



The Irish Garden Plant Society



Newsletter Number 122

January 2012



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**Front cover photograph: *Anemone nemorosa* ‘Lucy’s Wood’
by Dr. E. Charles Nelson**



Editorial

Last year the IGPS celebrated its 30th anniversary, and events were organised to mark the occasion, these are reviewed in the Regional Reports. As the Society moves forward it would like to hear the views of its members. In the centre of the Newsletter is a four page membership survey. Please take the time to answer the questions, and return it by the end of January, it will be greatly appreciated. One lucky respondent will win a copy of *In the footsteps of Augustine Henry* by Seamus O'Brien.

Looking forward to warmer days The Northern Group are the organisers of the A.G.M. It will be held on Saturday May 12th and Sunday May 13th in Hillsborough Co. Down. There are a number of interesting garden visits planned for the weekend and descriptions of the gardens are on pages 3 and 4. The booking form is also included with this issue, so make it a date in your diary and return the booking form to Patrick Quigley.

Members regularly write to say that Irish cultivars are not available in garden centres or even at plant sales and ask if they are grown by other IGPS members who might have some to share. The Plant Search on page 36 is an opportunity for a plant swop or similar arrangement. If there is an Irish cultivar that you are having difficulty obtaining or an abundance of a plant that you grow and have some you would like to share with other members, please get in touch and keep our Irish cultivars in circulation.

For galanthophiles there are gardens open this February that have not opened before. Some will have plants for sale so please go along and give them your support. Details are on page 11.

Finally, to all 2011 newsletter contributors and correspondents thank you.

Happy New Year

Mary

Copy date for the May 2012 Newsletter is 6th April.

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



Seed Distribution Scheme 2012

Another year is upon us, and the chance of a few wintry days or evenings enjoying looking through seed lists. Is there any other gardening task that brings as much anticipation as picking out seed packets for next year? I will never tire of looking over the seed pots as seedlings pop up - a great excuse to linger in the greenhouse too!

This year, as always, there are a few exceptional seeds from our valiant band of seed collectors, and I think the prize this year goes to the commercial quantities of *Fritillaria meleagris* sent in, it must have taken ages to collect them. If anyone is planning a spring bulb meadow now is the time to get free seed – in quantity.

Six species of *Primula*, 3 of *Cyclamen*, 5 of *Allium*, and 4 of *Iris* all add up, but how about the more unusual? *Synthyris missurica* var. *stellata*, or *Disporum megalanthum* should get most of us running to the books to check them out. How about the Berry Sedge, *Carex baccans*, with bright red seeds that are very colourful in late summer, and look most odd on what looks like a grass, or *Gladiolus tristis*, with grassy leaves and flowering in late spring – and no need to lift each winter either.

More interesting yet (to me) is *Gunnera perpensa*, from South Africa. Yep, that's right, an African *Gunnera*. I'd imagine seeds should be kept moist, so it may be a gamble, but worth it for this charmer. Or how about the native *Daphne laureola*, excellent for deep shade.

And finally an award should go to all contributors of *Decaisnea fargesii*, the wonderful blue seed pods (I leave them on the mess room table at work and invite people to try my Kerry Blue Sausages), are full of what can only be called goo, like wallpaper paste, apparently edible (mind you that's in China.....), and needing much washing to free the seeds.....

Enjoy the list, and more importantly, do try some!

Stephen Butler
Seed Distribution Scheme



The Annual General Meeting 2012

The A.G.M. will be held on Sat 12th May 10.00 for 10.30am, Hillsborough Courthouse, The Square, Hillsborough, BT26 6AG.

Hillsborough courthouse was originally a market house and built before 1765. From 1810, this splendid Georgian building was used as a courthouse with the Grand Jury meeting in the upper room from around that time.

As always, our AGM will be followed by a series of garden visits on Saturday & Sunday and a meal on Saturday evening. The Meal will be held at 8:00pm in La Mon Hotel & Country Club, 41 Gransha Road, Comber, BT23 5RF

The Hotel is holding some rooms for IGPS members at special discounted rates (double room £70.00; single room £60.00 – upgrades available: £10.00 for upgrade to deluxe room; £20.00 for upgrade to deluxe suite). If you wish to stay at La Mon, please phone to make your reservation and quote Irish Garden Plant Society to avail of these rates.

Tel: + 44 (0) 28 9044 8631 <http://www.lamon.co.uk>

Garden Visits:

1. Hillsborough Castle gardens.

This small park was created by the Hill family and laid out in an informal style. The House, built on the highest ground, looks over lawns with scattered clumps of trees and shrubs and in the distance, a more thickly planted area bordering the stream.

Formal elements were introduced by 1856. Today the terraces are embellished with mixed borders, planted with herbaceous perennials and shrubs: these are being refurbished to designs by Lady O'Neill.

Throughout the grounds are exotic plants, mature specimens and modern commemorative trees.

2. Mr Charles Stewart, 7 The Square, Hillsborough, BT26 6AG

The garden at 7 The Square, Hillsborough, is a small town garden of 18th century origin, walled, and a typical long strip falling away to a backdrop of forest.

Developed over 20 years really by accident, it is composed of several distinctly different areas, a formal courtyard with specimen trees leads to a terrace with a sale verte for entertaining and a cistern with a water spout. At a lower level is a raised ornamental vegetable “patch”, a pond and a gravel garden with currant bushes. A rose arch leads the visitor on to the wild garden and its charm. The garden has a few surprises and humorous touches.

3. Dawn & Ken McEntee, 7 Main Street, Hillsborough, BT26 6AE

An interesting town garden to the rear of the old Barrack House which is divided into 3 different areas leading to a formal pond in a hidden garden. Amongst the mature planting is a *Gunnera manicata*, a *Cornus controversa* ‘Variegata’ and a *Rosa* ‘Rambling Rector’.

4. Lismacloskey Rectory Garden, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Cultra.

The Rectory garden at the Museum has been cared for and planted by volunteers from the IGPS for many years. Gradually we are adding more and more Irish cultivars to the garden, creating a collection of these plants for future generations to enjoy. This is your opportunity to see the work of our own volunteers and to see what can be achieved in partnership with institutions in forwarding the aims of the IGPS.

5. Lord and Lady Dunleath, Ballywalter Park, Ballywalter, Newtonards, Co. Down, BT22 2PP

Ballywalter Park, home to Lord and Lady Dunleath, is a terra di Siena Italianate mansion built around 1850 surrounded by a landscaped park. The park contains two cedars and two Monterey pines listed in the Irish Tree Register and many rhododendrons including *Rhododendron* ‘Lady Dunleath’ which should be in bloom. The finest feature from a garden history point of view is the magnificent conservatory built in 1870 and fully restored at a cost of over £850,000 just a couple of years ago. There is also a walled garden with two Victorian glasshouses in working condition and a new fruit garden with an innovative biblical layout in which the 12 divisions or rooms represent the disciples and the 13th at the centre represents Christ.



A. G. M. Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of AGM 2011
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Election of Committee Members
7. Any other business

At the AGM in May the election of new committee members will take place. If you would like to be involved please contact Dan Murphy or any of the committee members listed on page 6. Nominations for election should be forwarded to Dan at least two weeks before the A.G.M. to his address on page 6 or to the Honorary Secretary: I.G.P.S. c/o The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9



News from the Chairman

GARDEN TOUR, IRAN.

We had been trying to organise a trip to Iran in April but unfortunately due to the current political situation, we have been advised by the travel company that this trip cannot now go ahead. For those of you who had been hoping to go, I am sorry for the disappointment. It is hoped that the trip may be re-arranged at some time in the future, so if you would like to be kept informed of any developments, please contact our organiser Andrena Duffin.

Andrena Duffin, 11 Grey Point, Helen's Bay, Co. Down BT19 1LE
Tel: 028 9185 2668 e-mail: duffin@riddel.co.uk

CHANGES

As we move forward into a New Year, we mark some changes to IGPS Committee personnel.

Marcella Campbell has decided to step down from her role as Executive Assistant to the society after several years of service in that post. Marcella will be familiar to many of you in the society, but we are not losing her completely as she will be continuing as Chair of the Leinster sub-committee. We thank Marcella for all her hard work over the years; she has put a huge amount of effort into both roles and it is greatly appreciated. She has become a personal friend to many of us in the IGPS and we look forward to that continuing friendship at both personal level and within the society.

The Committee will be examining the role of Executive Assistant over the next couple of months in light of our current levels of membership and financial resources, and there may well follow some structural changes to the running of the organisation. In the meantime, Hilary Glenn has very kindly offered to take over the management of our membership list. We will continue with the same contact details for membership:

IGPS, c/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9, but will update you all in the next Newsletter of any further developments or changes.

Thanks and appreciation once again to Marcella for all her hard work and to Hilary for taking on the role for the future.

Chairman: Patrick Quigley, 24 Areema Drive, Dunmurry, Belfast, BT17 0QG. tel: +44 (0) 7801 299263 patrick.quigley@live.co.uk

Vice Chair / Membership Secretary: Hilary Glenn, 23 Scolban Road, Dromore, Co. Down, BT 25 1NZ Tel: + 44 (0) 28 92699859
Email: hilaryglenn@hotmail.co.uk

Hon Secretary / Munster Representative: Dan Murphy, Laoi Na Greine, Gurrane, Innishannon, Co. Cork.

Hon Treasurer: Ricky Shannon, 48 Sydney Ave, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

Leinster Chair: Marcella Campbell, 36 St. Brendan's Park, Artane, Dublin 5

Munster Chair: Graham Manson, 4 Eastern Villas, Currabinny, Carrigaline, Co. Cork

Northern Chair: Yvonne Penpraze. 44A Middle Road, Islandmagee, Co. Antrim, BT40 3SL. Tel: + 44 (0) 28 93372032 E-mail: ypenpraze@gmail.com

Patrick Quigley



Island Gardens

by Rae McIntyre

There is something very romantic about island gardens – that is if you can disregard frequent gales and the occasional violent one that can blast half of the lovingly planted trees and shrubs into the sea.

The mill dam behind my childhood home had three small islands on it and these coupled with Enid Blyton's children's book *'The famous five go off on an island adventure'* figured largely in my imagination. The four children plus dog were allowed unbelievable freedom by their parents. Of course there didn't seem to be any mad axe men or murderous paedophiles lurking in caves in those halcyon days. My friend and I thought that the least our parents could do would be to let us row over and spend one night on the largest of these islands. Alas the parents were totally against the idea of two silly nine-year old girls, even with our sensible dog Bruno, sleeping under the stars and it was the fact that the place was seething with water rats that finally shut us up.

By the time I was ten I had grown completely out of Enid Blyton's books even to the extent of finding them silly and stupid and totally nonsensical in their lack of credibility. That summer our family did a tour round Ireland so that my father could visit hydro-electric power stations (boring) and my mother could visit gardens (boring except for Japanese Garden and Illnacullin). I fell totally in love with Illnacullin. We went from the mainland to Garnish Island in a boat rowed by someone called O'Sullivan; I've forgotten his Christian name but I took a photograph of him with the Kodak Brownie box camera I had been given for my tenth birthday. I took many other photographs too because I found the garden enthralling.

Edward Hyams, in his book *Irish Gardens* (Macdonald, London 1967), sums up the garden succinctly

'Illnacullin offers four major satisfactions of the highest order to the lover of natural beauty worked on by art: an exceptionally successful Italianate garden of rich stones finely wrought and of good plants skilfully chosen and grown; this set in a frame of wild garden planted with the most beautiful trees and shrubs from all over the world; this, again, set in an outer frame of rare natural beauty composed of sea and mountains; and all composing an integral work of art.'

The day that we visited was one of those untypical Irish summer days when the sky and Glengarriff Bay were gloriously blue. It was quite magical and I have stored the image of it in my mind ever since. Somewhere in this house, or in that of my late parents, there is a black and white – although more accurately shades of grey-photograph of Harold Peto's Italianate pavilion and lily pool which is in the heart of Illnacullin. No other garden, anywhere, has ever measured up to it.

Forty years later I visited it again with Davy this time. We went in a motor boat. The chap O'Sullivan, who had rowed us over, had emigrated to America apparently although I noticed that Shirley Lanigan in her book *The 100 Best Gardens In Ireland* was in a boat driven by a Brendan O'Sullivan.

It was a grey day with rain threatening. I wanted to go by myself but Davy decided to come along too rather than sit in the car reading the *Irish Times* and *The Independent* from cover to cover and attempting the crosswords. Big mistake. Davy is as interested in gardens as I am in rugby: totally not. I strongly suspect it was payback time for all the rugby internationals I had been to in Lansdowne Road where I was physically present but my mind was so far away that I had no idea of the actual score at the end – just whether Ireland had won or lost. Anyway we walked smartly round the island while he frequently compared the planting to that of Mount Stewart, then up to the Martello Tower. I wasn't allowed to linger anywhere or to sit down to absorb the atmosphere and we were back at the harbour in half an hour. I haven't been back since but I have heard and read several reports about it, many of them pointing out that the garden is not in nearly as good condition as it was earlier. This is Shirley Lanigan's summing up quoted from her book.

'Overall, Illnacullin is a truly glorious garden, but is in need of a good overhaul and in some respects is looking tired. This is too important a garden to be neglected. Created by great gardeners, it now needs another great gardener, of which there are many in the country, to conserve and develop it to stop it from becoming an old ghost. Let a talented enthusiast loose on it.'

Illnacullin's almost frost free climate means that tender exotics from Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Africa and Asia thrive here as well as they do in their native habitat – sometimes even better. They also seed themselves about so that they become integrated in the landscape.

The same happens in the gardens of Brodick Castle on the Isle of Arran off the south-west coast of Scotland and many tender and difficult plants self-seed generously. Three hybrids that have come spontaneously are the rhododendrons. 'Brodick', 'Glen Coy' and 'Goat Fell', the latter named after the mountain above Brodick.

I was there one May almost twenty years ago and, while it didn't make the profound impression that Illnacullin did, it was still a spectacular garden. Any garden with magnificent rhododendrons gets my vote. Unfortunately *Rhododendron maccabeum* had almost finished flowering but I could still admire the 30cm long leaves that were shining green above and woolly grey-white underneath. *R. falconeri* was the most impressive specimen I have ever seen. I detest the cliché, 'the wow factor' but *R. Falconeri* truly did have it. The leaves have attractive prominent veins and the flowers are huge dome-shaped trusses of palest yellow bells with purple blotches. I coveted it of course and if I had acquired one then it would be a sizeable tree now. But what nonsense am I talking? *R. falconeri* needs much space and shelter and both are in short supply in my own patch.

There was a plant stall at the garden and I bought a small tree fern *Dicksonia antarctica*. This seeds itself all over Brodick the way it does in Australia but sadly it was killed by frost a couple of years later. I would know better now how to care for it but then I've given up on plants that need to be fussed over.

A favourite book of mine, an American one, and one which I enjoy reading every few years is *An Island Garden* by Celia Thaxter. Paula, my daughter, knowing my interest in gardens and islands, brought this book back from America on one of her frequent trips there.

An Island Garden was first published in 1894 just a few months before Celia Thaxter's death at the age of fifty-nine. She wrote lyrical descriptions of her tiny garden on Appledore, one of the Isles of Shoals off the coast of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Celia only lived on the island during the spring and summer months. In the winter months she seemed to be skilled at growing plants from seed – many of them in egg shells – and much of her house in Portsmouth was given over to the cultivation of plants. She wanted them to be ready to set out, well developed, for early blooming.

On the first of April each year a small steam tug called *The Pinafore* transported Celia, her household belongings and all her carefully nurtured plants to the island so that 'the hurricane deck awash with green leaves and flowers looked for all the world like a May Day procession'. Her garden was very small about forty or fifty feet long, sloping to the south, not more than fifteen feet wide, sheltered from the north winds and open to the sun.

She grew old fashioned flowers many of them annuals and devoted at least three whole pages listing them – all named in capital letters as people used to do: Columbine, Ragged Robin, Cornflowers, Larkspurs, Pinks, Gilly flowers, Lilies, Larkspurs, Sweet William, Nasturtiums, pot Marigolds, Sweet Peas,

summer Chrysanthemums in great variety, Rose Campion, Pansies, and Mignonettes to name just a few.

She wrote about setting out small Tea Rose bushes in their sunny bed giving the impression that these didn't overwinter on Appledore. The soil was made rich with finely sifted manure and soot and a sprinkling of wood ashes. This is something I would like to try although I am puzzled by the idea of finely sifted manure. Maybe pelleted chicken poo would do just as well. She didn't seem to have any problems with specific replant disease of roses, that is if she did always plant them in the same place. She stressed the beneficial effect of wood ash on roses.

Like every other gardener she had battles with pests and weeds. The worst pests were slugs (sounds familiar doesn't it?). There were no toads on the island so she imported some which did the trick. The following year she was delighted to see that they had survived.

The worst weed was dodder, a parasitic plant that became entangled with her flowers in a yellow web – 'a mass of inextricable confusion' was how she described it and she waged constant war against it. Another hated one was *quitch-grass* which I presume was the English *couch grass* (pronounced cooh) and the Irish *scutch-grass*. I like the sound of *quitch-grass*; it has a rather Harry Potter ring to it.

Celia Thaxter's house on the island was no little hovel but seemed to be a civilised place judging by the paintings in the book by the artist Childe Hassam. She had a large, light airy room running the length of what she called the piazza – a verandah, I presume – and here she entertained groups of happy people. The floor was of polished wood with low bookcases round the walls and couches and sofas were piled with cushions and pillows of many shades of dull, rich colour. The walls up to the ceiling were covered with pictures and there were flowers everywhere. The piano, because the room was made first for music, stood midway at one side. I can just imagine *The Pinafore* ploughing through the water with a piano on board.

The reality of this must have been very different from Yeats' dream of a 'small cabin of clay and wattles made' on the Lake Isle of Innisfree.

To return to Ireland. I had no idea that there was a garden and, from all accounts, a very attractive one until I read Gordon Ledbetter's account of a three-acre garden on Achill Island in *The Irish Garden* (Oct/Nov 2011). It was created by the artist Alexander Williams just over a hundred years ago and remarkably survives to this day.

Gordon Ledbetter noted that Williams had the right idea starting with shelter belts and building an embankment along the bay to halt the high tides. It is no doubt, because of this that the woodland on Achill has now reached what he calls 'an opulent maturity'.

The present owners are Dutch, Willem van Goor and his wife Doutsje Nauta, who have developed the three acres and have assembled an enviable collection of native and unusual exotic species. It is named *The Secret Garden* and I look forward to seeing it because it is open between March and August.

I just wish someone would write a book about island gardens with plenty of good photography. All I would ask for is a signed, complimentary copy because they first got the idea here.

Snowdrop Time

1. IGPS Garden Visit, Saturday 18th February

A visit the gardens of Emer Gallagher, Barnhill, Dublin 15 and Eileen Collins, Parsonstown, Celbridge. Meet at the Grasshopper Inn, Clonee at 11am, where maps will be available. Some Irish cultivars will be for sale.

Contact Emer at 087 698 7566

2. Saturday 11th to Sunday 26th February 10am to 5pm

Burtown House, Athy, Co Kildare. Admission €5. www.burtownhouse.ie

3. Altamont Garden, Tullow, Co. Carlow. Snowdrop Week.

Monday 20th February to Sunday 26th February. Guided tour at 2pm Adults €2

4. Huntington Castle, Clonegal, Co. Carlow

Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th February Guided tour at 2pm

Admission Adults €5, children €2.50 www.huntingtoncastle.com

5. Woodville Walled Garden Kilchreest, Loughrea, Co. Galway Sunday

26th February 11 am to 5pm, including a visit to Killinane Graveyard to see the spectacular display of snowdrops. Snowdrops and woodland plants for sale.

There will be an illustrated talk on snowdrops and hellebores by Carl Wright.

Admission €10 proceeds in aid of Killinane Graveyard.

Telephone Margarita Donohue 087 9069191

6. Primrose Hill, Lucan Co. Kildare

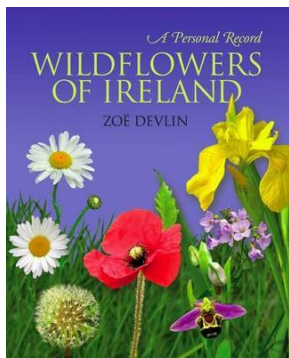
Open every day in February from 2pm. Admission adults €6, children €2.50

Telephone Mr. Robin Hall on 353 (0) 1 628 0373



Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

Christmas time is the great book time of the year. They make the perfect gift, easy for the giver to purchase and a joy to the recipient. In this issue I am going to gallop through a list of books and I am sure there is something of interest to everyone here.



I always take particular pleasure in bringing an Irish book to your attention and especially to know that it is one which will please and delight the reader. ***“Wildflowers of Ireland”*** is a personal record of Zoe Devlin’s lifelong love of our native plants. Over 400 wildflowers are described and illustrated by Zoe’s own superb photographs. This is a book which will appeal particularly to the amateur. If you are a person who looks at the wild flowers as you walk and whose eye is caught by each new one you see, then you will thoroughly enjoy this book as it will expand your knowledge in a most enjoyable manner and

without the sometimes overwhelming botanical information encountered in regular guide books. The descriptions are pleasantly written and enriched with literary quotations and information about the use of some plants and notes of references to them in Irish folklore. ***[Wildflowers of Ireland, Zoe Devlin, The Collins Press, Cork, 2011, HB, 360pp, €29.99]***

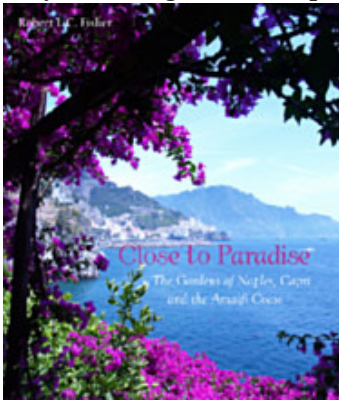


Another book similar to the above and which would appeal to a similar readership is ***“Wild Flowers”*** by Sarah Raven, she of BBC gardening programme fame and also a lady who stepped into the world of wildflowers as a child in the company of her father, a classics don at Cambridge, who was an enthusiastic amateur botanist, a pastime he had developed in his father’s company. It appears that much of Ms. Raven’s childhood weekends and holidays were spent in the pursuit of Britain’s wildflowers and it would not be inaccurate to say she is quite the expert. The photography is by Jonathan Buckley and is superb. Plants are grouped

by habitat: Lane, Wall and Hedge; Meadow; Chalk Down & Limestone Dale; Arable & Wasteland; Heath, Moor & Mountain and finally, Coast.

Each plant has a two part description; a narrative of introduction which gives general information and comment and then a botanical description, such as would assist the user of the book to identify a specimen to hand. The lover of wild flowers would be delighted with this book. [***Wild Flowers, Sarah Raven, Bloomsbury, 2011, HB, 500pp. £50***]

In the depths of winter when the weather is cold and miserable, the sky black, and rain is keeping you from the garden it is a great pleasure to have good books to show beautiful gardens and sunnier days. Publishers, Frances Lincoln, must have foreseen our need to be cheered up in this season as they recently released four titles which do just that. Two of the books describe gardens in Italy and two gardens in Spain and all are wonderful.



“Close to Paradise: The Gardens of Naples, Capri & The Amalfi Coast” describes twenty of the most glorious gardens in the most beautiful part of Italy. This is an area of great natural beauty and it has attracted the great and the good over many centuries, all leaving their traces on the gardens. The English influence is still fresh, giving as Charles Quest-Ristone described, “an eccentric extravagance that is Italian at base but covered with a sauce anglaise.” This captures the tone perfectly but the author’s descriptions and the photographs will have you booking your holidays there immediately. Simply magical and wonderful.

[***Close to Paradise: The Gardens of Naples, Capri & The Amalfi Coast, Robert, J. C. Fisher, Frances Lincoln, 2011, HB, 208pp, £30***]



Should you be planning to travel elsewhere in Italy then, ***“The Best Gardens in Italy”*** is your perfect travelling companion as it lists more than 120 of the finest of Italy’s gardens and includes many not found in other similar books, especially gardens which have undergone renovation and renewal over the past twenty years or so. Several historic gardens are described anew but now as revived, reinvigorated and restored gardens, a welcome approach. The gardens are organised geographically which makes the book particularly useful to the reader planning a holiday. Text is by Kirsty McLeod and

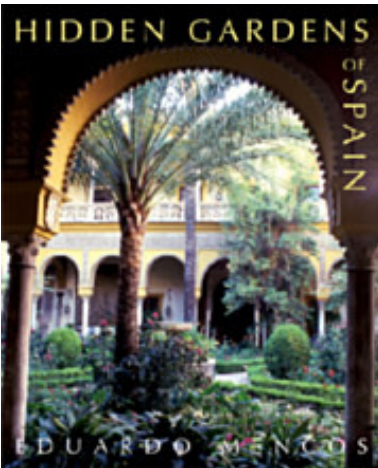
photographs by Primrose Bell with a most pleasing balance between text and photographs.

This is not a large picture book but one which is very informative and perfectly illustrated with excellent photographs. Author and photographer have obviously travelled the country over many years to visit gardens, interview the owners and take the photographs and this dedication has produced an outstanding book. [***The Best Gardens of Italy, Kirsty McLeod, Frances Lincoln, 2011, HB, 262pp, £30***]



I have never gone to Spain purely to visit gardens. It was a regular holiday destination when our children were younger but children don't want to be dragged to gardens, at least not too much. After reading, "**Great Gardens of Spain**" I can see that I have missed out on a great deal of gardening pleasure. Forty beautiful gardens are described in the book and illustrated with wonderful photographs. The gardens, all open to the public, reflect the diversity of climate and landscape in Spain and stretch from the greenery of Galicia to the cactus gardens on the Canary Islands. Because of this diversity there are gardens of many styles

and much to interest the garden visitor. I found quite an eye-opener of a book and think you would find it very worthwhile if you are planning on visiting gardens in Spain. [***Great Gardens of Spain, Anneli Bojstad, Frances Lincoln, 2011, HB, 255pp, £30***]



Initially, it struck me as a little odd that the photographer for the previous book above is the author and photographer of this one, "**Hidden Gardens of Spain**" but any nagging doubts were quickly swept away and I realised that Spain has a richness of gardens I had not previously realised, a fact brought home to me by the delight of reading both of these books. Where there is some overlapping of material the author presents a different view and a different insight and so adds rather than repeats. Thirty one gardens, public and private and spread over the mainland and the islands, are described and wonderfully photographed.

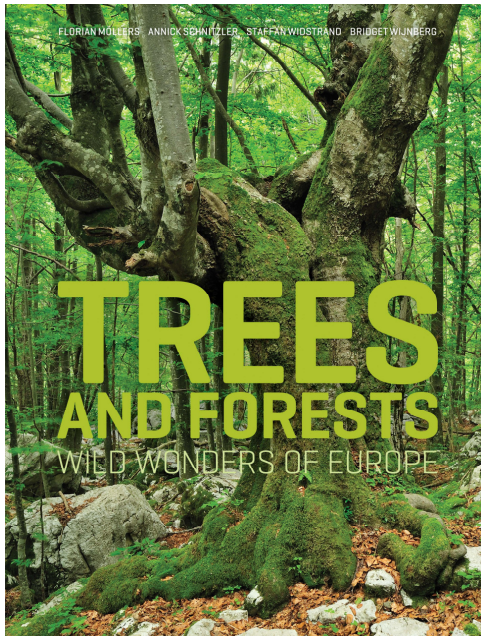
[***Hidden Gardens of Spain, Eduardo Mencos, Frances Lincoln, 2011, PB, 160pp, £16.99***]

Without doubt, this is the most pleasantly written book I have read this year.



Cleve West was the Best in Show winner at the Chelsea Flower Show this year and has six RHS gold medals to his name but, surprisingly for one with so much success, his writing is humble, down to earth, honest and a pleasure from start to finish. Although there are many comments on how he has managed his allotment this is not a “how-to” book, rather a simple account of the joy he and his family have had from their allotment. It is quite a special book; very enjoyable and highly recommended.

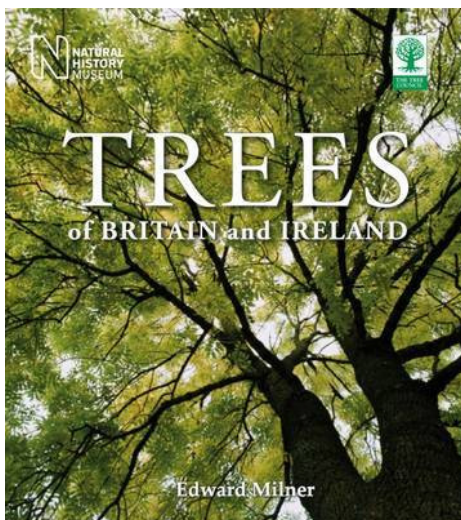
[Our Plot, Cleve West, Frances Lincoln, 2011, HB, 192pp, £20]



“Trees and Forests, Wild Wonders of Europe” is a large format book of beautiful photographs with an intense text and important message: that our forests are places of great beauty and great value to us, deserve to be appreciated and need to be cared for. As the authors are primarily photographers, winners of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year award and the European Nature Photographer Award, the photographs are given pride of place in the book – whole pages, even two page spreads and the text and captions are grouped together after a set of photographs. This doesn’t make for comfortable reading but the story is in the pictures. Beautiful photographs, uncomfortable text.

[Trees and Forests, Abrams, 2011, HB, 240pp, £29.99]

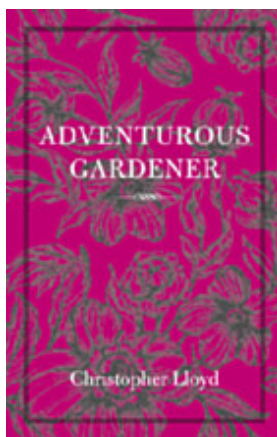
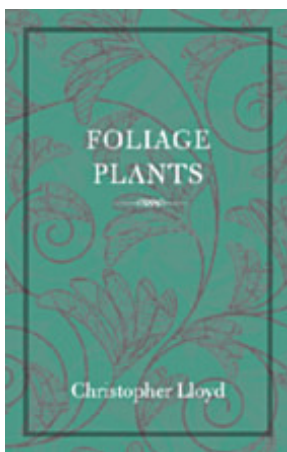
“Trees of Britain and Ireland” describes all the major native tree species with notes on their history, ecology and our relationship with them.



There are notes on the insects, animals and fungi associated with each species along with traditional beliefs, uses made of the trees and products made from them.

The text is well illustrated with clear photographs but, overall, it lacked love, fire and enthusiasm. It was informative but dull.

[*Trees of Britain and Ireland*, Edward Milner, Natural History Museum, 2011, HB, 224pp, £20]



Finally, two of Christopher Lloyd's books which have been reprinted in paperback, ***“The Adventurous Gardener”*** and ***“Foliage Plants”***, with introductions from Fergus Garrett, Head Gardener at Great Dixter.

I've always found Christopher Lloyd's writings very entertaining and enjoyable; never liked his garden. If you haven't read them previously, I recommend them to you. They are probably seen as essential reading for the keen gardener.

[*Frances Lincoln*, 2011, PB, 220pp, £12.99]



Gorilla Rainforest at Dublin Zoo

by Stephen Butler

As part of the development of Dublin Zoo we have themed areas to represent natural habitats so our animals look more 'at home'. The Waldrapp Ibis, Asian Rainforest Kaziranga Trail (for elephants), and the African Savannah have all expanded the scope for using plants in the zoo, and by careful choice we are hopefully making the areas look different enough to our visitors too.

The latest development though was more extreme for us, as we wanted to create a better home for our gorillas, so the African Rainforest project took over our lives for the past 18 months. More unusually, we wanted to plant up the animal area very densely too, but of course gorillas are vegetarians, so any plants used in their habitat had to be edible, but we wanted them not to eat all of them, but allow them to eat some.....you can see a problem here!

After much research, with other zoos happily sharing their experiences, much listing of what we thought we could use, many many design meetings looking at what sort of landscape we would end up with, and an awful lot of double checking the poisonous aspects of common plants, we had 'a plan'.

We now have a 6,000 sq m habitat for our gorillas and the same again for our visitors to walk through. The gorilla island landscape is as diverse as we could make it, with 4 linear mounds 4ms high breaking up the area and making it seem much larger. The mound tops are tree and shrub planted (about 1000 of each), though we expect much damage, we have hopes from our research for some not to eaten. *Berberis*, *Ulex*, *Pyracantha*, *Crataegus*, and *Ilex* are all hopefully too prickly to eat completely (they will nibble, especially flowers and new leaves). *Choisya*, Lavender, shrubby *Salvia* and *Nepeta* may be too smelly (peafowl will not eat *Salvia microphylla*). *Salix purpurea* is the only willow not eaten by rabbits as it has too much salicylic acid, so too bitter, and so far they have eaten it and spat it out again (round 1 to us). *Pterocarya fraxinifolia* seems not to be eaten much, even sometimes by goats (who have a certain reputation) so worth a try.

The main sward is grass of course, but as they actively pull the grass to eat we chose a deep rooting rhizomatous tall fescue that is drought resisting too. Through some areas especially on the slopes of the mounds, we also scattered a wild flower mix (actually an agri forbe mix so nothing poisonous), and on

flatter areas we deliberately sowed typical lawn weeds such as plantain and clover, as gorillas actively nibble them. Then throughout the entire area, as randomly as possible, we put in thousands of plugs of herbaceous plants, which hardly could be seen this year, but next year will hopefully be very impressive. Various herbs such as Lovage, and spot plants such as *Cynara* and *Symphytum* will also give highlights if left alone.....

Between the mounds there are ribbon marshes, a wet soil mix of *Iris pseudacorus* (not eaten as bitter, but poisonous), *Caltha* (not eaten as *Ranunculaceae*), *Carex*, *Typha*, *Phragmites*. Around the edge of the island we needed to discourage the gorillas getting their feet too wet, so a lower growing (so visitors can see over it hopefully) marginal planting of many *Iris* again (but different species here such as *I. kaempferi*), and many typical water plants, native *Ranunculus*, *Mentha*, *Caltha* etc, to give eventually a dense edge.

The visitor trail has some of the same plants of course, but many more bamboos, *Liriodendron*, *Populus lasiocarpa*, purple *Phormium*, *Cynara*, *Arundo donax*, *Ligularia* 'Britt Marie Crawford', *Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens' and many more. We have used purple coloured leaves as a signature for the African Rainforest. Watching this planting next year will not only be our great interest, but many other zoos that are keen to see how it all works.....15,000 plants gorilla side, 5000 visitor side and over a thousand tons of topsoil used in total, planting from early May to late October, long year.....

**On Thursday 22nd March there will be a lecture by Stephen Butler
At 8pm at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.**

***'Planting for Illusion - developing a planting palette to showcase
Dublin Zoo's wildlife'***

Modern zoos have a varied planting to give visitors a feeling of immersion in the animals' natural habitat. Over the past 10 years Dublin Zoo has developed 3 major themed habitats, Asian Rainforest, African Savannah, and African Rainforest. This talk will look at how Dublin Zoo's horticultural team create these habitats.

Dublin Zoo is open daily throughout the year from 9.30am

Telephone 353 (0) 1 474 8900

www.dublinzoo.ie



IGPS Membership Survey

For each question please tick all that apply

1 How long have you been a member of the IGPS?

Up to one year	1
1 to 2 years	2
3 to 5 years	3
6 to 10 years	4
More than 10 years	5

2 Which of the activities organised by the IGPS do you take part in and/or enjoy? And which are of least interest to you?

	Most	Least
Lectures & talks	1	1
Garden visits	2	2
Day long trips to more than one garden	3	3
Tours of 2 or more days	4	4
Plant sales	5	5
Specialised workshops	6	6
Seed distribution scheme	7	7
The AGM weekend	8	8
Adopt a Plant scheme	9	9
Promotion of Irish Heritage plants	10	10
Newsletter	11	11
Meeting like-minded people	12	12
Social events such as picnics, lunches & suppers	13	13
Other, please specify		

3 Which of the activities organised in 2010/2011 did you take part in?

AGM 2010	1
AGM 2011	2
Seed distribution	3
An IGPS plant sale	4

Adopt a Plant Scheme	5
Helping with Lismaclloskey garden	6

Northern

Tour of Edinburgh, July 2010	7
Head Gardener's Tour, Rowallane, August 2010	8
Diana Oxlade, October 2010	9
Penny Snowden lecture, October 2010	10
Snowdrop walk at the Argory, February 2011	11
Ian Beaney lecture, March 2011	12
Visit to Dorothy Brown, Ballymoney, April 2011	13
Visit to Bangor Castle Walled Garden, June 2011	14
Garden visit to Oakfield Park, Co Donegal July 2011	15
Garden visit to Finnebrogue Demesne August 2011	16
None of the Northern events	17

Leinster

Summer lunch 2010 at Angela Jupe's Garden,	18
Doogue Walls & Carson lecture, November 2010	19
Fraser Mitchell lecture, January 2011	20
Paddy Tobin lecture, February 2011	21
Kevin Hughes lecture (with AGS), March 2011	22
Diana Beresford-Kroeger lecture, April 2011	23
Jeanette Fryer lecture, September 2011	24
Tour of Maynooth College Grounds, October 2011	25
Dr. David Middleton lecture, October 2011	26
Dr. Matthew Jebb lecture, December 2011	27
None of the Leinster events	28

Munster

Mike Brown lecture, March 2010	29
Paul Cutler lecture, April 2010	30
Siva Velivelli lecture, November 2010	31
Malcolm Kitt lecture, January 2011	32
Patrick Quigley lecture, April 2011	33
Tourin & Ballynatray garden visits, May 2011	34
Paddy Tobin lecture October 2011	35
Bill Chase lecture November 2011	36
Patrick O'Hara lecture December 2011	37
None of the Munster events	38

4 Have you any suggestions for improving or adding to IGPS activities?

5 Do you visit the IGPS website regularly?

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------|
| Yes | 1 | Go to Q7 |
| No | 2 | Go to Q6 |

6 Why do you not visit the website on a regular basis?

- | | |
|--|---|
| Don't own a computer | 1 |
| Did not know there was a website | 2 |
| Have used it but the content doesn't interest me | 3 |
| The news and information is not up to date | 4 |
| Other, please specify | |

7 Have you any suggestions for improving the website?

8 Which, if any, social networking sites do you use?

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| None | 1 |
| Facebook | 2 |
| Bebo | 3 |
| LinkedIn | 4 |
| Twitter | 5 |
| Other please specify | |

9 Which part of Ireland do you live in?

Eastern	1
Southern	2
Northern	3
Western	4

10 How satisfied are you with the IGPS?

Very satisfied	1
Satisfied	2
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	3
Dissatisfied	4
Very dissatisfied	5

11 Do you belong to any other horticultural or gardening societies?

RHSI	1
RHS	2
Alpine Garden Society	3
Specialist society e.g. Rose or Daffodil Society etc	4
Local horticultural society or gardening club	5
Society or club organised by a garden centre	6
No other societies	7
Other please specify	

Please email to igpsireland@aol.com or post to The Irish Garden Plant Society, c/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 **before 31 January 2012.**

All entries received by 31 January will be entered into a draw for a copy of “*In the footsteps of Augustine Henry*” by Seamus O’Brien worth £40/€46. Please give your name, address and email address, if you have one, if you wish to enter the draw. Very many thanks for your help.

Name.....

Email.....



Haute Cuisine by John Joe Costin

Roy Lancaster presented a slide show in Kilcock entitled '*Impressive Plants*' some years ago. The knowledgeable audience, was largely women, predictably so as the tickets were distributed through 'Flower Clubs'. Enthusiasm could be measured in the distances travelled and the informed comments marked the well travelled. The first slide evoked gasps of admiration. The 'wow' factor was a panorama of a sun drenched treeless upland landscape, saturated to the skyline in golden flowers. It was exceptional. The audience gazed in awe. He remained silent. Voices asked, what is it? 300 pens were poised. He asked could anyone identify the plant or the place? The answers covered the northern hemisphere.

"The Steppes in spring".

"Kazakhstan"

"Montana"

"Mountains in Crete"

"Turkey"

He named the coveted. They were flabbergasted. Decency necessitated a few minutes respite to allow the audience compose itself, dissipate its embarrassment and regain its dignity. Roy captured the image on a visit to the Moors in Yorkshire. The gardeners in a momentarily lapse of taste had acclaimed Dandelions! In a Waterford colloquialism 'they got a right suck in'

In April 2011 I experienced a dandelion epiphany. On the Maynooth road to Kilcock, 2Km from the town one can view a unique Fen type landscape. In a treeless, hedgeless plain, the vista is dominated by the neogothic belfry of the town's chapel, a classic distant focal point. It is framed on the left by rising ground and a tall hawthorn hedgerow and on the right by the flood plain of the river Rye. The transport infrastructural investments of the last 170 years, a local road, the railroad, the Royal Canal and its tow-path, a manicured 5m wide grass median and the Old Dublin road all orientated by the course of the river, run in parallel towards the town centre. Together they accentuate the dominance of the belfry in an otherwise flat plain.

In April, three swathes of yellow, in differing tones, emerged together and transformed this placid landscape. Daffodils in cream and light yellow appeared first and stayed longest. A 1m wide band ran alongside the tow-path the entire 2Km to the harbour in the town. In mid April, for its brief 2 weeks flowering period, the acidic lemon of a 20 Ha (50 acre) field of rapeseed dominated the horizon. The third flower was the dandelion. Its warm yellow

turned the grass median in front of the daffodils into a golden rug. The Yorkshire Moors were in Kilcock. That is, if judges could be found who would evaluate its landscape effectiveness without the bias of 'this is a weed'. The dandelion got little opportunity to proselytise. Shortly afterwards, the median was mown.

Why the dichotomy?

The audience's initial reaction affirmed the beauty and the desirability of the dandelion in its anonymity. Their second reaction was discomfort in the contradiction that minds overruled eyes. Did a prejudice inform their aesthetics or was a good plant judged unfairly by an aspersion? The dandelion is a weed, but are not most of our garden plants someone else's weeds? Is it because it does not present a challenge to grow it? Is it a reject for its ubiquity and abundance, its indifference to location, its association with waste places, dry banks, meadows and lawns? Its presence reflects no glory on the gardener. Hubris demands the prestige of achievement and the admiration of others. Growing dandelions evokes derision and its advocates invite scorn.

Whilst my father had an interest in herbal remedies, I never heard him speak of dandelion as a cure. It has a reputation as a mild diuretic. This may have inspired the name that my aunt in Kilkenny called it by, '*Piss a Bed*', an uncharacteristic crudity from a kind person. I thought that it might describe its smell. I took it as a warning that it was a plant to be wary of. The name created a fear that contact might induce nocturnal enuresis and the mortification of that embarrassment would wreck my holiday. It transpires that the name is a direct absorption from French. They call it *Piss en lit* and piss in French means much the same as it does in English. My ancestors may have learned from the Norman invaders, who landed in nearby Baginbun Bay in Co. Wexford. Irish Daisy is one of 40 common name synonyms. My father's name for it, *caisearbhan* is the one I prefer.

Gardening practices ultimately submit to the laws of nature. We have however the freedom to choose what we want to grow or show. Our choices and interests are influenced by social mores, prejudices, fashion or in the imitation of the actions and words of others. Much of our gardening literature originates in the UK and is freighted with the values, acute class consciousness and social preoccupations of that society. Much of what is approved and a lot of what is 'infra dig' cannot be analysed on an objective basis.

The arbitrariness of these '*rules*' is epitomised in their extremes. At one end the use of bedding plants is scoffed at whilst at another extreme there is unanimity among a sept of the aristocracy/landed gentry that **'one does not have yellow in one's garden'**. The dislike of the plant can be its colour. One person may express intense dislike of a certain colour while another may elevate one colour above all others. Symbolism in colour is a primary

characteristic of cultures and societies but interpretation differs. Black represents mourning in certain societies, while in others white is the colour of death. Goods packed in yellow and red are considered cheap and cheerful by our marketers, whereas purple and silver packaging project the superior, the sophisticated and good taste. The criterion maybe it's performance or the lack of. The first and often the only question asked by purchasers of plants is "does it flower, when, and what colour is it"? The dandelion should be a winner on merit using those criteria. In the week of the grand display on the banks of the Royal Canal, a rare and sought after 'gem' flowered in our garden. I showed it to my best friend. It was planted by the kitchen window, sited prescription perfect in full sun, where it could bake. I told her to watch it progress as the buds coloured yellow/purple. Next day its gorgeous yellow petals unfurled and on the third day, they were shed. Over 20 years I have monitored its performance. This is its show, a one day display! Garden writers duped me to acquire it and they continue to praise 'The King's New Suit' or in euphemisms, which only the disappointed can decode. No one calls it by what it should be known as 'Blink and you will miss it'. The one day wonder is ***Paeonia mlokosewitschii***. Its consistent ability to never do better, gives it a perverse curiosity and conversational value that many Gold Medal plants never achieve. The dandelion is too dependable and we prefer the challenge of the uncertainty of the infuriating performer.

Imagine my chagrin when I arrived on December 8th in Puerto Arenas, the most southerly city in Chile situated on the Magellan Straits and the service port for Tierra del Fuego and Cape Horn, with my head full of exotic expectations and the anticipated excitement of seeing the Chilean flora in its native place, when the first plant I encountered outside the airport was a dandelion in full flower. It maybe native to Ireland but it really is a universal plant, widely distributed across the temperate regions of both the northern and southern hemispheres, a badge to its versatility and adaptability. The correct specific name for the Dandelion is I believe still to be established. ***Taraxacum officinalis*** long applied is obsolete. Dandelion can never interbreed, as they set seed without pollination. Each small seed is equipped with a filamentous parachute, an ideal distribution mechanism for a windy isle such as Ireland. Those that want to propagate distinctive blanching or salads cultivars do so by root cuttings.

An ecologist in UCD lectures that the Normans brought dandelions to Ireland. They were partial to its leaves and ate them in their salads. Indeed the French developed cultivars selected for blanching, or that self blanch, for the special flavour of their leaves, or for the taste and size of their roots. The Americans did too. The botanical evidence from Viking Dublin Fishamble Street excavations reveal that the Dandelion was a component of the hay meadows they harvested and brought into their houses 3 centuries before the Normans arrived. In sifting through the debris of 16 houses built and superimposed on

each other on the same site from 917 onward they found dandelions in every layer. Literature attests that dandelion was harvested as a food in Ireland. Its advantage is that it is evergreen, except in the coldest spells, and therefore could be collected the year around. The roots were harvested too in Britain during the war, from which they made a drink indistinguishable in taste from real coffee but without the caffeine. The Japanese use the roots as a vegetable in all their cuisine styles. In my student days, dandelion wine was one of the offerings from the many home wine makers but it was more honest to praise their enthusiasm because you could not praise the beverages.

Greenery is the base of many salads and is synonymous with the bland smooth tasting lettuce. Where the jaded palate needs a little bit more astringency, Dandelion like Chicory or Endive offers a bracing flavour. Those who have a more industrial inclination could tinker around with producing rubber from its latex. For dandelion loathers who need a patron saint to plead to, it has to be the former Soviet Union. They manufactured their rubber requirements from its latex when the west banned sales of natural rubber to them. They continued to do so until their scientists developed a fine synthetic rubber called Sovpren.

Eating dandelion would add variety to our diet. It is a challenge to list 50 herbs and vegetables stocked in Irish food stores. In Japan over 300 are grown commercially and many are what we call weeds. The Japanese are a respectful people. A part of their reserve is a loathness to criticise! One I elicited is that they find the European vegetable offering limited, bland and monotonous. They perceive an over emphasis on colour, presentation and an over dependency on carrots and tomatoes to provide it. Their cuisine emphasise tastes and textures and are accustomed to dining experiences that place vegetables and herbs on a par with other ingredients in the dish. Umami is now accepted as the fifth taste, it describes that savouriness that is so characteristic of many Japanese and Chinese foods.

Staying in a nurseryman's home in Hokkaido for 4 nights, every meal was a botanic class so wide and varied were the plants used to cater for every need and picky palate. I ate the fleshy leaf stalks of the giant Japanese Butterbur, *Petasites giganteus*, 13 different wild mushrooms, the young fronds of bracken, *Pteridium aquilinum* and of the Ostrich Plume Fern, *Matteuccia struthiopteris*, *Aspidistra* leaves were served as an antiseptic with raw fish dishes. Shrimp sized hornets larvae were forcepsed from their comb and eaten raw. In Sichuan in May a local farmer agreed to provide a dinner when we returned from the mountain that evening. The starter was dried preserved ferns. These were harvested the previous autumn and treated to remove the poisonous alkaloid that animals dislike and so never browse on their foliage. Then smoke home cured pork belly and finally an omelette filled with sliced young shoots snapped off a Toona tree in the garden, *Cedrela sinensis*, giving it a crunchy oniony flavour.

Many of our food outlets condition us to think of food as a commodity, not as a daily joy or as an aesthetic experience. It is treated as a fuel and packaged for us to be eaten on the run. So often the emphasis is on speed of service, prices are highlighted, not flavours to savour. Treats are fast food boxes, and variety is arbitrated by the low cost criteria of monopoly supermarkets. Food expertise is provided by diet quacks with elixirs to flog. The Farmers Markets and Bord Bia have Niagaras to confront.

Edible weeds and food for free

There was a time when doctors and herbalists/chemists could identify every plant by the taste of its leaf and determine whether it was benign or poisonous. People who gather wild plants for food know the extraordinary range of taste and what are the distinctive treats. Efficiency in gathering always tilts the balance towards high yielding plants.

The introduction of new crops such as potatoes displaced parsnips, up until then the dominant root crop in Europe. This development was accentuated when the Agricultural Advisory Service was established. The first Horticultural Advisor's mission, appointed in Ireland in 1901 to Co. Kildare, was to educate growers and to introduce high yielding and better varieties. New factory foods were introduced too. Processed foods were advertised as purer, superior and sophisticated products. A neighbour recalls 1Kg (2lbs) of white sugar was the exotic first prize in the parish Christmas whist drive in 1919. The following year the novelty prize was a large white loaf promoted as superior and 'purer' to oatmeal cakes and brown bread. By a combination of less time, higher incomes, more and cheaper manufactured foods and higher yield crops the collecting of wild foods diminished.

If we dislike Dandelion so much, why do we not revive its use as a desirable edible and promote it as a food. Then we could experience the double benefit that primitive societies retailed to anthropologists; the satisfaction of eating your enemy! In this period of austerity, eating weeds would resonate with the times as an eco friendly practice. It was done before. The UK government in war time Britain in 1943 published a booklet that encouraged Hedgerow Harvesting. That great plantsman E.A Bowles daily salad of choice was Endive, chopped Apple and leaves from a particular Dandelion. The late Theodora Fitzgibbon, Ireland's culinary goddess of the 60's, 70's and 80's included weeds in her recipes. It would be good for our cuisine to do so again. There is no reason why eating weed should not become as popular as smoking weed has, especially as it is legal to do so.

We know that some of the tastiest and most popular food plants are also some of the great nuisance plants in present day gardening. These are plants that insist on growing free on their own whether we want them or not. A revival in harvesting these for food would be both fortuitous and gratifying. If I was

served Giant Butter Bur in Japan and found it good, why should we not feast at home on the stems of Cow Parsley ***Heracleum sphondylium***. It is the queen of our road verges in May, accessible and available to everyone. The young shoots are succulently fleshy and fed our ancestors. Imagine the two in one satisfaction of weeding your garden and sourcing free food at the same time. ***Stellaria media*** or Chickweed is a champion carpeting weed and the one that gives the hand weeder the greatest satisfaction as every fistful clears a square metre. It is acknowledged as a deliciously tender wild vegetable. Leaves and stems were eaten cooked likes spinach with a little water.

Ground Elder, *Aegopodium podagraria* was popular and was served in Inns both as a vegetable and as a cure for gout. **Podagraria - gouty**. It has an unusual tangy flavour. Medical advances undid its gout credentials and our growing preference for the bland taste undermined the desire to eat it.

Dog meat, the national dish in Korea, was served by the founder when he invited me to lunch at his **Chollipo Arboretum** on the west coast. The accompanying stir fry was of the fleshy white roots of a native weed that grows in ditches and boggy places, ***Houttuynia cordata***. It would be a national benefit if we could uncover a recipe for its Irish equivalent, Bindweed. Its succulent white roots have all the necessary characteristics to become a new national dish and gardeners should relish devouring it.

A Chinese proverb advises us “**to eat a little clay with our food**”, it might be good for us. On the other hand powerful “informational” campaigns by hygiene products and pharmaceutical companies make all of us aware and maybe many of us paranoid about the cleanliness of our surroundings and of what we eat. Recent research shows a possible link between our obsessive sense of hygiene and the increase in the occurrence of allergies and asthma. Propagation trials in Kew demonstrated that the assiduous hygiene preached by teachers, advisors and pathologists is not necessary best practice. Strict adherence to such standards, deny young seedlings an interaction with essential soil micro-organisms. Dirty or natural soil is needed. This mutual interdependence between bacteria and plants called symbiosis was considered the exception (such as nitrogen fixing bacteria on legumes). Now it is the rule. We know that, but for a small minority, almost all plants need to form one with bacteria of some kind. These cannot be got from sterilised propagation media. Research is revealing that humans too depend on the benefits of innumerable symbiotic relationships. Misunderstood in the past, elimination treatments were mistakenly prescribed for beneficial microbes whose effects were unknown when they were first isolated and identified in the intestine.

By the same mind conditioning, people are circumspect if offered 'wild food'. There is a fear of the unfamiliar. For some, it is an astonishment that milk comes from smelly cows. There is an innate fear to avoid anything that is wild

or that has not been properly produced and packaged under hygienic health and safety approved conditions. “Plastic guarantees Purity”, so a blotchy **Crab Apple** with a little apple scab is rejected, a **wild strawberry** because it is not the 'normal' size, a **medlar** because it looks odd, like a brown rose hip with 5 stiff reflexed calyx. Only a trusting friend will accept a bletted or half rotten fruit at the point when it is ripe for eating off the tree. The *draighean dubh* (**sloe**) probably correctly because its astringency anaesthetise lips. Few will accept the fruit of *Mahonia aquifolium*, the Oregon grape as edible or that it can be eaten raw in mid November. The purplish berries of **Amelanchier** can be eaten off the bush, an action that alarms onlookers accompanying you if you do it unannounced or in a matter of fact manner.

Our house was the most distant from the local National School. In the long walk (3.5miles) 5.6K home we foraged in hedgerows for sustenance. Educated by the older ones we pulled the pistil from the flower of Deora De or Fuchsia, sucked on the nectar and deprived the bee. We munched the sweet scented elder flowers, even though the foliage has a vile stench, a remarkable experience, like eating Cheddar cheese unaccompanied. The flowers of the hawthorn have a nutty flavour. In autumn we gorged on Smeara Dubha, Fraochan and Sceach Gheal (Blackberries, Bilberries and Hawthorns). No fruits were more plentiful than the hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and like the **Caorthann** (Rowan berries) **Sorbus aucuparia** are of the apple family but smaller. We found occasional hazelnuts and crab apples and pulled our own scallions and carrots and ate them garnished in clay. **Symphoricarpos** or **Snowberry** I have eaten once or twice, it holds its berries until late spring. The fruit is not palatable and the birds left them to rot on the bushes.

What my father called *neanntog*, formed a plant edge around the farmyard but not the haggard. It thrives where animal waste abounds, the height and darkness of the foliage a measure of the richness of the effluent that seeped towards its roots. He would not have known that its favoured place of growth is now called a habitat or that it is its ecological niche or that this twinning of plant and effluent absorption is environmentally friendly or that it is a sustainable practice. Nor did he know that the sting is caused by formic acid. He did know however that the nettle is one of the most useful of edible plants, a rich source of vitamins and iron, that cooking destroyed the sting and that it provided the best means to dose his children with the equivalent of a modern booster jab. In April and May each year we ate 3-4 meals of nettles. Every housewife rearing turkeys knew nettles were essential to their diet if they were to thrive.

Like spinach it shrivelled when boiled so it was necessary to harvest large bundles to feed the pot. By June the foliage had lost its succulence, the stems became fibrous and the taste too bitter. Nettles were cooked and served as a soup, in colcannon or as a vegetable mixed with onions. These memories

inspired the banquet menu for the first International Plant Propagating Society Conference held in Dublin in 1986. Complements to the chef were the unusual number of requests for recipes he received in its aftermath.

The origin of the name of the townland where our nursery is located intrigued many of our English customers. Their presumptions were both complementary and aggrandising. To them, Portgloriam was a Latin name, a self-effacing modesty camouflaging grandeur and heritage. There is neither pedigree nor association. The place name was inspired by the habitat of a modest plant. For that we are indebted to the recording decisions made at the outset that guided the Trigonometrical and Interior Survey, when it commenced in Ireland in 1828. They wanted the survey to be a full portrait of Ireland unlike the more limited topographical one started in England. The objective was to glean information about our history, culture, economy, geology, religious practices, language, antiquities and agricultural potential. Interpreting place names correctly was the reason the director needed to understand the language. Thomas Askew Larcom a perfectionist decided that to do so properly, he had to learn Irish.

Map makers, he directed should initially discover place names by asking locals, then record variations and verify the correct one from manuscripts and printed texts and reconcile it all in the office. The Place Name Commission is its child. John O'Donoghue its most famous employee saw himself as a linguist archaeologist, excavating pure Irish names from generations of confusion and phonetic change. It is a treasure trove of information on plants. The name translated as Port, a bank or mound and Gloriam (gleoran) Lady's Smock. ***Cardamine pratensis*** grows freely here in a damp meadow and along the banks of a boundary stream. It was used like watercress and has the same tangy flavour. Watercress was once a popular green vegetable before its use was shrunk to a garnish. The cultivated plant is identical to that which you can pick in its natural habitat; the muddy shallow edges of the stream. The older and stronger coloured shoots are the tastiest and the tangy ones which inspired its specific Latin name ***Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum***. (Nasturtium = Nose twister or tormented nose).

Cardamine hirsutum, hairy bittercress, a related species is a common nursery weed and the one many nurseries supplied free of charge to their customers. The value of this gesture was not appreciated. It too has a pleasant tangy flavour that is fleshier and sweeter than that of watercress. All are edible members of the cabbage family. If only the gardeners had been told.

MUNSTER PLANT SALE

Saturday 14th April SMA HALL WILTON CORK 10a.m. – 12 noon.



Gary Dunlop on *Sorbus hedlundii* (Schneid.): An uncommon Whitebeam: first introduced into cultivation in Ireland.

This attractive tree was first named and described by Camilo Schneider in 1906, from a specimen collected by J.D.Hooker.¹ W.J. Bean describes the likely introduction into cultivation in the 1920s, albeit under the wrong name of *Pyrus thomsonii*, being via seed raised at Glasnevin Botanic Gardens at the end of the 19thC. The first specimen was grown at Killmacurragh.² The original specimen there died but not before Mr Walpole at Mount Usher had propagated it in the 1920s and the trees that he raised were deemed to be the largest in cultivation at the time, and may still be so, if they still survive. In a compilation of Trees and Shrubs in Ireland, the species was curiously recorded as *S.hedlundii* Hort. non Schneider, and also occurring at Kilbogget.³ It should be easy to confirm whether this identification is mistaken. The trees in Ireland are not mentioned in the recently published book on Champion Trees, which only records one specimen at Winkworth Arboretum, being 13m (42ft) tall.⁴ Bean also notes that the next known introduction was in 1971 when seed of it was collected in East Nepal by an expedition by the University of North Wales, from trees about 60ft-70ft high. This is most likely to be the source of the Winkworth tree. There have apparently been quite a few subsequent collections of seed from the wild.

I first came across this tree over 30 years ago, under the name *Sorbus thomsonii*, in the garden of the late Drs Bill and Gretta Lennon, at Plas Merdyn in Holywood, Co Down. Their small unimpressive and misshapen specimen, at the western end of their 3 acre woodland garden, had a main stem which divided crookedly about 3 ft above ground, was anything but impressive, and so I was not surprised to hear that it was apparently very rare in cultivation. Whilst it is not unusual for some nurserymen to embellish stories about the rarity of plants they are selling, few go to the extreme of incriminating themselves. In this case, the Lennons were told by the late Leslie Slinger, the proprietor of the Slieve Donard Nursery, that he had obtained propagation material from Mount Usher, but without the prior knowledge and consent of Mr Walpole and was never allowed back into the garden. He apparently said that only three plants were propagated, the one which the Lennons bought, the second was bought by their friend Vera Mackie whose garden Guincho also contained many rare and unusual plants and the third remained at the Slieve Donard Nursery.

On a visit to Guincho with the Lennons, almost 30 years ago, I saw Vera Mackie's tree, which was a neat, well shaped standard, which could readily have been taken for a young and barely established *Sorbus aria*. Some years later, I started to relate the anecdote about the tree to Nigel Marshall, the then head gardener at Mount Stewart, but he had already heard the same story from Vera Mackie.

I saw the tree at Guincho again about 5 years or so ago, more than 20 years after I had first seen it, and was surprised to see that it was not significantly larger. I found that surprising, not least because I had read somewhere that *Sorbus hedlundii* formed an impressive tree in the wild. It seems likely that Donard propagated plants must have been budded or grafted unto what was effectively a dwarfing rootstock. I subsequently learnt from Philip Wood, that the story of the dubious means of acquisition of the propagation material of this apparently rare tree, by the Slieve Donard Nursery, was merely a tall tale. Philip Wood, who joined the Donard nursery shortly after the war and eventually became a director, had written to Mr Walpole, in the early 1950s I think, requesting budding material, and had been sent a branch to propagate from. Apparently the Donard propagated about a dozen plants from the branch, but as the demand greatly exceeded supply, many potential customers were disappointed, as it seems that favoured customers were given priority to buy it. He didn't say how they had propagated it, whether by budding or grafting (the rootstock of *S.aria* is normally used commercially for both forms of propagation) or if the Donard had ever propagated it again from their stock plant, though I think not. The 'third' tree remained at the Donard, until its closure in 1972, when it was transferred to Baronscourt, near Newtownstewart, Co Tyrone. On a visit to the nursery there in the early 1990s, I saw the Donard stock plant or what was left of it, a short stump less than 50mm in diameter and less than 600mm tall, with a few emerging side shoots. I assumed Geoffrey Allan, the talented young propagator there might have propagated from it. Unfortunately after substantial plant losses in a very severe winter a year or two later, the nursery was forced to close.

The Lennons' small tree eventually bore fruit, which was equally unimpressive, being small clusters of small pale brown berries. Nevertheless, I succumbed to the temptation to try sowing some seeds of this 'rare' tree, and germinated about a dozen seedlings. It was only then that I tried to look up *Sorbus thomsonii* in Bean, to see what size the tree was supposed to grow to, but it was not listed and it was only by chance that I noticed the name mentioned in the text describing *Sorbus hedlundii*. I gave away most of the young saplings, to various gardens including Mount Stewart, Rowallane and Castlewellan locally and also sent one to Hugh McAlister at Ness Botanic Gardens, which held the National Collection of Sorbus. I subsequently discovered that Patrick Forde of Seaforde, had collected seed of this tree in the wild and exchanged one of my small trees for one of his collection, to see if they were similar.



Sorbus hedlundii Two trees the same age

Early on, I had planted one of my small saplings up at the top of the garden adjacent to a large mounded area of exposed bedrock, which formed a natural rock garden. It contained some relatively deep pockets of soil, as well as large areas of the dolerite bedrock, which had been ground smooth by glacial action. The soil was fairly shallow and poor, but it seemed a suitable location for what I thought at the time would remain a small and unimpressive tree. I was pleasantly surprised that it established readily and grew away well, even branching around and down to the base of the trunk. I was left with one other remaining small tree planted in better, though less open conditions at the lowest part of the garden, which was not doing so well, so I eventually moved it up beside the other specimen at the other side of a short path leading from the lawn up to the exposed bedrock. It too subsequently sprouted some branches from lower down the trunk, but whilst growing much better than in its previous location, it has not matched the development of the earlier planting, and is a rather poor lopsided specimen in comparison. The lower side branches of the original planting had formed about 10 supplementary leaders and made a broad, rounded symmetrical form, with foliage down to almost ground level, and more reminiscent of a plump cypress than a deciduous tree. This branching habit is exhibited in other species of the Aria section of *Sorbus*, which are likely to be separated out as a separate genus. The later planting of the tree from Patrick Forde was also planted near the top of the garden, which slopes quiet steeply up to the east, in marginally better conditions though my soil is shallow and low in nutrients. It has turned out to be almost fastigate, though slightly

lopsided to the east because of several eucalyptus trees to the west, which restricted the daylight slightly. It is thus reasonable to conclude that it is a species of tree that needs light and open conditions to perform at its best, and the younger that it is planted out in open conditions the better it will fare, and make a better shaped tree. I recently saw the specimen of this collection of the late Patrick Forde, in the woodland garden at Seaforde. It was planted near the side of a large open area, and though not fastigate like my plant, it was definitely growing out toward the light. It is probably about 12m tall with a 5-6m egg shaped spread, though with some shrubs in front of it, the side branching begins about 1m or more above the ground. Despite the more enclosed location, the better soil at Seaforde had produced a much larger specimen. My best specimen descended from the original introductions is now over 20 years old, but has yet to flower. It has made a shapely ovoid or egg shaped specimen, from ground level, over 6m tall and about 5m across, though I have had to prune back some of the lower branches to reduce the spread below head height, as it was planted too close to the path. The adjacent misshapen tree is almost 5m tall. In contrast the younger Patrick Forde collection has reached at least 9m tall, in about 10 years and would be about 3m across if it had developed symmetrically. It has a secondary trunk about half the diameter of the main one which is tight beside the main one and almost as tall, and the leaves are rather dull or greenish grey on the upper surface, in contrast to the original introduction which has a light silvery green upper surface typical of many species in the aria section of the genus *Sorbus*. The main distinguishing feature of *S.hedlundii*, from other members of the Aria branch of the genus, is that the veins on the underside of the leaves are covered with yellowish orange or rufous hairs, contrasting well with the silver underside. The colour of the upper surface of the leaves seems to be variable as the Seaford specimen is darker almost dull green, in contrast with the paler silvery green of the earliest introduction.

Well over 10 years ago, I obtained another plant under the name *Sorbus thomsonii* but as I have no record of the source, I expected it to be another form of *S. hedlundii*, but it turned out to be rather different, with larger and more rounded leaves but still with silvery green upper surface and a conspicuous silver indumentum or tomentum on the lower surface, including the veins. After some years it started flowering and producing small clusters of quite large berries, which ripen eventually to a dull orange brown colour and look rather like miniature crab apples, slightly bigger than a marble. A knowledgeable plantswoman visiting my garden some years ago also knew the plant as *S.thomsonii*. However, more recently on trying to confirm this identification, I subsequently identified the tree as a low altitude form of *S.thibetica* from the detailed article in the Plantsman. The trees at higher altitude have rather narrower leaves.⁵ It would seem that the name *S.thomsonii* has been erroneously applied to more than one species of the Aria section or subgenus of sorbus from the Himalayan region.



Sorbus hedlundii: New foliage



Sorbus thibetica: leaves and fruit

There have been quite a few more recent introductions of *S.hedlundii* into cultivation. In September 2008 the RHS hosted a Sorbus study day covering the Aria section of Sorbus, which may soon be separated as a genus of its own. Himalayan species were well represented, though the article in the Plantsman was more about the event and thus rather light on specific information about the various species. Whilst there were a few pointers to the differences between several species, it resorted to a list of recommended cultivars, despite them not being commercially available. There was at least a photo of the fruit of *S.thomsonii* but without worthwhile description, though apparently as it is in the Micromeles section of Sorbus, it lacks the white undersides to the leaves, which appear to be a pale grey green. This raises the question of whether the photo supposedly of *S.thomsonii* in Krussman ⁷ is correct as it appeared to show a plant with silver undersides to the leaves and with dark coloured veins, which is more likely to be *S.hedlundii*

The book on New Trees ⁸ which might have been expected to include details of some of the uncommon Himalayan species of *S.aria* of fairly recent introduction into cultivation, opted out because of taxonomic difficulties and those Sorbus in the section Aria have only partly been formally reclassified as being in the new genus Aria. The various species are only listed with cross references to Bean and Krussman. The Himalayan species are variable and even the status of *S.hedlundii* is uncertain as in the paper associated with the Plantsman article. Hugh McAllister considers it and others may be variant forms of *S. vestia*, whereas Keith Rushford is content with the various species as currently described. Irrespective of its eventual botanical destination, *Sorbus hedlundii* is a very attractive tree which needs to be grown in the open in order to perform at its best.

References:

- 1 Schneider, C.K.1906: *Sorbus hedlundii* tab.685 Handbook Laubholz i.685
- 2 Bean, W.J. 1980: Trees & Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles. 8th Edition. Vol. 4 pp.419- 20. John Murray London.
- 3 Forrest, M. compiler, Nelson, C. editor 1985: Trees and Shrubs Cultivated in Ireland (1988 reprint with corrections) Boethius Press Killkenny for Heritage Gardens Committee.
- 4 Johnson, O 2011: Champion Trees of Britain and Ireland. RBG Kew, London
- 5 Rushford, K. 1992: Butanese sorbi. Pt.3 Plantsman Vol.14 pt.1 (see also parts 1 & 2 in Vol 13 pts 2 & 4.
- 6 Lancaster, N. & Grant, M. 2008: Focus on Sorbus. Plantsman New series Vol.7 Pt.4 Dec.2008 RHS London The article plus a list if plants exhibited on the study day and another short paper on the different opinions of two experts on the status of some of the species in the Thibetica Group, are also available on the RHS website, under www.rhs.org.uk/plantsman. .
- 7 Krussman, G. 1986: Cultivated Broad-leaved Trees & Shrubs Vol. III Plate 119 (Photographed at Wisley). English Edition Timber Press Portland Oregon.
- 8 Grimshaw, J. & Bayton, R. 2010: New trees: recent introductions to Cultivation. RBG Kew, London

Plant Search

A member has written to say he has found it difficult to locate *Anemone nemorosa* 'Lady Doneraile', and that *Anemone nemorosa* 'Lucy's Wood' is not available commercially. If you grow either of these plants and have some to spare, or have information on where they are available, the contact details of the member are with the editor. Please contact Mary Rowe at the address on page 1.



Anemone nemorosa 'Lucy's Wood'
Photograph Paddy Tobin



Anemone n. 'Lady Doneraile'
Photograph Dr. E. C. Nelson



Regional Reports

MUNSTER

Tuesday 4th October 2011

“The Swiss Alps, Walks and Flowers” by Paddy Tobin

When I first contacted Paddy to give the Munster Group a talk in Cork and asked him for a title to his talk, he said “Swiss Alps, Walks in the Shadow of the Eiger”. Later he came to me with a decision to call it “The Swiss Alps, Walks and Flowers”. He thought that “In the Shadow of the Eiger” was a bit dramatic! I suppose that our imaginations could run away with us and visualise Mary and Paddy roped up and clinging to a sheer rock face, whilst trying to get a photograph of some very rare mountain plant. This was an image that he wanted to dispel. He was at pains to point out that all the walks were very gentle and easy on the foot. The Julie Andrews’s coming over the hill scene it is then! With the aid of absolutely brilliant photography, Paddy took us on a tour of the walks in the area around Wengen, Männlichen and Kleine Scheidegg which are in the region known as the Bernese Oberland. It has been a long time dream of both Mary and Paddy to visit this region and revel in the beautiful scenery and flowers that live there, so in May last year they fulfilled this ambition.

The tour started in Wengen, a village which is situated on a wind protected sun terrace at the foot of the Junfrau, 400 metres above the Lauterbrunnen valley at an altitude of 1274metres. This picture-postcard village filled with nostalgic timber houses is car free and can only be accessed by train from Lauterbrunnen via the Wengernalp railway. The village has a very high level of tourism especially in the summer and has a population of about 1300 people. A cable ride of 5 minutes takes you to Männlichen, Wengen’s local mountain at 2230 metres. The mountain station is the starting point of numerous mountain hikes. The wide plateau allows imposing views below to the village of Wengen and the valleys of Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald. The view towards the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau is quite unparalleled! Mary and Paddy went on the hike from Männlichen to Kleine Scheidegg, which is a fairly easy walking route with only slight ascents and descent. The trail leads through grasslands, where many alpine flowers can be seen. There is a world famous botanical garden on the Scyngge Platte. The botanical garden has more than 600 plant species and is very special, for it shows the plants in their natural communities.

Some of the many plants photographed were notably *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, otherwise known as the Alpine rose, *Pulsatilla alpina*, *Gentiana acaulis* and *Gentiana lutea*, which was used in brewing.

Everybody greatly enjoyed the well planned talk, which was given with good humour, abundant knowledge of plants and with great photographs. Well done Paddy!

Martin Edwardes

LEINSTER

Saturday October 1st A guided tour of Maynooth College Grounds

October 1st 2011 will be remembered by some as being a particularly wet and miserable day, especially by those working at the Northern region Plant Sale at Rowallane Gardens. But for some of us it will also be remembered for a guided tour of Maynooth College grounds in the company of John Joe Costin, as a special event to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the IGPS. John Joe is known to most of us for his interesting and informative articles in the newsletter; well he excelled himself on the day with a potted history of Ireland and of the foundations of the college; his forthright opinions on many of the plants used in the college grounds showed the great in depth knowledge of a skilled plantsman.

For many of us the highlight of the tour was the Bicentenary Garden designed by John Joe, and based on the theme: 'From Origins to Destiny: The Ascent of Jacob's Ladder' The garden has strong echoes of the oriental garden, with symbolism too complex to convey in much detail in this short review. In essence, the garden illustrates the spiritual journey of the human being towards God, with distinct areas designed to reflect the barren state of man's fall from grace and on the opposite side, a sunny, verdant area representing paradise. Man's journey through life is marked by a series of seven fountains, each illuminated in a different colour of light: procreation, pain, power, love, truth, understanding and finally paradise, symbolised by a central fountain, surrounded by water, seemingly inaccessible, but reached by smooth stepping stones set just beneath the surface of the water, and illuminated in golden light. The tour of the grounds was followed by a beautiful meal – a lovely way to help celebrate our 30th anniversary. Thanks are due to all involved in organising the event and in the preparation of the meal: Marcella, Emer and Mary for looking after the organising; Rita, Sarah and Felicity for the beautiful meal and floral table decorations and finally John Joe for his excellent guided tour.

Patrick Quigley

NORTHERN

Thursday October 20th

A lecture by Seamus O'Brien "Horto Hibernica – Ireland's great horticultural heritage"

When the Northern Steering Group began to discuss a possible speaker for the 30th anniversary lecture, we looked in the first instance to bring in a high profile figure from the horticultural world in Britain. Gradually it dawned on us that really, we had no need to go outside Ireland when we had our experts – plantsmen, botanist, designers, gardeners, explorers – who were steeped in Irish horticulture and sympathetic to the ideals of the Irish Garden Plant Society. Not only did Seamus O'Brien seem to fit all the categories, he had also written a book which was about to be published. And so he agreed to deliver his lecture "Horto Hibernica – Ireland's great horticultural heritage"

A capacity audience at The Old Court House in Antrim was enthralled by his account of Ireland's global influence on horticulture, botany and plant exploration. All the big players were there and the greatest of them was Ulsterman Augustine Henry, whose explorations in China in the late 19th century opened the way for a stream of explorers and plant hunters in the early 20th century – George Forrest, Frank Kingdon Ward and E.H. (Chinese) Wilson. Henry built up a strong connection with Kew Gardens and during his years in China sent back 158,000 herbarium specimens consisting of 6,000 species. Our gardens today contain reminders of Augustine Henry's incredible influence, henryi and henryana, augustinei and angustiniana roll off the tongue like Latin declensions. Attached to lilium and lonicera, rosa and rhododendron, they make gardens whose plants are familiar to us.

We are not without our modern day explorers. Almost a century later, in 2002, Seamus and a team from the National Botanical Gardens Glasnevin began the first of four expeditions following in the footsteps of Augustine Henry. The century between Augustine Henry and the 2002 expedition is a story of growth and consolidation of influence in Irish horticulture. We see Glasnevin reaching its pinnacle under the directorship of Sir Frederick Moore and ranking as one of the top three great botanic gardens of the world along with Kew and Edinburgh. We see Kilmacurragh, Fota, Castlewellan, Mount Usher and Powerscourt becoming important custodians of the trees and shrubs brought back by the great plant explorers.

The subject matter which Seamus covered in his lecture was immense. For anyone who hasn't heard it, I would suggest that a copy of his meticulously researched and very readable book is a must.

The IGPS in the North has had a very close association with Antrim Borough Council over many years when it facilitates our spring and autumn lectures. We met at Clotworthy Arts Centre but after two year's closure this has been restructured as a Garden Heritage Centre and is due to open very shortly. It is very fitting that our 30th anniversary lecture coincided with Antrim's exciting new venture. We wish it every success and hope for a long and continued friendship.

Yvonne Penpraze

Wednesday 7th December

“The Swiss Alps Walks and Flowers” by Paddy Tobin

Paddy Tobin kindly stepped in to deliver our Christmas lecture at Malone House. On a cold but snow free evening he transported us to high in the Alps of Switzerland to see plants where they grow in their own situation and the conditions they favour. In the Bernese Alps in the area around Wengen we roved across wet meadows blue with *Geranium sylvaticum* dotted Persil white with *Anemone narcissiflora*, yellow *Trollius europaeus* and the fluffy seed heads of *Pulsatilla alpina*. In one valley three different seasons can be enjoyed depending on altitude. As the snow retreats plants pop up rapidly to reproduce and make the most of a short season. Paddy showed us *Soldanella alpina* growing on steeply sloped shale, now I know why mine struggles on horizontal compost.

Then to Eigergletscher, a more rugged area where *Dryas octopetala* a shrub which is found in the Burren, grows happily in ground which is regularly disturbed with snow movement.

The Schynige Platte is a garden, but not as we know it, there is a gate but no walls and the plants merge into the natural landscape, *Phyteuma spicatum* (easily grown from seed), *Gentiana lutea* and *Erinus alpinus* (fairy foxglove), *Clematis alpina* grows horizontally carpeting the ground with a few Edelweiss here and there.

The area around Murren changes to woodland where Martagon lily, *Aruncus dioicus*, *Aquilegia atrata* provided splashes of pink, cream and dark purple. Such a variety of plants, many of which are familiar to us coupled with the spectacular scenery and ease of access from mountain railways make this a very enticing attraction. Paddy's enthusiasm was infectious.

Sharon Morrow



Puya alpestris in the garden of John Deegan in Howth last summer, about eight years after he received it from Dr David Robinson. Unfortunately it failed to set any seed. John says the nectar was slightly caramel in flavour and the overall scent from the flower head was best described as sweet-woody. The flower stalk was 1.5m long. He also received a *Puya berteroniana* and is hoping this will flower in the next year or two with a 3m spike.



The Irish Garden Plant Society



***Primula vulgaris* 'Innisfree' by Pearse Rowe**

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