

Irish Garden Plant Society



Newsletter
January 2018

*Narcissus* 'Border Beauty'*Narcissus* 'Empress of Ireland'*Narcissus* 'Spellbinder'*Narcissus* 'Rip van Winkle'**Editorial**

Mary Montaut, Leinster Branch IGPS

The chilly, bright winter weather just after Christmas made me really appreciate some scented subjects in the garden, especially my favourite *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postil'. I was extremely fortunate many years ago to attend a propagation workshop with IGPS at Kinsealy, and they had rooted cuttings of this glorious plant. I bought one and I have adored it ever since. However, I have recently fallen in love just as passionately with another winter-scented shrub and this one, I believe, might be adopted by IGPS as one of our 'Irish Heritage' plants, because it is named after an Irish botanist. The shrub is *Edgeworthia chrysantha* - the golden-headed Edgeworthia. It belongs to the same family as the Daphne, *Thymelaeaceae*, and originates from the China - Nepal border area. It is naturalized in Japan, where it was planted in the late sixteenth century for paper making and is called the Paper Bush (Mitsumata). There is also an orange-flowered variety called Akebono which is said to be a smaller shrub, but I have never been lucky enough to see this one. It was first classified in 1841, and named in honour Michael Pakenham Edgeworth. He was a younger brother of the novelist, Maria Edgeworth (of *Castle Rackrent* fame) and lived and worked in India most of his life. However, I feel we should salute his work, and recommend this superb and tolerant shrub. It is hardy, doesn't mind a bit of shade (in Kew there is a specimen which is almost completely in shade) especially as it flowers at a time when most of the leaves are off the trees around it.

There is quite a lot to be discovered about Irish plant hunters in the nineteenth century, I believe. A little more research about Pakenham Edgeworth (as he was known) had revealed that his older sister, Maria, was a keen plantswoman and many of her letters are concerned with her collection of roses. A most informative article by Charles Nelson and Christina Colvin in 1988 (*Garden History Society*), titled 'Building Castles of Flowers': Maria Edgeworth as Gardener, also includes a fascinating list of some of the seeds which her brother sent back to Edgeworthstown from his work in India, and although there is unfortunately no record of which seeds grew, or where, this list also includes *Daphne bholua*. Bearing in mind that this shrub is closely related to *Edgeworthia*, I feel that Pakenham Edgeworth could well have been the earliest plantsman to introduce both of these winter-scented beauties into Ireland, and probably into Britain. I am rather interested to find out whether it was a special honour bestowed on Pakenham to have his name given as the species name for *Edgeworthia*? In my limited experience, it is usually the varietal name which is given in this way.

It seems that the whole Edgeworth family was brought up by their father (Richard Lovell Edgeworth) to be interested in gardening, and apparently all the children were given garden plots on the estate. Maria's letters reflect a serious interest in new introductions, which she frequently noted in her correspondence with the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, John Foster of Collon, who was a close friend of her father's. He was a leading member of the Dublin Society (later Royal Dublin Society) and instrumental in establishing the botanical gardens at Glasnevin. He supplied Maria with new plants in return for seeds she had sent to him. She also sent seeds to Professor William Jackson Hooker in Glasgow, and to the curator of the Botanic Gardens at Ballsbridge, James Townsend Mackay. Pakenham himself also sent seeds to these plantsmen, and to Professor Robert Graham in Edinburgh, with whom he had studied botany.

Although nowadays it almost seems to be a solecism to bring new species into a country, our special remit as a 'Garden Plant Society' must surely oblige us to understand as much as we can about the many introductions which have occurred into Ireland. Reverting to the beautiful *Edgeworthia*, I gather that this is regarded almost as a 'native' in Japan, even though the date and purpose of its introduction are well known. My own attitude about this matter was hardened when I visited my sister in Australia in the mid 1990s. We were driving in the Blue Mountains outside Sydney when we came across what was to me, a most beautiful sight - hundreds of *Lilium regale* in full flower, among the eucalyptus trees. My sister however was venomous about this wonderful sight: she wanted to use a flame thrower on them all - they were 'non-native', and, emphatically, not welcome. I don't believe that *L. regale* has proved to be a major threat to the native Ozzie species so far - but she was all for extreme measures. Here, our serious problems with *Rhododendron ponticum*, a plant which Maria Edgeworth was so happy to receive from John Foster and to plant at Edgeworthstown, surely should not terrify us into the mass destruction of other interesting introductions.



Photo: *Edgeworthia chrysantha* at Donglin Temple, Jianxi, China [Photo by Shimizusatsuki, from Wikipedia]



Photo: *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postil'



A Note from The Chair

Billy McCone, Chairman, IGPS

At his home and nursery in Omagh, I spent a very enjoyable day last October with daffodil breeder Brian Duncan in bagging and labelling a donation of over 80 daffodil varieties. Taking opportunity of Brian's expertise I came away with more than bulbs but an insight and new knowledge on daffodil growing. As part of the IGPS conservation programme, the daffodils, many of which were award winners, have now been dispersed to Glasnevin, Lisnacloskey, Pogue's Entry and Castle Gardens in Antrim. Brian's generosity caused me to reflect seriously on the significant enrichment and value that our network of contacts contribute to the IGPS.

Last year, plants and bulbs donated free or at very low cost from Kilmurry, Mount Venus, Ravensberg, Irish Garden Plants, Sedum and Sage nursery and Dublin Council greatly increased the society's revenue from plant sales. That alone is a noteworthy, but there is also the added value of having a greater variety of plants for members to buy together with a supply of Irish Heritage plants to support the conservation programme. Of course the numerous donations made by our members are paramount to making the plant sales happen at all.

Last year saw the 30th anniversary of the IGPS providing volunteers at the Lisnacloskey garden at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. The partnership provided mutual benefits for both the museum and the IGPS. A second garden at Pogue's Entry in Antrim, provided and supported by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council offers similar benefits. Additional support from the horticultural department of the South Eastern Regional College, County Down has been very encouraging.

Our publications and conservation projects have been supported by OPW and National Trust gardeners, both past and present. Partnership arrangements with the Alpine Garden Society and the Irish Society of Botanical Artists have shown the benefits of sharing resources.

We are indebted to the management and staff at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin for their continued help and support by way of the facilities they provide, information they share and plants they donate.

So to everyone who has supported the society, to the hard working committee members who stretch themselves to get things done and to all the members, I wish you a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Billy McCone

Irish Heritage Plants Update, December 2017

Stephen Butler, Irish Heritage Plant Coordinator

I've said it before - work on this is a marathon, not a sprint, slow steady progress is best, but makes for less dramatic copy for the editor! Any lists sent in to me are always longer than before, well done to everyone involved.

Over the year several developments have reinforced our work, and built on what we have. There has been an increase in total numbers of IHPs known to be grown, and more work on verification, which must always be a very unhurried, measured and deliberate process.

Numbers have increased at the society's garden at Lismacloskey, now with 92 IHPs, an excellent achievement, all work carried out by a small number of IGPS volunteers. The new garden in the North in Antrim, Pogue's Entry, will be another excellent showcase for Irish Heritage Plants. Recent very generous donations of Irish Daffodil cvs from Brian Duncan will enhance both the above, and greatly add to the totals.

NBG Glasnevin has allocated a small area that will only grow IHPs, just opposite the Herbarium building. Included here is *Aconitum* 'Newry Blue' with several accessions for comparison – enough said already on this, as it is work in progress. Behind the scenes there is now also a small area for trials where we hope to be able to trial different accessions of other IHPs, currently collecting *Bergeria* cultivars, with Brendan Sayers and Gary Mentanko doing the legwork. Glasnevin holds the largest single collection of IHPs, closely followed by Blarney Castle. Several IGPS members hold good collections too.

The Leinster Plant Sale in October again had a good selection of IHPs, though not as many as last year, as not all plants are always available. Many thanks to our suppliers of IHPs, especially Kilmurry Nursery, an excellent range as always, Mt. Venus, and Ravensberg. Many of those listed below came from members too, many thanks due there also.

The following plants were sold at the Leinster Plant Sale, with brief notes:

Aconitum napellus 'Newry Blue' - Daisy Hill Nursery 1950

Agapanthus 'Kilmurry Blue' - Kilmurry Nursery recently

Agapanthus 'Kilmurry White' - Kilmurry Nursery recently

Anemone nemerosa 'Robinsoniana' - probably from Oxford BG, by Robinson

Azara microphylla 'Variegata' - Belgrove House, Cork by Gumbleton

Berberis stenophylla 'Corallina Compacta' - Daisy Hill Nursery Newry 1905

Bergeria 'Ballawley' – intro from Ballawley Park Dundrum about 1940

Chamaecyparis lawsoniana 'Kilmacurragh' – raised at NBG Kilmacurragh

Cornus capitata 'Kilmacurragh Rose' - NBG Kilmacurragh recently

Crococsmia 'Rowallane Yellow' - Rowallane Gardens, named by Graham Stuart Thomas

Crococsmia 'Kilmurry Orange' - Kilmurry Nursery recently

Crococsmia 'Rowallane Orange' - Rowallane Nursery intro by Gary Dunlop

Cryptomeria japonica 'Kilmacurragh' - raised at NBG Kilmacurragh

Dierama 'Kilmurry Seedling' - Kilmurry Nursery recently

Emmenopterys henryi - for Augustine Henry

Epilobium (Zauschneria) canum 'Dublin' – found in Dublin around 1976, confused history

Escallonia 'Glasnevin Hybrid' – raised at NBG Glasnevin about 1910

Geranium 'Mt Venus' - Nursery, recently

Geranium himalayense 'Irish Blue' - Coldrinagh House Kildare, by Graham Stuart Thomas 1947

Gloxinia 'Glasnevin Jubilee' - from seed from Montreal BG raised at NBG Glasnevin 1995

Griselinia littoralis 'Bantry Bay' – found at Illnacullin around 1950

Hebe 'Headfourtii' – raised at Headfort House from NZ seed

Iris 'Kilmurry Black' - Kilmurry Nursery recently

Luma apiculata 'Glanleam Gold' – found as seedling at Glanleam House, Valentia Island

Omphalodes cappadocica 'Starry Eyes' - Rathfarnham, Dublin, 1981

Potentilla fruticosa 'Longacre Variety' - found near Newcastle, by Slieve Donard Nursery

Pulmonaria 'Blake's Silver' – Found as seedling in the Blakes' mother's garden recently

Rosmarinus officinalis 'Fota Blue' - from Fota House, found by Neil Treseder (nurseryman)

Taxus baccata 'Fastigiata' - found near Florence Court, Co Fermanagh

Tilia henryana - -named for Augustine Henry

On bulb table

Narcissus 'Border Beauty' - Brian Duncan 1992

Narcissus 'Spellbinder' - Guy Wilson pre 1944

Narcissus 'Empress of Ireland' - Guy Wilson 1952

Narcissus 'Rip van Winkle' - Hartland, origin obscure

IGPS Leinster Branch Plant Sale

Michelle Nolan, Leinster Branch

The new venue chosen at Marino Institute on the north side of Dublin for this year's Plant Sale brought with it many advantages: an indoor hall, coffee shop across the yard for refreshments, the chance of new customers, and the wonderful opportunity to have a wander around the private gardens lovingly designed and cared for by Br. Bourke.

This was one of the most spectacularly turbulent weeks with regards to rain and wind, and Saturday 21st October was no different. We were lucky to be indoors, but with this new venue we obviously had hoped for great weather too. It did have an effect on sales but not so much as we feared. We were left with bulbs on Ed's and Mary's table for the first time, but overall we were happy. It must be recognized that the plant donations we received from the nurseries were of impeccable quality. Without this support year after year we wouldn't have these great days. We are grateful to all the usual helpers who were there, with the added bonus of a few more dragged along by Kirsten (Breda Dixon and Rosie Maye). With ten minutes to go to opening, we received a surprise visit by Billy Mc Cone from our Northern Branch, and also the one and only Br. Bourke. We were distracted and took our eye off the ball, only to find that the eager bargain hunters had slipped in ahead of time.

Plants were sold, many questions were asked, stories told and the hall was a hive of activity. The day students from the college snuck down from classes after word was spread we were in the business for good bargains. We finished the day with a talk from Ciarán Fogarty (Head of Facilities) on the fascinating history of Marino and Lord Charlemont. Not a professional gardener himself but certainly a great enthusiast, he then brought us out for a guided tour of the gardens. The rain had stopped by this time, thankfully, so this treat brought our busy day to an end.

Annual General Meeting in County Down 19-20th May 2018

What could be more enjoyable than visiting gardens where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea? Well, this is exactly what is on offer as the Society's AGM will take place in the Burrendale Hotel in Newcastle and will be followed by visits to gardens in the Newcastle and Newry areas over the weekend of 19th and 20th May.

The Mournes have been designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and South Down has a rich heritage of horticultural excellence. Castlewellan Arboretum, which belonged to and was developed by the Annesley family, who also owned Anne's Grove in Co. Cork, has been described as "...a world-class gem". Also world class in their time were the Slieve Donard Nursery in Newcastle and Daisy Hill Nursery in Newry, both now sadly no more but their legacy lives on in the names of some of our most beautiful plants such as *Pieris japonica* 'Daisy Hill' and the outstanding Himalayan poppy, *Meconopsis x sheldonii* 'Slieve Donard'.

Accommodation

We will be based in the comfortable 4* Burrendale Hotel Country Club and Spa on the Castlewellan Road in Newcastle – www.burrendale.com telephone +44 28 4372 2599. The hotel has agreed an excellent package for our stay:

One night B&B per person sharing (pps)	£75
One night B&B pps including the AGM dinner	£85
Two nights B&B pps including the AGM dinner	£145
Single supplement	£20 per night

Dinner on Saturday night for non-residents will be £33. The hotel is holding rooms for us **until 14th February**, so don't delay; book directly with the hotel mentioning the Irish Garden Plant Society to secure these very favourable rates. A deposit of £50 is required. After this date, although the special rate will continue, there is no guarantee of getting a room.

If you wish to stay elsewhere, there is the 5* Slieve Donard Resort and Spa and the Donard Hotel in Newcastle, the Kings Inn Hotel in Castlewellan, and the Briers Country House between the two, or you can contact the local Council's Visitor Information Centre – newcastle.vic@nmandd.org – for further details of guest houses and self-catering accommodation.

The Annual General Meeting

The meeting will be held in the hotel starting at 9.45 on the Saturday and all members are of course welcome to attend free of charge. However, please let us know if you plan to attend only the meeting and not the garden visits so that we have the correct numbers for tea and coffee. A formal notice and agenda will be published in the April Newsletter. There will be a number of vacant posts this year as some key people are coming to the end of their term of office. The Committee is very keen to hear from members willing to come forward to fill the vacancies and play a role in the future of the Society. We are looking for a new Vice Chair as Anne James has completed her four year term, as has our Treasurer, Pascal Lynch. Patrick Quigley has given long service to the Society in a number of roles, most recently as Membership Secretary, and now understandably wishes to take a rest for a while.

Please think about it. Committee meetings take place every second month in Dublin as this is the easiest location for people to get to; they are held in the evenings. Feel free to telephone or email any of the committee members whose contact details are on the back cover.

Garden visits

Following coffee and scones after the meeting, we will share cars and drive the few miles to Castlewellan Forest Park and the Arboretum with its internationally important collection of trees and shrubs including magnolias and rhododendrons which should be in bloom. Despite holding one of the island's most significant collections, the Arboretum suffered a period of neglect but is now recovering, thanks to the work of the current Head Gardener, Alwyn Sinnamond, and a team of enthusiastic volunteers, ARC which stands for Arboretum Restoration Castlewellan. We are especially fortunate in that not only will we have Alwyn as our guide, but he will be joined by one of our members, Seamus O'Brien, Curator of Kilmacurragh National Botanic Garden, who is an ardent supporter of the Arboretum.

After a break for a light lunch (included in the fee for the weekend), we will visit a nearby private garden in the afternoon. On Sunday morning, we drive through the heart of the Mournes to Ballyedmond Castle on the shores of Carlingford Lough where we will be hosted by our member, Lady Ballyedmond. On arrival, we assemble in the Orangery for light refreshments before going on a choice of guided tours taking in among other things the kitchen garden, the magnolia walk and the newly developed woodland area. There are a number of choices for lunch in the villages of Rostrevor and Warrenpoint before we make our final visit to another private garden on the outskirts of Newry, handily placed for access to the Belfast-Dublin motorway and the drive home.

For the comfort and enjoyment of all concerned, the garden visits will be limited to 100 people.

Booking

This year there are **two different rates depending on whether you are staying in the Burrendale Hotel or not**. The cost of the weekend is £59 for members who have booked the package with the Burrendale Hotel inclusive of dinner, that is, the £85 or £145 rate. If you are staying elsewhere and wish to attend the dinner on Saturday night, the cost of the weekend is £92 (£59 plus £33 for the dinner).

Members may bring one guest; guests pay a £10 supplement on the above prices.

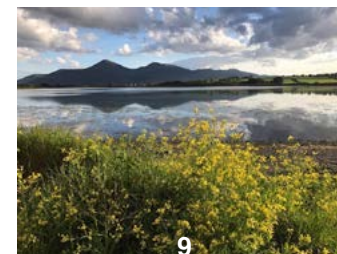
Please **book online if at all possible** rather than by post as it greatly reduces the workload of the regional committee. Online booking starts on 5th January and is on the Events page of the IGPS website: www.irishgardenplantsociety.com/events. If you have special dietary requirements, eg vegetarian, gluten-free and so on, please also email Barbara Kelso (see below) with details as otherwise we won't know.

If you are unable to book online, a form is enclosed with this Newsletter. The costs are as set out above. Remember to include your email address and/or phone number on the form so that we can confirm and update you with any developments. Return the completed form enclosing a cheque with the full payment for yourself - and your guest if you are bringing one - to:

Barbara Kelso, 25 Farm Lodge Drive, Greenisland, Co. Antrim BT38 8XN.

Important! Be sure to have secured your accommodation in the Burrendale Hotel before making your booking so that you pay the correct amount.

For further enquiries, please contact igps.northern@gmail.com or phone Barbara Kelso +44 7449 484050 or Maeve Bell +44 7713 739482



POGUE'S ENTRY : A Helping Hand by SERC

Horticultural lecturers and students from Holywood's South Eastern Regional College



Early December: reinforcements arrived at Pogue's Entry in the form of a group of lecturers and students from South Eastern Regional College (SERC) Holywood, County Down.

Northern sub-committee member and SERC horticultural lecturer, Joanna Loane, together with fellow lecturers Claire Dunwoody, Colin Atkinson and a class of Level 2 Diploma students very kindly offered to lend a helping hand in clearing the beds at the new IGPS garden at Pogue's Entry, Antrim.

Volunteers Yvonne Penpraze, Patricia Kernohan and Diane Sprules were delighted for the assistance in preparing the beds for new planting. Yvonne said, "They worked amazingly hard, achieving in one day what would have taken us weeks."

"We are more than glad to help and it has been a very useful learning experience for the students," commented Joanna. Yvonne says there is still much to do but things are moving forward at a good pace.



SERC lecturer and IGPS Northern Committee member, Joanna Loane and student, Caden Ruth, finding fun in digging out Day Lilies.

Early autumn: Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Heritage Officer, Philip Magennis, had brought in contractors to create new paths and vegetable beds. The beds and gravel paths edged with reclaimed red brick were a vast improvement to the previous uneven patch of rough lawn. In addition to planting of some Irish cultivars in the herbaceous border, the volunteers have already planted two Irish apple trees, raspberries, blackcurrants, gooseberries and rhubarb.



The Vegetable Beds - Before and After



Pollen to Stigma, and Then We Wait

Brendan Sayers

A large bag of Irish Heritage recently made it way circuitously from Omagh to Balrath, Co. Meath. It was in the form of daffodil bulbs, some of the results of many years of cross-pollinations made by Brian Duncan. Brian recently gifted 80 cultivars to the IGPS Northern Group and asked that the bag addressed to me might travel to Dublin alongside an attendee of the IGPS committee meeting. In return for the favour Billy McCone asked that I might reveal the purpose of the bulbs.



Patrick Duncan with a bunch of his seedlings

Immediately on being asked to write a piece on my daffodil breeding I remembered two things: firstly, my reluctance to write on various breeding endeavours until there were some interesting results; and secondly, the question posed to me by Brian Duncan as to what the aims of my breeding were. The answer begins with the surprise of what emerges from the unknown, for not all crosses will result in an improvement on the parents, in something that is garden worthy or indeed, pleasurable in any form. However, with good breeding stock, I am ever hopeful. So ignoring the reluctance, I will attempt to answer the question.

Beside the desire to continue the work of producing Irish cultivars, I have two clear aims in my tinkering with daffodils. The first is to continue the line of *Narcissus* 'Fairy Gold', the beautiful miniature hybrid that Keith Lamb produced when he intentionally crossed *Narcissus nanus* and *N. cyclamineus* in 1942. Although the hybrid should be fertile, success to date has been frustrating with only three fertile seed pods each producing approximately half a dozen seeds. The first of these crosses should flower in 2019.

My second aim concerns the daffodil breeder, Patrick Kiernan from Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford. Patrick is a prolific breeder who, having celebrated his 90th birthday early in 2017, has put away his pollination brush. Only four of his many fine daffodils have so far been registered. I have bulbs of 'Inny River' and 'Glen Lake' but still search for 'Lough Gowna' and 'Cam Lane'. I recently got some bulbs of another of his unnamed seedlings. I have used 'Inny River' and 'Glen Lake' and crossed these with Brian Duncan bred daffodils in the hope of creating a solely Irish line. I have also been able to cross pollinate, using Brian's cultivars as seed bearing parents, with a selection of flowers hand picked in Patrick Kiernan's garden.

The lost thread to this tale is my own association with Inny River and Glen Lake. Both are close to my mother's home. When she was born she lived in a cottage in the townland of Gneeve, from where the shimmering surface of Glen Lake could be seen on a fine day. The second cottage she lived in as a young girl was in Kilsallagh, from where we would travel on my childhood picnics as my father, uncles and grandfather would fish along the banks of the Inny River.

Among our Irish bred cultivars range from some discovered by keen eyed gardeners, to those that result from endeavours to supersede the latest and greatest, and those that reflect the great achievements of institutions like the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin where the pursuits of horticulture and plant breeding have added greatly to our garden plants.

Now, let's wait and see...

David Robinson in his garden with *Juania australis***A first ever - and its a girl!**

Some of you will remember the scientific gardener David Robinson and his garden at Earlscliffe, Baily, Co. Dublin. A trip to Earlscliffe was to visit a living experiment from the weed control using Simazine to the tender, woody plants, carefully planted but from then on left to their own devices. David passed away in 2004 and much can be learned of his achievements, his methods and garden at www.earlscliffe.com

Following a visit to the Royal Horticultural Society's garden, Rosemoor, in 1995, David returned to Earlscliffe and planted a young plant of *Juania australis* he had received as a gift. This was the first time the species was grown as an outdoor specimen on our island. *Juania australis*, the Chonta palm, is an island endemic from Robinson Crusoe Island or Más a Tierra of the Juan Fernández Islands off the coast of Chile in the South Pacific Ocean, where it grows in montane hardwood and tree-fern forests.

Against all expectations, the Earlscliffe plant thrived in its new home and was undamaged by the severe winters of 2010 and 2011. In June 2017 it produced its first inflorescence and can now be identified as a female of the species. A more comprehensive account of the species and its Irish connection will be published in *Palms*, the journal of the International Palm Society in early 2018.

This specimen at Earlscliffe caused wonder and envy but also encouraged others to attempt to cultivate it. In Ireland plants now grow at Kells Bay House, Co. Kerry, a private garden in Greystones and at the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh, both in Co. Wicklow. Kells Bay also offers young plants for sale. The proprietor, Billy Alexander has sold plants to gardeners in Ireland, Britain and France. Plants at Kells Bay were badly affected during the severe winters of 2010 and 2011 but have all recovered and the Greystones specimen was unaffected.

Thanks and appreciations to David's daughter Karen and David Foley for allowing us to share in this first flowering of *Juania australis* in Ireland.

Brendan Sayers

Round the Kattegat: Some Herbaceous Plants of Denmark and Sweden

Mary Forrest

Herbaceous perennial plants grown in drifts beneath trees and shrubs, in herbaceous borders or in island beds with specimen shrubs are seen in gardens in Ireland. Likewise in the gardens and parks of Denmark and Sweden but while their selection of herbaceous plants would be uncommon here, many deserve our attention as 'good garden plants'. Here are a few.

Bugglossoides purpureocaerulea is a spreading ground cover suitable for a shaded situation beneath shrubs. The stems, with narrow elliptic leaves, rise to 50 – 60cm. The name is very descriptive, the flowers look like a tubular Bugloss, the flowers open purple and become blue (purpureocaerulea).

The yellow spring flowering *Corydalis lutea* often colonises rockeries and old walls in this country. *Corydalis scouleri* grows to 30 – 40cm tall with upright stems with delicate looking finely divided leaves. Though Spring flowering, purple flowers remained in the plant until June. Growing beneath tall shrubs it created the effect of a gently swaying laurel lawn or rigid hedge, if such is not a contradiction.

Globular flower heads similar to those in Red and White clover *Trifolium pratense* and *T. repens* suggested a clover. It was *Trifolium pannonicum*, Hungarian clover, a neat upright plant to 78-80cm, branched from the base, with narrow green leaves in threes, as in clover. The flowers are white, summer flowering. The stems have sufficient strength so as not to warrant staking, a pert well-groomed plant. *Trifolium trichocephalum* grows to a similar height and has similar erect stems. The leaves are fringed with hairs and the flowers are pale yellow.

Whereas grey foliage, soft to the touch identifies Lamb's Ear, *Stachys byzantina*, corrugated or rugose (puckered) green foliage identifies *Stachys macrantha*. The mid green foliage, rounded at the base pointed at the apex, is a foil for mid-pink erect growing flowers. It was growing well in an open place on a rockery and by shrubs in a woodland garden. *Stachys ossetica* had a more lax habit with long narrow crenate leaves. Long tubular white flowers grow in distinct whorls along the flowering stem.

Asarum europaeum grows a couple of centimetres tall but its chief merit is a dense habit and glossy green heart-shaped or kidney-shaped leaves. It grows well in shade, at the margins of tree and shrub planting.

While most herbaceous look well cultivated in drifts or groups, some are 'soloists'. One such was *Megacarpaea delavayii*; at first glance it looked like an elegant relative of Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, but the foliage was not finely dissected. This member of the Brassica or Cabbage family has double pinnate foliage to the base of the plant. White hermaphrodite flowers, female flowers to the centre, male to the outside of the cluster, are held in terminal clusters. As the name might indicate, the fruit is large and the specific name, 'delavayii', indicates its origins in China. The species is blue flowered, though the plant admired in the Gothenburg Botanic Gardens was white flowered.

At first sight it looked like a mottled purple paper fan or some unusual bird that had spread its wings on the ground. Investigating further, there were short stemmed flowers with long dark red petals, large anthers and stigma within. Seeking a label which had been inserted in the ground and covered by a stone, the plant was labelled *Dysosma versipellis* 'Spotty Dotty'. Sometimes known as *Podophyllum*, the deeply lobed foliage mottled foliage emerges like an umbrella. The plant was growing in damp soil beneath thin pine woodland.

[Mary Forrest participated in an International Dendrology tour to Denmark and SW Sweden.]

[Editor's Note: *Dysosma versipellis* is on the UN Endangered Plant List.]

Megacarpaea delavayii



Dysosma versipellis - Spotty Dotty - Photos Mary Forrest

The Plant Collections at RHS Hyde Hall, Rob Brett, Curator. November 16th 2018

Stephen Butler, Leinster Committee

Experience is everything, and Rob Brett has certainly gained plenty as he moved around the UK, first in RBG Kew, then in Cambridge BG, and the Eden Project, until his current position at Hyde Hall, where he is enjoying, no, revelling in, the combination of horticulture and education.

Each garden has many highlights – Cambridge has the best Jade Vine, *Strongylodon macrobotrys*, which Rob found, while working late, could only be pollinated at night (which makes sense when it's bat pollinated), and they had queues of people coming in to see the enormous flowering Titan Arum, *Amorphophallus titanum* (3rd in UK). Successes like that breed more, so funding was easier to raise to restore the teak house; with 80% of the wood reused, it is now a wonderful facility again.

Eden Project was a much larger scale education project with horticulture as the message medium. Numbers here are always dramatic: there were 2 million visitors to see it being built (largest free standing scaffolding in Europe). This showed the potential, and estimates now are that the garden has pumped £1 billion into the Cornish economy since it started, and all from a disused china clay pit - but with a wonderful vision to achieve it. Education is the *raison d'être* for Eden, and they have many outreach programmes that have been very successful.

The Royal Horticultural Society, with 500,000 members, has been reinvented, and now has 4 gardens open (fifth on the way), 2.2 million visitors, flower shows, community outreach - not least Britain in Bloom, with 300,000 volunteers maintaining 20,000 acres of which half had been derelict, raising funds and planting thousands of trees, shrubs, and bulbs each year. The fifth garden, in the midlands, Bridgewater, will have an investment over many years of £150 million, and includes an 11 acre walled garden on its 300 acre estate, due to open around 2020.

Hyde Hall, mentioned in the Domesday Book, a 600 acre farm, was developed as a garden from the mid 1950s by the Robinson family, and given to the RHS in 1993. Some land was sold off, leaving 365 acres, of which at the moment about 28 are 'gardened'. But big plans are afoot, as always; start with a masterplan, think ahead for numbers, car parking, water supply etc. and get all your services in before tree planting. So, a 10 million gallon reservoir built for all irrigation needs, surrounded by woodland, is now a good wildlife spot with bird hides as a link with birdwatching groups. Car parks and roads/visitor paths have been built; woodland shelter belt planted over 5 years, 70,000 trees over 60 acres, and that area is now developing a more diverse wildlife and flora. With a £7 million development fund, it's not surprising that there are now 300,000 visitors.

Of course, there still have to be 'pure' gardens too, so additions of the dry garden (this is the driest part of England) akin to Beth Chatto's ideas and best in June; courtyard gardens that visitors could relate to, bold large plantings of herbaceous, shrubs, and trees on Clover Hill; and this year a global vegetable garden, a circular greenhouse surrounded by 4 quarters of the globe, veggies from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. A big sky meadow (this is very open countryside) of 7000sq ms has needed much work to control and edit the brutes from the more desirable, and control weeds. Collections of *Malus*, Roses which do well here, and also of AGM *Viburnum*, and winter gardens with great frost images add to this.

One phrase sticks in my mind about having good staff – you need staff that are never satisfied, and I think that sums up Hyde Hall, (and probably all the other RHS gardens): lots there, but much more to do before Rob's anywhere near satisfied, though it will always look well!

Definitely worth a visit.

***Digitalis purpurea* 'Elsie Kelsey'**

Interview with Harold McBride by Maeve Bell

Foxgloves are one of our best-loved native flowers. Earlier this year the Royal Horticultural Society magazine, *The Garden* carried a report of the trial they carried out between 2013 and 2015 to test the many new *Digitalis* hybrids and seed strains. In addition to perennials and annuals, 40 biennial types were chosen for the trial; one of them was *Digitalis* 'Elsie Kelsey' which was introduced and named by the well-known gardener and alpine enthusiast, Harold McBride of Lisburn, Co. Antrim.

How did your foxglove come about?

In the wild, *D. purpurea* is usually purplish-pink in colour, but approximately 15% of our native population is white or shades in between. During the 1990s, I noticed a foxglove seedling in my garden in Lisburn which had large white flowers with heavy, deep maroon speckling in the throat of the bells. The plant's flowering coincided with a visit from a television gardening programme of that time called *Gardening Club*; the presenter of the programme, Roy Lancaster, suggested that the plant was worthy of a cultivar name as he had not seen anything like it before. The following year I ran into Roy when we were fellow lecturers at an International Rock Garden Conference. Roy asked if I had thought of a cultivar name "...for the Spotted *Digitalis*?" I had to own up and say that I had not given it any further thought.

But you took Roy's advice and gave it a name?

Around this time our local church had just completed the building of a new hall and my elder sister, Elsie Kelsey, had been very involved in the planning and fund raising. As part of her efforts to raise money, Elsie prevailed upon me to give a gardening lecture. Sadly Elsie was taken ill and passed away before the planned lecture took place but with the help of good gardening friends, the lecture and plant sale went ahead to a packed house. I named my foxglove *Digitalis* 'Elsie Kelsey' and donated 100 seedlings to the plant sale. They were snapped up and I also took orders from many disappointed customers; hence the launch and naming of this cultivar.

What happened next?

Over the years I donated seed to various exchanges including the Alpine Garden Society (AGS), the Scottish Rock Garden Club (SRGC), the AGS in New Zealand, and the North American Rock Garden Club (NA RGC). More recently I noticed some major seed firms and nurseries listing my foxglove for sale. I still grow many cultivars and hybrids in my garden and I try to keep going plants which are very similar to my original. It is of course a challenge to keep the strain isolated and pure in a private garden where there is open pollination. The local bees don't discriminate between my specials and the wild ones!

**Are you upset that *D. 'Elsie Kelsey'* didn't receive an AGM (Award of Garden Merit) in the RHS trials?**

Twelve photographs including one of *D. 'Elsie Kelsey'* were printed by the RHS under the heading of "notable seed-raised selections". My sister was a keen gardener, loved going to the Chelsea Flower Show and was twice Mayor of Lisburn. I am just really pleased that the name of Elsie Kelsey is still remembered by an interesting & attractive flower.



Irish Heritage Apple Plantation: Securing the National Apple Collection

Report by Mary Montaut, Leinster Branch

This year, I was delighted to discover that Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council, along with Shankill Tidy Towns and UCD, has taken on the care of the National Collection of Irish Apple Trees in their park at Shanganagh, Co. Dublin. The trees were planted in February 2017, in a beautiful setting between the sea and the Dublin Mountains.

The history of this collection shows all too clearly how easily an important heritage can be lost. The collection was begun in the 1940s by Dr Keith Lamb, who intended it to be a National Collection. His foresight marks him as a man before his time. He published a monograph on The Irish Apple (1950) which is still available from Irish Seed Savers. His work was continued later by Professor Michael Hennerty (UCD), assisted by Kevin Kenny, Senior Technical Officer in UCD, and the trees were at this time located at Albert College (now the campus of DCU). However, during construction work at this site about 1970, 'an over-zealous' operative with a bulldozer completely razed the lot - all the trees were 'completely destroyed'.

With admirable tenacity, Mr Kenny set about replacing all the lost trees and he sought out some very rare examples of Irish apples, for example the Ballyvaughan Seedling of Co. Clare. He managed to take five spindly cuttings, one of which survived as a graft. It was only just in time - the parent tree died the following year. Luckily the UK National Fruit Collection at Brogdale in Kent held a great many of the Irish apple varieties, and they willingly helped by supplying strong plants. But the problems were not over. It still took many years of badgering from Professor Michael Hennerty to convince the Department of Agriculture to allow the varieties to be imported and only then under strict condition that the trees would be grown in isolation under the care of Kevin Kenny for two years to ensure they were disease free.

The 'bulldozer incident' highlighted the importance of safeguarding the National Collection and provided the determination for Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, working in partnership with Shankill Tidy Towns, to create its own mini collection. With the assistance of Kevin Kenny, cuttings were taken from 30 of the 70 cultivars making up the National Collection and grafted onto (M26) semi dwarfing rootstocks. These trees were grown under glass in the Shanganagh Parks Depot to give the grafts the best possible chance of taking.

The planting of the orchard took place during National Tree Week in 2017. The total cost of this Biodiversity in Action project was €600, thanks largely to the time given freely by volunteers from Shankill Tidy Towns, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council staff and Kevin Kenny of UCD.

[The Editor would like to thank Dean Eaton of DLR CoCo for the information about this Collection. A full list of the Apple trees which have been planted at Shanganagh is available from editor.igps@gmail.com]

Worth a Read

Paddy Tobin

I wonder if book tokens are as popular as they once were. They were always a present I welcomed at Christmas as they guaranteed satisfaction and hours of pleasure afterwards. Christmas has always been the season of highest book sales, the time of giving and receiving and I have a long list of gardening books published in this last year for your attention. I have kept my comments as brief as possible but you can read full reviews in the IGPS blog. <https://igpsblogs.wordpress.com/category/book-review/>

I will begin with three excellent titles from Irish authors and publishers:



Blooming Marvellous – A Wildflower Hunter's Year, Zoë Devlin, The Collins Press, 2017, Hardback, 295 pages, €16.99, ISBN: 978-1-84889-327-6.

Zoe's third book and a pleasure to read. It tells of her interest in Irish native wildflowers, how it began and includes recollections of many special days out and the excitement of finding special plants. Highly recommended.



The Open Gardens of Ireland, Shirley Lanigan, 2017, The Butter Slip Press, Kilkenny, €22.50/£19.99, Soft cover, 399 pages, ISBN: 978-0-9955825-0-7

This is an update of Shirley's long treasured and well used guide to Irish gardens which open to the public. It covers 427 gardens and will be as indispensable to garden visitors. Highly recommended.



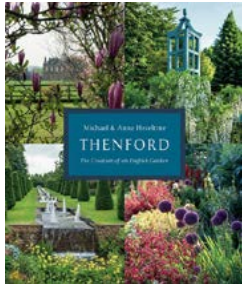
Whittled Away, Ireland's Vanishing Nature, Pádraig Fogarty, The Collins Press, Cork, 2017, Hardback, 360 pages, €20, ISBN: 978-1-84889-310-8

An extraordinary book; even an alarming book as the author reviews many areas of the Irish natural environment and comments on how we have cared for or not cared for it. A hard hitting book which is essential reading for anybody with an interest in our environment.



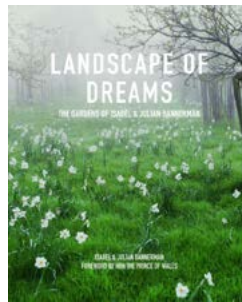
Head Gardeners, A Celebration of the most exciting gardeners working in Britain today, Ambra Edwards with photographs by Charlie Hopkinson. Pimpernel Press, London, 2017, Hardback, 240 pages, £35, ISBN: 9781910258743240.

A selection of head gardeners, not all in the traditional mould. A fabulous book; I loved it.



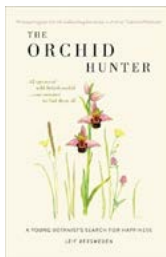
Thenford, Michael & Anne Heseltine., 2016, Harback, 319 pages, £40, ISBN: 9781784979737

My goodness! What a garden! Michael Heseltine and his wife Anne have created one of the major gardens in England. Hugely impressive, magnificent and an absolute pleasure to read. Photographs outstanding. Highly recommended,



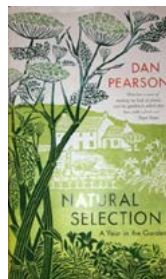
Landscape of Dreams, The Gardens of Isabel and Julia Bannerman, Pimpernel Press 2016, Large-format Hardback, 297 pages, £5, ISBN: 978-1-910258-60-6

The Bannermans might be popularly known for their 'stumpery' in Prince Charles' garden, Highgrove, but they have far more and far better garden projects to their credit and these are recounted in this book which is outstanding for text and illustration. Highly recommended.



The Orchid Hunter, A Young Botanist's Search for Happiness, Leif Bersweden, Short Books, London, 2017, Hardback, 352 pages, £12.99, ISBN: 978-1-78072-334-1

A young man's hunt for all the wild orchids of Ireland and Great Britain in one season.



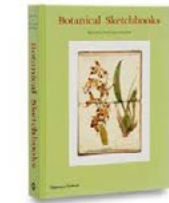
Natural Selection, A Year in the Garden, Dan Pearson, Guardian Book/Faber and Faber, 2017, Hardback, 421 pages, £20, ISBN: 978-1-78335-117-6

A compilation of newspaper articles arranged for the months of the year and, while they might be of passable interest in weekly doses they become tedious reading when put between the covers of a book. Pearson fans will love them however.



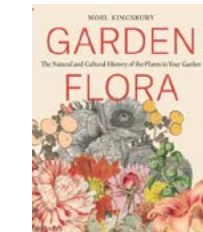
Gardening for Wildlife, Adrian Thomas, Bloomsbury Publishers, London, 2017, Hardback, 288 pages, £25, ISBN: 978-1-4729-3857-2

All you need to know about attracting and satisfying wildlife in your garden.



Botanical Sketchbooks, Helen and William Bynum, Thames & Hudson, London, 2017, Hardback, 296 pages, £29.95, ISBN: 978-0-500-51881-6

A peculiarly interesting book with very interesting notes on botanical artists and the plants they portrayed. Recommended.



Garden Flora – The Natural and Cultural History of the Plants in Your Garden, Noel Kingsbury, Timber Press, London, 2016, Hardback, 368 pages, £29.99, ISBN: 13:978-1-60469-565-6

A selection of plants, not encyclopaedic, with notes on their names, histories, culture, associations etc. Interesting.

Happy New Year and happy reading!

Lecture by Timothy Walker at the Old Courthouse, Antrim.

Victor Henry, Northern Region

Timothy Walker, who has won four Gold Medals at Chelsea and holds the impressive title *Horti Praefectus* of the Oxford Botanic Garden gave a most amusing, if at times not necessarily PC lecture at the Old Courthouse in Antrim on the 26th October 2017.

The title of the talk was '**A Blaze of Glory – Autumn Colour**' and covered the topic wonderfully well, moving around the globe, covering almost every Continent through Asia to Africa, North and South America then back to Europe.

Stunning slides of the mountains of Hokkaido, Japan's most Northerly Island, where the red and golds of the Autumnal foliage is beautifully interlaced with the evergreen species creating a magnificent tapestry, and comparing it with New England in the Fall where reds, oranges and golds prevail. The point Timothy was making was that green is the essential foil to any garden planting scheme, a point worth noting.

He was very frank about plants that he would not have in a garden, for example *Sedum Spectabile*, given that it invariably flops leaving a 'hole' in the middle. Phlox is another species that Timothy considers just doesn't go with any other plant due to its palette, shape and form.

The talk, I thought, was excellent and it is clear from his presentation that Timothy is a very accomplished university lecturer. It was not, however, as well supported by the members of the Society as it could have been.

Timothy's lecture did provoke thoughts about one's own garden endeavours and preparations for next year. Roz and I are hoping to open the garden again in 2018 for the Ulster Gardens Scheme (Open by Appointment programme).

A bed of mixed *Agapanthus* which was seriously bulging has been dug out, split and replanted into two symmetrical beds on either side of the approach to the pond. The *Delphinium* and *Iris chrysographes* from this second bed have been removed and potted up awaiting relocation decisions. Some tree tidying is scheduled shortly and I've been using the mower to lift and compost the leaves brought down by the recent storms.

The garden still has some interesting features; especially a stunning *Eucryphia x intermedia* 'Rostrevor' bought from Logan Garden, Galloway, Scotland twenty years ago, which has been flowering for the last three months. The various bananas and Dicksonias are holding their own and I've just cut back some of the Dahlias without waiting for the first frosts. Some of the roses have been cut back to half their height and the Ramblers will follow shortly, time and weather permitting.

The propagating house is being filled with tender specimens, the *Brugmansia suaveolens* are still in flower as well as the *Tibouchina urvilleana*. The Aeoniums are also relocated in their winter quarters.

Putting our garden to bed for the winter is not something that can be done in one fell swoop but is an ongoing activity. Most of the bulbs have been planted with just a few last minute impulse buys to go.

All in all it has been a mixed year with some stunning successes and some failures, but as ever, next year will be better!



A forthcoming lecture, not to be missed, will take place on 22nd March 2018, when we have the internationally renowned Andrea Jones, one of the world's leading plant, garden and landscape photographers (photos in all of the leading garden magazines). Her talk and slide show is entitled 'Garden Inspirations' and the venue is the Old Courthouse, Antrim at 7.30pm.

'Making sense of the Iridaceae' by Julian Sutton, report by George Sevastopulo, AGS
National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, 20th October 2017

Hardy members of the Dublin Group of the AGS and of the Irish Garden Plant Society travelled to the 'Bots' on a wet and windy evening and were rewarded with an outstanding lecture by Julian Sutton. Julian is a botanist turned nurseryman, who, together with his wife Sarah, runs 'Desirable Plants', a nursery in Devon with an eclectic mix of interesting herbaceous perennials and bulbs. He was a speaker at the Snowdrop Gala in Carlow earlier this year and amongst the enticing range of bubs that he brought for sale after the lecture were many excellent snowdrops. Unfortunately (fortunately according to my wife), I had neglected to bring any money with me!

Giving a lecture devoted to a particular group of plants and keeping the attention of a largely non-specialist audience is notoriously difficult. Julian succeeded in this by discussing some interesting and in most cases garden-worthy examples of the approximately 70 genera and 1,800 species assigned to the *Iridaceae*, at the same time as linking their morphology to their ecology, and particularly to aspects of their pollination biology.

The *Iridaceae*, characterised amongst other features by an inferior ovary and sword-shaped leaves, is divided into four subfamilies, the largest two of which are *Crocoideae* and *Iridoideae*. The *Crocoideae* are typically cormous and the flower commonly has a long perianth tube. Although the subfamily takes its name from the genus *Crocus*, relatively few of its members (*Crocus*, *Gladiolus* and *Romulea*) occur in Europe; its centre of diversity is in southern Africa, where it includes such well known garden plants as *Crocasmia*, *Dierama*, *Freesia*, *Gladiolus*, *Hesperantha* (in which '*Schizostylis*' *coccinea* is now placed), *Lapeirousia*, *Romulea*, *Tritonia* and *Watsonia*. *Gladiolus* is a species-rich genus (approximately 260 species in sub-Saharan Africa), which has a wide range of flower structure, colour and scent that reflect different pollination mechanisms rather than closeness of relationship. Julian showed images of several species to illustrate this. *Gladiolus carinatus*, the Blue Afrikaner, and many other species are pollinated by large-bodied, long-tongued bees which are attracted by scent and are rewarded with nectar when they insert their tongues into the narrow perianth tube, coating their bodies with pollen as they insert their head and thorax into the flower. The audience was intrigued by the low-growing, strongly scented, cryptically coloured, *G. uysiae*, which is also pollinated by long-tongued bees. Some nice potfuls of this plant have been on the show bench at recent AGS shows. In contrast, *G. floribundus* is scentless and is an example of species with long perianth tubes pollinated by long-proboscid flies (horse flies and tangle-veined flies) whose reward is nectar. A few species, including *G. priorii*, have small almost radially symmetrical flowers with short perianth tubes and little nectar and are pollinated by worker bees which forage for pollen. *G. tristis*, which is a good (almost too good) garden plant in Ireland, is an example of several species with white or cream or dark brown flowers, that are richly scented, in some cases only in the evenings, and are pollinated by moths. Julian showed several nice hybrids that he had raised from crosses of various species with *G. tristis*. Two groups of species with bright red flowers have contrasting pollination systems. *G. splendens*, which would probably grow outside in milder parts of Ireland, is typical of a group of species that are pollinated by sunbirds, African analogues of American hummingbirds. The flowers are scarlet with a very long tube, lack nectar guides and are scentless. The flowering stems are robust, allowing the sunbirds to perch on them to access the copious amounts of nectar in the perianth tube with their long narrow curved beaks. By contrast, species with superficially similar scarlet flowers except for the presence of nectar guides are pollinated by a single species of butterfly, the aptly named Mountain Pride Butterfly, which uses its long tongue to access nectar.

In the subfamily *Iridoideae* the storage organ is typically a rhizome or less commonly a bulb. The subfamily takes its name from the genus *Iris*; it is geographically much more widespread than the *Crocoideae* with numerous representatives in Europe, Asia, Africa and North and South America. Julian reconstructed the complex flower of *Iris*, the most species-rich genus, explaining how the tripartite division of the flower provides feeding stations for three individual pollinators, which are typically bumble bees looking for nectar. Interestingly, the magnificent *Oncocyclus* irises do not produce nectar and they are pollinated by male solitary bees seeking overnight shelter. Julian showed some most attractive members of the *Iridoideae*. I particularly liked a blue form of the Widow Iris (*Iris tuberosus*), *Tigridia vanhouttei*, which Julian grows on the rock garden, and *Herbertia lahue*, which is available from the seed exchanges and would make a nice exhibit in the Spring shows. I hope we can entice Julian to visit us again. He would be a splendid speaker for a Termonfeckin weekend, an annual, highly sociable event held in November, at which IGPS members would almost certainly be welcome.

SEED DISTRIBUTION SCHEME 2018

I write this as the festive season approaches, there is heavy frost on the ground in Dublin and a lot of snow in other parts of the country. In fact, the weather this year has probably not been terribly conducive to good seed collecting. As a result, the number of seeds sent, the varieties and quantities are well down on last year.

I reported in the last newsletter that, in all, 240 donations of seeds were received last year. What I did not mention is that there are a total of 19 contributors which is a very small number compared to the 102 requests for seeds sent out. Perhaps knowledge and awareness of this imbalance will prompt more members to think about collecting seeds and sending them in next year? I do hope so. The largest contributor and indeed overall mainstay of the seed distribution scheme is Stephen Butler. Stephen has already warned us that he is retiring next year and so his contributions are likely to decrease so now is the time for me to urge others to start thinking about gathering some seeds next season.

Nevertheless I do hope that the seed list contains lots of interesting and exciting seeds and I look forward to sending you all lots of little packets to sow.

Can I remind all members from N. Ireland to include a stamped addressed envelope with a N. Ireland stamp? Luckily I can usually find someone travelling North to post them to you on a regular basis which makes it easier and more economical for all.

Debbie Bailey
Reba Lodge
Braemor Drive
Churchtown
Dublin 14.
debbiebailey797@gmail.com
086 6085849



Irish Heritage Plant: Agapanthus 'Midnight Blue'

Seed Catalogue Time

Mary Montaut

I must confess that the pleasure of browsing through the new 2018 Seed Catalogues far outweighs any other pleasures of the Season for me. I have just received a very long catalogue (from Chiltern Seeds in the UK) which is guaranteed to take me at least three weeks to browse from cover to cover. As I look through the lists of unknown or half-remembered species, and spot irresistible possibilities in far too many of them, duly marked with a hopeful pencil on the first reading, I realize that this lovely and excessive exercise actually gives me quite an education. This year I have been specially looking for Irish plants - or plants with Irish names - or Irish connections - whatever may seem likely, in short. But so far (I am only at E in the list) I have only found one new plant, *Emilia javanica* 'Irish Poet', which seems a real possibility. Unfortunately, a little googling revealed that this has no Irish connection, except the name. It bears a tousled head of brilliant red petals, and that I'm afraid, inspired the name. Nevertheless, it is very attractive to bees and butterflies, according to the notes, and I think I will probably try it anyway. It is most unusual to find red flowers which are attractive to bees, because their vision is towards the ultra-violet (blue) part of the spectrum. My garden has rather a lot of blue-cum-mauve flowers because of this, and I'd like to put in a garish Irish Poet or two to jazz it up.

The arrival of the seed catalogue reminded me that I have long intended to find out more about the Global Seed Vault at Svalbard, on the island of Spitzbergen in Norway. There was a worrying report in May 2017 that this seed bank had been partially flooded, after the permafrost melted for the first time. This seed bank was opened in 2008, and it is sunk into the deep layer of permafrost specifically 'to withstand the challenge of natural and man-made disasters'. It already contains nearly a million packets of seeds, each a variety of important food crop. In May 2017, meltwater gushed into the entrance tunnel, but fortunately did not breach the vault itself. The meltwater quickly refroze in the tunnel and had to be hacked out by the staff. The seed storage area maintained its vital temperature of -18 degrees Celsius. New precautions are now in place, including major works to water-proof the hundred meters of tunnel in the mountain itself, and trenches to carry away any meltwater or rain outside the tunnel. Pumps have been installed in the vault itself, and electrical equipment which produced a slight amount of heat has been removed.

The seeds themselves are stored in triple-foil sealed packets which are placed inside plastic containers. The extremely low temperature reduces the ageing of the seeds. You might be interested to know that the Irish government has contributed 32 varieties of potato seeds from our own seed bank here. Many countries have contributed their food seeds, and it is believed that samples from about a third of the world's food crops are now stored in the Global Seed Vault.

There are also more encouraging stories from last year about the increasing interest in Seed Banks and recognition of their importance. On Gardener's Question Time (BBC Radio4) recently, the team visited Wakehurst Place in Kent where the Millennium Seed Bank is situated. This was opened in 2000 and is open to the public. This collection aims to include all the British native plants, and apart from a few, very rare species, the collection reached its aim in 2009. It now aims to preserve 25% of the world's species by 2020. One particular aim is to preserve wild relatives of crop species: 'Crop wild relative species potentially hold important traits for the development of resilience; and yet they are currently under-represented in seed bank collections around the world. Kew and Global Crop Diversity Trust ('Crop Trust') are working on a project that is bringing collections into the bank that cover the wild relative gene pools of the world's 29 major crops.'

From a contrasting, commercial direction, there was also some good news; it seems that 2017 Apple Day last October was a roaring success, with a marked resurgence of interest in heritage species of apple among growers. The UK People's Trust for Endangered Species actually has an 'apple diversity officer', Steve Oram, who said that communities in many parts of Britain are establishing 'community orchards' specially to grow and conserve local heritage varieties. Some have used 'crowd-funding' for their projects. The UK National Fruit Tree Collection at Brogdale has helped to provide the trees, as with the National Irish Apple Collection at Shanganagh in Co. Dublin. Steve Oram noted that, although a vast number of old orchards had been lost in the 1970s and 80s, it was encouraging to see how people have now picked up the idea of planting small orchards. 'But supermarkets were always the problem, and they still are,' he commented. 'Only one in three apples we eat (in the UK) comes from here, and they are still selling apples from Australia. They are just not thinking. They could do much better!'

One last point about Seeds: you should be aware that many seeds are dressed with neonicotinoid pesticides, and these have been shown to be very harmful to bees and other beneficial insects in our gardens. I believe it is time to wake up to these risks: the crops after all, will need bees and other pollinators to give us our daily fruit and veg. You can be quite sure that the seeds in our Seed Distribution have no such harmful side-effects. And if, like me, you still have a few seeds left from last year's distribution, make sure to plant them this year, along with the new ones. They can't grow if you don't sow them.



Emilia javanica 'Irish Poet'



Millennium Seed Bank, Wakehurst Place
[Photo: Stanton Williams]

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Northern Branch

Saturday 20th January 2018 at 2pm

Afternoon lecture by invitation of the Alpine Garden Society (Ulster Group)

St. Bride's Hall, 38 Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6FP

Admission: IGPS Members Free. Refreshments Provided

'The Stans – Plant exploring in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan' by **John Mitchell**, Edinburgh Royal Botanic Gardens

Join us for this interesting talk as John will bring us on a wonderful tour of the Stans and introduce us to the fabulously rare and beautiful plants of these parts of the world.

Saturday 24th February 2018 at 2pm

St. Bride's Hall, 38 Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast, BT9 6FP

'Ashfield House: Bringing a garden from the past to the present' by **Mike Snowden**, former Head Gardener at Rowallane

In this illustrated talk, Mike will share how a phone call in 2007 began a relationship with Ashfield House at Beauparc, County Meath. Initially it was for the restoration of the dilapidated Walled Garden. Ten years on has seen the restoration of the house, outbuildings and the garden together with the 300 acre estate. Refreshments provided and plant raffle after the talk.

Thursday 22nd Mar 2018 at 7.30pm

The Old Courthouse, Market Square, Antrim, BT41 4AW

'Garden Inspirations' by **Andrea Jones**, International garden photographer

Andrea has photographed gardens professionally for over twenty years and is now one of the world's foremost garden photographers. The talk will include many illustrations and Andrea will look at many types of garden styles, including prairie, geometric, dry, landscaped, gravel, water, exotic, contemporary, modern, minimal, oriental and night. Plant raffle and refreshments provided

Munster Branch

Rory Newell: "The Propagator's Diary" at Northridge House, Dec 5th at 8:00 pm – 9:30 pm.

Northridge house is on the grounds of St. Luke's Home, Castle Rd / Ferney Rd, Mahon, Cork.

Rory Newell is the Head Propagator at Blarney Castle Gardens and his talk will take us through a year in the life at Blarney Castle from the propagator's point of view, covering everything from the collections to recent Vietnamese trips and the IGPS garden at Blarney in Bloom 2016. His attention in recent years has been on propagating material which he collected with others from Blarney on recent trips to Vietnam, so we can be sure Rory will introduce us to a new and interesting range of plants with comments on his successes and failures.

Rory has also turned his talents to garden design and led the team in building the Blarney Castle/IGPS garden for Blarney in Bloom 2016.

We will have some festive nibbles on the night. New members and visitors welcome.

Leinster Branch**Adam Whitbourn, 'The Story of Blarney Castle Gardens'**

Thursday 15th February, 8 - 9.30pm, National Botanic Gardens, Dublin
Joint Lecture with AGS (Dublin branch)

Adam Whitbourn, Head Gardener at Blarney Castle Gardens, will give an insight into the history and development of the gardens at this famous landmark. Adam will give us a virtual tour of some of the highlights, as well as explaining ongoing projects, including the Irish Heritage Plant collection, his internet-based tree-tagging system, and details of his recent plant-collecting trips in Vietnam.

Ronald Houtman 'Plants and Pictures'

Mar 15 at 8:00 pm – 9:30 pm, National Botanic Gardens, Dublin

Dutch horticulturalist Ronald Houtman of www.plantsandpictures.com will speak about new plants and cultivars especially those of Dutch origin along with a selection of some of his personal favourites. A treat in store for all plants people.

Other Events:**Snowdrop Gala and Other Spring Treasures**

The Snowdrop Gala 2018 takes place on Saturday February 3rd, at Ballykealey Manor Hotel, near Altamont in Co. Carlow. Organised by Hester Forde and Robert Miller, the speakers on the day will include Graham Gough of Marchants Hardy Plants and Jim Almond.

Snowdrop Open Days at Ballyrobert Gardens

Sunday 11th February, Saturday 17th February, Sunday 18th February. All 2.00 to 4.30 pm.

Ballyrobert Gardens has in excess of 150 different varieties of Snowdrops from large whites to charming yellows. See and learn about these wonderful plants growing in a wide range of different locations/settings in the Gardens. At this time of year lots of hellebores, cyclamen, snowflakes and many other plants add to the winter display.

We will have two tours at 2-00pm and 3-15pm.

The charge is £7.50 and includes afternoon refreshments.

We advise booking your choice of date and tour time and this can be achieved via telephone at 02893440101 or email bookings@ballyrobertgardens.com

The Gardens are located on the B56 and 3 miles from the M8 at Corrs Corner Hotel

The New Kitchen Garden: a view beyond the ordinary in the veg. plot and kitchen

with Mark Diacono, grower, food writer, photographer, author

Wednesday 7th March at 7.30pm in Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn. Adm: £15. www.laganvalleyisland.co.uk

Info: email fagusmax@gmail.com. Tel 07732080256 / 0071409139

Annual General Meeting Weekend in Newcastle, County Down, 19-20 May 2018

Please see the article in this newsletter for full details.

If possible, please book online on the Events page of the IGPS website. The Burrendale Hotel in Newcastle are holding rooms for us until 14th February at a favourable rate. After this date, the rooms are still available at this rate, but there is no guarantee of getting a room.

Some Irish Cultivars

Pieris japonica 'Daisy Hill'



Meconopsis sheldoni 'Donard'



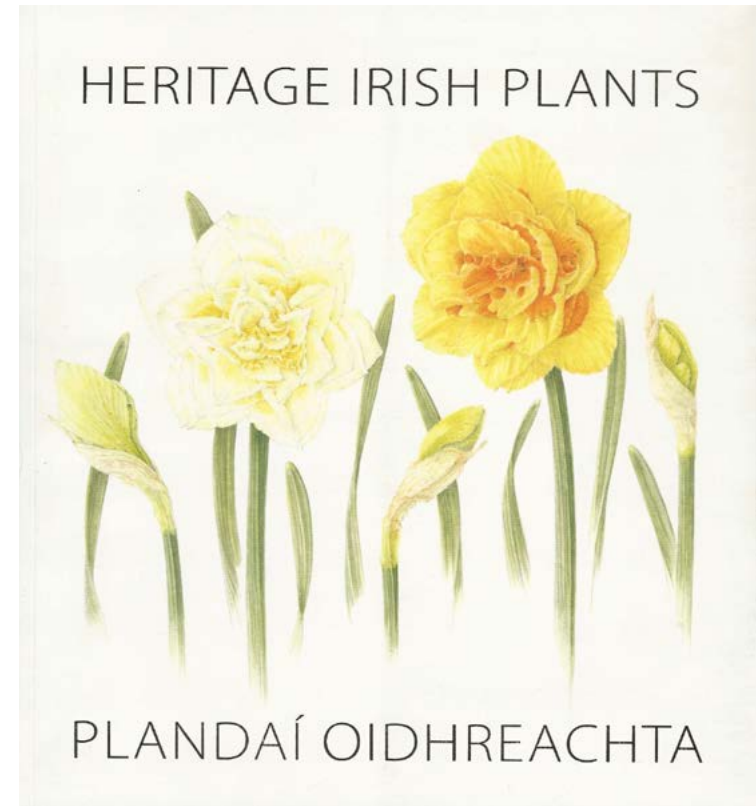
Penstemon 'Evelyn'

***Mahonia x media* 'Winter Sun'**

Thanks to Maeve Bell for the photo and information for this month's Irish cultivar. *Mahonia x media* 'Winter Sun' is a sister shrub of the better-known *Mahonia x media* 'Charity'. Both were seedlings raised by the former Slieve Donard Nursery in Newcastle, Co. Down but, while 'Charity' was given away as a tiny plant, the seedling which became 'Winter Sun' remained at the Nursery and was eventually named and introduced by it. The bright yellow scented flowers appear in Winter and are followed by black berries. The IGPS 2018 AGM will be held in the Newcastle area on 19-20th May and this is an excellent plant associated with the area.



Heritage Irish Plants *Plandaí Oidhreachta*



Many thanks to all who have supported this project and have bought a copy of the book.

In case you haven't your copy yet, do remember that you can purchase it online on the Irish Society of Botanical Artists' site: <http://www.irishbotanicalartists.ie/shop/>

YOU CAN PURCHASE THIS BOOK ON-LINE.

IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY

% National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9

Contact us:

Website www.irishgardenplantsociety.com
Facebook www.facebook.com/IrishGardenPlantSociety
Twitter <https://twitter.com/igpstweets>

Email Addresses:

Northern Region igps.northern@gmail.com
Leinster Region igps.leinster@gmail.com
Munster Region igps.munster@gmail.com
Irish Heritage Plants igps.heritageplants@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor igpseditor@gmail.com

Officers:

Chairman Billy McCone
Ph: +0044 112 44568
Email: igps.ireland@gmail.com

Membership Sec. Patrick Quigley
24 Arema Drive, Dunmurry, Belfast
BT17 0QG
Ph: +0044 78012 99263
Email: igps.ireland@gmail.com

Hon. Sec. Ali Rochford
Ph: +00353 86 348856
Email: igps.ireland@gmail.com

Registered Charity No: CHY 7893