



*The  
Irish Garden Plant Society*



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Cover photograph: *Gentiana verna* taken by Paddy Tobin, as were the photographs on pages 16 and 18.



## Editorial

What a wonderful summer we are having, with the added joy of seeing plants recover that looked unlikely to survive a couple of months ago. Stephen Butler, as mentioned in the April Newsletter, would like to hear from members about interesting plant losses, or indeed interesting plant survivors, please include the following:

Address (general area, urban or rural)

Site - elevation, shelter (windbreaks or tree cover), position (e.g. can cold air drain away)

Minimum temperature recorded (with site of thermometer - near house, on a wall, in the open etc)

Plant details - age (how many years established), drainage (is the soil very wet), previous damage (at what temperature)

Any protection given? Fleece, bubble wrap, etc.

Degree of damage - dead, killed to older wood, killed to ground and regrew.

Please send details to [stephencbutler@gmail.com](mailto:stephencbutler@gmail.com) or to Stephen Butler, Curator of Horticulture, Dublin Zoo, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8.

Congratulations to Brendan Sayers and Susan Sex whose book *Ireland's Wild Orchids: a Field Guide*, has been awarded the 2010 Annual Literature Award in the Technical category by the American Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries. The Annual Literature Award Committee "...was truly charmed by all the thoughtful innovations of this field guide, as well as the truly remarkable botanical illustrations done by Susan Sex."

Mary

Please send material for the Newsletter to: [igpseditor@gmail.com](mailto:igpseditor@gmail.com) or Mary Rowe 29 Bantry Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

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## *Ignoring our unique climate* *by John Joe Costin*

Landscapers, designers and architects fill their clients grounds with some plants which cannot achieve their full potential in our climate. If we advertise our competencies and professionalism, it is incumbent on us to specify plants that can achieve their full ornamental expression. Either we are not aware of the influence of climate, choose to ignore it or wilfully short change customers for our own convenience or short term profit, expediently ranking immediate impact above long term potential.

“Those who do not know history are destined to repeat it”, Edmund Burke said. Was he forewarning our landscape industry? Our perverse behaviour is that though we live in a maritime climate, we source a lot of technical advice, absorb garden influences and buy many of our young and mature stocks from suppliers who grow plants that are only suited to Mediterranean or continental climates. These suppliers produce many plants that cannot reach their full potential here, and their climate preclude them from growing many plants that do well in ours.

What we can grow is determined by soil types and climate. Climate is the controlling determinant. Ours is termed a maritime climate, because it is ameliorated by warm oceanic currents that originate in the Gulf of Mexico. Hudson Bay, directly opposite us, on the same latitude on the western shores of the Atlantic, freezes over for 3 months every winter. Our July average temperature is 10°C, theirs is 20°C. Our January temperature is 5°C. Theirs is -20°C. The climate of North East America is predictable and definite, the range is from -40°C to 40°C. It seems absurd but we specify plants that originated from N E America and expect them to grow here. A few do, but many don't.

Our native flora is comprised of 815 flowering plants. We now grow c20,000 species in our gardens. By trial and error we established that the most successful originated from areas of the world that enjoy an Oceanic type climate that approximate to our own, namely: Sichuan in China, Korea, Japan, New Zealand (South Island), Tasmania, Southern Chile, Argentina and Northwest America. The least successful introductions were from N.E. Asia, N.E. America and the Mediterranean.

It is instructive that all 24 of the 50m plus tallest trees in Ireland are conifers that originated in North West America. Trees sourced from other maritime locations are our tallest champion broadleaved evergreens namely *Eucalyptus globulus*, 44m Tasmanian Blue Gum and *Nothofagus dombeyii* 32.5m from Chile, it was one of the latest to be introduced in 1916, but has reached champion size already. Why have none of the record makers come from trees, native to continental or Mediterranean climates? Such trees were introduced up to 200 years before our champion trees.

A forester by measuring growth rate and timber yield can compare trees accurately. In landscapes we evaluate plants subjectively, by observing their amenity and ornamental merits. It is not enough that they grow and survive. If they flower profusely, set fruit or produce gorgeous autumn colour in their native place, we should expect that they do the same here too. Why should we accept *Magnolia grandiflora* only as a large leaved evergreen tree. Is that enough? Why can we not enjoy it for what it is noted for in its native states; dinner plate sized white flowers from June to August and a perfume that is reputed to be finer than any from a bottle. I have yet to see a flower on an Irish grown tree, it is unlikely I will. Native to the southern states of the USA from Georgia to Texas, accustomed to growing in heat and steam, we do not have the heat to enable it to flower yearly.

The Ivy, *Hedera helix* in Poland is a rare and endangered species and a protected plant. At the eastern extremity of its distribution it does not flower and just tolerates the extreme cold and heat. Why do we specify plants that can only grow as poorly here as the Ivy does in Poland? Adaptability to location is beautifully demonstrated by the Ash, *Fraxinus excelsior* our champion native deciduous tree at 40m in height. Tolerant of damp heavy clays, it thrives in our extensive alkaline limestone derived soils and is the commonest tree in our hedgerows. Being the last native tree to unfurl its leaves in late May, is a perfect adaptation to late frosts in our midlands.

Those in our benign coastal counties may not be aware that in the midlands July is the only assured frost free month. Coillte learned a salutary experience when late May and early June frosts killed the rapidly extending terminal shoots and wiped out a 500 hectare plantation of Sitka Spruce. Plants that produce a flush of new growth such as *Pieris* and *Metasequoia* suffer similarly. Agronomists like foresters are acutely aware of yield sensitivity in farm crops to local climate and latitude. Where comparative Strawberry cultivar trials were made in Scotland, England and Ireland, the highest yielding cultivar differed in each country. California covers 9 degrees of latitude. There the highest yielding strawberry cultivar changes on each degree. Maris Piper's complex balance of sugars and starch make its chips superior to those of all other potato varieties. Yet it cannot be grown in Ireland or Scotland, its production is confined in

England to an area east and south of Manchester. *M. 'Cox's Orange Pippin'* the king in Kentish orchards will not yield an economic crop in Irish orchards.

## Humidity

Alan Mitchell showed that the width of the crown of *Cupressus macrocarpa* decreased from a maximum at Cong Co. Mayo, to a narrower form in Norfolk, that corresponded to a decrease in humidity levels. This suggests that the maintenance of pencil thin *Cupressus sempervirens 'Stricta'* is a Mediterranean response to heat and low humidity. This also suggests that the thousands planted in Ireland will not resemble their elegant Mediterranean siblings in time.

The Olive is a quintessential of the Mediterranean landscape. Although in the same family as the Ash, this very long lived tree detests humidity. A grubbing programme of surplus olive plantations financed by the EU provided the landscape industry with a surfeit of fine specimens at a low price. Resilient old wood will allow some survive in the short term. In Ireland, in the long term few can. *Magnolia grandiflora* a champion tree in its humid southern states homeland measures 30m height x 27m in width. One sees magnificent pyramidal trees along the Riviera and in Italy. In response to our humidity I expect the tall elegant columns planted in recent years will in time be transformed into unshapely dumplings.

Rose Blackspot, Potato Blight and Apple Scab are diseases that are induced under low temperatures and high humidity. Powdery mildew develops in the opposite conditions of low humidity and high temperatures. East Malling Research Station in Kent evaluates ornamental *Malus* and apple cultivars for susceptibility to powdery mildew but not for susceptibility to Apple Scab. Neither, do Morton Arboretum in Ohio for its collection of 150 ornamental cultivars and species of *Malus*. The best of their selections are introduced by European growers as new cultivars. They in turn sell them on to us. There is no independent evaluation of their worthiness for Irish conditions. Why should the public in Birr be victims? I saw street trees semi denuded of foliage by Apple Scab at the end of June. It took an immigrant Dutch nurseryman, Matthew Neisen, to acknowledge their unsuitability in Irish conditions. He stopped production of *Malus* cultivars at his nursery in Cork. We import untested new cultivars yet, why does no Irish tree nursery grow *Zelkova carpinifolia*, the iconic and instantly recognisable tree in the National Botanic Gardens?

Both *Picea breweriana* (Brewer's) and *P.smithiana*, (Morinda Spruce) one from Oregon the other from an equally wet place in Afghanistan, thrive here. *Picea smithiana* is a magnificent weeping spruce, second only to *P.breweriana*. It grows faster and weeps as a younger tree. Both desire high humidity and are represented in over half the gardens catalogued by Mary Forrest. Champion

sized specimens of *Picea smithiana* are recorded in a number of counties. Neither our Continental nor Mediterranean suppliers can grow these.

*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* and *Tsuga canadensis* (Easter Hemlock) are native respectively to the forests of N.W. America and N.E. America. Both are prolific parents of innumerable ornamental forms. Cultivars of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* are among the most widely planted of all plants in Irish gardens. Cultivars of *Tsuga* are largely unknown and are not grown in our nurseries. Its many elegant and stunning cultivars are superior to those of *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* and would be popular if they were not such pernicky growers in our maritime conditions. On the other hand, *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* shows sensitivity to a drop in humidity. In Anjou, France it is successful only when grafted on to *Thuja plicata* rootstock, an expensive propagation method for a plant that is easy to grow on its own roots here.

In the 1960's a 10 year trial at Rosewane in Cornwall evaluated 400 species for their salt, wind tolerance and seaside shelter suitability. Our nursery industry was not established then. The research findings were not widely used then or since.

### **Outstanding Trees**

<b><i>Pinus muricata</i></b>	Bishops Pine	a highly ornamental pine.
<b><i>Pinus radiata</i></b>	Monterey Pine	
<b><i>Pinus thunbergii</i></b>	Korean Black Pine	Has unique picturesque corkscrew bole.

***Cupressus macrocarpa*** Monterey Cypress

Remarkably, the three American conifers were almost extinct when introduced from Monterey Peninsula latitude 36.5°N. *Cupressus macrocarpa* cultivars are grown on the continent as house plants. They make champion size trees here in our coastal counties. *Pinus radiata* is now one of the most important forest tree in many areas of the world. These Pines are not hardy on the continent. The pines offered by continental nurseries are dry climate Pines.

### **Bamboo and Grasses**

I grow 30 different Bamboos in our garden. The species most admired are *Yushania anceps* and *Chusqua culeou*. Coincidentally, the species *Phyllostachys nigra* specified most often by designers is among the least admired as a mature specimen. *Yushania* is widely grown in Scotland but our market is dominated by what the Italians can supply. These Bamboo thrive in an environment of high humidity. Low humidity probably precludes their production in the Mediterranean.

## High Temperatures and Well Defined Seasons

*Cornus florida*, the American Dogwood in flower, is the irresistible spectacle that moves northwards progressively along the east coast of the USA, from Georgia in March, to Maine in May. It is an experience many a visitor tried to replicate at home. This tree demands a continental climate in order to perform; it sulks in our gardens. It flowers in some gardens in Surrey and of course is a delight on the continent. In Irish gardens, the best flowering dogwood is *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis* from China.

Many plant species from both North East America and North East Asia struggle to cope in our climate because it lacks the definitive hot and cold or dry or wet season of theirs. *Cornus alba* is native to North East Asia. In Minnesota University in its dormancy period cuttings were subjected to an incredible -200° C temperature. They survived and grew. It is an extraordinary cold hardy plant. Yet in our climate an early mild spell induces bud break. Subsequently, frosts burn off the new growth. The beautiful form *Cornus alba* 'Siberica' is particularly subject to die back. I know of no established planting of it in Ireland. Clearly, its survival is not about absolute cold tolerance. It is about its inability to survive our alternating spring frosts and mild spells.

On November 8<sup>th</sup> 2009 I visited Kennedy Park to view the autumn colour which should have been at its peak. The colour of three outstanding trees that backbone the glorious display of Fall colour in New England were insipid. There was no promise or hint of colour to be seen. Yet all were first introduced up to 300 years ago.

<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red Maple	1.1656
<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Sugar Maple	1.1735
<i>Acer saccharinum</i>	Silver Maple	1.1725

Joe Morgan, Emeritus Professor of Horticulture UCD, studied factors that influence fall colour in New England for his doctorate in Cornell University in upstate New York. He showed that colour intensity, was a function of summer heat and autumnal rainfall. A high sugar content provides a fiery display. Heavy autumnal rainfall leached the sugars and diminished the display in the wetter autumns. Elsewhere, in Kennedy Park a grove of *Acer palmatum* 'Senkaki', a luminous chrome yellow, was magnificent, demonstrating that Japanese and Chinese species behave differently to N.E. American species here. It would suggest that species of Chinese and Japanese origin coming from a high rainfall climate have some protective anti leaching safeguard in place that the American species lack. In other gardens *Cercidiphyllum*, *Lindera obtusiloba* and *Euonymus grandiflorus* on that same weekend, were in their best fiery dress.



*Acer rubrum* is considered the most versatile of trees in landscapes of N.E and North America. For this reason, it is subjected to a continuous selection programme, European tree growers source, introduce and promote their best selections. *Acer x freemanii* is a recently popularised hybrid (*A. rubrum* x *A. saccharinum*). Its autumn colour is both spectacular and reliable. However, it is a tree for large landscapes as it has inherited the *A.saccharinum* habit of dropping large boughs without warning, even on the calmest days. For this reason Co Dublin Parks Department dropped it from its approved tree lists in the 1970's even though it can grow well here.

## Conifers

*Picea glauca* 'Conica' native to North East America is a big production line on continental nurseries. Few of the 1000s imported survive here. A field of impossible ice blue foliated *Picea pungens* 'Koster' may draw gasps of admiration from Irish buyers. A German Nurseryman will honestly say that for him it is an easy crop to grow. It is not for us. Relative to the thousands that have been imported there is a visible absence of fine specimens in our landscape. All of those that I see, grow poorly, are twiggy, bare, full of gaps and that is of those that survive. The Colorado Blue Spruce, native to the Rockies, thrives in extremes of heat and cold. It cannot abide the indefiniteness of our wishy washy, high rain climate.

*Tsuga mertensis* from western coastal North America is a beautiful blue conifer that grows well in Ireland. Mary Forrest catalogued specimens cultivated at Avondale, Castlewellan, Headfort Kells, Kennedy Park and Mount Congreve yet it is not specified by designers or grown by nurserymen here. Its production on the continent is problematic.

## Wind

Ireland is the second windiest place in the world, after the Aleutian Isles. Up until the single market was formed in 1992 a Department of Agriculture licence was necessary in order to import plants. There was a ban on the importation of any species that was perceived might endanger our forestry. Our landscape is the poorer for the prohibition on three major species, *Castanea*, *Quercus* and *Pinus*.

Where we now plant *Quercus robur* 'Fastigiata' the choice then was *Populus nigra* 'Italica'. It looks superb in the Po river plain, but miserable here, battered by high-speed winds that it is not attuned to. For smaller sites *Prunus* 'Amanagowa' was recommended, another miserable option that never grew well. Ed Scanlon introduced among many others, the lovely pyramidal *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer'. He used to holiday in Kilkea Castle annually and granted audiences. On his advice, I planted an avenue of this supposedly beautiful pear. The promise of elegance is now 25 years later a reality of hopeless disfigurement. The wood is brittle, and large boughs break off annually.

*P.calleryana* is a native to Hupeh Province in China an area free of wind and storms. I also expect wind harassment will dismember all those lovely 8m spires of *Cupressus* 'Stricta' planted, in the last 15 years. Wind and humidity undo the once lovely neat spires of *Juniperus virginiana* 'Skyrocket' and *J. communis* 'Hibernica'. They become floppy spires here. Spires that keep their shape and age beautifully are our own home raised *Chamaecyparis l.* 'Kilmacurragh' and very slow growing golden *Taxus baccata* 'Standishii'.

In the 1980's, cultivars of a wide range of *Juniperus* species were in vogue. Many of the prostrate forms are adapted to life under snow cover in winter and to seasons of hot and dry and extreme cold. Few thrived here. One suited to our climate, the seashore growing *J. conferla* native to Japan and Korea, encountered sales resistance. It lacked the endorsement that it was not catalogued or grown by the Dutch.

Wind responsive grasses were popularised in the 1980's using a collection of grass or grass like plants of species native to New Zealand, Japan and Europe. Grasses of prairie origin introduced by continental growers and sold as exciting novelties grew poorly here. We cannot replicate the extremes of heat and cold of their native habitat that they need. Markets are undermined by a lack of understanding and awareness of the growing requirements of each grass.

## **Flowers**

The intensity of summer heat is what sets the Mediterranean apart from our climate. California and New Zealand are major centres for *Camellia* breeding. Breeders concentrate on *C.japonica* as it has the widest colour range. Its flowering performance is assured in a Mediterranean climate where it receives the necessary heat to set flower buds. In our low summer temperatures, *Camilla williamsii* hybrids are superior garden plants for 3 reasons. They reliably set flower buds at lower temperatures, they are self grooming, that is the bush is not disfigured unlike *Camellia japonica* with large brown seed capsules set after flowering and they are hardier. Their drawback is a narrower colour range. *Paeonia suffruticosa* cultivars offered in bud with gorgeous flower labels are irresistible but should be resisted. At their best in a continental climate they are unsuited to all but our frost free gardens. They open their buds in the first mild spring weather and are blitzed in a subsequent frost.

Gardeners are adventurous and will experiment. They are also forgiving, blaming failure on green fingers deficiency. Professional specifiers should show more restraint. *Hibiscus* is a superb September flowering plant that once seen in flower gardeners covet. It is at best a marginal plant in Ireland. We do not have sufficient summer heat to induce it to flower reliably in most locations.

Sometimes a memorable foreign experience entice us to attempt to replicate that experience. In Siena, I stood in a perfumed courtyard marvelling at a 3 storey high white curtain of flowers clothing a large municipal building. We lack the summer heat to enable *Trachelospermum asiaticum* reproduce that experience. In 20 years I have yet to sight a flower on the evergreen *Clematis armandii* growing here. It does flower annually however, in other Irish gardens. Climbers that are destined to disappoint include *Campsis* and *Begonia*. Yet there are a suite of delightful Chinese and South American climbers suitable for shade and sun locations that flower reliably here namely, *Asteranthera*, *Berberidopsis*, *Eccremocarpus*, *Ercilla*, *Mitraria*, *Pileostegia* and *Smilax*.

We cannot match the range or volume of plant information published in the UK. We must however temper their information with reservations. Not all of it is applicable to Ireland. Where we can make valid comparisons we find cause to be wary. Hillier's Manual is a reliable and knowledgeable source of plant information. Nevertheless some of its observations are tempered by their climate which shows some continental influence. Most of the UK is less humid than Ireland and much of it is hotter, drier and colder. Many beautifully produced and formatted continental publications provide accurate and honest information that is based on experience of plant performance in their own climate. How many shrubs that they promise will be laden in berries will ever set a berry in Ireland. Has anyone seen *Callicarpa* berries? A significant amount of their technical data is not true for Ireland. However, increasingly designers use these manuals for guidance on plant specification. In a brief article such as this, it is impossible to list all the Mediterranean glories that disappoint but it is safe to assume that most will.

We cannot be prescriptive in a democracy but we can learn by observation. We have a fine collection of great gardens, albeit only 4-5 of them are in more exacting inland locations, where the trials and observations continue to be made to guide us. It would be remiss of us as designers not to utilise the potential of our climate or not to aspire to the ideal. It would not reflect well on us as professionals if we settled for the convenient or expedient. Is it sensible that we place a higher value on the instant and the immediate over the potential compound beauty of the long term?

Awards at Garden Shows create fashions and give momentum and credibility to trends. Judges are obligated to look at the perfection of the design, the specification of the planting and execution of the build. Their remit must also extend to the honesty of the specification, its long term viability and its suitability in the Irish climate. They should provide leadership. Their awards should not endorse the unsustainable, or those that ignore our climate and soil. Neither should they give credence to disposal consumerism. Some awards at Bloom have.



## *Rae McIntyre is Still thinking about last winter*

People are still talking about last winter. Even though we've had dry weather, a few days of summer and warmth, two balmy summer evenings when we could sit outside without shaking with cold, last winter's viciousness still lingers on in peoples' minds.

I have noticed it at the plant stall at National Trust Ulster Gardens Scheme open gardens. We did a roaring trade in agapanthus bulbs because so many people, who had left theirs in the ground, found that they had turned to mush in the ground after the frost. People asked about things like hardy fuchsias; one man said that all his had been killed. Even though herbaceous perennials predominate at the plant stalls I still hear tales of woe about Chilean, Australian and New Zealand shrubs being killed outright or badly damaged. I always thought that Co. Down had a much more benign climate than we have twelve miles from the north coast but it seems to have been hard hit by frost in many places too.

It's not easy to forget about winter's damage when several plants are still in the garden bare of leaf or with brown scorched leaves. We are advised by the gardening gurus to wait just in case the plant suddenly decides to stop being moribund and to put out a few green shoots. However a brown skeleton is not an attractive sight among lush greenness. I've finally decided that *Daphne bholua* 'Darjeeling' has outstayed its welcome because there's not a trace of life in it as I write at the beginning of June. *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' is just about 2 metres away but she seems to be made of sterner stuff and is still there. The plain *Daphne bholua* that has been here for many years had flowers from December through to the end of April. I'm scared to tempt fate by writing this but it performed better than ever and, strangely enough, didn't lose many of its leaves during the worst weather.

There's a great gap against a south-facing wall in the yard where *Myrtus luma* used to be. Andy, who does the heavy work in the garden, cut down the lovely cinnamon stems, all three metres of them, and there's only a piece – less than a metre – remaining. However it's an ill wind etc. because the rose 'Blairii No. Two', which had been planted there long before the myrtle, became completely overshadowed by it. Roses are generally sun lovers and this rose is now getting its full quota and seems to look much happier.

I'm afraid that three well-loved roses in the garden have died. These were the hybrid musks 'Cornelia' and 'Felicia' and the Portland rose 'Jacques Cartier'. They were not, I think, killed by frost but by an obviously harmful combination of exceptionally bad drainage and being moved at the wrong time. These three roses had been planted in a border close to where two great thuggish sycamores had been felled in 2006. I revelled in an unshaded, no longer sycamore root-starved area where roses would grow and they did grow well. But John Gault, a nurseryman specialising in rhododendrons, warned me that I could have problems with the water table where sycamores had been felled. How right he was! After last year's exceptionally high rainfall the ground in front of one of the sycamore stumps was a series of mini canals and undraining puddles that couldn't be cleared no matter what Andy did.

I became so fed up with this situation last March that I decided to have a pool here instead of one just outside the french windows of the house. With the latter the area between house and pool was inadequate and I could never sit there with friends or grandchildren without worrying about someone falling into the pool. The roses had to be moved to other parts of the garden but sadly not one of the three broke dormancy. I miss them because they would have been turning up now for their performance. Ironically *R. 'Jacques Cartier'* was bought because its petals are shaped to be able to withstand heavy rain. It also had the most heavenly fragrance.

The whole pool business was a bother because the frogs had spawned in the old one at the beginning of March and the spawn couldn't be transferred to the new pool (oval-shaped surrounded by flat basalt stones from the nearby quarry) because of all the chemicals from the liner and tap water. Instead I transported the spawn to the pool in the white garden, all twenty buckets full up five steps in total. Without these steps I could have brought it in the wheelbarrow. We've had a comparatively dry spell since the new pool was made so I'm not sure if there's going to be the same waterlogging that there was before. I hope not.

Rhododendrons, especially the winter-flowering ones, were a bit different this year. Every year the blooms, on at least one, are destroyed by a sharp frost. One is *Rhododendron eclepteum* 'Yellow' which usually flowers in early March but it managed to stay at the bud stage until three weeks later and flowered for a week, a whole week, between bouts of frost. *Rhododendron* 'Crossbill' with peachy-yellow flowers did the same. *Rhododendron spinuliferum*, which I first saw in flower in Glasnevin one February, waited until late April before its little red tubular blooms opened and now, in early June, there are still a few left. Alas the news wasn't good for all rhododendrons. There's a pocket of three of them facing south-east (can't remember what they are) that must have been hit by a blowing frost because their buds, and all three were covered in them, are just little dried-up brown knobs.

Nature seems to make amends after a punishing winter. The spring-flowering camellias, rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias have bloomed better than they have done for years. Roses, apart from the ones I have mentioned, are starting to bloom. Even after mild winters here they don't usually get into their stride until mid June or early July but I was immensely cheered when I saw tiny flower buds on April 9 on the noisette climber. *R. 'Mme. Alfred Carrière'*.

Some plants are slowly recovering from winter's cruelty. The leaves on *Garrya elliptica* growing against a north wall – a mistake I think – turned a ghostly grey but small green ones are sprouting all over. On *Itea illicifolia* on a south-facing wall, half of the leaves became tan and leathery but I'm hoping it is fully recovered by August or September when it has long yellowish green catkin-like flowers. In the white garden *Hoheria sexstylosa* lost many of its evergreen leaves but tiny new ones are appearing all over it.

All the hebes, except tough *Hebe salicifolia* with narrow willow-like leaves, are goners and there is no trace of *Melianthus major* but the eucryphias, which are much more valuable plants are undamaged. *Crinodendron hookerianum*, in spite of being in a sheltered corner, has taken a bit of a beating and there are no crimson lantern-flowers this year but *Desfontainea spinosa*, another Chilean native, is only slightly damaged. *Embothrium lanceolatum* 'Norquinco' being the hardiest deciduous form is 'on fire' just now. A friend gave me a sucker from his *Embothrium coccineum*, which is evergreen, and it has survived.

I spent a whole afternoon in May digging out hellebore seedlings and potting them individually. Hellebores never used to self-seed for me but now that I grow them at the edge of a border of rhododendrons they lean over and drop their seed on the gravel path. The hard frost must have promoted germination. A large percentage of them will probably be of muddy, indeterminate colours but I shall give them a chance in the hope that at least two will be attractive.

There has been an awful lot of self-seeding in the garden. Geraniums, foxgloves, aquilegias in lovely colours, bluebells, Welsh poppies, cornflowers and sweet rocket are popping up everywhere. In previous years I would have had a very low tolerance of these but that has changed to a laissez-faire attitude. Life's too short to be disturbed by a pink foxglove beside a scarlet geum.

Next winter? I hope the past one has just been a one-off like those of 1947, 1963 and 1981. However Gabrielle Monahan, who writes about Irish weather in *The Sunday Times*, said recently that some bureau, which predicted last winter's freeze-up, has said that the counties of Cavan, Leitrim and Roscommon are going to have snow in September. September!



## May on the Burren

by Paddy Tobin

An item in the Irish Times travel weekend supplement in early April prompted our long-thought of visit to The Burren. Our last visit had been with children in tow and flower searching on the limestone pavements had been out of question on that occasion so we looked forward to this visit for the freedom to wander the hillsides and rocky pavements in search of Burren treasures.

Since our last visit I have had to console myself with regular readings of ***“The Burren, a companion to the Wildflowers of an Irish limestone Wilderness”*** by Charles Nelson with wonderful illustrations by Wendy Walsh, a wonderful book which, above all else, shows Charles great admiration for this area. In preparation for my recent visit I sought out two small volumes: ***“Wild Flowers of The Burren and the Aran Islands”***, again by Charles Nelson and ***“The Burren and the Aran Islands, A Walking Guide”*** by Tony Kirby; the latter was of particular interest as the author was going to be our guide for the weekend walks. I fear I may sound a little like a boy scout but it is true that being prepared does add to one’s enjoyment and the amount of pleasure one may gain from any experience. My wife likes to book our holidays well in advance as she says that a great deal of the fun and enjoyment of any holiday is in the anticipation and planning.

Charles’ book presents not all the flowers one may encounter on The Burren but a substantial range of those more commonly encountered and I found it invaluable. I scanned it many, many times in advance of our visit and found it alerted me to the possibilities of what I might see and tuned my eye in, so to speak, for many flowers which might otherwise have escaped my attention. Only those truly oblivious to their surroundings could fail to notice the drifts of Spring Gentians (*Gentiana verna*), Mountain Avens (*Dryas octapetala*) and Early Spring Orchids (*Orchis mascula*) but Hoary Rockrose (*Helianthemum oelandicum*) might escapes one’s attention quite easily unless one was aware it might be present and that it was interesting enough to seek out.

We arrived on Friday afternoon and enjoyed a very pleasant coastal walk between Fanore and Ballyvaughan where the County Clare limestone hills tumble into the sea, sometimes with a gentle apron of level farmland and at other times as a sheer underwater cliff. These cliffs provide excellent fishing locations and there were many out enjoying the beautiful weather while catching dinner at the same time.

It is startling to find limestone pavement, a landscape we would normally regard as hilltop, even mountaintop, running right into the water. To be honest, we didn't pay too much attention to the flora as we were more intent on simply stretching our legs after our car journey but despite this lack of attention we still spotted the wonderful gentians, avens and orchids as well as the, to be expected, lovely clumps of thrift. I realise from Charles' book that the seashore limestone pavement and the sand dunes at Fanore would both be worth further time as they host an interesting array of plants. That will be for another day!

We repaired to The Old Ground Hotel in Ennis, our base for the weekend, as this weekend was a package offered by the hotel: accommodation, bed and board and guided walks on The Burren. Our appetites were gloriously satisfied in great style in the dining room before we joined those others who had come for the walking weekend in the Residents' Lounge. Tony Kirby, of Heart of The Burren Walks, greeted us there and presented a pleasant talk on The Burren, a general introduction to the geology, history, landscape, influences, social and farming life of The Burren. It was a great way to meet the others in the group, an opportunity to break the ice and get to know our companions for the weekend.

A bus called for us at half past nine on Saturday morning and with packed lunch, courtesy of the hotel, we headed north towards our first guided walk on The Burren. The roads became progressively narrower as we were transported into Rathborney Valley, just south-west of Ballyvaughan. Noting a perfectly dry stream bed alongside the road as we neared our drop-off point, it struck me that The Burren is essentially a giant limestone colander where water and streams disappear quickly underground. We climbed quickly along the eastern flank of Cappanawalla and were soon treated to our first Spring Gentians, Mountain Avens, Bloody Cranesbill and Early Purple Orchids. They were not in great numbers in this location but were appreciated, admired and photographed repeatedly for their novelty. By the end of the day these same treasures were regarded as commonplace though colour variations of the orchid, pink, pale pink and even white, continued to provide interest.

Another shot of that vivid blue caught my eye. It came from the Common Milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*) which, though it shares the same colour, does not rival the gentian as it is such a small flower. Lady's Mantle was also sprinkled about in this area. Three Lady's Mantles occur on The Burren but I would not venture a certain identification on which one I encountered. From Charles' book I would imagine that it was *Alchemilla xanthochlora*, Intermediate Lady's Mantle, which we saw so regularly growing in the grass. Our walk headed to the west and we were soon rewarded with glorious views of Galway Bay and Connemara beyond.



There is little doubt that on a day with such pleasant weather as we experienced it is difficult to imagine anywhere in the world more appealing than walking on an Irish hillside. We crossed a saddle where the highlight plants mentioned above continued to amaze us with their numbers and their beauty and came onto Gleninagh Mountain, a different environment, different growing conditions and another interesting selection of plants. We walked on what appeared to have been a recently cleared pathway along the flank of the hillside parallel to the shore but well above it so that we enjoyed wonderful views at all times. This hillside woodland was comprised mainly of hazel with a scattering of hawthorn and the Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*) in the understorey. Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*), Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*) and Water Avens (*Geum rivale*) were commonplace here. We stopped for lunch and our guide, Tony Kirby, pointed out the foliage of a Butterwort (*Pinguicula sp*) under our feet. While May is often touted as the best season for flowers in The Burren it is obvious that there were many other interesting plants yet to come. Of the eighteen orchids recorded for the area, only one was in flower/spotted during our weekend.

We moved onto a Green Road, one of the roads constructed and used for the movement of livestock on the hills and here the numbers and display of Spring Gentians and Mountain Avens could only be matched by an arrangement which might be seen at the Chelsea Flower Show. They were in their thousands and all perfectly arranged on the tiered shelving of the limestone hillside. It was an astonishing sight. It was also where I first spotted the Hoary Rockrose (*Helianthemum oelandicum*) which Charles Nelson describes as, “A Burren speciality, this species is very rare in Britain. It occurs in southern Europe, in high mountainy places around the Mediterranean, so it may be reckoned as one of the Burren’s Alpine plants.” As we neared the end of the Green Road and approached Fanore, Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) and Cowslips (*Primula veris*) became commonplace and I also came upon the False Oxlip (*Primula x polyantha*), a chance cross breeding of the Primrose and the Cowslip.

The roadside on the last few yards to the bus had Germander Speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), Common Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), Black Medick (*Medicago lupulina*), Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*) and Scarlet Pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis*) among other more commonplace flowers. The waiting bus brought us back to the hotel, a soak in a hot bath and an excellent dinner. Well, we couldn’t rough it all the time!

By the way, this walk is part of the walk known as the Black Head Loop and you can find a description here:

<http://www.shannonregiontrails.ie/FindaTrail/Walking/LoopWalks/TrailName,8611,en.html>



*Spring Gentians with Mountain Avens behind.*



*False Oxlip*



*A trio of Early Purple Orchids and a typical Burren dry-stone wall*



*Hoary Rockrose and Bloody Cranesbill*

The Ordnance Survey Discovery Series OS1 51 covers this area. It is also well described in Tony Kirby's book but, as Tony was our guide for the day, we didn't need to resort to its instructions. I had read it in advance to get an idea of what lay ahead and feel I could have done the walk alone with the book in hand but then I would have missed out on his interesting commentary during the day and on the comfort of having somebody else taking the responsibility for getting us to where we were heading. The guided walk gives great peace of mind.

On Sunday morning we walked in the Burren National Park at Kilnaboy where a very short stroll brought us to the edge of the turlough, Lough Gealáin, one of the seasonal lakes of the Burren. A wandering line of deposited grass and other vegetable material marked where the winter high water mark had been. The turlough had retreated significantly from this level and revealed the selection of plants which were underwater for the winter, or at least for a part of the winter, and were now into their growing season. The familiar Cinquefoil, *Potentilla fruticosa*, was just about to flower – it's always the way, isn't it! In fact, I found one single bloom on a shrub which was growing quite close to the waterline.

This area, in the immediate vicinity of the turlough, had a number of other interesting shrubs. We came across prostate juniper, *Juniperus communis*, which seemed not to raise its foliage more than a few centimetres above ground level. Purging Buckthorn, *Rhamnus cathartica*, was interesting for its growth habit – the trunk of the shrub was regularly quite substantial and showed signs of age but the shrubs were all quite small in overall size, growing out of the scailps of the limestone pavement and, once above ground, becoming fodder for the feral goats of the area. Ash and holly grew in a similar style. Stone Bramble, *Rubus saxatilis*, also grew in the scailps obviously running along lower down and only just showing its upper growth along the level of the flat limestone slab, presently showing its attractive bronze spring foliage but it would be nice to see the red autumn berries. I was especially delighted to find Turlough Violet (*Viola persicifolia*), the Fen Violet in England, growing here.

From the turlough we headed off in a north-easterly direction onto the flank of Mullaghmore to magnificent views, a great place for our picnic lunch, before continuing onto the western flank to return to the area round the turlough and our transport back to the hotel. As we walked we encountered scattered plants of the Early Purple Orchid, Hoary Rockrose, Cat's Foot, Bloody Cranesbill, Common Milkwort and Tormentil. At the top of the hill there were considerable numbers of Spring Gentians, in drifts as though they were daisies. Oh, how quickly these floral treasures became commonplace! Such is the experience of The Burren.



*View of turlough*



*Wood Sage in scailp*



*Yew tree on cliff*



*View of turlough*



*Looking back on the Green Road, limestone strata on the right and the sea on the left*

The western flank of Mullaghmore brought a different selection of plants. There was a considerable stretch of hazel scrub though, thankfully, some had been recently cleared to facilitate walkers. The outstanding plant in this area, in my opinion, was a fine specimen of the common yew, *Taxus baccata*, growing out of a limestone cliff above the hazel scrub. It was amazing to see it reach such a size in this environment. The hazel scrub was, in effect, a woodland environment and the flowers encountered reflected this. There were stretches of Primrose, growing in dappled shade, along the edge of the hazel woodland. Here also we found Woodruff, *Galium odoratum*, Pignut, *Conopodium majus*, Common Bugle, *Ajuga reptans*, Bluebells, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, and Sanicle, *Sanicula europaea* a plant I had previously been unfamiliar with or perhaps had not noticed. Though not showy, they were all beautiful and added to the delight of the area.

Even the last few hundred metres from the hazel scrub back to the road, covering terrain walked earlier in the day, presented some new plants. Though only some hawkweeds (*Hieracium species*) were in flower, it was obvious that they were going to provide the next floral display in the area. Wall Lettuce, *Mycelis muralis*, was widespread though not in flower as was Wild Madder, *Rubia peregriana*, its dark, coppery red foliage running along the scailps.

Unfortunately, this brought our time on The Burren to an end and we headed back to the hotel before making our way home. We had spent time in a magical place, a place we intend revisiting at another season. The selection of plants we saw provided an outstanding experience but, as Charles Nelson points out very strongly in his pocketbook, May is not the only month of the year when one will encounter interesting flowers in The Burren. Indeed, he asserts that there is hardly a day of the year when one will not find something of interest. A walk there at any time of the year would be pleasure indeed.

Reading Charles' book several times in advance of our visit was a good idea. It alerted us to what we might see and made identification and enjoyment all the easier. [***Wild Plants of The Burren and the Aran Islands***, revised edition of 2008, is available from Collins Press, <http://www.collinspress.ie/>].

Tony Kirby was our outstanding guide during the weekend and details of his guided tours may be found at <http://heartofburrenwalks.com/>. Having broken the ice, so to speak, I think I would be brave enough to step out on my own on future visits especially with Tony's guide to hand.

***“The Burren & The Aran Islands, A Walking Guide”*** is available from Collins Press or from Tony himself through the Heart of The Burren Walks website. I highly recommend it. It covers fifteen walks in total, excellent and simple directions, maps and comments – next best thing to Tony himself!



## Some *Olearias*

by Gary Dunlop

Olearias are not one of my favourite genera, despite which I have somehow ended up growing a surprising number of them. Many have dark green glossy or semi-glossy leaves and clusters of small white or off white daisy flowers, which in some cases seem to be missing many of their petals. The larger leaved species do however have several merits, they form good evergreen background shrubs against which many other more attractive plants can show off their merits to good effect. Many *Olearias* are reasonably hardy despite their reputation for being tender. Many of the ones I grow have survived a couple of nights of  $-13^{\circ}\text{C}$  about 10 years ago, though I did lose a few, inevitably mostly the more attractive ones. At least I can report that all the ones I currently grow in the garden have survived a month of freezing conditions, with the exception of the night before New Year's Eve, when a thaw melted the snow and ice that had lain for almost a fortnight, but was replaced with a further fall of snow at dusk that day. Most of the nightly frosts were only down to about  $-4^{\circ}\text{C}$ , but several nights were rather colder about  $-8^{\circ}\text{C}$ . For most of the month there was little thawing during the day, except where aided by the sun.

Those that are hardy in temperate climates are probably more suited to the cooler and more humid maritime climate and they have the advantage of being very wind resistant, and often salt tolerant, which make them ideal candidates for providing shelter to exposed seaside gardens. Wind tolerance is a quality which I do appreciate as I garden on a rather exposed and windy hilltop. Despite being only about 100m above sea level, with a gentle slope towards the south, it is exposed to the wind in every direction, which seems to accelerate before reaching the garden. I garden over 1 mile north of Strangford Lough, far enough inland so that direct or even indirect salt spray is not a problem. Many of the reasonably dull *Olearias* grow quite quickly and can become fairly large, and thus provide good shelter from the wind but are tolerant of severe and regular pruning, so they can be easily kept in check or reinvigorated if they become too tall or straggly.

*Olearia* is a genus confined to Australasia. Most of those grown in Ireland and the U.K are from New Zealand and Tasmania, though the majority of species are actually on the Australian mainland, but not likely to be hardy here. They are members of the daisy plant family, long known as Compositae, now called Asteraceae. As with many other genera, there are ancient links to the flora of

South America, which is most clearly evident with *Chilotrichum diffusum*, which bears a close resemblance to *Olearia phlogopappa*, though with rather smaller leaves.

I suppose it is fitting therefore to discover that the genus was established with a mistake. The genus was established in 1802 <sup>1</sup> by the German Conrad Moench, who was professor of Botany at Marberg University by reclassifying *Aster dentata* (Andrews) as *Olearia dentata*. The International Plant Names Index identifies the plant he named as actually *Aster tomentosa*. (H.Wendl.), though the current name for the plant now apparently is *Olearia tomentosa*. This was not an isolated mistake, as subsequently a number of plants attributed to *Olearia* were later transferred to the genus *Aster* and visa versa. A number of *Olearias* were also first placed in the genus *Eurybia*.

However, this initial changing of names created complications for the plant now named *O. macrodonta* (Baker). This plant was originally discovered and named *Eurybia dentata* by Joseph Dalton Hooker in 1853 <sup>2</sup> and renamed by him as *O. dentata* in 1864.<sup>3</sup> However as the name had already been used, albeit inappropriately, it was not valid. The mistake was corrected by Baker in 1884<sup>4</sup> who renamed the plant *O. macrodonta*. Bean introduces further confusion by suggesting that the status of the species is uncertain suggesting that it is possibly a hybrid between *O. arborescens* and *O. ilicifolia*.<sup>5</sup> However, H.H.Alan regards it as a valid species in the Flora of New Zealand. <sup>6</sup> Bean also lists two cultivars cv. Major and Minor, which gives a strong indication of how variable the species is in the wild, and I understand from Jeff Irons that botanists in New Zealand now support the hybrid theory.

The late Peter Clough, when he became head gardener of Inverewe, found himself responsible for the National Collection of *Olearia*. He subsequently researched the genus and wrote a brief article<sup>7</sup>, aptly titled '**A journey through a beautiful minefield**', in which he described some of the species in alphabetical order. He also mentioned that Jane Taylor also provided a summary of the species in the Inverewe National Collection in her book on National Collections.<sup>8</sup> He suggested that many gardeners in New Zealand thought the name *Olearia* was derived from the Latin *Olea* for 'Olive' and *aria* meaning 'like'. It was actually named after the German botanist Ölschläger, whose father latinised the name to become *Olearius*. This being so, it has an affect on the proper pronunciation of the Genus name, being correctly pronounced O-le-aria and not, as one might expect O-lear-ia, particularly if you come from Ireland.

The earliest survey of the genus published for gardeners was by Arnold-Forster, whose peerless book should be on the shelves of anyone interested in half-hardy plants.<sup>9</sup> It has been republished so should now be easier to obtain.

A more detailed list, of many of the species in cultivation, was written by Lord Talbot de Malahide, who was particularly interested in the genus. Usefully, he arranged the species that he described in groups with regard to their assessed hardiness. It was published in 2 parts in 1965.<sup>10 11</sup> An update on Talbot de Malahide's paper and collection was published by Anne James in 1998, in Moorea, the Journal of the Irish Garden Plant Society.<sup>12</sup> The Talbot Botanical gardens hold a second National Collection of *Olearia*, and perhaps rather surprising for plants from New Zealand and Tasmania, where the soils are usually acidic, the soil at Malahide Castle is alkaline. Bean, as usual, is probably the most readily available and comprehensive source of descriptions and background information on most of the species and many hybrids in cultivation.<sup>5</sup> However, Metcalf is perhaps the most detailed source of descriptions.<sup>13</sup> Cave and Paddison's book<sup>14</sup> provides some reasonable illustrations of most New Zealand species, arranged by size of plant, whereas Salmon arranges his less impressive photographs by the type of habitat.<sup>15</sup>

Illustrations of the Tasmanian species are more difficult to come across in published works. They are generally small leaved with the exception of *O. argophylla* from wet forest areas, which resembles *O. arborescens* from New Zealand. Two paper back books are the best source illustrations, with Tasmania's Natural Flora being the most comprehensive and with fuller descriptions.<sup>16</sup> The second book A Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania (4<sup>th</sup> ed) is also useful.<sup>17</sup> The former of these two is, I understand from Jeff Irons, currently out of print and few copies reached the UK. Quite a few good illustrations of *Olearias* can be found at [www.hebesoc.org](http://www.hebesoc.org).

### **The Coloured *Olearias***

However, I must concentrate on those *Olearias* which have coloured flowers, I have grown one species from the Australian mainland, *O. frostii* (F Muller). It was originally discovered in 1889 by J H Willis on Mt Hotham in Victoria at an elevation of 6000ft, and originally identified as an aster, but transferred to *Olearia* in 1956. It was illustrated in the Bot Mag 40 years ago.<sup>18</sup> It is a compact but attractive prostrate sub shrub with soft grey leaves and quite large pink or lilac and recognisable daisy flowers, and well suited to a sunny rock garden. It is quite a few years since I grew it and I can't remember what caused its demise or even when. It is all too easy to overlook a small plant in a large garden, and not notice its disappearance. Drought, significant frost or simply starvation from a nutrient deficient soil, are all plausible reasons. It is quite rare in cultivation, though I would be tempted to grow it again, if the opportunity arose.

A second species with tiny flowers of an attractive bright blue colour that I briefly grew is *O. ramulosa* 'Blue Stars'. It was certainly not very hardy and did survive for 2-3 years, long enough for it to reach about 60cm tall, with very small leaves and an open growth habit, possibly due to being grown in light



shade. It again might look well in a sunny sheltered rock garden but otherwise amongst other larger shrubs looks rather insignificant. It is still available from Graham Hutchins of Country Park Nursery, who obtained the rare blue form of the species from New Zealand and gave it the appropriate cultivar name. The species is normally white flowered.

Perhaps the two most well known coloured *Olearias* are 'Comber's Blue' and 'Comber's Pink', which are now classified as *O. phlogopappa*, though they originally went by the earlier name of *O.gunniana* var. *splendens*. An interesting article in the privately produced magazine 'My Garden', by James Comber,<sup>19</sup> the father of Harold Comber and head gardener at Nymans, describes the origin of these plants. The original plants raised from Comber's seed collected in Tasmania had a much larger colour range, but most were lost to cultivation as they are not fully hardy. Curiously no one seems to have tried crossing the two coloured survivors with each other or with the more common and typical white flowered species. From my experience *O. phlogopappa* 'Comber's Pink' is slightly more tender than *O. phlogopappa* 'Comber's Blue', and recent experience would suggest that  $-8^{\circ}\text{C}$  is close to their survival limit, though the typical white form of the species is a little hardier.

The coloured forms mostly tend to flower near the top of the stems whereas the white forms flower right up the stems, which might support the original description of the origin as being possible hybrids with another species. It would seem that at least two pink coloured forms have survived, as a replacement for the long lost *O. 'Comber's Pink'*. Obtained several years ago, it has just started flowering with rich deep magenta coloured flowers, rather than the normal bland mid pink colour. Unfortunately, I cannot remember the source of the unusual rich pink coloured flower.

When first exhibited at Chelsea many visitors to the stand dismissed this new coloured group of *Olearias* as 'forced' Asters, and inappropriate for a spring show. Whilst the individual flowers are not large they are plentiful, and make a good if brief show. There is one other named blue form *O. x scillionensis* 'Master Michael', a blue form of the hybrid which arose at Tresco and which is deemed to be a cross between *O.lirata* and *O. phlogopappa*, though the plant which I grew briefly did not seem to be noticeably different from 'Comber's Blue', and probably was not the correct plant. The original hybrid *O. x scillionensis* is white flowered, and a recent acquisition could easily be mistaken for *O.phlogopappa*.

One *Olearia* stands out from all the rest for attractiveness, in flower, foliage and growth habit. It was reputedly introduced into cultivation in 1909 by Dorrian Smith as *Olearia semidentata*, which he collected in the Chatham Islands and brought back to his garden Tresco in the Scilly Isles.<sup>20</sup> However, as Charles Nelson relates, it was actually introduced into cultivation the year before, with

a consignment of plants sent to Glasnevin Botanic Gardens by Henry Travers which arrived in 1908.<sup>21</sup> he subsequently tracked down the original type specimen of *O.semidentata* <sup>22</sup> and concluded that both the plants in cultivation were in fact hybrids and so renamed the Glasnevin plant *Olearia* 'Henry Travers'. The parentage is *O. chathamica* x *O. semidentata*, and apparently the former species grows near the coast and the latter further inland and between the two groups of species there is a large hybrid swarm. These are probably somewhat variable so it is questionable whether the cultivar name is appropriate for perhaps plants propagated from more than one original hybrid, even if quite similar.

*O. 'Henry Travers'* has a neat upright but spreading growth with fairly narrow leaves with serrated edges, dark glossy green above and silvery white beneath, with a similar covering on the young branches and stems. The pale lavender flowers with purple centres are full and neat and much larger than most of the genus, being more than 50mm across. In or out of flower it is an attractive plant worthy of a prime position in any garden where it can survive. However, it is likely that relatively cool and humid conditions are necessary for it to flourish. It would certainly seem to be quite hardy to  $-8^{\circ}\text{C}$ , as the recent winter has proved, but mortally wounded by  $-13^{\circ}\text{C}$  from previous experience, though not initially killed outright.

*Olearia chatamica* is similar to its hybrid offspring, though with a more lax and straggly growth habit and broader and slightly coarser leaves. The flowers are if anything slightly larger but often of rather dishevelled appearance, with an often slightly irregular arrangement of the petals and occasional gaps between them. They can be pale lavender or almost white fading as they mature. I first saw it in the garden of the late Mrs Reside in Rostrevor about 20 years ago. She kindly gave me a cutting of it, at a time when Charles Nelson was sure the true species was not in cultivation. Who made this particular collection and when it was introduced to cultivation, does not seem to be known, though it may have been Lord Talbot de Malahide, who planted a specimen in his garden in 1959, which was lost in the bad winter of 1962-3. <sup>12</sup> He obviously had either cuttings or reserve plants inside which survived, as he was still growing the plant at the end of the decade, though he may well have only collected the 8 Chatham Island endemics on his visit to the Chatham Isles which are listed in a footnote in the article he wrote about his brief trip. <sup>23</sup>. The species had also been growing at Mount Stewart for some years from cuttings obtained some years before from Mrs Reside, by Nigel Marshall, now retired as head gardener, and is sometimes propagated for sale at the local plant sales for the National Trust. Thus a couple of years ago I was able to get a replacement for my original plant which succumbed to severe frost of  $-13^{\circ}\text{c}$  about ten years ago.

Captain Arthur Dorian Smith on visiting the Chatham Isles, also collected *O. chathamica*, and was first to introduce the species into cultivation in Britain,

which was illustrated and described in the Botanical Magazine in 1912. <sup>24</sup> It must have been subsequently lost as it was not included in the substantial list of Olearias been grown on Tresco in 1985 <sup>25</sup> and may still not be grown there. The Garden Cottage Nursery in Scotland lists this fairly rare species along with many other Olearias, which are likely to be correctly named, as propagation material is probably obtained from the nearby National Collection at Inverewe. Henry Travers was responsible for supplying quite a few other species to Glasnevin, from where they entered cultivation in the British Isles, which were described by C.F. Ball in the Gardeners' Chronicle in 1911 <sup>26</sup>.

It is not certain whether the true *Olearia semidentata* is in cultivation, though it may now be grown at Inverewe, and if so must be of quite recent introduction. The true species is illustrated in Cave & Paddison p.83 <sup>14</sup> which suggests that it has a fairly dense growth habit with quite large flowers similar to *O. chatamica* but opening a warm lavender colour before fading much paler. The leaves are of similar shape to *O. 'Henry Travers'* but appear to be a little less rigid and possibly a paler green on the upper surface, so it is not surprising that the plants originally introduced into cultivation as this species were wrongly identified.

A year ago I acquired another species with very similar foliage to *O. 'Henry Travers'*. Indeed I was initially convinced that the rooted cutting I received was the wrong plant, until I checked up on its description. *Olearia angustifolia* is found on Stewart Island and parts of the South island, and has similar flowers to the species but in groups of three and with white petals and purple centres. It too is likely to require fairly mild and humid conditions to grow well. It appears to have a fairly upright growth habit and can apparently reach about 6m tall. Another rare species with similar foliage and flowers from Fiordland is *O. oporina* (Forst.), it has also white petals but with yellow centres. It is only mentioned by Allan in the Flora of New Zealand <sup>6</sup> but not in any of the other references mentioned and is almost certainly not in cultivation.

One other *Olearia* that is well worth growing has clusters of small white flowers and small silvery leaves with slightly serrated edges. I can't remember the name I first obtained it under, but it was probably *O. mollis*, as I grew it from cuttings received from a friend. The name was apparently used by Kew, as that is the name under which Arnold-Forster describes the plant which he obtained from Kew. However the name was already used for another hybrid which occurred in the wild, of the same cross as *O. x mollis 'Zennorensis'* mentioned above. Bean <sup>5</sup> describes the plant as *O. ilicifolia x moshata*, and more recently it was written up as *Olearia x matthewsii* of which two rare naturally occurring forms are known, the second form having longer and narrower leaves. The second form may not be in cultivation in New Zealand, but the form similar to that in cultivation in Great Britain was given the cultivar name of 'Highland Mist'. <sup>7</sup>

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jeff Irons for his helpful comments on the draft, the library staff of both the Lindley Library and the Botany Library of the Natural History Museum, and Murray Dawson for the copy of Peter Heenan's article.



## Regional Reports

### MUNSTER

Tuesday April 6<sup>th</sup> “Bulbs for all Seasons” a lecture by Paul Cutler

Paul Cutler, who is the Head Gardener of Altamont Gardens in Carlow, has a very keen interest in bulbs. No doubt most people would be aware of the snowdrop week, which is held at Altamont each year that was started by Paul some years ago. His talk on bulbs through the seasons showed that he had a great knowledge of this particular group of garden plants. He started with a good explanation of the differences between corms, tubers and rhizomes. Because the bulbs are the storage organs of the plant, particular attention should be paid to the manner in which the bulb is stored. He told us that bulbs should be stored in a very gritty granular mixture and usually in a clay pot as it can breathe. For bulbs that like wetter conditions, he suggested that one should use a plastic pot. He recommended that bulbs should be fed with a high potash fertilizer like tomato food.

Paul then moved on to the second half of his talk showing slides, and many of them were bulbs growing in a naturalistic setting in Altamont itself. The entrance area of the garden was especially beautiful, where cocoa shell was used as a mulch to keep in moisture under the tree canopy and also to suppress weeds. Paul explained that this area was ideal for spring bulbs because after the bulbs had done their show, the tree canopy darkened the whole area so that the leaves could die down in their own time without being unsightly. Here were many of the vast collections of unusual snowdrops for which the garden is famous. At this stage most have bulked up and put on an amazing show. Other spring bulbs looking lovely were *Cyclamen hederifolium*, and *Erythronium californicum* ‘White Beauty’. Bulbs Paul recommended to naturalize in a damp meadow situation included the summer snowflake, the scilla and *Tulipa speciosa*.

Then we saw some of the more demanding bulbs that need the best of conditions and pampering and plenty of feeding. Crown imperials need good well-rotted farm manure as do many of the lily family, but will reward well given their requirements. As the iris family is so varied, there is an iris for almost every situation, but knowing which iris needs what is the key to growing them successfully.

Paul also mentioned that mice are very attracted to *Crocus minimus* and can easily devour a whole planting of them. So, if you are wondering why your crocus have not reappeared, then this could be the reason. Paul ended his talk with an invitation to come and visit his lovely Altamount, which we all hope to do in the future.

Janet Edwardes

## LEINSTER

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March “Lazy Hazy Days of Summer” a lecture by Hester Forde

On a very very cold night in the Botanic Gardens in Dublin, with temperatures well below zero, Hester treated us to a delightful talk and walk through her garden. Summer seemed just around the corner as we looked at the beautiful slides of her garden ‘Coosheen’ on the estuary of Cork Harbour. The garden, an exposed site of 1/3 of an acre, was developed using tons of top soil to improve the ground and to build raised beds which she has planted with a wonderful collection of special plants all grown to perfection.

As well as her snowdrop collection the season opens with a great display of Ferns, Trilliums, Erythroniums and Podophyllums to name a few. The contrast of green and foliage types was wonderful, with the unfurling Ferns being especially uplifting. In May and June the Hostas, *Omphalodes*, *Corydalis*, *Dicentra*, *Epimedium* and *Tulipa* ‘Queen of Night’ take centre stage. *Hosta* ‘Blue Angel’ was especially impressive. *Omphalodes cappadocica* ‘Blue Rug’ under *Acer palmatum* ‘Chitoseyama’ was perfect as was *Corydalis* ‘Craighton Blue’ with *Acer palmatum* ‘Red Pygmy’.

Early summer arrived with Irises and Paeonias looking fabulous followed by Clematis and a great favourite of Hesters, *Gladiolus* in many varieties. Hester grows her *Gladiolus papilio* ‘Ruby’ and ‘David Hills’ in scree where they thrive. *Tetrapanax papyrifer* ‘Rex’ was very impressive but the star of the show was *Mathiasella bupleuroides* ‘Green Dream’ a new but hardy plant well worth seeking out. Late summer was a glorious display of Dahlias, especially *Dahlia* ‘Karma Choc’, with Cannas adding structure and drama. *Canna* ‘Black Knight’ was the star of the show. Day lilies, Hosta flowers and Delphiniums add to the picture. Agapanthus and Lilies completed the display with *Lilium* ‘Landini’ especially good with the Dahlias and Cannas. Despite the weather we left the talk full of hope for the new garden season ahead.

Emer Gallagher

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April Designing a Border a lecture by Dr. Laura de Beden

Dr. Laura de Beden, Landscape Architect and Garden Designer, spoke to a combined RHSI/IGPS audience on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Laura led us on an epic journey with wonderful images. She has a breadth of vision and the ability to make the vision come true.

Accepting that a border is a place in which one grows plants, borders can be of all shapes and sizes. The designer/ gardener must have a thorough knowledge of plants and their uses as well as an awareness of space. Begin by clarifying what you want in a design, add to what you have, eliminate what you do not want. Look at the larger picture and train your eye to judge whether plant groupings are harmonious or not. Of course, aspect and soil must be taken into account and improved if need be. Existing vegetation and borrowed landscape (if any) must be “factored in”. Note how repetition of planting creates a ribbon effect and sense of vista. Use arches to bring the eye down.

Laura used images of her own designs, the White Garden at Sissinghurst, Tom Stuart-Smith at Chelsea, Beth Chatto’s Gravel Garden, Piet Oudolf’s borders at Wisley, Hestercombe, Great Dixter, Denmans. She also praised the gardens of June and Jimi Blake which she visited on this trip. Individuals should collect images from such places and decide which elements will work for them. Garden and border design has gone through many manifestations from Roman times to the present. To a certain extent we are still using Jekyll-type planting but the trend is towards more naturalistic planting in recent times. Plants that deserve mention are *Wisteria floribunda* ‘Alba’ used as a standard, *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, *Clematis viticella* ‘Alba Luxurians’, *Parthenocissus henryana* (which Laura described as “well-behaved”), *Geranium* ‘Anne Thompson’ and G. ‘Rosanne’ which has a long flowering season and does not go to seed. Have sculpture in your garden and know where to site it.

This was an inspiring lecture delivered with great enthusiasm. It was great to see such a large audience but, unfortunately, this made the venue somewhat cramped. Still, you can’t have everything, even in a classy border!

Mary Bradshaw.

## **A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY**

**THE LEINSTER PLANT SALE** on  
**Sunday October 10<sup>th</sup> at 11 am.** Details on Fixture Card.



## *The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting*

The A.G.M. of the Irish Garden Plant Society was held at The Clonmel Park Hotel, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

### **Chairman's Report**

Patrick welcomed members to the AGM and said that in the past year two well loved and respected members of the Society Anna Nolan and Thérèse Murphy had died, and paid tribute to both of them for their work over the years.

He thanked the various committees for their hard work and support. Leaving the National Committee after a long period of service are Ed Bowden and Hon. Secretary Mary Rowe and Patrick thanked both for their work over the years. He also thanked Peter Milligan and Nicola Milligan from the Northern Regional Group who have tendered their resignation. Munster have a new committee:

Chairman – Graham Manson

Secretary – Frances Collins

Treasurer – Martin Edwards

Following the passing of Thérèse Murphy the Munster Representative is now Dan Murphy and it is lovely to have this continuity. In all regions there is a shortage of people coming forward. We need to support our local region and put the names forward of people who we think might be suitable committee members. It is difficult for committee members to know of the interests, skills and level of commitment of members.

Achievements during the past year included a Silver Gilt Medal awarded at Bloom 2009 and Patrick paid tribute to all those who were involved.

Congratulations also to Brendan Sayers and Susan Sex whose book *Ireland's Wild Orchids: a Field Guide*, has been nominated by the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries Award committee to receive the BHL 2010 Annual Literature Award.

We wish Peter Wyse Jackson good luck when he leaves the National Botanic Gardens in the autumn and moves to his new appointment in the United States.

Ian Scroggy of Bali Hai Nurseries is now the holder of the National Collection of Hostas.

Quite often matters reach a standstill. A couple of years ago the “Adopt a



Plant” initiative was begun, the data was collated and Pat Fitzgerald offered to carry out the propagation of cultivars. Paddy Tobin will be part of a working group to get things moving again and it is hoped to have a report in the Newsletter in the very near future.

Dr. Charles Nelson recommended the setting up of a database of plants and he has been commissioned by the Society to do this. It is hoped to have it available on the website and the difficulties involved in doing this have to be addressed. The Lismacloskey Rectory Garden is worth a visit to see the collection of old Irish apple trees and daffodils now planted. This is an active project to get Irish cultivars into the public domain. There is now an email of IGPS and other gardening events sent out once a month. When necessary further emails will be sent of additional events. . This is a very popular and effective means of communication. Please contact Patrick Quigley at [patrick.quigley@live.co.uk](mailto:patrick.quigley@live.co.uk) about any event to be included.

Following the last AGM Dr. Noeleen Smyth has very efficiently managed the website. Further improvements are required, in particular profiles of Irish cultivars. Anyone interested in writing a profile please forward to Patrick.

Moorea is an occasional publication of the Society. It was planned to publish an edition at the end of this year but since 2011 is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Society it has been decided to defer publication until then. It is an expensive publication and fundraising efforts are needed. Please think of ways of raising money beyond the normal gardening themes, quiz nights and raffles are very successful. Kitty Hennessy has donated ‘Bertie Bloomer’, a wonderful knitted gardener complete with gardening tools for a raffle to be held at Christmas, tickets will be on sale at IGPS events during the year. Thank you Kitty for this original idea.

In the January Newsletter concerns were expressed on the participation of members and the low attendance at events in the North. Feedback received was welcomed and appreciated. It is important to improve our cooperation with other organisations i.e. RHSI, Alpine Groups etc., we should pool our resources.

Patrick thanked everyone who supports the Society, and who works to make it a success. He also thanked the Munster Regional Committee for organising the AGM weekend.

## **Hon. Treasurer’s Report**

As seen below expenses need to be reduced as subscriptions and Plant sale returns are down. The Plant Sale figure reflects the fact that the raffle made less than in the previous year. It is planned to question the insurance costs, as they are very high relative to the needs of the Society.

Ed Bowden asked if the membership year is to change to the calendar year. Ricky said it would be difficult to make the change over, it could perhaps be phased in over 3 years.

**IGPS INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR  
THE TWELVE MONTHS TO 31st MARCH 2010**

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
	€	€
Subscriptions	10,028	10,891
Plant Sales	4,425	5,274
Quiz		1,497
Raffle	418	814
Book Sales 'A Heritage of Beauty'	425	1,585
Donation	146	250
AGM	36	415
Summer Lunch	407	77
Garden Visit		3
Deposit Interest	1	72
Copyright Income	102	
	<b>15,988</b>	<b>20,878</b>
<b>LESS EXPENDITURE</b>		
Newsletter	6,676	6,338
Lectures	3,372	4,598
Executive Secretary	3,000	3,000
Bank Fees	192	229
Postage and Telephone		206
Printing and Stationery	915	1,711
Travel	314	606
Garden Visits	135	
Audit Fees	365	365
Insurance	1,396	1,252
Subscriptions	45	207
Seed offer		347
Bloom	575	760
Irish Cultivar Project	324	
Sundry Expenses	265	
	<b>17,574</b>	<b>19,619</b>
Excess Income over Expenditure	-1,586	1,259
Accumulated surplus brought forward	17,022	15,763
Accumulated surplus carried forward	15,436	17,022

**IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY  
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2010**

	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>
	€	€
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Debtors & Prepayments	1,245	1,995
Cash at Bank and in Hand	15,242	16,502
	<b>16,487</b>	<b>18,497</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Creditors falling due within one year	<u>1,051</u>	<u>1,475</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	15,436	17,022
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	15,436	17,022
<b>ACCUMULATED RESERVES</b>		
Income and Expenditure Account	15,436	17,022
	<b>15,436</b>	<b>17,022</b>

**Election of Committee Members**

Dan Murphy, the Munster Representative has agreed to take on the position of Secretary, Patrick Quigley proposed and Mary Rowe seconded.

Lorna Hopkins was proposed by Marcella Campbell and seconded by Patrick Quigley.

Both were duly elected.

**Under any other business the following points were raised.**

Martin Edwardes said that attendance at Munster events remained low despite a change of day and having very good speakers.

Ricky Shannon asked if events could be held at the earlier time of 6.30pm as in Dublin people don't like travelling across the city late at night.

Margaret Power asked if Munster events could be held outside Cork city, could some events be held in Waterford as there are very enthusiastic members in the Garden Society there.

Patrick Quigley suggested having one major speaker each year e.g. a recent Fergus Garret lecture had an attendance of c. 200.

Petronilla Martin said all events must be well publicised.

Anne James said there should be more joint lectures. They should be interesting and entertaining.

Anne Cronin agreed that people do not want a Power Point catalogue.

Martin Edwardes asked if members could be reminded of events by text message. Anne James agreed that for contact at short notice text is very good.

Ricky Shannon asked that mobile phone numbers be included on membership forms in future.

Mary Rowe asked if the AGM could be held on a weekend in May but not the bank holiday weekend, as it may prove more popular with members. Patrick said that holding the A.G.M. on a bank holiday was not set in stone. Ricky Shannon said that the AGM of 2011 will be held in Dublin and as this is a central location it might be a success and a date late in the month of May should be considered as the weather might be better. Ed Bowden suggested Leinster should try this proposal next year, a show of hands was taken and the majority of members present agreed.

Patrick Quigley then thanked all those who contributed and closed the meeting.

### **Following the A.G.M. the following are the members of the National Committee 2010/2011**

**Chairman:** Patrick Quigley

**Vice Chairman:** Hilary Glenn

**Hon. Treasurer:** Ricky Shannon

**Hon. Secretary:** Dan Murphy

**Northern Committee Representative:** Hilary Glenn

**Munster Committee Representative:** Dan Murphy

**Leinster Committee Representative:** Marcella Campbell

**Committee Members:** Anne James, Janet Butcher,  
Dr. Noeleen Smyth and Lorna Hopkins.

**Executive Secretary:** Marcella Campbell.

## A.G.M. Garden Visits

### Killmacomma Garden, Clonmel

After a successful AGM, the first garden on the itinerary was a visit to Mrs. Hegarty's Killmacomma Garden, Clonmel. This was a young garden having only been established in the previous 20 years but it was a well thought out design choosing plants that would fit comfortably into the space allotted without causing too much shade. The back garden faces south west and is on two levels with a low retaining double wall dividing the two sections. This double wall provided a lovely site for all those tiny plants that could get lost among their hardier cousins and one such plant was the tiniest tulip species I have ever seen, a miniature red beautifully formed tulip flower, it was a true Tom Thumb (not its varietal name). Unfortunately, neither the name nor the vendor of the plant could be remembered. I suspect that this little treasure will be the star of this garden.

Starting at the front gate, the first tree was a *Pyrus salicifolia* 'Pendula' under planted with *Tulipa clusiana* growing extremely well in open ground, whereas at Malahide it was coddled in a glasshouse. Moving anticlockwise round the garden, just before entering the back garden was a small water worn stone fountain. I have often noted around the west coast of Clare some lovely pieces of water worn rocks and would love to take one to make a natural feature. Into the back and the plants of note were a red anemone, flaming orange *Trollius* and a *Dicentra* 'Red Fountain' – a lovely herbaceous plant. Behind them was *Enkianthus* sp. growing exceedingly well indicating an acid soil. Beside them a *Carpentaria californica* was looking very well, and not as often happens in Dublin rather the worse for wear after a hard winter. Beside it was *Prunus triloba*, once a very popular little plant but one that seems to have faded from fashion in recent years. Why? I don't know as it has the daintiest double pink flowers that always remind me of the birthday candlestick holders that were a must for every party. In the corner was one of my favourite plants *Rosa chinensis* 'Mutabilis'. This rose is always stunning when well grown with its young coppery foliage and red to orange apricot flowers that flower for a very long time. At Malahide one plant of it was sited beside *Hydrangea villosa* – to me the perfect combination. Every garden has a Magnolia and here was *M. x brooklynensis* 'Yellow Bird' a lovely yellow flowered plant, which was very popular all over Clonmel and many fine specimens were to be seen. There also was *Magnolia* 'Susan' a pink form and *M. stellata*.

Every garden has its plant puzzlers and here there were two. The first is the *Prunus serrula* and *Acer griseum*. They both have the lovely peeling mahogany bark but which is which? The easiest way for me to remember is that *Prunus* has the glistening bark like gloss paint while the *Acer* has the duller bark like a

matte paint, the botanical method of course is that *Acer* has opposite buds with the palmate leaves while *Prunus* has ovate simple leaves. The second was the *Cercis silaquastrum* and *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*. *Cercis* has the larger leaves while *Cercidiphyllum* has the smaller leaves that are opposite. There was also a very upright form of *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* 'Rothfuchs' (syn. with 'Red Fox') which had purple leaves, a most interesting variety.

With that very interesting collection of plants in the first garden, The I.G.P.S members were delighted and all asking for the names of the local nurseries. It was a great introduction to the weekend visits.

Anne James

## **Killurney, Clonmel**

"The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary". This quotation came foremost to my mind when we visited Mildred's garden during our A.G.M. The years of T.L.C. that have been showered on this piece of heaven is very evident to all who visit.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century ruin of an old church guides you to a dry shaded area of Hellebores. Being a very patient person Mildred waited 16 years for her *Abies pinsapo* to flower. There is a display of *Primula vulgaris* 'Captain Blood' to die for. *Rosa* 'Brown Velvet' is her favourite rose, this is strategically placed to colour co-ordinate the garden. A joy to behold was the *Magnolia x brooklynensis* 'Yellow Bird' in full flower.

Enough about the garden let me tell you about Mildred. She fed us, pampered us, guided us, chaperoned us for two days. The kindness, hospitality and help given to us by her and her family made us feel so welcome and a pleasure to visit. We thank her most sincerely.

Kitty Hennessy

## **Cahervillahow Estate, Thomastown, Golden**

Our garden visit on Sunday morning brought us to north Tipperary. As we meandered our way through the narrow roads we rounded a corner and found ourselves entering through a set of gates. This led us up a long drive with mature trees and spring bulbs on either side and finally a fine house with a view over the front lawn and surrounding countryside. This is the home of the Slater family with 10 acres of gardens and woodland. The American family visit their holiday home on a number of occasions during the year and were present while we were visiting. They have two full time gardeners who greeted us on our

arrival. Charles Parker who has spent most of his life working here and more recently Noel Maher.

The showers came and went but didn't stop our enthusiasm to explore the woodlands that were on either side of the front lawn. Large mature Oak, Ash and Beech as well as other species including the tallest *Sorbus aria* in Great Britain and Ireland (recently included in the new website Heritage Trees of Ireland). Beneath the trees was a variety of spring bulbs including a group of tulips *T. 'Queen of Night'*, also Trilliums, Fritillarias, *Dicentra*, *Smilacina*, and self-seeding pink *Erythronium*.

A fine large specimen of weeping beech on the front lawn gave us some protection from a passing shower as we proceeded towards the walled garden. Here we found a mixture of small trees, herbaceous plants, roses, and shrubs. A plant that was greatly admired was *Daphne tangutica*. Our cold winter and spring meant that the fragrant flowers on this plant were still there for us to admire.

Before departing we thanked Charles and Noel for their tour of this fine estate. I will certainly remember the fine trees that grow here; they have inspired me to plant as many trees as is possible in my present job! We all headed off in convoy towards Cashel for a well-deserved bowl of hot soup! Roll on summer!

Ed Bowden

## **Camas Park**

After a well needed stop for lunch in Cashel our little convoy gathered outside the town to thread our way towards Dundrum for our afternoon visit to Trish Hyde's garden at Camas Park. Having gained entry through the security gates, we drove up a very well maintained drive of pleached trees and past a planting of Laurel, which is not often seen but demonstrates how laurel was meant to be grown. It was kept to a height of about 4 to 5 feet and well trimmed. We are used to seeing Laurel in it's out of control state in many neglected gardens. As the afternoon had turned quite blustery we were very glad to enter the lovely sheltered courtyard created by Trish, where she was able to use the old stonewalls for some tender plants. The planting of Italian cypresses gave the garden a mature Mediterranean feel. There was a lovely *Akebia quinata* on one wall in full flower. Unfortunately it was rather too windy to be able to appreciate the usual chocolate smell from this plant, but nevertheless it was a lovely sight. Lots of Mediterranean type plants were doing very well in this microclimate, as it was shielded from the cold wind by the stonewalls which also probably acted as storage heaters.

An unusual plant that caught my eye was *Alchemilla alpina*, which is much better behaved than the usually grown *Alchemilla mollis*. There were some lovely irises and clematis here also.

Outside the beautifully manicured lawn was fringed by lovely herbaceous borders containing irises, peonies, roses, delphiniums, hostas all considerably ahead of Cork gardens in growth. This may have something to do with the fact that Trish may have access to the finest horse manure to mulch her borders. A path led us down to the lower section of the garden where some wet ground was cleverly managed to make several pools with inter linking paths and streams. These were edged in what looked like a very natural planting of hostas, ferns, ligularias, astilbes, water irises and primulas. These had all gained a certain amount of maturity and made the whole picture very pleasing to the eye. The paths were made in such a way as to give the visitor a lovely extended stroll through a watery dell. Elsewhere in the garden shrubs and small trees were used to give interest and all pruned and trimmed for maximum effect which probably holds the garden together during the winter months. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to Trish's garden.

Janet Edwardes



Several pools with inter linking paths and streams at Camas Park.  
Photo: Martin Edwardes



## Springhill, Killenaule

The final visit of our AGM weekend was to Demmie & Catherine Byrne. As with the previous garden this was a stud farm and had what I consider to be the typical landscape of such a site – immaculate maintenance, ranch style fencing and wide open spaces with old, mature specimen trees enclosed in wooden corrals dotted about the fields. A lot of work had been done to the site in recent months with a new stable block built near the house and large tracts of land cleared of scrub vegetation.

Our visit was mainly confined to the area immediately surrounding the house where there had been a lot of bulbs planted in groups under the trees and through the grass – fritillaries in abundance along with narcissi and erythronium. Who could fail to be captivated by the charm of the snakeshead fritillary with its intriguing tessellated flowers suspended from a fine elegant stem?

Along the avenue leading to a pond, the white bark of silver birch seemed to flow into the white narcissi pooled beneath. Most of the bulb planting seems to be recent, and still contained in fairly tight groups; it would be lovely to see this again in the future when they have naturalised into great drifts through the grass giving that touch of informal maturity that only time and nature can provide.

We were invited to view the private garden area at the back of the house. I must confess that this enclosed courtyard garden inspired many covetous thoughts with a splashing fountain, a luxurious paved area for dining and entertaining and its pergola of stout wooden beams supported on stone pillars clad in wisteria looking as though it had been there forever.

It was on this note that we finished our round of garden visits for the weekend. As always, great fun was had by all; there was the usual catching up on garden gossip, renewed friendships and the resolution to do all those things in our own gardens that we had been promising ourselves to do.

To all those who worked hard to make our weekend so enjoyable, and to all those who shared their gardens with us, many thanks.

Patrick Quigley



## *Philadelphia Flower Show 2010*

*by Frances MacDonald*

I imagine all of us as well as being members of the IGPS belong to a gardening club also – some small, some larger with a couple of hundred members but the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society boasts more than 18,000 members! The Delaware River Valley, in south-eastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware has many world famous gardens; Longwood, Chanticlear, Mount Cuba and Winterthur to name but a few. With such wonderful resources, all of whom offer a wealth of classes and lectures, it is no wonder that so many residents of this region are keen and knowledgeable gardeners.

Keeping to the spirit of their mission statement “to motivate people to improve the quality of life and create a sense of community through horticulture”, the PHS, for the past 181 years, have staged the Philadelphia Flower Show each March and this week long event has grown into a world renowned show that highlights the best in design and horticulture.

We are all aware of the enormous effort that goes into creating Bloom but this is achieved in our temperate climate. The Philadelphia Flower Show is staged inside the impressive Convention Centre and it appears more than miraculous to walk through streets in freezing weather, banked high on each side with mounds of cleared snow and where 51 inches of snow had fallen in January and enter a world of plants, all in peak condition and full flower. This year the theme was ‘Passport to the World’; it was reflected by gardens designed and created to showcase and represent diverse horticultural regions – Brazil, India, South Africa, New Zealand – and of course, Ireland.

Apart from its myriad of plant displays, gardens, botanical art exhibitions, there is also a continuous lecture programme throughout the week and I was privileged this year to be invited by Tourism Ireland to talk on a couple of occasions during the week. Along with John O’Driscoll from Strokestown House, we manned the Irish garden, created this year to showcase the strong classical gardening tradition and the wealth of global plants found in Ireland’s gardens. This theme was enhanced by the use of signature pieces from Mount Stewart House & Garden and aptly, it was dedicated to John Cushnie who for many years promoted Ireland at this show.

An added attraction at the show, was the launch by Maurice Parkinson of Ballyrobert Nursery & Garden, of *Phormium cookianum* 'Black Adder', (see Photograph below) one of a number of plants selected from field breeding at Pat Fitzgerald's nursery in Kilkenny. This is from a mutation of a micro-propagated plant of *Phormium cookianum* 'Platt's Black' and is regarded as a superior form. Although it has been available in Europe, the first plants distributed in the north east of the States, were given to 200 visitors at the show.

A mere 60,000 pass through the show each day! And given the strong Irish connection to the States, we were delighted with the reaction, not only to the garden and lectures but to Ireland also. I feel, we may have become blasé in the past about our American visitors but, particularly, in these recessionary times, they are essential to our tourist economy and this show is one of the main ways of encouraging more of them to visit Ireland. To me, one of the most impressive aspects of the show, apart from the array of floral stands was the hard-working team of women from Tourism Ireland who worked twelve hour days at the show promoting our country. Let's hope they find the same amount of dedication and service by us to ensure they have an enjoyable time when they do come...!



From left to right: **Frances MacDonald** (The Bay Garden), Minister of State **Dara Colleary T.D.**, **Maurice Parkinson** (Ballyrobert Garden & Nursery), **John O'Driscoll** (Strokestown House).



# *The Irish Garden Plant Society*

The Aims of the Society are:

- The study of plants cultivated in Ireland, and their history.
- The development of horticulture in Ireland
- The education of members on the cultivation and conservation of garden plants.
- To research and locate garden plants considered rare or in need of conservation, especially those raised in Ireland by Irish gardeners and nurserymen.
- To co-operate with horticulturalists, botanists, botanical and other gardens, individuals and organizations in Ireland and elsewhere in these matters.
- To issue and publish information on the garden plants of Ireland and to facilitate the exchange of information with those interested individuals and groups.

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

**E-mail:** [igpsireland@aol.com](mailto:igpsireland@aol.com)

**Website:** [www.irishgardenplantsociety.org](http://www.irishgardenplantsociety.org)

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