

*The  
Irish Garden Plant Society*





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*Rhododendron magnificum* 'Lady Rose'.

A new Irish cultivar, raised at Mount Stewart, Co. Down from collections made in Burma by Captain Frank Kingdon Ward (1885-1958).



# Editorial

Welcome to the summer edition of the newsletter. In this issue a beautiful new Irish cultivar *Rhododendron magnificum* 'Lady Rose' is formally described by Seamus O'Brien. We wish Seamus well as he sets off on his latest trip to the Himalaya and congratulate him on his recent election to the Royal Horticultural Society's Hardy Plant Committee.

Congratulations also to Dr. E. Charles Nelson who was awarded the Royal Horticultural Society's Veitch Memorial Medal last February for his "outstanding contribution to the advancement of the science and practice of horticulture". Like Seamus, Charles needs no introduction to IGPS members having been Chairman of the inaugural IGPS committee and has written on numerous occasions for both *Moorea* and the newsletter. Amongst his many publications is the much quoted *A Heritage of Beauty - The Garden Plants of Ireland* published in 2001.

The final booking date for this year's AGM in Letterkenny Co. Donegal is April 30<sup>th</sup> and Maeve Bell has details of the weekend on page 15, please get in touch if you wish to attend.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue of the newsletter as always it is much appreciated. I am always delighted to receive articles at [igpseditor@gmail.com](mailto:igpseditor@gmail.com) or Mary Rowe, 29 Bantry Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9

The copy date for material for the September Newsletter is August 3rd

Mary



## A word from the Chair



Thankfully we have moved very pleasantly through spring and the surge of early summer growth is just beginning. Longer evenings allow more time in the garden and garden visits will shortly become part of our schedule again. April sees the end of the winter talks and the first of the garden visits are planned for the month of May.

May will also bring our Annual General Meeting, organised this year by members of the Northern Committee, and it promises to be a wonderful weekend. Having the AGM itself at Glenveagh is a wonderful idea and will have us on hand for a guided tour of the gardens with Seán Ó Gaoithín. Donegal has always seemed quite a challenging distance for me as I live on the diagonal corner of the Island in Waterford and, though I have always wished to visit Glenveagh, it is the coincidence of the AGM which makes the journey less daunting. I look forward to seeing a great number of members there as the booking has been very active – and very convenient via the website. This reminds me that, if, perhaps, it has slipped your mind, you could also renew your membership online as it is convenient both for you and for the membership secretary. Your continued support for the society is greatly valued and we would truly wish that you continue your membership with us.

Stephen Butler has been particularly busy this year with his continuing organising of the seed distribution and now with his research on the availability of our Irish heritage plants. He has asked for responses from members regarding which plants they are growing so that, in the case of the rarer ones, we will know where we might source them should the need arise. Please take the few minutes it will require to respond to Stephen's request as this will provide very valuable information for him.

Best wishes for a most enjoyable summer of gardening and do look out for the Irish plants and support our Irish nurseries and propagate a few for our plant sales so that they can be spread about.

Paddy



## *Rhododendron magnificum* 'Lady Rose' by Seamus O'Brien

Frank Kingdon Ward considered Burma 'his country.' Between 1926 and 1956 almost all his attention was focused on the exploration of the mountains and gorges of Burma and Assam. During World War II he was based in Burma when the Japanese invaded but escaped into India and from there trained the armed forces in jungle survival techniques. When the war ended he was employed by the US Government to search for downed planes and the graves of lost aircrew. He knew Burma intimately and the Americans relied heavily on him. His travels were not without incident. He survived being impaled on a bamboo spike, lived to tell the tale of falling over a cliff (when luckily his fall was broken by a tree), he once travelled for days without food and was camped near the epicentre of the Assam earthquake (9.6 on the Richter scale) in August 1950.

His first expedition to Burma was in 1926, when he visited the northern border region before travelling down the Lohit River through the Mishmi Hills in Arunachal Pradesh, India. In the following decades he was to return several times to Assam and Burma. His 1926 expedition was not without its problems however. Travelling in the height of the rainy season, his porters deserted him, taking with them the bulk of provisions, including food.

Kingdon Ward had no choice but to make an eleven day forced march from his camp at the confluence of the Seinghku and Adung rivers, with his remaining porters. It was a march through hell, through leech-infested jungles, stifling heat and humidity, and though dreadfully ill, he had to press on. He had managed to carry out some collecting, though it must have been maddening to have had to abandon his botanical exploration in the middle of flowering season. Back in Ireland, in the spring of 1927, I wonder did the nursery staff at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin and at Mount Stewart in Co. Down realise the hardships Kingdon Ward faced to send the seeds of so many new novelties back to these Irish gardens.

The three premier botanic gardens of Britain and Ireland; Edinburgh, Kew and Glasnevin, all received consignments of Kingdon Ward's seed lots for free, and, Kingdon Ward's field notes, housed in the library at Glasnevin are annotated and ticked beside his collection numbers, indicating what was raised there from his Seinghku collections.

It is a similar case with his field notes at Mount Stewart. For example beside *Rhododendron giganteum* var? KW 6,782, Edith, Lady Londonderry scribbled 'very good'. This same collection number was also raised at Glasnevin and proved to be a new species described by Kingdon Ward himself, the aptly named *Rhododendron magnificentum*.

In the Seinghku valley, *Rhododendron magnificentum* grew in damp temperate rainforest dominated by the Himalayan hemlock, *Tsuga dumosa*, *Enkianthus deflexus*, the curious *Ilex nothofagifolia* (a small tree to about 5 metres tall), and Kingdon Ward's carmine cherry, *Prunus cerasoides* var. *rubea*. *Rhododendron* species abounded, including another new species, *Rhododendron seinghkuense* KW 6,793, named for the surrounding river valley. A rather straggly yellow-flowered epiphytic species, it is closely related to the better-known *Rhododendron edgeworthii*, and grew scattered on the mossy trunks of hemlocks and junipers. Discovered by Kingdon Ward on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 1926, it was raised at Glasnevin in the spring of 1927.

While Glasnevin, as a National Botanic Garden, received free shares of Kingdon Ward's seed lots, this was not the case for privately owned gardens. Kingdon Ward's most important sponsor in Ireland was the Marchioness of Londonderry, Edith Vane-Tempest-Stewart (1878-1959), the noted society hostess and creator of the much-celebrated gardens at Mount Stewart, on the Ards Peninsula, in coastal Co. Down.

Lady Edith had been introduced to Kingdon Ward by his first wife, Florinda (for whom he named the Tibetan *Primula florindae*). Born in 1896, both her parents owned substantial estates in Ireland, her father, Robert Norman Thomson lived in Kindlestown House and owned most of the townland of Kindlestown near Delgany in Co. Wicklow and her mother's (Helen Constance Orpin, born in Dublin) family had an estate near Newtownards just north of the Mount Stewart demesne.

Florinda was thus well connected with members of the Irish aristocracy and even had a rose bred and named for her by Dixon's of Newtownards. The scented, large double pink-flowered *Rosa* 'Florinda Norman Thomson' was named in 1920 by Alexander Dixon (1857-1949).

Florinda was a regular visitor to the Ards Peninsula and she introduced Frank (whom she married in 1923) to local wealthy gardeners like Hugh Armytage Moore at Rowallane and to Edith, Lady Londonderry at Mount Stewart. The Kingdon Wards divorced in 1934, but Frank continued to visit Mount Stewart on several occasions in the following decades and the Mount Stewart visitor book is signed by both him and his second wife Jean Macklin (whom he married in 1947). For example, Florinda and Frank stayed for lunch at Mount Stewart on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1927, while in May 1954 Frank and his second wife Jean stayed for nine days.

By then many of his Burma collections were growing into maturity and quite a few of his rhododendrons would have been in bloom. Kingdon Ward died on April 8<sup>th</sup> 1958, and the last entry for the Kingdon Wards in the Mount Stewart visitor book is the following year, when Jean stayed between April 12<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>. Frank Kingdon Ward's second marriage was an extremely happy one, and Jean's reason for being at Mount Stewart, almost on the first anniversary of his death, was undoubtedly to be amongst his Tibetan and Burmese plant collections.

Lady Edith, who died just a year after Frank Kingdon Ward, is one of the greatest unsung heroes of Irish gardening. Alongside Lady Moore, she was one of the most knowledgeable plantswomen in Britain and Ireland during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet she remains relatively unknown. Fortunately for Irish gardening, she had an extremely deep purse with which to fully indulge her passion, leaving this island one of our most remarkable gardens with an immensely important plant collection.

Edith corresponded with, and sponsored many of the early plant hunters, most notably Clarence Elliott, George Forrest, Joseph Rock and Frank Kingdon Ward. During the 1930s the garden at Mount Stewart was full of wild origin Chinese and Himalayan rhododendrons, but the gardens, then forever expanding, needed new material and Edith subscribed to more and more of Kingdon Ward's expeditions.

In February 1931, Kingdon Ward was exploring the dense temperate rainforest of the Adung Valley in the extreme north-west of Burma, an upland region that borders south-east Tibet. He compared this remote wilderness, with its distant snowy peaks, to Switzerland and he was to make several new discoveries while based there.

The headwaters of the mighty Irrawaddy River, originating in the Himalayan glaciers of northern Burma, pass through the Adung Valley and to carry out his

exploration Kingdon Ward forded streams on a daily basis by means of precarious rattan bridges, slung across gorges hundreds of feet above raging torrents and rocky stream beds. This wild landscape is inhabited by several ethnic minorities including the Doolin Jimphaw, the gypsy Lisa and perhaps most intriguingly, the Tarong, an endangered race of diminutive people, none of whom are more than four feet tall. Kingdon Ward met these little hill folk during his visit and lamented the fact that even then they were on the brink of extinction.

While nature and a scant diet has dwarfed these little people, the rhododendron trees of the area have soared skywards. One can only imagine the anticipation felt by Lady Edith and the nursery staff at Mount Stewart in the early part of 1932 when seeds of *Rhododendron* KW 9301 were sown and placed in a warm, humid propagation house. Still an unnamed species, he described this and KW 9200 as:

'a big tree, up to 50 feet high and 6 feet in girth towards the base; may bear flowers as a shrub 10 feet high. Leaves with a coating of snow-white felted hairs beneath, which slough off later; on young plants 18 in. long by 9 in. wide ... Trusses hemispherical, about 30 flowered, corolla 3 in. long, dark or lighter rose-purple honey pockets at the base ... the colour variable, but uniform for each tree, some have almost crimson flowers. Blooms from mid-February to the end of March, according to altitude. Never gregarious like *Rhododendron sinogrande*. It grows scattered throughout the forest, both on the sheltered and exposed flanks of the valley, between 5,000 to 8,000 feet. Common along river banks, in mixed forest between 6,000 to 7,000 feet, where the finest specimens were seen. A tree by the river, 50 to 60 feet high, carried over 500 trusses and in mid-February was a gorgeous spectacle.'

In his book *A Plant Hunter's Paradise* (1937) he mentions his encounter with this gloriously beautiful species:

So we came to the Tibetan outpost of Tahawndam. Prayer flags fluttered from a cluster of poles, and a thin spiral of smoke ascended from a pyre on which juniper branches had been ignited in our honour.



I looked about me. Here and there blue pines towered above smaller trees, their powerful tawny boles contrasting harshly with their slender needles. Crimson-flowered rhododendrons (*R. magnificum*), with enormous leaves glowed in the thickets, and there were other fat-budded rhododendrons, not yet in bud ...

Kingdon Ward's 9301 was also raised at Glasnevin, alongside a wide range of trees, shrubs, bulbs and herbaceous plants. Two sets of field notes for Kingdon Ward's 1931 expedition are held at Glasnevin; the garden's copy, sent to Dublin by Lionel de Rothchild (a personal friend of Sir Frederick Moore), who was also filling his garden at Exbury with Kingdon Ward plants. The second set, belonged to Frederick Moore. Generally celebrated for his work with orchids, Frederick Moore was also a leading expert on rhododendrons and raised material from Kingdon Ward's 1931 expedition at Willbrook House, Rathfarnham, where he and Lady Moore moved to garden when he retired from Glasnevin in 1922.

By this time Kingdon Ward was the longest established plant hunter in the field. Augustine Henry and Ernest Wilson had both died the previous year and George Forrest, Kingdon Ward's great rival, was to die the following January, on the mountains above Tengchong, in Yunnan province, western China. Frank Kingdon Ward was thus the last great professional plant hunter, his career spanned some 45 years, travelling first for A. K. Bulley (Bees) in 1911 to Western China (though he had previously travelled on the Bedford Expedition up the Yangtze in 1909) and finally in 1956, to Burma, when he famously climbed 11,000 feet to the summit of Nat Ma Taung (Mount Victoria). This 1956 expedition was primarily backed by a syndicate of Cornish and Irish gardeners, organised by Colonel Richard Grove Annesley at Annes Grove in Co. Cork.

Yet again in the late 1930s Lady Edith subscribed to further Kingdon Ward expeditions. In 1935 he travelled to the land of headhunters, the Naga Hills, on the India-Burma border, and across southern Tibet. He was employed because of his experience of the area by the New York millionaire and naturalist Suydam Cutting and the British-born Arthur Vernay. Mount Stewart took a £20 stake in seed shares for this expedition.

Edith also bought a 10 guinea share of all the rhododendron seeds collected on Kingdon Ward's 1938-39 North Burma Expedition. Kingdon Ward was travelling on yet another American zoological and ornithological expedition

again organised by Suydam Cutting and Arthur Vernay. For his part Kingdon Ward carried out the botanical work on the Vernay-Cutting Expedition and he thoroughly enjoyed the company of the Americans. Since he was travelling on an independent expedition his collection numbers ran in a new sequence. From this consignment numerous rhododendron species were raised at Mount Stewart including a further collection of *Rhododendron magnificum* (KW 213).

Kingdon Ward's seedlings were raised in thousands at Mount Stewart during the 1920s and 1930s, and fortunately there were extensive, well-sheltered wooded areas available in which to plant them *en masse*. One such area was Clarke's Hill (now called Rhododendron Hill), an area to the north of the house, on the east side of the lake, on the approach to Tir na'n Og. Within a framework of mature oak, beech, Scot's pine and Douglas fir an exciting new rhododendron garden began.

In her Garden Book no 2 for 1922-27 there is a note for autumn 1924 in which the decision to form a rhododendron plantation in these woods is found. In 1927 Edith provided an article to *The Gardener's Yearbook* describing the scale of her new project:

A start has been made to plant the *Rhododendron* species in the woods; the idea being to carry this out extensively year by year. Amongst others there are plants of *R. falconeri*, *discolor*, *decorum*, *thomsonii*, *aucklandii*, *grande*, *sinogrande*, *roylei*, and *lacteum*, with more of that series, while many thousands are being raised from Kingdon Ward's and Rock's collections ...

Lady Edith may also have subscribed to the most famous of all Kingdon Ward's travels, his 1924 expedition with Lord Cawdor to south-east Tibet. An article written in *Country Life* (1935) describes the Lily Wood and Rhododendron Hill:

... north and east from the house, large plantings of rhododendrons and azaleas are supplemented by bold groups of various lilies - *auratum*, *wardii*, *regale*, *sargentiae*, *henryi* and *Dianella caerulea*. In the woodland, stands of Douglas fir and *Abies grandis* and species *Rhododendron* - *falconeri*, *sinogrande*, *giganteum*, *aureum* and Kingdon Ward's recent introduction (*Rhododendron*) *cinnabarinum* Orange Bill.

Orange Bill, was a name evocatively used by Frank Kingdon Ward for what's nowadays called *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* ssp. *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group. Endemic to south-east Tibet, particularly the area around Pemako and the Doshong La, I was fortunate enough to see this plant in bloom when we crossed the Showa La, south-east Tibet, in July 2001. The flowers differ from typical *R. cinnabarinum* in being apricot-yellow.

Kingdon Ward discovered his 'Orange Bill' (KW 5874) on the Doshong La (we re-visited this pass in October 1997) at 13,000 feet on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June 1924. If he couldn't immediately name a species (in many cases they were new to science) he gave them 'pet' names. For example, from the same 1924 expedition, Kingdon Ward, in his classic *Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorge*, refers to KW 5,853 (*Rhododendron campylocarpum*) as his 'yellow peril'.

In the 1954 *Rhododendron and Camellia Yearbook*, Lady Edith discusses the success of rhododendrons raised at Mount Stewart from George Forrest's 1924-25 Yunnan expedition and his final 1930-31 expedition to Sichuan and Yunnan, and the various expeditions of Joseph Rock and Frank Kingdon Ward. She planted in enormous numbers:

... Here too, further up the slope is a large group of *R. elliottii* ... 30 plants in all, some 12 feet high ... we have about 50 plants of this lovely, brilliant red from a Kingdon Ward expedition... To return to the wood, there is a nice group of 30 *R. magnificum*. Another large group further on comprises 20 *R. fictolacteum* with 20 more still waiting to be sorted out... Near the shores of the lake is a group of *R. eriogynum* ... 14ft high with a diameter of 12ft. Above them on the slope is the only plant I have of *R. tyermanii* [sic.] ... next we come to a group of *R. magnificum*, of which we have about 200 plants.

This gives some idea of the scale on which Lady Edith gardened at Mount Stewart during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today the *Rhododendron* collection there is one of the most important in Europe and the gardens are justifiably famous throughout the world.

One of the great highlights of strolling past the lake towards Tir na'n Og in February is the enormous thicket of *Rhododendron magnificum*, planted within a few feet of one other, and today reaching maturity. This species is rare in gardens, and is quite tender. The Mount Stewart trees are magnificent – if you'll pardon the pun – particularly when seen at this early point of spring carrying enormous trusses of rosy-purple blooms.

On Rhododendron Hill is another group of Kingdon Ward veterans and one of these, now an imposing tree, is quite different to its companions, and stands out from typical *Rhododendron magnificum*.

For a start its foliage is quite different, its leaves are narrowly oblanceolate, not oblong-obovate as in other forms of *R. magnificum* (though the foliage of this species is quite variable). It has been suggested by at least two rhododendron authorities, that this Mount Stewart clone may in fact be a natural hybrid with the closely related *R. protistum* (both belong to the Subsection Grandia). This theory is possible, since both species overlap in the wilds of Burma. The flowers too differ, in that the Mount Stewart plant has a much more lax, open, fewer-flowered (12-14 blossoms, compared to up to 30 on typical *R. magnificum*) truss, though individually the flowers are larger than normal and of a shade best-described as phlox-pink, with a netted venation of deeper Tyrian rose.

Altogether, this Kingdon Ward seedling is a striking plant. While the inflorescence carries less flowers than normal, these are individually larger and of a more pleasing shade. The National Trust have decided to name this particular plant, and it has been propagated, and so this clone is to be named *Rhododendron magnificum* 'Lady Rose', in compliment to the present chatelaine of Mount Stewart House, Lady Rose Lauritzen, whose grandmother, Lady Edith, created the present gardens.

Visiting plantspersons to Mount Stewart, particularly during the annual autumn planter's seminars, will know of her warm, wonderful welcome and how she quietly watches over the restoration of her grandmother's masterpiece. Lady Rose once told me she met Frank Kingdon Ward, during the 1950s, when he visited her grandmother, in the company of his wife Jean. She is the only person I know to have met this great plant hunter, the last of his kind in his field and it is appropriate therefore that this cultivar, the latest Irish Garden Plant, is named for the granddaughter of one of his most important sponsors.

### *Rhododendron magnificum* 'Lady Rose'

**Description:** Hemispherical trusses of 12 to 14 obliquely tubular-campanulate phlox-pink corollas (Horticultural Colour Charts 248), held in a racemose umbel, with a netted venation of a deeper Tyrian Rose shade (254), nectar pouches at the base of a slightly deeper shade. Inflorescence more lax and open than typical *R. magnificum*, individual flowers larger than the type, corollas up to 80mm across and as much in length, eight-lobed. Leaves oblanceolate (not oblong-obovate as in other forms of *R. magnificum*).



# No, I do NOT have green fingers

by Rae McIntyre

Quite often I have been informed by people that I have green fingers. In fact they go as far as insisting that I have and when I argue that I do not they think I am just being modest. I am not. I am just telling the truth. While I have a garden packed full of plants, greedily and often expensively acquired over the years, I am certainly not a true gardener merely a plant buyer and digger of holes in the ground in which to put the plants. The impression that I am a green-fingered person (henceforth referred to as a G.F.P.) is deceptive, all smoke and mirrors. I don't fool the real G.F.P.s for one minute.

Seed-sowing is fundamental because all forms of life start as microscopic organisms. G.F.P.s seem to be remarkably good at growing all manner of plants from seed. They can grow anything from tiny, difficult-to-grow alpinines to shrubs and trees and thoroughly enjoy the challenge and sense of achievement. They will point to a rare rhododendron and say, as modestly as they can manage, "Well actually I grew this from seed." I will point to a rare rhododendron and say, "Well actually I got this from Glendoick Gardens in Perth and had to have my name on a waiting list for three years." Any shrubs and trees grown from seed in my garden have appeared courtesy of old Mother Nature or maybe it's a simple DIY exercise. Self-seeders are *Cotoneaster lacteus*, *Luma apiculata*, *Hoheria sexstylosa*, *Betula albosinensis* var *septentrionalis* (these last two are remarkably alike at the young seedling stage and I have sometimes confused them), *Leycesteria formosa*, *Rosa glauca*, *Daphne mezereum* and *Corylus maxima* 'Purpurea'.

A few plants have even layered themselves thereby creating an offspring with absolutely no help from me. These are *Crinodendron hookerianum*, *Cotoneaster microphyllus* (probably does this for everyone) and *Deutzia magnifica*. *Daphne bholua* has a baby one on the ground in front of it and I'm not sure whether it's a seedling or a sucker. It is growing far too close to the parent plant but, having brown fingers rather than the requisite green, I'm scared to touch it in case I kill it.

Joe, who used to work for me before Andy's time, asked me to identify a big dark blue seed pod that he had taken from a small tree in a garden open to the public. I recognised *Decaisnea fargesii* and said that he should sow the slimy seeds from inside the pod. Now Joe did have green fingers and a year later he had three fine little specimens of the tree. He gave me one and now when anyone asks about it - it's about 2 metres tall and stuck in behind a large rhododendron - I say the name and tell them that it was grown from seed. They immediately assume that I grew it from seed. Deception or what?

Many perennials self-seed. Two of my favourites are *Centaurea montana*, the perennial cornflower with vivid blue flowers scented of stewed plums and greyish leaves. *Arum italicum* 'Pictum' enlivens winter with big cheerful arrow-shaped leaves that are marbled with cream. Like *Centaurea montana* it appears all over the garden, not sown by me of course, but by birds I presume. They eat the orange berries in autumn and these are deposited, after recycling, with a good dollop of fertiliser. Hellebores seem to want to go forth and multiply and little seedlings appear in the gravel paths in front of where I grow most of them. Sadly, very few of them are attractive enough to keep because they come in various blends of murky purple and teal green. My mother had lots of hellebores in her garden that had been self-sown and there wasn't an unattractive colour among them.

The vast majority of perennials in the garden have been bought from nurseries - many of them mail order suppliers, sometimes garden centres, plant sales in gardens open to the public or, best of all, given to me by friends who are G.F.P.s with an abundance of plants. Just recently Shirley and Knox Gass visited us and Knox arrived, as always, with a box full of lovely plants. As well as giving me great pleasure these make me feel ashamed because Knox had grown them all from seed. What will rarely be found in my garden are plants that I have raised from seed myself because I am just so utterly hopeless. When I was new to gardening I greatly admired one vignette in Mount Stewart. *Rosa chinensis* 'Mutabilis' and *Alstroemeria* 'Light Hybrids' had almost identical colours of crimson, peach and orange in their flowers. Nigel Marshall, who was Head Gardener at the time, propagated the rose for me and gave me seeds of the *Alstroemeria*. I took great pains with sowing the seeds but only a fraction - I won't say what fraction - germinated and then, to my great dismay, reverted in a couple of years to orange alstroemerias that grew practically wild round a local derelict house. That could only have happened to me I believe. I had the rose until 2011 when it was killed the night the temperature dropped to -18°C. A G.F.P. would have propagated the rose several times over and protected the offspring from hard frost to plant in spring.

One of the very few things I've had success with is propagating *Lilium lancifolium*. Bulbils, like small blackcurrants, grow down the stems and germinate with ease. However one cynical man told me when I was boasting about this, "Huh, any eejit can get them to grow." I was utterly deflated. Real G.F.P.s seem to be able to grow plants from cuttings with consummate ease. I really have tried, in vain of course, with some desirable plants and could nearly count my successes on the fingers of one hand. The first was *Desfontainea spinosa*. I stole five cuttings from a shrub in a large public garden in Co. Down and still have guilt feelings about doing so. At that time (1978) it was possible to buy a small propagating kit with compost and a set of small polystyrene wells. There was a gadget for tamping down the compost. It worked and to my great joy, albeit tinged with guilt, one of the cuttings struck. I still have it and another one grown from it. Other cuttings I acquired since have been asked for. Before the building boom years there used to be several derelict houses round here with old roses growing in the gardens. I had a modest success with these and there are four growing in the garden. Then during the building boom years all these old semi-ruins were used as building sites and completely cleared; that included the gardens. I did manage to rescue one rose, with the owner's permission. It is the single deep red flowered *Rosa moyesii* 'Geranium'.

Green-fingered persons usually have impressive compost heaps. Helen Dillon's are state-of-the-art and are oohed and aahed over nearly as much as the garden itself. The compost heap in our garden was down at the bottom next to the sheugh. I don't know whether it was the compost heap or the sheugh but for a while it was seething with rats. Davy, who hates rats with a passion, told Andy to get rid of it which he dutifully did by setting fire to it after a dry spell one May. We had plenty of potash to put round all the roses. I considered buying one of those compost bins that can be turned like an old-fashioned milk churn. That was until I saw one belonging to a friend. She used hers for uncooked vegetable waste, things like potato peelings and cabbage stalks. Then one day she pointed out a hole as big as a saucer in it because a rat had chewed through the heavy duty plastic to get at the food inside. My composting is a pretty pathetic affair. I collect fallen leaves in autumn, put them into black bin bags, pierce with a fork and let them lie for up to two years when they turn into good leaf mould. Then a local chap has horses and he gives me well rotted horse manure. In exchange I give him plants. Recently I dug out two large *Cotoneaster lacteus* plants for him and I must confess I offload things on him that I don't like. He seems pleased enough with them.

The soil in the garden is heavy and damp but fertile and that's a great help. I don't know how I would cope with having light, friable, alkaline soil that constantly needed conditioning. Very badly I would think.



# Seed Distribution Scheme 2015

by Stephen Butler

A brief note as we are still sending seed out! Total requests in so far is 92, up a little bit on last year, a few more still to come in no doubt until April 1<sup>st</sup> closing date. As always, a big **thank you** to all our seed donors, without you the distribution team would have no list.

Thinking ahead, you can start saving seed now – look at hellebores and early bulbs, watch crocus they can be tricky as the seed pod is right down at soil level, seed heads are developing as I write this.

New seed collectors are always welcome, just try to get into a routine:-

1. Find a paper bag or used envelope (paper better as it dries out, polythene will usually rot pods and seeds).
2. Write the name of the plant, and variety if need be, again easier if paper.
3. Cut off fully ripe heads as found – this may take several trips to the garden, put upside down in bag.
4. Leave in a dry spot, maybe on a windowsill to get dry in the sun.
5. Clean and put in clean paper envelope – make sure it's labelled - to send it in later.

I'm often asked how to judge when to cut the seed heads off. Tricky one that, as every plant is different. You really have to look closely, maybe judge that when one has opened it is time enough to collect the lot or you may lose them. The more you look the more you learn! More than one collection may well be needed for some plants – if there is a long flowering season, there will be a long seed collecting season!

Seeds can be sent to me at below:

Stephen Butler, Curator of Horticulture, Dublin Zoo, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8





# The Annual General Meeting 2015

**The Annual General Meeting weekend Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th May 2015 at the Clanree Hotel, Letterkenny, Co Donegal**

Bookings have been coming in thick and fast for this year's AGM weekend to be based in the Clanree Hotel in Letterkenny, Co Donegal. Following the formal business meeting at Glenveagh on Saturday morning - no charge of course for attending the meeting but only members may receive papers and contribute - we will embark on a series of garden visits made all the more special by the spectacular scenery of northern Donegal: Glenveagh and Cluain na d'Tor on Saturday followed by Oakfield and Dunmore on Sunday. Due to their locations, there are steps and some steep and at times, slippery paths in the gardens. Glenveagh is on a slope with small paths through the wooded landscape; Oakfield is on a hill and has extensive parkland so to visit everything a significant distance is involved; Dunmore has a pond and quite a lot of atmospheric mossy steps. Be sure to wear suitable footwear and, if you have one, bring a walking pole.

The cost for the full weekend is €85/£70 for members and €95/£78 for guests. This includes tea and coffee on arrival at Glenveagh, entry to the four gardens, coach transport from the hotel in Letterkenny to and from the gardens on Saturday, a three course dinner plus coffee on Saturday evening at the Clanree, a light lunch on Sunday and a final cup of tea before heading for home. But with lots more lovely gardens on the Donegal Garden Trail including the garden of our members Ann and Bob Kavanagh, why not stay a little longer?

If you have not already booked, there is a direct link to the Eventbrite electronic booking via our website which is very simple to complete. Otherwise please complete the booking form which was included with your subscription reminder and post it to Billy McCone at 16a Crumlin Road, Ballinderry Upper, Lisburn BT28 2JU. **The closing date is 30<sup>th</sup> April** but please let us know as soon as possible. If you have any special dietary requirements, be sure and let us know ahead of time so that the hotel is able to take account of them in the dinner menu. Either contact the Northern organising group at [igps.northern@gmail.com](mailto:igps.northern@gmail.com) or Billy at [william@mecone.co.uk](mailto:william@mecone.co.uk)

**Notice of the Annual General Meeting of the Irish Garden Plant Society to be held at Glenveagh Castle, Letterkenny, Co Donegal on Saturday 16th May 2015 at 10.30am**

**AGENDA**

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Minutes of the AGM held on 17 May 2014 in Sutton, Dublin
- 3 Matters arising (if any)
- 4 Chairman's report  
To note the report
- 5 Treasurer's report and accounts for 2014-15  
To adopt the accounts
- 6 Election of Officers and Committee members
- 6.1 Election of an Honorary Secretary
- 7 Any other business

**Nominations for the post of Honorary Secretary**

Please send nominations to the outgoing Secretary, Maeve Bell, giving the name of the candidate, the names of the proposer and seconder, and a statement that the person has agreed to stand for election.

Nominations may be sent to her by email at [igps.ireland@gmail.com](mailto:igps.ireland@gmail.com) or [maeve.bell@btopenworld.com](mailto:maeve.bell@btopenworld.com) or by post to 1 The Drive, Richmond Park, Belfast BT9 5EG to arrive no later than close of play on **Friday 1<sup>st</sup> May**.

**Details of your committee members 2014-15**

Chairman: *Paddy Tobin* has served 3 years of a four year term and 3 years of a maximum of 10 on the committee.

Vice Chair: *Anne James* has served 2 years of a four year term and 6 years of a maximum of 10 on the committee

Hon Secretary: *Maeve Bell* is standing down after serving 3 years of a four year term and has served 3 years of a maximum of 10 on the committee.

Hon Treasurer: *Pascal Lynch* has served 1 year of a 4 year term and 1 year of a maximum of 10 years on the committee.

Membership Secretary: *Patrick Quigley* has served 1 year of a four year term and 6 years of a maximum of 10 years on the committee.

Committee member: *Ricky Shannon* has served 1 year as a committee member and 6 years of a maximum of 10 on the committee.

Committee member: *Stephen Butler* has served 1 year as a committee member and 1 year of a maximum of 10 on the committee.

Leinster representative: *Clíodhna Ní Bhroin* has served 1 year as a regional representative and 1 year of a maximum of 10 years on the committee.

Munster representative: *Frances Collins* has served 2 years as a regional representative and 2 years of a maximum of 10 on the committee

Northern representative: *Hilary Glenn* has served 9 years of a maximum of 10 on the committee.

Maeve Bell.  
Hon. Secretary

## Glenveagh Castle:

Contrast gives great artistic effect. In the art of gardening we revel in placing opposing elements together - combining texture with colour and form, in formal and informal arrangements. Perhaps nowhere else in Ireland can one find such contrast than at Glenveagh Castle where its roughhewn granite battlements towering over luxuriant woodland gardens, peopled with Roman Emperors and their Gods at the heart of a vast wilderness of open moorland, mountainous peaks and divided by long deep peaty lakes in the heart of the Donegal highlands.

The Castle was constructed at the centre of the Glen, on the lake shore to emphasize its command of the landscape by John George Adair in 1870. His American born wife Cornelia brought in a Kew trained gardener John Rainey from Belfast to begin the transformation of a boggy treeless moorland into a sheltered oasis of botanical beauty.

Fortunately for Glenveagh the Castle has always been occupied by lovers of art and beauty. The art historian Arthur Kingsley Porter and his wife Lucy brought a new lease of life to Glenveagh in 1929 introducing the single red *Dahlia* ‘Matt Armour’ to the Gardens.

In 1937 Henry P McIlhenny purchased the Estate. With the able assistance of Lanning Roper and Jim Russell they set about transforming the gardens into a horticultural masterpiece. In 1983 the Castle and Gardens were gifted to the Irish Nation by McIlhenny. Since 1975 as a National Park, Glenveagh has been cared for by the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht. We look forward to welcoming you to the Gardens and sharing with you its botanical delights.

Seán Ó Gaoithín,  
Head Gardener.



Glenveagh Castle courtesy of Seán Ó Gaoithín



## Paddy Tobin's Presentation of Honorary Membership Certificates

These last few weeks have brought the most enjoyable and pleasurable of duties my way as Chairperson of the IGPS. At our AGM last year it was agreed to present Honorary Membership to three of our members who have each made a considerable and significant contribution to Irish horticulture. Pat Fitzgerald gave an excellent talk to the Munster group in February and I took advantage of the occasion to make our presentation to him. Helen Dillon very kindly invited us to her house in early February and I felt we were the ones being honoured rather than the proposed intention of our visit and I was delighted that Joe Kennedy attended a talk in Antrim at the end of March and I was able to present his certificate on that occasion. Each occasion was special and on each I felt we were not honouring any of these wonderful people but simply acknowledging their generous contribution. Their contributions have been significant and our marking of them appropriate.



Photo: Margaret McAuliffe

**Pat Fitzgerald and Paddy Tobin**



Photo: Ali Rochford

**Helen Dillon and Paddy Tobin**



Photo: Barbara Kelso

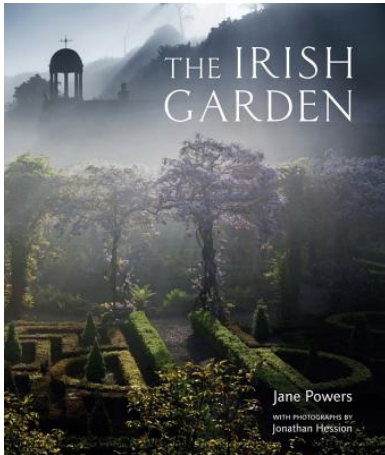
**Joe Kennedy and Paddy Tobin**





# Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

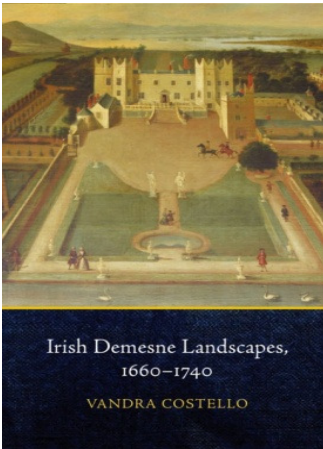
The early part of each year is the period of highest book launches and I have quite a number to hand at present. If I had to choose my desert island book from this present selection it would have to be “**The Irish Garden**” by Jane Powers with photographs by Jonathan Hession. This has been done before, photographs and descriptions of Irish gardens, and the selection available to each author has hardly changed so producing a significant volume is indeed a challenge but, quite simply, the standard for such a work has now been raised to such a level that only the very brave or foolhardy will follow in Jane and Jonathan’s footsteps and then only after the passing of many years. I might



quibble about some of the gardens selected but as one might comment on the selection of a football team it is better to hold one’s tongue when that team scores a resounding success. Such it is with this book; one might wonder about the ingredients, wonder if it has not all been said before, wonder why such a garden was included and another excluded, wonder if this one was past its best days and that one yet to prove itself. However, as with the proverbial pie, this book does not disappoint; rather it delights and succeeds and triumphs so very wonderfully. Jane’s text is quite outstanding and Jonathan’s photographs its perfect match. Now, as to which gardens have been

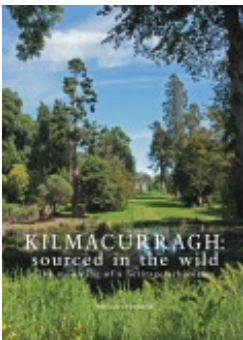
included and which not, you will simply have to see for yourself and enjoy yourself in the process. ***The Irish Garden, Jane Powers & Jonathan Hession, Francis Lincoln, London, 2015, HB, 400pp, £40 ISBN 978-0-7112-3222-8***

Vandra Costello has the impressive background of presenting courses on gardening history in University College Dublin, University of Ulster and University of Limerick. She has also published articles on garden history and on general garden topics in several magazines.

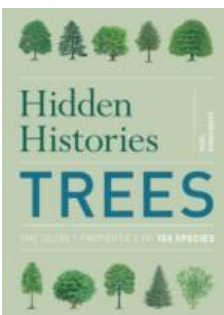


In this book she outlines the development of the formal style of gardening in Ireland in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, discussing the people, the gardens, the influences upon them and how it was done. What pleased me most about this book was the wonderfully pleasant and easy to read style of the author which made a topic which might not immediately catch our imagination so very interesting and very enjoyable to read. It gives a view to another time, an insight into the people and their gardens in a very human way and enjoyably, history is brought to the present in a style we can enjoy. ***Irish Demesne Landscapes 1660 – 1740, Vandra Costello, Four Courts Press,***

***Dublin, 2015, HB, 256pp, €45, ISBN 978-1-84682-506-4***



Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens is one of our historic and significant gardens and a book on the garden would be welcomed were it of a calibre to match the gardens. This book disappoints as it is littered with inaccuracies throughout. There is frequent confusion regarding the history of the house and the family, inaccurate historic background details of plants and incorrect captioning of photographs. All in all a huge disappointment! ***Kilmacurragh, Sourced in the Wild, Megan O'Beirne, Systems Publishing, Gorey, 2015, HB, 194pp, ISBN 978-1-905404-21-6, €30***

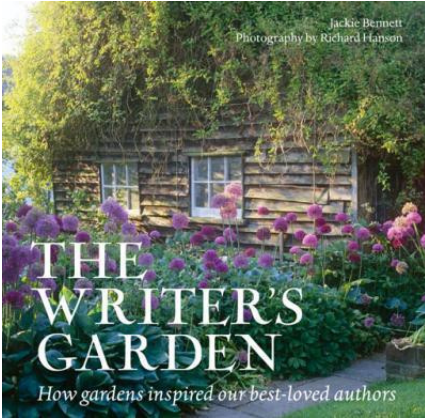


This seems to be a side shoot of the book by Noel Kingsbury which I reviewed in the last newsletter. The layout is in the style of a field guide with 150 trees listed and described in short textbox notes giving the interesting information about each species – its uses, whether for practical matters, culinary or medical with notes on folklore traditions or spiritual beliefs associated with some. It is interesting but a collection of notes rather than a narrative. ***Hidden Histories: Trees. The Secret Properties of 150 Species. Noel Kingsbury, Timber Press, London, 2015, SB,***

***224pp £14.99 ISBN 978-1-60469-617-2***



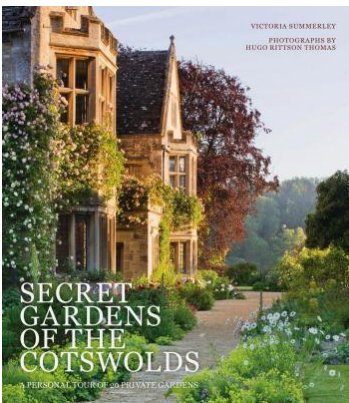
**The Writer's Garden: How Gardens Inspired Our Best-Loved Authors**, by Jackie Bennett, with photographs by Richard Hanson –



descriptions of nineteen gardens with the added interest of information on the authors who gardened in them. Beatrix Potter, Roald Dahl, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Hardy, Robert Burns, Charles Dickens to name a few authors who were particularly interested in their gardens, are all included here. Others included were not quite so keen but it is nonetheless interesting to read of them and their plots. The gardens are not rigorously assessed and all are described pleasantly and illustrated to flatter and each entry has side panels with biographical notes and information on

the literary work of the garden owners. It is an interesting and pleasant book because of the associations with the people listed rather than their contribution to the world of horticulture. ***The Writer's Garden: How Gardens Inspired Our Best-Loved Authors***, by Jackie Bennett, with photographs by Richard Hanson, Frances Lincoln, London, 2014, Hardback, 176pp, £25. ISBN: 978-0-7112-3494-9

**Secret Gardens of the Cotswolds:** Twenty gardens are described in this



book, beautifully photographed and written following interviews with the owners. They are not entirely secret gardens as some open regularly and many occasionally. What is most striking is the density of beautiful gardens within a relatively small area of England, a wonderful tribute to the gardening tradition which exists there. Reading of gardens is never the same as visiting in the flesh but this book provides as good a selection of armchair garden visiting as one could imagine. ***Secret Gardens of the Cotswolds: A Personal Tour of 20 Private Gardens***, Victoria Summerley, photographs by Hugo

Rittson-Thomas, Frances Lincoln, London, 2015, Hardback, 143 pages, £20, ISBN: 978 0 7112 3527 4



# Irish Heritage Plants - Plants with an Irish connection By Stephen Butler

Many thanks to all those members that have sent lists in to me of Irish Heritage Plants that they are growing, I have not had time to compile them all, and I have some good meaty ones to add in, but already we have a good list as below.

Out of 75 plants listed, only 12 were duplicated by other members, an indication of how scarce some of these plants are.

We are keen to develop a list of members who are willing to propagate some of these plants, especially anything woody, please contact us as below if you have room and skills to divide herbaceous material, take woody cuttings, or maybe just grow on small plants for later distribution.

We will happily list any nurseries or garden centres that are actively engaged in propagating, selling, and highlighting any Irish Heritage Plants, please contact us at [igps.heritageplants@gmail.com](mailto:igps.heritageplants@gmail.com) or Stephen Butler, Curator of Horticulture, Dublin Zoo, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8.

*Acanthus spinosus* 'Lady Moore'

*Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku' (syn 'Senkaki')

*Aconitum* 'Newry Blue'

*Agapanthus* 'Midnight Blue'; *Agapanthus* 'Patent Blue'

*Anemone nemorosa* 'Robinsoniana'

*Athyrium filix femina* 'Frizelliae'

*Bergenia* 'Ballawley'

*Celmisia* 'David Shackleton'

*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Kilmacurragh'

*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Moonlight'

*Crocsmia masoniorum* 'Rowallane Yellow'

*Dahlia* 'Jim Branigan'

*Deutzia purpurascens* 'Alpine Magician'

*Dianthus* 'Chomley Farran'

*Epilobium (Zauschneria) canum* 'Dublin'  
*Eucryphia x intermedia* 'Rostrevor'  
*Forsythia x intermedia* 'Lynwood Variety'  
*Galanthus* 'Brenda Troyle';      *Galanthus* 'Castlegar'  
*Galanthus* 'Coolballintaggart';      *Galanthus* 'Greenfield'  
*Galanthus* 'Hill Poe'  
*Hypericum* 'Rowallane Hybrid'  
*Mahonia x media* 'Charity'  
*Mahonia x media* 'Winter Sun'  
*Malus* 'Echlinville Seedling'  
*Malus* 'Irish Peach'  
*Meconopsis x sheldonii* 'Slieve Donard'  
*Narcissus minor*  
*Narcissus* 'Rip van Winkle'  
*Nerine* 'John Fanning'  
*Olearia* 'Henry Travers'  
*Omphalodes cappadocica* 'Starry Eyes'  
*Osteospermum* 'Lady Leitrim'  
*Papaver* 'Fireball'  
*Parthenocissus henryana*  
*Penstemon* 'Evelyn'  
*Pieris japonica* 'Daisy Hill'  
*Pittosporum* 'John Flanagan' syn 'Margaret Turnbull'  
*Potentilla fruticosa* 'Sophie's Blush'  
*Primula* 'Apple Blossom';      *Primula* 'Guinivere'  
*Primula* 'Lady Greer;      *Primula* 'Julius Caesar'  
*Primula* 'Kinlough Beauty';      *Primula* 'Lissadell'  
*Rhododendron* 'Joan Slinger'  
*Rodgersia pinnata* 'Irish Bronze'  
*Rodgersia pinnata* 'Perthshire Bronze'  
*Rodgersia pinnata* 'Rosea'  
*Romneya coulteri*  
*Rosa* 'Belvedere'  
*Rosa* 'Fimbriata'  
*Rosa* 'Rambling Rector'  
*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Prostratus'  
*Saxifraga* 'Lissadell'  
*Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin'  
*Tropaeolum majus* 'Margaret Long'  
*Ulex gallii* 'Mizen Head'  
*Viola* 'Irish Molly';      *Viola* 'Molly Sanderson'  
*Watsonia* 'Mount Congreve'



# Regional Reports

## LEINSTER

**January 15th** - Chinese and Himalayan Plants for the Irish Garden - Martin Walsh. Joint I. G. P. S. and Alpine Garden Society Lecture

With an excellent attendance despite woeful weather, Martin, a Dublin based garden designer, who first became interested in these plants at the 1996 Chelsea Flower Show featuring plants collected during the 1994 ACE expedition to China, showed pictures from his trips to Bhutan, Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh. The lecture began with some excellent slides of the Himalayan Region, with The Snowy Mountain Range, one of Martins favourite places also Nepal and Bhutan and China including Yunnan and Sichuan. The pictures gave a real taste of the region, while his notes on Conifers, Trees and Shrubs, Woodland Plants, Ferns, Bulbs, Perennials, Alpines, Primulas, *Meconopsis*, and *Corydalis* listed many that were easy to grow in Ireland, from the 10,000 species listed for the Himalayas.

The lecture continued with an excellent history of plant introductions from the Himalayas and China by plant hunters such as Robert Fortune the Scottish Botanist who is best known for introducing tea from China, Augustine Henry the Irish plantsman credited with sending over 15,000 dry specimens, seeds and plants to Kew Gardens and Ernest Wilson who introduced *Lilium regale*, *Davidia involucrata*, *Acer griseum* to name but a few. The excellent plant slides began with *Cornus* 'Norman Hadden' a spreading semi-evergreen tree with creamy white bracts and who's leaves turn yellow or pink in Autumn. Following this was the elegant Bhutan Pine *Pinus wallichiana* introduced to the west by Nathaniel Wallich. Among the climbing plants was the charming *Clematis rehderiana* with its nodding bell shaped primrose yellow flowers and delicious scent of cowslip, however this climber needs a lot of space. One of Martins recommendations was *Clematis tongluesnsis* a flamboyant rarely seen climber carrying one to few large white flowers on long pedicels. Another rarity was *Roscoea humeana* a herbaceous perennial from Sichuan and Yunnan, a member of the ginger family that grows in the much cooler mountains.

For the woodland *Maianthemum racemosum* (syn *Smilacina racemosa*) a Chinese native great for a shady border, in spring small Solomon Seal like shoots emerge with racemes of yellow creamy white flowers that are extremely fragrant. One slide featured one of my favourites *Cardiocrinum giganteum* the largest species of any lily, growing up to 3.5 meters found in the Himalayas, Tibet, Nepal, and Bhutan. Another recommendation was *Lilium nepalense* that is best suited to wet forest borders preferring slightly acidic rich soil, the flowers grow up to 1 meter high and are generally unscented during the daylight hours and heavily scented after dark. For the alpine lovers Martin also recommended the supreme alpine *Paraquilegia anemonoides* or Asian columbine a rare and very decorative dwarf rock garden plant with large intense violet flowers from mountain rock crevices.

No lecture on Chinese and Himalayan plants would be complete without *Meconopsis lingholm* the Himalayan Blue Poppy. Easy to grow, acting as a perennial, lasting in the garden for many years. All of the plants featured in Martin's lecture are available, some a little more difficult to find, check specialised UK nurseries like Crug Farm, web sites, and various garden society seed lists too.

If you were unable to make it to Martin's lecture on Chinese and Himalayan plants you missed a great lecture I would highly recommend.

Gary Murphy

### **February 12<sup>th</sup>** Snowdrops in an Irish Garden. A lecture by Paddy Tobin

The eminent and entertaining Paddy Tobin, Chairman of the IGPS came to talk to us on one of his favourite topics, Snowdrops and delighted the audience with his tales of how he and his wife Mary, had built up/accumulated their own collection of Snowdrops over the years. His presentation included a multitude of photos of the varieties that are successfully growing in their garden and he outlined growing tips for those of us in the audience who might want to start, extend or improve our own Snowdrop collections.

Paddy said that it is Mary who is really the Snowdrop person in their household, she being the one who started off the collection many a year ago, with 3 of 3 different cultivars adding to it every year, and with the help of a shoebox full of snowdrops sent by Bob Gordon of Ballymena. There is a name for those of us who would practically kill to get a particular snowdrop variety- 'Galanthophile', the lunatic fringe, according to Paddy.

There is nothing more heartening and beautiful to come upon than a patch of early snowdrops beckoning to you in Winter or Springtime, when all around you see brown earth and bare beds. No wonder it is such a favourite plant of so many. The ideal location to plant snowdrops is under deciduous trees or along the front of herbaceous borders where they will have plenty of light in springtime and dry, shade in summertime, when they are resting. Best method for feeding your snowdrops is by top dressing with leaf mould after flowering. They can also be very successfully planted directly into a 6" layer of leaf mould.

Some of the more reliable early performers are *Galanthus elwesii* Hiemalis group, *G. elwesii monostictus*, *G. 'Farringdon Double'*, *G. plicatus* 'Three Ships' and one of Paddy's particular favourites *Galanthus* 'Castlegar', an Irish snowdrop, found and named by Dr. Keith Lamb, an elegant, easy to grow, nicely marked variety.

A favourite of Paddy's, a champion of Irish snowdrops, is *Galanthus* 'Straffan', one of our oldest cultivars, which is unusual as it produces a second flower after the first, prolonging the flowering display. *G. 'Hill Poe'* is another of Paddy's favourites, a double snowdrop, late to flower, with 5 outer segments and approximately 20 inner segments, neat and tidy, low-growing and perfectly formed.

*Galanthus* 'Lady Moore', named after the wife of Sir Frederick Moore, Curator of the National Botanic Gardens from 1879 to 1922, is particularly embedded in Paddy's heart because of the connection with Lady Moore and Rita Rutherford. Around 1940, at the beginning of the war, Rita accompanied her mother to a 'Sale of Work' at the Mansion House in aid of the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association and they met Lady Moore on the front steps. Lady Moore passed some of these snowdrops on to the Rutherford's, telling them they were worth growing and they have done very well since. Many years later, Rita presented Paddy with some of the said-same snowdrops when he visited her garden in Kiltarnan and he treasures them in honour of both these ladies. They have a prime spot in his garden under a Cedar Tree where they thrive.

One Garden which any lover of Snowdrops must make time to visit in springtime is Primrose Hill in Lucan, owned by Mrs Cicely Hall and her son Robin, the home of the Irish snowdrops. Mrs. Hall has always been excellent at growing plants from seed and regularly gave visitors some of her seedlings, her 'Primrose Hill Specials'. One of these, Paddy particularly loves, *Galanthus* 'Cicely Hall', flowering late in the season, slow-growing, standing up beautifully proud and strong with almost completely green inner segments.

Another garden which is a must to visit is Altamont Gardens in Carlow. Look out for *Galanthus elwesii* 'Skyward', a tall plant, approximately 30cm in height, with impressive glaucous foliage, holding its flowers well above the foliage. Another one to look out for is *Galanthus* 'Green Lantern', a very striking plant, again with glaucous foliage and strong green markings at the apex of the outer segments.

Martina Halpin

**March 19<sup>th</sup>** In the Shadow of Kangchenjunga – a botanical expedition to the Bhutan and Sikkim Himalaya – Seamus O'Brien. A joint lecture with the A.G.S.

This talk was much anticipated, even so it was a surprise to see a completely full house at Glasnevin, with doors shut and a few people unfortunately turned away, not a situation we are familiar with, we can only offer our apologies to anyone who could not get in.

After a few notes and pictures on well known early explorers in this area, Seamus guided us through several vegetation zones, from tropical valleys to high alpine and beyond, with detailed notes on altitude and temperature, and many many plants of course. Starting in the Punakha Valley, at 1200ms above sea level, with pictures of the famous palace Punakha Dzong built in 1637 and the original capital of Bhutan. With *Jacaranda* and *Ficus religiosa*, we rapidly moved on to the relatively new botanic garden at Lamperi, where they have 50 species of *Rhododendron*, and groves of *Taxus wallichiana*. Then on to Taktsang Monastery – or Tigers Nest – perched on an incredible precipice, with *Colquhonia coccinea* var. *mollis*, *Cornus capitata*, and hillsides turned purple with autumn tints of *Parthenocissus semicordata*.

The Druk Trek – to 4000ms now – with *Inula hookeri*, *Clematis montana*, *Gentiana depressa*, and absolute masses of *R. arboretum*, brought home how many familiar plants come from the Himalaya – even *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, which here is well behaved, meaning something must be eating it. I always thought it came from the Caucasus, which it does, but it's home range spreads this far too. Surprising too to see *Bergenia purpurascens* here at Jungchulakha – as a high alpine plant.

On to Sikkim (I was out of breath by now, wondering how the trekkers had been.....) and following the Hooker trail, we headed for Khecheopalri Lake, which is sacred for both Buddhist and Hindus, part of the Kangchenjunga National Park, and carefully managed for ecotourism and pilgrimage, with 600 epiphytic orchid species, just imagine.....

No slowing of pace, and off on the tropical Yuksom 1784ms to very high Dzongri 4000ms Trek, that's a mere 2200ms climb or about twice the height of Carrauntoohil on top of Carrauntoohil. Plants shown included *Luculia coccinea* large scented flowers, and *Thunbergia coccinea* to 30ms, both desirable, but too cold here, while *Curculigo crassifolia* is growing happily in a very dry spot at Kilmacurragh. *Mahonia acanthifolia* looked familiar of course, but gets to 10ms, and flowers in November. Also seen were areas of untouched primeval forest, with *Rhododendron* galore, and cloud forest vegetation with *Hymenophyllum* and *Trichomanes* filmy ferns.

Still no rest – onto Dzongri, and the Prek Valley Trek to the Rathong Glacier. Woodland of *Abies densa* gave way to high alpiners again, *Androsace lehmannii*, and *Myricaria rosea*, with large drifts of *Potentilla fruticosa* var. *arbuscula* in moraines left by the glaciers as they retreat. Even at 5000ms at Lamuney plants were found – albeit lichen *Rhizocarpon geographicum*, with map like patches. Also seen were Snowball plants – *Saussurea gossypiphora*, aptly named and highly desirable but no doubt impossible in cultivation!

Altogether a most entertaining and informative breathless talk, with excellent pictures, masses of detail, and delivered in a confident style. The presence of many of his fellow 'trekkers' in the audience added to the atmosphere, a memorable evening about a memorable trip.

Stephen Butler

## MUNSTER

**March 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday** "The Irish Primrose" by Pat Fitzgerald

There was a very good turnout for the talk given by Pat Fitzgerald. The talk as one would expect was very informative from the very start and delivered with a lot of good humour and enthusiasm. Pat Fitzgerald started his nursery back in June 1990 growing as he put it "Good old fashioned flowers." The nursery is located 10 miles south of Kilkenny quite close to the Mount Juliet estate. He was always interested in the conservation of Irish plants and, as he admitted, got his inspiration from the Irish Garden Plant Society.

In December 2004, Fitzgerald Nurseries took over Plant Technology Ltd, a commercial plant tissue culture laboratory, the only laboratory of its kind in Ireland.



Fifteen staff are employed in the facility and the laboratory now produces exclusively for Fitzgerald Nurseries, as well as taking on contract propagation for selected clients. The main focus of the laboratory is to produce novel and licensed plant varieties with a special emphasis on foliage plants for outdoor and patio planting.

Around 2006, Pat, who has a soft spot for primroses, read an article written by Joe Kennedy in the IGPS newsletter about old Irish primrose varieties. Joe Kennedy is a well-known amateur Irish primrose breeder who comes from Carlow, but now lives in Ballycastle, Co. Antrim. Pat contacted him and subsequently visited him in 2006. Joe educated him on the history and breeding of this beautiful plant, which goes back to the 1800s. As a result of that meeting, Pat was taken over by this plant and has devoted considerable time and resources in developing Joe Kennedy's best work and by utilising micropropagation protocols, brings these plants to the attention of the world.

All varieties come from the one plant *Primula vulgaris* and include such beauties as 'Drumcliff', 'Dunbeg', 'Avondale' and 'Claddagh'.

At the end of the meeting the IGPS chairman Paddy Tobin awarded an IGPS Honorary Membership to Pat for his outstanding contribution to horticulture in Ireland and dedication to the preservation of Ireland's garden heritage.

Martin Edwardes

**April 7th** *The Science of Gardening* a lecture by Prof. Peter Jones from UCC

Peter started by saying that very often the species name of a plant can be an indicator of the best place to grow it. He then took us on a tour of the different areas (Biomes) in which plants grow and how they adapt to the different biomes. He explained why plants have waxy leaves, why they can be hairy, why some flower early and so on. It is all to do with the particular biome they inhabit. There were wonderful slides throughout with some fantastic microscopic images of cross sections of herbs.

All in all an excellent presentation.

We also had a members' plant sale which was well supported.

Margaret McAuliffe.

# NORTHERN

## February 28th Snowdrop Walk at Benvardeen

On a changeable chilly day in February we made our way to Benvardeen, near Ballymoney, Co Antrim for our guided tour of the grounds and snowdrop walk. Benvardeen House has an intriguing history, and is situated in grounds through which runs the River Bush, famous for being an important ingredient of Bushmills world famous whiskey, though Benvardeen is probably best remembered for the Lion Park which existed from the 1970s to 1996.

The estate was bought originally by the Montgomery's in 1865 and is well known for its extensive gardens, forest walks and wonderful walled garden dating from 1630. The garden was made between 1800 and 1820 and has herbaceous and mixed borders, and a fish pond with fountain, surrounded by box parterre, gravel paths and original Rose garden dating from the 1960s. The old brick walls bear many espalier trained apple and pear trees, there is also an extensive vegetable garden, from which produce is sold, when available.

The present owners Hugh and Valerie Montgomery who have lived here since the 1960s, escorted us on our tour, sharing gardening tips and pointing out special plants of interest along the way, telling us how they have enjoyed many years managing and improving this much loved family garden. We meandered through restored paths alongside a wildlife pond, to see splendidly colourful dogwoods and silver birches standing leafless over carpets of snowdrops planted under the oak, beech and sycamore canopy. Our stroll then took us across a dormant wildflower meadow to the cast iron bridge, which had been installed by the present owners Great Great Grandfather Robert James Montgomery, who had survived the charge of the Heavy Brigade in the Crimean War.

To conclude our visit we had a much welcomed cuppa and biscuits in the Old Stable Tearoom in the atmospheric stone farm yard. Although it was a chilly day in early spring, we were charmed by the extensive carpets of snowdrops seen in a tantalising glimpse from the driveway into Benvardeen, and I think many of us plan to return, to see the Azalea walk, the Camellias, Rhododendrons, Hostas and Asparagus beds; so much more to see on future visits. Our thanks were given to Hugh and Valerie Montgomery for a most personal tour of their tremendous gardens.

Dawn Mitchell Mc Entee



# Details of upcoming events

## NORTHERN REGION

**MAY Saturday 23 Stranmillis Garden Stroll, Belfast 1pm to 5pm**

**Check in between 1pm and 3.30pm to start at:**

**1 59 Richmond Park, Stranmillis, Belfast:**

Described by a visiting plantsman last year as a garden of "good design with the best of contemporary planting", the garden of Adrian Walsh, the BBC Gardener of the Year 2001, combines a vibrant and imaginative mix of perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees set within a formal layout.

**2 Maeve Bell, Richmond Park**

For a city location this secluded garden is larger than average. There are varied and colour-themed planting schemes (including a number of Irish heritage plants) which together with the mature trees and formal and informal features bring a country house garden feel to the city. **Plant stall. Pause on the pavement to admire as you pass**

**3 David and Linda Hewitt, Knightsbridge Park**

A small front garden so packed with interesting plants and colour it is hard to believe it was only planted in late 2013/early 2014.

**4 Hilda & Chris McHale, Bladon Drive**

A cottage style garden which seeks to integrate house and landscape: a framework of camellias, rhododendrons and a magnolia under-planted with bulbs gives spring colour while at the rear of the property there is a trio of garden rooms including a large pond constructed in 2014.

**Between 3.30 and 4.30pm visit:**

**5 Ann McBrien, Maryville Park, Malone Road**

A modern city garden that offsets bold geometric areas of natural limestone hard landscaping and lawn with modern, softer herbaceous planting to reflect and enhance the Art Deco design of the house.

**Finish with a cup of tea between 3.30pm and 5pm at:**

**6 Vivienne Kirk, Bladon Drive**

A medium sized garden with a small pond, a potager and a large swathe of lawn backed by a variety of Japanese maples and mixture of shrubs.

A small greenhouse at the side allows a large number of plants to be grown from seed to supplement the framework already in the garden. The front is dominated by a spectacular beech tree which proves challenging conditions for planting.

Members £3, non-members £6

**JUNE Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> 2.00pm**

Garden visit to Berkley and Mary Farr, Downpatrick, Co. Down

**AUGUST Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> 2.00 pm**

The visit is to Hilary & Jim Rafferty's Garden 'The Mill House' 140 Ballynashee Road, Glenwherry, Ballymena, County Antrim. BT42 3EW

This five acre country garden which sits on the banks of the Glenwherry River has been transformed over the past 20 years from a hill farm to a wooded haven.

There are two large ponds fed from the weir by an old mill race. The larger of the ponds (approx 0.5 acre) has a jetty, an island, is home to brown trout and a collection of water lilies and aquatic marginals. It is surrounded by raised stone beds filled with hundreds of primulas, hostas and other mixed planting to give all year interest. A series of woodland plantings of beech, birch, spruce and over 150 rhododendrons are linked by stone paths with seats at points of interest.

Although the garden has previously been opened in 2014 as part of the NT Ulster Gardens Scheme and generated great interest amongst those who visited, it is generally not open to the public.

**LOCATION:** The garden is situated on the Ballynashee Road half a mile from the main Ballymena- Larne Road (A36) approx 10 miles from Ballymena and 10 miles from Larne

From Broughshane; Take Rathkeel Road (B94) towards Ballyclare. After about 0.6 miles at T junction turn left onto A35 then after approx. three miles turn right onto Ballyrashee Road. House is on the right.

**SEPTEMBER Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> 2.00pm**

The final visit of the year is to the National Botanic Gardens Kilmacurragh Arboretum. Kilbride, County Wicklow.

Seamus O'Brien the Head Gardener will be guiding our visit.

The collections include many interesting and remarkable tree and shrub specimens such as *Athrotaxis*, *Fitzroya*, *Podocarpus* and *Saxegothaea* from the Southern Hemisphere. Notable broadleaves include *Picconia excelsa* and *Lithocarpus henryi*. An avenue of Irish yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata') and a wonderful collection of Rhododendrons are some of the magnificent specimens making this visit a 'must'.

Although this is listed as a Northern Region visit, it is, like all visits, open to Members from all regions and would be a fitting climax to a year of interesting outings.

**LOCATION:** Kilmacurragh is located 3 km from the N11 Dublin to Wexford Road (between Wicklow and Arklow). Travelling South, turn right at the Beehive Pub or at the Tap Inn.

**ADMISSION:** Members free. Non-members £4.00

## **LEINSTER**

### **JUNE Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> Garden Visits**

**11 a.m.** Kilmurry Nursery, Ballymoney, Gorey, Co. Wexford.

Orla and Paul Woods are well known for their show work, especially at Bloom, with many gardens using their wonderful plants. Come and see their nursery and select some gems. Light lunch available (€12) No entry fee but donations to RNLI.

**2.30 p.m.** Bay Gardens, Camolin, Co. Wexford.

Frances and Iain MacDonald are well known as garden tour organisers with a renowned garden. Come and enjoy a summer stroll. €8 includes entry, tour, tea/coffee/biscuits.

**Please book so we have numbers for catering [igps.leinster@gmail.com](mailto:igps.leinster@gmail.com) or 086 351-1281.**

**JULY Thursday 16<sup>th</sup>, Dublin Zoo, evening tour, buffet food at 6.30pm, tour to 9pm, cost members €30, non-members €35. Secure parking in staff car park almost opposite Garda HQ.**

In the past 10 years Dublin Zoo has undergone many changes as visitors are immersed in themed landscaping of new animal habitats, with thousands of plants being used to make each area resemble the natural habitat of each area, Asian Rainforest for Asian elephants, African savannah for giraffes, zebras, and rhinos, African rainforest for our gorillas, and just opened Pacific Coast for our sea lions and flamingos. Please note many animals will not be on view.

**Please book so we have numbers for catering.**

**[igps.leinster@gmail.com](mailto:igps.leinster@gmail.com) or 086 351-1281.**

**JULY Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> St Enda's Park, Grange Road, Rathfarnham. A tour, workshops on propagation and seed saving. 2pm to 5pm.**

St Enda's Park is one of Ireland's most historic parks, with the Pearse Museum and many follies in the grounds. Our tour will take in riverside walks, the extensive woodlands, and walled garden and 2 workshops will look at propagating from cuttings, and saving seed.

## **MUNSTER**

**Summer Garden Visit:** Glebe Gardens & Cafe, Baltimore, Co. Cork (Date to be decided. When finalised details will be available on the website: [www.irishgardenplantsociety.com](http://www.irishgardenplantsociety.com) or email [igps.munster@gmail.com](mailto:igps.munster@gmail.com))

A charming garden with enviable Potager, beautiful ponds, relaxed meadow and flower garden, all perfect for enjoying on a mid-summer's day.

**JULY Saturday 11th 10am to 5pm Annual Plant Sale: Blarney in Bloom**

After the success of last year's plant sale, IGPS Munster will once more be holding their annual plant sale at Blarney in Bloom. Now in its fifth year, Blarney in Bloom features specialist plant nurseries, garden talks, traditional arts and crafts, birds of prey, farmers market, children's entertainment and much more. Entry to the fair also includes access to Blarney Castle's extensive grounds and gardens.

For more information about Blarney in Bloom visit:

[www.blarneycastle.ie/pages/blarney-in-bloom](http://www.blarneycastle.ie/pages/blarney-in-bloom)



# Gardening – The Next Generation by Bruno Nicolai

An interview by Bruno with Paul Smyth of YoungHort



Paul Smyth

## **Tell me a little about yourself?**

Well, I'm 21 years old and live in Nurney, Co Carlow. I have studied in Waterford Institute of Technology for my Level 7 degree in horticulture and currently I'm completing the final year which will give me Level 8 in Land Management (Horticulture). For my work placement in 2013 I worked for Angela Jupe in Bellefield House and Gardens in Co Offaly. I have also worked for Altamont plants sales. I'm currently involved in a group called YoungHort which was set up last year and aims to encourage younger people into horticulture and show people the diversity and the benefit of a career in horticulture.

**I first met you at Blarney in Bloom 2014 where you and some of your fellow WIT Horticulture students had installed a garden. How did your participation in the event come about, what was your aim in creating the garden, and were you happy with the result?**

Well, like a lot of these things it sort of came out of a mad suggestion in the college canteen last year, when we were all moaning about a business subject we had and how it would be great to do something like Bloom. We had a look at the Shows around and approached a few. Laura Quinn (who with myself and Rory Newell were the brains behind the idea) had worked in Blarney and we approached Adam Whitbourn who was up for having us. We were just doing it to prove to ourselves that we could do it.

We christened ourselves the Wildflower Wackos. Our initial plan changed drastically, but the overall aim of the garden was to show people how simple it was to brighten up a dull area of your garden with a simple packet of seeds, minimal effort and how with a few simple ideas you could greatly increase the biodiversity of your garden while making it more attractive too. We were delighted with the result. We all live in different provinces so the whole project was organised and discussed via Viber and Skype after we left college and was done on a shoestring budget so we were delighted how it eventually came together. It was a fantastic experience and we met some great people too.

### **What drew you to horticulture?**

Food initially. When I was in my teens I started watching Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall and his adventures with becoming self-sufficient. This got me really interested in that area and growing my own food was my main interest then. I grew up on a farm and subconsciously have been gardening since I was big enough to hold a trowel. My grandparents were all great gardeners too though it's only now that I appreciate how much they all knew. We always had a veg patch on the farm and when I was about fifteen my parents basically gave me free reign of this. From there my interest grew and I began to get interested in ornamentals and it has steadily grown into an obsession.

### **In what way do you feel horticulture benefits you?**

Well, personally it's like a therapy. It keeps me fit and constantly busy. It's a complete relaxation. I don't ever consider gardening work, especially not at home. I'm the type of person who gets itchy feet if I'm not at something, particularly in summer when the days are so long. I despise being inside when it's bright, so gardening is a good excuse to keep me busy throughout the year. It also has helped me form a lot of great friendships. I love when a plant has a story behind it and so many plants I have come from people who mean a lot to me. Obviously it's important to support our nurseries, but there's something special about having plants you can relate to the people who gave them. Horticulture keeps you fit, active and keeps your mind fresh. Personally I can't fathom why more people don't garden, though it is easy preaching to the converted!

### **Do you have any favourite plants?**

That's like asking a parent do they have a favourite child. Like the parent, it depends on the time of year and what is behaving best on the particular day you ask!! There are definitely a few plants that I have a soft spot for though. Snowdrops and Primulas are close to the top of that list. From working in Bellefield my interest in both these plants grew, but in particular Snowdrops. So much so, that I have completed my final year project for college on Twin-



scaling Snowdrops. They are scarily addictive! I'm slowly building a collection of both plants. Herbaceous plants are my main passion. Irises and Dahlias are two other groups of plants that I think I may have too many of. I especially love experimenting with Dahlias, crossing different hybrids and growing on the seedlings in the hope of finding something interesting.

### **Can you tell me more about YoungHort?**

YoungHort was formed in December 2014 in the UK by Jack Shilley. It was set up entirely on Twitter initially! Its aim is to encourage more young people into horticulture and to support young people who have already decided on a career in horticulture by hosting events to promote this talent and as a means of networking amongst young people and students in the industry. There are 12 ambassadors scattered over the UK and Ireland. Our role is to promote the YoungHort initiative in our different regions, be involved in new projects, and help organise and attend various events.

### **Are there any challenges young people face when they have an interest in horticulture, or are considering horticulture as a career?**

Absolutely. Horticulture has this stigma attached to it that it's only for people of a certain age. It has such a poor public image, with the common perception being that it is poorly paid, involving hours of hard work, physical labour and an industry with little opportunity. This could not be further from the truth! The opportunities that this industry allows you are vast. It is definitely a career to consider for any young person with a love for the outdoors and nature. Horticulture is considered a career for those who don't do well academically, however there are opportunities for all in the horticultural industry; it's such a shame that this perception has been created. To overcome this we need first to educate kids and teenagers in particular about the importance and opportunities that horticulture allows. We need parents to encourage their children's decision to pursue a career in horticulture. We also need to value the work of horticulturalists and view them as the professionals they are.

### **What could gardening clubs do to make them more attractive to younger gardeners?**

I suppose the first thing they could do is be as welcoming as possible to any newer entrants to their clubs. It can be hard as a young person approaching these groups, and at first you do feel out of place. So maybe those involved in these groups that know any young people interested in gardening could approach them and invite them to tag along, maybe informally to a meeting at first and see what they think. Reduced membership rates are a must; perhaps even allow their first year of membership to be free to encourage them to join. This will hopefully mean that younger committee members will be encouraged,

who will in turn give other younger people the confidence to join these clubs and societies, showing us that they are indeed open to everyone! Younger committee members will have their own ideas on how to encourage the next generation and I feel it is important that they are involved where possible. Another area that could be looked at is the use of social media. YoungHort was founded on social media and has led me to meet some amazing people and see some amazing places. The negative effects of social media are all too commonly highlighted. It can, if used correctly, be used for so much good and YoungHort is a prime example of this.

**Have you any advice to young people who are interested in horticulture?**

Try it. Whether you manage to coax a patch of land from your neighbour or like me was lucky to have loads of space to experiment with. You learn so much more from getting involved in horticulture. My advice when it comes to getting a professional education is to start off with a practical based course and work your way up. You will learn most when you are out in the industry. The worst you can do is kill a few plants or maybe drive your parents mad by filling every spare inch of the garden with plants and taking over every sunny windowsill in the house! Meet others too. YoungHort, events, societies, and talks are all a great way to do this. That's where you'll learn.

**I've no doubt your name will gradually become known in the gardening world. Do you currently offer any talks or workshops?**

At the moment I'm preparing a talk on Irish snowdrops that I will be doing at Woodville walled garden at their snowdrop festival on Sunday the 8th of February. I'm always up for attending and doing talks and workshops and it's another great way of meeting new people and seeing some amazing gardens.

**What hopes and goals do you have for the years to come?**

I would love to travel and see more of the horticultural world. Plant Hunting is an ambition of mine at some point but I have a lot to learn first. I would love to work in a botanical nursery long term, but equally would like to experience things such as help build displays at garden shows such as Hampton Court and Chelsea. I don't like to be tied down too much to plans and will happily take up anything that interests me and helps me further my knowledge and career if it comes my way. It's an industry that you will always feel you need to know more about and it's endlessly diverse, additional reasons to add to the never-ending list of why I love it!

**Wishing you the best of luck for the future Paul. We look forward to attending your talks and seeing the results of all your hard work.**



# Snippets

**Tulip Fest April 24<sup>th</sup> to May 10<sup>th</sup> 11.00 am to 5.00 pm at**

Bellefield House, Shinrone, Birr, Co. Offaly.

Plants and bulbs in flower will be on sale.

Admission €5 per person

Tea, coffee and cakes on Saturdays and Sundays in the Bellefield Coach House

See [www.angelajupe.ie](http://www.angelajupe.ie) for details including maps or

telephone +353866002180

*Celebrating the Movies* was the theme for this year's Philadelphia Flower Show. The exhibit funded by Tourism Ireland was designed and installed by Pennsylvania firm Michael Petrie's Handmade Gardens. Petrie used John Ford's *The Quiet Man* for inspiration and it was a great favourite with the show's visitors, with many people taking photographs.



**Photo courtesy of Pearse Rowe**



# *The Irish Garden Plant Society*

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