



*The Newsletter of the
Irish Garden Plant Society*



Issue 107, January 2008



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Front Cover Illustration: Galanthus ‘Drummond Giant’

Galanthus ‘Drummond Giant’ is an excellent garden plant, a good strong snowdrop which clumps up very well in the garden. Although not widely grown as yet, those who have grown it have been delighted with it. The snowdrop originated with Mrs. Stasia O Neill, Ballon, Co. Carlow and here is her account of its origins:

“I bought a bowl of six bulbs at Xmas 1958 at Drummond’s Garden Shop in Pembroke, Carlow. All blooms were alike. They were a change from the more usual cyclamen, chrysanthemums etc. When they died back, I planted all six in a group under a large spruce, where they got very little light or nourishment. About 15 years later I moved them and sowed them into a good site. I had very little gardening time or experience then. Anyway they flourished and increased well and started to flower in January/February. After a few years I gave them to Mrs. Corona North, Altamont Gardens. She planted some in her borders and gave some to friends. She also sold them in her garden centre.

Drummonds were Agricultural Seeds and Grain Merchants in Pembroke, Carlow. They ran a horticultural shop and nursery alongside the above. They also had a horticultural shop on Westmoreland St. opposite Trinity College.



Editorial

Things are Moving!

In the editorial of the last issue I outlined the efforts of the National Committee to progress the work of the conservation of Irish plants. You each received an inserted list of Irish plants and were asked to identify those you grew and whether or not they were in suitable condition to allow for propagation. The response to this initiative has been very encouraging and marks a beginning to a new era of conservation of Irish plants within the society. I will leave the details to Brendan Sayers who has very kindly written an update on this work for the newsletter. However, I simply must take this opportunity to thank the members who took the time to return the information to the members of the National Committee and also to further commend this work which the National Committee has undertaken.

I am delighted to be able to present a range of excellent articles for your interest in this newsletter and wish to thank the contributors for their time and efforts. Contributors are the lifeline of the newsletter and I would encourage more members to try their hand at writing on some aspect of gardening which is of special interest to you. One group who contribute significantly to the newsletter but, I believe, do not get the recognition they deserve are those who write the reports on the various activities of the society, winter lectures and summer visits. Dear Roving Reporters, you have my deepest gratitude.

Of note in this issue: Paul Maher has written an excellent account of the Glasnevin expedition to Chile. Most members can only enjoy such undertakings through the recollections of the likes of Paul and it is a great pleasure to be able to read of his work at the cutting edge of plant conservation at an international level. Members of staff at the Botanic Gardens have been the backbone of this society for many years and their continued involvement adds a depth of knowledge and experience to the society which is of tremendous value. Fortunately, those several members of the staff at Glasnevin who have been long time members of the society have risen to senior positions within the Botanic Gardens and continue to promote the importance of the conservation of Irish plants to the students who pass through the gardens.

*Sincerest congratulations to Stephen Butler and the horticultural staff at Dublin Zoo on being granted provisional status as National Collection Holders for their collection of *Libertia*. Stephen has written a very interesting account of the collection for the newsletter and, of course, he also has an update on this year's Seed Distribution Scheme. Rae McIntyre looks back on 2007 in her own inimitably whimsical and self-deprecating manner while Peter & Nicola Milligan recalls some horticultural bedtime reading which they have enjoyed over the years and the selection of titles would grace any bedside locker. On the other hand, Keith Lamb has gone up the walls to continue his gardening. You will have to read on to enjoy these articles.*

*There are two publishing events which I cannot fail to mention as they relate to two members of the society. "**Helen Dillon's Gardening Book**" is simply a delight in which Helen recalls her successes and failures, her changes and development in her garden over the years as well as dispersing the*

gardening wisdom she has accumulated through experience or from gardening friends and mentors and all this in her usual entertaining and humorous style. An excellent contribution from Helen; but we would expect nothing else.

There is also **“Wendy Walsh – A Lifetime of Painting”** from Nick Wilkinson and E. Charles Nelson. This is simply a beautiful book, a stunningly beautiful book which is appropriate given its subject matter. An initial section of the book gives Wendy’s background and development as an artist while the main section has forty four full page botanical plates showing the beauty of Wendy’s work that we have come to appreciate so much.

Finally, please tolerate a return to the theme of plant conservation. With the work being undertaken by the National Committee on the conservation of plants with an Irish interest it is important to emphasise the important part which the individual member can play in this work so that members do not imagine it is something to be left to the committee and something in which they cannot make a significant contribution. The I.G.P.S. is affiliated to the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens, the U.K. group which shares our interest in plant conservation. A recent news briefing from the N.C.C.P.G. went as follows:

NCCPG National Plant Collection Facts:

2007: 654 National Plant Collections covering genera from *Abelia* to *Zephyranthes*

Each Collection covers a single genera or a collection of plants relating to an historic period or plant collector.

Collections are situated in Royal gardens, famous gardens and private back garden; in greenhouses and on allotments; in heritage properties, local authority parks and botanic garden, in zoos and by garden centres and nurseries. Plants in Collections range in size from minute Alpines to mature trees

NCCPG National Collections are held by:

- Two of the Royal Households, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and Wakehurst Palace, the National Botanic Gardens of Scotland, the University Botanic Gardens at Oxford and Cambridge and by the RHS at Harlow Carr, Hyde Hall, Rosemoor and Wisley
- 72 charitable trusts ranging from Abbotsbury Sub-Tropical Gardens to West Dean Gardens
- 44 education establishments including botanic gardens, universities and colleges
- 81 governmental, local authority and Crown/Royal estate organisations
- 49 National Trust and National Trust for Scotland properties
- 112 commercial nurseries
- **And by 296 individuals**

Yes, the individual is important and so are you. Your continued contribution to the society and particularly to the conservation of Irish plants is vitally important and I hope you continue your support of the society’s work.

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The Irish Cultivar Preservation Programme by *Brendan Sayers*

Initiated at the Extraordinary meeting last May and encouraged by the fantastic response to the list of cultivars distributed with the last newsletter, a small group of members, those interested in The Irish Cultivar Preservation Programme, gathered in the auditorium at the National Botanic Gardens on the evening of Tuesday, December 18th. The item for discussion was the results of the mini census and to brainstorm over the best way to proceed with the information at hand.

In all there were 59 replies sent back (I am sure there are some more to come, so fish it out from the pile and return it please) which included 82 named plants with Irish associations. To get some idea of where these 82 lie in relation to what priority should be assigned them they were matched against two editions of the Plant Finder, 2003/04 and 2006/07. The Plant Finder is a Royal Horticultural Society publication that is produced on a yearly basis and lists plants available from nurseries, mainly in the UK. Having completed this comparison it was clear that we were dealing with some plants that are in no danger of being lost to cultivation and others that are. A breakdown of the results is given in the table below.

Of the 16 plants that do not appear in either edition of the Plant Finder* we have attached a category of High Priority. For those listed in 9 or less nurseries we have attached a category of Lower priority. The remaining 46 cultivars are available in so many nurseries that we do not see them as in need of immediate action other than a monitoring of their availability over the coming years.

In his editorial, Paddy Tobin posed the hypothetical question “what will happen then?” Well, some responses ticked a cultivar as being cultivated but not available for propagation. Paddy also pointed out that the intention is not to have members gardens invaded with trowel and secateurs-yielding thugs so if there was a fear there, let it be gone. Some plants are still young and not suitable for bulking up. That too is fine and it is good of members to allow us to know that plants are there for the future. For those that had plants and were willing to propagate or provide propagation material an ‘Adopt a Plant’ or, more correctly, ‘Adopt an Irish Cultivar’ proposal form will be winging its way to you soon. This will allow members to become involved in a structured way but with limits set by each individual member as to what they can achieve in a given amount of time. The Plant Group will be setting targets for late 2008 for themselves and will invite members to do the same. However it is important to remember that one more propagation of an Irish Cultivar is a step forward and that is the direction in which we are going.

The more members that become involved in the project the greater a success it will be. So if you feel that you are unsure about the plants in your garden and whether they are indeed Irish Cultivars - pen a letter/email to the plant group. If you feel you need assistance with propagation in the form of advice – pen a letter/email to the plant group. If you are short of space and do not have the time to propagate and pot up – pen a letter/email to the plant group and we will find someone to do the work; all you will have to do is supply the cuttings. If you did not get a list to check or have lost it – the Plant Group are sending it again in the next newsletter. If you need to know what is going on and how we are progressing – look carefully at the newsletter where we will keep you posted. Hopefully this information sharing will extend to an electronic format also.

So, lastly it is for me to thank all the members who replied. It was seen as a great show of interest and an encouragement and confirmation that IGPS members are indeed interested in Irish Cultivars and need a little assistance in getting things moving.

Thank You

From all members of the Plant Group

For more information send letters to: Attention of the Plant Group, I.G.P.S., c/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.

Send emails to pseudobren@gmail.com

- Dianthus ‘Chomley Farran’ is listed in Plant Finder 2006/07 for one nursery.

HIGH PRIORITY Irish Cultivars from census not available in Nurseries listed in the Plant Finder 2003/04 nor 2006/07	LOWER PRIORITY Irish Cultivars from census available in LESS THAN 10 Nurseries listed in the Plant Finder 2003/04 nor 2006/07
<i>Anemone nemorosa</i> 'Lucy's Wood'	<i>Celmisia</i> 'David Shackleton'
<i>Betula</i> 'White Light'	<i>Rodgersia pinnata</i> 'Perthshire Bronze'
<i>Campanula cochlearifolia</i> 'Lisadell Variety'	<i>Narcissus</i> 'Colleen Bawn'
<i>Deutzia purpurascens</i> 'Alpine Magician'	<i>Viburnum tomentosum</i> 'Rowallane Variety'
<i>Galanthus ikariae</i> 'Emerald Isle'	<i>Narcissus</i> 'Lucifer'
<i>Galanthus</i> 'Coolballintaggart'	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i> 'Burren Rose'
<i>Gloxinia sylvatica</i> 'Glasnevin Jubilee'	<i>Buddleja davidii</i> 'Glasnevin Hybrid'
<i>Hebe</i> 'Headfortii'	<i>Primula</i> 'Tawny Port'
<i>Iris unguicularis</i> 'Kilbroney Marble'	<i>Saxifraga</i> 'Ballawley Guardsman'
<i>Pericallis</i> 'Purple Picotee'	<i>Agapanthus inapertus</i> 'Lady Moore'
<i>Pieris japonica</i> 'Daisy Hill'	<i>Cestrum roseum</i> 'Ilincullin'
<i>Rhododendron</i> 'Joan Slinger'	<i>Rosa</i> 'Belvedere'
<i>Saxifraga</i> 'Lissadell'	<i>Betula utilis</i> 'Trinity College'
<i>Primula</i> 'Rowallane Rose'	<i>Acanthus spinosus</i> 'Lady Moore'
<i>Dianthus</i> 'Chomley Farran'	<i>Galanthus</i> 'Hill Poe'
<i>Geranium x oxonianum</i> 'Lady Moore'	<i>Papaver</i> 'Lady Moore'
	<i>Chamaecyparis lawsoniana</i> 'Kilmacurragh Variety'
	<i>Rosa</i> 'Souvenir de St Anne's'
	<i>Primula</i> 'Kinlough Beauty'
	<i>Hebe</i> 'Lady Ardilaun' ('Amy')



*National Collection of **Libertia**
(species and cultivars) at Dublin Zoo*
by Stephen Butler

We have been collecting *Libertia* at Dublin Zoo for several years now; some of you have probably seen me refer to it occasionally. After much effort we decided we had enough to apply for National Collection status with the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens, see www.nccpg.com. We were successful and are now listed as having a *Libertia* Collection, at Provisional level as plants are still small for many species, and there is work to be done on the naming, with 20 taxa (either a specie or cultivar) listed. Mount Stewart has had a similar collection for many years now.

The interest started when we realised that none of our ‘guests’ at the zoo, actually ate *Libertia*; even geese left it alone, once established. We started collecting new species – a fairly slow process as most had to be brought in from the UK as plants, and were often not available, or nurseries did not send by post. The kindness of people who helped to get plants to us was great – complete strangers visiting a garden in Cornwall ‘press ganged’ (by the nursery!) into a courier role to get a few plants (gratis) over as they did not do postal deliveries from that nursery. While on visits to gardens I have shamelessly begged for divisions of interesting looking plants. Chasing seed led me to nurseries in New Zealand, to whom I still owe a pint or two for seed sent over, including newly described species after a review of the NZ native *Libertia*, and seed of *Libertia grandiflora* which I want to grow on to see how much different it is to the plant we grow as *L. grandiflora* – more of that below.

We raise a lot (guess at 5000+ over the past 10 years) of *Libertia* – mainly *grandiflora* – for our planting around the zoo. It has been a brilliant plant for us, easy from seed, very patient while waiting in small pots, quick to establish, tolerant of drought once established, great looking in flower, little maintenance needed, and green all year. Within the plants we have collected there are a couple of contenders to compete against it, but most of the genus is less suited to our planting, though still often very garden worthy. Some *Libertia* do cross pollinate rather easily though and while seed collecting in the past has been easy enough as it has nearly all been *L. grandiflora*, we need to be more careful in future, especially for any new species that we need to keep pure.

Our current *Libertia* list is as below – please note that names are as I received them and I have doubts about the names of several! My first priority is verifying the names as they

mature which will take at least 2 years. There are a few very obvious divisions within the genus to aid identification. Only a few sucker; a couple have bronze leaves while the majority have floppy green leaves and don't sucker. However, as they have come to me, here is the present list of plants growing at Dublin Zoo:

L. 'Amazing Grace' – a shortish plant, flowers held above fairly stiff green foliage, well spaced on stem. A hybrid of *chilensis* and *ixioides*??



Libertia 'Amazing Grace' Photograph by Stephen Butler

L. breunioides – a questionable name, not recognised in the botanical lists. The plant has stiff leaves that turn orangey when old and in winter, few flowers yet, and, unusually for most *Libertia*, it suckers, which probably means it has *L. peregrinans* as a parent, which would also explain the leaf colour. Few flowers produced so far.

L. caerulescens - a beautiful blue, seems not too hardy, shy flowerer; I have doubts about this plant's name as it is very like *Orthrosanthus*. Chile

L. chilensis - should be called *L. formosa* now, but this is a very different plant to other *formosa* we have, almost glaucous foliage, and the biggest difference is that it suckers, but looks nothing like the main suckering *L. peregrinans*.

L. elegans - a fairly short plant, white flower, but mine are all very young yet. Chile

L. Formosa - often seen, classic white flowers held in very dense clusters just above leaf tip level, on a great solid compact plant; probably the best for flower power in the garden. Chile



Libertia formosa. Photograph by Stephen Butler

L. grandiflora, often seen, our main planting all over the zoo, white flower held well over the leaves, easily seeds around too, generally a looser plant with slightly floppier leaves than *grandiflora* as correctly described. This plant has been around for some time, there is a question as to whether it is still a pure specie, or is a hybrid – hence my interest in getting new seed from New Zealand which should germinated in November and will allow proper comparisons to be made when the plants grow on for a few years.

L. 'Goldfinger – a hybrid between *ixioides* and *grandiflora*. A fairly new variety in trade, very stiff leaves like *ixioides*, golden centre rib.



*A planting of *Libertia grandiflora*, part of the “plains” planting at Dublin Zoo, taken in the month of May by Stephen Butler*

L. ixiooides, short stiff green leaves; stiff flower spikes held above foliage, orangey seed pods distinctive. NZ

L. ixiooides hybrid, purchased from Great Dixter, who describe it as a Helen Dillon selection (Helen no longer has it though!), hasn't flowered yet.

L. ixiooides 'Taupo Blaze', again a fairly new plant in trade, stiff leaves again, dark green, with reddish older leaves.

L. ixiooides 'Tricolor', a very dwarf stiff leaved plant, easy to look over and miss!

L. micrantha, seed just germinated; a newly described species after a revision of NZ species.

L. paniculata, a fairly short plant, soft green leaves, new to me, not flowered yet, said to be a tad tender. Australia

L. peregrinans, a suckering short plant, bronzish older leaves, stiff flower spikes held just over stiff leaves. NZ

L. peregrinans ‘Gold Leaf’, a fully bronze leafed plant, habit as specie.

L. procera, again a name not recognised by the taxonomists. A very vigorous plant, floppyish leaves as with *grandiflora* and *formosa*, but about a foot taller and the white flowers held on spikes reaching 5ft.



A close up of Libertia procera showing the excellent flowers. Photograph by Stephen Butler

L. sessiliflora, a blue flowered specie, the flowers held tight to the main stem (sessile – no stem to the flower), not a great plant with me, few flowers, and not great appearance. Many plants sold as *caerulescens* are actually *sessiliflora*. Chile

L. sp HCM 98089, from Chile, a new plant to me, not flowered yet, let’s see what it is! There are 3 listed in the *Plant Finder*, but somewhere the collector’s numbers got mixed up – one is from a trip to Nepal where there are no *Libertia* native!

L. ‘Taupo Sunset’ PBR, similar to ‘Taupo Blaze’ above

There are several more cultivars listed in the *Plant Finder* that are virtually unobtainable, or have been renamed, lost to cultivation, or the growers have realised the name is completely wrong. We can only keep trying!



Liberti

a sessilifolia. Unfortunately, although this photograph shows the tightly clumped flowers, it fails to show their lovely powder-puff blue colour. Photograph by Stephen Butler.

In addition, I have seed of the following:-

L. cranwelliae – just in from NZ.

L. mooreae – just in from NZ.

L. peregrinans ‘Gold Stripe’, only found this in trade as seed, no germination yet, and even then if it is a variety it may well not come true to type from seed! Only tried out as part of duties of a collection holder!

L. pulchella - no germination yet. Australia

Note: Stephen is the Curator of Horticulture at Dublin Zoo and can be contacted at: sbutler@dublinozoo.ie or 01 474 8930



2007 in Retrospect

By Rae McIntyre

If I had to write a report on my own garden this year I would put that time-honoured comment of school reports, “*Could do better*”. The sad thing is that I could have said that at the end of every year of my gardening life and then followed it with the vow that next year things would be different – even perfect. Next year there would be no nasty little patches of ground elder, no brambles suddenly sneaking out of hedges, no convolvulus twining around roses, no shrub pruned at the wrong time, no deadheading neglected, no plant needing nourishment left unfed, no plants sitting dolefully in pots waiting to be planted, no packets of seeds languishing in kitchen drawers and no thugs allowed to spread far beyond their allotted space. I know other gardeners who seem to attain and sustain perfection in their gardens. After I have visited them I come home, look round my severely flawed efforts and wonder why I bother.

During 2007 I have visited twenty-nine gardens, slightly below the average number of 32. Nine of these were in a group visit to gardens of Northumberland at the beginning of June and I had to admire how gardeners there had overcome the adversities of soil and climate to create places of great beauty. I am always whinging about the soil and climate in my own patch so I came home suitably chastened. I also came home with a number of Northumbrian plants. Even though transporting them was difficult because we had flown to Newcastle, I still managed. Some plants were posted. From others I removed the soil, wrapped them in damp tissues and polythene bags and packed them in my suitcase. Unfortunately I clumsily spilled some soil on the hotel bedroom carpet. Have you ever swept up soil with a hairbrush and chased after creepy-crawlies with tissues? It’s not something I’d recommend.

One of the interesting plants I was given by one garden owner was *Peucedanum ostruthium* ‘Daphnis’ which I had never seen before. Another member of the party insisted it was the variegated ground elder but Heather, the garden owner, set the record straight. It looks like the variegated ground elder but, so far, seems better behaved. Both are umbellifers, now called Apiaceae. The peucedanum has attractive grey-green and cream variegation and, as I write in late November, still looks as fresh as it did last June.

The Quiet Garden at the See House in Derry was opened on May 19th just two and a half years after I had first seen it as a wilderness. This one-acre walled garden is beside the See

House, residence of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe and his American wife Mary. It was she who had the idea of creating a quiet garden from the wilderness, a place for peace and contemplation where both sides of the N.I. sectarian divide could come together. My input was designing the planting schemes. I've written about this before but, to re-cap briefly, there were originally four large curving beds with a circular pool in the centre. One had pale yellow flowers, one had blue and white, one had mauve and ecclesiastical purple and one had warm pink and coral. All these were quiet, not in-your-face colours. Then along came John one day with a great sheaf of *Crococsmia* 'Lucifer' and red-hot pokers. Quiet colours they were not. However people are much more important than colour-schemes so another bed was made and John's plants were at the centre. I planted other red flowers to complement them. Later I was very glad I did because not long afterwards he developed a rapid form of cancer and died within a few months. This bed is now called "John's Bed". I don't even know his surname.

Some of us had planted hundreds of tulip bulbs, in the beds in November 2006 to flower when the garden was being officially opened in May. It was the most dismal wet November day when everyone went home except three of us who are on the wrong side of sixty. Margot's raincoat was so wet that she was able to wring nearly a bucketful of water out of it. We cheered ourselves with the thought of the glorious flaunting tulips on the sunny day of the opening. Alas, it wasn't and, yet again, the rain bucketed down. Moreover the winter had been so mild that the tulips nearly all flowered in April so only about a fifth of them were still showing colour.

The soil in the See House Quiet Garden is not good. It lacks humus, is shale-like in places and yet growth in the past six months has been amazing. It will, of course, need several more years before it stops looking like a new garden but many plants are making satisfying, spreading clumps. I think it must be due to pelleted chicken manure. One day when I was there planting I asked the Bishop if there was any manure left. There wasn't, so he kindly went off to the nearest garden centre to buy four tubs of the stuff. It's put in every planting hole and I noticed this November, when I was planting yet more tulips, that there are now earthworms in the garden. In November 2005, when we first started planting, there wasn't one to be seen.

The See House Quiet Garden isn't the only one, other than my own, I've been working in during recent months because I've been reorganising parts of my elderly parents' garden. My father is 88 and has emphysema so has breathing difficulties and no energy. My mother is 93 with osteoporosis and has lost 8 inches in height; she used to be five feet, eight inches tall. She also is semi-blind because of macular degeneration and her hearing is poor. They both live in the same house that my father's uncle bought them when they married in 1940. I spend two days a week with them to prepare their meals. Thankfully they have carers

coming in at regular intervals during the day, a cleaning woman they've had for years and a man who spends a couple of days a week in the garden. He does very basic things like mowing the lawn, sweeping paths and cutting back things. Oh Lord, how this man loves secateurs and clippers and making geometric shapes! I'm not talking about hedges or topiary here. He has done things like cutting the fern *Polystichum setiferum* into a perfect cone and a sarcococca that was about to flower into a cube shape. My mother has been hinting so strongly that I should supervise him that I have finally relented. He is actually a very good worker and just needs guidance so the garden is less like a wilderness now.

I always seem to be working at my parents' garden on days when the weather is fine and I yearn to be in my own garden. Anyway I've planted attractive things in containers close to the doors of the house where my mother can see them without having to walk painfully around with her walking aid. One of the borders in front of the house was full of bright green grass which I do not know but I was busy ignoring it. Not Mother who, in spite of the macular degeneration, could see it plainly and was doing some more strong hinting. In my own garden a border of this size would have taken two days to weed. In their garden, with its light, limy soil, it took me just two hours. I came across many pieces of lime about the size of golf balls. There is another bed full of *Libertia formosa* and *Geranium ibericum* waiting for me to reorganise next week.

Even though the soil in my own garden is damp, heavy and acid with the weeds locked in I still prefer it because I can grow my beloved rhododendrons and all those other shrubs like embrothrium, camellia, desfontainea, crinodendron and enkianthus that demand acid soil. One of my projects this winter was to remove all the wildly invasive herbaceous plants from one damp border and prepare it for yet another rhododendron border. Andy, the wonder-worker, got most of it done last Friday afternoon and it's almost ready for replanting. The soil was in much better heart than I thought it would be. There are times when I seriously consider removing all the herbaceous stuff from the garden now that I'm getting old and arthritic. I also think this will be the last year that I shall plant 600 tulips much as I love them in the spring. Daffodils enjoy life here and they are far less bother; I just stick them in and forget about them then get Davy to deadhead them with a golf club.

I thought global warming was going to pass us by here in Blackhill until I saw a daffodil on November 3. Not a snowdrop, a daffodil! It was up about 10 cm through the ground and was clearly budded. It has since grown to three times that and is in full bloom albeit looking rather bewildered amidst the lingering flowers of summer and autumn. Other siblings are joining it. They are all of the variety 'Rijnveld's' Early Sensation' which usually blooms here in late January but before Christmas in Cornwall.



A Book at Bedtime

On Garden Books, Garden Writers, and Gardeners

by Peter and Nicola Milligan

What is the source of the attraction of books for gardeners? Is it purely something to fill the long, bleak winter evenings when inclement weather has forced all gardeners indoors, a remedy against insomnia or a source of information and inspiration?

It may be educational if I start at the beginning of my own personal odyssey into the world of gardening books. My interest in gardening grew from my work with my grandfather and father in their gardens in Co. Down and my introduction to gardening literature came in the form of seed catalogues, and nurserymen's plant lists.

However, once my father had determined that my interest in gardening was no passing fad he gave me two 'real' gardening books. The first was entitled *All About Gardening* [1] and was edited by G. H. Preston (Assistant Curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) and written by J. Coultts (formerly Curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew). Now this was intended to be a serious introduction to the art of gardening written by serious gardeners of some standing. Sadly, it left me largely unmoved. Seemingly unending passages on the nature of soils, the techniques of gardening, garden drainage, etc., did little to fire my budding interest and if my second gift had been of a similar nature then my interest may have succumbed to the equivalent of a literature induced botrytis and withered away.

Happily the second book was of an altogether different form. Entitled *Adam the Gardener* [2] it was a compilation of articles that had appeared in the pages of the Sunday Express. In each article, one for every week of the year, Adam presented appropriate work that should be undertaken and, with the aid of drawings and related text, guided the reader through the required processes to produce wonderful fruit, vegetables and flowers. And who could fail to be impressed by the drawing of Adam. There he stood in what I assumed were moleskin trousers, carefully tied below the knee, a collarless shirt, neckerchief and waistcoat and hat. He wore a beard and the whole image suggested age, wisdom and patience - everything that was required to be a good gardener was conveyed in that drawing. I fell under the spell of this book and, as a result, developed my passion for gardening and garden books.

As my interest in gardening grew I sought books on the subject. At this time, the 1960's, few shops seemed to have a large stock of gardening books. However, through the pages of

one of the weekly gardening magazines I came across an advertisement for the Garden Book Club. Each month they sent a book that you could chose to keep or reject. From this source I encountered books by Margery Fish (*Cottage Garden Flowers* [3]), and Roy Genders (*Covering a Wall* [4]) to mention but a few. At this stage I was not aware of the stature of many of these writers – these were books that were ‘easy’ to read, and enjoy – in many cases an entertainment as well as an education.

My first introduction to television gardeners and gardening came via the work of Percy Thrower. It is possible that Mr Thrower was the first popular television gardener – certainly we watched his programmes with interest and, subsequently, I bought some of his books. One of the first was *In Your Greenhouse* [5], and this formed the ‘bible’ for my early work under glass. The sections dealing with ventilation, heating, soil mixtures, and, of course, guidance on specific plants (including my favourites – tomatoes and chrysanthemums), were invaluable to the greenhouse beginner.

Since Percy Thrower’s appearance a plethora of television gardeners have appeared, and in many instances have gone – I may say mercifully gone in some cases. These personalities are introduced as ‘plantsmen’, never seem to finish a job, promote the use of decking, odd stonework or metalwork (or some similar horrors), never seem to get their hands dirty, soon have their own range of seeds, and inevitably a book promoting their dreadful approach to gardening. I will not be blunt about this plague of so-called ‘plantsmen’ in case I offend their followers. Let me just say that I avoid both their books and their programmes.

However, I must point out that we do like watching the current Gardeners World team and in particular enjoy the offerings of Monty Don and Carol Kline. Mr Don has produced many excellent books and my favourite would be *The Jewel Garden* [6] written with his wife. This book gives a very personal insight into Mr Don’s life and gardening experiences.

There is a real temptation to list all of the books I possess as I could say something positive about each one. I fear the reader would grow bored quickly. To counter this I will focus on some books that I enjoy and re-read, or reference, frequently. I have the failing that when I have an interest in a particular plant, or plant family, I will seek out books on that topic. Typically, I will look for books by ‘old’ writers of some standing as well as modern contributors. To illustrate this I offer you the following ‘gems’ from real plantsmen and their writings.

As mentioned elsewhere roses, and particularly old roses, are a favourite of mine. There are numerous texts on this plant family but if I had to choose one it would have to be *Roses for English Gardens* [7] by Gertrude Jekyll. I feel that the knowledge and love of plants shines through her writing. A close second would be *The Graham Stuart Thomas Rose Book* [8]. In effect, this book collects Graham Stuart Thomas’s three famous rose books into one volume. As Christopher Lloyd noted “.... it is no use having just one of his rose

volumes, you must have all three ... and the trio must not be scattered in different parts of the house” This book solves Mr Lloyd’s problem, with excellent descriptions of the various species and cultivars and is garnished throughout with wonderful photographs and colour plates.

Snowdrops are another of my favourites and a classic text is *The Genus Galanthus* [9] by Aaron Davis. This is an excellent book containing a complete botanical treatment of the genus with sections covering taxonomic history, morphology, anatomy, cytology, etc. I must be fair and note that this is a ‘heavy text’, in other words a serious - even scholarly - tome, but I feel it is a must for any budding galanthophile. A lighter treatment of the genus can be found in the writing of Matt Bishop, Aaron Davis and John Grimshaw. Entitled *Snowdrops* [10] this text is invaluable for the excellent descriptions of the various species and cultivars of this wonderful plant family.

The clematis family attracted our attention some time ago – one of the first plants I grew was a *Clematis jackmanni*. My wife has a love of these plants and grows a number in various parts of the garden, on walls, over an old tree stump, and in pots. Christopher Lloyd has produced an excellent text on this subject – *Clematis* [11]. As with all of his writings Mr Lloyd managed to convey not only his knowledge of clematis but his love of this family. An interesting feature of this ‘old’ book is the second part which contains a descriptive list of Clematis in cultivation. I find such lists make fascinating reading as they provide a ‘window’ on a given period (in this case the mid-1960’s) showing the fashionable plants of the time.

I have a strong interest in bulbs from South Africa and my wife supplied what must be one of the definitive works on this material. Entitled *The Color Encyclopedia of Cape Bulbs* [12], and written by John Manning, Peter Goldblatt and Dee Snijman, this is a wonderful book with excellent descriptions of almost eighty genii accompanied by superb photographs. Old favourites such as *Agapanthus*, *Chasmanthe*, *Dierama*, *Gladiolus*, *Kniphofia*, and *Watsonia* appear in elegant profusion with the new (to me) wonders of *Spiloxene* (the aptly named Cape Star existing in wonderful bold yellows and whites) and *Veltheimia* (the Sand Lily with red Kniphofia-like flowers rising above their green lanceolate leaves). With such an excellent range of heat loving bulbs available perhaps the oft foretold global warming will give rise to new opportunities for bulb growing.

For general reading consider some of the texts listed below. They are by a mixture of ‘old’ and ‘new’ authors but I have found all of them to be interesting, informative and importantly an enjoyable read. All of the following authors are, or should be, well known as they have written a number of useful books.

In his obituary on E. A. Bowles the President of the Royal Horticultural Society noted that “.... Bowles was the greatest amateur gardener of the past half century” All of Bowles’

books have freshness and convey knowledge, understanding and a love of plants. The trilogy of texts entitled *My Garden in Spring*, *My Garden in Summer*, and *My Garden in Autumn and Winter* [13] provides a showcase for Bowles' wisdom and is well worth a read. There are some choice sections in the works including Bowles's description of the plants he grew in his famous "lunatic's corner". In addition Bowles wrote an interesting text entitled *The Narcissus* [14]. In his preface to a re-publication of this work Brian Mathew notes that "Certain books, because of their scholarly and historical content, never become outdated and are essential reference works for a particular subject. I regard E. A. Bowles's *Handbook of Narcissus* as one of these". This book is well worth a read as some of the historical facts presented, e.g. on the origins of various cultivars, I have not found elsewhere.

The work of Margery Fish is known and loved by many people. She wrote a considerable number of gardening books. In addition to her famous *Cottage Garden Flowers* mentioned above I would recommend *A Flower for every Day* [15] and *We made a Garden* [16]. In the first text Fish provides a month by month description of the plants growing and flowering in her garden. The second book describes the work undertaken by Walter and Margery Fish when, in 1937, the likelihood of war prompted them to purchase a house in the country. This book provides some interesting insights into the relationship between the husband and wife team and, Walter Fish's treatment of their 'gardener'. Apparently, despite frequent warnings, the 'gardener' continued to lavish attention on some chrysanthemums. Mr Fish took a pair of shears and chopped off the heads of the poor plants – a somewhat drastic solution.

The late Alan Bloom of Bressingham Hall in Norfolk combined the roles of farmer, nurseryman, businessman, gardener, plantsman and author with an ease that was astonishing. In his career he wrote almost thirty books the majority on gardening topics and the rest on his second love – steam engines. His first book was produced in 1944 and his last (a joint text with his son Adrian) was written in 1995. I would love to be able to list all of Alan's books – each contains several gems of knowledge for the reader - but I will recommend *Alan Bloom's Hardy Perennials* [17] and *Bloom's of Bressingham Garden Plants* [18]. The first of these books enabled Alan to recount his meetings with various nurserymen and plantsmen and to list all of the 170 cultivars that he raised and introduced to the gardening world. An interesting appendix to the book takes the form of Alan's 1939 catalogue – it is amazing to see the range of plants offered at that time. The second book lists over 5000 plants chosen by Alan and Adrian. Alan writes about perennials, grasses, ferns and alpine while Adrian focuses on dwarf and slow growing conifers (his special love) and heaths, heathers and shrubs. When Adrian started his garden at Foggy Bottom (beside Alan's famous Dell Garden) it was populated, on the whole, with conifers and heathers.

Christopher Lloyd, now sadly deceased, was another person with a seemingly endless supply of energy. He wrote articles for various papers and magazines for many years while

creating his garden at Great Dixter, cooking for his numerous friends and guests and writing gardening books. As with Alan Bloom's books I would like to list all of Christopher Lloyd's but again will have to settle for mentioning a few special favourites. *The Year at Great Dixter* [19] is, as the name suggests, a record of the garden presented in a month-by-month format. However, it is more than a simple record of the plants that are in flower each month. Christopher Lloyd's passion and love of gardening shines through every chapter and his views and anecdotes make for an enjoyable read. My second choice is *Dear Friend and Gardener* [20] jointly written by Christopher Lloyd and Beth Chatto. This book contains a selection of the letters exchanged by these old friends and gives a very open, and fascinating, insight into their friendship and their views on plants and gardeners.

As usual I like to include something with an Irish connection. Fortunately there are numerous good books to choose from including both old and new writers. An excellent example of 'old' writing can be found in the works of William Robinson. While Robinson wrote a number of books, all of which are enjoyable, I prefer a rare, small text that he produced in 1912, *The Virgin's Bower* [21]. This book is really very rare and first editions are hard to obtain. You may be lucky and be able to find one of the limited edition reproductions produced by the British Clematis Society in 1996. In his introduction to the reproduction, Peter Herbert (then current owner of Gravetye), writes that "... In collecting Robinson's books I found early on a copy of this rare and charming little book, *The Virgin's Bower*, and appreciated just how influential both he and his Head Gardener, Ernest Markham, had been in the world of clematis. From the beginning of this century and for the twenty five years that followed, they cultivated such marvellous plants as *C. tangutica* 'Gravetye', *C. texensis* 'Gravetye Beauty', *C.* 'Ernest Markham', *C.* 'Miriam Markham', *C.* 'Markham's Pink' and others ...". If you are fond of clematis do try to find a copy of this little book – the search is well worth the effort.

For 'new' writing consider the excellent trio written by Charles Nelson. The first, *A Heritage of Beauty* [22], should be well known to all IGPS members. An amazing volume of research must have gone into this work and it is of immense value to anyone interested in the plants developed or introduced in Irish horticulture. The other members of this trio, *Glory of Donard* [23] and *Daisy Hill Nursery Newry* [24], are fascinating histories of two great nurseries. Both texts approach their subject in the same way providing details on the founding, growth, and subsequent demise of these two well-known, if not world famous, nurseries. Importantly, both contain lists of the plants raised, named or introduced by these nurseries.

We can look to Southern Ireland for wit and wisdom in the writings of Helen Dillon. I love books that are 'collections', i.e. collections of material produced by the author over a period of time and finally drawn together to provide a single 'focus' of fact and fun. Such a text is Helen Dillon's *On Gardening* [25]. This contains a collection of articles originally published in *The Sunday Tribune* from 1992-1995 and is both informative and humorous.

At this point I must 'sneak in' another anthology, entitled *Gertrude Jekyll, The Making of a Garden* [26]. This book by Cherry Lewis contains a selection from the writings of Gertrude Jekyll. It is presented in five sections entitled 'Of Gardens', 'Spring', 'Summer', 'Autumn', and 'Winter' and provides an excellent overview of Jekyll's views and opinions.

From Northern Ireland a comparatively recent introduction, co-authored by Gary Dunlop of Ballyrogan Nursery, will be of interest to anyone who likes or loves *Crocoshmia*. *Crocoshmia and Chasmanthe* [27], by Peter Goldblatt, John Manning and Gary Dunlop, is a mine of information. For me the best section, written I believe by Gary Dunlop, is the latter half of the book which gives an excellent review of the history of the development of the numerous *Crocoshmia* cultivars and a description of these plants. Mr Dunlop owns and runs Ballyrogan Nursery in Co Down and has a superb collection of *Agapanthus*, *Crocoshmia*, *Dierama*, and *Roscoea* to mention but a few of the excellent plants he raises.

These are some of the books by both old and new authors that we turn to for information, and entertainment, time and time again.

And so, can we ever answer the question of what causes gardeners to write and to read? Perhaps for the plague of so-called 'plantsmen' their goal is 'filthy lucre' and the false glory of modern television stardom. But the real plantsmen - they leave their mark on the hearts and minds of all gardeners - all of us who have been inspired by reading books written by the people who really grew the plants, ran the nurseries, who gave us that choice plant - in other words all those true gardeners who share their love of plants, their plants and their wisdom - I believe it is this that attracts us all to their works - may it always be so!

I hope that this article will encourage you to think about the books you read and why you read them - not the RHS encyclopædias or similar reference books that we all need from time to time - but those special books that we all like to pick up and read again and again.

I hope you will find something in these books that will appeal to you. Perhaps, with some careful hints, you may receive one for Christmas. However before you rush out to buy them, or make Christmas gift suggestions, please consider some words of wisdom written by Christopher Lloyd in his book *The Adventurous Gardener* [28] –

".. do not listen to me - I don't ..".

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Glasnevin Chile Expedition 2007. by Paul Maher

Stretching as it does for 4329 kilometres, the ribbon-like landmass of Chile, 356 kilometres at its widest, down to a spindly 64 kilometres at its narrowest, is an intriguing country ten times the size of Ireland. Couple this with the fact that its flora amounts to just over 5000 species half of which is to be found nowhere else on earth and over half this exists in the Central Valley.

It was in this region that four members of staff from the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin spent three weeks in the latter half of April and the beginning of May this year. The purpose of the visit was twofold, firstly to assist in the training of staff at the Jardin Botainco, Universidad de Talca, and secondly to collect seed to enhance the collections of the gardens at Glasnevin, Kilmacurragh and other OPW gardens.

Dr. Peter Wyse Jackson, Director, had identified the need for staff training at the inauguration of the garden at Talca in 2006. In discussions with the Director of the Talca Botanic Garden, Steffen Hahn, it seemed that there was a dire shortage of formally trained horticultural staff available to run the gardens. There was one trained head gardener with the remaining staff employed as untrained assistants. There was a need for guidance on general horticultural principles, for example the proper procedure for planting a tree, which was among the basic aspects of horticulture demonstrated in a week long course presented to staff there.

The training week was well planned in advance with notes and PowerPoint presentations prepared, concentrating on propagation, composting, and health and safety issues. All presentations were well received, delivered with the aid of an interpreter. We further reinforced this with practical demonstrations of topics learned in the classroom. We held one such workshop the countryside area of Amerillo, south of Talca, where we demonstrated the correct methods of collecting material of value to a botanic garden and its collections in the wild. We worked for the last two weeks of the expedition, as we had planned, selecting and collecting plant material and preparing herbarium specimens. During this workshop we collected some very good bark colour forms of *Luma apiculata* for Glasnevin. These ranged from intense reds to pastel pinks; it will be interesting to see if the variation is maintained in the germinated plants. There was also a variation in seed size on the plants inspected with some seed as big as a blackcurrant. *Cestrum parqui* also grew in this area; in Glasnevin we grow it against a wall. *Peumus boldus*, another familiar plant

which grows in our conservatories at Glasnevin, was noted. It is a decorative plant whose leaves are used as a tea, and we encountered it many times on our travels.

We also participated in the inaugural All-Chile Botanic Gardens Congress. We had the opportunity to tell the story of Irish horticulture in that far-flung land to an audience of about 100 delegates and opened up a very interested debate on Ireland and Irish horticulture. Presentations were delivered on the gardens at Glasnevin and Kilmacurragh along with a presentation on the Irish flora.

The last two weeks saw us working from Talca as far south as Valdivia, a journey of 600 kilometres. Glasnevin has a good representation of the Chilean flora in its collections. However, when Glasnevin was asked to administer Kilmacurragh Arboretum in 1994 the quality of the Chilean plants there gave an added reason for a concentration on this aspect of the collection.

Travelling south from Talca we worked in an area called Vilches where we encountered magnificent specimens of *Nothofagus dombeyi*, giant trees, which towered over us and in the leaf-littered banks underneath we found plants of the extremely rare *Anemone moorei*. At first glance this plant looks like a mahonia; it is limited to a tiny population in this area and all agreed it would be a very good addition to any garden. *Gevuina avellana*, usually seen in gardens with acid to neutral soils, is impressive. It gets its species name from the European *Corylus avellana* which in turn got its species name from Avellino, a town in Italy known for its fruit and nuts. This is a plant that should feature more in Irish gardens.

Moving south from Vilches we worked along the Maule Valley rising to the frozen lands on the borders with Argentina. This area is reminiscent of the landscape of Lanzarote with temperatures at the lower end of the scale. On the long drive up through the valley we passed very gnarled old specimens of *Austrocedrus chilensis* which is native to both Chile and Argentina. It is categorised as vulnerable due to logging and fire and can live for 1,300 years if allowed to grow undisturbed. Laguna del Maule, at 2350 metres above sea level, is a frozen, forbidding landscape. At first glance it seemed almost barren; however there are many gems hidden in the stony gravel. *Viola cotyledon*, with its tiny golf ball clump of perfectly formed foliage, has to be carefully searched for. *Nassauvia species* have interesting but wrinkled clumps of foliage. Among the shrubbier plants were *Empetrum nigrum* and *Gaultheria pumila*, resplendent with reddish and white berries respectively. We ended the day on the mountainside, with temperatures dropping dramatically to below freezing as we put on layer upon layer of clothing to retain what little body heat was left.

On the road south towards the Araucaria region we stopped at Salto del Laja, salto meaning waterfall. There are several of these magnificent waterfalls in the lake district and all were dramatic. The flora in close proximity to these waterfalls grows in perpetual spray and

commonly found in such conditions are *Fuchsia magellanica*, *Gunnera tinctoria* and *Blechnum chilense*.

The Araucaria region situated in the Andean Cordillera with some small population in the coastal region was something we had long anticipated and it was humbling to see specimens that have been growing for the last 1,500 years side by side with their recent offspring. *Araucaria araucana*, or the ‘Monkey Puzzle’ as it is commonly called, is categorised as vulnerable and is listed on Appendix 1 of CITES, which limits trade in its timber and seeds. Fire and logging are the main threats but another threat is the over collecting of seed as a food source. We saw large piles of seed for sale in many markets; hard to think that as a result of CITES we could not bring any of them home. The bark of the Araucaria is very different to what we see at home. Usually our Irish trees show the bark with very obvious rings up along the trunk whereas in the wild the trunk is made up of large plate sections, curious and more interesting to look at.

Leaving the Araucaria forests behind us we travelled further south through Parque Nacional Villarrica in the heart of the Lake District. During our various stops we examined familiar plants like *Desfontainia spinosa*, *Rhaphithamnus spinosus* and *Lapageria rosea*. It is always interesting to examine growing conditions in the wild comparing them with how we hold collections at home. *Lapageria* is the national flower of Chile and was very rampant in what were light woodland conditions. The temperature ranges it would experience growing in Chile would certainly see it having to tolerate some frost. *Prumnopitys andina*, ‘The Plum-Fruited Yew’, was a plant we had expected to see on our travels and on encountering it we were not disappointed. *Drimys winteri* var. *andina* displayed a vast variation in leaf form, all of which were so attractive that we had to photograph them.

Having experienced the Araucaria forests we travelled towards the Pacific coast and the city of Valdivia. It was here we visited the Jardín Botánico, Universidad Austral de Chile, to meet once again with staff who had attended the training course in Talca. It was heartening to see a newly constructed compost heap there, a result of our demonstrations during the training week in Talca. From Valdivia we travelled further south to La Unión, gateway to the Parque Nacional Alerce Costero to see the *Fitzroya* forests.

Fitzroya cupressioides, commonly called ‘Alerce’, grows at more southerly latitudes than *Araucaria* and is similarly threatened. It is also included under Appendix 1 of CITES. *F. cupressioides* can live for up to 3,500 years. We visited the site of the oldest tree in that area, ‘The Mother of all Alerce’, an ancient tree growing in a valley which by virtue of its size was very difficult to photograph. It was interesting to see good specimens of *Weinmannia trichosperma* and *Pseudopanax* species growing in mossy pockets on its branches. It is in this area also that we crossed a sphagnum bog with *Lepidothamnus fonkii*, in the same family as *Podocarpus*, growing in vast swathes to only 16” high.

La Union, south of Valdivia, was our most southerly stop and it was from there we travelled back towards Talca along the Pan-American Highway, a magnificent stretch of road. Just imagine travelling at 120 kilometres per hour for the best part of a day and you get the idea of the vastness of the country. At Curanipe, a little town on the coast, we had one last collecting stop before Talca. We saw *Griselinia scandens*, a low scrambling shrub nothing like its hedging relative, growing in close proximity to the sea. Here too were good plants of *Puya chilensis*, long since out of flower but containing large amounts of very good seed.

After such a period in the wild, collecting both seed and herbarium specimens, a large bulk of valuable material accumulates. Certainly cleaning seed and drying specimens as you travel is vital to the success of the expedition; however it takes great organisation to keep everything together and lose nothing. Once we arrived back to Talca Botanic Gardens we spent the last day sorting and cleaning the remainder of the seed. There was also the business of presentation of certificates to staff who had attended the workshops. We took the opportunity to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the two botanic gardens. This agreement has been put in place to develop a joint program of co-operation in terms of development and education that will benefit both The National Botanic Gardens of Ireland and the Jardin Botanico Universidad de Talca.

The Team Members on this expedition were Paul Maher, (Expedition Leader), Seamus O'Brien, Kevin Kenny and Peter Meleady, all staff of the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland.

Snowdrop Week

Altamont Gardens, Ballon, Co. Carlow

Monday, April 11th – Sunday, April 17th

Guided Tours Daily at 2p.m.

Groups are very welcome but, please, book in advance.

Admission: Adults: €2.75 Groups: €2 per person

Snowdrops clearly labelled and the collection continues to grow and includes interesting Irish cultivars.

For further information contact Altamont Gardens: 059-9159474



Flowers on Walls – A Gardener's Sideline by *Keith Lamb*

We have several old limestone boundary walls. Such walls are valued for sheltering tender shrubs and for supporting climbers but have lent themselves to another aspect of gardening also. This is to fill the crevices with small plants that like good drainage and tolerate a starvation diet. These walls are colonised naturally by such little ferns as Wall Spleenwort and Rusty-back.

Of non-native plants, aubretia and white arabis come immediately to mind for such places, but the possibilities do not end there. House leeks (*Sempervivum*) are especially good for such situations. Legend has it that they are protection against fire when planted on a roof. When grown on a wall the Cobweb Houseleek retains all its cobweb, making a striking ornament whereas on the flat the white threads get washed off in the rain.

That little alpine, *Erinus alpinus* (Fairy Foxglove), thrives on our walls and seeds itself freely. Indeed, a word of caution is needed as it can seed itself down on flower beds below to excess. However it is easy to pull up. An added attraction is that in some years we see Humming Bird Moths visiting the flowers.

In a similar way, the small *Arabis rosea* adorns our walls with its flattened rosettes of dark green leaves and spikes of pink flowers. It grows to much the same height as *Erinus alpinus* when in flower and, like the latter, seeds itself about but in a more restrained way.

Campanula is a huge genus that provides species for almost every situation in the garden. At least one, *C. portenschlagiana*/ *C. muralis* will grow and flower profusely in crevices and holes in a wall provided they are not too arid. Give it a start in autumn to give it a chance to get established before being subjected to the stress of summer drought.

Indeed, autumn is a good time to plant all these wall plants, plastering them in with a clay-soil that will stay in place and not fall out before the plants have anchored themselves.

This by-way of gardening gives us pleasure with little effort. No doubt, other gardeners could add to the list of suitable plants.



Seed Distribution Scheme 2008

By Stephen Butler

Well, as I write this in late November, I think most seeds are in, though there is almost always a few more to arrive.....

What a woeful year to try and collect seed! My usual habit of collecting once a week or so all summer just did not work; many flowers were simply not pollinated – lack of insects or purely too wet pollen perhaps? Some seed heads I looked at were just so wet, and never dried out, that the whole head rotted off. Several plants I tried to get seed from had no viable seed at all after much drying and cleaning. Mind you, the plants were growing well and why not, with 51 days of rain in July and August!

Despite all that, yet again, our gallant band of seed collectors has come up trumps. About 300 seed packets have arrived in my hot sweaty hands (I must get out more!). That total is still without removing duplicates, ‘no seed present’ packets, ‘no species or cultivar’ packets, and without having checked every accession for good seed, so as usual it will come down, but I’d still expect about 230 or so, a very respectable total indeed.

What is really pleasant is getting seed back from people with a note ‘grown from IGPS seed’, which makes it all worthwhile!

So all we need now is for your good selves to request seed. Don’t forget to consider the seeds needs – some may need to be outside (or in a fridge) for a period of chilling to trigger germination. And of course some need more than one year to germinate, so patience (and good labelling) is required. Half the pleasure of the seed list (for me as well) is looking up the plants – and that’s also a good way to learn new plants, which is of course one of our aims as a society.

Happy sowing!

Stephen Butler Seed Distribution Coordinator
Curator of Horticulture, Dublin Zoo

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Regional Reports

Munster

“Gardens of Italy” with Patrick Quigley

October

Patrick Quigley made the long journey down from the Belfast to give us a talk on the Gardens of Italy for our October talk. He traced the development of Italian gardens starting with the Renaissance garden style of the mid 15th century and looking at how they developed down through the centuries from there. He pointed out that the main characteristics of this period were order, structure and formality. Town gardens tended to go for the enclosed garden style with strong links between the house and garden. Typical features were a shaded walkway with the main rooms opening on the garden. The garden offered a peaceful sanctuary from the noise and smells of the busy streets.

From the cloister garden style the gardening tradition towards the south began to show a Muslim-Islamic influence. Here the dominant features were that of a paradise garden with not much sense of order. The Medici family had great wealth and influence on the culture of that time and we can see evidence of this in their gardens. The tendency here was to have a fortified dwelling in the background with the garden starting to look out on the landscape and countryside. The garden would be linked to the villa in symmetry and geometry. From 1500 onwards there was a bid towards more sophistication. There was great use of elaborate statuary and structures on a vast scale.

Different periods followed and the Mannerist period of art in gardens reflected this. The scale of such features was immense especially the cascading water features, fountains and

statues of pagan goddesses at Sarco Bosco which had a unique style, totally different to that viewed previously. My own personal favourite was the last which was the very famous Ninfa Gardens, possibly because of the romantic notion of a garden slumbering for centuries around an old wealthy medieval town which was totally neglected when the wealthy family of Caetani was expelled. The garden stayed like that until the family moved back in 1911 and created a garden which is essentially English in style. This garden differs from the others in that it is a garden of plants which have been allowed to clothe the ruins of the old town. And thus, ended Patrick's talk which had been illustrated with his superb photographs.

Martin Edwardes

“Lathyrus - Cousins of Sweet Pea” by Sylvia Norton **Friday 30th November**

Sylvia is Chairperson of the Lathyrus Society of England and informed us of her NCCPG National Collection of Lathyrus. She started when she was young with one sweet pea; she also said her parents were keen gardeners especially her father, while her mother used sweet peas for many craft ideas. Sylvia became very interested in a collection and though her parents or herself had little botanical knowledge they often rehearsed the few names they knew; for instance Sylvia knew sweet peas were in the genus Lathyrus but not much more. She was led to about 40 species with early enquiries and with access to 20 she thought a national collection would be a good idea. With the help of Cambridgeshire NCCPG Group members Sylvia started to gather seeds and plants from as many sources as possible and National Collection status was granted in 1991. Sylvia was awarded NCCPG's *Brickell Award for Excellence in Cultivated Plant Conservation* in 2005.

She went on to talk about sweet peas growing wild in the Mediterranean and Japan in shady acres of dry land and scrub. Seeds had originally been sent from Italy across to England and sweet pea plants were first brought into the country in 1660. We had great pleasure viewing Sylvia's slides of many varieties of the lovely sweet pea and many rare ones from the collection of over 150. Her hobby has turned into a compulsion, a compulsion which gives much pleasure, she assured us, as well as increasing her knowledge of botany. When Sylvia retired from teaching she concentrated on developing her lovely new garden and it was a great joy to watch her slides of this. A wonderful night was had by all.

Kay Twomey

Leinster

“Botanical Gems of North America” by Panpyoti Kelaidis

October 10th

Panayoti Kelaidis spoke to a combined IGPS and AGS group at the National Botanic Gardens on October 10th. As Panayoti is in charge of Outreach at Denver Botanic Gardens, living and working in “Mile- High City”, it was to be expected that these botanical gems would be alpine plants. Working with “Plant Select” Panayoti has been responsible for the study, introduction and re-introduction of many hundreds of plants to the Rocky Mountains Area and on the slopes of Denali. It is difficult for us in our little island with only minor hills to understand that there are 500 mountain ranges in North America and that Colorado alone has circa 500 alpine species. This was a virtual tour of many such ranges and their accompanying flora in Alaska, Wisconsin, Idaho, California, Wyoming and, of course, Colorado.

So, we marvelled at photographs of the fragrant *Gentianopsis barbellata* which blooms in September, *Primula ellisiae* which grows only near Albuquerque, New Mexico and another fragrant alpine *Phlox pulvinata* growing like a covering of snow on the Medicine Bow mountains in Wyoming. The quite rare *Delphinium alpestre* was displayed growing on West Spanish Peak in Colorado and the early- flowering *Kelseya uniflora* growing in mats 30 cms. in diameter on the Bighorn mountains.

We were further impressed by the miniature *Aconitum columbianum* which grows only on one hillside and *Aquilegia caerulea* (lavender-scented) the state flower of Colorado. In the Steppe lands of Utah and Colorado no fewer than 250 species of Penstemon were to be found and *Eriogonum ovalifolium* occurs at all elevations on the Idaho Steppes.

Panayoti’s main message is that gardening is a form of conservation and we must focus on human abuse of the environment from the threat to *Iris lacustris* caused by “Vacation Homes” and to *Calochortus nuttallii* by oilwells in Utah.

We then focused in on the gems of Denver Botanic Gardens which has 40 troughs of alpine plants each from a different North American mountain range. We also took note of the Kelaidis family garden, carefully constructed brick mounds with plants at their peak in May but also in July/August. Panayoti concluded by praising the fertility of prairie soils which have never been leached by rainfall but he also stressed that he does not trust underground watering and all his plants are watered from overhead.

Incidentally, Denver Botanic Gardens has no less than 50 separate gardens on site so why not visit next time you’re in the U.S.A.?

Mary Bradshaw.

“Agapanthus to Zantedeschia” with Martin Walsh **November 15th**

Martin Walsh spoke to the Leinster group on November 15th about his recent trip to the Drakensberg Mountains in Lesotho and South Africa. His subtitle was “African Plants for Irish Gardens”. This is a very spectacular part of the world. The Drakensberg Range, composed of basalt and Cape limestone, is home to many ancient cave paintings and is listed as a World Heritage site. Martin’s photographs ranged from those taken at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens to the top of the Stanley Pass where circa 200 species survive, to the top of a 200 metre waterfall down which people abseiled to get closer to some ferns, to some Lesothan villages with their thatched roofs. His constant question was whether the encountered plants might or might not be suitable for Irish Gardens. These are his conclusions.

Agapanthus campanulatus will grow in damp meadows. *A.inapertus* ‘Graskop’ has a superb colour and would be worth trying. *Alepidea thodei*, a member of the carrot family, grows in a large range of habitats. *Arctotis arctotoides* is best grown in wet but gravelly areas. *Berkheya purpurea* and *B.cirsifolia* (thistles) will self-seed in damp conditions. *Brunsvigia* which grows in the Karoo area is a member of the Amaryllis family whose flowering cycle coincides with the winter rains. After flowering it dries up and blows away. It requires nutrient-poor compost and takes 4-5 years from seed to flower if you’ve got the time. Martin recommends the Restio species *Cannomis virgata* as growing ideally in acid soil but suitable as a container plant especially near a water feature. He concludes that the various *Diascia* species he photographed are more impressive in cultivation than in the wild. *Dierama dracomontanum* is widely available here. Perhaps we might try the white/pink forms of *D.robustum* as well. *Eucomis autumnalis* stays fresh for a long time and should be grown where it is clearly visible.

E. schiffii only reaches to 10 inches but has a very dark, inky- purple flower. Sounds promising? *Euphorbia clavarioides* grows in a succulent cushion and its sap is used by children as a chewing gum. It needs a very well- drained spot. There are no less than 11 different species of *Felicia* in the Drakensberg and 14 species of *Gladioli*. *Gladiolus saundersii* is used widely in breeding. *Glumicalyx goseloides*, a member of the foxglove family might succeed in Irish conditions, but is not widely available. IGPS members might like to grow *Harveya pulchra* because of its Irish connections with William Harvey (TCD). A member of the Broomrape family, it is difficult to cultivate.

There are 600 species of *Helichrysum* in Africa. *Helichrysum adenocarpum* with its red buds and white flowers was shown along with *H.milfordiae* growing in moist crevices on the Stanley Pass. *H. pagophilum* grows in very dense cushions, but very slowly! Martin recommends *Kniphofia caulescens* for its equally good foliage and flowers. The *Nerine angustifolia* he describes as “ribbon-leaved” was found growing in a marsh so might be suitable for a damp corner. *Phygelius aequalis* is best treated as a wild plant and cut back once per annum. I think it might be worth trying *Wahlenbergia cuspidata*, a deep blue member of the campanula family, but I think I might stay away from *Zantedeschia*

albomaculata however, as it has heavily-spotted leaves. (It always reminds me of funerals, anyway.)

Martin imparted an immense amount of knowledge to us at this lecture. It is clear that he thoroughly enjoyed his trip and even suggested that most members would be well able to undertake a similar one. I'm not so sure about the abseiling but I'm certain that many members would like to give it a try!

Mary Bradshaw.

29th November 2007

Adventures of an Irish Botanist with Dr. Matthew Jebb

From Ant Plants in Papua New Guinea, echiums and architecture in Barcelona to sea-kale on Greystones Harbour in Co Wicklow Dr. Matthew Jebb had his audience enthralled with photographs, encyclopaedic knowledge and many colourful stories. Our journey began in Papua New Guinea the largest tropical island on earth, colourful and diverse with twenty per cent of the world's languages and where Matthew spent six years as a young botanist. Some of the island's most amazing plants are the Ant Plant, an epiphyte where ant colonies nest with the ants providing protection and building spectacular compost heaps that provide nutrition for the host plant.

In September 2002 Matthew was a member of the NBG Glasnevin Central China Expedition that travelled along the Yangtze River collecting seed and herbarium specimens. The group retraced the footsteps of Augustine Henry visiting the Three Gorges, where the world's largest water storage reservoir was under construction. An amazing feat of engineering but equally amazing were an ancient *Ginko biloba* and in the village of Maoba the six hundred year old fossil tree, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* thought to be extinct until its discovery in 1941.

A visit to Siberia in 2006 at the invitation of the Central Siberian National Botanic Gardens afforded an opportunity to see forests of birch, spruce, fir, larch, and pine along the Yenesei River. Siberia is home to one fifth of the world's forests and half of the world's temperate forests. At Rybalka, Altai Province, on a river bank of white sand the Irish fleabane *Inula salicina* grows. In Ireland it is known in only one place, on the shores of Lough Derg where only six plants survive. The establishment of the Ardnacrusha hydroelectric station has reduced the seasonal changes in water levels in the lake and this allows a variety of plants to grow and compete with the *Inula*, and creates a less favourable habitat. As a result of the visit to Rybalka there are now ninety eight plants in the NBG nursery for planting out with the hope of re-establishing a healthy colony again.

We watched the movement of the genus *Nepenthes* as the earth developed over sixty million years. DNA can now tell us the story of its journey from areas as distant as Sri Lanka, Borneo, New Guinea and Madagascar.

In Malaysia, on Mount Mulu, with its limestone Pinnacles, sharp ridges of limestone with a 1500m rise in 2km, and Mount Murud, Matthew saw twenty two species of *Nepenthes*, including *Nepenthes hurrelliana* and the spectacular *Nepenthes loweii*. A wonderful photograph showed us a pygmy squirrel standing on the plant and during a food exchange let its droppings fall into the pitcher and thus provide additional nourishment for the plant.

Representing Ireland, Matthew has worked tirelessly with the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) including taking the Chair at the 8th Conference in Curitiba, Brazil, in search of a strategy to halt the loss of global biodiversity. This is a concern that must interest all of us, as oil palm plantations replace large tracts of rainforest, and closer to home sea-kale *Crambe maritima* on Greystones Harbour and other seashore areas is lost because of habitat changes. The gravity of the situation highlights the importance of the work of botanists like Dr. Matthew Jebb. How fortunate to have him on the staff at Glasnevin and involved in plant conservation in Ireland.

Mary Rowe



Looking Ahead

Munster

Here is the fixture list for 2008. All meetings held in the SMA Hall, Wilton, Cork, starting at 7.45pm

Friday 11th January 2008

Miriam Cotter

"Dreaming of a hot summer!"

Miriam will take us out of our winter blues with a talk on plants that will thrive and delight us in a hot summer.

Miriam is Chairperson of the Alpine and Hardy Plants

Friday 1st February 2008

Thomas Pakenham

'In Search of Remarkable Trees. On Safari in Southern Africa.'

Thomas Pakenham is the author of many distinguished books, including the book entitled "Meetings with remarkable trees" and he is Chairperson of the Irish Tree Society.

Friday 7th March 2008

Dr Matthew Jebb

"Saving Ireland's Wild Plants through horticulture."

Matthew is Keeper of the Herbarium, and is Horticultural Taxonomist at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin

Friday 4th April 2008

Mary Waldron

"Spring in the garden"

Mary Waldron writes a garden column each month in the Irish Garden Magazine.

There will be a Munster IGPS plant sale on Saturday 12th April at SMA Hall, Wilton Cork.

All members in the Munster area are requested to grow and pot up plants for this sale.

I wish you and your family a very Happy New Year,
Best regards,
Martin Edwardes

Leinster

Thursday 17th January

'Through the Windowpane' by Brendan Sayers

A lecture on the ongoing work in the glasshouses in The Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

Thursday 28th February

'Plant Hunting in Chile' by Seamus O'Brien

Seamus will present the Glasnevin expedition to Chile in May 2007

Thursday 27th March

'The Changing Flora of Ireland' by Dr. Declan Doogue

Declan organized the field work for the Republic of Ireland section of the B.S.B.I. Atlas of the British and Irish Flora.

Joint lecture with the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club.

Thursday 24th April

'Euphorbias and Cacti' by Orla Mullen

Joint lecture with the Cacti and Succulent Group.

May 3rd ,4th and 5th : A.G.M. Bunclody, Co.Wexford.

Wednesday 14th May

'Woodland Plants' by Tim Ingram

Joint lecture with the Alpine Society.

Northern Ireland

JANUARY 10 LECTURE A LABOUR OF LOVE - THE MAKING OF ' ORCHIDS OF IRELAND'; Clotworthy Arts Centre, Randalstown Road, Antrim; 7.30pm.

Susan Sex, the botanical artist, and Brendan Sayers, from the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin, will talk about their shared passion for orchids, and the mountain of research and drawing which has resulted in their recently published book 'Orchids of Ireland'. This beautiful book reproduces Susan's flowing watercolours, accompanied by Brendan's notes on each species. A small selection of these drawings have been loaned from the Botanic Gardens in Dublin, and will be on display in the Theatre Gallery in Clotworthy Arts Centre for the month of January. IGPS members free, non-members £2. Refreshments provided.

APRIL 19 GARDEN VISIT - Mrs Margaret Glynn, 2 Old Galgorm Road, Ballymena, BT42 1AL; 2pm for 2:30pm.

A return visit to Margaret Glynn's 2.5 acre garden with its established trees, shrubs and lawns, alpine sinks, herbaceous plants, annuals, scree and water garden and new woodland areas. Guided tour. Donations for Ulster Gardens Scheme.

DIRECTIONS: On A42 road to Portglenone, 1/2 mile west of Ballymena centre, at junction of Old and New Galgorm Roads. Black wrought iron gates. Car parking.

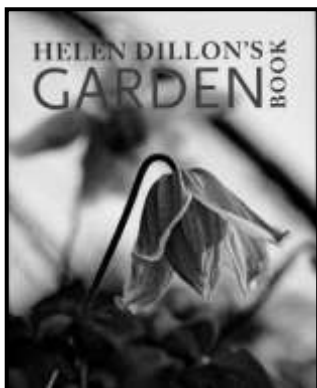
Note: At time of going to press this is what was available of the Northern Fixtures List. Northern members will be kept informed of the full fixtures list as it is organised.



Worth a Read?

by Paddy Tobin

A good book is always a pleasure and an armful of them around Christmas time is truly a delight. When I come to write this article for the newsletter I find that it is all the more enjoyable when the books I have in front of me are ones which I can recommend without hesitation and are ones I feel confident will bring enjoyment and pleasure to readers. It is particularly a pleasure that the first three books are from Irish authors and of Irish interest, something which always prompts me to enjoy them all the more.



Let me begin with our own dear and darling Helen Dillon – now you know where I stand. Helen has entertained, educated and led us (well, those of my age group anyway!) through our gardening experiences for quite a few years and justifiably holds the position of the most admired gardener in the country. She is admired for her garden, her gardening talks and her gardening books as well as her generosity with her advice and her plants. Her first book with Sybil Connolly was a treasure which inspired me for many, many years. This book, “*Helen Dillon’s Garden Book*” is another to treasure and contains the gems of wisdom and experience gained with soil-engrained fingers along with insights into her approach to gardening, the developments and changes to her garden and her amusing comments on a whole range of

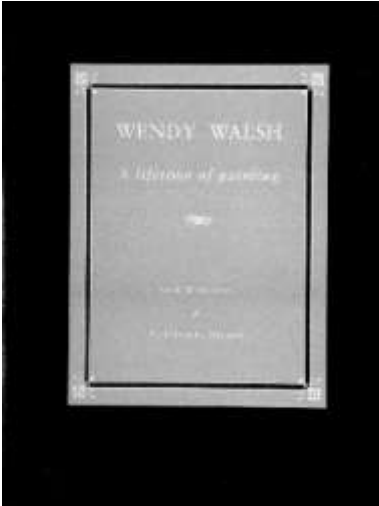
gardening topics. Yes, unhesitatingly, this is a book which is well worth a read. Thank you, Helen, a wonderful book.

[Helen Dillon’s Garden Book, Helen Dillon, 2007, Frances Lincoln, London, HB, 234p, £25, ISBN 978-0-7112-2710-1]

The second book is one which marks the lifework work of a most wonderful lady, Wendy Walsh, again an I.G.P.S. member and a generous contributor to this newsletter with her

beautiful cover illustrations. This is a book in two sections. The first is a memoir compiled from notes made by Wendy Walsh over the years and also from notes taken by Nick Wilkinson in conversation with Wendy. This first section outlines Wendy's life and her development as an artist and is generously illustrated with a range of her work from those earlier days. The second section is a suite of forth four botanical plates with commentary by E. Charles Nelson. This is Wendy as we know her best, beautiful illustrations, and

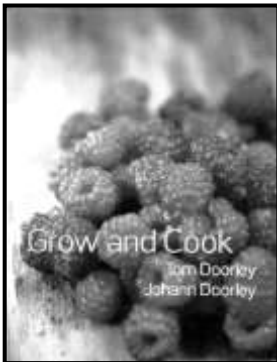
delightfully these are combined with Charles Nelson's concise yet comprehensive and informative text. This is a wonderfully beautiful book, large format and of the highest quality, an absolute treasure.



I truly hope that Wendy is pleased with this publication. From speaking to the publishers I know that it was a project undertaken by those with a great love and admiration for Wendy and I am so very pleased to have a copy; it will indeed be treasured.

[Wendy Walsh – A Lifetime of Painting, Strawberry Tree, Dublin, 2007, Text: Charles Nelson & Nick Wilkinson, Illustrations Wendy Walsh & Lesley Fennell, HB, 230p.ISBN 1-904004-06-07]

Something a little bit different from the normal selection of books presented here, a combination cookery/gardening book with the emphasis leaning heavily towards the cooking. Tom Doorley will be well known to many from his regular television appearances and from his restaurant reviews and cookery columns. Lady readers will now nod their heads in agreement when I point out the obvious – that behind this successful man is a very competent woman, Tom's wife Johann and this book is the product of their combined effort.

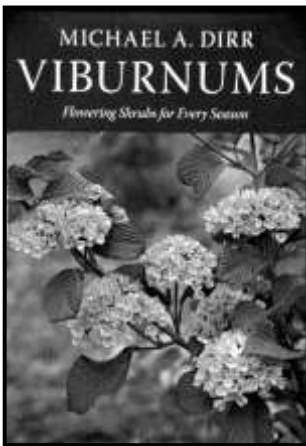


So, why have I slipped what is essentially a cookery book into our gardening newsletter? Well, quite simply, my wife cooked the 'Lemon Sauce Pudding' from this book last evening and it was delicious, three helpings delicious!

Tom and Johann live in Lismore, Co. Waterford and grow their fruit and vegetables using organic methods. Well, actually, in the division of labour that marks many a household, by and large Tom grows and Johann cooks. The book is divided into monthly sections and the beginning of each contains advice on

growing your own using these methods and this is followed by seasonal recipes. Many are firm favourites such as Leek and Potato Soup or the several jams described but then there are also many other recipes which sparked my interest and which will certainly be tried out here in season. Gooseberry and Elderflower Fool is certainly one of these as is Leeks wrapped in Prosciutto. I grow leeks very successfully but have as yet failed to cook them in a manner which appealed to me. This may be the one. Those risotto recipes look tempting too. From the book it is obvious that the authors love what they are doing, are passionate about their gardening and their cooking. I think this is a book you will enjoy and am certain that you will enjoy eating the many delicious recipes.

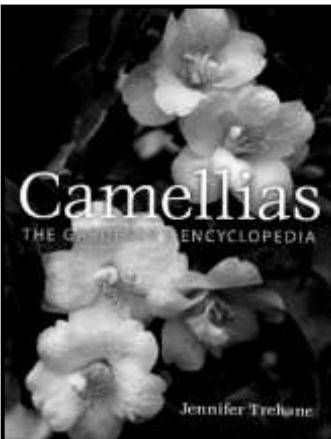
[Grow and Cook, Tom & Johann Doorley, Gill & Macmillan Ltd., Dublin, 2007, HB, 254p, ISBN 978 07171 4163 0]



Back to gardening books and two excellent recent publications from Timber Press, both for the gardener who wants to delve a little more deeply into a genus which may have attracted his/her attention at some time.

The first is Michael Dirr's "**Viburnums**". While here we would look to 'Hilliers' for our information on trees and shrubs, Americans would look to their 'Dirr' (Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs). Michael Dirr is a Professor of Horticulture at the University of Georgia and to date is the author of twelve books. He has also conducted a plant breeding programme over the years and has introduced more than 100 woody cultivars. Here he presents us with a most comprehensive treatment of the genus *Viburnum* which has a whole range of species and cultivars which are very

suitable for our gardens. The text is precise and informative while the illustrating photographs show all aspects of the shrubs – foliage in summer and autumn for those which colour well, flowers, fruit, general growth habit etc. This is an excellent book, presenting an outstanding treatment of the *Viburnums*. If you are at all interested in them this is the book to have. *[Viburnums, Michael A. Dirr, Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2007, HB, 262p, £25, ISBN-13:978-0-88192-853-2]*



Jennifer Trehane presents an encyclopaedia on *Camellias*, a stunning presentation on these beautiful and popular plants. This is, put very simply, a one-stop book for those interested in *camellias*. As well as descriptions of over carefully chosen 600 garden-worthy species and cultivars there is also comprehensive information on how to grow and care for them. The photographs (800+) illustrating the book are excellent, close up of the flowers almost entirely.

If camellias are your passion you will delight in this book. [*Camellias, Jennifer Trehane, Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2007, HB, 380p, £35, ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-848-8*]



The Irish Garden Plant Society

The Aims of the Society are:

- **The study of plants cultivated in Ireland, and their history.**
- **The development of horticulture in Ireland**
- **The education of members on the cultivation and conservation of garden plants.**
- **To research and locate garden plants considered rare or in need of conservation, especially those raised in Ireland by Irish gardeners and nurserymen.**
- **To co-operate with horticulturalists, botanists, botanical and other gardens, individuals and organisations in Ireland and elsewhere in these matters.**
- **To issue and publish information on the garden plants of Ireland and to facilitate the exchange of information with those interested individuals and groups.**

Correspondence:

For membership information, general correspondence, enquiries etc:

The Irish Garden Plant Society, c/o The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin

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(Please note that staff at the Botanic Gardens cannot take telephone enquiries about the IGPS. They simply facilitate by providing a postal address for the convenience of committee members.)

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