



*The
Irish Garden Plant Society*



Newsletter No. 112

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Front cover:

Moji Shan known to Augustine Henry and E.H. Wilson as "the Dome". Henry collected *Lilium henryi* on its slopes during the 1880s.

Lilium henryi in Glasnevin's Double Herbaceous Borders.

Séamus O'Brien



Editorial

Thank you to everyone who wrote or e-mailed with good wishes over the last few months.

The Annual General Meeting takes place next month May 23rd in Greenmount College Antrim. This is an important forum to discuss the future direction and work of the Society. A new Chairman will be elected as Petronilla Martin's term of office comes to a close after a busy three years. There are also two vacancies on the National Committee as both Marco Fussy and Carsten Asherfeld have returned to Germany. Their expertise as a garden designer and landscape architect respectively contributed in many ways to the IGPS since they joined the Committee in 2006. We are delighted that Marco will be involved with the IGPS display at Bloom 2009. If you are interested in joining the National Committee please contact me by May 8th. Meetings are held every six weeks at the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin and are attended by representatives from the three regional groups.

Details of the garden visits arranged for the weekend by the Northern Group are in the Newsletter. If you have never attended an AGM it is always an interesting, enjoyable and well-planned weekend.

On behalf of the IGPS I would like to extend our sympathies to Rae McIntyre on the death of her parents, may they both rest in peace.

Mary

Please send material for Newsletter to: maryarowe @yahoo.com or Mary Rowe, 29 Bantry Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

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From the Chairman *Petronilla Martin*

As the I.G.P.S. year is coming to a close, so is my term of office as Chairman of the Society. In order to see if the job was effective I have looked back at the report of the AGM 2006 in Co. Down. The main concerns of the members were that the Society was not promoting itself with a clear identity, that the membership numbers were falling and that people in general did not know which plants were Irish cultivars and if they had them in their gardens. In order to promote the profile of the Society we have taken a stand at the Rose Festival Raheny, at Bloom 2007 and 2008 and the Sustainability Show in the Botanic Gardens 2007 and 2008. These Stands attracted a lot of attention especially at Bloom and the members who manned the stands did sterling work. The increase in the membership numbers is a testimony to this. The sales of A Heritage of Beauty ensured that many more people became aware of the plants with Irish connections. This year we are continuing the work by mounting a new Stand at Bloom 2009 May 28th to June 1st inc. I hope to meet many of you there and if you have time to man the Stand I would be grateful if you could phone me at 8380067 or 086 3210753. A sub-committee coordinated by Brendan Sayers was set up in December 2007 to promote the 'Adopt an Irish Cultivar' programme. The plant sales continue including one in Cork and are a great way to disseminate Irish cultivars.

The highlights of the past three years as far as I was concerned was the meeting of so many members at the AGM's in Down, Limerick and Bunclody and the visits to many wonderful gardens. Hopefully we will see many more members at the AGM in Antrim on the 23rd of May.

The Society cannot function without the great work behind the scenes, my colleagues on the National Committee, the three regional committees organising lectures, plant sales and garden visits. The summer lunch organised by Ricky Shannon, Stephen Butler collecting and distributing seeds for the seed exchange, and last but not least the Editor of the Newsletter. Paddy Tobin held the post for many years, during which time he managed to keep us on our toes through his great editorials always "hitting the nail on the head". Paddy thank you for your great service to the Society. It is great to see that you are continuing with the Book Review. Mary Rowe took up the challenge at the end of 2008 and I am sure you all were very pleased and proud of the January Newsletter. I wish Mary every success in her role.

At last the winter has gone and we can look forward to great gardening, the AGM, the Summer Lunch and the renewal of enthusiasm to promote the IGPS in the life of Irish gardening.



The Lismacloskey Rectory Garden & Project Irish cultivar conservation.

Patrick Quigley proposes a way forward

Following the last edition of the Newsletter and the article on conservation of plants with an Irish connection by Brendan Sayers, it has struck me that we rarely seem to think of the future destinations of these plants. We may be able to track down the last few plants in cultivation; we may successfully propagate them but what then? They may continue to flourish in the gardens of individual members but in the long term how will future generations of gardeners know where the plants can be found; will they still be known under their true names by their then custodians, or will they have become *'those lovely little plants my grandmother grew in her garden but whose name I don't know'*. An issue which has arisen time and time again when we are encouraging members to propagate Irish cultivars for our plant sales is the question of identification, especially of plants handed down through friends and family over the years. The simple fact is that many of us could be growing rare Irish cultivars without even knowing it, and yet it is the knowledge of their existence that is essential for future conservation.

Not only do we need to address the propagation of such plants, we need to look at how we maintain records of where they may be found. Kevin Halpenny referred to The National Plant Collections® scheme in the last edition of the Newsletter. This is one way of maintaining a stock of plants and keeping detailed records of the plants held. However, it is geared more towards collections of a single genus and does not seem to cater for the possibility of establishing a mixed collection of plants linked only by the fact that they are cultivars of Irish origin or with some other Irish connection.

As an organisation we lack a garden of our own where we can continue to grow such plants to maintain a stock for the future. To my mind it is therefore essential for us to work in partnership with other institutions, especially with those who have gardens open to the public. If we can identify, propagate and make available some Irish cultivars to such partnership institutions, they can grow them on, keeping a record of the plants in their own catalogue, and hopefully provide further propagating material in the future.

Here in the North we are fortunate to have had access to a garden at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum at Cultra for many years. Long-term members of the society will be familiar with this venture which

was established in the 1980's under the Chairmanship of Mary Davies. At the time, the aim was to create a period garden outside the Lismacloskey Rectory in the Folk Museum, using only plants which would have been available around the beginning of the 20th century. IGPS volunteers designed the garden, provided the plants and carried out general maintenance work of hand weeding, mulching etc. while the museum staff carrying out the heavier work of hedge-trimming, grass cutting and hard landscape maintenance. The project fell by the wayside for a while in the early 1990's, but was revived in 1996 and has continued ever since, thanks to a very dedicated team of volunteers, led by Andrena Duffin. The support for the project by Museum staff has been tremendous and the garden features heavily in much of the publicity material for the museum.

Over the past few years, we have changed the emphasis of planting in the garden and have tried to introduce more Irish cultivars, using the garden as a repository for such plants. Sadly the response to our appeals for plants from members has been quite poor, but we continue un-deterred adding in a few more each year. Once we have built up a reasonable collection of Irish cultivars, we would hope to produce an information leaflet which will be available to visitors to the museum, raising the profile not just of the plants but also of the IGPS. The project is by no means on a large scale but it is still a step forward in encouraging gardeners to continue to grow our wonderful heritage of old garden plants. Under the stewardship of the Museum and the team of IGPS volunteers, a long term collection of Irish cultivars could be established and maintained.

I believe that if we could establish a range of similar projects throughout Ireland, it would go some way towards achieving the professed aims of the society. The Northern group has been looking at the possibility of developing this idea further, and although no contact has been made yet, we have considered the possibility of approaching the National Trust to see if it would be possible to develop a scheme where the IGPS could identify and provide appropriate Irish cultivars for one of the Trust's gardens; these could be promoted in a supporting information leaflet for visitors, and the Trust would then take responsibility for maintaining a stock of the plants for use in their own gardens and for the provision of further propagation material back to the IGPS. Greenmount College in Antrim, the venue for our AGM this year, is another possible partner for such a scheme and would have the added advantage of exposing its horticulture students to the idea of garden plant conservation and to the work of the IGPS. These are just a couple of suggestions put forward for the Northern region but there is no reason why other bodies throughout Ireland could not be identified and approached in a similar way. The society already has a great relationship with the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin and through

individual IGPS members, we have good connections with many other publicly owned and maintained gardens so we wouldn't have to look too far for potential partners.

The key to success would be a definite commitment to the scheme by IGPS members. There would be no point in putting forward the idea and then finding that we could not meet our obligations in providing a suitable and adequate supply of plants. I must admit this has been the main factor in not pursuing the idea further, given the lukewarm response to any appeal for Irish cultivars for the Lisnacloskey Garden project.

Every year at our AGM, the subject of conservation work is raised and yet we seem to make little progress from one year to the next. Brendan has already mentioned a special event being planned to address the issue this year. Why don't we all make 2009 the year when we renew our commitment to the aims of the society, shake ourselves out of the apathy or lethargy which seems to afflict us and see how we as individuals can help the society move forward in its professed aims of conserving our great heritage of garden plants.

For Northern members, one way to do this is to volunteer to help out with some light work in the Lisnacloskey garden. The usual day has been changed from Wednesday to Friday, so if you are free on the first and / or third Friday of each month from May to October (full list of dates shown below) please contact Andrena Duffin at the address below. You do not have to commit to every date; even one morning would be appreciated and would give you a chance to meet up with some of your colleagues from the society. And don't feel your gardening skills will be under scrutiny; a willing spirit is more important than a high level of expertise. If you are unable to select a date now put all the dates into your diary and if you find you are free some day, come along anyway.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Fri. 1 st May | Fri. 15 th May | Fri. 5 th June | Fri. 19 th June |
| Fri. 3 rd July | Fri. 17 th July | Fri. 7 th Aug | Fri. 21 st Aug |
| Fri. 4 th Sept | Fri. 18 th Sept | Fri. 2 nd Oct | Fri 16 th Oct. |

Starting time is around 10:30 am, usually finishing by lunchtime. Bring your own tools - hand-fork, hoe, secateurs etc. Heavier tools are not usually needed but may be useful. For members who are not able to help out at the garden but who may be willing to provide some Irish cultivars for the project, please get in touch with Andrena.

**Andrena Duffin, 11 Grey Point, Helen's Bay, Co. Down
BT19 1LE Tel: 028 9185 2668**



A Dangerous Walk

With Bob Bradshaw

It was the day of the IGPS Plant Sale. I strolled in the Botanic Gardens and then the gunshots started, or were they fireworks? It was a strange time of day for fireworks, ten in the morning on a Sunday, but perhaps it was a little late also for a shootout in the nearby *Favelas*. The police much prefer early morning raids. Perhaps the local convention is that gang wars start later, on a Sunday morning, in Rio de Janeiro?

Perhaps it was just my guilty conscience, about avoiding any involvement in the plant sale then setting up in Glasnevin?

In any event, the fireworks, or shots, did not rattle the many other persons enjoying the pleasures of the 200 year old Rio Botanic Gardens that morning and I began to relax a little, as the noises stopped. I was, after all, probably out of the immediate reach of the organising committee of the plant sale, who are, I understand, much feared, even in the most deprived *Favelas*. The Botanic Garden grounds, once set on the edge of Rio, are extensive, with 137 hectares running up a valley slope, with views back to the famous statue of Christ the King. Over time they have, like Kirstenbosch, invaded more and more of the hillside, leaving the formal squared-off early planting at the road side gate and with more informal areas to the back.

Dom Joao IV, the Prince Regent, founded the Botanic Gardens on June 13th 1808, so there was a strong celebratory tone to the displays there last year. During that period the Gardens have had their ups and downs, but have always maintained a commitment to scholarship and research, with strong contributions by garden staff to the understanding of native flora over the years. From 1808 until it exploded in 1831, the Garden also shared space with the Royal Gunpowder Factory, in a strange mix of seeds and shells, and some remains of this former enterprise still exist, now sheltering a playground and a garden of useful plants. The former Powder Mills subsequently went through various uses, storage, accommodation for gardeners, a laboratory and is now a modest museum. An early European visitor complained that the trees were too small to be interesting. They are not small now.

There are many follies and fancies in the gardens, not least the Fountain of the Muses (1895) secured by Director Barbosa Rodrigues. The great long allée of Imperial Palms *Roystonea oleracea*, is now named in his honour, and is terminated by the reconstructed façade of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, moved here in 1942 as an eye-catcher. You just have to walk down to it, but it is one mighty long stroll down and back with only a view of a busy road through the ruin as a reward.

The displays did not shy away from mentioning the key role of slaves in digging out the Friar Leandro Lake, which is named after an earlier Director from 1824 to 1829, and where *Victoria amazonica* now reign. The redoubtable friar, and his slaves, played a major role in the present appearance of the grounds. He would be pleased to know that some of the trees he planted are still alive, an *Artocarpus altilis*, perhaps the very Breadfruit tree he planted to feed his slaves, is one.

Conditioned as we are to stories of the amazing diversity of the South American rain forest, it comes as a bit of a shock to see how many now very common plants in Brazil have all been introduced, expressly for their commercial potential, and mostly through the work of the botanic gardens, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, the Jackfruit from India, and *Eucalyptus robusta* coming from the land of the Koala, for example. The tea plant, *Camellia sinensis* was in the gardens in 1812 and seedlings were being sent out two years later, but it is the coffee plant *Coffea arabica*, also a non-native species, which has conquered Brazil, coffee is the second most commonly traded product. Curiously, the gardens seem to have had little role in the spread of the coffee plant.

Of course all Botanic Gardens live in the continuous conflict between interest in the native plants and the exotic, between serving the popular tastes of the day and work at the scientific cutting edge. I have to admit I was much taken by the really splendid cactus garden, really exotic and perhaps inappropriate here, filled with Mexican and desert species over-shaded by the high canopy. This outdoor display was wildly popular, indeed such was its popularity that it needed two security guards to be on a strict watch over it. The orchid house, however, was rather lonely. This is the only “plant house” in the garden, but naturally there is no need for any glazing or heating here, only shading. The orchid display was modest, rather unexciting in content, and a much larger reserve collection was strictly off limits. Cheering from the immediate vicinity led me on to the staff football field, where a game was in progress, and then on to the much advertised sight of the Levada Aqueduct of 1853, which provides the water supply to the grounds. This was all of three to ten feet in height, as it crossed over the valley floor. It seemed rather oversold and overshadowed by the stately trees that marked the garden boundary. Another noise in the bushes, this time it was a dark monkey who was inspecting a plant identification panel.

As I trudged back to the main gate at the far corner, where turtles slept around a small pond, I began to wonder how I was going to get away. While taxis out to the Gardens are easy enough to arrange, they do not wait there. So it was that I was soon outside, waving frantically at any yellow coloured vehicle out on the main road. My advice, hard earned, is that any *gringo* should perversely try the taxis heading out from town, as the inbound cars will inevitably be full.



Broadleaved Evergreen Trees *With John Joe Costin*

Ireland has over 700,000 hectares or up to 10% of available land, predominant conifers under forest. This is not surprising given our competitive environmental advantage. We have recorded the fastest growth rates and the shortest production cycles in Europe for conifers.

By extension it would be reasonable to assume that the same environment should be equally favourable to broadleaved evergreen trees. It does not seem to be. We grow very few, either native or introduced. Of our 20 native trees only one is a broadleaf evergreen, the Holly. It is widespread and found in every county. The *Arbutus* is a broadleaf, but it has a very restricted distribution. Our other three 'native' evergreens are conifers; Yew, Juniper but most botanists will not give a passport to Scots Pine.

All the other commonly encountered evergreens are introduced. The evergreen Oak is one of our best known broadleaves. Eucalyptus species are widely planted. The Laurel, *Prunus laurocerasus* introduced as game cover, is now a popular hedge plant but is seldom grown as a tree. *Prunus lusitanica* Portuguese Laurel make a beautiful tree as can be seen in Powerscourt Gardens, but is rarely planted. It makes a nicer hedge than the laurel but is seldom planted for this purpose.

The **Holly** remains our most popular evergreen. In favourable locations one encounters choice profuse flowering evergreens such *Drimys winteri*, *Eucryphia*, *Embothrium*, *Luma apiculata*, *Hoheria* and *Cornus capitata*.

There has been increasing misuse of *Magnolia grandiflora* in the past 10 years. Its misuse does a disservice to the industry's image. As a native to the Mississippi Valley, it requires heat and shelter to thrive, neither of which is available here. There are more suitable substitutes available.

Why have we so few broadleaved evergreens in our landscape? We automatically plant conifers where evergreens are desired. Four reasons spring to mind which may explain why they are under represented in our gardens and landscapes.

Up to 30 years ago prior to the development of reliable container production blueprints, transplanting losses necessitated that nurserymen favoured plants that could be reliably transplanted bare rooted. Those that did not had to be rootballed. This is time consuming and expensive. This requirement discriminated against plants that had coarse or fangy root systems not suited to rootballing.

Being notoriously difficult to transplant is the reason that the stunningly beautiful Snowdrop tree *Halesia* and other lovely trees are not available in the trade. Happily, some of the most floriferous evergreen have fine fibrous root systems amenable to rootballing and are reliable to transplant such as *Camellia*, *Azalea*, *Rhododendron*, *Pieris*, *Pernettya*, *Leucothoe* and *Skimmia*. This accounts for their popularity. Nearly all evergreens had to be rootballed in order to transplant successfully. Conifers were popular as were shrubs such as *Aucuba*, *Viburnum*, *Elaeagnus*, *Mahonia* and choice deciduous items like *Hamamelis* and *Magnolia*.

Secondly, customers purchasing trees discriminate against plants whose presentation as a young plant does not accord with their idea of what a young tree should look like. A Holly in a small pot is bought as a shrub whereas a 3m tall caned and tied cherry, ticks all the boxes of a customer's perception of what a tree is.

Thirdly, tree nurseries also discriminate against a wide selection of choice trees that do not fit into their production system.

Their main market is for street trees, that is a tree shaped like a lollipop with a 2m clear stem with a cluster of branches on top. This specification favours trees that grow fast, straight and respond well to pruning. It cannot accommodate slow irregular growers and evergreens that do not attain the desired height and girth within an economic 4 year production cycle.

Fourthly, many nurseries still look to Holland not only for inspiration but as a source of young plants. We have a maritime climate that is more accommodating to broadleaved evergreens. There is a continental climate, with warmer summers, colder winters and lower humidity. Most of the evergreens you find in Irish gardens are not hardy in Holland.

Broadleaved Evergreen Trees

Irish gardens are like the United Nations in that we can grow plants native to a surprisingly large number of countries in one small space. It has been my ambition to see as many of the lovely plants we grow in their own homes.

In my travels, I got acquainted with some desirables in their own place. As a learning experience, a day in the wilderness is more instructive than a years observation in the garden. When you encounter an arresting sight in a plants native place, you can instantly profile not only the plants ornamental attributes, but also its habitat and growing requirements. These are some of the evergreen broadleaved, mainly trees, that I encountered in Chile and Argentina. Chile is the longest country in the world. It has 13 different vegetation zones crossing its latitudes as you move south to Cape Horn. Most of the plants are from zones equivalent to Ireland's.

Both Hillier and Bean attach reservations on the hardiness of many South American plants. "Suitable for maritime locations" or 'needs protection in winter' are warnings that suggest such plants are only suitable for carefully 'chosen places'. Perhaps, they have not been planted widely enough to have their true hardiness properly evaluated. The cold hardiness of a plant grown in a heavy wet clay as we have here in Kilcock is subjected to greater stress that a similar plant grown in a free draining gravelly soil.

Our site presents a strenuous test of any plants hardiness. The plants listed with such warnings grown here for up to 20 years, endured some severe winters, 2009 being the coldest for 18 years, they were not defoliated, singed or blemished. Terms such as suitable only for maritime 'locations' should be reevaluated.

Perhaps it is a question of humidity. The Irish climate may mirror the Chilean environment more accurately than England in that it is more humid. Powdery mildew is the most prevalent disease on Apples and Roses in England, while Apple Scab and Blackspot are the scourge of these plants in Ireland. Powdery mildew develops in warm, dry conditions, whereas Apple Scab and Blackspot are induced by damp cool conditions.

Maytenus boaria

One indelible Chilean experience was my first encounter with *Maytenus boaria*. It is an evergreen tree that grows to a height of 10m. It is an eye-catching, picturesque feature of the pasturelands of Chile and Argentina. It is always found as an isolated specimen in the landscape. Its identity is unmistakable, with its umbrella shaped crown

and drooping foliage seen in a clear silhouette against the sky. Its foliage is a fodder of choice for cattle, so the elegance of each specimen is enhanced with the grooming of the lower branches as high as the cattle can reach. It is neither known nor widely grown in Irish gardens. The Monkey Puzzle was the first tree introduced from South America and Maytenus introduced in 1820 was the second. It survives in anonymity. It does not deserve such obscurity. It is perfectly hardy here in Kilcock, happily growing in a heavy clay soil with a high winter water table. Judging by where I saw it in Chile these are not ideal conditions. I do not know how readily it transplants bareroot as our trees were planted expts.

Those who went out to explore were also driven by the profit motive of what could be exploited. Their seed collections were commercially selective. Collecting seed of a prospective high volume timber tree was obvious, as was the unique novelty value of the Monkey Puzzle and the flower power of an Embotrium was irresistible. Perhaps the demur charms of a distinctive tree in the pastureland with inconspicuous flowers did not give it sufficient sales sizzle in a nurseryman's catalogue, to make it a candidate for suburban gardens. However, it is a mystery why such a picturesque tree is so scarce in old demesnes.

Berberis valdiviana is another neglected treasure from Chile, the aristocrat of this family and a superb small tree here. It makes a narrow evergreen column 2m wide and is 6m in height after 15 years. I do not like thorns in any form. Uniquely, in this viciously equipped family its large glossy handsome dark green leaves are unarmed.

Its large saffron yellow pendulous flower racemes in April are like a foretaste of the later Laburnum display, and are the largest in this family. Older and impressive specimens grow in the adjacent Coolcarrigan Gardens. This garden, created on a mineral island surrounded by the Bog of Allen, experience lower temperatures than we do here. It is perfectly hardy.

***Nothofagus* 'Southern Beech'**

Most of the southern Beech are evergreen. I occasionally encountered these in Irish gardens. They deserve to be appreciated more. I grow three evergreen species. Two of these I saw in Chile and one in New Zealand.

Nothofagus dombeyi is a tree of the very largest size and is a dominant tree in the Chilean temperate forest. It is found over a wide range but is not found as far south as *N. betuloides*. In its old age as it matures, it develops a characteristic majestic beauty, with a flat topped growth habit like that of the cedars. At 20 years of age it is already assuming that habit here. It is perfectly hardy.

Further south in Chile and all the way to Cape Horn, *Nothofagus betuloides* can be seen. It has an upright neat dense conical habit. I planted a line of small plants from 2L pots to create an avenue 18 years ago. It is the tree that attracts most comments from visitors. It is 15m in height and its growth rate is superior to *N. dombeyi*, planted at the same time. None of the *Nothofagus* have suffered in the severest winters that obliterated adjoining plants. There is a magnificent specimen in Powerscourt at the back of the lake that rewards a visit and deserves a little homage. Both can be raised from cuttings.

Nothofagus solanderi* var. *cliffordoides a variety of *N. solandri* with smaller leaves, is a forest tree found in the upper mountain altitudes in the South Island of New Zealand. They call it the Mountain Beech, raised from collected seed 1988, it is a dainty leaved evergreen with a neat pencil slim pillar habit that has the form but not the rigidity of *Cupressus sempervirens* Stricta Group.

Alan Mitchell showed that the neatness of habit in *Cupressus* is a function of low humidity. In high humidity climates *Cupressus* lose their shape and in time become 'fat mamas'. The tree here is 5m in height but less than 1m in spread. It is unblemished by winter conditions. It is a very distinctive tree that shows promise as a superior evergreen accent plant to pencil slim *Cupressus* or Junipers selections.

***Aristotelia chilensis* 'Variegata'**

It grows in waste or disturbed ground in Chile. It is also lumbered with the appellation of "doubtful hardiness". I grow both the species and the variegated form. Both have behaved identically. During the millennium winter it did not lose a leaf, when an adjoining large 30m² clump of *Phormium tenax* 'Purpureum' was wiped out by snow and a heavy frost. It is 5m in height. Its growth is luxuriant and it makes a dense round-topped shrub or small tree.

Embothrium

I have failed to establish *Embothrium* here. From my observations of where I saw it growing in Chile, I now believe it is unsuited to rich clay soil. More than for any other plant, garden writers give us 'namby pamby' recipes for its growth and protection until established. I suggested such cossetting is unwarranted. *Embothrium* demand less not more. In fact they grow in the mountains of Cape Horn in the same habitat that favour furze in Ireland. Poverty and neglect, I believe are the conditions they need in order to thrive. *Embothrium* are Protaceae, a family noted for its sensitivity to phosphorus and to normal levels of soil nutrients. It needs poor soils.

I walked across the foothills, flecked in scarlet to the skyline, to the Torres del Paine spectacular vertiginous granite columns over 1000m in

height which are an irresistible challenge to mountaineers. Embotrium was in full flower, bush size, but finding places to grow on a bleak exposed treeless stony mountain.

Mountain top trees are considered to be poor competitions. They are driven from the plains where they are not able to compete for space, to colonise the locations where there is less competition. They obviously like the light too.

Further north, I also saw the spectacle of Embotrium in full flower, tree size, well spaced out among the last great stand of 2000 year old, lichens covered, gargantuan sized Monkey Puzzle trees.

***Azara microphylla* 'Variegata'**

If this highly desirable tree was presented to customers in tree form rather than as an evergreen shrub in a small pot, it would be much more widely planted. Long before my trip to Chile a fine specimen in the Cambridge Botanic Gardens scuttled any reservations imputed to its suspect hardiness that I may have had. Cambridge experience lower winter cold than anywhere in Ireland. In Chile, it is regularly found in forest associated with *Nothofagus obliqua*. Here it is most often seen, misplaced by a wall where all its elegant delicate slightly arching growth habit cannot be displayed to its full effect. It is a tree to plant on its own to enjoy in the round. It has a peeling creamy coloured bark. I recently transplanted successfully a 5m tall specimen to achieve that effect.

Luma apiculata

What is now called *Luma apiculata* was formerly sold as *Myrtus luma* and is more usually available in its golden variegated form 'Glanleam Gold' The name celebrates the garden on Valencia Island where it grows to an impressive sized tree and has formed a self seeded naturalised forest. In the temperate forests it grows intermixed with *Nothofagus dombeyi*. Groves of mature trees are tourist attractions in Argentina.

It is normally sold as a shrub, but to realise its full potential, it should be let grow as it forms a beautiful tree. It is better to seek out the species as the dark green leaves are the perfect foil to its stunning smooth cinnamon coloured bark. Whether as a single trunk or a multistemmed coppiced tree the bark develops from an early age.

The best bark display I have seen, was a retired hedgerow that was allowed to grow naturally. I rank its bark in my favourite five.

It flowers reliably and profusely in late summer, its pure white button flowers show up particularly well against the dark green foliage. It is another native of Chile that flourishes in gardens around the country but should be planted more.

Eucryphia lucida

I planted a number of *Eucryphia* in our heavy sticky limestone clay for observation, seasoned with little expectation. None of the species from Chile have survived. Cossetting is a word I associate with *Eucryphia* and other choice plants that are deemed worthy of special treatment, but it is a form of gardening I do not practice or advise. That this tree grows well here should not have surprised me since in its native Tasmania it grows on river banks. So far, it has made a slender, upright, neat, compact, small leaved dense tree 4m in height. It flowers in July but not yet profusely.

Eupatorium ligustrinum

I have grown this purplish evergreen from Mexico for over 30 years. Sceptical initially, I indulged the enthusiasm of Gerry Donnelly (the donor) a keen florist in Ballinasloe but doubted its hardiness. Mexico seemed an unlikely source of hardy plants suited to our indecisive climate. However, its highlands and mountains have been the source of some fine shrubs, perennials and conifers a few of which are garden aristocrats. Its performance here again confounds the “for the mildest parts” caution. It remains unblemished by snowfall and is not defoliated by heavy frosts. Unpruned it grows into a perfect semicircular dome 4-5m high. It is an ideal small tree for miniscule suburban gardens.

It flowers profusely from October – January. A season it has more or less all to itself. The dull greyish purple corymbs are 20cm across, cover the bush all over and attract more butterflies than any other plant I know. What I most enjoy is the intensity of its sumptuous scent. It suffuses its surroundings and is accentuated in and after rainfall. For that reason I have planted one by a patio door, for convenience to enjoy its fragrance in the rain.

Fascicularia bicolor

This is one of my favourites Chilean plants, but it is not a tree.

It forms magnificent hummocks and colours profusely where I saw it in a shore location. The foliage is unaffected by sea spray. It is classed both as a shrub and an evergreen perennial. Its seeds have a very short viability period and propagation by division is uneconomic. Hillier warns that it needs winter protection. This is not so. Before putting into tissue culture for rapid multiplication I had grown it where it formed a large ground cover carpet in heavy clay. It never showed any adverse winter cold symptoms. I have since planted thousands as ground cover even in heavy wet clay without loss. It also makes a superb plant for a large urn; it thrives on neglect, where it survives without watering on rainfall alone.



Rae McIntyre Reminiscing

We've had a week of spring weather recently with birds building nests and frogspawn appearing in pools but it's after a long dismal autumn and winter. Weatherwise it was hard and it's quite possible that it's not over yet as I write this on February 17. I spent much of the autumn and winter visiting my father in a nursing home and my mother in hospital. Jim, my father, died on December 11 of pneumonia – not unexpectedly because he had chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (usually referred to as COPD) for years and dementia with it. My mother, Kathleen, had had osteoporosis for even longer but had been in hospital since early December with a bad kidney infection and shingles. When Jim died she just lost the will to live and she too died of pneumonia on January 20. He was 89 and she was 94 and they had been married for nearly 69 years. During all that time they lived in the same house and their garden had been an absorbing interest to both.

World War 2 was waging when they married in June 1940 so their garden at the front and at the south side of the house was essentially a cottage garden with mostly food crops intermingled with flowers. For much of her married life my mother provided flowers for the small church the family attended less than a mile away. Only when the osteoporosis got really bad, about twelve years ago, did someone suggest that there should be a rota but even then she had to do it for some Sundays when the flower provider had no flower-arranging skills. I cannot remember the names of many of the flowers she grew. Carnations and pinks did particularly well in the limey soil and were good for flower arranging. There were snapdragons, beloved by children, dowager paeonies supported by stout canes and annual asters with feathery plumes. The roses that grew in the garden were old ones like the pink cabbage rose that had been there for years and had a short flowering period but the blooms were beautifully scented. *Physalis alkekengi*, commonly known as 'Chinese Lanterns' flourished there and were considered by many as essential for winter decoration. Everyone's drawing room / good front room had a vase filled with 'Chinese lanterns', the papery silver 'pennies' of honesty and pampas grass in pride of place. Kathleen got heartily sick of this combination and used variegated ivy, rosehips and catkins during the winter months. I remember, as a young child, bringing her in a bunch of dandelions and she carefully arranged them, surrounded by a diadem of young fronds of hart's tongue ferns, in a white china bowl then set them in the centre of the dining room table.

After the war Jim developed about half an acre of waste ground, to the

north side of the house, as a vegetable garden. As vegetable plots went this was beautifully neat and organised with a very wide range of vegetables grown in the well-manured soil. It was also highly labour intensive but the bulk of the work in it was done by Jimmy Bell who had trained as a gardener with the Adairs of Lynwood in Cookstown; this is where the *Forsythia x intermedia* 'Lynwood' originated.

Without vegetables in the main garden Kathleen was able to indulge her passion for growing flowers. One of the first things she did was to make a rockery. There was a slope in front of the house that led down to the lawn and then the river. As a child the lawn seemed big to me but I now realise that it must have been very small. The rockery was colourful but the plants growing in it were quite ordinary; I can remember the invasive *Cerastium tomentosum* 'Snow-in-summer', aubrieta, iberis and a plethora of Welsh poppies. I was asked to weed this once but, being a nasty, lazy little brat anxious to get back to whatever book I was reading at the time, I pulled out several things that were definitely not weeds and was told never to dare touch the rockery again. That suited me fine. My mother had been gardening since she was three and suffered from the delusion that everyone in her family would enjoy it as much as she did.

Over the years the garden extended right along the bank of the river. The house was a mill house and linen had been manufactured there since the early nineteenth century. An old roofless building of pinkish brick and stone with gothic windows still stood and within this Kathleen made a walled garden. It was tiny in comparison with that which belonged to our nearest neighbours who lived in what had been the dower house for the Loughrey Estate. The neighbours' garden must have been about two acres in size but only had a few straggly, unpruned fruit trees trained against the walls. It was the home for a series of massive and ferocious bulls who each lived there in splendid isolation before being sold to someone in Argentina for a small fortune. My mother thought that just keeping all that space for one grumpy old bull, however valuable, was a dreadful waste. Her walled garden was paved with faulty bricks, donated by a brickworks nearby, because they weren't suitable for building. There was a rectangular pool in the centre and raised beds round three of the walls. Growth was rampant in these and plants seemed to have ambitions to make the place a jungle. There had to be regular cutting back sessions when Jim did a chain-saw massacre on them. Kathleen would tearfully call him an absolute brute but in no time at all everything would shoot again.

Round the corner from this little walled garden there was another garden 'room' where shade-loving plants thrived. Sadly it has become very overgrown and the biggest, glossiest *Sarcococca confusa* I have ever seen died a few years ago. There was a waterfall here, an overflow from the mill dam that could be shut off by a sluice gate. This had to be

done during dry spells because every drop of water was needed from the dam to keep the turbine going to make electricity for the house. As a child my young friends thought I was lucky to have a waterfall in the garden but I could only see the functional side of it. Kathleen made a garden along one side of the waterfall and then Jim had a hump-backed steel bridge made for her so that she could cultivate the other side. The steelwork is still there but the wooden boards across it rotted some time ago. Because of the osteoporosis Kathleen wasn't able to cross to the other side so it has become another small wilderness.

When my parents went on holiday Kathleen took two sponge bags with her; one was an official one and the other was for cuttings – usually referred to as slips – of plants. They weren't keen on hot countries but they liked Canada, New Zealand (the South Island), Australia, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Kathleen made a bed along the bank of the river and that's where the cuttings grew into fine big plants so that in a few years the Long River Bed, as it was called, was very attractive. Then there came a flood, the like of which they had never seen before, at the end of October 1969 immediately after my son David was born. I wasn't able to help because I wasn't well but as soon as their phone was working again I rang my parents to commiserate. The flood water had risen to a metre high in the house, so many pieces of their furniture, carpets and rugs were destroyed. Kathleen wasn't worried about these. "I don't give a damn about those things", she said. "We can always buy new stuff. But every single thing in the Long River Bed was swept away by the force of the flood and I can never replace them". I realised how serious a grip gardening can have.

After the flood Kathleen thought that someone up there was telling her something so she gave up her life of horticultural crime. The bank of the river had to be built up higher and reinforced so she lost her rockery and the lawn in front of the house. This gave her the opportunity to create a new 'garden room'. All the plants in it were acquired legally. Only once, during the rest of her life, did she steal a cutting and that was on my behalf. It had taken a long time for me to become interested in gardening but I was very thoroughly bitten by the bug in 1978. Before that I had reluctantly accompanied her on garden visits but during 1978 I couldn't visit enough gardens. We went to Castlewellan one day and I was totally smitten with *Desfontainea spinosa*. She didn't know the name because all her gardening was done on limey soil so she wasn't familiar with acid lovers. She thought it was some kind of holly and said she had always had difficulty getting cuttings of holly to strike. However I badly wanted to try it so, very very reluctantly, she showed me how to take cuttings. It was probably beginner's luck but I managed to get two to strike and felt that, at long last, I was a real gardener. Incidentally I never steal things from other people's gardens. I had a coach party visiting my garden once and they

stole everything they could. It was devastating.

Jim had absolutely no interest in ornamental gardening but grew vegetables and great potatoes until about 10 or 12 years ago. Then his COPD worsened so that he had little energy, Jimmy Bell's successor died and the space the garden occupied was needed for buildings as the engineering works (this had replaced the mill) expanded. He kept urging me to have a vegetable garden and was very disapproving when I made a white garden in 1997. I seem to have inherited my mother's need to create garden rooms in every available space. The white garden was made in the last piece of uncultivated ground round the house. Jim then kept on nagging me to use some of our farmland surrounding the garden to make a vegetable garden or as he put it, get rid of a lot of those utterly damned useless shrubs and flowers. We had many enjoyable arguments about the issue but I insisted that I had no interest in growing vegetables, that they were far too labour intensive, that they wouldn't grow nearly as well in acid soil and that I didn't have Jimmy Bell or Tommy A, his less skilled successor, to slave away for me. Now that he's gone I have stirrings of guilt and have decided to try vegetables this year. In containers. I am not particularly good at growing things from seed and feel that I would have more control over container-grown vegetables than ones in the open ground. If this venture is successful I might cultivate a patch of the farmland in 2010. Kathleen adored hellebores. Her love affair began away back in the 1940's when she found a large clump of *Helleborus viridis* growing at the edge of the orchard at the house of her parents-in-law. They thought she was mad to want a piece of this to plant in her garden with its small apple green flowers not all that much different from the colour of its spiky leaves. It was, they considered, an aberration. It, like many hellebores, is found in the wild, on calcareous soils. For that reason I didn't even attempt to grow hellebores for many years and refused my mother's offers of seedlings. Then someone else chopped her *Helleborus x hybridus* in two and gave me a half which has flourished ever since ... along with about thirty others. Even with my mother's tender care *Helleborus viridis*, which is a native European plant, has never become very big or seeded itself around. It took a lot of persuasion and a lot of weeding done for her to make her part with a piece of it for me. That was five years ago. I brought it home, planted it very carefully indeed and marked its spot because it becomes tatty in autumn and then disappears to emerge again in February. Since then it hasn't reappeared in successive late winters/early springs. I had to confess this to Kathleen because ten times out of ten she knew when I was telling a lie. I'm profoundly sorry she's not there any more – or maybe it's because of that – for this year *Helleborus viridis* has appeared. It's not in flower yet but I still cannot look at its distinctive leaves above ground without being moved to tears.



Worth A Read by Paddy Tobin

The early part of each year seems to be a rich time for new books and I have another few to hand which readers might find of interest.

The first is ***The New Encyclopedia of Daylilies*** by Ted L. Petit and John P. Peat. If ever a plant deserved that description so regularly heard in the heyday of herbaceous perennials, “a good, reliable and easy-to-grow plant”, it is the daylily.

Along with a number of species I grow a selection of cultivars in my own garden and have found them well-deserving of the above description. One, rather expensive cultivar, which I purchased last spring with a single growing shoot has now been divided into eleven plants in the garden. Certainly an amenable and accommodating plant!

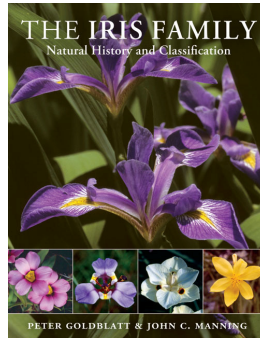
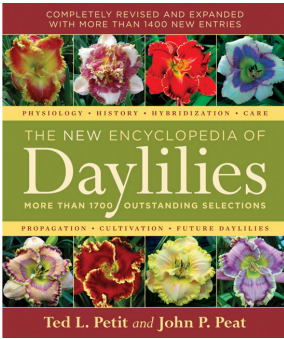
This book gives a general introduction to the species and cultivars and an update on present hybridising programmes in the U.S.A. where the daylily enjoys great popularity. There is a section on cultivation which, given the ease with which these plants grow, is hardly necessary.

The bulk of the book illustrates and gives a short account of a great number of cultivars – “more than 1,700 outstanding selections” the cover declares. The book is then more or less a catalogue of up-to-date daylily cultivars.

The photographs are of high quality and the descriptions brief, clear and to the point. It is an excellent book for the daylily enthusiast.

[The New Encyclopedia of Daylilies, Ted L. Petit and John P. Peat, Timber Press, London, 2008, HB, 408pp, US\$ 49.99, ISBN 13:978-0-88192-858-7]

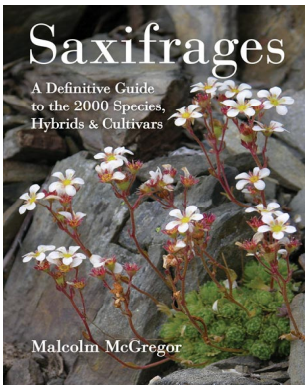
The Iris Family – Natural History and Classification by Peter Goldblatt and John C. Manning is a taxonomical treatment of the Iris family covering more than 2,000 species in 60 recognised genera.



The iris family is well represented in our gardens with iris, crocosmia, crocus, sisyrinchium, watsonia, diorama to name a few. These and many others are all clearly described in this book and illustrated with over 200 photographs and numerous clear line drawings. This is not quite the run-of-the-mill gardening book and will appeal more to anyone with a particular interest in the iris family with each species clearly described along with detailed keys to aid identification. It is more an in depth treatment of the family rather than a look at what might be of interest in the garden.

[The Iris Family – Natural History and Classification, Peter Goldblatt and John C. Manning, Timber Press, London, 2008, HB, 290pp, £40, ISBN-13:978-0-88192-897-6]

Saxifrages – A Definitive Guide to the 2000 Species, Hybrids & Cultivars by Malcolm McGregor.

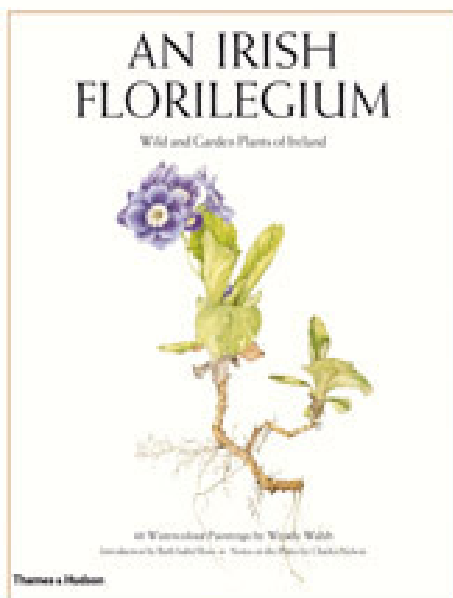


The growing of alpine plants continues to attract more and more people and, perhaps, with the continuing shrinking of garden size this is likely to continue. The saxifrage has long been a popular alpine plant for enthusiasts and beginner alike as it has an extraordinary range of species and cultivars to please and challenge gardeners of all levels of ability and experience.

Malcolm McGregor, editor of the Scottish Rock Garden Club journal for several years and editor of Saxifrage Magazine, the specialist publication of the Saxifrage Society, for many years also has long been an enthusiastic grower of saxifrages and has distilled his experience and research to present a wonderful book on this most pleasing plant.

This book brings together accounts of garden and wild saxifrages – their botany, history, cultivation and propagation. All sections of the genus *Saxifraga* are included as is the genus *Micranthes*. The author recalls his searches for saxifrages in the wild along with his experiences in growing them and, very helpfully for a beginner like myself, lists his top 100 saxifrages. This book will certainly interest the enthusiast but will also be an excellent resource of information and inspiration for the beginner.

[*Saxifrages – A Definitive Guide to the 2000 Species, Hybrids & Cultivars*, by Malcolm McGregor, Timber Press, London, 2008, HB, 384pp, £35, ISBN-13:978-0-88192-8808]



A good book is a source of great pleasure. A book with excellent illustration and perfectly written text is a great joy. The combination of illustration from Wendy Walsh and text from Charles Nelson gives a book to be treasured.

When these two direct their talents to plants of Irish interest they create a work which I can only describe as a national treasure and certainly a book which every member of the I.G.P.S. will simply adore as it addresses the core interests of the society.

In 1983 they combined their talents to give us ***An Irish Florilegium*** and in 1987 *An Irish Florilegium II*. Both of these were books of outstanding beauty with text of extraordinary interest. I was a young man, with a large mortgage and the expenses of a young family, at the time they were published and could not afford to purchase them. The mortgage is now cleared and two of the three children are making their own way in the world so the republication of *An Irish Florilegium* by Thames and Hudson is an event which delights me. Now, at long last, I have a copy in my hands and have the pleasure of being able to admire Wendy Walsh's illustrations, 48 beautiful plates, at my leisure while reading Charles Nelson's text with great interest and pleasure.

The short foreword by William Finlay sums up the charm and achievement of the book far better than I ever could.

"This book...is intended to give pleasure, not only by delighting the eye in its paintings, but also by informing and entertaining us in its text" and "There is a happy relationship between the three groups of plants painted – the native, the cultivated and the collected"

He acknowledges the quality of the illustrations,

"The essence of An Irish Florilegium lies, however, in the rare quality of Wendy Walsh's paintings. There is so much a blending of truth and feeling in her work that each of her subjects has its particular appeal and we are very fortunate in having the opportunity to see such a fair collection so finely reproduced."

The introduction by Ruth Isabel Ross recounts the history of plant collecting and horticulture by the Irish since earliest times and is comprehensive, informative and entertaining. Charles Nelson, as he has shown in many works, is the master of presenting extensive research and information in a clear, concise and eminently readable manner. While the paintings of Wendy Walsh are the centrepiece of this book they are completed and complimented by the writings of Ruth Isabel Ross and Charles Nelson.

This book will appeal to many and certainly to members of the Irish Garden Plant Society as it deals so beautifully and perfectly with our Irish plants. Wendy Walsh, Ruth Isabel Ross and Charles Nelson all have a keen interest in Irish horticulture and in Irish plants and their love, and knowledge of this subject beams from the pages of this book.

They have provided us with a work to be treasured. I simply adore this book. It is a work of an extraordinary high standard and one I am thrilled and delighted to have in my possession after a wait of over twenty five years. It is my earnest hope that Thames and Hudson will also republish *An Irish Florilegium II* in the near future.

[*An Irish Florilegium, Wendy Walsh, Ruth Isabel Ross and E. Charles Nelson, Thames & Hudson, London, 1983, reprinted 2008, HB, Large Format 48 colour plates, 224pp, £65, ISBN 978-0-500-23363-4*]

There might be a wait for *An Irish Florilegium II* to be reprinted but there is an alternative for anybody interested in these books. Thames and Hudson have taken Wendy Walsh's paintings from both of these publications and combined them into one new book of a smaller format, ***The Wild & Garden Plants of Ireland***. The paintings have been rearranged into a series of thematic groups, each of three illustrations. Each illustration is accompanied by a short text from Charles Nelson and each group is introduced with background and historic notes. The quality of the illustrations is superb and the text is succinct and perfectly gauged to both compliment the paintings and inform the reader.

One painting which was added to this book and not in the original volumes is a daffodil which was named after Wendy Walsh, *Narcissus* 'Wendy Walsh', a name suggested by Charles Nelson and a beautiful flower to carry her name.

[*The Wild & Garden Plants of Ireland, Wendy Walsh with E. Charles Nelson, Thames & Hudson, London, 2009, HB, 280 pp, 99 illustrations, £24.95, ISBN 978-0-500-51456-6*]

Munster Group Annual Plant Sale

ON

SATURDAY APRIL 18TH 10A.M.

VENUE: SMA HALL WILTON

For details see Munster Fixture List Newsletter page 44



Collectors' Corner – Bulbinella hookeri

Peter Milligan and Nicola Milligan

As mentioned before, our gardening interests lie with hardy herbaceous perennials and in my case in particular with many of the wonderful plants that have their origins in the South African veldt. How could anyone fail to love such well known favourites as Agapanthus, Crocosmia, Dierama, or the spectacular Kniphofia? However in this article we wish to introduce you to another beauty that has its origins both in South Africa and New Zealand – the *Bulbinella* genus.



The plants have fleshy roots and succulent grass-like leaves somewhat reminiscent of the foliage of the more delicate Kniphofia species. The flowers are described as 'dense, terminal racemes of star-shaped or narrowly cup-shaped occasionally monoecious' [1].



Such a technical description may please the botanists. Putting it more simply I think the flowers of the specimen we grow have a form similar to those of *Primula vialli* whereas Nicola thinks they look like small *Kniphofia* flowers. You can judge for yourselves from the photographs.

Currently we are growing *Bulbinella hookeri* (commonly referred to as the Golden Wand Lily or the Maori onion as it was reputedly eaten by the Maori peoples) which comes from New Zealand and can get up to a height of around 24 inches with a spread of 12 inches. In terms of cultivation *B. hookeri* requires little in the way of special treatment – a moist well-drained, neutral to acid soil in full sun or partial shade

B. hookeri can flower anytime from spring through to summer. It was in flower when we prepared this article (mid-June). We think the yellow flowers are beautiful – have a look at Nicola’s excellent photographs

Manning, Goldblatt and Snijman are rather dismissive of the New Zealand species writing “only the antipodean species enjoy any cultivation outside of botanical gardens but they are all rather coarse in appearance and monotonously similar” [2]. As we grow only *B. hookeri* at the moment we can not comment on the “monotonously similar” but we disagree that this plant is “coarse in appearance”.

The plants can be moderately difficult to source as an examination of the current RHS Plant Finder [3] will reveal. Although the online RHS system lists some 14 species only 9 of these are available from suppliers and, as usual, most of the suppliers are based in GB. However *B. hookeri* is the most popular with around fifteen suppliers listed and there is one supplier listed for NI at time of writing– Timpany Nursery in Co. Down can supply this plant. We obtained our plant from Bloom’s in Norfolk a few years ago and it has grown from a young plant to a healthy specimen about 12 inches high and 8 inches in spread.

So, ignore the comments of Manning, Goldblatt and Snijman and try one of these interesting plants for yourselves.

Apart from the work of John Manning, Peter Goldblatt and Dee Snijman, whose book is a very, very good reference text, it is difficult to find material on this genus. There are fleeting references to *Bulbinella* in *The Garden* [4, 5] (*B. gibbsii* var. *balanifera* and *B. rossii*) but you have to search a little further afield to find any lengthy articles.

One such specialist article can be found in the *Journal of the Botanical Society of South Africa* [6] and it is worth sourcing as it is by Pauline Perry who is noted as a leading expert in Karoo geophytes with specialities including *Bulbinella* and *Eriospermum*.

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John Manning, Peter Goldblatt and Dee Snijman
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- [3] RHS Plant Finder 2008-2009
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- [4] The Garden - Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society
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Vol. 127, Part 11, p 839, November 2002

- [5] The Garden - Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society
The Royal Horticultural Society
Vol. 131, Part 11, p 724-725 and p 750, November 2006

- [6] Bulbinella – a neglected garden plant?
Pauline Perry
Veld and Flora, Journal of the Botanical Society of South
Africa
December 1990, pp. 105-108

Don't forget the Summer Lunch

Saturday 13th June 2009 12.30 p.m. for 1.00 p.m. at
Rathmichael Lodge, Ballybride Road, Shankill, Co. Dublin
Organised by Ricky Shannon. The Booking Form is with the
April Newsletter.



Annual General Meeting 2009

The 2009 AGM will take place at the Richardsons Walled Garden at Greenmount College, Antrim on Saturday 23rd May. Dinner on Saturday evening will be held at the Templeton Hotel, Templepatrick. For those of you who are booking accommodation for the weekend, there are quite a few hotels and B&B's in the area.

As always there will be a series of garden visits for the weekend, starting with a guided tour of the Richardsons Walled Garden immediately after the meeting.

Richardsons Walled Garden.

The Walled Garden was redeveloped for the millennium and was one of the largest private/public sector initiatives to happen in Northern Ireland. The garden has a dramatic, formal framework with softer planting within. Features include a curvilinear style conservatory, a bronze sculpture, fountain and cascade. Intricate Celtic knot gardens and a small maze throw a wonderful contrast to the colourful mixed borders and rose beds. Pleached lime trees, formal yew hedges and a large trellis clad pergola contrast the informal potager planting of fruit and vegetables amongst ornamentals.

Other gardens to be visited (listed here in no particular order) are:

Fiona & Roy Simpson's garden at Drumadarragh Lodge, Doagh, Ballyclare.

A country garden with formal, informal and wild elements, including mixed and themed herbaceous borders, a gravel garden and a wildlife pond. There is also an organically managed vegetable and fruit garden. Fiona manages the supply of plants for the Ulster Gardens Scheme Open Gardens so there should be plants available to purchase.

Mr & Mrs Hugh Montgomery, Benvardeen Gardens, Dervock

This historic estate has been in existence since the 1630's, making it one of the oldest in Northern Ireland. There is a delightful Walled Garden with a splendid rose garden, several herbaceous borders, a new box parterre and a fully working kitchen garden. Extensive pleasure grounds stretch down to the river, which is spanned by a splendid iron bridge 90 feet long, erected by Robert Montgomery in 1878. The Woodland Pond was originally created in the 1850's but fell into dereliction. It has been reclaimed and includes plantings of rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias and some fine specimen trees.

Joy & Maurice Parkinson, The Cottage Garden Nursery, 154 Ballyrobert Road, Ballyclare.

Originally a small traditional farm, the present owners have used sensitive design and a high standard of care to achieve a Robinsonian principle of a 'garden to fit the place'. During design and construction many traditional landscape features have been retained and others added in the context of an Ulster cottage garden. The 6 acres of woodlands and more formal gardens contain one of the most extensive collections of herbaceous plants in the province. The nursery specialises in producing and selling many of the plants found in the garden. The extensive range focuses on herbaceous perennials, grasses and bog plants; trees shrubs and seasonal bedding are also stocked.

Margaret Glynn, 2 Old Galgorm Road, Ballymena, Co Antrim

Margaret's garden has been a Mecca for garden lovers for many years now, and as a longstanding member of both the IGPS and the Alpine Garden Society, she will be known to many of our members. A 2 1/2 acre town garden with established trees, shrubs and lawns. I have always found Spring and early Summer to be a delightful time to view this garden – although with the extensive plant collections and the charming layout, it would be hard to imagine a time when the visitor would not be charmed by the scree and water gardens, Alpine sinks, herbaceous plants, annuals, and woodland areas.

David & Janet Ledsham, 11 Sallagh Road, Cairncastle, Ballygally, Larne.

A true plantsman's garden with an amazing array of rare and unusual herbaceous and woody plants growing on a sloping, partially terraced one acre site. The IGPS Northern Regional group visited this garden several years ago and at the time we were astonished at the maturity of the garden in the short time since it had been started. David and Janet have continued to develop the garden since then and it should be a welcome addition.

A booking form for the weekend is enclosed with the Newsletter. A fully detailed programme will be sent at the time of booking. If you have any queries or need any further information, please contact Patrick Quigley. Tel: 028 90225484 (evenings & weekend); 028 90337218 (office hours); 0044 7801 299263 (mobile). E: mail: pmquigley@aol.com For those calling from the Republic of Ireland change the dialling code for home & office number from 028 to 048.

Annual General Meeting Agenda

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Minutes of AGM 2008**
- 3. Matters Arising**
- 4. Chairman's Report**
- 5. Treasurer's Report**
- 6. Election of Committee Members**
- 7. Any Other Business**

Nominations for committee

Nominations for election to the Committee must be forwarded at least two weeks before the A.G.M. to the Honorary Secretary: Mary Rowe
29 Bantry Road Drumcondra, Dublin 9



Gothenburg International Garden Festival 2008 Gail Roantree

The Swedish city of Gothenburg held an International Garden Festival between 28th June and 28th September 2008. The festival was based in four centres: Gunnebo House and Gardens, Liseberg Amusement Park, The Botanical Gardens and The Garden Society of Gothenburg. Although I had hoped to visit more of the festival sites, my time was limited to a single afternoon and I had to make a choice. With great good luck, I chose the Garden Society of Gothenburg, a place I would happily revisit, even if no festival were on offer.

The Garden Society of Gothenburg began life in the mid-19th century as a city centre park that was supported by subscription. Over the years it fell into disrepair, but has recently been restored to how it probably looked around 1905, including the 1878 Palm House, a copy of London's Crystal Palace. The park appeared to be about the same size as Dublin's Merrion Square with plenty of wooded areas and open spaces, but with areas of much more concentrated planting. A particularly exciting factor was that many of the designers integrated their plans into the existing planting. Also, visitors were encouraged to wander through almost all the exhibits, providing the opportunity to do more than just look; to touch, feel, smell and experience the scale of the various designs.

Ulf Nordfjell, Sweden's most prominent landscape architect, was the exhibition designer and must take huge credit for the overall atmosphere. His woodland garden described as *a cultivated interpretation of the forest's atmosphere*, included ferns, hostas, variegated dogwoods, violets, foxgloves, astilbes and Japanese anemones, mainly in white varieties, planted in large swathes beneath the existing trees. Julie Toll and Jacqueline van der Kloet's woodland had a different atmosphere, with a focus on its green structure. Plants included holly, hypericum and azalea, with arbour like areas to encourage the visitor to explore.

Piet Oudolf's woodland was the first example of his planting that I had seen outside of photographs and I was not disappointed.

The beautiful blending of helenium, sage, astilbe, aster and purple coneflowers interspersed with various grasses and cimicifuga drew me back several times. Close to the original traditionally styled rose gardens, a number of designers had challenged convention and developed more modern interpretations of how a rose garden could look.

Although Piet Oudolf and Ulf Nordfjell also contributed exciting designs in this area, the Sunken Garden by two Gothenburg designers, Nina Thalinson and Gert Wingardh, will become a permanent addition to the park. This sheltered seating area is enclosed by a 12 metre long blue and white mosaic created from old Chinese porcelain fragments rescued after spending 250 years in a wreck at the bottom of the sea. Jane Schul's small rose garden was centred on one of my favourite roses, *Rosa Chinensis* 'Mutabilis', which was placed in a central position in a large pot with the surrounding earth-based plants reflecting the pink, yellow, orange and red tones of the rose – an idea I am seriously tempted to steal for my own tiny garden.

Another thirty or so gardens were on show – mainly presented in the traditional rectangular form of the show garden, although there were a number of modern interpretations of Victorian bedding presented in circular form. Some showcased the work of horticultural students, others were by professional designers. All were worth exploring and were remarkable for their lushness in early September after being on display since June.

In addition to the show gardens and the park itself, other memories I took away from my visit include the plentiful supply of spotless bathroom facilities, the small but well-stocked sales areas and the choice of places to stop and buy refreshments. However, top of all these memories is the experience of sitting at a small café table in the Palm House sipping coffee and eating cake. How about it, Glasnevin?

Garden Festivals will take place throughout the country during the summer. Details are available from Fáilte Ireland or www.discoverireland.ie

In the South East there is a garden trail in June. Margaret Power will forward a brochure on receipt of an S.A.E. to
Margaret Power, Abbey Road Gardens, Ferrybank, Waterford.



Seed Exchange Notes March 2009

Well, praise be, this year we have an increase on our requests for the first time in years! As I write in mid March we have had 121 requests, up already on 2008's 110, and no doubt a few more to come in late as usual.

Very few people got all their first preferences this year as many donations had very few good seed, and by now even with a full subs list I often cannot fill the order. I must own up to at least one error (that I've noticed) – awfully nice of people not to comment though! I managed to list *Helleborus argutifolius* and *Helleborus corsicus*, when of course they are the same plant and *H. corsicus* is just a synonym now. I feel a tad better though as a couple of people requested both anyway.....

I asked in the last newsletter if anyone could tell me why *Athrotaxis selaginoides* is called the King Billy Pine. My thanks to Jane Hayter writing from Australia, who tells us the tree is named after either mountains in Tasmania near where it is found, or in honour of the King of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people – from 'Forest Trees of Australia' by Thomas Nelson and CSIRO.

Just one more comment as a few people have said how much they enjoy the flowers of *Libertia caerulea*, distributed through the seed list several years ago. With my collection of *Libertia* I can now say the plant does not exist! The only blue *Libertia* is *L. sessiliflora*, which I find a variable species, flower colour can be a good blue or a very pale insipid colour. All *L. caerulea* I have seen are either *L. sessiliflora*, or are in fact *Orthrosanthus laxus*, or *O. multiflorus*. Neither are as hardy as the *Libertia*, and often suffer tip burn on the leaves, sometimes up to half the leaf is browned off. The very obvious difference is the number of petals, 3 in *Libertia*, 6 in *Orthrosanthus*.

I'll do a full review of the seed exchange as usual for the next newsletter once all the requests are in.

Happy sowing!

Stephen Butler, Curator of Horticulture, Dublin Zoo



Seamus O'Brien describes *Lilium henryi* – 120 years in cultivation

“Some of the plants he introduced, such as the glorious light orange August-flowering *Lilium henryi*, do unusually well here – in my more fanciful moments I imagine his benevolent ghost smiling over the wall” so writes Helen Dillon in her beautiful book *Garden Artistry*. The Dillon Garden lies next door to the house once occupied by the Irish author, botanist, dendrologist, forester and plant hunter, Dr. Augustine Henry (1857-1930). Henry would have been pleased that a garden of such note had sprang up next door to the house he called home between April 1913 and March 1930. In that garden his wife Alice (for she was the gardener, he the botanist) grew many of the plants her husband had discovered in China decades previously, and in the early decades of the 20th century the Henrys opened their garden gates to many visiting plant enthusiasts. Augustine Henry sourced his plants from Glasnevin, Kew and also from Sir Harry Veitch before he closed the long-run family nursery firm of Veitch of Chelsea in 1914.

Their house at Ranelagh, in the south-side Dublin suburbs, had a pretty decent sized garden and on moving in the Henrys immediately set to work on planning a new design. They had a few trees to begin with, a fine yew, a ginkgo, a tall walnut, some apple trees and a long stretch of lawn. The latter was stripped and replaced with a series of box-edged borders and these were filled with all sorts of rarities.

The garden became very well known during the 1920s and an article by John William Besant, Director of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin published in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* in 1935, leaves a good account of Henry's garden not long after his death.

In the archives at Glasnevin is a list headed “*Henry Plants in our Garden*” in the handwriting of Alice Henry. This, alongside Besant's article, leads to a long list of plants in the Henrys Ranelagh garden, most of which carried his name. Within the confines of those box-edged beds visitors met with well grown plants of *Acer henryi*, *Androsace henryi*, *Corydalis cheilanthifolia*, *Cotoneaster henryanus*, the beautiful herbaceous *Hydrangea* relative, *Deinanthoe caerulea*, the rare maple relative *Dipteronia sinensis*, *Hamamelis mollis*, *Hypericum beanii*, *Itea ilicifolia* (Helen Dillon's plant is a propagation from the Henry original), *Lilium henryi*, *Ligustrum henryi*,

Lonicera pileata (now on every suburban motorway and roundabout) *Lysimachia henryi* (a gorgeous little loosestrife), the glorious *Rhododendron augustinii*, *Ribes henryi*, the ghostly white-stemmed *Rubus lasiostylus*, *Spiraea henryi*, *Sinowilsonia henryi* (named for its introducer E. H. Wilson or “Chinese Wilson” and its discoverer Augustine Henry) *Viburnum henryi* and the better-known *Viburnum rhytidophyllum*.

Along the back walls of the house grew bushy vines of the Chinese gooseberry, *Actinidia chinensis*, *Lonicera henryi*, *Schisandra henryi* and the well-known *Parthenocissus henryana*, while in the shelter of a small glasshouse *Corydalis saxicola*, the *ai-huang-lien*, a tuberous rooted perennial that he had discovered in the gorges above Yichang in 1885, bore crowded racemes of yellow blossoms during the winter months. By the front gate of his house, he planted one of his hybrid cottonwoods, *Populus x vernirubens*. That tree still grows there today as a reminder of Henry’s forestry years and is often admired by visitors to the Dillon Garden. Of all Augustine Henry’s discoveries, it is the lily that bears his name that lays claim to the hearts of gardeners in temperate regions of the world. It is a superb plant and without doubt the best and easiest of the Asiatic species.

Henry found it in 1887 on the limestone cliffs of the Xiling (Yichang) Gorge and in a few places near the summit of Moji Shan (“the Dome” of Henry and Wilson), a pyramidal shaped mound of conglomerate rock on the far banks of the Yangtze from the Foreign Compound at Yichang.

Henry not only discovered this sensational lily, but also introduced it to western cultivation. On February 17th 1889 he received news of a transfer from Yichang to the large tropical island of Hainan off the southern coast of mainland China. He was gravely disappointed, his plans for further exploration in Central China were in ruins and his diary (at Glasnevin) for March 2nd reads, “I had no sleep”. He departed from Yichang the following morning taking with him bulbs of

Lilium henryi and sailed down the Yangtze towards the east coast of China.

Henry spent March 17th, Saint Patrick’s Day, in Hong Kong where he called on Charles Ford (1844-1927), the Superintendent of Hong Kong Botanic Gardens. It was on that visit he gave Ford bulbs of

Lilium henryi, instructing him to send half the batch to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Thus the most beautiful of all the Asiatic lilies was introduced to cultivation. *Lilium henryi* flowered at Kew in August of that year causing a sensation.

According to E. H. Wilson, Henry’s lily had been virtually eliminated from the type locality (Yichang) by the time of his arrival there in 1900. In the wild it reaches little over a metre tall, bearing one to six flowers, two to four blossoms being the usual number. In cultivation it

performs far better, thriving in alkaline soils and hating a peaty, acidic soil. I have seen it tower, when well grown, to almost three metres tall in several Irish gardens and carrying two to three dozen flowers. Wilson, who introduced so many fine Chinese lilies had high praise for it and pointed out,

It is peculiarly fitting that such a noble addition to our gardens should bear the honoured name of a pioneer who has done so much to acquaint a skeptical world of the rich floral wealth of interior China, - Professor Augustine Henry.

Sadly Henry's lily has become a rarity in the mountains of western Hubei today. I had the good fortune of stumbling across it in September 2004 while travelling on the second Glasnevin Central China Expedition to Hubei province. We were making our way through Shennongjia, a region aptly known as "the Roof of Central China". In that pristine landscape, now a Man and Biosphere Reserve, an enormous range of plants survive and are heavily protected by law. Towards the end of our visit we explored the Tianzhuqiao Nature Reserve with our very knowledgeable guide, Professor Mingxi Jiang, an expert on the region, from Wuhan Botanic Gardens on the eastern plains of Hubei. We soon entered beneath the forest canopy by an enormous cascading waterfall (the rainy season had just ended and waterfalls crashed and tumbled over many of the cliffs we passed) and we continued our way on across a boardwalk and several flights of steps. Over many millennia the torrents of water have carved this limestone cliff into all sorts of shapes and on the cliffs above it grew a new, as yet undescribed species of *Corydalis*, then about to be named *Corydalis shennongjianensis*.

The *Corydalis* was soon forgotten however, when a little further on, we spotted on the summit of that beautiful waterfall, a single plant of Henry's lily. It grew on a mossy boulder, frustratingly out of reach, where the waters crashed their way down a wall of grey limestone. It's a memory, I think, that will never leave those of us who saw it that day. Few westerners have seen *Lilium henryi* in its wild native haunts and what a picture it made on the edge of a huge cascading waterfall, surrounded by the rich, steeply forested mountain peaks of Shennongjia. The sort of scene familiar to the great plant hunters but now almost gone due to the shortsightedness of our 20th century ancestors.

Henry's Lily has graced our gardens for 120 years now, three cheers for the modest Irish plant hunter who not only brought it to our attention but also sent bulbs back to Europe to ornament our gardens. Hip-hip-hooray!



Regional Reports

LEINSTER

January 22nd

Rare and Unusual Plants for your Garden

Paul Maher began his lecture by referring to the many times he has given this lecture before during his long career at the National Botanic Gardens. His plant list has been updated many times as plants become more or less available, but he stressed that all 59 on the present list have attributes which make up for their shortcomings. I will only mention a few from that list to which members might give serious consideration next time they are searching for something different.

Catalpa bignonioides Paul considers this suitable for a small garden. He recommends that it not be pollarded and that the flowers be allowed to bloom. He prefers the purple variety to the yellow one.

Firmiana simplex (The Chinese Parasol Tree) may not be fully hardy in Leinster but is already a street tree in Madrid. Seeds are available from Chilterns and the tree may be seen in flower in Fota. *Corylopsis himalayana*- Should be in all city gardens and treated as a specimen small tree. *Staphylea colchica* has many fine attributes striated bark, "nutmeg" fragrance, produces bladders of seeds, easy to propagate. *Colletia hystrix* syn. *armata* is architectural with a rugged bark. It grows to 14 feet tall, has a blush pink flower, is slow growing but can live for 100 years. *Exochorda macrantha*- flowers early but is never damaged by frost. Its flowers are shown off to great advantage against intense green foliage. Paul recommends that *Anemone blanda* be planted underneath.

Poncirus trifoliata (Japanese Bitter Orange Tree) is very spiny and could be used as a hedge. It flowers during the 3rd week in May and is grown for its fragrant white flowers and orange fruit which tastes horrible! It is better grown from seed. *Colquhounia coccinea* var. *vestita* usually flowers in late summer. Its crushed leaves smell like apples. It carries torch-like flowers for two months. On the east coast of Ireland it keeps its structure but is probably best grown in an herbaceous border.

Sambucus nigra 'Guincho Purple' is an Irish cultivar grown for its pink flowers and mature purple foliage.

Cleyera japonica 'Fortunei' is a bushy evergreen shrub. In cold weather the cream coloured leaf margins turn red. It can cover a large area and needs neutral to acid soil. Although related to the Camellia its flowers are insignificant. *Paeonia rockii* suffers no such drawback! This plant has flowers as large as footballs. Although slow to develop it is a long-lived plant. The white flowers are semi-double marked with deep maroon at the base. Although expensive, this plant is a showstopper!

Xanthorhiza simplicissima is an American plant from the Ranunculaceae family. It bears clematis-like flowers in pendent racemes in spring and is only c. 18" tall. It can be used for ground cover in a shady position. Paul recommends that it be grown with a small white daffodil. *Coronilla valentina* 'Citrina' is a "must have" plant, often available at the IGPS Autumn Plant Sale. Paul grows it against a wall. Its flowers are lemon yellow and it flowers all year. *Pileostegia viburnoides* is an evergreen self-clinging plant which does best on a west or south-facing aspect. It is "well mannered", not rampant. *Cestrum parquii* (Willow-leaved jessamine), it has a great scent. It is moth pollinated and will grow to 12 ft. tall if supported on a wall.

Gentiana lutea (Bitterwort) has hosta like foliage, without the slug damage! It will flower for 6 weeks during the summer and has a very strong yellow colour. Its foliage is magnificent all year. A beautiful, blue South African annual is *Heliophola longifolia*, seed is readily available. *Diplarrhena moraea* a small member of the Iris family from S.E. Australia/Tasmania . It produces many flowers and is low growing. *Salvia guaranitica* will flower 365 days a year. Its emerging buds are black. *Echium wildpretii* many gardeners may have lost this plant during a recent very cold spell. The message is to try again for its wonderful pink flowers. Grow it in a dry part of the garden as it does not like being wet and cold. *Isoplexis canariensis* – an evergreen giant foxglove, it is not reliably hardy outdoors. Shelter it from cold drying winds. The colourful flowers make the effort worthwhile.

As you can see this is just a "taste" of Paul's long list of treasures which he encourages us to grow. Inevitably, I have chosen those which most appealed to me. That's the problem with reporters, - you never get the full story! You can only get that from the man himself, an experienced grower and plant lover who spoke very eloquently about just a few of the many plants in his life.

Mary Bradshaw

February 19th. Irish Botanists in Jordan

Dr. Darach Lupton gave a very entertaining and enlightening talk on a research expedition to Jordan undertaken by the National Botanic Gardens in April 2008. Darach who started his career in horticulture at the National Botanic Gardens has travelled and studied plants extensively both at home and abroad. He went from Glasnevin to read botany and complete a PhD. on the Irish orchid *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* (Irish Ladies Tresses) at the Botany Department in Trinity College Dublin.

Darach opened the presentation with some facts about Jordan. Jordan is situated between Israel, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. It has a population of approximately 6 million people and is just larger than Ireland (91,971 km²). King Abdullah, who is a popular leader, rules the country and large portraits of him adorn many of the buildings. The capital city is Amman and amid the high density dwellings and urban sprawl lay the ruins of some amazing roman theatres and temples. There are two and a half thousand plant species recorded for Jordan compared to around one thousand in Ireland.

The main vegetation types in Jordan are segregated on the basis of rainfall, it is wetter in the north of the country and drier towards the east and south. The vegetation types are oak and pine forest, dry steppe, semi desert and desert. North of the capital Amman there are forests of *Arbutus andrachnoides* (strawberry tree) and *Pinus halapensis*. In the dry river basins there are pistachio trees, which appeared very dramatic against the barren landscape. In the few wadis or small streams the vegetation consists mainly of the giant grass *Arundodonax* and crop species. In the south of the country Juniper scrub is peppered through the amazing outcrops of sandstone. Across the apparently barren plains species like the unusual melon fruiting *Citrullus colocynthis* were also apparent.

Also in the south of the country lie the ruins of Petra, a world heritage site. This site was first developed by the Nabatheans, a group of Arab traders, who levied taxes on goods passing through the country to the west. Later the Romans occupied the city and when trade routes changes it was lost to the west. The spectacular Siq entrance and temples in pink sandstone made it a most spectacular sight.

Some notable garden worthy plants from Jordan were *Pallenis spinosa* a daisy family relative in bright yellow and a sea holly like herbaceous perennial called *Notobasis syrica*. One of the most spectacular trees of

the trip was *Moringa peregrina* (Miracle tree), this tree is very rare in Jordan and only a few stands of it remain, it had very pretty racemes of pink flowers, which were followed by an amazingly long seed pod (over 30cm). The vibrant pink of the well-known oleander *Nerium oleander* was also found in damp areas throughout the country. The most spectacular plant however was the purple black *Iris atrofusca*.

The long pastoral tradition of the Bedouin people is still very evident in Jordan, where shepherds can be seen with their flocks even in the city centre of Amman. There is a huge amount of grazing pressure on the landscape in Jordan. Many of the Jordanian plants have adapted to the pressures of grazing animals and protect themselves by having large spines. The most common shrub on grazed lands was *Sarcopoterium spinosum* a thorny small leaved shrub in the rose family.

Water is the big issue for Jordan, and is a more precious commodity than oil in the Middle East. The Jordan River was dammed and many of the oases have been drained for crop growing. In one part of Jordan near the site of the once large oasis or Asraq an irrigated vineyard was seen, this oasis is now just a pond, due to excessive drainage for irrigation from an area that once covered a square kilometre.

Darach then showed slides of the newly developing Botanic Gardens, set on a spectacular sloping site outside Amman, what first appeared as a giant lake at the centre of the gardens was in fact a polluted reservoir. Darach and team surveyed the new site by picking random plots and recording the vegetation within them, the species found within the plots were compared to the species found in the wild. By surveying both the vegetation at the gardens and the vegetation in the wild Jordan Botanic Gardens can focus on collecting the native species not present at the site and will have information on the species needed to recreate the landscape of Jordan within the Botanic Gardens. Some of the species found wild in the Botanic Garden were highly ornamental with *Cistus creticus*, many Tulipa species and orchid species one of which *Orchis santa* was widespread.

Darach's talk was interesting and very informative. He highlighted the ongoing links with the newly establishing Jordan Botanic Gardens and Glasnevin Botanic Gardens and he finished the talk with details on some of the research being carried out by Glasnevin staff on genetic fingerprinting of some of Jordan's ancient trees.

Dr. Noeleen Smyth

MUNSTER

January 13th

Pushing the Boundaries in the Garden

The Irish Garden Plant Society welcomed Hester Forde, to give a talk on Pushing the Boundaries in the Garden. Hester began her lecture showing slides of the seasons in the garden through the year. Christmas morning photos were a treat to see, of winter plants pride of place is a plant called *Beesia calthifolia*, which has dramatic silver leaves in winter.

Early spring garden has lots colour, such as hellbores, clamatis, primulas, snowdrops, and lots more. The most dramatic plant in her garden during the summer is a furry leaved *Tetrapanax papyrifer* 'Rex'.

She also showed slides of lots of lovely foliage, the garden has many plants and are grown for foliage affect, and she spoke of trees, among these are acers and a white barked Himalayan birch, a paper bark maple, and a purple *Cercis canadensis*. She said Japanese acers are quite tough once established, out in the open garden.

Hester also showed a slide of a lovely pink watsonia, purchased from Rosemond Henly in Annesgrove gardens, she hasn't any name for it. It would be nice if Hester named it 'Henly', until such time as she discovers the real name. Hester also went on to say to collect seeds and take cuttings is like an insurance policy.

With the many many different trees and a wide collection of rare shrubs and plants from many nurseries including England and Wales, in a medium size garden, the title Pushing the Boundaries is very accurate indeed. Hester's garden is not just a mixture of plants, textural differences and colour mixes are expertly placed. It was an enjoyable evening with a good attendance.

Kay Twomey

February 3rd My Garden and My Favourite Plants – Carmel Duignan

A good group turned out despite the dreadful freezing weather to hear Carmel Duignan give her presentation on her garden and her favourite garden plants for our February meeting. By a strange coincidence she started with a slide showing her garden covered in snow, which was taken in 1991 but could have been taken that very day.

She recommended *Daphne* "Jacqueline Postil" which is grown for its wonderful scent and colour at this time of the year. Another uncommon plant selection was the *Grevillea* family who seem to be very happy with conditions in her Dublin garden. One interesting point she made was that New Zealand plants are very wind tolerant unlike Australian plants which tend to be brittle. One casualty to bear out this point was Carmel's *Acacia retinodes* which was one of her starring plants but sadly toppled over in a recent storm. However, like most gardeners, Carmel philosophically saw this as an opportunity to plant something else!

An unusual *Buddleja* to flower in Spring was *Buddleja agathosma*, which had lovely pink flowers, which grows easily from cuttings. One of Carmel's favourite clematis is *Clematis napaulensis*, which loses its leaves in summer and must be placed carefully. Moving into early summer we saw a lovely example of *Staphylea colchica* which Carmel recommends as a tree with a neat growth habit with the added bonus of lovely foliage and beautiful white flowers.

Other summer performers were a *Deutzia* whose seed was sent by Reginald Farrer from his plant hunting expedition in Burma and is now called after him, *D. "Alpine Magician"*. Carmel apologised for only including one slide of *Schefflera* as they are one of her favourite plant groups!

This one was a beautiful specimen, *Schefflera taiwaniana*, which has hopefully not been damaged by our current spell of freezing weather. We saw some unusual *Echium* hybrids, which are seen by some as weeds, but as Carmel pointed out it is very easy to just pull up whatever seedlings are not needed.

Moving into the later season and some of the more unusual Fuchsia species keep the show going. These, along with the Correa family should be more widely grown as they are generally trouble free and long flowering.

I especially loved *Clematis* "Glasnevin Dusk", the seed of which was brought back from Burma by Seamus O'Brien, so it is of special interest to Irish gardeners and *Clematis urophylla* for their delicacy and beautiful foliage although the latter is fairly difficult to grow.

We all love a challenge! Carmel ended her talk with plants that look good at all times of the year such as *Mahonia lomariifolia* which has very lovely flowers followed by fruit. Carmel's garden is full of the more unusual plants for us to try and experiment with and hopefully we will not be deterred by the freezing icy weather we have had for the last few days from having a go at sourcing the more unusual or perhaps sending off for some seeds from the society's seed list!

Janet Edwardes

March 3rd.

Ferns for Irish Gardens – Jim Dennison

Jim Dennison is Chairman of the Limerick Plants group and has been passionately interested in ferns for over 18 years.

There are over 10,000 species of ferns found worldwide, but only about 50 are indigenous to Ireland, which is a great deal fewer than in the rest of Europe. Even now, there are new ferns still being discovered in the tropics. They can be found in all different types of environments, in forestland, up the side of high mountains and even in desert areas.

True ferns are the principal components of the plant group known as the Pteridophta. Of all the plants known today, the Pteridophta are the most primitive with vascular tissue (tubular cells that carry food and moisture around the plant).

From an evolutionary perspective, the Pteridophta fit between the mosses and liverworts and conifer gymnosperms. He told us that they do not produce flowers, but reproduce by spores, which are usually brown or green and normally formed on the underside of the fronds.

For some gardeners, the fact that ferns do not produce flowers might be a major reason for not growing them, but the diversity of frond shapes and the vast variety of shades of green, sizes and textures make them invaluable in a garden.

He informed us that the Victorians were very keen on growing and collecting ferns that they almost wiped out some species by indiscriminately removing them from the wild. One such species was the beautiful Killarney fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*), which was nearly made extinct around 1840.

Jim continued his lecture with particular reference to the genus called *Asplenium*, commonly known as spleenworts. He gave their locations and numbers on maps of Ireland and England. For example, *Asplenium adiantum-nigrum* (black spleenwort) is very widely distributed throughout the British Isles, whereas *Asplenium viride* (the green spleenwort) is rare. The green spleenwort is a very pretty little fern found in shady niches of lime rich mountainous areas.

He next talked about the genus called *Dryopteris*. This is a genus that contains by far the largest number of good garden ferns. Most are hardy, withstanding temperatures from minus 18 to minus 12 degrees Celsius and should form a pivotal part of any fern border. Many species have scaly stipes, which can be very beautiful and striking in springtime. One example of the genus is the hay-scented buckler fern *Dryopteris aemula*, which has fresh green, triangular fronds giving a crisped appearance. This will do well in a garden if given plenty of shade and moisture.

Jim finished his lecture by giving examples of ferns that he would recommend growing in the garden. These included *Dryopteris taiwaniana* and *Dryopteris wallichiana*.

A large number of hardy ferns recommended for use in the garden can be found in the species *Polystichum setiferum*. Almost all are evergreen with a fairly leathery texture to the frond.

We all enjoyed this excellent talk from a man who is extremely knowledgeable on this vast and varied group of plants.

Martin Edwardes



Looking Ahead

MUNSTER

Saturday April 18th 10am.

Munster Group Annual Plant Sale

SMA Hall Wilton

Plants can be brought in from 9a.m. on Sat.18th, or for collection in advance please text or ring any of the following

M. Edwardes 087-2776249

C. Coulter 086-8498086

K. Twomey 087-2078341

T. Murphy 087-2519402

Saturday May 16th. 10 a.m.

Munster Group Annual Summer Outing

Meet at the Swiss Cottage at 10am There will be a guided tour of the cottage, followed by the short journey to Cahir Castle. Here too there will be a guided tour and a stroll in the grounds.

Lunch at the Park Hotel.

At 2.30pm a visit to the garden of Mildred Stokes. This garden won the overall prize in the Viking Garden Competition in 2008. Mildred will tour the garden with us, and the day concludes with light refreshments in the Garden at 4-4.30.pm.

Detailed itinerary and map available from Martin Edwardes
edwaelec@eircom.net alternatively text or phone 0872519402.

All calls received will be acknowledged. Money will be collected on the morning.

Please let us have your name and number if you intend travelling.
Early booking makes life easier.

Cost of day €15 +lunch.

NORTHERN

Saturday May 9th ANNUAL PICNIC AND GARDEN VISIT

Venue:

The garden of Mary and Peter Brown, 3 Mahee Island, Comber, County Down, BT23 6EP

Picnic 1pm; 2pm for garden visit.

Members £2, non-members£3

NB Car share if possible as parking is limited.

This is a beautiful informal garden situated on the shores of Strangford Lough, with pond and a good mixture of mature and new plants. A garden room is available for the picnic if the weather is damp.

Directions: From Comber take the Downpatrick/Killyleagh road (A22) and 200 yards from the roundabout (just past Texaco garage) turn left (signposted Mahee Island 6). After 3 miles turn left, following the Mahee Island signage and follow the narrow winding road to Nendrum Monastic site car park. Park here (picnic items may be dropped off at the garden, right fork of road).

AGM: Saturday 23rd- Monday 25th May

The AGM will be held at the Richardson Walled Garden Greenmount College Antrim at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday 23rd

Garden visits on Saturday, Sunday and Monday will be based around Antrim/Templepatrick.

Details of the AGM programme of garden visits and booking form in the April Newsletter.

Saturday July 4th at 11 am

The Walled Garden, The Manor House, Killaughey Rd, Donaghadee, BT21 OHA

The garden was created by The Countess of Mount Alexander (Montgomery) nee de Lacherois – when the house was built in the 18th century. Mrs Nicholas de Lacherois-Day created the new garden with the help of the garden designer Christopher Masson. The replanting of herbaceous borders was started in 2002 and the water feature was completed in 2008.

ENTRANCE FEE £1.50

Directions:

From Donaghadee town centre take the Millisle Road (A2) approximately 200 yards up the hill leaving the centre, turn right into Killaughey Road. The walled garden is on the right with the entrance through the conservatory style Café Manor.

Parking is on the roadside

LEINSTER

Thursday 7th May National Botanic Gardens at 8pm.

A joint lecture with the Alpine Society. **Timothy Walker ‘On top but never in control – Tales from a small garden’.**

Timothy Walker read botany at Oxford and trained at Askham Bryan, Windsor and Kew. He has been Director at Oxford University Botanic Garden since 1988 and is custodian of the NCCPG Collection of Euphorbia. Timothy is also the Earnest Cook Lecturer in Plant Conservation at Somerville College, Oxford.

Saturday 16th May at 2pm.

A visit to Hamwood House and Gardens Dunboyne, Co Meath.

Directions:

Take Maynooth Road out of Dunboyne, Pass Dunboyne Castle Hotel, on your left. Keep right at next fork, 1.5 miles from Dunboyne you will see white fencing with a gate lodge on right.

Booking form in Newsletter.

Admission €8 to include tea/coffee.

Friday 29th May to Monday 1st June Bloom 2009 at the Phoenix Park Dublin.



Ireland's Wild Orchids - a field guide

Mary Bradshaw

Ever since the publication of “**Ireland’s Wild Orchids**” by Brendan Sayers and Susan Sex in 2004, the pressure has been on them both to produce a field guide to enable the gardener, wild-flower enthusiast, amateur botanist, tourist, to identify the thirty species of native Irish orchids in the wild. The original publication is a collectors’ item and selling at very high prices.

Brendan and Susan have now presented us with this field guide that is a truly magnificent production. All the artwork is new, produced over the 2005-2008 growing seasons, and the text and descriptions are entirely up to date. Before moving to the individual plant information, there are short sections introducing well-known sites, conservation, hybridisation, morphology (plant parts) and spur types. This last section in particular is so well drawn and painted that mistakes in identification are almost impossible even for the most amateur plant lover.

There follows the actual field guide to each species and some hybrids. Here we have the actual plant description accompanied by photographs and drawings. Height of plant, Habitat, Flowering Period, Status, Distribution and Variation are all dealt with in a very compact way, each page of text accompanied by a painting. At the end of each genus section is a useful page for the reader’s own notes and experiences. An index and bibliography complete the text and, a masterstroke, a small ruler and magnifying glass are attached to the book’s cover to assist identification. The field copy is also waterproof! Polyart, a virtually untearable moisture proof “paper” has been used and as the guide is spirally bound it will lie flat as the reader studies/photographs the plant in its surroundings. This is a useful feature in our Irish climate and it does not detract in any way from the glorious colour of the artwork and photographs.

I recommend this book wholeheartedly to members. Buy the field copy and keep it in the car. Buy the limited edition Library copy for perusal during the winter months and good orchid hunting!



Ireland's Wild Orchids a field guide
may be purchased at www.orchidireland.ie
and at the
N.B.G. Glasnevin, Dublin 9.
Price: Field copy €35 incl. p&p
Library copy €175 incl. p&p.



The Irish Garden Plant Society



Primula 'Kinlough Beauty' growing in the garden of Rose Cunningham in Co. Leitrim

Membership Correspondence:
The Irish Garden Plant Society,
c/o The National Botanic Gardens,
Glasnevin,
Dublin 9.

Please note that staff at the Botanic Gardens cannot take telephone enquiries about the IGPS.