

The Newsletter of the
IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY



ISSUE NO. 98 OCTOBER 2005

EDITORIAL

This is issue 98 of the Newsletter and April next will bring issue 100, a good number to reach for any voluntary and amateur group. Personally it is issue 13 for me as editor and I hope that misfortunate number casts no bad luck my way. My own memory only allows me to recall the three editors previous to me, Annette Dalton, Sally O Halloran and Paul Maher. All three started at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. Paul has risen to high rank within the Botanic Gardens and held in great esteem there; Sally is with the Office of Public Works with responsibility for the gardens at Kilkenny Castle, Emo Court and Haywood while Annette is Head of Amenity Horticulture at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. They are what you might call 'a hard act to follow'.

Who are and where are the previous editors, I wonder? While there will be justifiable pride in reaching the milestone of issue 100 it will also be realised that it could not have been possible without the earlier issues. Perhaps the earlier editors would make themselves known to me and might draft a note for issue 100 recalling their days with the newsletter. Indeed, members with recollections of those early issues might also contribute. I imagine it would make interesting reading for the 100th. Looking forward to hearing from you.

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

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Front cover: The front cover illustration is of *Coprinus comatus*, commonly called, 'Judge's Wig'. It is an edible fungus though the taste is described as 'not distinctive'. The illustration is in pencil by Mrs. Maureen Harding of Waterford.

I.G.P.S. Anniversaries

The inaugural meeting of the I.G.P.S. was held on the 7th of July 1981 at NBG Glasnevin. July, 2006, will be the 25th anniversary of that event.

To mark the occasion there will be a one day seminar with four prominent speakers and will include lunch. Details will be announced in the New Year.

A special edition of 'Moorea' will also be published. Serious articles on Irish plants, gardens or garden history will be welcomed for this special edition. These articles may be illustrated with appropriate drawings or good quality slides and should be typed in double spacing and forwarded to Mary Bradshaw at "Avonmore", Bird Avenue, Clondkeagh, Dublin 14 by December 31st of this year.

If you know of any business persons who might financially support Moorea by placing an advertisement in same you might approach them in this regard. Rates on application to dkehoe@eircom.net

Next year will also mark an important anniversary for the Newsletter. The first newsletter was published on the 1st of August 1981 so the April 2006 issue will be the 100th newsletter. I would be especially delighted if past editors would write for this issue.

Developments at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin by Brendan Sayers

Saturday, September 10 2005 was an eventful day at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. A specimen of the Wollemi Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*), one of the world's



oldest and rarest conifers, was planted in the Central Pavilion of the Curvilinear Range by An Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern. *Wollemia nobilis* was found by David Noble, a National Parks officer in the Blue Mountains of Australia in 1994. This is a major botanical find and considered to be the equivalent of finding a dinosaur alive today. It is a member of the Araucariaceae and the National Botanic Gardens is one of the first European gardens to obtain a plant for cultivation. The Gardens will test the suitability of the Wollemi pine for cultivation in Ireland and Irish gardeners will be able to grow their own Wollemi pines once the plant is released for general cultivation. For more information on the Wollemi Pine and its upcoming release visit www.wollemipine.com.

A potted specimen of the Wollemi Pine. Photo courtesy of www.wollemipine.com.

Following the planting of *Wollemia nobilis*, An Taoiseach inaugurated the new traditional Maya house in the Palm House by burning a sacred Maya resin called Copal. Copal is obtained from bleeding the stems of the tropical tree, *Protium copal*. Constructed from 100% plant material (not even nails are used) collected in the forests of Belize, the house was built by indigenous Maya Indians who are staff at Belize Botanic Gardens.



Beginning construction of the Maya House. Photo by Brendan Sayers



The house took six days to build and is thatched with the leaves of the bayleaf palm (*Sabal mauritiformis*). The house will be the focus for the interpretation of the tropical collections housed in the Palm house. For more information on the Traditional Maya House visit www.botanicgardens.ie.

A view of the inside of the thatch of the Maya house. Photo: Brendan Sayers

Veteran Oaks in Emo Court by Sally O Halloran

A mile long avenue of Wellingtonias, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, can be seen on the skyline as the visitor approaches Emo village in County Laois. This is the first indication that an impressive tree collection awaits within the grounds of Emo Court.



Emo Court. Photo courtesy of Laois Tourism

Under the care of the Office of Public Works, today the core demesne of Emo Court consists of 250 acres. It was designed in the late eighteenth century style of a naturalised landscape, with the house surrounded with wide-open expanses of smooth terrain, dotted with clumps of noble trees.

Five veteran specimens of oak, *Quercus robur*, can be found in amongst these trees. These are included in the ‘conserving veteran trees’ project, which was written about in IGPS July 2005 newsletter. In March 2005 cuttings were taken from all five specimens and sent to Teagasc, at Kinsealy, Dublin. Once rooted, they will return to the garden to ‘continue the life of the veteran tree in a rejuvenated form’ (Dr. Gerry Douglas, IGPS July 2005 page 9).

The first and most impressive specimen that the visitor will find is in an area known as The Clucker which is on the left as one enters the garden. Originally recorded at 8.61m in circumference, this specimen now measures 9m. It is surrounded by the wonderfully scented spring flowering *Rhododendron luteum*. Although imposing in girth it is dwarfed in height by a specimen of *Pinus radiata*, which the tree register of Ireland

measured in 1990 at 102ft x 21ft, and a specimen of Douglas Fir, *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, at 80ft x 13ft.

Following the path out of The Clucker, leads the visitor through an avenue of Irish yews, *Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata', planted in Victorian times. This is a brief moment of formality as turning left leads into a 20-acre meadow spotted with mature limes. From here the large expanse of a 25 acre lake, recently restored to its full glory, can be seen.

Three veteran oaks can be found in front of the lake. Smaller in circumference at 4.25m, 4.5m and 5.38m respectively, but still recorded as veteran. Walking along the lakeside towards the arboretum, the final specimen could be missed with so many other surrounding trees of interest. Three young Dawn Redwoods, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, planted in the 1970's by the previous owner Mr. C.D. Cholmeley Harrison cause the visitor to stop and admire their wonderful form and foliage. Directly opposite is the final specimen, measuring 6.23m in circumference.

The successfully rooted specimens will be returned to Emo Court in autumn 2005 and it is hoped each will be planted alongside its parent plant. For now, the parent trees can be seen at any time as the gardens are open free of charge, all year round, during daylight hours.



Some of Emo Court's magnificent trees.

Gunnera and *Libertia* Collections at Dublin Zoo

by Stephen Butler

In a previous issue I talked about some aspects of *Gunnera* that we are slowly collecting at the Zoo. New accessions are being grown in the nursery for a while before planting out. Our one large *G. perpensa* has been planted out and looks rather grand. The seedlings from last year are growing very well, and, with better conditions in our new nursery, have flowered in their second year at a mere 50mm height. Remember the normal flowering height is half a metre – if my original seedling had done this I'd have been very surprised the following year. I see there is now one supplier of *G. perpensa* in the UK listed in the Plant Finder 2005/2006.

Our *Libertia* numbers at the Zoo are increasing. This year, after many years of planting literally hundreds of *Libertia grandiflora* annually, we had a splendid show in various areas. We use *L. grandiflora* as a filler and edge plant, especially lake edges – easily raised from seed, it is visitor friendly, no thorns, but dense enough to discourage straying feet once well established, and of course the geese still don't eat it.

We have increased our range of *Libertia* species and varieties too, the list now includes *L. Amazing Grace*, *breunioides*, *caerulescens*, *formosa*, *grandiflora*, *ixioides*, *peregrinans* 'Gold Leaf', *procera*, *tricolor*, and *sessiliflora*. There is some confusion with naming, and it takes a while to get your eye in to the differences. All flowers are white unless specified.

L. grandiflora is our 'standard', deep green leaves about 75cm long, flowers stems to a metre or so. *L. formosa*, in comparison, is slightly more dwarf, with much denser flower heads, and I feel a much better garden plant.

L. 'Amazing Grace' has a far more graceful open flowering habit, each flower held well apart from the next and it has darker leaves.

L. procera is new to us, though easily available in UK. The flowers are 3 times the usual size on a seemingly dwarfer plant, but it is not planted out yet.

L. breunioides has the most remarkable dusky brown leaves, but hasn't flowered well for us yet.

L. ixioides and *L. peregrinans* are often seen for sale, dwarf, dark green leaves, with *L. peregrinans* leaves often turning brown in winter.

The 2 blue flowered species are very different. *L. caerulea* flowered very well for us the second year after planting but has failed to flower well since – the blue flowers are a real china blue, very delicate and held away from the stem.

L. sessiliflora is a darker shade of blue, and the flowers are very dense on the stem with no stalk (sessile), almost too crowded.



Libertia sessiliflora. Photograph by Stephen Butler

We're slowly collecting more, but so far, for ease of propagation, tolerance of occasional feet, and general ability to survive, *L. grandiflora* will be hard to beat for our needs. One very useful quality it possesses is its ability to withstand being stuck in a small pot for a year or three, only to really grow like blazes when eventually planted out – not good gardening perhaps, but useful at times!

National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens

By Paddy Tobin

The aims of the NCCPG and those of the IGPS are almost perfectly parallel and the IGPS is affiliated to the NCCPG. I have taken some material from the NCCPG website which, I hope, will give members an overall view of what the organisation is about and perhaps, prompt thoughts for action within the IGPS.

'The NCCPG is almost entirely a voluntary organisation. Its foundation stone is the vast numbers of all sorts of people scattered through the regions who are mad about plants and gardens. Such people combine a genuine passion to learn with the generosity to share. The aspirations and objectives of the Council include the desire to ensure that the plants of the United Kingdom in all their plenitude should be recorded, nurtured and passed on to posterity. The transmission of a heritage in this way is every bit as rich as the country house or the parish church.'

Sir Roy Strong

The NCCPG was founded as a registered charity in 1978 to combine the talents of botanists, horticulturalists and conservationists with the dedication of keen amateur and professional gardeners. The aims of NCCPG are to:

- encourage the propagation and conservation of endangered garden plants in the British Isles, both species and cultivars
- encourage and conduct research into cultivated plants, their origins, their historical and cultural importance and their environments
- encourage the education of the public in garden plant conservation.

Through its membership and the National Collection Holders, the NCCPG seeks to rediscover and reintroduce endangered garden plants by encouraging their propagation and distribution so that they are grown as widely as possible. The NCCPG works closely with other conservation bodies as well as botanic gardens, The National Trust, The National Trust for Scotland, English Heritage, The Royal Horticultural Society and many specialist horticultural societies.

Concern about the loss of plant variety within the horticultural world was brought to a head in 1978 when a conference was arranged by the RHS with the title, *'The practical role of gardens in the conservation of rare and threatened plants.'* As a result of changing patterns of plant marketing and increased costs of production many nurseries were cutting back on the breadth of stock offered in their catalogues

The RHS Council established a steering committee to build upon the ideas generated by the conference and individuals who attended began to plan local initiatives. The RHS committee established aims and objectives for a fledgling organisation, including

the formation of National Plant Collections as a mechanism for preserving plant material.

Back in 1978 there was no *Plant Finder*, therefore one of the first tasks for the area groups was to conduct a nursery survey to establish which plants were 'commonly available' and which were 'rare and endangered'. This was completed in 1982. During the course of the same year the first journal was published.

There was a steady growth in both collections and membership; by 1984 there were 200 collections and 3,000 members. The first National Plant Collections Directory was issued in 1990. In 1991 *The Pink Sheet* of rare and endangered garden plants was formalised and published by the Cambridge Group.

The NCCPG has strong links with many of the voluntary organisations involved in horticulture. The NCCPG is based at the Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) gardens at Wisley in Surrey, consequently there is considerable contact with RHS staff. The Lindley library, the herbarium and the botany departments have the closest association with the NCCPG. The RHS is also a holder of several National Plant Collections. Contact is maintained with many other organisations via the National Plant Collections Scheme.

The National Plant Collections Scheme is the flagship of the NCCPG and is the prime mechanism for ensuring the survival of cultivated plant species and cultivars. Because of the involvement of botanic gardens, universities and expert horticulturists (both amateur and professional alike), the National Plant Collections Scheme has earned the respect of the horticultural world.

British (and Irish!) growers have a long history of collecting plant material from the wild and hybridising. In decades past, small independent growers would compile catalogues containing literally hundreds of garden plants. Sadly, many of these are now lost for ever. And since many growers never recorded their work, we have also lost vital knowledge; a tantalising slice of social, cultural and horticultural history has simply died with them.

The National Plant Collections Scheme holds the key to these problems. There are 450 National Collection holders in Britain, responsible for 650 National Plant Collections. Each collection is a 'living plant library' dedicated to a specific genus, be it roses, cotoneasters or hydrangea. The holders collect plants, grow them, propagate them and make them available to the public, research the plants' history, record the plants' details, and make their knowledge available to the wider public. As the sole authority awarding National Collection status, the NCCPG is the only body caring for cultivated plants in this way. And by co-ordinating the work of the National Collection Holders, it ensures that both plants and vital horticultural knowledge are preserved.

The Leafy Green Road to Good Mental Health

New Science Points to Benefits of Weeding, Watering Gardens

By MICHAEL WALDHOLZ, Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Stuck in an emotional funk after a personal loss, Janice Mawhinney couldn't muster the enthusiasm to tend her backyard garden in Toronto for three years. Then, inexplicably, one day this past spring, she found herself vigorously weeding again, her spirits slowly blossoming along with a long-concealed blue lupine, a pink and white bleeding heart, several Shasta daisies, and a host of other recovered plants. As Ms. Mawhinney restored the garden, it in turn helped restore her. Now, "every morning I rush to look out at all the color through my bathroom window," says Ms. Mawhinney, a 58-year-old reporter at the Toronto Star. "In just a few minutes I feel refreshed."

Common sense and experience tell us that hiking in the wild or working in a garden can be emotionally restorative. Now, scientists are beginning to understand why: Gardening -- or simply observing a lush landscape -- holds a powerful ability to promote measurable improvements in mental and even physical health.

Building on the science, a new practice of horticulture therapy is sprouting. Increasingly, hospitals are using the insights of environmental psychologists to build small but elaborate gardens for patients, visitors and even stressed-out doctors. Some urban botanical gardens and health-rehabilitation centers are creating so-called healing gardens with horticultural-therapy programs that teach patients and the public about the recuperative effect the natural world has on the human psyche.

"If a researcher had seriously proposed two decades ago that gardens could improve medical outcomes, the position would have been met with skepticism by most behavioral scientists, and with derision by most physicians," says Roger Ulrich, a Texas A&M University professor and a leading researcher in the effects of environment on behavior. "We now have studies showing that psychological and environmental factors can affect physiological systems and health status."

One study published in June found that people who were exposed to nature recovered from stress more quickly than others who weren't; what's more, the positive effects took hold within just a few minutes. Dr. Ulrich's research has shown that hospitalized patients whose windows looked out at landscape scenery recovered from surgery more quickly than those without such access. Other studies have found that simply viewing a garden or another natural vista can quickly reduce blood pressure and pulse rate and can even increase brain activity that controls mood-lifting feelings.

A growing body of evidence suggests that humans are hard-wired not just to enjoy a pleasant view of nature, but to actually exploit it, much like a drug, to relax and refresh after a stressful experience. Our earliest ancestors, Dr. Ulrich theorizes, likely needed a

way to swiftly recover from a traumatic experience such as a hunt, a battle or an attack from a wild animal. "You can imagine that those who could look out at the open savannah, seeing its safety and tranquility, and quickly feel calm but also alert to their environment would likely have a survival benefit over others," Dr. Ulrich says. Scientists have documented this restorative effect in a number of controlled experiments. In the study published in the June issue of the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Terry Hartig and colleagues at the University of California at Irvine measured markedly different physiological, attention and mood changes in test subjects exposed to natural or urban settings.

In the experiment, 112 young adults were assigned a variety of stressful tasks, including driving to a site they hadn't visited before. Afterward, the people who sat in a room with tree views and then walked through a nature preserve showed declining blood pressure and substantially more positive change in their feelings than those who sat in a windowless room and then walked in an area of medium-density urban development.

Some of the changes could be measured within minutes of being exposed to the natural settings, says Dr. Hartig, now at Uppsala University in Gavle, Sweden. He provides advice to several European cities whose planners are considering expanding so-called urban forests.

'Immediate Calming Effect'

James Raimes, 64 years old and retired from publishing, experiences an effect like this when he returns to his modest country home in Chatham, N.Y. "The sounds, the smells, and the sights have an immediate calming effect as soon as I step out of the car," Mr. Raimes says.

Many gardeners say they lose track of time while weeding, planting or mulching. "I can and often do garden from sunup to sundown, to the exclusion of many other things in my life," Mr. Raimes admits. Indeed, as people who move to fecund environments like Florida's can attest, the biological draw of gardening can be powerfully addictive -- though it's clearly a much safer outlet than other addictions.

Many cultures have long understood the harmonizing influences of flora. Henry Thoreau, the early American naturalist, wrote persuasively about the impact of nature on human well-being in his book, "Walden." The pioneering landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, "understood the need for fatigued urban dwellers to recover their capacity to focus in the context of nature," says Stephen Kaplan, who, along with his wife, Rachel, at the University of Michigan have helped found the field of environmental psychology. In the 1860s, Mr. Olmsted employed his insights in designing New York City's Central Park, with its acres of rambling walks and natural vistas, as well as a host of other city parks modeled after it.

"The gardens of the ancient Egyptian nobility, the walled gardens of Persian

settlements in Mesopotamia, and the gardens of merchants in medieval Chinese cities indicate that early urban peoples went to considerable lengths to maintain contact with nature," according to Texas A&M's Dr. Ulrich. More recently, Harvard zoologist Edward O. Wilson has written extensively on this natural affinity, which he calls "biophilia" and defines as a partly genetic tendency by humans to respond positively to nature.

The latest research and writings are serving as the intellectual basis for the relatively new practice of horticultural therapy. Practitioners say their experience shows that gardening can have an especially beneficial mental-health impact because it provides a sense of control, a psychological counter to stress and anxiety. This is especially important for patients who are recovering from stroke or other traumas or are learning to live with a physical or mental disability, says Teresia Hazen, who oversees horticulture-therapy programs for Legacy Health System in Portland, Ore. "For patients who find themselves restricted by a disability, even the simplest gardening experience, such as growing a potted plant from a cutting, gives them a feeling of control," says Ms. Hazen. "Gardening, more than most rehab activities, has the ability to be very distracting," she adds, noting that simply taking people's minds off their problems alleviates pain and depression.

'A Source of Relief'

Ms. Hazen recently helped design an award-winning garden in Legacy's Good Samaritan Hospital that has a dual purpose. Rehab patients receive therapy in it, she says, but also "many doctors and nurses just come by and sit or stroll or just stand and gaze, maybe just for a few moments. It's easy to see it draws them and is a source of relief."

Now, several city-run botanical gardens are hiring horticulture therapists to run public programs to expose city dwellers to nature's therapeutic benefits. Chicago's Botanic Garden provides a range of horticultural-therapy services -- including planting, weeding, cultivating, watering and harvesting -- both to private health agencies that treat the handicapped and to people who come in off the street.

Even some prisons are looking to gardens for relief. The New York Horticultural Society directs one such program, called the Greenhouse Project, at New York's Riker's Island facility. Inmates work in the garden, but some have also been allowed out to build gardens in public spaces throughout the city.

Several schools of architecture now have academics on staff who specialize in studying what kinds of gardens are most likely to attract users. "Some hospitals just throw in a few bushes and trees and hope they are accomplishing the wanted effect," says Clare Cooper Marcus, a professor at University of California, Berkeley, who has traveled the world analyzing gardens in health-care settings. A better garden, she says, "allows people to interact with the natural setting."

Write to Michael Waldholz at mike.waldholz@wsj.com

Making waves at the See House by Rae McIntyre

At the See House in Derry city, the residence of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, there is a one acre walled garden within the grounds.

Like so many old walled gardens it was closed up and forgotten about for many years, very overgrown with trees and all those weeds that quickly occupy untended ground. Mrs Mary Good, the Bishop's wife, conceived the idea of making a quiet garden there, a place of peace and tranquillity away from the frenzied lifestyles that many of us lead to-day. In collaboration with Thornhill Retreat Centre, run by the Sisters of Mercy, and within walking distance of the See House, Mrs Good foresaw opportunities for shared retreats, prayer days and courses in spirituality. She envisaged the garden cleared, restored and made into a place of beauty, an immensely challenging and costly exercise. From a lunch in the See House last November a small committee evolved and we have been meeting regularly since then planning the garden's restoration.

During spring and summer the area has been cleared and should soon be ready for planting. The layout has been designed by Caroline Dickson, a qualified architect, and incorporates a pavilion, a circular pool, paths wide enough for wheelchairs and four large beds planted with ornamental trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials and bulbs. As the one member of the committee who is deeply involved in gardening I have been left to devise the planting schemes ... actually a labour of love.

As it is to be a Quiet Garden (I honour it with capitals) the plants will have to be in fairly subdued colours. I've had to eschew the flaming scarlets, glowing oranges and vivid yellows that I personally like in favour of gentler colours such as the whole range of pinks, mauves, purples, lemons, pale yellows, cream and white. Each of the four beds will have its own colour scheme, largely monochromatic because that is more restful by far than introducing strong contrasts. To prevent blandness there will be accents from foliage colours such as purple (the same colour as copper beech leaves) and some variegated leaves. Foliage is important because it can be there for so much longer than flowers. Bed A will have blue and white flowers. Bed B will be in soft yellow, cream and white. Bed C will have pinks, mauves and magenta with a few whites. Bed D will be warm pink flowers (no trace of blue in them) with accents of copper foliage.

Plants will need to be as trouble-free as possible. Any roses that are planted will be known to resist black spot and other rose blights, will be reasonably long-flowering and require minimum maintenance. The semi-double white rugosa hybrid "Blanc Double de Coubert" fits the bill perfectly and is delicately scented. *Rosa Mutabilis*, the "Butterfly Rose", detests being pruned and flowers for months.

Plants will have to be self-supporting, with the possible exception of some paeonies which need to lean on stout canes when they become dowagers. Beautiful as they are, delphiniums, with their teetering tendencies, will be excluded. Also their emerging shoots in spring are the slug's equivalent of a 3 star Michelin restaurant. I've discovered in my own slug-infested garden that grey-leaved hostas such as "Halcyon" and "Snowden" do not attract the slimy beasties as much as the green and white-leaved forms.

Species plants that self-seed can be a gift from Nature so they will feature strongly. *Polemonium caeruleum*, *Astrantia major*, *Rosa glauca*, *Centaurea montana*, *hellebores*, *Daphne mezereum* and many species geraniums are welcomed but I have no plans to include *Alchemilla mollis* which could cover the entire acre of the garden within a few years.

The Quiet Garden will have colour and bloom all year round. In our curious climate the temperature can occasionally be higher in January than it is in July so it makes sense to include winter bloomers. Many of these like *Hamamelis mollis* "Pallida", *Mahonia meadia* "Charity" and *Viburnum x bodnantense* "Dawn" have beautifully scented flowers to attract early pollinating insects. And what could be more uplifting than a sheet of snowdrops, early crocuses and little winter-flowering irises?

There are four large beds to be planted fairly closely using the late Graham Stuart Thomas's principles of groundcover. If the ground is well-covered weeds will have less chance to flourish which is important if maintenance is kept to a minimum because we'll be dependent on voluntary labour. Planting will be in drafts or *waves* as Carol Klein, a BBC *Gardener's World* presenter describes it, with three or five of each perennial. Gardening gurus advise planting in odd numbers, except ones. Lots of single plants make for spottiness. Waves are better.

You will have realised by now that we are going to need a huge number of plants so we are asking people living *within reasonable distance of Derry city* to contribute these please. There is a long list extending over several A4 sized pages, an idea that has been copied from wedding present lists. Many people will have the better-known plants growing in their own gardens and these can often be divided or given if they have been grown on from seedlings or cuttings.

If you feel you can help please write for a detailed list of plants needed to *Mrs Mary Good, The See House, 112 Culmore Road, Londonderry, BT48 8JF. Telephone 028 71351206 (048 71351206 from R.O.I.)* You will also be sent a leaflet describing in detail the rationale behind the garden.

Titan arum - the biggest 'flower' in the world

A note from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Amorphophallus titanum

One of the most spectacular plants to be found in the wet tropics zone of the Princess of Wales Conservatory in Kew Gardens is the titan arum. With its huge flowering structure (inflorescence) rising some 3m above the ground and its single immense leaf, it certainly is a giant among plants, as its name suggests. Coupled with its characteristic foul stench, and the rarity of flowerings, this plant has always hit the headlines.

History

The titan arum originates in the moist shaded rainforests of Sumatra. The first European botanist to encounter it was the Italian, Odoardo Beccari, who was travelling in the region in 1878. He sent back seeds to his patron in Italy and one of the young plants that germinated from them was subsequently dispatched to Kew, where it flowered in 1889, exciting great public interest. In 1926, when it flowered again, the crowds attracted by the phenomenon were so large that the police were called to control them.



A third titan arum for 2005 looks set to flower shortly.

Visitors to the Princess of Wales Conservatory currently have the unique experience of being able to see a titan arum at all three stages of growth, with one specimen in leaf, one coming to flower, and a third, from the first flowering of 2005, now in fruit.

Looking ahead to spring! – Stephen Butler

Every spring we all look forward to sowing seeds for a new year, trying new plants or techniques, or adding to our no doubt already full gardens. Our seed list helps by offering loads of different seeds, some easy, some harder, some very common, some very, very, unusual. The list caters for all tastes, from the new gardener just starting and wanting to try raising plants from seed, to the experts who can grow anything!

Some seeds have already been sent in, and I don't doubt many more are poised ready for posting on to me. I have a good few ready myself as usual. *Sonchus arboreus* has flowered at last having been hit back by frost for a few winters – it looks like it sounds, a woody Sow Thistle, but what a beauty, 1.5 metres high, very weird buds looking like miniature artichokes, and bright, bright yellow flowers. Seed must be collected daily or it simply blows away.



Sonchus arboreus – photo by Stephen Butler

The Autumn Snowflake, *Leucojum autumnale* is flowering well as I write, its delicate white pendulous flowers looking somewhat out of place in autumn, with a few ripe seed heads each day, again regular collection is needed or they scatter easily. Various *Geranium* and *Erodium* are a pain to collect as they fire their seed away when ripe –

you have to catch them a few days before and bag them or you run the risk of collecting only empty heads. The easiest to collect must have been either various specie Foxgloves or *Thalictrum flavum*, both of which just needed one bag, one day, and one cut to collect the whole head!



Sonchus arboreus – photo by Stephen Butler

.....and for speed of growth, sheer plant power, and stunning architectural looks, how about *Onopordum acanthium*, from seed in August to 3 metre monster the following July!

All seeds as usual please to.....

Stephen Butler IGPS Seed Distribution
Curator of Horticulture
Dublin Zoo
Phoenix Park
Dublin 8

The Wollemi Pine by Mary Kate Power

A visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew is always an enjoyable experience. There is such a range of plants to see, trees especially but I also enjoy a visit to the glasshouses and the alpine house especially. There is always something interesting to see.

A visit to Kew at the end of May of this year brought a sight more unusual than normal. As I walked about I came on the scene below, a tree enclosed in what I can only describe as very high security fencing. It was obviously designed to protect the tree, not alone from the depredations of the local fauna but also from human predators. Naturally enough my curiosity was engaged by such a sight. Closer inspection showed a young evergreen tree and the information notice told me that it was a Wollemi Pine, *Wollemia nobilis*, a tree recently rediscovered in Australia and up to then believed to be extinct, echoing the story of the rediscovery of the Dawn Redwood in China in the 1940s. Sir David Attenborough had planted this specimen in Kew.



On my return home I went to the internet to seek more information. Apparently a National Parks and Wildlife Services officer, David Noble, who enjoyed walking the wilder areas of the Blue Mountains which are about 200 km west of Sydney, stumbled on them while abseiling into a deep gorge.



The Wollemi Pine safe and secure in Kew Gardens in May of this year and the humorous sign attached to the railings. Photograph: Mary Kate Power

The trees were up to 40 metres tall, about a metre in circumference, had a bark which resembled bubbling chocolate and foliage which was dark green and resembled a fern. He took a branch with him and passed it to the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney. After consulting with other experts it was discovered that this was a tree whose last records – fossil records – dated from several million years ago. The oldest fossil records dated to approximately 90 million years ago.

It may strike you as peculiar that this tree had not been discovered previously as it is located relatively closely to a major area of population, Sydney, in the Greater Blue Mountain Mountains area – since designated a World Heritage Site – supervised by National Parks and Wildlife Service. However, although the Blue Mountains are not particularly high, an average elevation of 1000 metres, the Wollemi wilderness is a particularly inaccessible area, a plateau heavily afforested with eucalyptus and cross cut by hundreds of deep chasms cut into the soft sandstone of the area. Some of these are only metres wide yet very deep and often filled with pools of icy water. Access is very difficult. Also the Greater Blue Mountains Area extends to 1.03 million hectares, not the average backyard. Coincidentally, a cave containing aboriginal art believed to be 4000 years old was discovered in the same area in 2003.

The tree was named '*Wollemia nobilis*' to mark the area where discovered, Wollemi National Park, and its discoverer, David Noble.

Protection and conservation were uppermost in the minds of those with responsibility for the Park. The location of the trees has been kept secret. Initially cones were collected in order to have seed for propagation. This could only be done by lowering someone on a rope from a helicopter, dangling him at the correct level at tree top and winching him back to safety when he had collected the cones. Later trials found that micro propagation would work successfully with the tree and this became the method employed to bulk up numbers.

Specimens have been distributed to Botanic Gardens around the world, so a visit to Glasnevin will give you the opportunity to see one of the world's rarest trees.



Look closely at the photograph and you will see the chap dangling from a rope collecting cones from the top of one of the trees.

Photograph: www.wollemipine.com

Regional Reports

Reports from Munster

I.G.P.S. Munster Summer Lunch 2005

This years Summer Lunch was held at Tourin House which, with its gardens and estate, is situated on the banks of the river Blackwater. It is just a few miles south of Cappoquin on the picturesque route to Youghal.

Tourin house, built in 1840, is the home of the Jameson family. It is a lived-in stately home. One readily appreciates that they are experiencing a residence, as it is now and not as it once was, which is often the case in restored and refurbished stately homes. Our hostess at Tourin was Kristen Jameson, the present occupant of the house. Kristen was a gracious and charming hostess. At a reception in the drawing room she circulated and welcomed everyone in the manner of a high society hostess but without any hint of “airs and graces”. It was a lovely experience and a great start to the occasion. The walls of the drawing room were adorned with some magnificent oil paintings, which are the work of members of the Jameson family. This room also held a collection of old books. The books cover many aspects of country life as it was in days gone-by and some of which are still hale and hearty to this day. Hunting, shooting, fishing – I’ll say no more.

Our lunch was really something special. No need to analyse the menu. Suffice it to say – an abundance of food with qualities and flavour to satisfy and delight the most discerning epicurean palate.

After lunch a leisurely stroll through the garden, in the company of Kristen’s sister, Tara, gave us an opportunity to enjoy the efforts of a previous generation who designed a wonderful collection of camellias, rhododendrons and magnolias set against a backdrop of mature cedars, evergreen oaks and tree rhododendrons. No human fingerprints are discernable on the design. The informality and co-ordination of the layout appear like a product of Nature in one of her more artistic moods.

Our tour of the walled garden was especially interesting for any of us who have ever dabbled at growing fruit, vegetables or flowers on our own little patch. In this well laid out garden was a fine collection of not just fruit, flowers and vegetables but many varieties of each. All seemed to be thriving in their environment. The produce of the garden is used in the house. The abundant surplus is sold to local restaurants or to the public at the gate of the estate.

At the end of our tour we dawdled for some time in the precincts of the house. We just did not want to leave yet, as we were enjoying the ambience of the place in beautiful summer sunshine. To make this dalliance more pleasurable Kristen had chairs brought from the house to help us linger at our leisure. When we eventually did start out for our homes all were agreed that the conviviality, the friendship, the location and, not least, the beautiful weather made this a very enjoyable occasion.

James M. O Regan

September Lecture: ‘Late Summer Stars’ **by Rosamund Henley**

Through a sea of exotic foliage appeared a gardening genius, namely Rosamund Henley of Annesgrove Garden. Rosamund had brought a range of unusual plants from her nursery, rare plants not to be found in the average garden centre. She propagates her own material and so makes available a different range of mostly herbaceous plants than is normally available elsewhere.

Rosamund’s lecture, entitled ‘Late Summer Stars’, was both a pleasure to listen to and to look at. Not alone did she bring plants and slides, she also brought a huge range of cut flowers so that we could see their true colours.

Salvias were the first group of stars we were treated to and Rosamund divided them in to three groups: semi-hardy, borderline hardy and tender salvias. Although some salvias are strongly pungent, Rosamund felt they make up for this with their wonderful flower colour.

Her second group of stars were the hedychiums or hardy gingers. They come from the Himalayas and are related to the culinary gingers. The rhizomes are beautifully scented which makes them so very nice to handle during propagation.

Tricyrtis (Toad lilies) were the third group of stars. They are native of Japan and are best planted in a cool moist shady woodland situation with rich humus. In a big group they look great.

Rosamund also gave us an update on her work in the restoration of Annesgrove Gardens. It has been most fortunate that Annesgrove has had the good fortune to come

under the care of Rosamund. This evening we had been impressed with her knowledge of plants and her success in propagating some quite unusual plants but perhaps more important than her work with plants is her work in helping, indeed having the professional knowledge to help to resuscitate Annesgrove Gardens. This is one of Ireland's greater gardens, of international significance which, due to inevitable pressures of a change of generations, had declined since the days of its creator Richard Grove Annesley. Now once again it is a great pleasure to visit Annesgrove Gardens and to see each the new planting, innovative ideas and the loving care she is giving it. All of us gardeners in Co. Cork and the people of Ireland are in her debt.

In conclusion, this was a star night from a star gardener.

Kitty Hennessy & Elizabeth Corban-Lucas

Reports from Leinster

Visit to Charleville House and Gardens, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow, 21st of May 2005

Entering through tall black cast iron gates, we drive along a narrow tarmac road which sweeps through endless pastures fringed by mature beech and lime trees. At the end of this drive we reach Charleville, a Palladian villa, designed by Whitmore Davies and built in the late 1790s for Charles Monck, later 1st Viscount Monck. It was then redecorated in anticipation of a visit by King George IV, but he went to Powerscourt next door, failing to see Charleville altogether.

The demesne features an extensive walled garden which has been imaginatively designed by Helen Dillon, Jim Reynolds and Arthur Shackelton and features a remarkable series of circular borders that follow the curves of the boundary wall. Outside the walled garden are the pleasure grounds with some large old trees and an orchard full of ancient apple trees which were in full flower at the time of our visit.

Before entering the walled garden we passed a courtyard, the outer wall covered in several Wisterias all in full bloom and with a wonderful scent. Opposite is a large border with Azaleas in yellow and apricot colours with yet more heady scents! The first 'garden room' is the tennis court surrounded by several large borders. A seating area tucked away to one corner has a lovely pavilion with Regency trellis work which was the right spot to be during one of those heavy showers that Saturday morning! A line of *Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula', immaculately pruned into lollipop shapes, on one side, complements a line of *Prunus cerasifera*, also pruned, on the other. The colour scheme here is mainly silver and red. The red colour supplied by *Berberis thunbergii* 'Atropurpurea Nana', *Cotinus coggygria* and *Prunus cerasifera*; the silver colour by

Santolinas, *Helichrysum italicum* and *Convolvulus cneorum* just to name a few. Yew and beech hedges are used to subdivide the walled garden.

The next garden featured a Doric columned conservatory (early 19th century), displaying some of the more tender plants in pots. I noticed a *Leucospermum*, the South African Pincushion, in flower, *Dodonea viscosa* 'Purpurea', several scented Pelargoniums and a Citrus tree. The avenue leading to the conservatory is planted with columns of mature Yew trees and gives a very formal feel to the garden. This allee is of seventeenth century design. There are more mature conifer specimens in this area such as *Thuja plicata*, *Thujopsis dolabrata* and several *Cupressus lawsoniana*.

Through the rear of the conservatory we entered the next garden which featured a circular pond with a central fountain. Immaculate lawns surround the pond and a beech hedge forms a boundary which displays several statues which are cleverly recessed into the hedge. Here vistas lead into more garden rooms, one of which is a herbaceous perennial garden framed with box hedging on one side and a Hydrangea collection in the border opposite it. The other garden is a rose garden, which is framed with box hedging and has a central summerhouse as a focal point. *Hedera helix* 'Pedata', a graceful and delicate ivy, encircles the summerhouse and softens the structure. As there was no gardening staff present, we couldn't find out which rose cultivars had been planted but they all looked the picture of health and vigour. In fact, the whole garden is maintained to a very high standard and credit goes to the garden staff who must surely work tirelessly to achieve such impeccable results.

In the rose garden we came across another very interesting feature, a beech tunnel which is 200 years old and really quite remarkable. Along its base grows *Allium ursinum*, wild garlic, which fills the air with its unmistakable scent.

Time was running out and with the sky darkening yet again, we left Charleville and its outstanding and lovingly cared for garden.

Esther Schickling

A.G.M. Weekend, Dublin, June 2005

John Burke's Garden at Marino Teacher Training College

John Burke's garden was the first one we visited at our AGM weekend. The garden is in two sections between tall monastic buildings. One would think that this situation would be too dark and shady and difficult for a gardener, but not for John.

He told me that he started planting in 1990 because of his interest in plants and how they behave and grow. Fifteen years later we have a collector's garden; his interest in

plants being his driving force. The first time I visited this garden was to find him working away in his greenhouse in a corner with the strains of Mozart wafting around the buildings and plants. This peaceful aura floats through from the *Lapageria* and Jasmine curling around the entrance to the cloister garden, to a shady area where ferns *Athyrium filix-femina* and *Adiantum pedatum* grow happily by *Fatsia japonica*. On the left we have *Cornus controversa* and *Echium* 'Pride of Madeira'.

Dicksonia antarctica and the more unusual *Dicksonia squarrosa* grow happily here too.



Where he has run out of space he has now clothed the walls with Roses and some unusual climbers such as *Rubus lineatus*.

The soil is alkaline but acid loving plants such as many species of Rhododendron and Camellia are accommodated in large tubs of suitable soil.

We had a most pleasant few hours there and the visit will be remembered by everyone. John was a wonderful host and took time to answer all the questions in his good humoured way. This is one of the many pieces of suitable verse one might step on while wandering through the paths in this peaceful place:

*Kind hearts are the garden,
Kind thoughts are the roots .
Kind words are the blossoms.
Kind deeds are the fruits.*

*The wonderful garden at Marino.
Photograph by Bob Bradshaw*

Marcella Campbell

The Walled Garden at Malahide Castle

The Saturday afternoon visit was to the Walled Garden at Malahide Castle. The castle and demesne lie nine miles north of Dublin, and a short distance north of the village of Malahide. Our tour started when we met our guide, Kevin Halpenny, at the entrance to the Talbot Botanic Gardens. At this entrance a large *Cedrus libani* and *Quercus robur*, that both date back to the mid 1800s, grow and it is here also that many of Malahide's National Collection of *Olearia* are planted; the remainder grow in the Walled

Garden. This is a Fingal County Council property, and despite being four acres in size the walled garden has an intimate feeling to it and could still be the private garden of the late Lord Milo Talbot. Lord Talbot was an outstanding plantsman, with a particular interest in southern hemisphere plants. He inherited the property and gardened here from 1948 until his death in 1973. There are seven glass houses acting as focal points throughout the garden. There are also herbaceous and mixed beds, a large area of lawn and a well planted pond dominated by a willow, *Salix babilonica* with *Gunnera manicata*, *Macleaya*, *Rodgersia* and *Iris pseudacorus*.

Immediately inside the green wooden door of the Walled Garden is the former Rose garden with *Cladrastis sinensis*, *Prunus 'Kanzan'* and the Loquat tree *Eriobotrya japonica* 'Bodnant Form'. In Lord Talbot's time there were six glass houses in use, the seventh is a circa 1860-design Victorian Conservatory which was erected in 1993, Australasian plants grow well here including *Anigozanthos flavidus*. In the area known as The Haggard, formerly used to house animals, there are two houses, The Cambridge House, a tall house planted over thirty years ago by Lord Talbot with *Callistemon citrinus* 'Splendens' and *Acca sellowiana* 'Variegata', and a small propagation house, a Dutch House, used to maintain the garden's salvia collection and other plants raised from seed.



The beautiful glasshouse at Malahide. Photograph by Bob Bradshaw

Plants growing in the Haggard include *Olearia argophylla*, *Rubus lineatus*, *Vallea stipularis*, and *Pittosporum daphniphyloides*. The lean-to glasshouse was the first glass house built in the garden, and was used as a peach house. It now contains *Billbergia nutans*, *Strelitzia reginae*, *Cassia corymbosa* and *Passiflora antioquiensis*.

Close by is a small Primula House, fifteen feet by ten feet, that houses a large auricula collection. The plants are displayed in 18th century fashion on staging around three walls and on a double staging in the centre of the house. The main flowering was over when we visited but there was still a good variety of colour and scent, with *Primula auricula* 'Old Irish Blue', *P. auricula* 'Dusky Yellow', and *P. auricula* 'Alicia'. A very floriferous *Rhodochiton atrosanguineus* was growing along the entire length of the roof.



In the walled garden at Malahide. Photograph by Bob Bradshaw

Kevin then brought us to the Sunken House, a novel glass house built by Lord Talbot in the 1960s. It is self-watering in winter because the walls are sloped, and the area at the base, which is made of cement, allows water to enter the house. It is the hottest house in summer and the coldest in winter. Plants that enjoy conditions here include *Agave americana*, *Beschorneria yuccoides*, and *Paeonia cambessedesii*. The Alpine House was formerly a Melon House and today, as in the time of Lord Talbot, houses a collection of Alpines including the mauve *Phlox bifida* and *Leontopodium alpinum* 'Mignoi'.

Beside the Alpine House is the Tresco Wall, a free standing wall where Lord Talbot planted the tender plants given to him by Lieutenant Commander T.A. Dorrien Smith of Tresco. Today drama is created by *Echium pininana* from the Canary Islands and *Buddleja colvilei* from the Himalayas. Also in this area are many *Olearia*, *Pittosporum* and *Garrya x issaquahensis* 'Pat Ballard' raised at Malahide. This area is bounded at one end by the Chicken Yard, a very sheltered part of the garden, with a *Eucryphia milliganii* and a garden seedling of the white flowered *Sophora microphylla* while the other boundary, in total contrast, is a newly planted formal Australasian Garden with *Phormium tenax* 'Purpureum', *Eucalyptus spp.* and *Hebe* 'James Stirling'.

Thanks to Anne James for inviting us, and to Kevin Halpenny for showing us how Fingal County Council is continuing the work started by Lord Talbot. Many further visits would be needed to do justice to this wonderful garden.

Mary Rowe

AGM Weekend, Sunday afternoon **The Gardens of Carmel Duignan and Anna Nolan**

Our weekend of garden visits continued on the Sunday afternoon with visits to two gardens – those of Carmel Duignan and Anna Nolan.

Carmel's garden is a showcase for the rare and unusual of the plant world adding a touch of the exotic to other more mundane plants (if it is possible to consider anything in this garden mundane).

By the back terrace the large leaves of *Tetrapanax papyrifer* stretch out beside a fig with finely cut leaves, while the glossy leaves of a fine *Pseudopanax* nearby soak up the sun. (Seemingly, anything with a 'panax' is welcome in this garden!).

Moving up onto the next level, a fine rectangular lawn is flanked by beds full of mixed planting – herbaceous, bulbs, shrubs, trees – something for every taste. A cluster of plants with dark foliage and flowers caught my eye – the soft leaves of a purple Japanese maple gently draping a black *Aeonium* with a gorgeous deep wine-red *Astrantia* in front, in turn blending with *Persicaria microcephala* 'Red Dragon' and a dark purple heuchera. A bronze-flushed *Astelia* added a touch of lightness, while further along, *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum' picked up the colour theme.

Being rather fond of intense colours and blacks, I was also taken with a black *Centaurea montana* 'Jordy' in the opposite border, and a little double black aquilegia further along. An unusual coloured rose, *R.* 'Brown Velvet' lived up to its name with softly textured flowers in orangey red with a shimmer of brown, as if it couldn't quite make up its mind what colour it should be.

Also catching attention was a rather nice *Schefflera*, its pale green drooping parasols highlighted against the dark purple of a cotinus. Close by, *Decaisnea fargesii* was in flower, although it is probably better known for its dull deep blue seed pods than for its more subdued yellowish green flowers.

Beside an arbour, *Elaeagnus* 'Quicksilver' captivated many of us with its intense perfume. Moving a little further, *Deutzia purpurascens* 'Alpine Magician' was in full flower. I had only ever heard of this plant from others on the IGPS committee who extolled its virtues – I can now see why. It has beautiful flowers – white with a deep plum corona and as an added attraction, it has strong Irish connections – originating as a seedling in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, from seed collected by Reginald Farrer in Burma.

I could go on and on, listing plants from this garden, but such a catalogue list would make it seem merely like a collection of plants. Far from it, the garden is a delight – not only has Carmel acquired a range of plants to satisfy even the most ardent plant collector – she grows them in beautiful combinations of texture, colour and form.

But all good things must come to an end, and so we had to move on to our next garden. The disappointment of having to leave Carmel's plant paradise was soon offset when we arrived at Anna Nolan's garden. Here towering spires of *Echium* in the front garden promised another garden of delights.

I say *Echium*, which is exciting enough for most front gardens, but of course, here it had to be just a step further – a white flowered form. Imagine a couple of the magnificent spikes of *Echium pininana* soaring skywards from a lushly planted border, and then add a heavy dusting of icing sugar – you may start to get the general effect. Then for a bit of extra interest, add in a foreground of white watsonia and all this is before you reach the front door!

As with Carmel's garden, there is a danger of making Anna's sound like a plant catalogue, but again – it is so much more than a collection of plants. A path, with a serpentine inlay of brick wriggling along like a series of elongated tadpoles, leads around the side of the house and wraps around the back, opening out onto a gravel terrace with a raised bed and wall fountain and a collection of pots just begging to be inspected. One shallow bowl was filled with dark green rosettes of lance shaped leaves from which emerged pure white cup shaped flowers, - *Weldenia candida* apparently, - just one of the mysterious beauties of the garden. Not far away, close to the wall fountain, a stand of soft orange *Isoplexis canariensis* was equally captivating, although in a more robust manner than the delicate *Weldenia*.

The back garden drops down from the terrace to a curvaceous lawn via a set of broad steps flanked by beds filled to overflowing with mainly herbaceous plants. In one corner, a strikingly modern structure provides shelter for a couple of seats on a paved

surface surrounded by lush planting. The tall semi-circular wall around this terrace is slashed with vertical gaps, opening views into and through the surrounding borders. Behind the wall, tall stems of black bamboo provide additional seclusion, and in front of the terrace, the pleated leaves of *Veratrum*, and the heavily veined foliage of a hosta are offset by the lightness of *Tulbaghia*. Across from this area the borders, extending down from the top terrace, are broken by a small cascade, lined with soft mounds of *Hakonechloa macra* ‘Aureola’, the domed shape echoed by a purple cut leaf Japanese maple.



*The beautifully designed and planted seating area in Anna Nolan’s garden.
Photograph by Bob Bradshaw*

Throughout the borders there are lots of treasures waiting to be discovered – a variety of orchids including *Calanthe triternata*, a lovely soft yellow *Roscoea* (*R. caudleoides*, perhaps?), the little red *Delphinium nudicaule* – hard to recognise as a relative of the more familiar tall spires of deep blue delphiniums in the opposite border.

It’s difficult to stop enthusing about gardens such as these, but stop we must. For those of you who attended the AGM weekend and visited the gardens, I’m sure you will join me in appreciation of all the garden owners who made us so welcome. Thank you Anna and Carmel for sharing your gardens with us and for being such kind and generous hosts. We look forward to the next time.

Patrick Quigley

THE DILLON GARDEN.

Our visit to the Dillon Garden on Monday June 5th, 2005 exceeded all expectations! The sun shone, Val's and Helen's hospitality flowed and the garden, as always, looked superb.

I'm sure Helen would declare that we were too early for the perfection of her Herbaceous Borders, but there was much to gladden the heart. What struck me most forcibly was the success of massed planting. What seemed like a "grove" of *Nectaroscordum siculum subsp. bulgaricum* stood up proudly at the back of the red border. Nearby was a large group of *Dactylorhiza x braunii* and, standing out close by, the North American slipper orchid, *Cypripedium reginae* which I had seen about a week previously in upstate New York growing wild.

Other massed plantings which caught the eye were of *Roscoea humeana* and 'Professor Blaauw' a violet blue Xiphium Iris really shining in the sunshine. Just as the Chairman and I were reminiscing about the Irises at Monet's garden at Giverny, Helen came along and reminded us, correctly, that Monet's Irises were all bearded, Pogon Irises. Still, the "impression" lingered.

Roses were also outstanding for early June. The stunner 'Rhapsody in Blue'- dark purple was thriving, almost appearing to climb against a south - facing wall. Also prominent was the hybrid musk *Rosa* 'Prosperity' with large clusters of double, scented, creamy white flowers. *Rosa* 'Souvenir de St. Anne's' and *R.*'Charles de Mills' were in full flower too.

I was very impressed with *Amicia zygomeris* hiding near the greenhouse area. I had not encountered it before, (mea culpa), but its heart-shaped leaflets with pale green stipules diffused with red attracted me hugely. Also, it promised racemes of pea-like yellow flowers for the autumn, worth a return visit for me. Mary Rowe will tell me when it is at its best!

Massed planting has also taken place in the front garden at Sandford Road. About 40 *Betula utilis* 'Fascination' were planted in early spring. These will form a wonderful backdrop to Helen's hellebores and bulbs in due course. Masses of *Phlox* and *Acanthus* were also showing promise, as were some well displayed vegetables in well camouflaged containers!

All in all, this was an inspiring visit to a great garden and, I believe a fitting conclusion to our 2005 AGM series of garden visits.

Mary Bradshaw.

Reports from Northern Ireland

IGPS Garden Visit, The McKelvey Garden, Bessbrook.

18th May 2005

A party of enthusiasts braved a cold & wet evening to visit the garden of Hilary & William McKelvey in Bessbrook Co. Armagh. The occasional roar, and fumes, from helicopters on the other side of the garden hedge, provided a curious contrast to the peace and beauty of an oasis planned and cared for by the McKelvey's.

Although Hilary said that, probably, June would be her preferred month for the garden, when it would look its best – particularly for her collection of clematis – our party found that there was a great deal to be seen and admired on our visit. Many unusual plants thrive in carefully constructed and maintained beds containing shrubs, herbaceous species and alpines. Curved tiled surrounds gave an immaculate appearance to the beds (What has happened to the weeds Hilary?), and a raised bed for choice alpines aided the convenience of elderly or arthritic admirers!

William's expertise in constructing 'stone' troughs was evident, using polystyrene containers concealed within a recipe of glue, sand, peat and cement (I think).

At head-height, or above, the garden is made bright by such striking specimens as *Rubus* 'Benenden', with its creamy white cups, and *Azara serrata*, gleaming in yellow stamens. Early summer clematis included a variety of uncommon forms of *C. montana* supported on trellis or on other 'host' shrubs.

White flowers, to alleviate the darkness of the evening, and to provide scent, were present in *Daphne retusa*, *Choisya ternata* and a bush of the unusual *Rhododendron* 'Cream Chiffon'.

Lower down there was much promise from herbaceous plants, with some already in flower – such as aquilegia, dwarf bearded iris, trillium, *Dodecatheon* and many others. Members were able to buy *Dactylorhiza* orchids with strong flowers spikes showing.

Alpines had much to offer the specialist in that field, but unfortunately had to be admired and wondered at from a height – in the case of this writer at least – even with the raised beds in which many were planted!

We are much indebted to the McKelvey's for their hospitality and enthusiasm in showing us and telling us all about their lovely garden. Perhaps we may be allowed to pay another visit – on an occasion when the sun shines and our glasses of wine are not heavily diluted with raindrops.

John Dudgeon

Looking Ahead

Munster Fixtures

Friday 7th October @ 07.45pm

Conservatory & Indoor Plants. John Hosford, M.D., Hosford's Geranium and Garden Centre

Friday 4th November @ 7.45pm

The Making of our Garden Frances McDonald, The Bay Garden, Co. Wexford

Friday 2nd December @ 7.45pm

Heritage Gardens in the Killarney Area Cormac Foley, OPW Park Superintendent SW Region.

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

Leinster Fixtures

Friday, 14 October, 8.00pm: Lecture

'Plant Hunting in Central Asia' with Christopher Grey Wilson at the National Botanic Gardens. This is a joint lecture with Alpine Society

Sunday, 16 October, 12 Noon: Plant Sale

At Our Lady of Dolours Church, Glasnevin

Time now to organise some plants for the Plant Sale. Your support is essential. This is one of our biggest fund-raising events of the year and good quality plants in good supply ensure success.

Thursday, 8 December, 8.00pm: Lecture

'A World of Botanic Gardens, Conserving our Diverse Plant Heritage' with Dr. Peter Wyse Jackson, Director National Botanic Gardens.

At the National Botanic Gardens

Northern Fixtures

Thursday, 18 October, 7.30pm The Clotsworthy Lecture

'The Legacy of David Douglas, Explorer and Botanist' with Syd House. Venue: Clotsworthy Arts Centre, Antrim. This is a joint lecture with Antrim Borough Council. Free for members. £1 for non-members. Parking facilities are available. Refreshments provided (free).

December 7 2005, 7.30pm, Malone House, Barnetts Park, Belfast

Malone House Lecture, joint with Belfast Parks

Anne James **'The Walled Gardens of Fingal'**. Free; refreshments provided.

January 10 2006, 7.30pm, Ulster Museum, Belfast

New Year Lecture, joint with the Ulster Museum and the Royal Horticultural Society

Penelope Hobhouse **'The Gardens of Islam: Mirrors of Paradise'**.

Members £4.00 Stg, non-members £5.00 Stg.

An RHS Regional Lecture.

Plant Sale – The Big Event of the Year

Sunday, 16th October, 12 Noon

Our Lady of Dolours Church, Glasnevin

Last chance to organise some plants for the Plant Sale

Bring them along early on the morning

SNIPPETS

Cedars of Lebanon: You may recall the article in the last newsletter about the Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation's project of planting Cedars of Lebanon around the country to commemorate the contribution of Irish soldiers who served with the United Nations peace keeping forces in Lebanon. There are three such plantings planned before the end of the year: October 21,2005 Fota Island,Cobh Co.Cork. Dec 03, 2005 Raheny Dublin, St Anne's Park. Dec 10 ,2005, Thurles Co Tipperary, 11:00 am St Mary's Church. For further information contact: Irish Lebanese Cultural Foundation, 79, The Paddocks, Kells Road, Kilkenny. Tel & Fax: 056 775 6700

Travelling in China: Seamus O'Brien and companions have departed for another stint in China. Our best wishes go with them for a successful expedition and we look forward to reading about it in a future newsletter.

'Gardens of Earthly Delight': On tour from the Chester Beatty Library and on view in Dyehouse Gallery, Dyehouse Lane, Waterford 3 – 27 October.

Birr Castle Exhibition of Botanical Paintings: This exhibition will run until the end of the year showing the work of 15 different artists. All plants portrayed by the artists grow in Birr Castle grounds. Excellent.

Official Orchid Painter for Royal Horticultural Society Congratulations and best wishes to Deborah Lambkin who now holds this position.

New Stamps from Susan Sex: Susan is in the process of painting portraits of four of our native trees for a coming stamp issue. These are the Oak, Ash, Arbutus and Scots Pine.

The Watercolour Society of Ireland: The Society's 151st exhibition opens on Sunday next in the County Hall, Dun Laoghaire. There will be over 200 paintings on display of general interest and many of a botanical nature.

National Botanic Garden, Glasnevin: The winter programme of gardening talks is excellent – contact 01-8040300 for brochure.

Heritage Bulbs Offer: IGPS members may be interested in a special seasonal offer from Heritage Bulbs, Ireland's specialist bulbs supplier. Their Plantsman Collection this year includes the beautiful and historic daffodil cultivar, 'Empress of Ireland'. Guy Wilson, the famous daffodil grower from Co. Antrim, registered 623 cultivars in his life, and was especially proud of this large and frilly white Trumpet daffodil. IGPS members can order half a dozen for the special price of just €7.50 (plus P&P €2.50). Tel. 044 62744, email info@heritagebulbs.com. Full details of Heritage bulb collections at www.heritagebulbs.com and www.wildaboutbulbs.com.

Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

Vita Sackville West will be well-known to readers as the creator, with her husband Harold Nicolson, of the gardens at Sissinghurst Castle. However she hoped above all to be remembered as a poet, not as a gardener. Indeed, her son, Nigel Nicolson, writes that she ‘*would have despaired that today she would be known mainly as a gardener and a prose writer about gardens, much as she loved her own.*’ Her numerous novels include *The Edwardians* and *All Passion Spent* but her reputation as a writer is dominated by her two long poems, *The Land* and *The Garden*. These were first published respectively in 1926 and 1946. Frances Lincoln Publishers have reissued both of these poems, something I consider a remarkably good thing for a publisher to do. It seems to me to be a case of publishing what is of good and lasting quality rather than simply seeking that which will be popular in the bookshop. Frances Lincoln is to be commended for this.



Readers who have been admirers of Vita Sackville West, the gardener, will be enthralled by these two books as they provide such an insight into the woman herself and her thoughts and philosophy of life.

Both poems are structured to follow the seasons, describing the work, events and conditions of each. Her descriptions, especially in *The Land*,

are not fanciful or prettified but down-to-earth, bare, stark and simple delving from the ordinary, mundane and everyday into more profound themes of mortality and the harshness of nature and the life of the farmer. Her writing in *The Garden* is more personal, expressing all her ‘*beliefs and unbeliefs.*’ Her descriptions of the beauty of nature through the seasons are interspersed with her fascination with the harshness of nature and the ever-presence of death. Both provide fascinating thought-provoking reads. [*The Land*, Vita Sackville West, Frances Lincoln, 2004, 107 pages, Hardback, £11.99, ISBN 0711223599] [*The Garden*, Vita Sackville West, Frances Lincoln, 2004, 134 pages, Hardback, £11.99, ISBN 0711223580]

Two other books, again published by Frances Lincoln, this time in conjunction with the Royal Horticultural Society, are the companion volumes, ‘*Treasury of Garden Verse*’ and ‘*Treasury of Garden Writing*’. Again, both break from the general run of gardening books and give us another perspective on this fascinating hobby. Were I writing here for non-gardeners, these, and those of Vita Sackville West, are books I

would recommend as presents for their gardening friends. How often have you received a gardening book as a present from a non-gardener only to be disappointed that it is not of the style or of the subject matter you would have chosen? These books are of a wider appeal and are almost guaranteed to be welcomed by any gardening enthusiast.

The *Treasury of Garden Verse* draws on the work of a selection of poets which span many centuries, Coleridge, Browning, de la Mare, Wordsworth, Dylan Thomas, Oscar Wilde among others. The Bible is the source of several verses and humble origins account for others. Let me quote *'Inscription on the Palm House Doors, Bicton House, East Budleigh, Devon, c. 1850'*.

*The gardener at a hole looks out
And holes are plenty hereabout
A pair of pistols by his lug
One load with ball the other slug
A blunderbus of cannon shape
Just ready to discharge with grape
Let midnight thief or robber stand
And pause ere he puts out his hand
While those who come by day
May look but carry nought away.*

How many might find good use for a sign such as this!

Poetry by its nature is more suitable and subsequently more readable and enjoyable in such treasuries than prose. A short excerpt of prose rarely gives as good a flavour to the reader as does a poem. Yet, Charles Elliott has selected well and included an entertaining and very readable selection in this volume. There are the expected: Vita Sackville West, Christopher Lloyd, Gertrude Jekyll, Anna Pavord and Beth Chatto among others of our era but also the wit of Horace Walpole and Thomas Love Peacock, jewels from E.A. Bowles and Reginald Farrer and beautifully descriptive pen pictures from Lewis Carroll and J.M. Synge. Both are books which can be picked up for an interesting short read at any time with the guarantee of enjoyment.

[Treasury of Garden Verse, The Royal Horticultural Society, Frances Lincoln, 2003, 120 pages, Hardback, £12.99, ISBN 0-7112-2073-5] [Treasury of Garden Writing, The Royal Horticultural Society, Frances Lincoln, 2005, 192 pages, Hardback, £12.99, ISBN 0 7112 2522 2]

For those who enjoy botanical art, here is a book to light up your hearts. The Chelsea Physic Garden Florilegium Society was founded in 1995 with the aim of recording in watercolour the flora of this garden which was founded in 1673 by the Society of





Apothecaries. To date fifty six artists have completed some 200 paintings and this book, *Flower Paintings from the Apothecaries Garden*, presents one painting of each of these artists. The prints are all of A4 size approximately and each is accompanied by an informative text about the plant's use, its cultivation at the Chelsea Physic Garden and also biographical details of the artist. Like myself, I'm sure each reader will have his/her own favourites among the illustrations but, that aside; each deserves its place in this beautiful book. However, I felt that the colour in the printing of the pictures was in almost all cases a little light.

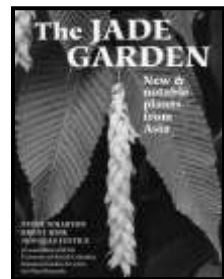
The cover illustration is repeated inside the book but is a pale imitation. Nonetheless, a beautiful book. [*Flower Paintings from the Apothecaries Garden*, Andrew Brown, *Antique Collectors' Club Ltd.*, 2005, 135 pages, Hardback, £25, ISBN 1 85149 503 7]



The infamous storm of October 1987 caused devastation in the south of England and especially in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and at Wakehurst Place. Afterwards it was obvious that there were major gaps in the collections at these gardens of material from the world's temperate woodlands. In *'Plants from the Edge of the World'* Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham describe their expeditions to Korea, Taiwan, eastern Russia and Japan to rectify the situation. This is a story of modern day plant

collectors and is filled with stories of the frustration of the search and the thrill of the find, with details of the difficult but essential work needed to bring us the plants we treasure. It is a very readable and informative book, well illustrated and will be of interest to the keen gardener. [*Plants from the Edge of the World*, Mark Flanagan & Tony Kirkham, *Timber Press*, 2005, 312 pages, Hardback, £25, ISBN 0-88192-676-0]

Finally, and not getting the space it deserves, *The Jade Garden*, describes and illustrates a wish list for the enthusiastic gardener of fabulous plants from Asia. The plants are described from the authors' experience of growing them at the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden & Centre for Plant Research, where climatic conditions are quite similar to those here in Ireland. Following an opening chapter describing the natural landscapes of China and bordering regions, the plants are described under the three headings of Perennials, Shrubs and Trees. The text is authoritative, clear, well-researched and enthusiastic. These are plant lovers describing great plants. This book is simply a must for anybody interested in Asiatic plants. One quibble – the photographs are grouped in the book rather than being beside the text. [*The Jade Garden*, Peter Wharton, Brent Hine, Douglas Justice, *Timber Press*, 2005, 228 pages, Hardback, £25, ISBN 0-88192-705-8]



The Irish Garden Plant Society

Despite its small size, Ireland has made a major contribution to the world of horticulture. Throughout the island there is a range of garden styles - from historic 17th century French Formal to modern 21st century urban gardens. The internationally recognised Robinsonian style, so popular throughout the 20th century, had its origins in Ireland, with its creator William Robinson coming from Co. Down.

Within these gardens, the work of Irish gardeners, plant breeders and collectors is celebrated in the names of plants such as *Viola* 'Molly Sanderson', *Lilium henryi*, *Rosa* 'Grandpa Dickson', *Sarracenia x moorei*, while *Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin', *Hypericum* 'Rowallane' and *Luma apiculata* 'Glanleam Gold' recall some of the great gardens of Ireland.

Sadly some of our garden plants have been lost from cultivation – due to changes in fashion or difficulties in propagation on a commercial scale. It was in recognition of our horticultural heritage that the Irish Garden Plant Society was founded in 1981 in order to research, locate and propagate such plants so that future generations may continue to enjoy them in years to come.

- Taken from the I.G.P.S. website: <http://www.igps.ie/>

You can help:

The I.G.P.S. depends on its membership subscriptions for funding and to a very large extent on its present members to promote the society. You might have a friend who is interested in gardening and suggest they become a member.

Enquiries re membership should be directed to: The Irish Garden Plant Society, c/o The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. Please don't telephone the Botanic Gardens regarding any I.G.P.S. business. The staff at the gardens are simply facilitating the I.G.P.S. by forwarding mail but cannot deal with telephone enquiries.