus orientalis* and *Fraxinus hupehensis*.

From the wilds of Hubei our travels took us to the sophisticated city of Shanghai, often called "Paris of the East", a name it certainly lives up to. Shanghai's 21st century skyscrapers merged effortlessly with 19th and early 20th century colonial buildings. The Bund, Shanghai's elegant colonial waterfront, made a wonderfully stark contrast overlooking the new space-age area of Pudong.



Lighthouse on Taiwan. Photo: S. O'Brien

Our next port of call was Taiwan where Henry had been based in 1893-94. During our week there we visited Oluanpi (South Cape of Henry), Kenting National Park on the island's southern tip and Wanshoushan (Ape's Hill of Henry) at Kaohsiung (formerly Takow). Taiwan was new and exciting and provided the first opportunity for any of our group to collect in tropical rainforest. Waking up to blue skies and a tropical breeze, it was hard to think it was late October. The flora, being new to us, was particularly interesting. Most of the coastal vegetation is common to the Old World tropics, since the fruits of many of these plants drift on ocean currents and may germinate on distant shores after several months of passage.

Many of the forests and jungles we visited were based on fossilised coral that was lifted off the ocean floor about 100,000 years ago. Extensive coral reefs also lay offshore. Taiwan was a tropical paradise and was such a contrast to the temperate

forests we had left behind in Central China. We were to spend our time there in dense tropical jungles of palms, giant banyans, screw pines, climbing bamboo, lush aroids, bananas, lianas and epiphytes.

On Wanshoushan, at Kaohsiung, we were trilled to find the very sinister *Amorphophallus henryi* and *Amorphophallus hirtus*, the sight of which actually frightened Henry's pet spaniels! We also made a brief trip to Bankinsing, a small village at the foot of the central range of Taiwan's mountains.

It was here that Henry had based one of his aboriginal collectors. The village has the oldest Roman Catholic Church in Taiwan (built by Spanish missionaries in 1865) and it seemed strange to encounter a Catholic village in the middle of a betel nut and banana plantation in Taiwan.

From Taiwan it was on to Lantou Island and Hong Kong for rest and relaxation before heading back to the day job at Glasnevin for another year.



Pandanus odoratissimus on Taiwan. Photo by Seamus O'Brien

Seamus will give an illustrated lecture "From Glasnevin to Central China and Taiwan, 2004" in the visitor centre at the National Botanic Gardens on the 3rd of February 2005 at 3.15 p.m. Admission free.

The Glasnevin China Expedition 2004 – a Note from Emer O'Reilly

My three week adventure in China was exhilarating from the first day that we saw *Allium henryi* on the top of the mountains in the swirling mists. We saw herbaceous borders of wild plants along the roadsides. We ran after Seamus as he identified everything in sight asking him what it was and how to spell it again and again.

We ate delicious food except for the lunch of ferns, fungus and chicken feet which are an acquired taste. We gam-bayed the local corn liquor for the honour of Glasnevin and I hope Glasnevin appreciated my hangovers. We hiked up mountains along tiny dirt tracks on our hands and knees (except Joan who ran up them like a mountain goat) cursing Seamus all the way. We lunched in a peasant's house surrounded by virgin forest.



Emmenopterys henryi growing in China
Both images courtesy of www.losn.com

We saw a thousand year old *Emmenopterys henryi*. We only had one day with leeches and one day of Temples and I'd had enough of both of them by the end.

And we came home laden down with seeds and herbarium specimens and wonderful memories.



Emmenopterys henryi in flower

Emer works at the Airfield Trust- see note of their activities schedule in "Snippets", Ed.

Win some; lose ... a lot by Rae McIntyre

In an article in the “Daily Telegraph” Saturday Gardening Section Nov. 27th 2004 Helen Dillon wrote that she had planted 32 clematis sometime in the early 1980s. Now, all 32 have gone. I am very pleased to hear it. There is no *schadenfreude* about this (an expressive German word meaning to have malicious pleasure in the misfortunes of others). It’s simply knowing that if an eminent gardener, like Helen, can somehow lose 32 clematis then there’s an excuse for me. I have a most unfortunate tendency to lose clematis. About eighteen months ago Mary, a gardening friend of mine, was buying every scented form of clematis she could find from an English grower called Sheila Chapman. From the catalogue I ordered *Clematis rehderiana* which I had been wanting for years. It’s a species with little cowslip-coloured and apparently cowslip-scented flowers in late summer. When it arrived it was planted with all the ceremony due to a precious clematis. It had a deep planting hole filled with goodies and best top soil and was planted deeply to avoid that scourge of the genus, Clematis Wilt. It did not reappear after its first winter and neither did the other two very expensive clematis plants I bought. Meanwhile Mary’s collection, ordered and planted at the same time, was flourishing like Jack’s beanstalk, almost.

Not all clematis I plant give up the ghost. There’s a long-suffering ‘Perle d’Azur’ that was hacked to death (as I thought) by workmen repairing supports for climbers against the old barn walls but which resurrected itself after three years underground. There’s a *Clematis viticella* that delights from August to October every year (hope I’m not tempting fate) and is neither pruned nor fed at anytime. A *Clematis flammula*, with thousands of little white flowers, appears sweet and wholesome but is a rampant thug. It has been butchered time after time but always seems to live to bloom another day. This past year it has had masses of white fluffy seed heads like Old Man’s Beard that decks winter hedges in chalky parts of southern England.

I think it must be the dastardly slugs that are to blame. They view a well-planted, new, expensive clematis as a gourmet meal. *Helleborus niger* is a cousin of the clematis (all are members of the *Ranunculaceae*) and I’ve always found it very difficult to keep in my garden. I have discovered two things about this Christmas Rose: It loves lime in the soil and slugs love it. I’ve managed to keep two (out of five I must confess) going for two winters now by planting them with garden lime, grit and then watering them with liquid slug killer occasionally. However there are many thrushes, robins and wrens in the garden so if the Christmas Roses don’t survive, that’s tough. The birds are more important and forms of *Helleborus x hybridus* (syn. *Helleborus orientalis*) aren’t much favoured by slugs. *Codonopsis clematidea* is. It’s another cousin. The longest it has stayed in our garden before being chomped to bits was ten days so I’ve just given up on it entirely.

The only doricum I can keep in the slug-infested ground of the garden is *Doronicum pardalianches* which is a European native and is found in colonies round places like Jedburgh in Scotland. It was growing on the roadside *outside* our garden so I brought it in from the cold. Instead of flowering in early spring, like *D.* ‘Miss Mason’, it waits until May or June and has foot-tall, yellow daisy flowers from a base of soft green, rounded slightly hairy leaves. I would imagine that for a slug these would be much less palatable than the smooth green, slightly shiny leaves of Miss Mason.

I can manage to keep *Meconopsis x sheldonii* for many years and it’s reputed to be difficult. This *meconopsis* likes to be planted in a hole about 1 ½ cubic feet in size filled with rich plant food and the process repeated after two or three years because it likes to move around the garden. But there’s another poppy relation that utterly refuses to have anything to do with me. *Macleaya cordata* grows like a weed in many people’s gardens and they even complain about it. Over the years I must have planted at least twenty but not one has survived. John Bourke, of Monkstown, Co. Dublin, gave me a beauty some years ago which had very glaucous scalloped leaves. Alas, it didn’t appear after its first winter.

My mother refuses to let me say anything disparaging about her hideous cacti in front of them lest they become offended and won’t flower for the three days, or whatever, that is their flowering time. I’m beginning to think she might be right. I’ve had the tree paeony, *Paeonia delavayi*, growing for many years but have never liked it. It was sold to me as a red flowered paeony and, before it bloomed, I visualised the flowers as scarlet or even crimson. They turned out to be neither but were, instead, the colour of dried blood – an unattractive brown red. I insulted it horribly both behind its back and to its face and if tree paeonies have hearts, this one seems to have a broken one. Some of the branches started dying back early last summer and by the autumn it was obviously dead although there is still a sucker that seems to have life in it.

There are no plants left in the garden of *Iris foetidissima* ‘Variegata’ but it was never insulted at any time. Quite the opposite in fact because I always praised it as a grow-anywhere plant that looked fresh and attractive all year round. It has sword-like leaves, striped in green-grey and cream. The flowers are a trifle dingy but they’re not needed with such good foliage that can mix with any other plant. Over the years I have established little colonies of it all over the garden but in the summer of 2003 the leaves on different plants started to brown and die so that now eighteen months later, I haven’t a single one left. It must have been some kind of virus. The plain *Iris foetidissima* seems to be unscathed so far but I miss the stripy form terribly.

I’ve even lost some rhododendrons over the years and dread that horrible disease that wipes them out in parts of England coming here. It’s bound to, just as Dutch Elm Disease has decimated so many elms. The rhododendrons that died were attacked by powdery mildew and were removed before it could spread. They were particularly

beautiful specimens too. One was *Rhododendron* ‘Virginia Richards’ which I first spotted in the Olinda Gardens in Australia and was delighted when I found it for sale here. It has most attractive apricot coloured flowers. I should say *had*, because it only grew here for about three years before it succumbed to powdery mildew. *Rhododendron* ‘Lady Alice Fitzwilliam’ was first coveted in Rowallane many years ago and stayed here for about 15 before it became diseased. It had coral trumpet-shaped flowers with rather glaucous leaves and was a great favourite of mine. I’ve noticed that these two rhododendrons are rarely available in commerce now because of their susceptibility to powdery mildew.

I’ve never had much success with the rose ‘Iceberg’ which, from all accounts, is a paragon covered in pristine white blooms from June to November, or even December, frosts – an obligatory plant for white gardens. It just seemed to fade away in mine and I always blamed myself for not tending it well enough. Then Noreen Brown, who has a real dream of a large rose garden within her walled garden at Walworth outside Limavady, told me that she didn’t find “Iceberg” particularly easy either. She grows specimens in containers and renews the soil in them every spring. Tedious, but worth it because “Iceberg” is so attractive.

From the Plant Sale at Glasnevin in October: Below: Anna Nolan and Carmel Duignan, again in the “Rare and Unusual” section. Right: Dermot Kehoe, on the “Perennials” stand. Photos by Mary Bradshaw.



A Wee Bit of Plain Planting By Stephen Butler

It is now several years since Dublin Zoo was granted an extra 30 acres of land, and I'm sure many of you have seen that area already. Themed on African animals, we called it the African Plains, but we wanted to make it look more 'plainish', which meant largely replacing existing ordinary 'lawn' grasses with 'ornamental' grasses. I was asked to put together a planting scheme and also to landscape around our resurfaced roads. Most of the work was carried out during the winter of 2003-4.

Woodland areas along the northern lake edge were planted up with lots of bamboos in many species, some palms (*Trachycarpus*, *Jubaea*, *Chamaerops*), and shade tolerant grasses or grass look-alikes – *Carex pendula*, *Luzula sylvestris* etc. Screening the view of other visitors is also important too, giving a more intimate visiting experience, so lakeside tree screening of about 500 Alders will also help. We often bundle-plant 3 whips to a hole, quicker planting and more effective too. Bundle planting is a very old system, often resulting in several fully mature oak or beech trees leaning out from each other giving a very unique feature – our alders will probably need coppicing instead!

More open areas, mainly in front of the giraffe, rhino, and hippo exhibits, but not in the exhibits (yet!) were planted up with *Molinia arundinacea*, *Stipa gigantea* and *S. arundinacea*, *Miscanthus sinensis*, *M. condensatus*, and *M. gracillimus*, *Deschampsia caespitosa*, *Calamagrostis* 'Karl Foerster' etc. One new to me was *Glyceria aquatica*, with deep green leaves that look really lush and tropical, but it needs moist soil and judging from its spread already this year it may be a bit of a thug! There was a variation within the planting, some areas dense to fully screen an area from view, other areas lighter to allow views through or over. This has worked well, with thin *Molinia arundinacea* or *Stipa gigantea* contrasting with dense *Miscanthus sinensis* or *M. sacchariflorus* for example. During late summer and autumn the rapidly growing flower spikes on many of the *Miscanthus sinensis* cvs got better each day. New curves in the road have allowed deeper planting to help screen the view ahead – creating a little bit of discovery rather than seeing too much of what is round the corner. Three hundred more *Robinia pseudoacacia* whips also went in, to (eventually) give us a more naturalistic tree cover. We had planted about five hundred previously, but more will be needed no doubt. We use this False Acacia as a look-alike tree as African Acacias, of course, would not be hardy enough and it's a little bit too exposed yet for the likes of *Acacia dealbata* and *A. baileyana*; but, we have plans!

So, we put in a few plants. It was only when we added up the totals that we realised just how much we had done. Four hundred tons of topsoil used; 8,500 grasses (4,500 *Miscanthus sinensis* alone); 350 bamboos in 12.5 litre pots and 800 trees. All right we cheated; we used contractors with a JCB and dumper for manure and soil moving. We

used lorries with a grab to lift soil over fence lines. We covered a lot of new soil with plastic to keep it dry for planting. We used mainly small plants (all grasses in 12cm pots for instance) for easier planting. We staggered plant deliveries. But we got it done in time and better still, in budget! We have lost about 500 *Miscanthus* from the straying feet of our visitors (over 700,000 a year now), but we expected that and will replant with tougher plants in particular areas, good old *Carex pendula*, for instance.

Just in case you think that's all we did, you may see our boundary fence has an extra 1200 laurels along it are more are due. We buried more steps (a hobby of mine) with planting at the Gorilla exhibit to give them a bit more cover and less viewing. Little bits of landscaping around newly built toilet blocks, and a small wildlife garden with pond also kept us on our toes. Our new nursery, whilst still small, has helped a lot by providing what we call fillers for quick effect – *Echium pininana*, *Silybum marianum*, *Chenopodium giganteum*, even some Jersey Kale for a change!

After that we are only left with the lifting of a lot of really nice stock from the front gate area as it gets extended, planting a naturalistic woodland in the new Siberian Tiger exhibit, and landscaping around the new restaurant and facility building over winter 04/05; so we're slowing down a bit.....

Come and enjoy the plants in the park with an ark!

The Zoo Garden Team: Fred, Pat, Chris, Jimmy, Mark, and the ever-helpful Glasnevin students this year: Eoin, Rachel and Tom.

Editor's Note: Stephen is the Curator of Horticulture at the Zoological Gardens in the Phoenix Park, Dublin. After his work there, he manages to find time to organise the society's seed distribution and is also the Regional Representative for the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) for Ireland, Scotland, and Northern England. He is also the Plant Collection Coordinator for Ireland (South). His notes on the Seed Distribution and the NCCPG follow:

Seed Distribution 2005 by Stephen Butler

Once more my pigeon hole in the Zoo office has been full of bulky seed packets, often rattling, and frequently leaving a small trail when I move them, especially *Aquilegia*, which seem to be the Houdinis of the plant seed world, getting everywhere. Many thanks to all contributors and a special thanks for sending seeds early: some arrived as early as June. I found this a hard year to get good seeds, often missing a good dry day and then finding it too damp for collecting.

As I write this in early December we have 230 accessions, but I still have not deleted duplicates or any 'doubtful' seeds – these include any empty packets, perhaps just the pods but no seeds (a regular problem with *Geranium*), rotten seeds (perhaps after getting wet in the post), or a name that cannot be verified or is only identified at genera level. That probably means we will have less than last year (at 321), but there are already some very interesting plants in the list, and I know there are a few good packets still to arrive.

Bear with me after you have sent in your requests. During the first week requests can total 20 a day and it can get a bit hectic. I must avoid a repetition of last year, when the family put my picture on the mantelpiece to remind them of what I looked like!

Any stories on last year's seed, good or bad, success or failure, would be great to hear, and Paddy is always looking for articles too! (*Always! Paddy*)

The National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) - A Note from Stephen Butler

The Irish Garden Plant Society has been connected with the NCCPG since its inception and has always been keen to have National Plant Collections within Ireland, as part of the scheme that the NCCPG coordinates. There are 42 local NCCPG groups in England, Scotland and Wales. The IGPS is Ireland's equivalent on a British local group. From within these groups Plant Collection Coordinators (about 40 of us) are appointed and it is they who do the groundwork at local level on the 650 plant collections currently managed.

Each area has a very varied collection portfolio. Yorkshire alone has 65 collections, 11 of these being held by Leeds City Council. All of this work is coordinated by a very small nucleus of staff (based at RHS Wisley in a borrowed portacabin) on an annual budget of under £200,000. Applications for collection status are discussed at Plant Conservation Committee meetings held 4 times a year.

Some of the collection holders have developed their collections to such a high level that they have published handbooks on the plants in their particular collection, or their work has been recognised as being of scientific value too. The conservation value of the collections en masse is remarkable, and a tribute to the collection holders.

At present in Ireland we have 12 National Collections as part of the NCCPG. These are:-

Dianella, *Libertia* and *Phormium* at Mount Stewart (National Trust)

Penstemon at Rowallane (National Trust)
Eucryphia at Seaforde Gardens
Escallonia at Brook Hall
Narcissus at University of Ulster at Coleraine
Potentilla fruticosa at Ardgillan Demesne (Fingal County Council)
Olearia at Malahide Castle (Fingal County Council)
Eucryphia and *Nothofagus* at Mount Usher
Garrya at National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin

There are several more in the pipeline, but developing a collection to a point where it is ready to apply can be a fairly long term project.

For more information on the NCCPG see their web site www.nccpg.com which is an excellent site, and very useful indeed. Their annual Directory is a mine of information, and their newsletter (sent out to members) always has interesting articles.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions re the NCCPG.

Stephen Butler, Collection Coordinator Ireland (South)
Regional Representative Ireland, Scotland, and Northern England
Email sbutler@indigo.ie Phone: 01 626 8532

The Autumn Plantsman's Day at Glasnevin, September 2004

After the success of the previous Plantsman's Day at Glasnevin it was no surprise that this autumn treat was well supported, and well supported it deserved to be as the proceeds from the day were to fund the Glasnevin Expedition to China.

Once again those attending were treated to a gardening day of the highest calibre, three excellent talks followed by three most interesting tours. Hard though it might be to believe, I think the team at Glasnevin has surpassed the high standard set at the previous Plantsman's Day. For those attending it must have been one of the most painless methods of being relieved of one's money that could be imagined. Hopefully what funds were raised went some way to help with the expenses of the expedition to China.

Here, thanks to some of those who attended, are short accounts of the day's proceedings, talks and tours. They might motivate you to make your way to Glasnevin when the next such day is organised. I can assure you that it would be a day you would enjoy.

Ireland's Wild Orchids by Brendan Sayers.

Fresh with the success of the launch, with Susan Sex, of the recent book on Ireland's native orchids, Brendan presented a talk on his favourite flowers in a manner sure to raise the interest and enthusiasm of his listeners in these wonderful plants.

It might surprise the reader to be told that the orchids of Ireland range over 28 species in 13 genera with subspecies and distinct varieties over 35 discernible taxa. After a basic outline of what an orchid was and of the flower structure – 3 sepals, 2 petals with 3rd petal modified (the labellum) and the flower's sex parts fused into a column – Brendan went on to tell where orchids might be found in Ireland. Despite the fact that sand dunes are popularly thought to be the best location for orchids, they are in fact found countrywide, though some are very restricted to a very few sites.

Brendan continued and showed us a stunning selection of his photographs taken on treks around the country, accompanying each photograph with an interesting and oftentimes witty account. The Marsh Helleborine, *Epipactis helleborine*, he told us, attracts its pollinator, a wasp, with the most delectable of nectar, an alcoholic and hallucinogenic concoction. No wonder the wasps are willing. The Bee Orchid, on the other hand, has evolved that its flower structure imitates so perfectly the appropriate bodily structure of its pollinating wasp that the insect is lured by the promise of pleasure and services the orchid in the process.

Our most showy of orchids are the *Dactylorhiza* species, the spotted orchids, of which there are seven, and among these the Common Spotted Orchid is so common as to be weedy in some gardens. By comparison the Bird's Nest Orchid, *Neottia nidusavis*, lives underground all year, has no green parts, no chlorophyll; lives through a symbiotic relationship with a fungus and is only seen when the flower spike appears. Obviously, studying this species, or indeed painting it, can only be undertaken by the well-prepared, the patient and the very alert.

With their sexual promiscuity hybrid orchids appear regularly, pure white forms being the most easy to spot and recognise. The O Kelly Orchid of the Burren is a white variation of the Common Spotted Orchid. Despite their own diligent efforts several of the Irish species are under threat with the greatest danger coming from habitat destruction. At present four of the Irish species have protected status while eight are given protection under the Wildlife Order in Northern Ireland.

On this day, when the thoughts of the audience might be forgiven for straying towards the flowers of China, Brendan showed that there is a wealth of beauty here at home for us to explore.

Brendan suggests those interested in orchids should join the Orchid Society which meets at the Botanic Gardens. Contact Botanic Gardens for details.

Paddy Tobin

Tales of the Orient, a Plantsman's Journey by Seamus O'Brien

On all occasions that I have heard Seamus speak, it is his enthusiasm for his subject that has most impressed me. This lucky fellow enjoys what he is doing and this comes across especially when he speaks of his trips to China, a place he obviously loves. As he was about to tell us about a wealth of plants, Seamus distributed a list of his slides at the beginning of his lecture. When one sees beautiful plants illustrated and hears them described in lectures such as this, there is always the scramble to write the name down; to be sure the spelling is there or thereabouts, at least, so that one can look up this desired plant on returning home. The list makes such noting so much easier, though it doesn't make acquiring the plants any easier at all.

Seamus brought us with him from the Upper Yangtze Valley, along the Mekong River, over the mountains to Tibet, the Doshong La, Tsangpo and Showa to Emei Shan in Sichuan where the plant hunter is spoiled for choice among the 3,200 species which grow there. Along the way there were encounters with Tibetan farmers, nomads and porters, Nepalese sherpas, Buddhist monks and, of course, the intrepid group from Glasnevin who trekked these far-flung places. We saw rice paddies, maize fields, monastery gardens, palaces, temples and mountain scenery that would make John Hinde envious.

To say the plants were interesting would be to understate their place in this splendid and wide-ranging talk. As one would expect, *Meconopsis* species, *Mm. betonicifolia*, *integrifolia*, *horridula* var. *racemosa* and *lancifolia* were outstandingly beautiful, the latter very rare and not in cultivation. *Rhododendrons rothchildii*, *sinogrande* and *campylogynum* showed why this genus is so popular and how we have the plant hunters of the past to thank for our garden treasures of today. Among many to tease the plant lover was *Rheum nobile*, so frightfully desirable and so difficult in cultivation, a plant which can grow and flourish on the most wind-swept and apparently barren of mountainsides, in conditions so harsh that the bracts have evolved to cover and protect the flowers and yet it refuses to perform in a garden where it would be so lovingly and tenderly cosseted. Such is the gardener's life!

As these expeditions from Glasnevin are seen as very much in the footsteps of Augustine Henry, Seamus showed us the Old Foreign Compound in Yichang where Augustine Henry was stationed while working in China and also two plants which commemorate him: *Emmenopterys henryi* and *Lilium henryi*. Thankfully, this latter grows with a will in our Irish gardens and ensures we can all grow at least one plant which will bring the glory of the Chinese flora to our gardens.

Paddy Tobin, with the help of Mary Bradshaw's notes.

Hidden Marriages and Phantom Pregnancies by Dr. Matthew Jebb.

The third lecture in the Autumn Plantsman's Day was given by Matthew Jebb, Acting Director of the Gardens and a taxonomist by profession. 'Taxonomy' is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as 'the science of the classification of living and extinct organisms' and described by Matthew as being one of the oldest professions, in that hunter/gatherers would have been the first people to distinguish animals from plants.

In a fascinating and enlightening lecture, with many literary quotes, Matthew first explained photosynthesis, with the chlorophyll confined to small sub-cellular organelle called chloroplasts. Electron microscopy has shown these contain strands of DNA organised in the same way as a bacterial genome. Of the three Plant Kingdoms, red, brown and green, all land plants are derived from green algae alone.

We were then brought on a tour of the evolution of the reproductive methods which are crucial to life on earth, from the water dependant seaweed, through mosses and ferns, to stationery trees and onto animals than can move and distribute their genes. 'Death only came about with the evolution of sex', Matthew related and then assured us this was not a moralistic judgement!

Pre 1849 and the work of Wilhelm Hofmeister on Alteration of Generations, it was not clear how spore plants reproduced. There were classified as having the 'Hidden Marriage' of the title. The 'Phantom Pregnancies' refers to the gymnosperms which produce wasteful fat seeds when pollinated or not.

The talk prompted many questions, showing the level of interest generated. At the end we were assured we were like the Red Queen in Alice in Wonderland, running like mad to keep in the same place, evolving to stay ahead of adverse conditions.

In his handout which accompanied the talk, Matthew's last paragraph suggested we 'give new respect to the green seaweeds; they are the mothers of all land-plants'. All present came away with new respect for and a better understanding of taxonomy.

Our thanks to an erudite and amusing speaker.

Nora Stuart

Behind the Scenes at the Nursery with Joan Rogers

At the hugely enjoyable Autumn Plantsman's Day at Glasnevin I chose to go 'behind the scenes at the nursery' with Joan Rogers. On the way to the nursery we were able to view some of the gardens' special plants and treasures growing against the tall warm

boundary wall of Glasnevin Cemetery. We admired *cestrums*, quinces, *Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin' and the lovely, Seamus O'Brien collected, *Clematis* 'Glasnevin Dusk'.

What impressed me most on arrival at the nursery was how neat and tidy everything was and the rich soil waiting for the new half-hardy annual plants which were then growing strongly from seed in regimented rows.

The group was amazed by how labour-intensive and detailed were the methods used to propagate plants. For instance, take the dahlia collection which is lifted each autumn, dried off, stored and started into growth each spring; cuttings are taken, grown on and planted out in early summer with three plants of each variety held back and planted in the nursery. The old tubers are not discarded until the new stock flowers. I wondered where the old tubers are dumped!

This rare chance to peep behind the scenes at Glasnevin gave us all a much greater appreciation of just how much work goes into the planting displays.

Margaret Power.

Historic Trees of Glasnevin – a walk with Theresa Synott

It was a beautifully warm sunny day in September when Theresa Synott introduced our group to the Historic Trees of Glasnevin. First we visited the two impressive limes (*Tilia*) which have stood sentinel to the gate lodge at the garden entrance for many years. Then on to admire an ancient *Arbutus x andrachnoides*.

A magnificent specimen of the stone pine (*Pinus pinea*) dominates the rock garden with its dense, flat-topped head and very large cones (6" long) and edible seeds. A much admired weeping Atlantic cedar (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Pendula'), which is approximately 130 years old, grows on the west side of pine hill.

The oldest trees in the garden are the Yews (*Taxus baccata*) which form a double avenue and are reputed to have been planted by Thomas Ticknell in memory of Joseph Addison. At the northern end of the yew walk stands a fine example of the lovely handkerchief tree (*Davidia involucrata*) from central China. This species has close associations with Dr. Augustine Henry for whom *Emmenopterys henryi* is named. *Emmenopterys* is planted near by. A very large and beautiful chestnut, grown from seed collected in Burma by Lady Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe, grows happily in the new Chinese section being developed by Seamus O'Brien. The last tree of the day was Caucasian Elm (*Zelkova carpinifolia*) with grey bark on its short-butressed trunk with numerous erect crowded branches and dark green-toothed leaves. A striking tree and although allied to Elms (*Ulmus*) does not suffer from Dutch elm disease. A very

enjoyable tour. Our thanks to Theresa for sharing her knowledge and enthusiasm with us.

Phemie Rose

A Rare View of the Museum/Herbarium Collections with Grace Pasley.

Immediately on entry the Herbarium impresses the visitor. The evolution of plants is shown in relief along the walls while a section of Giant Redwood, cut down in 1890, brings us in contact with the oldest and biggest living organism of the plant world. Inside 650,000 specimens are stored in large strong-room like cabinets in a controlled atmosphere where temperature and humidity are regulated to ensure the good condition of the specimens. As in the garden, bugs are the mortal enemies of the herbarium keeper and great care is taken to exclude them. The conditions required to store the plants were not totally agreeable to the visitors as several had to leave so as to cool down. Grace explained that the windows may never be opened, indeed they are made so as not to open, and so those working on the herbarium specimens generally come and collect the specimen in which they are interested and take it to another room to work on it.

Grace explained the processes used to prepare specimens for storage. Flowering plants are pressed with a heavy object to rid them of their moisture content and then, under proper storage conditions, can last forever. Indeed Grace mentioned one plant which was pressed in 1661. Mosses are allowed to dry naturally and then stored while lichen will dry quickly but, as they are normally attached to a piece of rock, are then stored in small boxes. Mushrooms are sliced vertically before drying and storing.

Rare books and important records are also stored here in Glasnevin though they require different conditions of storage. They are kept at low temperatures, more my scene really. Important and very interesting among the records held at Glasnevin are records of the important gardens in Ireland and what they grew. The facilities here are used by university students engaged in research projects and visiting botanists regularly come to study the specimens and records held here.

While much of what was on display was understandably of a “look, but don’t touch” nature, one specimen which allowed the visitors to make a contact of sorts with a famous historic character was a seed pod from the Baobab Tree which had been sent from the Belgian Congo to Glasnevin early in the twentieth century by Roger Casement. This is the hand that shook the hand...

Paddy Tobin

Leaves from a sun-lounger III by E. Charles Nelson

Christian Lamb gardens in Cornwall in a place as favoured as any in these islands for growing unusual and beautiful plants, similar to sequestered nooks and crannies in Cork and Kerry. She cultivates such beauties as *Echium wildpretii*, *Lapageria rosea*, *Myosotidium hortensia* (Chatham Island forget-me-not), a clutch of *Vireya* rhododendrons (indoors!), and especially admires any plant associated with Sir Joseph Banks, to whom this book is dedicated. There are many excellent colour photographs of the plants in her garden, and of places she has visited worldwide in search of species in their native haunts. This is a book that could have been written about the inhabitants of many an Irish garden, so Irish gardeners will feel it is homely.

Mrs Lamb combines her horticultural wisdom with accounts of the travels of the plant collectors who discovered or introduced the species. Familiar names are Augustine Henry, Ernest Wilson and Robert Fortune, while Banks receives the lion's share of attention. Lady Banks is not neglected (although she never went plant-hunting) – *Rosa banksiae* commemorates her, but it was not named by Sir Joseph as Mrs Lamb asserts.

While I can say that this book makes interesting reading, and would be an amusing addition to any gardener's book-shelves, I have some reservations about it. It is disappointing that it contains so many spelling errors (including "Augustin" Henry), eccentric punctuation, and other lapses, thus displaying a lamentable want of careful editing and proof-correcting. If you are content to ignore these, you should enjoy this "story of [Mrs Lamb's] Living Plant Museum". It'll be grand for wintertime browsing. (C. LAMB. *From the ends of the Earth*. Bene Factum Publishing, Honiton: 2004. Pp vi, 225; illustrated. Price £17.99. ISBN 1-903071-08-9.)

2004 has been a good year for authors of Irish extraction. Susyn Andrews's and Tim Upson's beautifully illustrated monograph on lavender, published by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is beyond reproach, botanically and horticulturally. Susyn trained at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, and until recently was horticultural taxonomist in Kew; she now works free-lance. This is likely to be the "last word" on lavender! (T. UPSON & S. ANDREWS, *The Genus Lavandula*. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: 2004. Pp 386; illustrated. Price £37.50. ISBN 1-84246-0106.)

Another Glasnevin graduate, Gerard Taaffe, with Ran Levy-Yamamori as collaborator, has published an authoritative book about the native plants of Japan that are grown in Japanese gardens. Lavishly illustrated with almost 800 colour photographs, this work will allow "Western" gardeners to select authentic Japanese species and cultivars for their Japanese-style gardens, but more than that, allow them a glimpse of the richness of the flora of gardens in Japan. I must declare an interest in this volume: I assisted Gerard with the often tricky nomenclature of the plants, and he

and Ran invited me to write the foreword, an honour I accepted. (R. LEVY-YAMAMORI & G. TAAFFE, *Garden plants of Japan*. Timber Press, Cambridge & Portland: 2004. Pp 430; illustrated. Price £45. ISBN 0-88192-650-7.)

From Asia to Africa, for the third book with an author with Irish credentials. Gary Dunlop is co-author with Peter Goldblatt and John Manning of one of the Royal Horticultural Society's new series subtitled "Plant collector guide". This one is about the species and cultivars of montbretia, the genera *Chasmanthe* and *Crocasmia*. To some the almost ubiquitous montbretia of Irish ditches and road-side banks is a blot on the landscape, but there are other *Crocasmia* that make alluring garden subjects, especially valuable because they tend to bloom late in the season. The book is a botanically precise monograph describing each species, and two primary hybrids of *Crocasmia*, including the familiar, weedy *C. ×crocosmiiflora*. It concludes with a long list of cultivars, including a clutch of recently named ones of Irish origin, some of which Gary himself raised, selected and named. Alas there are a few errors that could so easily have been eliminated. One is the misspelling of 'Moirá Reid' (as 'Moirá Reed'), a careless discourtesy to Mrs Reid, a native of County Clare, a generous and skilful gardener; I hope this error will be rapidly corrected. It is amazing also to find Straffan, County Kildare, misspelled, and to encounter someone named "Tylo de Malahide", a careless, garbled version of Lord Talbot de Malahide's name – he was Milo John Reginald Talbot. I also think it is regrettable that the principles of the *International code of nomenclature for cultivated plants* (2004) were not applied, and unacceptable cultivar names rejected and replaced.

Another declaration of interest! I was involved in the "conception" of this book, and so was Wendy Walsh, although the published volume is illustrated by the South African botanical artist, our good friend Auriol Batten. Peter Goldblatt graciously acknowledged Wendy's and my involvement in the introduction. It is a pleasure to see the fulfilment of a cherished project. (P. GOLDBLATT, J. MANNING, G. DUNLOP & A. BATTEN (artist), *Crocasmia and Chasmanthe*. Timber Press, Cambridge & Portland: 2004. Pp 236; illustrated. Price £22.50. ISBN 0-88192-651-5.)



At the Plant Sale in Glasnevin in October, Ed Bowden serves another satisfied customer with and Irish cultivar.

Photo: Mary Bradshaw.

Regional Reports

Reports from the Northern Area

“Playing With The Elements”

by Oliver Schurmann on November 16th.

Irish Garden Plant Society members were treated to a talk from Oliver Schurmann on November 16th in the splendour of the Lagan Valley Island Arts Centre, Lisburn.

The topic “Playing with the Elements” superbly demonstrated the naturalistic planting style that Oliver and his wife Liat have perfected at their Mount Venus Nursery in Rathfarnham, Dublin. Oliver and Liat learned the art and craft of this naturalistic style in Bavaria. Although the nursery was founded only five years ago, in that short time Oliver has learned which of the many grasses and perennials are most successful in Ireland.

Oliver concentrated his illustrated talk on the use of grasses in the garden and how their forms, textures and colours make them ideal companions for a wide range of plants. They also suit a wide range of settings, including domestic gardens and planting areas around bold and modern buildings. The slides amply confirmed this, showing planting schemes from Mount Venus Nursery, landscaped public areas and also gardens that Oliver and Liat have designed.

Oliver gave a concise explanation of the difference between “cool season” grasses and “warm season” grasses. The cool season grasses start into growth in late winter or early spring, flower in spring or early summer and form seed heads in mid summer. Examples include species of *Deschampsia*, *Festuca*, *Stipa*, and *Molinia*. Warm season grasses wait until late spring or early summer before starting into growth and then grow rapidly and vigorously throughout the summer. They flower in mid to late summer. The flowers turn quickly into seed heads which remain on the plants for many months in the winter. Examples are grasses from the *Miscanthus*, *Panicum*, *Pennisetum* and *Cortaderia* species.

The traditional style of border planting (tall plants at the back, shorter ones in front) was challenged. Grasses such as *Molinia caerulea* ssp. *arundinacea* ‘Transparent’, the flowering heads of which grow to 180cm tall, can be spot planted successfully at the front of the border. Here they provide a moving diaphanous curtain of slender stems through which the rest of the planting can be viewed. This lends an air of mystery to the planting and induces a desire to see more. A successful planting of grasses and

perennials will encourage you to explore a garden, the rhythm and movement of the grasses pulling and guiding you along the journey.

A favourite grass of Oliver's is *Stipa gigantea*, the giant feather grass. The effect of this grass is best seen when the tall golden seed heads are bathed in the soft sunlight of a late summer afternoon. A single specimen of this grass can transform any planting scheme. Personal experience has confirmed this. This is a grass that will surge up in growth in May, the 200cm high stems exploding out from an evergreen base of foliage that is no more than 10cm in diameter. Other favourites of Oliver include *Achnatherum calamagrostis*, the silver spear grass, and *Festuca mairei*, the Atlas fescue.

Oliver also gave some interesting tips and advice. For example, in a mixed perennial and grass planting scheme, the flowering spires of Delphiniums can be tied to the stems of the essential tall grass *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'. This enables the Delphinium flower spires to move with the wind, and prevents them from being broken in two as often happens in windy conditions if they are tied onto an immobile support.

Oliver also advised that planting more than two varieties of *Miscanthus* in the garden can significantly increase cross fertilisation between the plants. This can lead to variability when sowing the seed. This is fine if you want to experiment with finding new varieties, but not so good if you want to maintain a stock of the parent plant from seed.

After the talk, members were able to purchase from a wide range of grasses brought up from Mount Venus Nursery: a perfect excuse to find that perfect Christmas present for a gardening friend.

Adrian Walsh

“The Glasnevin Central China Expedition of 2002”

The Malone House Lecture by Seamus O'Brien on 1 December 2004

For our annual Malone House Lecture in conjunction with Belfast Parks, we again travelled to foreign parts. Seamus O'Brien from Glasnevin gave us a wonderful illustrated talk on the Glasnevin China Expedition, which for a large part followed the footsteps of Augustine Henry. It is great to know that one of the most prolific of all plant hunters came from Ulster, and that his work is so well represented at Glasnevin.

Seamus's knowledge and enthusiasm for Henry's life became apparent and the slides showed not only examples of the great number of plants discovered and catalogued by Henry but also fascinating snapshots of nineteenth century life in China, as well as views of the same areas, many now much changed, in modern China. One of the most

famous, and to my mind, the most beautiful species found by Henry is *Davidia involucrata* var *vilmoriniana* discovered in 1888 in Sichuan Province. When Ernest Wilson visited Henry in 1899 he was able to describe to Wilson the valley where it had been found, so leading to its introduction to Britain.

The Glasnevin Expedition Group of 2002 were fortunate to explore the Yangtze's Three Gorges area before it disappears under water when the new dam is completed; unfortunately several rich plant areas and probably many species will be lost. They were also able to collect seed of many species which have not hitherto been cultivated in Ireland, which we hope to see at Glasnevin in the years to come.

Some years ago I was privileged to explore western Yunnan, and in Lijiang I also met Dr. Xuan Ke, the leader of the authentic Chinese musicians; he is the son of Joseph Rock's right hand man and has Rock's roll-top desk in his house in Lijiang! It was a very interesting evening and for me brought back many memories of the magical experience of plant hunting in China

Andrena Duffin.

Reports from Munster

“Gardens of the French Riviera”

by Louise Bustard on October 1st 2004

After a summer of mixed weather, and with the cool evenings of autumn filling in around us, it was heart warming to be taken on a tour of the spectacular gardens of the French Riviera.

Louise was in Ireland not only to talk to the different branches of the IGPS but was also taking the opportunity to visit Irish gardens. Some she would have had knowledge of but others would be completely new to her. Of course they could all become at some future date the basis of a very good lecture for an audience back home.

For what was a very entertaining talk that certainly inspired many to plan next year's holiday in the region, our audience was very thin on the ground. Maybe it was the fact of it being our first night back after the summer recess.

Words here would not adequately convey the setting, scenery, planting or style of each garden visited but each was beautifully and eloquently presented for our consumption.

A pity to any one who wasn't at the feast.

David O Regan

“A Seaside Garden”

By Mary Walsh on November 5th 2004

When some one tells you that they have a seaside garden you don't conjure up the picture of it being, quite literally, on the beach. But this would be a far more accurate description of the situation in which Mary finds herself on the beautiful Beara peninsula.

Having moved there in 1991 she set about taming the landscape and, as best she could, creating an environment in which she could grow her beloved plants. Her first task in order to achieve this objective was to create some level of shelter. So using a mixture of trees (Oak, Pine, *Sorbus*, *Abies*) and shrubs (*Oleria*, *Fuchsia*) she gradually found that in certain locations she had created ideal conditions for growing a wide range of tender plants.

But this is not just a garden of plants. This garden epitomizes what can be achieved with a little planning, plenty of hard work and the determination to overcome what would appear to be insurmountable challenges. The reward for her toil is a beautiful and unique garden with a breathtaking landscape of sea and mountain all round.

While Mary could be described as an unassuming person, her achievements have not gone unnoticed with visits from BBC's Flying Gardener and Gardeners World and our own Garden Heaven.

David O Regan

Reports from Leinster

“The Flower Photography Workshop”

with Grace Pasley on Saturday November 6th at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

This was an occasion which had something for anyone interested in learning how to take better photographs. Grace, an accomplished photographer who held a very successful exhibition last February at Glasnevin entitled 'Changing Seasons at Glasnevin', demonstrated how through practise, the skill and judgement of the photographer is improved.

Grace feels that despite the large variety of cameras now available a 35mm SLR is a good starting point. When travelling she carries as little equipment as possible and normally brings her manual Fujica with a macro lens. This is best for close-up shots. Her other camera is the Olympus I.S. 5000.

Below are some recommendations from a very enjoyable and informative workshop.

- Try different films to find one that suits. Different films have different characteristics. Grace uses Fujifilm as she finds it is best with the colour green. She normally uses Fujifilm 100, or 200 in winter; Fuji Provia is good quality but more expensive.
- If buying a camera with built- in flash buy one with the flash raised above the camera to eliminate red eye.
- Use a tripod and cable release to avoid camera shake. This is particularly important for close-ups.
- For dept of field good light is needed, but of course avoid very strong sunlight.
- Flash distorts colour, use natural light as much as possible
- A macro lens is very useful for good close-ups, but can also be used to give sharp pictures at longer range. A 55mm macro lens is a good investment if buying a 35mm SLR camera.
- Red is a good colour to photograph. Blue is more difficult and is better photographed on a dull day, even a passing cloud can make all the difference! Alternatively a professional film that compensates for blue can be used but is expensive.
- Normally it is better not to put a circular flower in the middle of a picture particularly if there are no buds or leaves visible.
- To take a shot with good depth of field stand parallel to subject and focus 1/3 down subject.
- And finally practise makes perfect. Use lots of film to get to know your camera, and make notes where possible to act as reminders when film is developed.

Mary Bradshaw

The Plant Sale

Minimalism was certainly not the order of the day at the Leinster Branch Plant Sale at Glasnevin this year. Coordinated by Mary Bradshaw, the hall buzzed from 9.15am with helpers arriving, many bringing plants to add to what had already been donated. Despite being a busy place with lots of work to be done - labelling, displaying plants, and later selling, it was also a place for friends and acquaintances to chat and enjoy the brunch supplied by Marie Cunningham and Petronilla Martin. All tables were overflowing with plants with Irish cultivars *Hebe* 'Amy', and *Romneya coulteri*, lots of spring bulbs, *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postil', *Abutilon vitifolium*, *Celmisia asteliifolia*, many wonderful *Salvias*, and also tender plants like *Streptocarpus*, *Plectranthus*, *Sollya heterophylla* and *Agave americana*. Well done and many thanks to all who donated plants and to the wonderful helpers who made the day such a success with profits up on last year. Some photographs elsewhere in the newsletter.

Mary Rowe

“Orchids and the Cloud Garden”

by Tom Hart Dyke on November 25th.

Lullingstone Castle (in Kent) and its two acre walled garden will be the place for plant lovers to visit from summer 2005 onward, if Tom Hart Dyke has his way. Here he plans to establish the “World Garden of Plants” which, when complete will contain 10,000 plant species collected from every corner of the world.

Tom’s lecture to the I.G.P.S. and the Irish Orchid Society on November 25th, 2004 illustrated just how much of our world this modern day plant hunter has already explored. In 1997, with a grant from the Merlin Trust, he headed for S.E. Asia. He spent some time working on an orchid farm near Chiang Mai. Later he explored the forest floors of Peninsular Malaysia, studying their *Nepentes* (pitcher plants) in particular. Stag beetles and dead rats had to be eaten on Siberut Island (Indonesia) to avoid insulting local people, and canoes were being paddled by using school exercise books!

In 1998, Tom received a grant to collect plants in Australia and Tasmania. Here he devoted his time to studying the *Eucalyptus*, *Callistemon* and *Banksia* species, climbing to the top of *Eucalyptus pulchella* to collect nuts and seeds. Some time later he headed for California and South America.

But, of course, Tom’s greatest “adventure” so far, was his abduction with Paul Winder in the Darien Gap (Panama), the world’s most dangerous stretch of jungle. Pure chance had brought these two young men together. Rare orchids spurred them on. Warnings were lost on them; their understanding of Spanish was minimal, yet they almost made it to Columbia, when they were ambushed by F.A.R.C. guerrillas. The rest, as you know is the subject of their book, “The Cloud Garden”.

They spent nine excruciating months in captivity, suffering humiliation, illness and near desperation. Yet, they were always mutually supportive and luckily, they escaped with their lives and a few palm seeds. It was not always clear that this episode would have a happy ending.

Tom’s lecture was given and received with great enthusiasm by both societies. It is wonderful to see a relatively young man already so well versed in plant hunting and collecting. We wish him well with his latest venture, bringing the diverse “World of Garden Plants” to a wider audience.

Mary Bradshaw.

Looking Ahead

Munster Fixtures

Friday 14th January @ 07.45pm

“My Garden in Co. Wicklow” by Dermot Keogh, Chairman IGPS.

Dermot is an enthusiastic gardener and plantsman whose garden has deservedly received praise over the years. It will be a delight to hear Dermot tell us of its development and planting and, of course, of some of his favourite plants.

Friday 4th February @ 07.45pm

“The Redevelopment of Herbaceous Borders at Kylemore” by Ann Golden, Former Head Gardener Kylemore Abbey.

Here is a garden with a great story and who better to tell it than Ann Golden, former Head Gardener. The gardens have been lovingly and expertly restored to become one of the outstanding gardens in the country.

Friday 4th March @ 07.45pm

“The Productive & Beautiful Vegetable Garden” by Joy Larkcom Pollard, Author.

Joy Larkcom has been the inspiration of vegetable growers for many years through her writing. Here is an opportunity to meet her in the flesh and hear her speak on this subject of which she is the acknowledged expert.

Friday 1st April @ 07.45pm

“A Practical Introduction to Plant Propagation” by Ruth Good, Florist, Douglas Court Flowers.

There are few activities in gardening more rewarding and pleasurable than the propagation of one’s own plants. When the gardener manages this s/he has mastered a skill which will provide for her/his own garden and also ensures happy gardening friends.

Please note that the Society Plant Sale will be at this meeting

Time to put the skills learned from Ruth Good to immediate practical purpose.

Members are requested to bring interesting and surplus plants to the Plant Sale. These plant sales are an opportunity to get those plants which are seldom offered anywhere else. Come along and see what you will find.

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

Leinster Fixtures

Thursday February 3rd

“The Woodland Garden” by Kevin Hughes

Joint lecture with The Alpine Garden Society at National Botanic Gardens 8pm

Thursday March 10th

“Explaining the Burren” by Dr David Jeffrey.

At National Botanic Gardens 8pm

Saturday March 5th

Propagation Workshop with Christopher Heavey

at Teagasc Research Centre, Kinsealy 2pm.

Thursday April 14th

“A Botanist’s Guide to Plant Conservation, Gardens and the Art of Travel” by Dr

Tom Curtis. At National Botanic Gardens at 8pm

Saturday, April 16th

Garden Visit to Dr Keith Lamb’s garden at Woodfield, Clara, Co. Offaly. 2pm

Booking Form enclosed

Northern Ireland

Wednesday, January 26th - NEW YEAR LECTURE.

“Tis better to have loved and lost” with Helen Dillon.

Ulster Museum; 7.30pm. Experimenting with plants is a large part of what gardening is all about. Helen will look at the dead, the old faithfuls, the boring and the outstanding.

Book sales and signing. Members £3.00, non-members £4.00. Tickets - Museum Reception. Joint with RHS & UM.

Tuesday, March 15th - MEMBERS' EVENING

Ulster Museum, 6.30 - 8.30pm. Come along and meet your fellow members for a natter/an identification or two/a few surprises/holiday garden photos and a nice supper. Bring mystery plants, interesting objects, books - we'll provide a projector and a PC for showing slides/photos/CDs. Supper - hot nibbles and dips, salads, sandwiches, tea, coffee, tray bakes - £5.00. Use Stranmillis door (old main entrance) - ring bell.

Members & guests only. **Contact Catherine Tyrie on 90-383152 to arrange to bring in electronic material c. 1 week in advance.**

Thursday, April 14th - THE CLOTWORTHY SPRING LECTURE

Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim; 7.30pm. '*Making Gardens - with an Artist's Eye*'. Daphne Levinge Shackleton explores the use of colour schemes and interesting plants to make gardens of inspiration and atmosphere. A botanist by training, an artist by inclination, Daphne has made gardens throughout Ireland, including the popular Lakeview Gardens in Co Cavan. Refreshments provided. Members free, non-members £1.00. Joint with Antrim Borough Council.

SNIPPETS

Heritage Bulbs have just launched a heritage vegetable list, called 'Wild About Veg' which offers over 30 heritage varieties plus some 'modern classics', chosen with Irish conditions firmly in mind. Irish varieties on offer include the 'Tipperary Turnip', the Irish Green Pea, and the 'Bawn Onion'. From further afield they have tomatoes from Russia and the Ukraine, peppers from Hungary and Ohio, Yugoslavian lettuce and a Japanese red carrot! Prices from €2 per packet, growing and cooking tips included.

Free catalogue from Heritage Gardening at West Wing, Tullynally, Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath, Tel 044 62744.

Snowdrop Week at Altamont Gardens: This is the third annual Snowdrop Week to be held at Altamont Gardens, Co. Carlow, and is likely to be the busiest yet, judging by the increase in visitors last year over the previous year. It will be held on the second week of February, from Monday the 7th to Sunday the 13th. A guided tour of the snowdrop collection will be given each day at 2pm. A number of garden club groups have already made bookings and these are being accommodated in the mornings during this week. The snowdrop collection continues to increase and some interesting cultivars have been added since last year. For further details you may contact Paul Cutler or Pauline Dowling at Altamont, telephone: 059-9159444.

Kilkenny Castle Park Lecture Series 2005: A series of garden lectures will be held in the Parade Tower, Kilkenny Castle, commencing in January 2005, free of charge, and open to all. The following schedule is for January to March 2005:

Wednesday, 27th January 2005 at 8pm. Designing a Potager, by Joy Larkcom. Everyone has room for vegetables; even the tiniest garden can look beautiful and grow luscious vegetables and salads. The secret is the design, colourful varieties, planting in patterns, integrating fruit flowers, herbs and vegetables.

Wednesday, 23rd February 2005 at 8pm. Do it yourself Garden Design, by Paul Maher. By following some easy steps, garden design is not as daunting as it may initially seem.

Wednesday, 23rd March 2005, at 8pm. The Making of Our Garden, by Frances Mac Donald. Frances will outline the development of the Bay Garden, in Camolin, Co. Wexford, following the development of the main garden, the rose garden, hot borders, pond garden and woodland.

For further information please contact Sally O' Halloran, Kilkenny Castle, Kilkenny, on (087) 2303834.

Airfield Gardens' Spring Programme sounds very interesting and it should be worth enquiring about it. The following are available:

1. A month-by-month Practical Gardening Workshop by the Airfield gardeners.
2. One day Master Classes in each of the following: Propagation, The Spring Garden and The Organic Garden, each presented by the Airfield Gardeners.
3. National Tree Week, March 7-13th: A Tour of the Trees of Airfield.

All times, dates and costs have yet to be confirmed. Please contact Airfield Trust Tel: (01) 298 4301, E-mail: gardens@airfield.ie or www.airfield.ie for details

You can also visit the Airfield Farm and Garden display at the Homes & Gardens Exhibition, RDS March 17th-20th

The GLDA's 9th International Seminar will be held at the Astra Hall, University College, Dublin on Saturday 5th February 2005 and is entitled: Finding the Designer's 'Anam Cara' (Spirit-Friend)

The theme of all four speakers at next February's Garden & Landscape Designers Association Seminar is environmental sensitivity and sustainability. All display a strong respect for the heart and soul of the natural landscape – hence the Seminar title, 'Anam Cara'.

Landscape architects **Ulf Nordfjell** from Sweden and **Steve Martino** from Arizona take their inspiration from their respective environments and both have picked up many awards for outstanding and innovative landscape design and have alerted public imagination to a greater appreciation of regional and local environments.

Kim Jarrett has gained prominence in landscape design and realisation in his native New Zealand and again this year at the Chelsea Flower Show when he was awarded a gold medal for New Zealand's entry, of which he was co-designer and team leader. In

both his public and private commissions, he is recognised as a skilled interpreter of an intrinsically New Zealand and Pacific landscape style.

Speaker **Raf Seghers**, of Seghers Eco Plant, is a Belgian specialist in the design and installation of multi-functional living 'green roofs' and natural swimming pools and brings an up-to-the-minute ecological approach to the purification and utilisation of waste water and to the conservation of a vital natural resource.

Attendance at the day-long Seminar costs €125 and includes full buffet lunch, morning & afternoon tea/coffee. A list of convenient good value Dublin accommodation for the Seminar is available. For further details contact the GLDA office at 73 Deerpark Road, Mount Merrion. Co. Dublin Tel. 01-278 1824. Fax. 01-283 5724. e-mail: info@glda.ie www.glda.ie

Irish Wild Flowers, painted by Susan Sex, on New Stamp Series:

Congratulations to Susan on having her Irish wildflower paintings used in new series of definitive stamps launched by An Post in September last. The theme of the series was Irish Wild Flowers and initially 7 new stamps were introduced. The stamps are denominated at 4c (Dog violet), 5c (Dandelion), 48c (Primrose), 60c (Hawthorn), 65c (Bluebell), €2 (Lords and Ladies) and €5 (Dog-rose).



Ireland has a relatively mild and moist climate, making it possible to grow a wider range of garden plants than in most places in the temperate world. These native wild flowers consist of those that have grown here since before Ireland was separated from the European landmass after the last ice age and those that are capable of long distance dispersal and which arrived here in the winds. Some wild flowers, like the hawthorn and the widely found daisy and dandelion, are known to everyone. Others are not so well known and may be found only in certain parts of the country or are confined to special habitats. This stamp series is a mixture of the common and familiar with the rare and unusual. Bright and colourful flowers are included with those that are less spectacular in appearance but are just as important in the vegetation. The series provides a window to the world of the Irish flora and attempts to give a flavour of the variety of wild flowers that can be seen in the Irish countryside. (Text from An Post)

Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

Dangerous Gardens, the Quest for Plants to change our Lives, by David Stuart is a grippingly interesting read, a gardening book with substance and one where text outshines illustrations, though these are very good, where the author wends his way through the fascinating story of the uses we have made of plant materials through the ages. It was an account which left me amazed that the human race has managed to survive its fascination with plants. David Stuart describes man's interaction with plants as "a child playing with fire over a barrel of gunpowder." Deadly Nightshade, *Atropa belladonna*, was praised as effective in treating a range of conditions while aconite and henbane were used as painkillers. On the other hand is the story of Felix Hoffmann who isolated acetylsalicylic acid from willow trees to give us aspirin. The demand for effective medicines opened the doors for con-artists and quacks and their stories make interesting if cautionary reading. Strychnine and hemlock were the substances of favour for poisoners through the centuries and *Cannabis sativa*, qat and coco leaves all have their interesting stories. Plant extracts were used to attain closer unity and communication with the gods, to help attain life everlasting, to cure our many ills or to kill our enemies. Their uses and their stories make interesting reading, especially when told by so skilled a storyteller as David Stuart. [*Dangerous Garden, David Stuart, Frances Lincoln, London, 2004, 208 pages, £23, ISBN 0 7112 2265 7*]

When does a gardening book become regarded as a classic? When a book is still highly regarded after many years, when it has been reprinted several times, when two publishing houses are currently issuing reprints then such a book is certainly approaching the status of "classic". *Down to Earth* by Anne Scott-James was first printed in 1971 and still enjoys its original popularity. Anne Scott-James presents a treasury of gardening ideas based on her own experiences and expresses them in an opinionated, witty and entertaining way. There is nothing wishy-washy, airy-fairy here, just good advice and clear opinion. She has taken her own advice from such well-regarded gardeners as Vita Sackville-West, Margery Fish and Hugh Johnson and regards Hidcote and Sissinghurst as two gardens which everybody should see before starting to design their own patch. When stocking one's garden she advises that when visiting friends' gardens "it's wise to grab every offer when it's made" and when planting she suggests following Margery Fish's advice: "Plants are happy in close company, plant them much more thickly than they tell you in the books." When reading the book I regularly came across sentences which simply demand quoting – her comment on weeding, that how one did it, whether on knees or bending over, depended on whether one had a bad back or bad knees; that men and women had a different approach to feeding plants: men would use artificial fertiliser while women would use compost, "like a nanny pushing cereal into a baby." This is a book which is a good read

as well as being one which dispenses good advice. Well worth a read. [*Down to Earth, Anne Scott-James, Frances Lincoln, London, 2004, 191 pages, £14.99, ISBN 0 7112 2425 0*]

The material contained in *New Shoots Old Tips by Caroline Holmes* was first heard on BBC Radio 4 and was collected from a hunt through old gardening writings. These range back through the centuries and while they can appear arcane, even zany, many of them hold mostly true to this day and, more importantly to the reader, they are still entertaining. The book is a great source of interesting quotations for the literary gardener. George Bernard Shaw states that “Gardening is the only unquestionably useful job”, a comfort and encouragement to today’s gardeners. Samuel Reynolds Hole, later Dean of Rochester, wrote: “The principal value in a private garden is not understood. It is not to give the possessor vegetables and fruit (that can be better and cheaper done by the market-gardeners), but to teach him patience and philosophy, and the higher virtues – hope deferred, and expectations blighted, leading directly to resignation, and sometimes to alienation.”! This is a book to dip into now and again, a good five minute read now and again at bedtime, perhaps, the perfect book for the doctor’s waiting room. [*New Shoots, Old Tips, Caroline Holmes, Frances Lincoln, London, 2004, 208 pages, £12.99, ISBN 0 7112 2367 X*]

The London Gardener, Guide and Sourcebook by Elspeth Thompson is an excellent guide to gardens and gardening in the British capital. The first section is perhaps not immediately applicable to many of us as, drawing on her own extensive of experience there and on her two allotment plots, it advises on the challenges and opportunities of city gardening. However, much of the advice given would be applicable to someone in a similar urban situation. The middle section of the book gives a very worthwhile personal tour of some of London’s horticultural treasures, from the well-known large parks to some more personal and intimate gardening spaces. The final section lists sources for the London gardener: garden centres, where to buy accessories, information on horticultural societies, all telling you exactly where you can get whatever you need for your garden. The book is beautifully written in an entertaining and captivating style and would be very useful for the visitor to the city as well as to the resident. [*The London Gardener- Guide and Sourcebook, Elspeth Thompson, Frances Lincoln, 2004, 287 pages hardback, £12.99, ISBN 0 7122 2259 2*]

Toby Musgrave may be known to readers from his appearances on several BBC gardening programmes. He is a garden historian but in two books of his which I have to hand he turns his hand to more modern gardening matters. *Cottage Gardens - Romantic Gardens in Town and Country* and *Courtyard Gardens – Imaginative Ideas for Outdoor Living* both have a similar layout and approach to the subject: the author presents excellent photographs of the best examples of courtyards and cottage gardens and discusses the strengths of the designs in each and then continues to present his own designs based on the central ideas of his examples. There are courtyard gardens showing Roman, Renaissance, Islamic and Japanese influences and others

based on such themes as the tropical garden and the easy-care option. Each is illustrated with a wide range of excellent photographs and accompanied with advice and hints on how to create your own version at home. Similarly, *Cottage Gardens*, presents eight different stylistic approaches to the cottage garden, illustrated with examples of successful designs and followed by designs suggested by the author. This is followed by a second section which includes eight cottage gardens based on themes and climate, for example, the dry garden, the cut-flower garden or the herb and vegetable garden. In both books the photographs are excellent; the text good, though a little difficult to follow at times due to the large number of illustrations and, disappointingly, the author's designs were quite uninspiring, unimaginative and obviously not the author's forte. Had he kept to an account of the best examples of both of these types of gardens I believe he could have written two far better books. [*Cottage Gardens*, Toby Musgrave, Jacqui Small, 2004, 160 pages, hardback, £20, ISBN 1-903221-19-6. *Courtyard Gardens*, Toby Musgrave, Jacqui Small, 2000, 160 pages, hardback, £20, ISBN 1 903 221 01 3]

Classic Garden Plans by David Stuart, a very attractively presented book, aims to assist you recreate the essential elements of some very well known gardens in your own plot. Inspiration is taken from the creations of the likes of Gertrude Jekyll, Frank Lloyd Wright, Vita Sackville-West, Lawrence Johnson, Margery Fish and Piet Oudolf. As David Stuart explains in his introduction: “*Some of the gardens have been built by kings and princes, others by gardeners with much less wealth. But because they are dreams, they can also be shared and so become independent dreams in their own right.*” The photography of the source gardens is excellent as are the accounts with each and, happily, the offered designs and planting suggestions would grace and improve many of our gardens. [*Classis Garden Plans*, David Stuart, Frances Lincoln, 2004, 160 pages, hardback, £20, ISBN 0 7112 2386 6]

IGPS member, Dermot O Neill has brought out another offering this Christmas: ***Discover Gardening with Dermot O Neill***. The book is aimed at the beginner and outlines the basics on a wide range of gardening topics: Annuals & Biennials, Bonsai, Rock Garden & Alpine Plants, Herbs, Soft Fruit, Topiary, Weeds & Weed Control among them. There is enough in the book to get the beginner off the ground, so to speak, good solid advice, practical examples and suggestions and all presented in a clear and concise style. Were every gardener to be perfectly acquainted with the contents of this small book, the gardens of Ireland would be the better for it. [*Discover Gardening with Dermot O Neill*, Dermot O Neill, Poolbeg, 2004, 118 pages, softback, ISBN 1-84223-184-7]

Irish Garden Plant Society Committee Members

Chairman: Dermot Kehoe

Vice Chair: Mary Bradshaw

Secretary: Patrick Quigley

Treasurer: Ed Bowden

Committee Members: Sarah Ball, Brid Kelleher, Paul Maher

Executive Assistant: Position vacant

Collection Coordinator and Seed Exchange Manager: Stephen Butler

Munster Representative: Kitty Hennessy.

Northern Representative: Patrick Quigley

Editor "Moorea": Mary Forrest

Editor Newsletter: Paddy Tobin

Correspondence should be sent to "Irish Garden Plant Society, c/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9." However, please note that staff at the Botanic Gardens cannot deal with telephone queries regarding the IGPS.

Material for the newsletter can be sent directly to Paddy Tobin, "Cois Abhann", Riverside, Lower Gracedieu, Waterford. E-mail: pmtobin@eircom.net, Phone: 051-857955.

The committee needs a few new members. Anybody who is willing to help please contact Ed Bowden at (01) 8436297. Committee meetings are held about 8 times per year at the Botanic Gardens Glasnevin. Somebody interested in P.R. would be particularly welcome.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY NEEDED:

Angela McCrone Donnelly, our Executive Secretary, is moving on and we are looking for a replacement. If you have a few hours to spare, are computer literate and keen to help the Society please email us at igps@eircom.net or write to The Hon. Secretary, I.G.P.S. C/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.

The job involves collecting mail regularly from Glasnevin and dealing with this if necessary between committee meetings, answering emails, maintaining membership database and attending committee meetings (8-9) per year. A computer, filing cabinet etc are supplied and an honorarium and expenses will be paid"