



Irish Garden Plant Society

Newsletter

July 2020

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Copy for the autumn issue as early as possible please and by **20th August** at the latest.

Cover: Helen Dillon's Monkstown garden. Photo courtesy of Jonathan Hession. Grateful thanks to the Editorial Advisors: Stephen Butler & Brendan Sayers.

Welcome

How topsy-turvy life has been since I was putting together the previous Newsletter. All of a sudden, the pandemic led to society's shutters being pulled down and most aspects of normal life being put on hold. Now, as we head into summer, the restrictions are easing and hopefully will continue to do so. It has been a time of mixed emotions ranging from sadness and anxiety at one end to pleasure arising from time spent in the garden at the other, so it seemed appropriate to look at the subject of gardens and well-being; thank you to four of our members who reflect on different aspects of this exceptionally relevant subject.

The IGPS is a membership organisation and it is clear at the various events which normally take place that friendships between members are important. Visiting gardens and meeting friends brings great pleasure but it has not been available in recent months. So I appealed for a 'virtual' visit, or peep over your gate, by sharing a photo of your plants and gardens in these pages. There was an astonishingly varied response. I have very much enjoyed looking at the pictures and reading the snippets of information which accompanied them and I hope you do too. This feature is very different from our normal

Newsletter content so please let me know whether you like it or not.

Twenty years ago this Newsletter carried an article by Rae McIntyre about which plants were 'good mixers'; while her opinions are largely unchanged, many of the plant names have had subtle, or not so subtle, changes. The bane of our lives! I'm delighted that our Honorary Member, Mary Davies, has also returned to these pages; she reflects on some roses which evoke feelings of nostalgia.

Our local horticultural businesses such as nurseries, garden centres and flower farmers have endured a torrid spring. Billy McCone and the Committee have a proposal for the Society to give more support to our members in the horticultural trade, please see the following page for details.

As a kind member wrote to me: stay safe, stay well and stay gardening.



Maeve Bell

Editor

Meet our contributors

Debbie Bailey is a Horticultural Therapist and also teaches flower arranging.

Claire Peacocke was until very recently the Honorary Secretary and as part of a portfolio career runs a community garden in the Belfast area.

Paddy Tobin, a former Chairman of the Society, lives in Waterford and is in charge of the Society's website and Facebook page.

Rosemary Maye gardens near Slane and is also known as The Insomniac Gardener.

Carmel Duignan is a gardening writer and a keen plantswoman whose Dublin garden is full of plants of all kinds from the rare and exotic to the ordinary and useful.

Brendan Sayers is Glasshouse Foreman at the National Botanic Gardens and a long-standing member of the Society.

Mary Davies, a former Chairman and an Honorary Member, co-founded *The Irish Garden* magazine and continues to write for it.

Rae McIntyre, a retired teacher, contributed regularly to this Newsletter over a long period; she says her garden now contains many more shrubs due to advancing years.

Mary Forrest is Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at UCD, a former Chairman of the Society and currently its Vice Chair.

Robert Logan, a recently retired GP, is a member of the Northern Committee and helps with our garden at Pogue's Entry in Antrim.

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While every effort is made to ensure that content is correct at the time of printing, views expressed in newsletter articles are those of the author(s) and may not reflect those of the Society. Factual errors will be corrected as soon as possible.

A Note from the Chair

A few days before writing this I joined two volunteer members at the IGPS garden at Pogue's Entry in Antrim, observing all due precautions of course. It was a disheartening sight that greeted us with weed-filled beds, an unkempt lawn, and litter among the drought-stressed vegetables. However, against the whitewashed cottage wall, a once straggly climbing rose that last year had been pruned to an inch of its life was now over six feet high and festooned with scented pink blooms, truly an inspiration to spur us on.

After relative isolation, meeting two friends to enjoy a garden made me appreciate how much more enjoyable it is when gardens can be shared. I know many of you have missed the visits to gardens you had hoped to see and the friends to share them with. With that in mind our regional committees will be considering plans for a phased return to garden visits and other events.

Others working quietly away have been our Newsletter, ebulletin, and website editors, our Plant Conservation group, and our newly formed *Moorea* team who have all been very active. Our Membership Secretary, Nichola Monk, has successfully integrated the GoCardless Direct Debit system for renewals with the database. Volunteers are now back at Pogue's Entry while the Lisnacloskey

volunteers are discussing a return to our Rectory Garden with the Folk Museum management.

It's been a supply and demand roller-coaster recently for the buying and selling of plants. In the April Newsletter I made a plea that we should support our local growers who have endured a fraught and dispiriting spring. For some time the Committee has been considering how to give more support to members who run nurseries, flower farms and garden centres, the people we rely on for interesting and well-grown plants, for keeping alive Irish cultivars, and without whom our gardens would be the poorer.

To help both members and member nurseries, we are offering to list contact details in an ebulletin. If you are a member selling plants or offering a garden service and wish to have your details listed along with information of any particular plants you specialise in, please email igps.ireland@gmail.com and title it TRADE LISTING.

Difficult times for us all but let's look forward to reopened gardens and meeting up again. Thank you everyone for keeping things going.



*Billy
McCone*

Chairman

Wellbeing in the Garden

by Debbie Bailey

Given the world we have been living in since March, I imagine the vast majority of IGPS members are practising some form of horticultural therapy at present. It is a wonderful privilege to be able to get out into our gardens no matter how big or small and to spend time with nature, nurturing and caring for our plants and gardens whilst at the same time nurturing and caring for ourselves.

My work as a horticultural therapist involves a more structured approach. Horticultural therapy is a formal, planned programme of horticultural activities devised to benefit those taking part with specific goals within an established treatment, rehabilitation or vocational plan. So it is an active exercise whereby the process itself is considered the therapeutic activity rather than the end product.

The therapy usually forms a part of an overall treatment plan. It can help participants learn new skills or regain those they've lost; it improves memory, language skills, cognitive ability and socialisation; it strengthens muscles and improves balance, endurance and coordination; and it teaches people to work independently, problem solve, and follow directions.

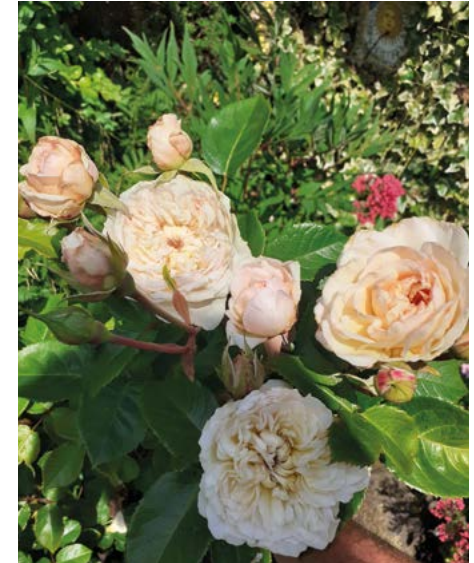


Time with nature: photo courtesy of Rosemary Maye

My role is to facilitate and co-ordinate these programmes in various settings including residential care homes, specific community gardens and, in some cases, in private gardens on a one to one basis. A therapist works to provide the right environment, to encourage, enthuse, foster belonging, support as much as necessary and ensure that tasks are not only achievable and challenging but also safe. The act of gardening in its many forms is used to bring about positive changes in the lives of people who are living with disabilities, ill health or who may be vulnerable,

disadvantaged or isolated. It is incredibly satisfying to work with participants who may be feeling sad or depressed and who, over time spent outdoors in the garden or even working with plants and soil indoors on a winter's day, gradually relax, begin to open up, to talk, to interact, gain self-esteem and confidence and to improve mobility and dexterity. These changes don't happen overnight and it can sometimes be a painfully slow process but gradual improvements and steps forward are hugely rewarding for both the therapist and the participant. An important distinction between a gardener and a horticultural therapist is that the therapist must remember that the most important aspect is the people taking part and not the plants.

Sometimes the plants can get quite a bashing, sometimes they are mushed into a pulp, heads may be cut off the flowers, sometimes they have even been eaten. I have constantly to remind myself that it is not about the plants, it is about the people. As an avid gardener, that can be a challenge but the rewards we reap from our work when we see the enormous strides participants can take far outweigh the loss of a few plants.



An old-fashioned rose: photo courtesy of Robert Logan

Amongst the many enjoyable aspects of my work is the time I spend with older people who may have dementia-related disorders. The scent of an old-fashioned rose or of lily of the valley can trigger wonderful memories for them and allows them to reminisce and provide a soothing, calming and relaxing environment in a sometimes confusing and busy atmosphere. That is the definition of a truly fulfilling job.

Growing Together

by Claire Peacocke

Grow is a charity based in North Belfast that brings people together to garden, cook and build connections. We have a unique way of doing things that we've built up over the past ten years. It's not the only way but it works for us and our participants and volunteers. We have two community gardens where we run three gardening sessions per week and welcome other local groups to use the garden for earth-oven cooking, singing, tai chi or relaxation. In 2019 we welcomed over 60 regulars at the weekly sessions and a further 200 visitors from other groups and connections. Our participants may have physical or mental health issues, be socially isolated, newcomers, or may just simply love to garden and the social nature of the groups. One of Grow's main attractions is that we have a broad appeal and in any given group nobody knows who is experiencing mental or physical health difficulties unless they choose to talk about it.

While the term Social and Therapeutic Horticulture may be new, the practice certainly isn't. In Ancient Egypt, the royal physicians would prescribe a spell in the palace gardens for those with a 'troubled mind'. There is a considerable amount of research measuring the therapeutic benefits of horticulture for a variety of conditions; but there

is certainly no need to convince seasoned gardeners such as IGPS members of the benefits of gardening for the body and mind! There are three different aspects to gardening that can combine in different ways for individuals to gain therapeutic benefits: access to the natural environment, having a purpose or task and activity, and social benefits.

Everyone's needs are different but North Belfast has some particularly grim statistics reflecting its complex economic and social history. Ten percent of all suicides and self harm in NI occur in North Belfast, that is more than three times as many compared with the least deprived areas in NI, 44% of working age adults have no or low levels of qualification, housing density is high, and many have no, or only tiny, private outside space. This is grim reading, but North Belfast isn't alone; there are plenty of places all over Ireland with high deprivation and complex needs. The World Health Organisation has identified mental health as a major social crisis and calls out loneliness and social isolation as a major cause of poor health. At Grow we know we can't change the world, but we can offer a safe and beautiful place for connecting with nature, learning about gardening, growing some healthy food, and of course



Growing healthy food: photo courtesy of Yvonne Penpraze

plenty of cups of tea and chat. When we ask what the gardens mean to our volunteers and participants, the response is overwhelming. Many participants highlight the ability to address social isolation and loneliness. If an individual is not connected to a local extended family network, or if they are not a member of a local church or a sports club, then their opportunities for social connection are limited. Grow can meet that need. People who have lost ties with family or community can experience both with Grow. One member described Grow as a "gardening family". Some participants say they are more acutely conscious of their disability when they are on their own, commenting that coming to the session was "a release from feeling like you can't do stuff". Others talk about physical and mental health improvements, about the structure and routine and "a bit of work and a

bit of fun" being the perfect balance. A connection to nature and the growing process is important as is the educational aspect – "every day's a school day in the garden" – and also the fact that it is safe to not know anything about gardening. The needs of a community garden are many and our participants feel that there is space to find the best way of using their own talents. There is a comfort in this.

In these difficult times, the need for safe outdoor space and social connections has never been greater. The difficulties endured by our Grow friends who cannot now access the gardens and groups are tangible. Until we can meet in some form in the future, we (myself and two fellow Grow workers) do our best to solo-maintain and care for our spaces, and keep in touch with participants by delivering grow-at-home salad kits, small posies and, like many families, waving through windows.



Claire packing veg kits

Slow Gardening

by Paddy Tobin

There is no such thing as an instant garden nor a maintenance-free garden and no garden is ever finished. When we realise this, especially the latter, we may approach our gardening differently. We would put aside the desire and the need to get the garden finished, to get the work done, for it will never be finished and will never be done. If this state of affairs upsets you, you have chosen the wrong pastime but if you accept and embrace it you will find your garden all the more pleasurable and enjoyable. You will find that the joy of gardening is in the doing rather than in getting it done.



Iris 'Tol Long'

In business management speak, it is the difference between product-led and process-led working. For garden designers and garden builders, the work is product led; they must, they are contracted to, produce a garden for the client. For the home gardener, it is the process which is more important. Of course, we wish to have a pleasant garden – a product which is pleasing to us – but we work without deadlines, without a schedule, without a contract. For us, it is the doing which is most important; it is the gardening, not the garden but, thankfully, as the song goes “you can’t have one; you can’t have one; you can’t have one without the other!” Enjoying the process, the gardening, will almost certainly lead to us creating a garden, the product, which is pleasing to us.

So, with all that in mind, it is time to be more relaxed about our gardening, to take it at our ease, to live in the moment, to stop rushing it, and to banish thoughts of having to get this or that done; to remember that it is **gardening**, an ongoing activity that is to be enjoyed.

What Gardening means to me

by Rosemary Maye

I was asked this question recently and was surprised not to find the answer at the tip of my tongue. Perplexed I thought about it quite a lot until I realized that gardening is simply part of who I am. My mother gave me my first garden when I was a small child and I’ve a lot of sweet memories tied up in that simple act. Good memories are like a safety blanket and can help comfort us in times of stress and make us feel secure in our world. The garden has always been a place where I can forget everything except the job at hand. There’s a certain concentration as one digs holes, takes slips, pots on seedlings, prunes shrubs or waters plants. Even weeding gives a focus as I’m determined to get them out before they seed about.



Photo: Sweet pea and sweet memories

In these strange times it is a comfort more than ever as we all battle with the consequences of a pandemic. The lack of control over our futures is very unsettling as it’s bigger than all of us. The garden however is a steadfast and stabilizing force which can help, literally, to bring us back to earth. Spring bulbs have had their time in the spotlight and now the garden is moving towards the blaze of glory which summer brings. I look forward to alliums, roses, hydrangeas, agapanthus, dahlias and countless perennials, shrubs and trees. They grow steadily, each with their own time to shine and take centre stage and then fade, retreat and rest until next year. The stormy weekend in May reminded me to take a lesson from our gardens. There’s damage, yes, but most of it not irreparable. With hard work and a bit of care, things will bloom again and there’s always next year to look forward to.

Last Word

The last word should perhaps go to the actress, Audrey Hepburn:

“To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow”.

Grow an Irish Plant

by Maeve Bell, Carmel Duignan, and Brendan Sayers

***Daboecia cantabrica* 'Alba'**

St Dabeoc's heath is a native Irish plant which is also found in south western France, through northern Spain and into north western Portugal. The flowers usually come in various shades of pink and purple but often different varieties occur giving us flowers with distinct shades and form. Charles Nelson's *A Heritage of Beauty* records two dozen cultivars of Irish origin, one of which bears his name.

Coveted by horticulturists is a white-flowered form of a plant that usually bears much stronger coloured flowers. *Daboecia cantabrica* f. *alba* is one such example and has been recorded for centuries. At various times and in various places, a white sport or seedling will occur, often with some slight variation that can be used to tell them apart.

St Dabeoc's heaths are attractive garden plants requiring acidic soils. For those of us without acid soils, they will quite happily grow in large pots or troughs. Plants tend to produce two periods of flowers, one in early summer and again in the autumn. To keep plants looking tidy, they should be pruned back once a year.

For information on the saint that the common name commemorates, take a look at Charles Nelson's paper on the subject. It is available on The Heather Society's website and makes for an interesting read. It is currently listed as being available from one nursery, the well-regarded Ashwood Nurseries Ltd. **BS**



***Penstemon* 'Evelyn'**

Penstemons are excellent garden plants; many of them are hardy, they flower for a long period starting in early summer and most varieties are trouble-free. *Penstemon* 'Evelyn' is a relatively small, bushy plant with narrow leaves and ever-so-pretty,

pale pink, tubular flowers; while it may never be the out-and-out star of the show, it will harmonise easily with many border colour schemes.

It is associated – like many of our good Irish plants – with the former Slieve Donard Nursery in Newcastle, Co Down.

The entry in *Glory of Donard* by Nelson and Deane dates it to pre-1935 saying that it is thought to have been raised at the Nursery but that, while various other 'Donard' plants were named Evelyn after one of Leslie Slinger's daughters, this one was definitely not.

Whoever it may be named for, it has stood the test of time. It holds an Award of Garden Merit from the RHS and is listed by a couple of dozen nurseries in the RHS Plant Finder. **MB**

***Rosa* 'Irish Elegance'**

Rosa 'Irish Elegance' is a well-named cultivar for its six petals lie almost flat save for the under-curl at their edge and the unfurling bud has a stately poise. It dates from 1905 and came to us from the Royal Irish Nurseries in Newtownards, Co Down owned by Alex Dickson and was then a well-recommended variety.



The Nursery catalogue describes it as a 'gem of the first water' and a plant that stood out 'even in the midst of our seedling quarters'.

This hybrid tea begins to flower in early summer and continues throughout the year until late autumn. The bud colour is mainly a deep apricot while the open flower is in various shades of the same, with an occasional deeper splash of pink/orange. It is a vigorous cultivar and will reward its owner once well pruned, fed and deadheaded during the growing season.

Rosa 'Irish Elegance' was last listed with the *RHS Plant Finder* in 2004 so ever more important that we root cuttings and distribute the resulting plants. Semi-hardwood cuttings root well so, when cutting a bud for the vase, take an extra length of stem for rooting. **BS**

***Deutzia purpurascens* 'Alpine Magician'**

Deutzia purpurascens 'Alpine Magician' is a tall, slender, multi-branched shrub that flowers in May, is completely hardy and will grow in most conditions. When Dr Charles Nelson was Taxonomist in the National Botanic Gardens in the 1990s, he noticed this plant; it had a label and a number but he was not content that the name was correct. He researched the records and discovered that the seed had been sent to the Gardens in the early

1900s by the great alpinist, plant explorer and writer, Reginald Farrer, who had collected the seed in Burma. Dr Nelson identified the plant and went through the process of having it named as *Deutzia purpurascens* 'Alpine Magician'. Lady Phyllis Moore, a noted gardener and wife of Sir Frederick Moore, Director of the National Botanic Gardens from 1879 to 1922, was the first to refer to Farrer as "The Alpine Magician".

D. 'Alpine Magician' is a deciduous plant with arching branches growing to about 2m with flowers of pure white with a plum-coloured centre. While the plant is a joy when in flower, for the rest of the year it is a trifle dull. It roots relatively easily from semi-ripe cuttings and, because of its lack of availability, I always try to have a few rooted cuttings on hand to pass on to fellow enthusiasts or to bring to the annual plant sale. **CD.**



Three Roses, Three Gardens

by Mary Davies

There are three particular roses that I cherish in memory from the days when they grew in three different gardens of mine. The most interesting, perhaps, is the one with an IGPS connection – *Rosa* 'Souvenir de St Anne's' – which originated in the early 1900s as a sport at St Anne's, now St Anne's Park, in Clontarf, Dublin, home of Lord and Lady Ardilaun. I bought this Irish shrub rose at an early IGPS plant sale; my recollection is that it was grown by Dr Neil Murray who also propagated and distributed shrubs such as *Ilex* 'Lady Valerie' to society members.



R. 'Souvenir de St Anne's'; photo courtesy of Peter Beales Roses

The rose was planted in my town garden, a small space that not long before had been no more than a rectangular lawn, more dandelion than grass, surrounded on three sides by hydrangea bushes. After I moved there I enthusiastically double-dug the whole space and, oblivious to how well they did in the dry alkaline soil, removed the hydrangeas. The garden became a curving strip of lawn edged by flower borders. Its best feature was the high granite wall at the end adjacent to an early-Victorian house, with a glimpse of a black poplar in the one-time garden of the eminent forester Dr Augustine Henry.

The side walls were cheaper affairs of brick and rubble, and it was against one of these that 'Souvenir de St Anne's' flourished, providing a long-lasting show of delicate pink blooms. It grew robustly to the height of the wall, some two metres, marking the end of the right-hand border close to the house, and its slight perfume enhanced the pleasures of sitting out on summer evenings.

A second rose looked back on with affection is one that I inherited, rather than chose. The rambler 'American Pillar', with its generous sprays of carmine-pink single blooms, grew at one end of a traditional cottage I owned for many years up in the Wicklow Mountains. This vigorous

rose was a mixed blessing, for its long questing stems had the habit of disappearing beneath the undulations of the galvanised roof, and periodically had to be hauled out, with some effort, to emerge pale and elongated into the sunlight. But this habit was more than made up for by its explosions of summer colour: individual single flowers were pretty but not remarkable, but the dense clusters that arched down over the house's whitewashed walls were a delight. The cottage front, with its tiny windows and green-painted half-door, was framed at one end by the rose, balancing the gentler creamy rose 'Félicité Perpétue' at the other gable end.

'Souvenir de St Anne's' may still survive, perhaps, in that town garden, but the 'American Pillar' is long gone, the casualty of twenty-first

century renovations. The third rose of the trio has also gone, at least the original one I encountered, but its descendants bloom on. A leggy climber, its velvety red double blooms stood out against the courtyard wall of a converted Wicklow dairy house rented for a few years after the mountain cottage was sold. This house, too, had a strong atmosphere of the past, belonging as it did to a major eighteenth-century estate. I think of the climber as perhaps *Rosa* 'Dublin Bay', in which case, though, it is a relatively modern cultivar, bred in New Zealand from 'Bantry Bay' by one of the McGredys of the famous Co. Armagh family. Cuttings took root easily, and one of these thrives today in another Wicklow country garden, that of good friends, where its flowering continues to provide an endearing annual spectacle.



Possibly *R.* 'Dublin Bay': photo courtesy of the Medlycott family

Our Gardens: A Rich Tapestry



Helen Dillon's garden in summer: photo courtesy of Jonathan Hession

Margaret Casey gardens in south Dublin; her honeysuckle almost covers an arbour.

This is my summer favourite, *Lonicera periclymenum* 'Belgica'. I have to admit it does need pruning in a confined space; it loses its leaves quite early and suffers from mould in the summer, so not quite perfect! It's worth it though for the beautiful scent in the evening or early morning. You could give it freedom, perhaps over a tree stump. It would be interesting to experiment by putting another climber with it for the summer, maybe a slightly later flowering honeysuckle.



Tim Guilbride gardens in Co Roscommon and has managed to trace a heritage daffodil associated with his house.

We had heard on the grapevine about a unique 'family' daffodil, raised and treasured by the Devenish family who lived in our house in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Fortunately a close friend of ours grew up with a direct descendant of the Devenishes, a vicar who is the current keeper of this horticultural grail. Our friend acted as intermediary, and this spring we were able to return the variety — always known as the 'Clonteen' daffodil — to its original Co Roscommon home. The picture shows our first set of babies, which we have now planted out to encourage them to naturalise. The flowers are only tiny and the leaves look more like those of a snowdrop, but we are thrilled to have them, however modest they look.



Caro Skyrme, a member who gardens in Shropshire in England, got in touch.

I was born in Co Antrim and gardened in Co Down too. For some years my husband farmed in Fife in Scotland where I opened our gardens for the Scottish National Gardens Scheme. After his father died, we came here to Broadward Hall and I had to start again! We are currently restoring the walled garden which had virtually fallen down. These prolific poppies were given to me twenty years ago by my old art tutor, the late Betty Charlton of Howth, Co Dublin. Betty had held a National Collection of succulents and inspired my interest in many exotic plants. She regularly won prizes for her plants and paintings, including at the Malahide Show.



Amy Archer lives a mere 200 metres or so from the sea at Helen's Bay in Co Down where frost is relatively rare as can be seen from her magnificent clump of the Chatham Island forget-me-not and she has some advice for us on growing it from seed.

I enjoy this combination of *Myosotidium hortensium* with *Magnolia denudata* and on the right *Tiarella cordifolia* as ground cover. The *Myosotidium* grows on a terraced, semi-shaded bed where drainage is good. I don't water it, or haven't as yet. Seed should be sown within 6 weeks of ripening, and germination is almost 100%.



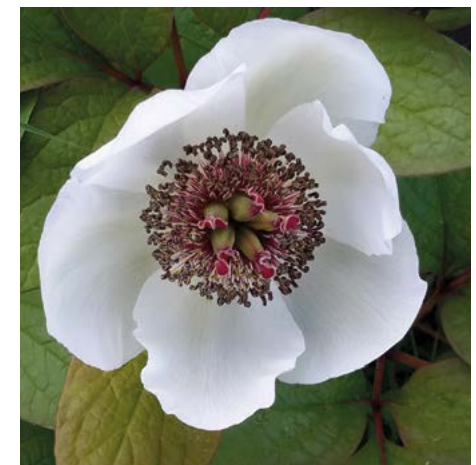
Sharon Morrow also gardens close to the sea, this time on the beautiful Co Antrim coast. Like many of us, she enjoys buying plants as souvenirs of AGM weekends.

This is a peony from Angela Jupe's garden near Birr which I acquired

during the AGM visit in 2017. Unidentified as yet, this is the first year of flowering and I'm delighted.



Lesley Fennel is an artist who lives and gardens at Burtown House near Athy. Her mother, Wendy Walsh, was a noted botanical artist who contributed regularly to this Newsletter and was an Honorary Member of the Society.



I am sending photos of my favourite peonies that I grow here at Burtown House. *Paeonia obovata* is a beautiful cup shape with a red centre and is a stunning combination of colour. This was my mother's favourite peony and, as it is hard to get, I guard it carefully! The second photo shows its seed head with its brilliant red colour.

Along with three other artists, I have been asked by the Georgian Society to paint for an exhibition of Historic House Gardens, which is meant to be happening in September. I have spent the last year recording various settings and plants for this, with particular attention to walled gardens. It is sponsored by the American Georgian Society, and I think will be an interesting record of some of these places as opposed to more botanical renderings of plants that are usually seen. We hope it will be able to go ahead.



Hilary and William McKelvey live in Bessbrook, a 'model' village which developed around the linen mill, and are keen members of the Alpine Garden Society, Ulster Branch. They also grow a number of plants which are associated with the famous Daisy Hill Nursery as Hilary explains.

As we live only three miles from the former Daisy Hill Nursery in Newry, I thought I should show you our rose, *Rosa* 'Narrow Water', which is thought to be named after the nearby Narrow Water Castle in Warrenpoint. It grows approx 8ft x 6ft and is covered in pale pink semi-double flowers which are lightly scented. It grows with us in a semi-shaded position and does not seem to suffer from any of the usual rose problems. I bought it many years ago in Dublin but fortunately it is not as scarce as some Irish cultivars and is available to buy in many of the leading rose growers' catalogues.

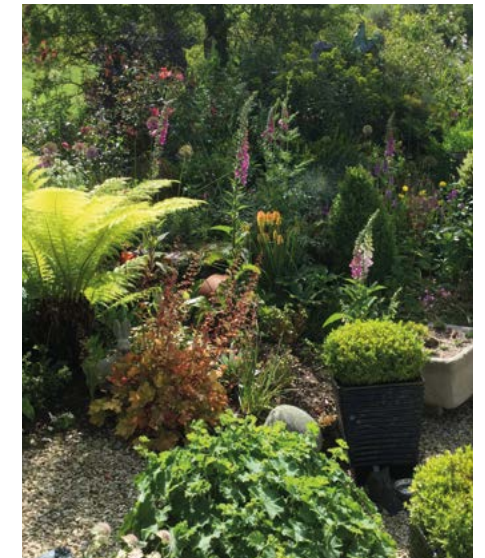


Paul and Christine Megahey grows a wide variety of plants near Downpatrick including a collection of succulents.

The first succulent I bought was *Echeveria elegans* which I discovered in a roadside shop near our home. It is a lovely blue-green colour and a 'good doer'. We are now up to forty plants, with quite a few 'babies' coming on as well! They are mostly various echeverias along with aeoniums and a couple of agaves. One of my favourites currently is *Aeonium* 'Velour' which has good colour and a good shape. Echeverias are widely available locally from larger garden centres but for more unusual succulents and particularly the aeoniums, you will need to go on-line to specialist companies such as Surreal Succulents.



Ted Kiely is a stalwart of the Munster Committee and has a cottage-style garden near Mallow, Co Cork. He describes his planting style as an eclectic mix of trees, shrubs and lots of perennials with bulbs front of stage in spring and some exotics in summer. Pots and troughs are a strong feature in the garden changing regularly to give seasonal interest.



Helen Curtain enjoys a fabulous view from her garden above the river in Cork where she has a hot border planted with zingy colours including *Alstroemeria* 'Indian Summer', *Geum* 'Totally Tangerine' which echoes the marigolds and *Sisyrinchium* while further along there are peonies, hardy pink geraniums and a South African *Restio*.



John and Catherine Fraher grow a number of magnolias in their garden near Cork.

I have sent two photos of *Magnolia x wieseneri* which, in mid-June is still in flower here, with its unmatched ethereal scent. The first shows the boss of stamens around the base of the stigmatic column while the second is of the flower itself. Our *Magnolia campbellii* was at its very best this year, covered in huge flowers, and no frosts to spoil them.



Mary Montaut from Bray is interested in pollinators, especially bees. She too has chosen a peony.

This is my beautiful Molly the Witch, *Paeonia mlokosewitschii*, with two different bees, a honey bee and a bumble bee. I bought the plant long ago from the Shackletons, and only in recent years has it come to flower. However, this year, it had about five flowers and the promise of seeds later on for the Seed Distribution list.



Hilary & Jeffrey Glenn moved to their house in the rolling drumlin countryside of Co Down just over 25 years ago and set about making their garden from scratch in a field. Hilary's great grandfather was Swiss so her pot of edelweiss gives her special pleasure.



Visitors to **Ann Kavanagh's** garden, Ros Ban in Donegal, can on their departure reflect on some lines from a poem by Thomas Hardy at her gate.

*"And rooks in families
homeward go,
And so do I."*

Good Mixers Re-Visited

by Rae McIntyre



Solanum crispum 'Glasnevin': all photos courtesy of Paula McIntyre

There are some plants that can fit in almost anywhere. They can grow in diverse conditions, except in the extremes of deep, dry shade and bogs and agree happily with most plants growing alongside them. Such paragons aren't all that common. The test they have to pass in my garden is to be able to live alongside rhododendrons and roses without looking uncomfortable with either. I am particularly fond of both these genera but they are segregated: the rhododendrons live on the outer edges while the roses, mostly old ones, live in central beds and borders. The 'Good Mixers' I believe give a degree of unity to the garden. [The following names are as advised by taxonomists today, the names of the same plants 20 years ago are shown in brackets. Ed]

1. *Arum italicum* subsp. *italicum* 'Marmoratum' (syn *Arum italicum*

'Pictum') is a plant with panache. If it likes you, it will seed itself around your garden and is a cheerful sight on dark winter days. It has large arrow-shaped leaves, marbled with grey and white, which disappear in summer leaving behind a stem of green berries. These turn to orange and then the leaves appear in autumn and stay until late spring/early summer.

2. *Brunnera macrophylla* has large elliptical green leaves with clouds of delicate pure blue forget-me-not flowers borne between March and May. This shade of blue blends with nearly every other colour. *B.* 'Hadspen Cream' has leaves with creamy white margins while 'Langtrees' has silver spotted leaves. Both make most attractive foliage plants in summer.

3. *Daphne tangutica* Retusa Group (*Daphne retusa*) is an attractive little shrub with neat, shining evergreen

leaves and deep pink and white beautifully scented flowers in early summer. Apart from the scent, both leaves and flowers resemble those in some rhododendrons. In fact my original plant was given to me as a rhododendron by a woman who thought that was what it was and she detested them. Twenty years ago [Now forty! Ed] I didn't know the plant either.

4. *Dicentra* 'Stuart Boothman' (*Dicentra formosa* 'Stuart Boothman') with very finely cut grey-green leaves and mauve-pink flowers harmonises in spring with the tiny greyish leaves and purple flowers of small species rhododendrons like *Rhododendron impeditum*. In summer, it dwells happily alongside old roses like *Rosa* 'Celeste'. In autumn the foliage is still there when *R. impeditum* has a second flush of flowers.

5. *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* is a Mediterranean native yet combined surprisingly well with rhododendrons. **Update.** I now haven't had it for years and it obviously no longer likes living here.

6. *Gentiana asclepiadea* is the willow gentian, an almost metre-high perennial which has willow-like leaves and carries pairs of rich, pure blue gentian flowers in early autumn. The low growing 'alpines' are very fussy about soil but *G. asclepiadea* grows, and looks well, almost anywhere. **Update.** I have found there is a problem in that they only last a few

years but I just buy more and plant them in a different place each time.

7. *Hosta sieboldiana* var. *elegans* has an impressive mound of blue-green foliage and narrow funnel shaped flowers that are almost white. It is repeated throughout my garden and is there among glaucous-leaved rhododendrons like *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* (Conroy Group) 'Conroy' (*R.* 'Conroy'), with magenta *Geranium psilostemon* and *Rosa* 'Reine des Violettes', in the white garden, and in a boggy border.



8. *Iris foetidissima* 'Variegata' is the variegated form of that tough old survivor, the Stinking Gladdon. The variegated form rarely flowers. It doesn't need to because its cream and grey striped leaves are elegant every day of the year. **Update.** Sadly mine has since died but, as I love their colours, I still grow many irises.

9 *Paeonia daurica* subsp. *mlokosewitschii* (*Paeonia mlokosewitschii*) has very ephemeral, pale yellow globeflowers but in

spite of this has great presence for much of the year. The deep crimson leaves spear through the earth in January and develop into attractive pink-tinged foliage. In late summer and autumn there are interesting seed pods lip-shaped with seeds like shiny pink (infertile) and black (fertile) 'teeth'. I have seen this peony in a peat bed in Edinburgh Botanic Garden, in a large scree bed, and in herbaceous borders; it always looks just right.



10. *Polygonatum x hybridum*, more commonly known as Solomon's Seal, is a lily relative that forms colonies in shady parts of the garden. The polygonatums are usually found in limestone areas in the wild but it appears to be perfectly happy among rhododendrons.

11 The closely related *Maianthemum racemosum* (*Smilacina racemosa*).

This seems to need acid soil. Its leaves resemble those of the Solomon's Seal but, while that has tiny dangling white flowers, *Maianthemum* has creamy white, fluffy inflorescences with a heavenly scent. My original plant started life in the white garden but over the years I've chopped off pieces and replanted them all over the garden.

12. *Primula vulgaris* has been my favourite flower all my life even before rhododendrons and roses. There is a primula for every situation in the garden and I never tire of collecting

them and growing them.

13. **Update.** Unlucky thirteen! Twenty years ago I recommended *Salix exigua*, the 'Coyote Willow', but got rid of it ages ago. Its rampant suckering got seriously on my nerves.

14. Viburnums are very versatile plants. I particularly like *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn' because of its cheerful winter-long flowering and fresh foliage for the rest of the year.

Update. Today I am amazed that I didn't mention oriental hellebores in the original article. Once I discovered that they survived and did well in acid soil I became addicted. They are excellent mixers. In recent years I have been growing fewer perennials and concentrating on shrubs because they are less labour intensive and many are completely trouble-free. In flower just now are *Crinodendron hookerianum*, *Rosa moyesii* 'Geranium' and *Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin'. Old age and backache have crept up on me.

Ballawley Park, Dublin

by Mary Forrest



The word Ballawley has several associations: for some, it is a mid-20th century alpine nursery commemorated by two popular perennials, *Bergenia* 'Ballawley' and *Saxifraga* 'Ballawley Guardsman', but for those currently living in south Dublin, it is a public park.

In 1906 Louis Shaw Smith purchased Ballawley House and surrounding land near Dundrum, Dublin. In the following years Mrs Shaw Smith established a well-known garden. Writing in 1915, *The Irish Times* described how, over five years, 'wasteland and woods [were] now walks and terraces, beflowered pergolas and a thousand varieties of blossoms and plants indigenous of many climes'. Lady Moore's 1951 appreciation of Mrs Shaw Smith published in the same paper recalled three acres of natural rock gardens

developed in large outcrops of granite and a bog garden with dwarf shrubs and bog plants. She continued that 'Mrs. Smith's industry was only outrivalled by her skill in planning her plants to the greatest advantage.' Mrs Shaw Smith was also a skilled plant propagator and, in 1929 with her son Desmond, opened the Ballawley Alpine Nursery. *A Heritage of Beauty*, Charles Nelson's encyclopaedia on Irish garden plants, records cultivars of aubrietia, carnations, saxifrage and bergenia. *Bergenia* Ballawley, (c 1940) and *Saxifraga* 'Ballawley Guardsman' (1941) are the best-known legacies.

There is another legacy of the Shaw Smith family – fine trees in what has become a public park. Vaguely square in outline with undulating ground, the park is wooded towards the Sandyford Road before becoming more open with views to

the distant city and nearby Dublin mountains. Looking more closely at the woodland, it is apparent that small stands of Scot's pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) were planted in association with broadleaved parkland trees such as oak (*Quercus robur*), lime (*Tilia*), and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). While as mature trees they combine to form woodland, the trunks of each individual tree can be seen and the eye is drawn upwards to their tall crowns. A giant redwood (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) with its distinctive, brown soft bark stands out among its neighbours.

Elsewhere in the woodland, hollies (*Ilex*), elder (*Sambucus*) together with a carpet of bluebells, cowslips and buttercups grow beneath Monterey pine (*Pinus radiata*) and ash (*Fraxinus*). Some mature yew and lime trees may be fragments of an earlier avenue planting from the 19th century Bellewly Park (as it was then called), while what may have been a mid-20th century barrier planting of Leyland cypress (*Cupressus x leylandii*) has become a row of individual trees with their foliage showing their parentage – *Cupressus macrocarpa* and *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*.

I spotted one uncommon looking shrub growing beneath some tall trees – leaves 2-4 inches oblong with a grey-green upper surface, densely covered with white hairs beneath. The pendulous inflorescence suggested a *Garrya*, aptly called the Silk Tassel Bush. It was *Garrya x thuretii*, a

hybrid raised by Gustave Thuret in 1862 at Antibes, near Nice, in France. The shrub has grey catkins as in the more common *G. elliptica* but, in June, it also carries small grey flowers with yellow stamens. If *G. elliptica* is notable for its pendulous catkins in winter, this one would provide year-round foliage interest, though the plant in question was tall and lanky drawn skywards by the surrounding trees.



Ballawley Park was opened to the public in 1984. Additional planting by Dún Laoighaire-Rathdown County Council included *Cedrus deodara* and *Cedrus atlantica* 'Glaucua' in groups of three – stately trees of the future. Elsewhere copses of field maple (*Acer campestre*), rowan (*Sorbus intermedia*), birch (*Betula pendula*), ash and horse chestnut have developed well while Japanese cherries (*Prunus serrulata*) were added earlier this year.

In the mid 20th century, people visited Ballawley Park for the annual sale of alpine plants, now they stroll beneath the tall trees and watch children play hide and seek.

Writers and Gardening

by Robert Logan

Gardening and the written word have gone hand in hand for centuries. We are all familiar with passages of scripture that extol the lilies of the field and Shakespeare was not amiss in extolling the beauties and glories of the garden. Francis Bacon in 1625 stated, 'God Almighty first planted a garden', and that colourful garden writer, the Countess von Armin, wrote, 'It is a blessed sort of work, and if Eve had had a spade in the Garden of Eden and known what to do with it, we should not have had all that trouble in Paradise'.

But gardening has long had appeal. Horace penned, 'This is what I had prayed for: a small piece of land with a garden, a fresh flowing spring of water at hand near the house and above and behind, a small forest stand.' We can visualise Horace's dream. Chaucer in his Canterbury Tales recounts, 'It was the morning of the sixth of May and May had painted with her soft showers a garden full of leaves and flowers. And man's hand had arrayed it with such craft, there never was a garden of such price but if it were 'twas the very paradise'. Of course the garden is something designed to bring pleasure. It was a sentiment not wasted on Thomas Jefferson, 'No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth and no culture comparable to that of the garden'.

Needless to say authors have found

scope for lyricism in the garden. Anne Bronte writing in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* says, '...that beautiful half-blown Christmas Rose, just peeping from the snow that had hitherto, no doubt, defended it from frost, and was now melting away in the sun'. William Blake in his 'Auguries of Innocence' poetically mused about seeing a world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower.

More prosaically the poet Thomas Hood wrote,

'The cowslip is a country wench,/ The violet is a nun;/ But I will woo the dainty rose,/ The queen of everyone.'

Eloquently, Albert Camus describes autumn as 'a second spring where every leaf is a flower.' Coleridge takes us to the Mediterranean,

'Know'st thou the land where the pale citrons grow,
The golden fruits in darker foliage glow?
Soft blows the wind that breathes from that blue sky!
Still stands the myrtle and the laurel high!
Know'st thou it well, that land, beloved Friend?
Thither with thee, O, thither would I wend!'

Apt words in time of lockdown.

Garden writers have their place in the pantheon. Fred Whitsey picturing the dullness of winter wrote, 'Yet here on the Southwest facing wall is a giant camellia bush, its leaves polished like an executive limo ready for Christmas'. The plantswoman Gertrude Jekyll declared, 'The first purpose of a garden is to be a place of quiet beauty such as will give delight to the eye and repose and refreshment to the mind.' Returning to the Countess von Armin, 'The longer I live the greater is my respect and affection for manure in all its forms'.

Gardening opening can have its frustrations but surely no more concisely summed up than by the (probably apocryphal) Lady Maconochie of Inverewe,

'Awake my muse, bring bell and book
To curse the hand that cuttings took.
May every sort of garden pest
His little plot of ground infest,
Who stole the plants from Inverewe
From Falkland Palace,
Crathes too,
Let caterpillars, capsid bugs,
Leafhoppers, thrips, all sorts
of slugs, Play havoc with his
garden plot And a late frost
destroy the lot.'

Gardens are the work of time and tradition but also of individual talent. They are peaceful and settled, yet they require endless labour and love. I will leave the last words to H E Bates, 'Gardening, like love, is a funny thing and doesn't always yield to analysis'.



Kilmacurragh 'a place of quiet beauty': photo courtesy of Seamus O'Brien

Worth a Read

by Paddy Tobin



Britain's Ferns
by James Merriweather, is as good a field guide as I could imagine. I have tried and tested it with perfect success and

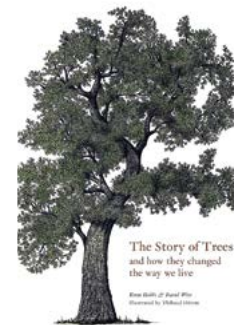
highly recommend it. Clubmosses, horsetails and quillworts are included in the Pteridophyta family and are covered here also. The identification keys are central to the book with technical terms kept to a minimum while differentiating features are clear and simple. Each species is described in great detail and illustrated with exceptionally good photography. An excellent book – one of an outstanding nature series from Princeton University Press.

and fascinating presentation of the most interesting trees in the world. It intertwines the botany and history of these 100 trees, their uses and benefits to mankind, their place in folklore, religion and culture with their place in the modern world. The material is presented with a pervading enthusiasm and makes for a very enjoyable read, best taken at a leisurely pace given the depth of research and breath of information it contains. [Laurence Kink Publishing 2020.]

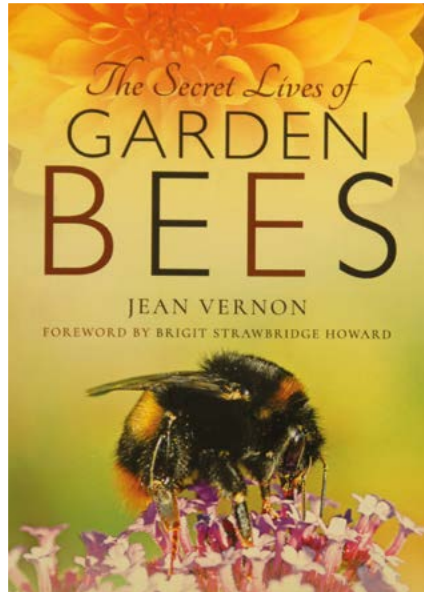


Kitchen Garden Revival by Nicole Johnsey Burke is the perfect book for anyone who wishes to make a start on creating a stylish small-

scale, low-maintenance edible garden. It is aimed at the beginner or the nervously reluctant and guides one through planning, building and filling the vegetable garden. This book will be especially appealing and useful to those who wish to grow a nice selection of fruit and vegetables but are mindful to do so in a style which is appealing and beautiful in the garden. [Quarto Publishing Group, 2020]



The Story of Trees and how they changed the way we live
by Kevin Hobbs & David West, illustrated by Thibaud Herem, is an informative



The Secret Lives of Garden Bees by Jean Vernon. There has been a wave of concern and goodwill for our bee population and gardeners are in the vanguard and best placed to help them. A recently published book, *The Secret Lives of Garden Bees*, opens the door to the reader to begin an exploration of the fascinating world of bees and will encourage you on a journey of learning and action.

There are 276 bee species between the UK and Ireland. Of these 25 are bumble bees; there is the one, only one, honeybee and the rest are

solitary bees – they prefer to live alone rather than in a hive – and there are about 250 species of these. This book, for it is only intended to be an introduction, an encouragement, describes only those which are most common, the 7/8 species of bumblebees, and a number of the mining bees. The early chapters describe the bees you are most likely to see in your garden followed by a chapter on how bees behave – very interesting – and another on what bees eat. One deals with the dangers in the garden for bees – The Hostile Garden – while Plant Intelligence tells us of some of the amazing adaptations of some plants to suit and to take advantage of bees. Bee Good Plants recommends some of the best choices of garden plants to suit bees and Season by Season in the Bee Garden is, well, just that.

This was a pleasant and enjoyable read; not intended for the person already well-informed on bees; not a field guide nor a reference book for identification but an exciting and fascinating introduction to the wonderful world of bees.

[*The Secret Lives of Garden Bees*, Jean Vernon, Pen and Sword White Owl Books, Yorkshire, 2020, Hardback, 191 pages, £25, ISBN: 978 1 52671 186 1]

My Own Bee Hunt

After reading Jean Vernon's book, I felt it was appropriate to move to action so I went to the garden with camera in hand. A large patch of *Geranium macrorrhizum* was the clichéd hive of activity and I was



able to note three different species in action, two bumblebees and a honeybee. Back indoors, I could look at the photographs in the book and identified one of the bumblebees as the buff-tailed bumblebee, *Bombus terrestris*, and the other as the common carder bee, *Bombus pascuorum*. The third bee was, as I had guessed, the honeybee, *Apis mellifera*. Three different bees in the space of five minutes was quite an achievement, I reckoned, and I was delighted with myself.

Even a few minutes watching bees closely was a fascinating experience and it was obvious that it was not at all simply haphazard buzzing about but that there was method to their foraging. Close observation has huge rewards and I shall be seen with nose almost in flower on many more occasions during this summer. Where the bee sucks, there lurk !!



Society Snippets

Pogue's Entry, Antrim by Robert Logan

As in *Sleeping Beauty*, the cottage garden at Pogue's Entry went into lockdown after the Curse of Covid struck. Three months is a long time in any garden, especially in springtime, for the weeders, sowers and mowers to be *en vacances* but, happily, our initial despondency at the vision of knee-high grass and a vegetable plot obscured with weeds was dispelled. After a couple of mornings spent weeding and digging, the edgings of *Ilex crenata* re-emerged, the Swiss chard, garlic, cabbage and onions

stood erect and weedfree, and the soil was prepared and sown with runner beans, kohlrabi, parsley and Irish heritage peas.

Lots of the planting in the borders would benefit from a prolonged soaking but there were encouraging signs of maturity and bulking-up of climbers and perennials with *Hydrangea petiolaris* starting to make an impression on the cottage walls, a lovely clump of iridescent *Iris sibirica*, and the promise of good displays from penstemons, day lilies, and dieramas. It's good to be back.



Robert Logan and Billy McCone: photo courtesy of Yvonne Penpraze

Advice for contributors

Length

If writing a report of a regional event such as a visit or lecture, please keep it short and sweet: 250 to 300 words is very suitable.

Articles are always welcome; 650 or 950 words work well especially when accompanied by two or three good quality, high resolution photos. Do not embed them in the text as the printer has to take them out again, send them as a separate jpeg. It's very helpful if you can alert the editor ahead of time about what you plan to write.

Newsletter conventions

Book and magazine names should be in **italics** with a capital letter for all the principal words e.g. *A Heritage of Beauty* and *The Irish Garden*. Do **not** enclosed the title with either single or double quotation marks.

Scientific names of plants. The scientific or Latin name of the plant must be in italics. The initial letter of the species name has a capital letter, e.g. *Nerine*, while the second does not: therefore *Nerine bowdenii*.

The cultivar name, which is often but not exclusively in English, is printed in standard type and enclosed within **single quotation marks** e.g. *Nerine bowdenii* 'Alba'.

If more than one is referred to, the second and subsequent ones can be shown with just a capital letter in italics for the genus, e.g. *N. undulata*.

Common plant names. When plants are referred to by their common names, they are in standard/Roman type rather than italics and the initial letter is **lower case** e.g. nerines, roses, hellebores and peonies. Likewise for the names of wild flowers.

Capital letters. Use an initial capital letter for proper nouns, i.e. the names of people, countries, gardens, and institutions. Thus the National Botanic Gardens, Rowallane, or Kilmacurragh; the Society when referring to the IGPS but gardening societies in general; the Chairman when referring to the person who has been elected to this post in the IGPS. Seasons of the year are in lower case e.g. spring, autumn.

Abbreviations. Write IGPS rather than I.G.P.S., Co Kildare rather than Co. Kildare, etc rather than etc., and Dr rather than Dr. but include a stop or point for the following two abbreviations, e.g., and i.e.

Spaces. Leave just **one** space at the end of a sentence.


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