

THE ROCK GARDEN 146



January 2021

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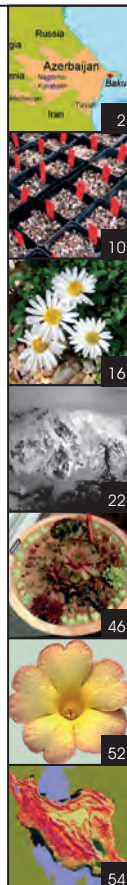
The Rock Garden

The Journal of the
Scottish Rock Garden Club
January 2021

Number 146

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The Editor welcomes articles, photographs and illustrations on any aspects of alpine and rock garden plants and their cultivation. Authors are encouraged to submit material electronically but articles may also be submitted in manuscript. Digital images are particularly welcome; high quality prints or drawings may also be submitted.

The normal deadlines for contributions are 1st November for the January issue and 1st April for the July issue. These dates also apply for material for the Yearbook and Show Schedules.

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A Letter from the Editor

2020 is coming to its close as I write this. It has been a year in which we have felt the value of friendship and company more than ever but were able to enjoy it less than ever. Plants lovingly raised for shows, exchanges, raffles, gifts and sales have flourished unseen except by their owners. At home we have resorted to planting in the local cemetery or leaving them for its visitors to take home. Those of us with gardens had time for tasks long neglected. Forgotten corners were cleared, rock beds renewed, weeds banished and improvements completed. These are some of the benefits of life in the times of Covid-19.

Tributes I tempt Fate by writing that I know no member who has succumbed to the virus. But age has taken its normal toll and it is with sadness and appreciation that I record the death of Glassford Sprunt, a former president of the club and my own assiduous indexer of the journal this last twelve years. Glassford worked hard for the club, lecturing, judging, advising and even selling plant labels at shows. With his friendly manner he endeared himself to many who met him in later life. No show was complete for me without our mutual congratulations on still being here; and now he is gone. Another formative influence on this journal was Malcolm McGregor, who died this year. Malcolm was my predecessor as editor and inspired me to take up this job to continue the work he started so colourfully.

Articles I speak confidently for all who read this issue when I give cordial thanks to the authors of the many articles you will find within its pages. In responding to my July plea for material, some have given accounts of close-to-home practicalities, some have never appeared here before, and others have excavated their memories of the past to bring you a present-day account of recent expeditions and distant beauties.

Our Future – Will you help? I repeat the plea I made in issue 145

We enter different times. We have no show reports. Until recently, our journals were well stocked with travelogues and the search for exotic beauty. But foreign travel of all sorts will for some time remain difficult, constrained, expensive, and even dangerous. We cannot expect the usual flow of travel accounts, and the supply of material for your journals will inevitably dwindle. This means we face a future of smaller and perhaps less frequent issues *UNLESS* we all take up pen or keyboard.

Your Vital Role To strengthen the links between us, and to ensure the survival of this and our online journal, *The International Rock Gardener*, we must all contribute. Think about your plants, your experiences, your own gardens, your own enthusiasms. Please write, photograph, paint, draw and share with your fellow members. Some doubt their own expertise or ability; but please don't doubt yourself – just write! All your contributions will be welcomed most warmly and will sustain our wonderful friendly community through this and our online journal.

Anton Edwards

Azerbaijan - Talysh and Nakhchivan

Michael J B Almond



At the end of April 2015, I joined a group of rock garden enthusiasts for a brief visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan. The country sits north of Iran and south of the Caucasus and Daghestan. It is bounded on the east by the Caspian Sea and to the west lie Georgia, Armenia and Turkey. Because there are various systems of spelling place names in Azerbaijan, you may find the places mentioned here spelled differently on any map you consult.

Talysh is the area in the south-eastern corner of the country, on the coast of the Caspian and abutting Iran. The Caspian Sea surface is well (28 metres) below sea level, and its deepest part (1023 m below sea level) is the second lowest natural depression on Earth after Lake Baikal (1180 m below sea level). The Talysh consists of low-lying Hyrcanian forest and a mountainous inland area, rising to a maximum height of almost 2500 m above sea level. Unfortunately, our local guides had not been properly briefed as to our interests and, of the two full days we had in Talysh, one was wasted in the forest adjacent to the Caspian Sea (interesting though it doubtless is from a dendrological point of view). The only flowers of interest we saw there were occasional solitary orchids (*Limodorum abortivum* and *Orchis pinetorum*), a very few of the local variety of primrose (*Primula vulgaris* ssp. *heterochroma*) and some wood violets. Behind our hotel was a wooded valley with leaves of the local *Cyclamen coum* ssp. *elegans* (but well-finished flowering).

The first day, however, was spent in the mountains and was full of interest – spoilt only by the subsequent realisation that we could also have been up in the mountains on the other day. We drove up to the village of Lerik at about 1100 m and explored the surrounding meadows, in which there was a mass of *Muscari neglectum*, *Leopoldia caucasica*, *Ornithogalum oligophyllum* and *O. sintenisii*. Beside the road we saw some large clumps





Primula vulgaris ssp. *heterochroma*

of *Orchis pinetorum*, *Adonis microcarpa* with its large, bright red flowers and the even more striking *Papaver bracteatum*. The steep hillsides in the distance above us were white with *Prunus* blossom; in a scrubby white area we found quite a lot of the showy white *Allium paradoxum* and a good quantity of *Primula vulgaris* ssp. *heterochroma* (normally with white flowers, but showing the occasional pink). There was also the occasional *Anemone caucasica*, like *A. blanda* but generally with smaller flowers, and the pale yellow *Orchis pallens*. The stars of the show here, however, were the numerous large clumps of *Paeonia wittmanniana* scattered throughout the scrub; this has large, white or cream flowers, many of which were a good six inches across.

We then drove up the Dağlar Qapisi (literally *Gate of the Mountains*) gorge. In the screes at the side of the gorge we found flowers of *Aubrieta olympica*, *Astragalus alyssoides*, a white *Saxifraga* species, *Echium amoenum*, with its large, pink flowers, and the striking *Arum elongatum*, standing proud and erect and a good 50 cm tall. Above the gorge, at a height of about 1300 m, we stopped beside a stream. The dry hillside above was festooned with *Fritillaria crassifolia* ssp. *kurdica*, showing endless variations in flower shape, size and colouration. Nearby we also found a *Myosotis* species, *Gagea olgae* (perhaps), *Adonis annua* and more *Papaver bracteatum*.

Paeonia wittmanniana





Fritillaria kurdica ssp. *crassifolia* and Lily Beetles

We eventually reached the village of Gosmalijion, at 1450 m. The area round the village looks very dry at first glance but it lies in a valley in the bottom of which is an abundant supply of water; there was a running stream and extensive marshy areas beside it. Here we found considerable quantities of the impressive *Fritillaria kotschyana*, with its large bells usually four cm long and on stems up to 40 cm tall. In the same area were masses of *Muscari neglectum* and the large cowslip *Primula macrocalyx*, together with a few flowers of *Ornithogalum oligophyllum*.

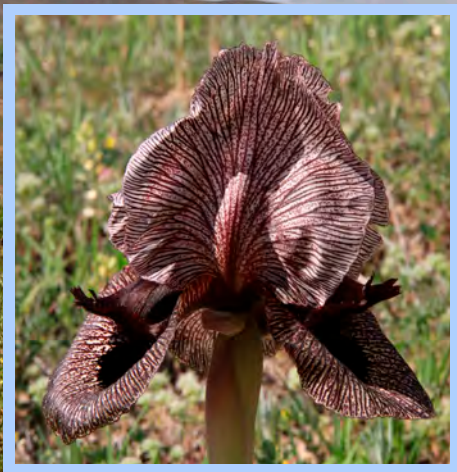
Fritillaria kotschyana



Nakhchivan is a detached province of Azerbaijan (an ASSR under the USSR), whose politics, history and ethnography you have neither the time nor the patience for me to attempt to explain. The present fraught situation is exemplified by the fact that to fly there from Baku (the Azeri capital) the plane must make a considerable detour over Iran to avoid flying through Armenian airspace. We spent two full days in Nakhchivan and, despite being obliged to travel in the same direction on both days because of restrictions on access to areas near the Armenian border, both days were full of interest. Nakhchivan city itself is a pleasant and well-kept capital, with many interesting old buildings, lying at a height of about 800 m. It is the reputed burial place of Noah and Mount Ararat is indeed visible in the distance from his tomb.

We took the main road which leads in a northerly, and then north-easterly, direction up to the pass on the Armenian border at 2346 m. On this road we were allowed to drive high up, close to the border, mainly (we were told) because the lake that nestles below the pass is a favourite picnic spot for the urban dwellers. On the outskirts of the city, we were shown the bulb-growing areas of the Botanical Garden, where we saw some of the flowers we hoped to see later in the wild: various *Iris* species, *Allium akaka* (which we saw) and *Eremurus spectabilis* (which we did not see). As soon as we left the city, the scenery became quite spectacular, with distant northward views of snow-capped peaks, to which we gradually came closer and closer.

We explored the area near the Säläsüz reservoir, at about 1100 m altitude. Cattle were grazing among sheets of bright-red *Papaver bracteatum* perhaps and purple *Salvia nemorosa*, serried ranks of beehives and workers in the distance cutting hay with scythes. An attractive field weed was the dark-purple *Gladiolus atrovioleaceus* while at the roadside there were clumps of the henbane *Hyoscyamus reticulatus* with its large, brownish flowers. The more undulating ground above the reservoir, however, held greater treasures, and we found what we had particularly stopped to look for: *Iris atropatana*. This is a yellow junco iris; the specific name *atropatana* means 'from Azerbaijan') but unfortunately it was only in bud. What we did find aplenty – and in flower – was the more spectacular oncocyclus *Iris iberica* ssp. *lycotis*. We found a few *Allium akaka*, with tennis ball sized pink flowers and large ribbed leaves, and also the less spectacular *Allium noeanum* in both pink and yellow forms. While searching out the irises we found the attractive blue *Moltkia longiflora*, a striking yellow species of *Chamaescadium*, the dark maroon poppy-like *Roemeria hybrida*, a bright orange horned poppy – probably *Glaucium leiocarpum*, *Adonis flammea*, *Bungea trifida*, and a very attractive *Euphorbia* (probably *E. marschalliana*) with orangey-pink flowers grouped in an inflorescence about eight cm across and sitting right on the ground.



Iris iberica ssp. *lycotis* near Säläsuz reservoir

A few miles further up the road we stopped again and found more *Iris iberica* ssp. *lycotis* dotted over a very steep, dry hillside. They looked somehow different from the ones we had seen earlier (shorter, and darker in colour) but we decided that it must be the same species growing in different conditions. At the bottom of the hillside near the road were a few *Leopoldia caucasica*, some of the striking *Stachys lavandulifolia*, with its tiny pink flowers emerging from balls of fluff, *Veronica macrostachya*, with small flowers of a very attractive dark pink hue, the yellow *Scutellaria salviifolia* and a pink *Hedysarum* species. As the road was squeezed beside the river in the bottom of a steep-sided valley, we came across a mass of bright-yellow *Iris imbricata* at the base of the cliffs. Nearby was a good rich purple form of *Ixiolirion tataricum*, clumps of *Hyoscyamus niger* and some bushes of a cherry in flower, probably *Cerasus angustifolia*.

Further on, we turned off the main road and drove up a side road to the east above the main valley to a village (probably Gomur, at about 1850 m). On a dry hillside on the outskirts of the village we found red tulips, possibly *Tulipa eichleri*, together with *Fritillaria crassifolia* ssp. *kurdica*. In the same area there was also some *Ornithogalum oligophyllum*, a *Chamaescidium* species (possibly the same one we had seen beside the reservoir), a species of *Veronica* with small, pale blue flowers on relatively long (5 to 9 cm) stems (possibly *Veronica persica*) and a solitary example of what appeared to be a yellow form of *Leopoldia caucasica*.

Back on the main road, as it wound its way higher into the mountains at about altitudes of 2000 m or more, we passed through a wooded area, with many of its *Prunus* trees in full and spectacular blossom. Beneath them we found *Primula macrocalyx* and the pale-yellow *Orchis pallens*. The lake of Zor Bulağı ('the Spring of Strength') lies just below the frontier pass at 2225 m. This was as far as we were permitted to drive up the main road, although nobody seemed to worry about our exploring the hillsides above and around the lake – and we saw no sign of any official presence. Large areas of the hillside above the road and just below the lake were covered in a mixture of the light blue *Puschkinia scilloides* and the bright yellow *Gagea glacialis*(?) with occasional patches of the brighter blue of *Scilla armena*. In some areas there were large patches of *Corydalis seisumsiana*, a very showy and quite variable species with large creamy-white, or pink and white, flowers with crimson blotches of varying size and intensity of colour, on short stems. In places there was quite a lot of *Ornithogalum oligophyllum* and we also saw white *Pedicularis caucasica*, *Muscari armeniacum*, *Myosotis olympica*, *Erysimum uncinatifolium*, and *Ajuga orientalis* in the grass. On rising ground east of the lake we found a mass of *Fritillaria caucasica* with their dark purple, almost black, petals glinting in the sun. A wet flush beside the main road was covered with white *Merendera kurdica*. Beside the lake itself there were *Ranunculus kochii*, *Erysimum thyrsoideum*, *Myosotis alpestris* and *Muscari armeniacum*.



Iris imbricata

Iris imbricata flowers are bright yellow with green leaves. The background shows a mountainous landscape with a winding road and snow-capped peaks in the distance.

Tulipa eichleri with *Fritillaria crassifolia* ssp. *kurdica*

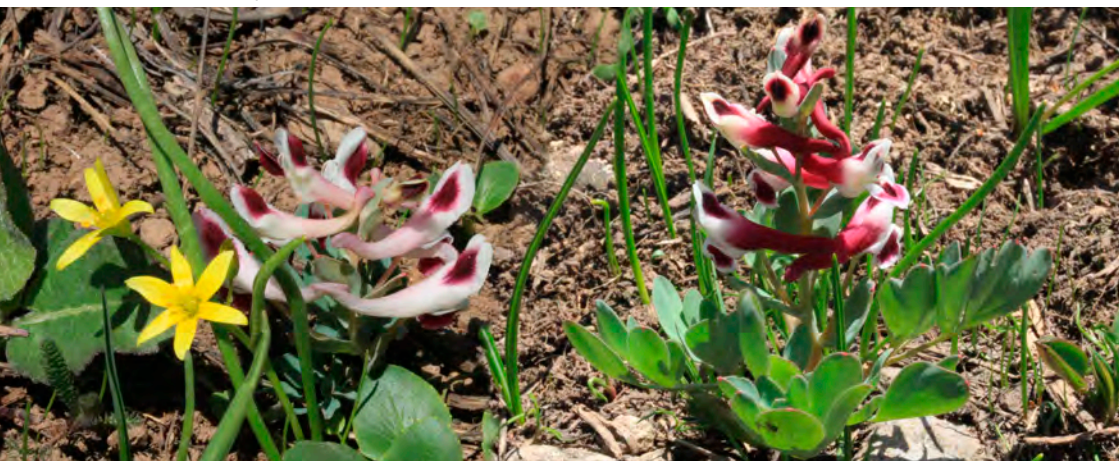


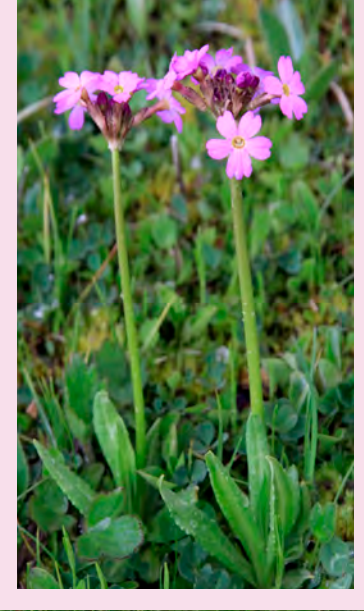


Puschkinia scilloides, *Gagea glacialis* and *Scilla armena*

The hillsides above the lake, to the north-west rising up towards the Armenian border, provided a real feast as the weather began to close in on us. On the grassy hillsides beside alpine streamlets were large patches of pink *Primula auriculata* ssp. *tournefortii*, a smaller version of the *P. auriculata* familiar to me from the Caucasus and north-east Turkey. On rocky knolls there were *Gagea* and *Fritillaria caucasica*. The cliffs above these green slopes, however, more than amply rewarded the effort of scrambling up them. In addition to the occasional patch of *Gagea*, *Arabis caucasica* (?) and *Corydalis seisumsiana*, hundreds if not thousands of *Fritillaria crassifolia* ssp. *kurdica* were cascading down the cliffs. The variation in flower size, shape, colour and markings was amazing.

Forms of *Corydalis seisumiana*





Primula auriculata ssp. *tournefortii*

As I sat in peace and tranquillity on the hillside and contemplated all the natural beauty around me in both the flowers and the magnificent view over the lake, it seemed difficult to believe that the country I was in was actually at war with the one whose border was only a hundred metres or so above me at the top of the ridge.

*"Though every prospect pleases,
and only man is vile."*

Merendera kurdica





How I grow *Primula* and *Meconopsis* from Seeds

Jeanie Jones

W

here do you start? Well I think **seeds** come first. If you have collected your own seeds, dry them and put them either in glassine packets or in envelopes, clearly labelled with their name and date. Put the packets into a **sealed glass jar** in the fridge. If you are buying your seeds from societies such as the *Scottish Rock Garden Club*, *Alpine Garden Society*, *Meconopsis Group*, or *National Auricula and Primula Society*, when you get them put them straight into the jar. *Primula* and *Meconopsis* seed can be short lived if not stored this way, and garden centres seem to display their seeds where the sun's rays can fall on them so the seed is not viable even before you buy it. Going through a friend's jar she gave me a packet of *Primula boveana* '09 and they germinated ten years later!

Red for *Primula*, blue for *Meconopsis* and yellow for other seeds



Next is **compost**. Everyone has their own recipes, from using multi-purpose straight out of the bag to various complex and formulations of their own devising. I usually use the following well-mixed combination: 4 x John Innes Seed compost; 2 x Humax multi-purpose compost; 1 x Pearlite; 1 x sharp granite grit.

So to **labels** - I colour code them each year; the SRGC has good labels on which pencil lasts well. This year (2020) the labels are red for *Primula*, blue for *Meconopsis* and yellow for other seeds. The name, date sown and where the seed came from are written in pencil and a Dymo label is also attached.



Containers - I find a (8 to 9 cm, about 3") square pot is more than sufficient for the number of plants that I want to grow. The pots are filled to within 12 mm (1/2") of the rim, and I mix a sprinkling of Osmacote slow release fertiliser into the top inch. Then I top the pots with 6 mm (1/4") sharp granite grit. A pinch of seed is sprinkled onto the grit, covering the whole area very thinly, and then I use a hand sprayer filled with fresh water to spray the seed into the grit. I had this idea from our gravel paths, where anything that falls there seems to grow from seed. A layer of grit on top of the compost stops liverwort and moss growing on the surface. I then water the pots from below and allow them to drain.

I have a table on the north side of the house, onto which I put large trays, the size a growbag fits into. The trays have had holes drilled into the sides halfway up, and I fill them level to the top with charcoal chips,

Meconopsis: pricked out

... and ready to plant out



filling them with fresh water up to the drainage holes. This gives a nice moist atmosphere, and the charcoal keeps the water “sweet”. I think slugs and snails find it difficult to get up to the pots if they must travel over the charcoal, making this an additional deterrent when compared with putting the pots on the ground.

I start sowing on the first of January and place the sown pots on the charcoal to take whatever the weather brings. I have heard that snow aids germination, but that may merely be an old wives’ tale. If sun shines on the pots the tiny seedlings will shrivel up and if you had not noticed them beforehand you might think the seed was not viable. It is therefore important to put the pots where this will not happen, or to cover them with fleece.

As soon as I see any germination I turn the pot 90 degrees, so that I know that has happened, the position of the label reminding me, and the pots get a misting of a weak seaweed or tomato fertiliser solution. As soon as there are a few seedlings in a pot I take it into my cold north-facing greenhouse and give at least a daily misting of the seaweed solution. The pots may be covered with fleece if they are in a position where the sun comes in, or it is going to freeze.

When the seedlings are just large enough to handle, I prick out about forty of them into trays using a similar compost but substituting

Right: Sown on the first of January: the *Primula* bed in June

Below: Sown on first of January: a bed of *Polyanthus* 15 months later



John Innes No. 1 for the seed compost. They are watered from below and placed in a cool place for a day or two, then I put them where there is good light on the green house shelves. When they have grown on, I put them outside to harden off, then plant out 10 cm (4") apart in the old vegetable garden in rows to grow on.

If my plants have grown on well enough by the autumn, I transplant them into the woodland area, otherwise it will be done in the spring.

I trust this is of help and if you try it this way, I do hope that it will work for you.

All sown in January the previous year:
Right: *Meconopsis x complexa* in mid May
Overleaf Top: *Meconopsis paniculata*, mid-July
Overleaf Below: *Meconopsis x complexa*, mid-July





It was all worth it - the monoculture monocarpic bed in bloom in June



Desert Island Alpines

Brian & Shelagh Smethurst

Way back in 2002, John Dower (no stranger to the show bench) wrote in our East Lancashire Group Newsletter “Imagine yourself on a desert island with all the basics required for a comfortable life except access to the wide range of plants that you currently grow. Given that conditions will be perfect for any plant you choose, which five alpines would you select as those you would not want to be without?” Picking just five plants is very frustrating, there are so many to choose from.

Brian could have picked ninety-five. These were the ones he chose from our favourites. Some won prizes, some won awards; some won nothing but we loved them all:

Epimedium davidii

I like all the epimediums; their flowers are delicate and there is a touch of the fairylike about them. You would expect to find them in Rivendell. *E. davidii* is one of the best. The yellow flowers are particularly fine. The foliage, as with many epimediums, is extremely attractive, especially with the new leaves that are tinged bronze. It is clump-forming and therefore a little more compact and tidy than some other species. I grew it originally because I like it – and now I love it.



Primula x pubescens ‘Alba’

Primulas were amongst my first loves in the alpine world; particularly *pubescens*, *allionii* and *marginata* species, and varieties. The tight snowballs of flowers of *P. x pubescens* ‘Alba’ have a pearl-like purity and simplicity. It is wonderful to see one on the show bench when grown to perfection.





***Ptilotrichum spinosum* 'Roseum'**

This is a good garden plant forming a mound or clump up to 25 cm high and perhaps 45 cm across. Its attractive grey foliage is completely covered by a mass of flowers in late spring. It is quite long lived, evergreen – or rather, *evergrey* – so it may easily take on a look of permanence in the rock garden.



***Verbascum* 'Letitia'**

This verbascum is a wonderful hybrid, another plant with grey foliage. A small shrub, it is usually less than thirty cm after a number of years. The amount of cheery yellow flowers it produces is astonishing and comes over a long period. It may look a little bit tired in winter after all that flowering but, come the spring, it picks up and is ready to go again.



Campanula x stansfieldii

There are many and varied beautiful campanulas: my chosen one is compact, very floriferous and a good strong blue. It seems easy enough to raise in a pot – always a positive point. I came to grow it for the first time about three years ago and have propagated it without any trouble – another plus. The one that we showed at Cheltenham in 2001 got an encouraging write-up by Rod Leeds in the AGS Bulletin.

***Andromeda polifolia* ‘Macrophylla’**

If the AGS can award joint first, second and third why can't I have a joint fifth alpine? This is a neat and cheerful ericaceous plant, perhaps too well known to need a description. But I love its urn-shaped pink cheery flowers and tidy foliage. It is another plant whose success on the show bench has made it even more enjoyable to me.

Alas, I must confess we now have none of these plants. Ah, the ravages of time and circumstance!





Shelagh didn't pick her favourites in 2002 so thought she would do it now:

Erigeron scopulinus

This erigeron looks very delicate, with tiny dark green foliage and miniature white daisies. It comes from North America, mainly Arizona and New Mexico, and is one of the 'fleabanes'. It is fairly new to us, but it came through the winter in the Alpine house and flowered well this summer (2020), when it set copious amounts of seed. It seems happy with us in its pot but is said to love crevices.

Asplenium fontanum

I have a particular fondness for ferns, and we have a small collection of them. I sowed the spores early in September 2001 and 19 years later it has just moved out of a 19 cm pot. It is very neat, keeps a perfect circular shape and – no matter the season – it always looks good. *Asplenium fontanum* comes from rocky places in Europe, where it grows in limestone crevices. It has been a stalwart of the show bench and good specimens often get a red sticker.





***Cytisus ardoinoi* 'Cottage'**

We saw this on the show bench in Glasgow and had to search one out. It began as a small shrub which saw some action on the show bench. However, after changes to our garden, Brian decided it would form part of the backbone of our new raised bed. Well – it has flourished, and now think it would definitely be a 36 cm pot to show. I love it: dark slender stems are covered in creamy flowers in spring. This cytisus is definitely one I would not like to be without.

***Ramonda nathaliae* JCA 686**

Ramonda nathaliae comes from Bulgaria and Serbia. You can see by its collection number that it is one of Jim Archibald's finds. It really is a beautiful plant with its clear blue flowers that sometimes have four or perhaps five petals. They stand up, showing you their faces, and are a pure delight. Ours is quite a venerable example but it performs wonderfully year after year.





Hepatica japonica 'Gyousei' and 'Blue Sandan'

Brian managed to get away with six favourites and so will I. (Ed. *There are three sorts of mathematicians – those who can count, and those who can't*). Over the past few years our cold frame seems to be groaning with *H. japonica*. These plants are hardy in the frame, keep their leaves for most of the year and put on a wonderful display each spring. *H. japonica* 'Gyousei' was given us by an old friend a few years ago. It is a fabulous shade of magenta which really stands out against the dark green foliage. It has won us a Farrer medal at the Kendal Show.

However, I must emphasise that *H. japonica* 'Blue Sandan' has a combination of colour and flower type that makes it stand out. It is a good foil for the other colours and, as the late Bruce Forsyth might have said ... "It's my favourite."

Ptilotrichum spinosum 'Roseum' at home in a rock garden





Southern Slopes of Annapurna: The Mardi Himal

David & Margaret Thorne

On 21st June 2016 we stood by our tent in the road-head village of Lumre as the monsoon clouds parted fleetingly to reveal the snow-covered pinnacle of Mardi Himal. Next day we set out to walk for 33 days and 160 kilometres, from west to east up ridges and down into valleys across the grain of land along the southern slopes of Annapurna in Nepal. For the first sixteen days we explored the two knife-edge ridges of the Mardi Himal in the West, studying the plants and comparing them with those on the Lamjung Himal to the East which we visited on the last seventeen days. Unlike the Marsyangdi Circuit round the northern side of Annapurna that lies in the mountain's rain-shadow and is visited by thousands of people every year, the route we devised receives the full force of the summer monsoon and is not a recognised



trek. It rained for part or sometimes the whole of the first thirty-one days and, although we took two umbrellas each, only one survived to the end of the trip; David resorted to filming video from beneath a slit-open plastic sack, our porters' normal form of protection.

After walking through the rice paddies on the edge of the village, our first day's climb was steeply upwards past cultivated fields of sweet corn, on whose edges we found the white-flowered bulbous plant, *Crinum amoenum*, with contrasting deep pink filaments and anthers shedding yellow pollen. Soon we were walking through deciduous forest with a diversity of trees and predominant large rhododendrons in the canopy and understorey, with a rich ground flora. We recognised from previous treks what we now regard as typical first day plants. These included the yellow star-shaped flowers of *Hypoxis*



Rice planter

auraea, the 'Bleeding Heart', *Dactylicapnos macrocapnos*, and *Remusatia pumila* whose asymmetrical leaves and aroid inflorescences were just forming. A little higher was the similar *R. hookeriana* and close relative *Arisaema tortuosum*. Later we also found *A. exappendiculatum*, a Nepalese endemic which was new to us. As its name suggests, this has no spadix appendage, but the white flower is also curious in that the margins of the spathe overlap and never appear open. By late morning it was raining heavily and we sheltered for a while at Mardi Himal Eco

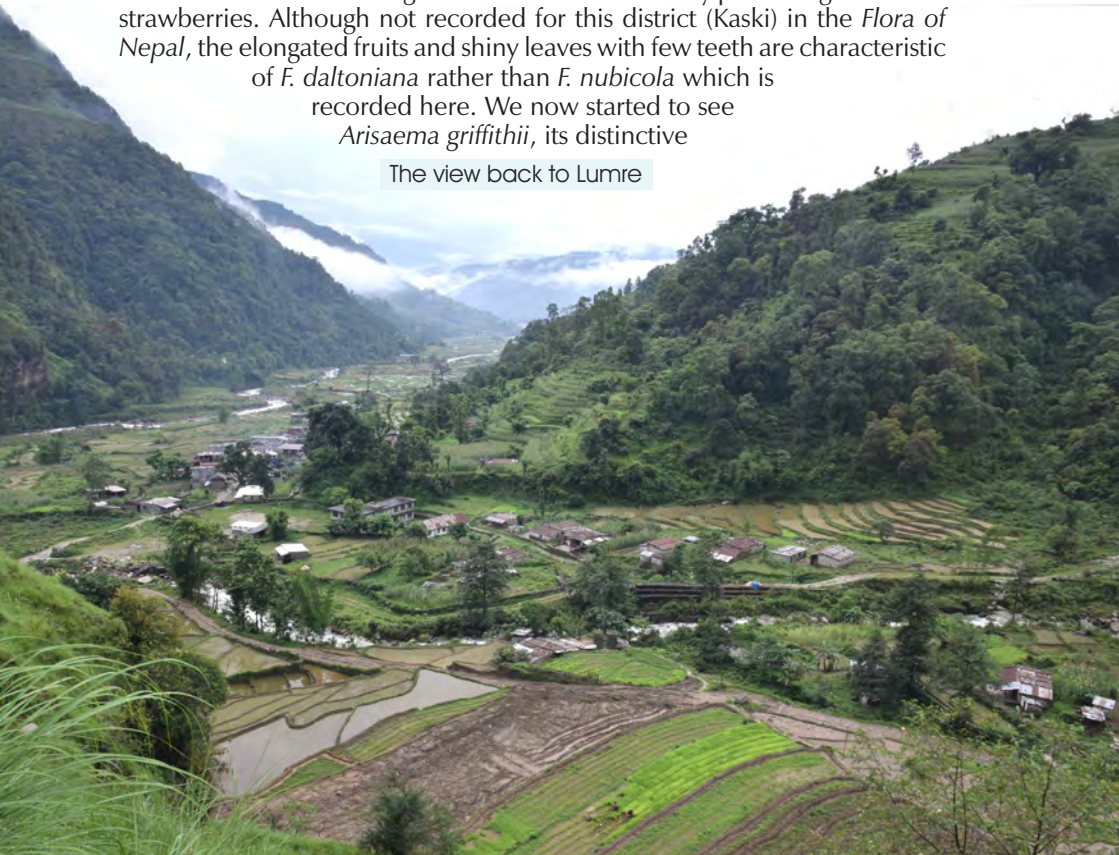
Dactylicapnos macrocapnos



Village where we were entertained by our porters singing and dancing during lunch. We set off again in the rain past rice paddies ploughed by water buffalo, back into the forest where we now found the epiphytic orchid, *Coelogyne corymbosa*, hanging from the trees and the giant lily, *Cardiocrinum giganteum*, past flowering and with swelling seed capsules. When we arrived at Forest Lodge to spend the night, the proprietor joined us in removing large numbers of small black leeches from our outer clothing and dispatching them in a bowl of wood ash. More time was spent de-leeching our luggage which we discovered had been left outside in the rain by our porters in their hurry to huddle by the fire and play cards in the warm, dry lodge.

On our second day we began to see the single purple and white flowers of *Roscoea alpina* at 2555 metres, significantly lower than indicated in some floras, and closely related orange-flowered *Cautleya gracilis*, mainly growing as an epiphyte on the moss covered trees. Orchids included another epiphyte, *Pleione hookeriana*, by far the most widespread species of this genus we have encountered in our Himalayan travels. *Calanthe tricarinata* was abundant on the forest floor but only over a limited area; it had tall spikes of small but striking flowers, a white and deep red lip with contrasting pale yellow green petals and sepals. *Rubus calycinus* carpeted the forest floor with white flowers and *Fragaria daltoniana* was already producing small wild strawberries. Although not recorded for this district (Kaski) in the *Flora of Nepal*, the elongated fruits and shiny leaves with few teeth are characteristic of *F. daltoniana* rather than *F. nubicola* which is recorded here. We now started to see *Arisaema griffithii*, its distinctive

The view back to Lumre





Coelogyne corymbosa

curled brown flowers with golden reticulations and attractive deep red edges to the trifoliate leaves. The white or green flowers of *A. intermedium* each had a spadix appendage which wound round its leaves whereas *A. nepenthoides* was already in seed. We were delighted to find our first *Meconopsis* so early in the trip, *M. gracilipes*, a slender forest species with finely and deeply divided leaves looking not unlike those of nearby ferns. It was still in bud, but we were able to photograph its yellow flowers when we came back down to this altitude later in the trip.

Arisaema griffithii



Soon after we set out next day from our camp at 3050 metres, we found the distinctive marbled leaves of *Goodyera repens*, essentially the same as our own native species (Creeping Lady's Tresses) though some authorities recognise those in Nepal as *G. marginata* on the basis of differences in the hairiness of the sepals. It had yet to flower and was just beginning to do so when we saw it again two weeks later. Other orchids included *Oreorchis foliosa*, which has pink petals and sepals contrasting with a purple spotted white lip, and *Chusua pauciflora* – looking like a miniature *Orchis*. We puzzled over the first primula of the trip which was an early flowering petiolarid in seed with beautifully sculptured edges to the rounded leaves. It was only once we were home that we identified it as *Primula nana*, confirmed by Pam Eveleigh of the website, <http://www.primulaworld.com>, which is such a useful resource for information on this genus. Although we had never seen the species in the wild, we should have recognised it from the garden, though it grows less well at home than on the Mardi Himal.

By now we had climbed above the forest and into steep grassy areas between low growing rhododendron scrub, a man-made habitat created by felling trees for fuel and building materials and to create grazing ground for livestock. In the more open areas were green and white striped *Arisaema jacquemontii*, *Corydalis juncea* with black tipped yellow flowers, the small

Corydalis juncea



blue annual *Gentiana capitata*, deep pink *Gymnadenia orchidis* and dainty white flowers of *Gypsophila cerastioides* with a dark stripe, although not the superior form of Margaret & Henry Taylor's 'Rosy Stripe'. At this altitude we also found *Primula reticulata*, close relative of *P. sikkimensis*, but with a more rectangular leaf and white flowers which open in an upright orientation before bending over in a more typical primula-like poise. The shrubs included *Lyonia villosa* with white urn-shaped flowers and leathery ericaceous leaves, deep pink *Spiraea bella*, *Clematis montana* and a yellow cluster-flowered form of *Berberis angulosa* armed with trifid spines.

Facing: *Meconopsis staintonii* 🍁



It was in this extremely steep forest edge habitat that we found our second *Meconopsis*. It was much taller and more robust than the first, towering above us even in bud and with long, narrow, stemmed leaves cut almost to the midrib particularly towards the petiole. It was not unlike *M. paniculata* in structure but the leaves lacked the golden sheen which we associate with that species. We gently prised apart buds of different plants to reveal white petals on five of them, and red on the sixth; Mahindra, our trainee guide exclaimed with delight at this discovery. He had reconnoitred this route beforehand when little had been in flower but he still remembered where different plants were growing. He also proved good at spotting new species and was interested in learning what we called them. As we climbed higher there were a lot more *Meconopsis* plants with their buds beginning to open and showing white petals until we eventually reached extensive patches in full flower. Each had four white petals, white filaments with golden yellow anthers and a stigma pink in the buds that we prised apart but deep maroon once open, and very dark brown once the seed capsules developed. There were occasional red-flowered plants with red filaments and then we found one with bicoloured flowers: red in the petal centres, white at the outer edge, very dark red filaments, golden yellow anthers and a dark brown stigma. These were all *Meconopsis staintonii*, named in 2006 after the botanist Adam Stainton by Christopher Grey-Wilson from specimens collected by Stainton in the Kali Gandaki Valley during the 1954 Stainton, Sykes and Williams expedition. In that expedition, the species was collected on the Mardi Himal by John Williams, and south west of Dhaulagiri by Bill Sykes; it was later found along the Modi Khola on the way to Annapurna Sanctuary.

For much of the day we had seen occasional white-centred blue flowers of a small primula that reminded us of *Primula tenuiloba*; it had completely different simple toothed and hairy leaves and we realised it was *Primula buryana* var. *purpurea*. As we approached High Camp, our lodge for the night at 3520 metres, rock crevices by the path were full of it in good flower, a wonderful sight at the end of a trekking day.

For the previous two days we had been walking along the crest of the west ridge of Mardi Himal, but only now above the trees could we appreciate views to the higher parts of the ridges that we were about to explore, and Machapuchare – the fish tail mountain – looming above us. The views came in tantalizing snatches as the clouds parted briefly and it was not easy to see which of Annapurna's peaks we were glimpsing when we could only see one or two at any time. As this was the highest lodge, the plan we had agreed with the trekking company was to be in tents for the next three nights, two of which would be at Mardi Himal Base Camp from where we could explore higher up the ridge. We set off next morning in anticipation of an exciting day ahead.



Meconopsis staintonii, red and white forms
Primula buryana var. *purpurea*





Maharanga emodi

Almost immediately we found new species, and more of those we had seen the previous day. There was a borage, *Maharanga emodi*, with pinky blue urn-shaped flowers, deep purple *Cardamine violacea* and the occasional patch of ground carpeted with both blue and white flowers of *Anemone obtusiloba*. We came across a more robust *Anemone* with umbels of vivid pink flowers, *A. polyanthes*, and yellow *Lloydia tibetica* growing around its base. Soon we were finding primulas with farina in a narrow band round the edge of the under-surface of the leaf, a characteristic of *P. calderiana*. When we eventually found plants with flowers, they were yellow, so this was *P. strumosa*, originally a separate species but now regarded by some authorities as a colour variant of *P. calderiana* and downgraded to a subspecies. There were also clumps of *Primula stuartii* with two-tone yellow flat-faced flowers, a plant we had previously seen only much further west in Himachal Pradesh. *Cryptothladia polyphylla*, a prickly *Morina* relative, was beginning to produce its small pink flowers and small-leaved *Rhodiola wallichiana* was already covered with yellow and red blooms. Hiding away between the large leaves of *Bergenia purpurascens* we found just two flowers of the low-growing, purple-flowered *Aquilegia nivalis*; we would love to have seen more of this dainty plant but sadly we did not find it in greater abundance elsewhere.

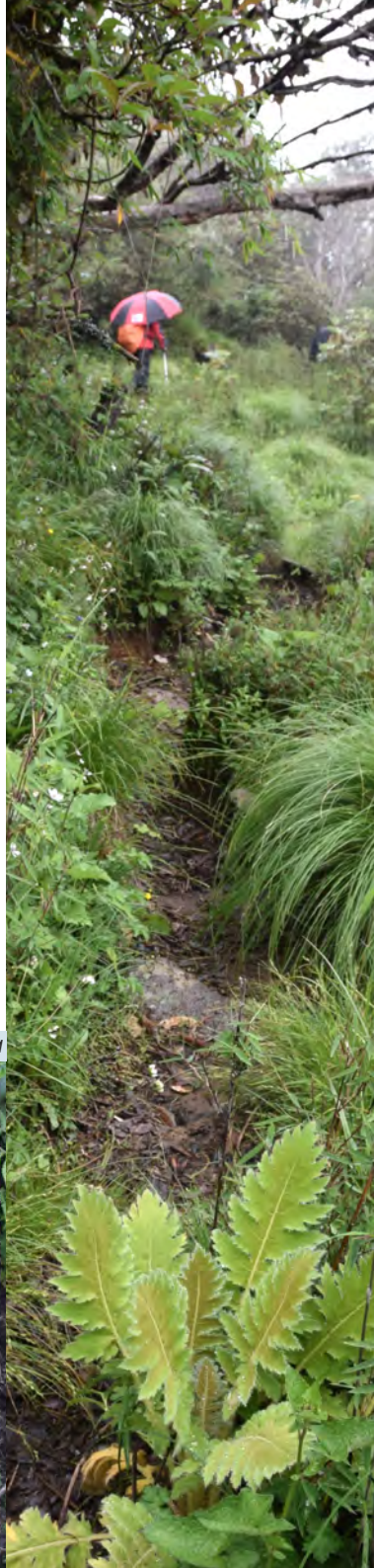
Rhodiola wallichiana



Throughout the day we had been pleased to see many more plants of *Meconopsis staintonii*, a slightly higher proportion having red flowers than on the previous day, but white was by far the prevalent colour and there were also more apparent crosses between the two colour forms. At an altitude of 3800 metres we had started to see large basal leaf rosettes of a different *Meconopsis*, another evergreen monocarpic, whose leaves were grey-green, undivided and very finely serrate. One hour later and eighty metres higher, we found flowering plants which were slightly shorter than *M. staintonii* but broader and with larger deeply cup-shaped flowers of a most attractive coral pink. Their filaments were white, the anthers orange and stigma very dark reddish-brown. In all respects they exactly matched the description of *Meconopsis taylorii* given by Williams in 1972 from plants he collected here during the 1954 expedition.

That night at Kali Danda, we stood beside our tent perched on the West Ridge of the Mardi Himal at 4130 metres, with a magnificent view of the Annapurna peaks above us and down into the Modi Khola valley. *Meconopsis taylorii* plants were all around us, and a lot of interesting discoveries over which to puzzle. Darkness came early and we fell asleep to the call of the Solitary Snipe and the sound of its winnowing tail feathers as it displayed over a nearby pool.

Meconopsis taylorii, *staintonii* and *paniculata*





Does *Meconopsis taylorii* really exist?

The Stainton, Sykes and Williams expedition of 1954 was a joint Natural History Museum and Royal Horticultural Society venture, instigated and organised by Sir George Taylor. Its leader, L H J Williams, spent much of the rest of his museum career working on the specimens collected during this and other expeditions to Nepal and in 1972 he published *Meconopsis taylorii* as a new species. He dedicated it to Sir George Taylor in recognition of his major contributions to the understanding of the genus *Meconopsis* in his 1934 book *An Account of the Genus Meconopsis*, and of his promotion of the botanical exploration of Nepal. We had been surprised that, eighty years on, Christopher Grey-Wilson's 2014

Meconopsis taylorii: plant & inflorescence





Meconopsis taylorii

monograph on the genus *Meconopsis* had no verified images of *M. taylorii*. Our interest had been further stimulated by the author's statement that "as far as I am aware no botanists have ventured to the type locality since its first discovery". When we subsequently noticed that the *Flora of Nepal* (2011) queried whether *M. taylorii* was distinct from *M. regia*, we could resist the temptation to investigate no longer. It hardly seemed likely that Sir George Taylor, one of the botanical world's most ardent 'lumpers' would ever have given his name to a species which might subsequently disappear into synonymy.

Meconopsis taylorii seed heads



Having paid the Natural History Museum to scan the contents of their file on the 1954 expedition, we were fascinated to read the correspondence between Williams and Sir George Taylor. However, neither this nor the six-page post-expedition report sent to the Government of Nepal described the routes taken in detail, only the very general areas covered by each of the three botanists. All available information confirmed that both the Mardi and Lamjung Himal had been allocated to Williams, so we decided to explore as much of these areas as we could. We devised an itinerary, then booked a trekking company and flights for a visit in 2015. The devastating Ghorka earthquake that struck in April and the May aftershock resulted in this trip's cancellation, so we were even more pleased to go in 2016 and make our modest contribution to the Nepalese economy.

The more westerly of the Mardi Himal's two knife-edge ridges lies between the rivers Modi Khola and Mardi Khola, and the one to the East, between the Mardi Khola and Seti Khola. We planned to climb steeply through the forest to the crest of each ridge in turn, and on each one to walk northwards to the two Mardi Himal Base camps before dropping into the next valley below. It was not clear from Williams's paper on which ridge he had found *Meconopsis taylorii* or the type location. We had spent a lot of time plotting latitudes and longitudes from *M. taylorii* herbarium specimens, wondering why those from the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh and Natural History Museum with the same collection numbers differed from each other and why some were located in the middle of a river near Pokhara. We were later told that these were "generic" and not actual co-ordinates for the locations, so wondered why they were given to such precision in degrees, minutes and seconds (to two decimal places, corresponding to a precision of less than a metre!). Williams's published description also gives co-ordinates, but these are for the peak of Machapuchare itself, as is the altitude of 22958' (6998 metres). Our only other clues were the altitudes of the herbarium specimens; from these and the verbal description of the ridge, we could deduce approximately where they had been collected.

On 25th June 2016 we had found plants exactly matching the description of *Meconopsis taylorii*, but were they, as the *Flora of Nepal* suggests, merely a colour variant of *M. regia*? To answer this question, we needed to study the population thoroughly – and we had already noticed interesting features for investigation and analysis. We had planned to ascend next day to Mardi Himal Base Camp West for two nights, for further higher altitude exploration, but our crew and porters refused to go higher. So instead, we and our guide set off towards Base Camp with the intention of going as high as we could before returning to the campsite at Kali Danda.

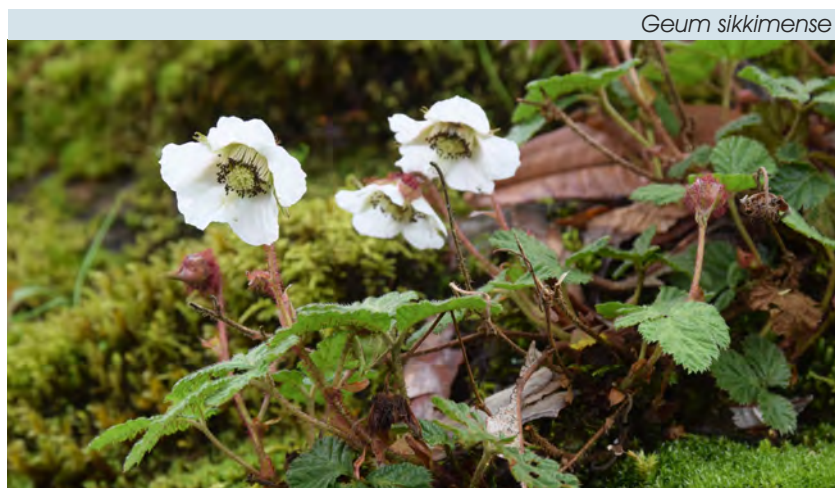
There were many more *Meconopsis taylorii* plants for us to enjoy and as we climbed higher they became noticeably smaller in stature but



Rheum moorcroftianum

even more floriferous; it was easy to imagine how lovely they would look in herbaceous borders. Seed was brought back from the 1954 expedition and the resulting plants were described with great enthusiasm in the gardening press at the time, including the 1958 SRGC journal, but they did not survive long in cultivation. No doubt this was partly because they are monocarpic, meaning that every plant dies after flowering and therefore seed must be sown every year to ensure a succession of blooms.

There were no more *M. staintonii*, the last of which had been seen around the middle of the previous day at 3800 metres, but there were plenty of interesting new plants. These included clusters of the nodding white flowers of *Lloydia longiscapa* with purpley-brown blotches at the base of their tepals, neat mats of white- or blue-flowered *Anemone rupestris*, and a particularly compact form of *Rheum moorcroftianum* that had crinkled leaves and neat spires of deep-red flowers. We found two species of *Geum*, white-flowered *G. sikkimense* and showy *G. elatum* with yellow flowers and contrasting dark calyx. Here also was the familiar marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*, although in a dwarf form like those we find in our Scottish Borders hills. However, the extensive swathes of



Geum sikkimense



Caltha palustris, dwarf form

yellow meadow primulas were quite unlike anything we see back home. A tiny pink-flowered *Primula* with a yellow eye found here and several times later defied identification for some time; we eventually decided it must be our old friend *P. concinna*, which we have seen many times before but never with such subtle colouring.

Just after one in the afternoon, we were surprised to find our path heading downhill. It soon became evident that, not only were we going the wrong way, but our guide had never been to Base Camp and had no idea how to get there. The lie of the land made for an easy decision to turn round and retrace our steps; it was not long before we found the correct path and were once more climbing steeply upwards. We were finding more cushions and creeping plants on the rocks. The silver-edged palmate leaves of *Sibbaldia purpurea* provided a lovely backdrop to its rich maroon petals, closely related *S. perpusilloides*, was yet to open its white blooms, golden-yellow *Potentilla microphylla* flowers were tucked into soft moss-like foliage, and there were white star-shaped papery petals of *Anaphalis nepalensis* ssp. *monocephala*. We continued upwards until 3 pm, by which time we were about three quarters of the way from Kali Danda to Base Camp and at an altitude of 4280 metres. We scanned above us with binoculars and could see no more *Meconopsis taylorii* then, before heading downhill, hurriedly photographed *Chrysosplenium nepalense* and our first *Androsace* of the trip, *A. tapete*, just coming into flower.

Next day while we were exploring around our Kali Danda campsite to record our findings, a shepherd with a large flock of sheep came past and we realised that seasonal grazing of these ridges plays an important part in maintaining their botanical diversity as well as keeping the paths open. We then left our scenic campsite, perched high on the West Ridge, to return to High Camp and Low Camp. Over the next five days we descended a new route into the valley of the Mardi Khola to 1410 metres and along the river for a couple of kilometres before climbing up onto the East Ridge of the Mardi Himal.

Highlights of crossing from one ridge to the other included first blooms in a patch of *Cypripedium himalaicum*, tall spikes of *Cardiocrinum giganteum* – each with several pure white trumpet-shaped



Cypripedium himalaicum

flowers – and huge clumps of *Coelogyne corymbosa*, an epiphytic orchid hanging from the trees. Close to the lowest point near the river we found an attractive pale yellow-flowered member of the Araceae growing on moss-covered rocks; this was *Ariopsis peltata*, a new species for us and unlikely to be hardy at home. The path up from the river was initially paved with stone and led us between fertile fields of sweet corn as far as a well-populated village on the edges of which rice planting was in full swing. The flooded paddies were being ploughed with pairs of water buffalo before individual rice plants were hand planted, having been brought from nursery beds in bundles.

At 3340 metres we once again found white flowered *Meconopsis staintonii* and, at 3610 metres, *M. taylorii*, so were delighted to have discovered both species on both ridges of the Mardi Himal. As on the West Ridge, *M. staintonii* was predominantly white-flowered, with fewer red-flowered plants and occasional bicoloured forms that produced an attractive range of variations. When we looked down to flatter areas about 100 m below there were hundreds of white-flowered plants and single figures of red-flowered ones. Where we stood on the ridge, the proportion of red-flowered plants was slightly greater, perhaps an increase with altitude or perhaps because the red ones came into flower a little later.



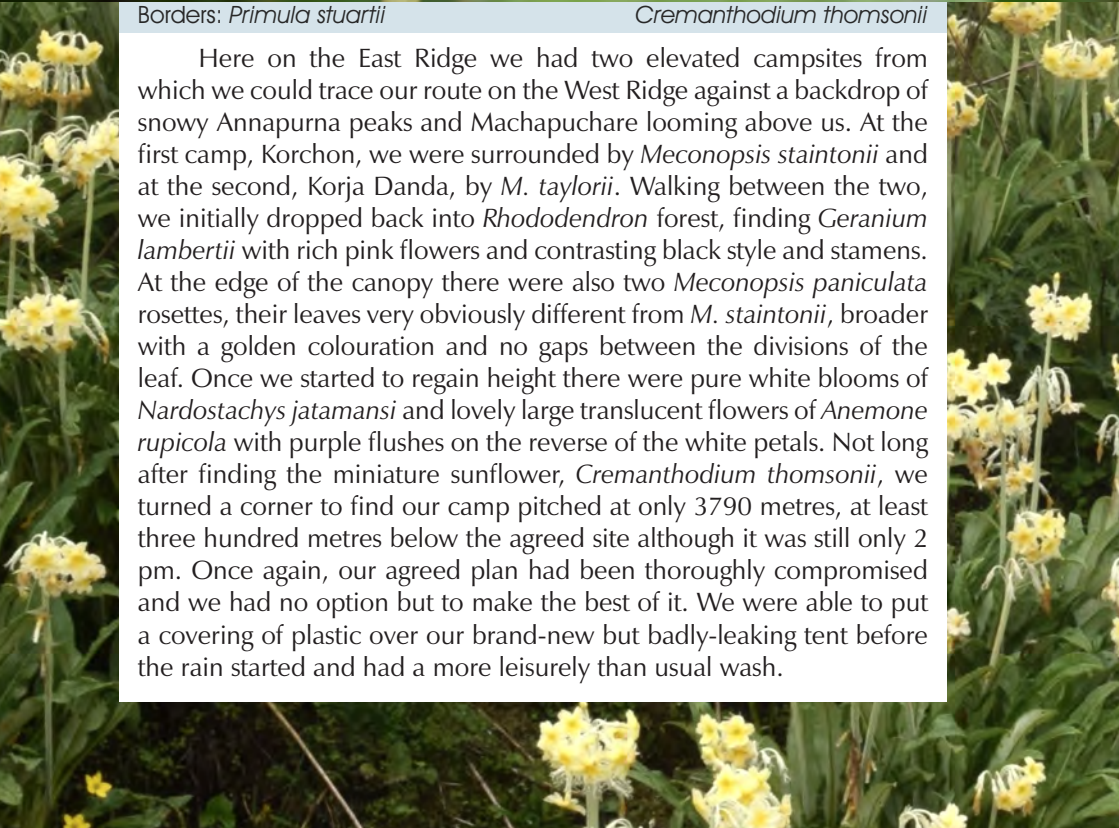
Primula concinna



Borders: *Primula stuartii*

Cremanthodium thomsonii

Here on the East Ridge we had two elevated campsites from which we could trace our route on the West Ridge against a backdrop of snowy Annapurna peaks and Machapuchare looming above us. At the first camp, Korchon, we were surrounded by *Meconopsis staintonii* and at the second, Korja Danda, by *M. taylorii*. Walking between the two, we initially dropped back into *Rhododendron* forest, finding *Geranium lambertii* with rich pink flowers and contrasting black style and stamens. At the edge of the canopy there were also two *Meconopsis paniculata* rosettes, their leaves very obviously different from *M. staintonii*, broader with a golden colouration and no gaps between the divisions of the leaf. Once we started to regain height there were pure white blooms of *Nardostachys jatamansi* and lovely large translucent flowers of *Anemone rupicola* with purple flushes on the reverse of the white petals. Not long after finding the miniature sunflower, *Cremanthodium thomsonii*, we turned a corner to find our camp pitched at only 3790 metres, at least three hundred metres below the agreed site although it was still only 2 pm. Once again, our agreed plan had been thoroughly compromised and we had no option but to make the best of it. We were able to put a covering of plastic over our brand-new but badly-leaking tent before the rain started and had a more leisurely than usual wash.





Anemone rupicola

Next day we left for our intended campsite at Mardi Himal Base Camp South and, just as on the West Ridge, there were many *M. taylorii* plants, now past their peak of flowering, and setting seed. On rocky crags beside the path grew a blue-flowered legume, *Parochetus communis*, tiny *Lloydia delicatula* with its upward facing white star-shaped blooms, pink bells of *Lilium nanum* ssp. *nanum* and dwarf rhododendrons. These were not the two-colour forms of *R. lepidotum*, as might be thought at first glance, but pink *R. lepidotum* growing beside yellow flowered *R. lowndesii*, distinguished by its hairy stems. How appropriate for us to find this plant, discovered by and named after Donald Lowndes, an SRGC member and supporter of the Edinburgh Show (as are we when not on our travels). Here too was the only blue flowered *Corydalis* of the trip, *C. cashmeriana* ssp. *longicalcarata* and *Anemone polyanthes* with its spectacular clusters of pink flowers. Large mounds of *Arenaria densissima* enveloped the face of the rock, its purple-anthered white flowers and slightly broader leaves distinguishing it from the similar species, *A. polytrichoides*. Here too was *Pedicularis wallichii* with dark-veined pink flowers and compact pinnate leaves.

Base Camp itself at 4080 metres was full of primulas: *P. strumosa*, *P. stuartii*, *P. reticulata* and the form of *P. obliqua* so different from ones found in east Sikkim and Bhutan. Scattered among



Anemone polyanthes

Facing: *Meconopsis simplicifolia*

these yellows and creams was the pink of *Bergenia purpurascens* and the blue of *Meconopsis simplicifolia* ssp. *simplicifolia*, complete with last year's dead flower stems to show that it was perennial. We scanned above and around us with binoculars and spent a long time enjoying the spectacle before heading back to Korja Danda Camp.

Next day was our last at altitude on the Mardi Himal, and we made some final observations. Here on the East Ridge we had been able to confirm that, as on the West Ridge, there were plants which showed intermediate characteristics between the two species of *Meconopsis staintonii* and *M. taylorii* as well as others with mixed features; for example, the red flowers and tall narrow stature of *M. staintonii* but entire slightly-toothed leaves like those of *M. taylorii*. Both scenarios clearly indicated some hybridizing between the two species, and the presence of *M. staintonii* in two colour forms provided the potential for an even greater range of combinations of flower colour than would otherwise be the case. The altitude range over which the distribution of *M. staintonii* and *M. taylorii* overlapped was 3610 – 3870 metres. Because at least one of the Stainton, Sykes and Williams expedition seed collections for each species was made between these altitudes on the Mardi Himal, it is likely that some of this seed was of hybrid origin. No wonder a great deal of confusion resulted when these seeds were grown in cultivation. Other seed collections of *M. taylorii* were made above the overlap zone and *M. staintonii* was collected in locations where *M. taylorii* does not occur, so these should have resulted in non-hybridized plants. But if these two species were grown in close proximity in cultivation, they too may well have hybridized and, as we know, the pure forms of both species disappeared fairly quickly after they were first introduced from the expedition in 1954.

On 6th July, day fifteen of our trek, we left the knife-edge East Ridge of Mardi Himal, dropping steeply towards the valley below, recording our lowest *M. taylorii* at 3720 metres and the last *M. staintonii* the following day at 3010 metres. We found several glorious clumps of cream- and maroon-coloured *Lilium nepalense* and patches of blue-berried *Gaultheria trichophylla*, but the steep slopes and wet slippery conditions were not conducive to much





Meconopsis staintonii

Meconopsis staintonii (white) x *taylorii*





Meconopsis staintonii x taylorii

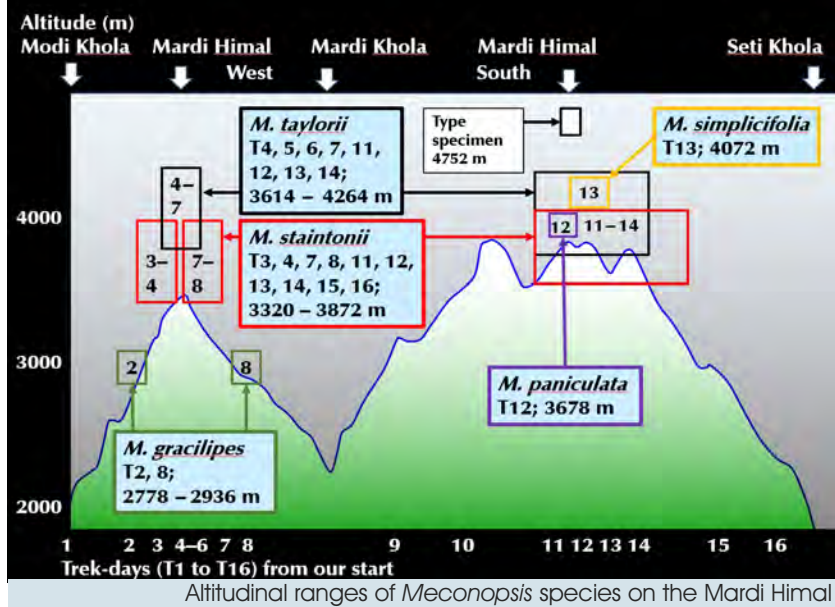
Meconopsis staintonii (white) x *taylorii*





Leaves of *Meconopsis staintonii*, *taylorii* and hybrids
Seed capsules of *Meconopsis staintonii* (white) and *Meconopsis taylorii*





exploration, especially as our guide was uncertain of our route, resulting in considerable amounts of time being lost in unnecessary detours. After descending 2500 metres, we spent the night of 7th July in a valley lodge at Dhiprang and, on day 17, we crossed the Seti Khola, leaving the Mardi Himal behind us, and started the long approach eastwards towards the Lamjung Himal ...

A rare break from the rain on the two Mardi Himal ridges below Machapuchare



Rock Gardening after a Stroke

David McAdam

Or ... How I came to love rock gardening and alpines

I was born just before the Second World War. My parents had bought a new McTaggart and Mickel bungalow on the top of a hill in Clarkston on the south side of Glasgow. The back garden sloped away steeply to the North towards the River Clyde. My father had a plan drawn up by a newspaper for the whole garden. He was then young and fit and landscaped it all himself in the days before JCBs and "hit squads". This started his interest in gardening which he passed on to me. I used to help him by dropping to my hands and knees and going down the long winding path pulling out weeds. It was later when I learned that weeds were just wild-flowers growing in the wrong place. This triggered my love of gardening.

Father worked as a statistician for the *Coal Owners for the West of Scotland* and when the Coal Board was nationalised in 1948 we moved through to Edinburgh to an end-terraced Victorian house in Corstorphine. It had a long back garden where he continued to enjoy gardening. The garden was on a sunny south-facing slope which had once been market gardens for Edinburgh so the soil was wonderful and ideal for growing vegetables, which I helped him harvest.

When we moved through to Edinburgh my father used an old connection between my Glasgow school, Hutchesons Boys Grammar School, and the Royal High School (RHS) in Edinburgh to get me a place at the RHS. At that time the school was in Regent Road; just inside the gates were two prefabricated classrooms which were used for many years for staging the Scottish Rock Garden Club spring shows.

I studied Geology at Edinburgh University and took a job with the Geological Survey in London. In London I met and married my first wife, Ann, and we moved back to Edinburgh, into a newly built house in Penicuik. It had a typical new-build front garden: a straight slabbed path with a flat lawn on one side and a sloping flower bed on the other up to another lawn. I thought I could put my collection of rocks to good use on the bank to make a rock garden. I had heard about the SRGC and joined it in the early 1970s. In the journal I saw an advert for Edrom Nurseries near Coldingham, run by the Misses Milne Hume. In the advert they had a special mail order offer of ten 'pot luck' alpine plants, I ordered twenty and when I unpacked the order I found a selection of saxifrages, hypericums, gentians, sempervivums and other alpines; this is how I started off my garden. Over the years I added to my collection when visiting other specialist nurseries and from the sales area at the SRGC spring show.

After my first wife died, I remarried; Valerie and I moved into my father's house in Corstorphine. Here I created a raised bed with peat blocks and planted it with heathers and other ericaceous plants. At that time the SRGC spring shows had moved to St Ninian's Church in Corstorphine, which was very convenient for us.

In 2003 we moved to North Berwick, taking on an even larger garden, but one with a raised bed at the back of the house – once more an ideal site for growing alpines. I planted up three alpine troughs and my wife Valerie managed to make another two from empty polystyrene boxes. My interest in stamps brought me into contact with Gavin McNaughton at Macplants, another useful source of alpines. We have loved to admire other alpine gardens while visiting places throughout the country such as Wisley, Kew, Harlow Carr and the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh.

In 2019 I had a large stroke that has left me without the use of my left arm and leg and has confined me to a wheelchair. We moved to a specially adapted bungalow with a much smaller garden. We brought the three alpine troughs with us; by then they had become a bit neglected. We had the back garden landscaped so that I could move round easily in my wheelchair and we put the three troughs in a raised position for me to work on them with my good hand and with the help of my wife Valerie. Then lockdown happened. We managed to choose new plants to refurbish the troughs



The revamped troughs brought from the old house. We didn't take "before" photos but they show how they have come on in the past few months and how they have been raised up to work on them





Development of the new trough with the slate bedding to make an accessible crevice garden

from the Macplants website and they were delivered a few days later. Using my right hand I could dig out some of the old plants and replace them with new ones. So now we had three beautifully refurbished alpine troughs but it wasn't enough, I wanted more!

We managed to source a new, relatively light trough online and had to think of a way of raising it up off the ground. To look after my alpines, they need to be raised to a level where I can reach them easily and stretch across to the back of the container. During her excavations in the garden, Valerie had found several square paving slabs and bricks and we used these to raise the new trough to a suitable level. We had seen several styles of rock garden on our travels and particularly liked the one imitating the vertical strata of rocks. We achieved this by using slates bought online from a company that supplies slate for use in aquaria. I was then able to plant a variety of alpines in the crevices.

The wood trough alternative

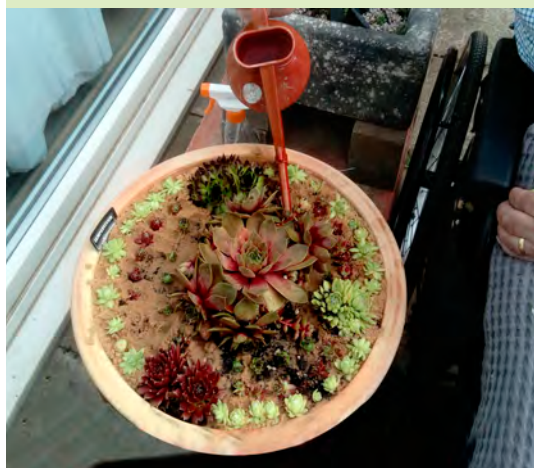


At last the garden centres reopened and on her first post lockdown trip, Valerie found a beautiful shallow terracotta pan suitable for growing sempervivums (houseleeks), another of my passions. This also needed to be raised. My younger daughter had been busy during lockdown clearing the neglected drying green at her block of flats in Edinburgh and came across large quantities of bricks. She sorted out the best of them and they were just what we needed to raise the pan ready for planting. The previous week we had seen George Anderson on the Scottish television programme *The Beechgrove Garden* potting sempervivum offsets and we followed his example, to make an interesting circular pattern.

This is not the end of the story. We had tried with some success to grow some alpines from seed. We sadly failed with *Erinus alpinus* (Fairy Foxglove) which I had grown successfully in the past from seed from the SRGC seed exchange. Searching online, Valerie managed



The brick and terracotta venture



McNab-style rock garden in the Lodge Grounds, pre-war (centre) & now (right)





to find a nursery that supplied it as plants. They were having a half-price sale and to qualify for free postage we ended up buying a total of thirteen plants altogether! So where on earth would we put these? Back to the internet again – to find a raised planter. This time we opted for a raised wooden trough which arrived as a flat pack and needed to be assembled and painted.

We thought we would now opt for a different way of planting. The Lodge Grounds in North Berwick is a beautiful park with an historic rock garden that was designed in Edwardian times. It is thought to be the only surviving example in this country in the style of the McNab rock garden in the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. It is a series of compartments with paths between, each compartment was enclosed by stone walls so it could be filled with soil suitable for particular plants. The rockery in North Berwick was reconstructed and restored in 2008 by volunteers



Wooden trough gardening





from the *North Berwick in Bloom* scheme. I decided I would like to imitate this in miniature so with yet more aquarium slate we set out our design and planted it up.

I now have a variety of containers planted up in different styles which I am able to tend easily, dead-heading, removing dead leaves and generally tidying up. This is very satisfying for both of us. Some of the plants are already beginning to spread which gives me plenty of scope for lifting and dividing in future. Despite having had a stroke I am still able to enjoy my gardening.

None of this would have been possible without the help and support of my family. I thank them all.



A Flower as Painted

Zdeněk Zvolánek

The relatively new *Dionysia khuzistanica* was described by Jamzad in the *Iranian J. Bot.* 7: 25 1996. It occurs in a valley of the Zagros Mountains in Iran, growing there as if nailed to the vertical limestone walls at altitudes of 2000 to 2100 metres. Cushions made of the light green hairy leaves are as solid as fists. Seed was collected there by a small German expedition marked JLMS in 2002.

One of the members of the expedition was the robust Bavarian stonemason Josef Mayr, a specialist in the difficult and most beautiful alpine, especially those from the genus *Dionysia* (usually grown on the flood benches of new wooden greenhouses). Josef also collected *Dionysia khuzistanica* seed there in 2015. A portion of these seeds was germinated in the Netherlands by Martinj Jansen. In a total of twenty-one seedlings, most resembled the mother with yellow flowers but, after the intervention of an unknown pollen donor, there were some pink flowers.

One of the pink plants was like slightly mixed vanilla ice-cream with a beautiful pink border and flash, or blush. It is so distinct from others that it now bears the name of the grower's son – *Dionysia* x 'Thom'. The new cultivar is compact; the small rosettes are made of obovate entire leaves covered with miniature indumentum of minute capitate glands. The flowers are single, sessile to the cushion, and the thin flower tubes are 10 to 15 mm long. The crown is an honest yellow with pink-painted margins. The short style is hidden under long anthers, indicating that this is a "thrum" plant. In "pin" plants, the style is much longer than the anthers. Primulaceae is one of the plant families that displays this heterostylous nature. Self-pollination can occur more readily in pin flowers but for successful seed set it is often necessary to cross both types.

We know well from the practice of the *Dionysia* hybridizer Michael Kammerlander that insect pollination in an alpine greenhouse is very productive, as is also the case in Josef Mayr's stable house near Dachau, where the fathers of many beautiful hybrids remain unknown. Hybrid plants are almost always more sustainable than parents, and that feature is one of the most important things for growers.

Martinj Jansen is a young Dutchman who grows, breeds and sells fine alpines. The autumn issue of the *Czech Rock Garden Journal* showed us his dark purple form of *Physoplexis comosa*, and *Dionysia khuzistanica*. Here we may compare his fine photographs of *Dionysia* x 'Thom' (facing: below) and his *D. khuzistanica* (facing: above).



The hidden thrum style in *Dionysia* x 'Thom'



In Search of *Dionysia* in Iran

Kok van Herk, Marijn van den Brink &

Kees Jan van Zwielen

The genus *Dionysia* is amongst the most tempting and yet tantalising of all genera cultivated by alpine gardeners, containing some of the most beautiful of all alpine cushion plants, ...". These words are from Christopher Grey-Wilson in his book (1) about dionysias. Indeed, few other cushion plants can rival *Dionysia* for their exquisite beauty and tricky cultivation. Many of the species are stunningly beautiful, especially when their dense cushions are smothered with pink or yellow flowers. Dionysias are deservedly popular for the alpine house, but this article is, however, not about cultivation.

More than fifty *Dionysia* species are known from the wild, mostly restricted to rather dry mountains ranging from southeast Turkey in the West and Oman in the South, to Tadjikistan and Afghanistan in the East. Iran is situated well in the centre of diversity of the genus. Many of the species are narrowly endemic and tend to grow in parts of the world that are not commonly visited. Perhaps this also adds to their attraction.

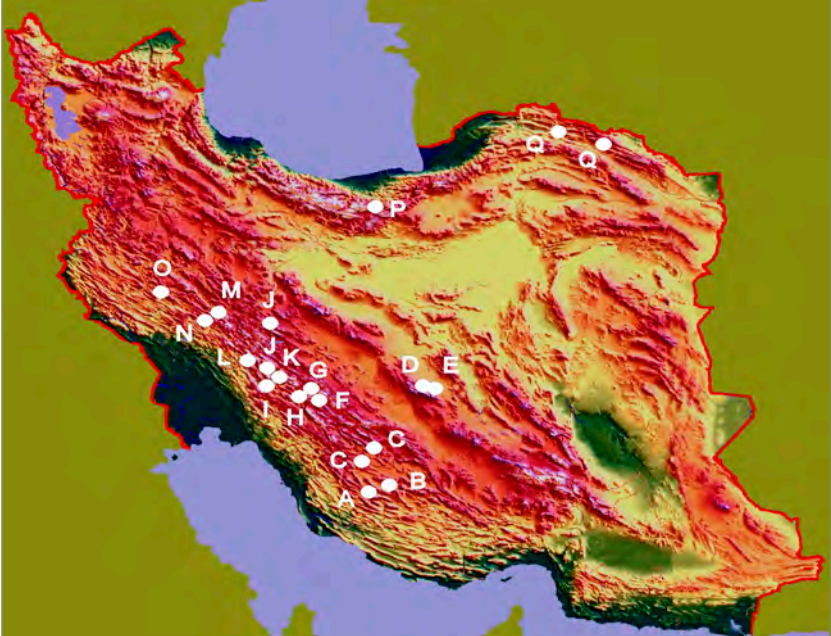
Our article is an introduction to the species of Iran. The species we discuss and show here have been photographed during four of our trips: in 2008, 2009 and 2010 (when Marijn and Kees Jan visited the Zagros, the northwest and the northeast of the country) and in 2015 (when Marijn and Kok visited the Zagros, Yazd and Shiraz).

Dieter Zschummel, a frequent visitor to Iran in search of *Dionysia*, and well-known for his articles (2,3) about the genus, supported us in our planning and recommended that we ask Mohammad Rostami from Teheran to be our guide. Mohammad was not just our guide on all four trips: he cooked for us and prepared detailed itineraries to get the necessary visa for sites off the beaten tracks. Without Mohammad this would not have been possible. During our stays we often camped in the mountains, enabling us to spend as much time as possible in the field.

Although *Dionysia* was one of the main objectives, we were also interested in the bulbous plants of the area. Our first trip was to the northern Zagros Mountains, a hotspot for *Dionysia* diversity. Our second and third trips were to northeast (Elburz and Kopet Dag) and northwest Iran, both areas with many bulbous plants but only few *Dionysia*. The fourth trip focused again on the dionysias, now the southern Zagros, Yazd and Shiraz.

Geography, Climate and Vegetation

North and northwest Iran receive much more precipitation than the central, southern and eastern parts. By far the greatest diversity of the genus *Dionysia* is to be found in the Zagros Mountains, a quite dry area in the west and southwest of the country. Here, the winters are usually



Our sites are mainly along the Zagros Mountains, with a handful in the North. Our sites are shown as (A) ... (Q) in our various descriptions.

cold, and precipitation comes mainly as winter snow in the high mountains. Summers are hot and very dry. The surfaces of the rocks are mainly dry. Moisture is usually only present deep in rock crevices, seeping down during springtime from higher elevations. Only at Yazd did we see *Dionysia* growing in wet crevices (see *D. khatamii*).

We saw no *Dionysia* species in the wetter and greener northwest parts of Iran. Here, *Dionysia* is largely replaced by other members of the Primulaceae such as *Androsace villosa* and several *Primula* species, usually preferring much wetter conditions. Another, perhaps less important, factor may be the differences in the geology of northwest Iran: limestone is not as common as it is further south in the Zagros. The Elburz Mountains, bordering the Caspian Sea, is another relatively humid range, where *D. aretioides* may be found. In the northeast, conditions are again much dryer. In the Kopet Dag mountains near the Turkmenistan border (part of the former USSR), two other species of *Dionysia* are documented: *D. tapetodes* and *D. kossinskyi*, although the status of the latter is sometimes questioned (see below).

The flowering season starts in mid-March in the southernmost parts near Shiraz. At Yazd the beginning of April is the best time for a visit whereas in the southern part of the Zagros mid-April should be fine. The Northern Zagros, the Elburz Mountains and the Kopet Dag follow at the end of April or the beginning of May. Our experience is that all flowering takes place in a narrow span of time, so the timing of a field trip may be a tricky matter. Differences between 'early' or 'late' flowering species hardly exist within single mountain areas. Of course there is a correlation



with altitude, exposure and – perhaps – moisture availability, but consequent differences in flowering time are not obvious. We found populations of *Dionysia curviflora* near Yazd at 2400 m and at 3200 m, both flowering at the same moment (April 7th).

***Dionysia* Habitat**

Most alpine enthusiasts are aware that *Dionysia* species tend to grow on vertical limestone rocks and cliffs, often even under overhangs. In cultivation they hardly tolerate any moisture on the leaf surfaces. Nevertheless, it may come as a surprise that several species can also be found on rock outcrops, often only sloping at an angle of 45 degrees or even less. This is probably only the case in areas with extremely low rainfall and low air humidity. Few species can be found on other rock types than limestone.

Diversity

The number of *Dionysia* species known to Science has increased considerably over the last fifty years. *Flora Iranica* (4) mentions 34 species known for the whole genus at that time. When Grey-Wilson wrote his account (1), 41 species were known. In Lidén's 2007 overview (5), with a key to the species, the number increased to 49. The most recent list on the internet (www.worldfloraonline.org) comprises 54 accepted names at species level. Still more species are waiting to be discovered, and Mauser (6) mentions several tentative names for recent



Dionysia sarvestanica ssp. *spathulata*



Dionysia sarvestanica ssp. *sarvestanica*

discoveries. The great majority of the species occurs in Iran and Afghanistan; we don't know the exact Iranian number, but most occur here. Many species are narrow endemics and most tend to grow geographically isolated from one another, but with exceptions that are mentioned below.

The Species from South to North

We present here an overview of the species, roughly sorted from south to north as seen by us during our trips. (Our map on page 55 shows the sites {A} to {Q} visited by us in our various expeditions). We have arranged them in a sequence corresponding to the climatic zones from south to north. This matches closely the sequence in which flowering takes place under natural conditions.

***Dionysia sarvestanica* ssp. *spathulata* {A}**

D. sarvestanica is probably the southernmost representative of the genus in Iran. It is a densely pulvinate yellow-flowering species with glandular hairy leaves. Subspecies *spathulata*, described by Lidén in 2007, is quite distinct with broad rounded leaves, arranged in a very neat way. In our opinion it is sufficiently distinct from subspecies *sarvestanica* (see below) to deserve separate species status (compare photos of leaves).



Dionysia diapensiifolia

We found it in the Kuh-e Sedifan near Firuzabad, South of Shiraz, on a gently sloping rock face at 2000 m. At the time of our visit, the end of March, many plants were already out of flower.



***Dionysia sarvestanica* ssp. *sarvestanica* {B}**

The leaf shoots of this subspecies are not unlike those of *D. bryoides*, which is pink-flowering whereas *D. sarvestanica* ssp. *sarvestanica* has yellow flowers. The leaves are smaller and much more pointed than the leaves of subspecies *spathulata*. We found it in a canyon at 2100 m in the mountains southeast of Sarvestan, East of Shiraz, far from the nearest road, and only after many hours of searching.

***Dionysia diapensiifolia* {C}**

This species seemed widespread north of Shiraz, for example near Zarqan in the fringes of the Kuh-e Bamu protected area, cliffs along the main road between Persepolis and Sivand, and cliffs between Sivand and Sa'dat Shahr. It is a quite variable species, especially in respect of the size and shape of the leaves. The yellow flowers are usually solitary.



Dionysia curviflora f. *alba*

In Kuh-e Bamu the plants had farinose flowers (tube and lower side of petals). According to Grey-Wilson (1), *D. diapensiifolia* should be efarinose. Lidén (5) suggests the possibility of an undescribed species. We failed to find *Dionysia michauxii*, which is also known from Kuh-e Bamu.





Dionysia curviflora



***Dionysia curviflora* {D}**

D. curviflora, *janthina* and *khatamii* are three pink-flowering narrow endemic species restricted to the mountains near Yazd. This range, about 50 km long, rises suddenly out of the desert in central Iran. All three species are the only members of the section *Zoroasteranthos* (5). Despite their close relationship, they are easy to separate: *D. curviflora* has leaves with many tiny bristly hairs on the upper surface, but the lower sides of the leaves are glabrous. It has a wide range in the Shirkuh (at Deh Bala). We found it first at 3200 m, and later much lower at only 2400 m. At both sites it was flowering abundantly. We have seen this species only on limestone, although it has also been reported from basalt or volcanic cliffs (1). One plant at 3200 m had pure white flowers, a phenomenon that seems to be rare in *Dionysia*.



Dionysia janthina

***Dionysia janthina* {E}**

The leaves of *D. janthina* are more or less grey-tomentose on both surfaces. Otherwise this pink-flowering species is like *D. curviflora*. Both are densely pulvinate. We saw *D. janthina* in a canyon in the Darreh Damgahan near Mehriz, south of Yazd at altitudes of 2300-2550 m, together with *D. khatamii*.

***Dionysia khatamii* {E}**

D. khatamii was described by Valiollah Mozaffarian only recently (7). This pink-flowering species has a loosely caespitose habit and deeply emarginate petals. The corolla tube is hairy on the outer side. The leaves are unusual, 4–10 mm long and only 1 mm wide, linear-lanceolate.

Dionysia khatamii





Dionysia janthina

Because of the special form of the leaves it is readily recognizable. *D. khatamii* was growing side by side with *D. janthina* in the Darreh Damgahan Mountains, south of Yazd at 2300 to 2550 m. According to Lidén (5) it grows both on granitic rock and limestone, but we only saw it on limestone. The two species were clearly different without intermediates. *D. khatamii* probably has (together with *D. janthina*) a slightly higher moisture tolerance than most other species: it was often growing near or in wet cracks.

***Dionysia iranshahrii* {G}**

We found this beautiful cushion species on limestone in the Kuh-e Pashmaku at 2800 to 3000 m in 2008 and 2015. This area is near Semirom in Bakhtiari province. The species can be found on the east and southeast sides of the vertical limestone cliffs. Violet-flowering, it was, unfortunately, out of flower at the time of our first visit, but on the second we had more luck when we found it in full flower.

A humming-bird hawk-moth is at least one of its pollinators, as may be seen in Klaas Kamstra's <https://dionysia.rocks/dionysia-iranshahrii/#!enviragallery480-489>. This is perhaps not surprising, because *Dionysia* flowers have long flower tubes. Dieter Zschummel (2, p. 561) observed a similar moth as pollinator of *D. lamingtonii*: "... a moth about the size of Hummingbird Hawkmoth...". The species is readily recognizable by its very densely white woolly leaves, totally obscuring the leaf surface (if not by its flowers!). In the same place location we also found the shrubby *Dionysia revoluta* var. *revoluta*



Dionysia iranshahrii

***Dionysia bryoides* {F, G}**

D. bryoides is fairly common on limestone near Semirom, for example near the waterfall a few kilometres east of the town, and along the road to the Hanna Dam at 2300 to 2400 m. The tiny and rounded leaves are covered with glandular hairs. It is again a pink- or violet-flowering species. Some forms are very floriferous with large and wide petals, others have only poor small flowers. This species was already out of flower in 2008, but in 2015 we found it at the peak of the flowering.

***Dionysia mozaffarianii* {G}**

D. mozaffarianii is exceptionally beautiful, one of the three pink-flowering species that occur near Semirom. Although we found all three in large quantities, we never found more than one together, and indeed it is very unlikely that their distributions overlap. This species is easily recognized by its tightly packed leaves with four to six lobes at the tip (reminiscent of *Primula minima*). It is common at 2800 m on Khateiban, a mountain above Semirom. We also found *D. revoluta* var. *revoluta* at this site.



Dionysia bryoides



***Dionysia revoluta* var. *revoluta* {G}**

This, according to Lidén (5), is the most common and widespread of the *Dionysia* species in the Zagros. It is a laxly-branched subshrub with elliptic to linear leaves with revolute margins. The type subspecies has a sparse covering of hairs, whereas subspecies *canescens* is densely covered with hairs. We found the type subspecies at Kuh-e Pashmaku at 2800 m, near Semirom in Bakhtiari Province, and on the nearby Khateiban at about the same altitude. In 2008 it was nearly out of flower but in 2015, when we were there four weeks earlier, it was nicely in bloom. At Kuh-e Pashmaku it grows together with the cushion-forming *D. iranshahrii*, and at Khateiban with *D. mozzaffarianii*.



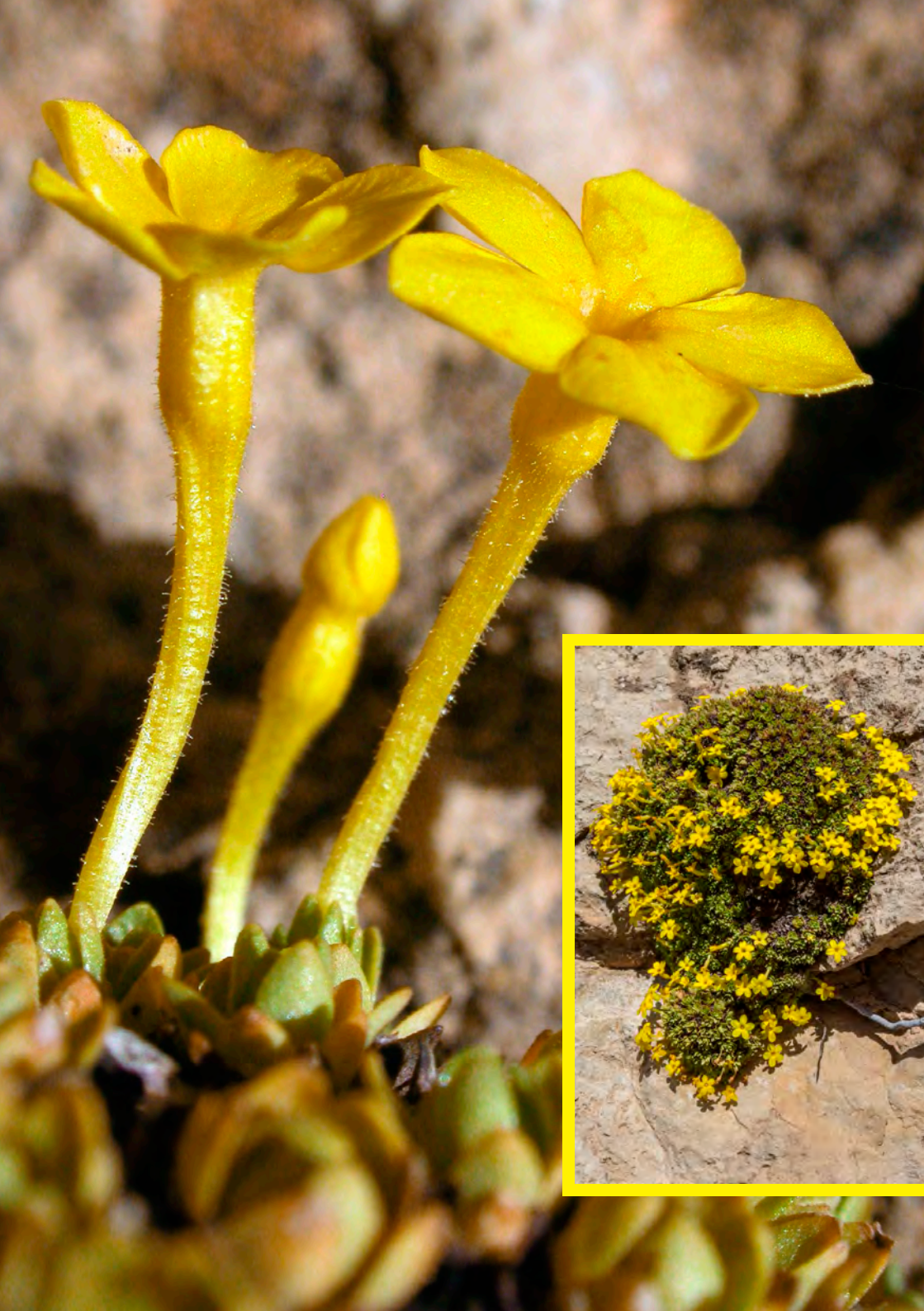
Dionysia revoluta var. *canescens*

***Dionysia revoluta* var. *canescens* {H, I}**

This is yet another *Dionysia* from the Zagros Mountains. Lidén (5) downgraded this subspecies to variety, which might be correct. Differences with the type subspecies were often hard to descry. We found it in three places, twice between Semirom and Lordegan, just on cliffs along the main road, and once on the Chahar Tagh pass west of Lordegan where it occurred with *D. iranica*. All populations were at altitudes between 1900 and 2500 m.



Dionysia revoluta var. *revoluta*



Facing: *Dionysia iranica*

***Dionysia iranica* {I}**

This species was described in 1996 by Jamzad from plants found near Lordegan. It is yellow-flowering with sessile flowers, characterized by a densely pulvinate habit and sessile glands on the leaves. As often happened, Mohammad directed us to a mountain where he had been with Dieter Zschummel, to point out where we should search. Eventually we found *D. iranica* at a small summit not far from the Chahar Tagh pass, west of Lordegan, in quite exposed conditions at about 2450 m, together with *Dionysia revoluta* var. *canescens*.

***Dionysia khuzistanica* {K}**

We found this yellow species at Tange Nafon, 40 km northwest of Lordegan. This species was described in 1996. Unfortunately, only a few flowers remained at the time of our visit. We found it on vertical limestone cliffs, growing sympatrically with *D. caespitosa*.

***Dionysia caespitosa* {J}**

We have seen this variable species on several occasions. It is known from numerous places in the Zagros Mountains. The species is quite variable in leaf and bract characteristics. We saw it twice in 2008. We found it 15 km east of Daran on limestone in the Zagros Mountains. We later found it growing on limestone on Tange Nafon, 40 km northwest of Lordegan, together with *Dionysia khuzistanica*. Chris Grey-Wilson recognized two subspecies in 1989, but Magnus Lidén united them again in 2007.

Dionysia caespitosa



***Dionysia* aff. *caespitosa* {J}**

In April 2015 we found a very interesting population on calcareous rocks at 1800 m by a road in the Bazoft Valley near Lordegan. Material from this population is currently under examination. The plants are different from the usual *D. caespitosa* in several characteristics: the calyx is very deeply divided, more than two thirds of its length; leaves are entire, less hairy, long hairs are absent, and there are few stipitate glands; the corolla is not as hairy as in 'normal' *D. caespitosa*. On all our images from this location the plants are quite similar. Therefore, we think it might be an undescribed species related to *D. caespitosa*.

***Dionysia cristagalli* {N}**

Lidén described this species in 2007. It is very much like *D. haussknechtii* with similar densely imbricate leaves, but the leaves have a 'crest' of whitish basally confluent hairs (glandular in *D. haussknechtii*). The difference is best seen using magnification. It is endemic to a small area in the Zagros Mountains, where we found it during our first trip in full flower on limestone cliffs near one of the trout farms along a dirt road between Aligudarz and Shoulabad. This is a brilliant site: *D. lurorum* and *D. zschummelii* also occur here, along with some other interesting chasmophytes like *Viola pachyrrhiza*.



***Dionysia lurorum* {N}**

We found *D. lurorum* at or near the type locality 65 km southwest of Aligudarz, between Aligudarz and Shoulabad at 2500 m. Between these two towns we also found *D. haussknechtii*, although both species were not found sympatrically. *D. lurorum* is a yellow-flowering species, named for the Iranian province of Lorestan. The cushions

Dionysia aff. *caespitosa*





Dionysia cristagalli

are quite lax. Our population was at 2500 m on limestone rocks, which it shared with *Dionysia cristagalli* (similar to *D. haussknechtii*) and the most interesting little *Viola pachyrrhiza*.

***Dionysia zschummelii* {N}**

This attractive pink-flowering species was named after Dieter Zschummel, who discovered it and introduced it into cultivation. It was described in 2007 by Magnus Lidén (5). We found it on limestone together with *D. lurorum* and *D. cristagalli* 65 km southwest of Aligudarz, but we found no hybrids.

Dionysia lurorum





Dionysia zschummelii ↑

↓ *Dionysia lamingtonii*

***Dionysia lamingtonii* {L}**

This is a yellow-flowering species that we only found on the fourth of May 2008 out of flower on a limestone cliff in the Bazoft Valley, north of Sefgabad. The flowers are said to be sessile and “*The small thickish blue-green eglandular leaves with distinct venation and long soft crispate hairs makes the species unmistakable*” (5).

***Dionysia zetterlundii* {L}**

This species, named after Henrik Zetterlund, was described by Magnus Lidén in 2007. It is a yellow-flowering species superficially similar to *D. haussknechtii*. *D. zetterlundii*, however, has no obvious cilia along the leaf margin. We found it on limestone on the Charii Pass, near Sevfabad, between the Kuhrang and Bazoft river valleys in the west-central Zagros Mountains during our first trip.





Dionysia zetterlundii ↑

↓ *Dionysia hausknechtii*





Dionysia haussknechtii

***Dionysia haussknechtii* {M}**

This is the very first species that we discovered during our first trip to Iran. There were several populations on limestone cliffs along a dirt road from Aligudarz to Shoulabad in the Zagros Mountains, about 50-60 km southwest of Aligudarz. This yellow-flowering species has sessile flowers and the flower tube is glandular hairy. The leaf margin is ciliate, usually with stalked glands.

***Dionysia gaubae* {O}**

We found this yellow-flowering species on limestone cliffs 40 km northwest of Khorramabad (province of Lorestan). It is a rare and narrowly endemic species very closely related to *D. odora* (5). We have no photograph to show of this species.

***Dionysia aretioides* {P}**

Dionysia aretioides is said to be common in the valleys of the central part of the Elburz, particularly on the side facing the Caspian Sea. It is usually present in crevices of shady limestone cliffs where it prefers north, west and east exposures, often in quite wet conditions. *D. aretioides* is found over a wide altitudinal range from 300 to 3200 m. We have seen it in the wild on limestone rocks at Veresk at 1580 m, in the Elburz Mountains. In the wild and in cultivation this species can form large cushions. The yellow flowers are usually solitary.

***Dionysia tapetodes* {Q}**

This species is popular in cultivation and has the largest distribution of any (1), from the mountains in northeast Iran (Khorassan Province) and adjacent Turkmenistan (Kopet Dag) and on to Afghanistan. Its altitudinal range is also large, from 1000 to 3200 m. It is a cushion forming species, the cushions usually being quite flat, and the yellow flowers are sessile.

We saw *D. tapetodes* in flower on limestone rocks near Emam Qoli, halfway between Quchan and Bajgiran, and on the northeast side of limestone rocks in the Kopet Dag, Razavi-Khorasan province. The flower tube appeared to be hairless here, typical of the species.



Dionysia aretioides

We noticed plants resembling *D. tapetodes* in three other places, but out of flower. For this reason we are not entirely sure if they were indeed populations of *D. tapetodes* or its close relative *D. kossinskyi*. The latter was described in 1927 from Khorassan (Iran), Mt. Kisil-Chisht in the Kopet Dagh, above Khorkei. Apparently, it is also known from the Turkmenistan side of the border, where Gaudan seems to be just on the other side from the Iranian town of Bajgiran. Closely related to *D. tapetodes*, it is said to differ by a corolla with short eglandular hairs, and leaves with slightly longer glands. Our un-flowered photographs did not show enough detail to be sure which of the two species we had seen.





Dionysia tapetodes

D. kossinskyi seems to be poorly-known, only from a herbarium specimen (1). Grey-Wilson mentions it as a puzzling species, with various attempts made in the 1960s and 1970s to re-collect it in its type locality. According to the online AGS encyclopaedia the status is presently questionable.

‘Out of flower’ populations

We found populations out of flower in: a dry river gorge at low altitude in on limestone cliffs, 5 km south of Naveh, north of Bojnurd in de Kopet Dag, North Khorasan Province; on limestone 7 km south of Bajgiran, at 2000 m in the Kopet Dag (Razawi Khorasam Province); 2 km further along the road, 5 km S of Bajgiran (perhaps part of the same population as the latter). The rocks were sloping perhaps at a 75 degrees. The withered flowers that we photographed seemed to indicate a hairless tube, so this and the former could well have been true *D. tapetodes* rather than *D. kossinskyi*.

For those who wish to refer to the helpful sources we used in our travels and our analysis, we offer a short reference list that relates to our account. These websites are useful to see the variability of the species. Often, dozens of different plants of a single species are shown, along with less showy plants.

Further Reading

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<https://photos.v-d-brink.eu/Flora-and-Fauna> (Marijn van den Brink)
<https://dionysia.rocks/> (Klaas Kamstra on species of Iran and Oman)

Dionysia mozaffarianii





Cowden: Scottish Rock, Japanese Garden

Anton Edwards



Rocks, gravel, ponds, beaches, bridges, islands, lanterns and tranquillity – these are some of the features of a Japanese garden familiar to western minds. To the Japanese themselves the gardens are full of hidden meaning, long-established conventions, religious associations, a history stretching over millennia, and a cultural linkage to the ancient gardens of China. Some inspired people have created remarkable copies in the West, such as those in Portland (USA), Tatton Park (UK), Cowra (Australia, NSW), Kyoto (London, UK), Hamilton Gardens (NZ); there are many others.

A full history would be long; my account is necessarily brief and personal. In the fifth century, Chinese Taoism started to affect Japanese art. One Taoist belief was that there are three or five islands in the sea where immortals live. Folklore told of a fisherman who saved the life of a sea turtle who, grateful, took him to one of the islands. There he married a princess and became immortal, but he at last succumbed to homesickness and returned to his old village, where he soon lost his immortality and died. Such tales inspired storytellers and early garden creators to the extent that words for *garden* and *island* were similar. In the *pond and island gardens*, large ponds were often surrounded by trees and in the middle was an island or two or sometimes only a large rock symbolizing the fisherman's immortal land.

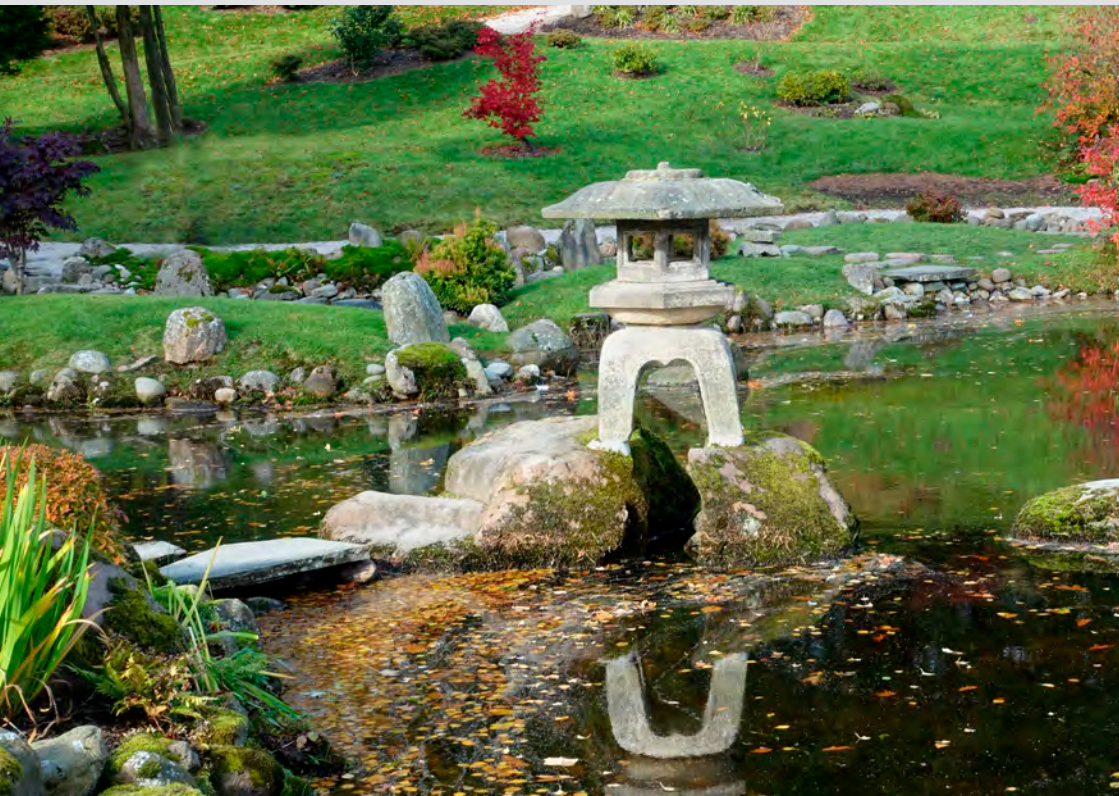
*A pond and island garden: Ritsuin at Takamatsu in Japan**



Other distinctive gardens appeared in Japan as early as the eighth century, when ideas were imported from the Tang dynasty in China. Ponds, islands, shores and rocks were the almost inevitable physical components of early layouts. Cultural interchanges continued, and a notable influence was Zen Buddhism, introduced from China in the 1200s and popular with the Japanese aristocracy for its emphasis on self-discipline. There was a subsequent inflow of Chinese ideas during Japan's Momoyama period (1568 - 1603), when the country was open to artistic notions from the earlier Sung dynasty, and to their development during the near-contemporary Ming. These times were violent and turbulent but, rather as happened in Chinese history, tempestuous and mortal politics was often accompanied by great artistic creativity.

The Zen gardens usually provided a context for meditation. Stones were characteristically placed in a static composition as a reduced image of Nature. After the Momoyama period, various layouts became popular for the stones, with arrangements such as the stone triad – a well-known representation of a central deity with two flanking acolytes. Lanterns were brought to Japan in the Asuka period (sixth and seventh centuries)

A stone bridge, shore stones and the snow-scene-shaped lantern at Cowden. The lantern cap (kasa) is much broader than other Japanese style lanterns. Snow-viewing refers to the kasa's similarity to a snow-covered bamboo hat. There are many conventions surrounding the proper placement and orientation of such lanterns





Stone triads and single *nameless* rocks on the north slope at Cowden. Single stones are placed in Japanese gardens to add randomness.

with Buddhism, as votive lamps placed before a Buddha hall. Their role was strengthened during the brief Momoyama period (1573-1615) and they became a key feature of the Japanese garden. In later centuries, and particularly in the Edo period (1603-1868), there was an increased emphasis on the *strolling* or *dry landscape* garden.

This complex history has left a legacy of several features that are, to a naïve gaze such as my own, both representative and crucial. Seasonality is naturally inevitable and represents the constancy of change. Empty space is as much a part of the garden as are the lawns, water, gravel, rocks, plants and moss that frame it. The eye is often drawn towards distant vantage points or to artefacts such as the lanterns or various delicate buildings. The layout and scale of the garden offer effective evocations of natural landscapes. There is a match of scales between the viewer and the garden's components. Paths are intimate or gracefully winding, neither too narrow nor too wide. Along with the bridges, they invite the wanderer onwards. Rocks, steps and stepping-stones fit the dimension of human bodies; here are none of the hideously incongruous massivities of Paxton's rock garden at Chatsworth. There are few bright colours. Buildings tempt exploration. While wandering in these gardens we constantly see mythical lakes and seas, figurative mountains and hills, all on near-human scales.

Facing: Raked gravel, mossy island and a distant lantern within a stone river at Cowden. The stone carefully tied with rope is a *barrier-stone*, placed to indicate that the wanderer should not pass or intrude further.





Facing: Raked gravel pattern in the dry landscape garden at Cowden

Right: a whimsical cairn on rocks of the northern slope.

Some idea of the intricacy of thought that permeates these gardens may be found in the intriguing *Japanese Garden Dictionary* (www.nabunken.go.jp/org/bunka/jgd/index.html), which lists several hundred specialist terms. For example, there are about a hundred and fifty recognised types of stone, ranging from *arching* and *barrier*, through *guest-honouring* and *meeting*, to *Yang* and *Yin* stones. Many of these stone types such as the *Face Washing Stone*, the *Widower Stone*, and the *Moonshadow Stone* are to be found in the garden but on a first visit their significance and even their presence were easily missed by a novice such as your correspondent!



The *dry landscape* garden at Ryōan-ji lies in Zen temple grounds northwest of Kyoto. Within the carefully coloured clay wall there are fifteen rocks, no shrubs, gravel, and a little moss around the stones. Such rock gardens offer the illusion of tranquillity, while nevertheless requiring meticulous and daily attention if they are to keep their form and charms *



Centre: momentary Autumn tranquillity in the pond waters of Cowden loch

Garden Styles


Five main styles are sometimes suggested: *study*, *tea*, *courtyard*, *dry landscape*, and *strolling* gardens. The first three may be briefly described. The *study garden* is not designed for visitors to explore. They are only encouraged or permitted to appreciate its charms and form from a window or room, as if it were a painting. The *tea garden* is connected to a tearoom or tea house and forms an integral part of the tea ceremony. It is a place to make mental preparation for the tea ceremony, a place of traditional rituals that lead to the final ceremony. Typically there are one or more gates, shelters, stepping stones and various services for purification of the body. The *courtyard garden* is, as its name suggests, to be found in small spaces among buildings such as aristocratic houses, temples, or traditional merchants' houses in cities.

Dry Landscape Gardens (karesansui)

The *dry landscape garden* (dry, 枯; mountains 山; rivers 水) is well-known and is often called a *Zen garden*. These gardens lack any of the water that is so important for the other styles. Water is merely represented by gravel that provides the illusion of dry sea or river. There may be an emphasis on the space between the groups of stone, as at Ryōan-ji. This aesthetic is quite different from our western rock gardens where the rocks

A shoreline stroll at Cowden





are so often seen as a framework in which to place plants. Although many landscape gardens are known for the interplay of gravel and rocks, the plants (and the carefully tended mosses) may also play a key role in defining the spirit of the place.

Stroll Gardens (*kaiyū shiki teien*)

Many *stroll gardens* (roughly: 回 turn around; 遊 tour; 式 style; 庭 family; 園 park, otherwise known as *two-way gardens*) were constructed during the Edo period (1603 – 1868) by the daimyo (the feudal lords) and are therefore sometimes known as daimyo gardens. These places echoed the peace of the country with their soft shorelines, quiet stone arrangements, and gentle topography. They sometimes recreated historical or mythical scenes, either Japanese or Chinese. As in Europe, the daimyo gardens reflected the wealth, discerning taste and intellectual prowess of the garden's owner.

There was almost always a central lake and, for those able to afford them, bridges were an prestigious and important element of the design. For an English parallel, think of Capability Brown's Palladian bridge at Stourhead. Stone bridges may comprise one block or two parallel blocks with a central overlap, or they may be curved. In the Heian period (794-1185), bridges in the palace gardens were curved to allow the passage of boat parties on the lakes beneath. Today, the function is lost but the form remains as one of the signatures of a Japanese garden.

Zigzag bridges are a delightful feature of stroll gardens, tempting the visitor onwards, usually onto an island. They have a charming history. A young aristocrat happened on a place called Yatsubashi (Eight Bridges). Here the river split into eight iris-ridden channels, each crossed by a bridge. He was fascinated by the irises and wrote a simple but elegant poem that for ever made the link between irises and the Yatsubashi Bridges. Zigzag bridges may be associated with iris-rich gardens and the larger ones offer visitors several viewpoints from which to appreciate the garden.

Cowden Japanese Garden

With all this history in mind, astonishing inspiration may be found much nearer the home of the SRGC. At Cowden in Clackmannanshire, some of this small shire's forty thousand acres are occupied by a century-old Japanese garden (more than seven acres) and surrounding woodland (twenty acres).

The full history of this remarkable garden may be told in a future issue; here I only offer a superficial account (there is more at www.cowdengarden.com). Isabella Christie of Cowden (1861-1949) was an energetic and adventurous landowner who toured the Far East in 1906/7 and was particularly impressed by the gardens of Japan. One tale suffices to reveal her sang-froid: when 50, she was waiting for the



A zigzag bridge leads to the island at Cowden

train at Dollar station and was asked if she were travelling to Edinburgh. Her reply was brief and forceful: “No, Samarkand”. She created a substantial loch at Cowden by damming the burn that ran through the site. A Japanese lady, Taki Handa, was employed to help realise Ella’s ambitions for the site. Taki Handa was followed by Professor Suzuki, who often visited to shape the trees and shrubs, and by the locally known “Japanese Emperor”, Shinzaburo Matsuo. Such definitive Japanese influence ensured the unique nature of the garden over the decades. After World War II, Ella died in 1949, the castle was demolished in 1952, the gardens were vandalised in 1963, and for another fifty years the site languished, like the Sleeping Beauty.

In 2008, Sara Stewart, Ella’s great great niece, took the garden on and a charity was started to care for and develop the garden, once more with the help of Japanese authority in the person of Professor Masao Fukuhara. The restoration so far is impressive, and the garden is clearly heading towards peaks of glory over the coming years. I commend this remarkable and well-run venture to all members of the SRGC who wish to experience at first hand some of the joy and grace of Japanese gardens.

Facing: Curved bridges at Cowden

* Photographs are shown by courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Ritsurin: 663highland - Own work, CC BY 2.5, 663highland, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>. Ryoan-ji: Cquest, CC BY-SA 2.5 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5>>

A zigzag bridge within *Iris at Yatsunashi* (Eight Bridges), an abstract view of water with drifts of Japanese irises (*Iris laevigata*). The work is from the early 1700s at a time of luxurious display in the Edo period [By Ogata Kōrin (1658-1716), Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons]



Leaving the garden



Hunting for Queen Olga's Snowdrop in Corfu

Michael J B Almond



G*alanthus reginae-olgae* was described by the Greek botanist Theodore Orphanides in 1876 and named in honour of Queen Olga, wife of George I, King of the Hellenes, and grandmother of the Duke of Edinburgh, who was born on Corfu. It is the earliest of the snowdrops to come into flower, in October in the wild. It has been found in Sicily, the south-western Balkans, Corfu and the Peloponnese; the population in south-west Turkey has been reclassified as *G. peshmenii*. Among its several synonyms is *G. corcyrensis* (the Corfu Snowdrop) and in autumn 2019 we decided to go to Corfu and look for it. It was not easy to find and the most useful preparation came in the form of an internet article that had been written by Tom Mitchell (<http://www.revolution-snowdrops.co.uk/galanthus-reginae-olgae-part-i/>). We spent two weeks on the island from the 10th to the 24th of October and had excellent weather throughout.



Corfu has been said, with some justification, to have been ruined by tourism. It is still possible, however, in the rugged north of the island, to get well off the beaten track, enjoy spectacular views and walk for hours without meeting anyone. Although the sun was still fierce at this time of the year, the mountain air was generally cool enough for it not to be oppressively hot. The rock is mainly limestone and there is little surface water. The highest point on the island, Mount Pantokrator, rises to 906 m, commanding superb views in all directions – and particularly across the narrow strait to Albania.

In driving around the north of Corfu, our first impression was of the superabundance of *Cyclamen hederifolium*: wherever we went, olive groves, woodland and roadsides were covered in its haze of pink. Only rarely did we see any white ones. While looking at the cyclamen, we often became aware of a noxious miasma. This was the “perfume” of the diminutive *Biarum tenuifolium*, dark-coloured, only a few centimetres high, and often difficult to see. But we soon learnt to recognise that we had wandered into its domain, where it was often flowering in large numbers. The cyclamen usually prefers comparatively

Above: Mount Pantokrator seen over a marble threshing floor above Loutsas
Below: *Cyclamen hederifolium* in woodland shade





Pale forms of *Cyclamen hederifolium* in shaded woodland

damp habitats whereas the *Biarum* does not seem to be fussy, and we found it also alongside the spectacular yellow flowers of *Sternbergia lutea*, which grows (though not very commonly) in drier areas. Unfortunately, the *Sternbergia* flowers do not last long. We twice visited one excellent location beside the church of St James in Ano Perithia; on the first occasion there was a mass of flowers whereas ten days later there was hardly a flower to be seen. Very occasionally the carpet of pinkish flowers in an olive grove would turn out to be not *Cyclamen hederifolium* but *Scilla*

Sternbergis lutea beside the church of St James at Ano Perithia





Colchicum cupanii



autumnalis, giving a slightly different shade of mauve and pink to the prospect. This is a flower we saw normally only in penny numbers, when it looked rather insignificant.

We find it difficult to identify different *Colchicum* species but we saw at least two, identified as *C. haynaldii* (with fairly large, showy flowers) and *C. cupanii* (much smaller), both growing in very dry positions in light shade under trees. There were also large numbers of *Crocus boryi* in a few places, usually on roadside verges, but also in the precinct of the monastery at the summit of

Left: *Biarum tenuifolium* Below: *Campanula versicolor* on a cliff





Crocus boryi

Centre: *Spiranthes spiralis*

Mount Pantokrator. It being autumn, we only saw one orchid in flower, the autumn ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*), but we did see it in several places. On one occasion, spectacular masses of the bluey-violet *Campanula versicolor* cascaded down cliffs above the road. It is usually a summer-flowering species, but this colony was in a very shady position. We also saw odd clumps of it elsewhere. But the masses of sea daffodil (*Pancratium maritimum*) on the coast had, unfortunately, already finished flowering and were shedding their big black seeds.

Although most of the scrub on the mountains is of evergreen oak, we sometimes came across *Erica verticillata*, which seems to like the dry conditions, and also *Arbutus unedo*, sometimes in flower, sometimes in fruit, and sometimes with both flowers and fruit on the same bush; it is called the strawberry tree because of its red fruits which look rather like strawberries – but do not taste of anything. Other flowers we saw occasionally beside the dry and stony mountain tracks included *Urginea maritima*, *Scutellaria columnae*, *Helianthemum syriacum* and *Dianthus viscidus*. On only one occasion did we see the autumn daffodil (*Narcissus miniatus*) – a goodly number growing on the verge beside the main east coast road.





Narcissus miniatus



All this time, driving hither, thither and yon, we were trying to spot snowdrop flowers and work out whether any of the places we passed contained suitable habitat for them. We realised that we might, in fact, be too early for flowering and we knew, it being an autumn-flowering species, that the first plants would come into flower at the highest point of its range. So, on our first day we set out for the summit of Mount Pantokrator, on whose upper slopes we knew Tom Mitchell had found the snowdrop in flower. We had identified the exact location we wanted to explore from one of his photographs. The terrain can best be described as challenging, and after an hour or so fighting our way through thick waist-high tussock grass on a 45° slope we had drawn a complete blank and retired defeated.

Three days later, having failed miserably to locate any snowdrops in our intervening explorations, we tried Mount Pantokrator again. This time, rather than heading for the upper slopes we set off along a track through the dense oak scrub that covers much of its lower flanks. On this occasion we were rewarded with our first sight of a flower of *G. reginae-olgae* in the undergrowth beside the track, at about 700 m. But, a flower, **one** flower, was all we saw of it the whole day.



Campanula versicolor

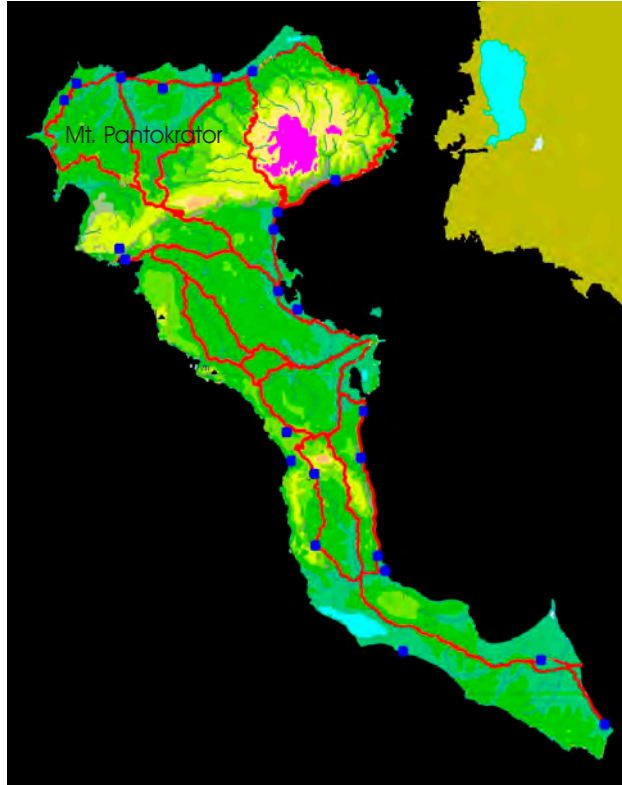
We were still not clear what kind of habitat we should be looking for and we continued our snowdrop-less explorations of the northern part of the island for another three days. Then we returned to Pantokrator. Beside the road up the mountain we were rewarded with one stand of four flowers under thick scrub, again at 750 m. Later in the day we retraced our route of three days previously and found a few more snowdrop flowers scattered in the gloom under the trees and scrub. The next day we decided to take the bull by the horns and headed back to the upper slopes of Pantokrator and the scene of our exhausting but fruitless scramble on our first day. This time, in the exact same location (at about 720 m), we were richly rewarded. There were dozens of clumps of snowdrop flowers dotted around between the tussocks of grass and at the base of rock outcrops.

The day afterwards our luck was still in and, in driving up the road from the village of Nimfes to the nearby waterfall, dry at this time of the year, we passed an olive grove with several clumps of snowdrop in flower. They were only about 170 m above sea level and may well flower lower down to sea level later in autumn. On the same day we found a good number of snowdrop flowers dotted alongside the road at the bottom of a low cliff near Strinilas, at a height of about

590 m. As always, the location was in permanent shade at this time of the year.

On our last day we returned to the roadside near Strinilas, where the snowdrop population was much as it had been three days earlier, and also to the site on the flanks of Pantokrator at about 750 m where we found a considerable number of snowdrop flowers in the scrub.

Overall, it was a successful expedition, though trying in parts. To sum up, *G. reginae-olgae* seems to be rare on Corfu and is difficult to find, at least in October. It occupies habitats in deep shade, either because of the aspect of the site or the thickness of the scrub; in other words, it never gets sun at any time of day when in flower and probably stays relatively cool and damp all summer.



Crete's summit: Mount Pantokrator is at 906 m
Galanthus reginae-olgae



An Essay from Argentina and Chile

Ger van den Beuken

In 2017 I finished organizing tours to South America. Slightly aging, the responsibility of leading big groups was too much for me. In a fantastic job and over many years we made many friends from all over the world. We extend special thanks to our very good friend and remarkably informative Argentinian guide, Marcela Ferreyra. It was quite emotional to say goodbye to Patagonia, to all those awesome plants and to the spectacular nature of this astonishing land. In issue 145 of this journal we embarked on the different journey of sharing our memories with you. We started quite arbitrarily with those species beginning with the letter A. We continue our alphabetic expedition here with our recollections of the letters B to C. Unknown to many alpine growers, these plants may encourage you to make a start with this fantastic vegetation.

The Letters B & C

Barneoudia major This prominently rosette-forming species is 6 to 8 cm across with yellow stemless flowers. The main distribution is in the Argentinian Andes in the province of Chubut. Altitude 2800 metres on rocky slopes. These very attractive plants are possible to grow from seeds.





Benthamiella azurella comes from South Patagonia to Neuquén. Its hard cushions are 2 cm high and can grow to 60 cm across. We mainly found this species on stony soil in the Perito Moreno National Park. The yellow flowers are insignificant. Propagation is from seeds.

Benthamiella nordenskjoeldii is the most southern species in Santa Cruz and Tierra del Fuego. We found these beautiful cushions, 50 cm across and 3 cm tall, on a scree near Estancia Stag River, altitude 600 metres in extreme climate conditions. Flowers are stemless in a brilliant white colour. Propagation is from seeds.





Benthamiella patagonica is the most common species in different forms from the South of Santa Cruz to Chubut. We found the plants in steppe conditions as well in crevices from lava rocks. Altitude about 1200 metres. The cushions are 3 cm tall and 50 cm wide depending on their habitat. This species is in cultivation in different forms. Sometimes you can admire nice plants in the shows in Scotland and England. Propagation is done from cuttings in pure sand. This species is an absolute must for the alpine house. *Benthamiella pycnophylloides* is found from Santa Cruz to Chubut. It forms a very dense and compact-growing mat in rocky steppe conditions. Altitude 1500 metres. Sessile stemless white flowers. The propagation is from seeds or cuttings.





Bolax gummifera – we saw the most attractive hard and compact cushions of this species in Tierra del Fuego at a relative low altitude of 600 metres in extreme weather conditions. Some specimens are more than a metre wide and a few cm tall. The soil? – just a mix of sand and stone with a small amount of leaf-mould from *Nothofagus* trees. Cultivation is possible in the alpine house and, depending on climatic conditions, in the rock garden. Propagation is from cuttings or from seeds.

Caiophora coronata is found from North to Central Chile, Argentina and Peru. The sites are usually on screes or between semi-shaded rocks. It is a wonderfully attractive species with white spiny hairs on the leaves and 5 cm white creamy flowers. Propagation is from root cuttings.





Calandrinia affinis – for me this is the most impressive species growing in a wide range of colour forms from white to deep pink or purple. The flowers are stemless on rosettes with long linear leaves. The species, from the Central Cordilleras of Chile and Argentina, always grows in big colonies in wet conditions. Altitude from 2000 to 4000 metres. Propagation is from seeds but it needs a cold period to break its dormancy.





Calandrinia affinis

Calandrinia caespitosa is an extremely variable species from Southern Santa Cruz to Neuquén and adjacent Chile, to 4000 metres. We found the most beautiful red–yellow form thriving between big lava rocks, 3800 metres high in Mendoza. The species is not difficult in cultivation but is often short-lived. The propagation is from seeds.

Calandrinia caespitosa





Calandrinia caespitosa ssp. *skottsbergii* grows mainly on the summits of the Cerro Catedral near Bariloche in sites of extreme weather conditions. Altitude 2400 metres. This is a rather rare subspecies with orange flowers. On later trips we found more plants to the North.

Calandrinia colchaguensis is a species from the provinces of Neuquén and Chubut. Altitude from 1000 to 3000 metres. The plant forms a rosette with pink stemless flowers 3 cm high. These plants grow in moist and poor soil that dries out completely during the summer. Propagation is from seeds.





Calandrinia picta is a loosely growing plant about 20 cm high, seen by us only once on a dry summit near Lagunillas, a small village in the Maipo Valley. Altitude 2400 m. It is a beautiful pink-flowering species, usually growing on extremely dry screes in the Atacama desert up to 4000 m. Propagation is from seeds

Calandrinia sericea is a striking plant with hairy leaves and shiny pink flowers. One of my favourites. The location is exactly the same as *C. picta*. It is found in very dry and hot sites, up to 3000 metres. The flower stems are 10 cm. Propagation is from seeds.





Calceolaria biflora is a plant often seen near mountain streams or forest edges in open humid places. It is local in Tierra del Fuego, the Falklands and further north in the province of Neuquén. A good plant with bright yellow flowers on 10 cm stems, cultivation is not difficult and the propagation from seeds is easy.

Calceolaria pennellii is shown in our picture from its site on the summit of the Volcan Batea Mahuida. Altitude 2200 metres. A species with big bright yellow flowers which grows in the most extreme weather conditions, always with very strong wind and rainfall. This awesome plant just reaches 5 cm with mats of 40 to 50 cm. Propagation is from seeds.





Calceolaria pinifolia is endemic in the dry regions of the Andes in Argentina and Chile to an altitude of 4000 metres. It grows in big colonies in crevices. The flowers are bright yellow on 12 cm stems. From seeds.
Caltha appendiculata – a mat-forming species growing in wet places near melting snow in Tierra del Fuego and the southern part of the Andes in Chile and Argentina up to 2000 metres high. Creamy yellow solitary flowers on short stems. Propagation is from seeds or dividing.





Calceolaria uniflora ssp. *darwinii* is the most beautiful species in the genus. We find it overwhelming to see these plants in big groups on grassy places near Stag River in Southern Santa Cruz and to the North at 2200 metres with cushions more than 50 cm wide. Flowers on 6 cm stems. The cultivation is not difficult. Propagation from seeds.

Caltha sagittata is a colony-forming species from moist grassy places, alongside running water and on screes near melting snow. Big pale-yellow flowers on solitary rosettes. From sea level in Tierra del Fuego to more than 4000 metres in the Andes. Completely hardy for our climate and easy from seeds.





Chaetanthera aff. *flabellata* comes from the Central Cordillera in Chile. It is a wonderful species with grey curved leaves and big bright yellow flowers on stems that are ten cm long. The species occurs in sand and gravel conditions at an altitude of 2000 metres. The propagation is done from seeds.





Chaetanthera pusilla A beautiful species from the Northern and Central Andes in Chile growing in scree at more than 4000 metres altitude. Stemless white flowers on silver hairy rosettes. Propagation from seeds.

Chaetanthera spathulifolia is one of the most spectacular species, from the Northern part of Mendoza, here on a scree at 3400 metres altitude. Beautiful grey hairy rosettes with stemless bright yellow flowers. Would be a dream to grow this species. Propagation from seeds. 🍁

Chaetanthera villosa 10 cm silver hairy rosettes with 5 cm large yellow-orange flowers give this plant an enchanting appearance. From the Central Andes in Chile on bare scree and volcano slopes, 3500 metres altitude. Propagation from seeds. For the alpine house.





A Tribute to SRGC Sandwiches

Sandy Leven

Wherever you live, attending SRGC shows will probably involve a longish drive. Exhibitors must leave home early or even have an overnight stay in a hotel or B&B. Historically, up to the early 1970s, members and exhibitors attended their local shows. Few crisscrossed the country each weekend to visit a flower show. Noted exhibitors like Harold Esslemont and Jack Crosland did indeed exhibit all over the country. They needed no overnight accommodation because one would take the plants to the show on the Friday and the other would pick them up on the Saturday. This cooperation is partly the reason that they won so many Forrest medals between them but the prime reason for their success is that they showed the best plants.

From the 1980s onwards more people travelled from central Scotland up to Aberdeen and *vice versa*. New joint SRGC/AGS shows were established in Ponteland in Northumberland and Morecambe in Lancashire. Much later, the local show in Inverness developed into the Highland show in Nairn. I have exhibited plants at all shows; not, I hasten to add, at every show every year. I sometimes had to leave home at six in the morning and drive for three hours. Now, in case you get hungry after an early breakfast at home, I point out that the McDonald Corporation has thought about you. It has convenient restaurants in Carlisle, Forfar, Edinburgh, Stirling, Elgin and Inverness. For Perth, think Burger King. Asda provides a traditional good breakfast for those who don't want a delicious McMuffin. Until I took him for one in Harrogate, Fred Hunt had never been in a McDonalds. He telephoned Alice to tell her how good it was! However, despite these enticingly situated outlets, I recommend waiting till you get to the show. At each you are offered delicious food and beverages.

Nothing revives you on arrival like a cup of tea or coffee with a biscuit. The giving and receiving of hospitality at the shows cements friendships and instils happiness in both the servers and consumers. A long tradition gives exhibitors a welcoming drink and snack on arrival; judges may get a mid-morning snack as well as lunch. Show secretaries know that it is important to look after the mainstays of the shows. Show breakfast is usually tea or coffee with biscuits. However, some shows offer more adventurous fare.

One of my favourite venues is **Aberdeen**, because I enjoy the drive. My fondest memory is of 1987 in Aberdeen Music Hall. It was noteworthy for a few reasons: our daughter Johanna was born on the Thursday before the show; I was told that to achieve a quorum for the Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee I really *must* attend, perhaps because Ron Macbeth was in the Himalaya. That meant taking our young sons Andrew & Alasdair too. We were welcomed with tea and delicious butteries with raspberry

jam. While the judging and Joint Rock meeting took place, Alice and Fred took the boys into the city for a real breakfast - or was it lunch? The boys loved Aberdeen. After the show we were all invited to have tea with the Esslemonts. From that day on, Agnes Esslemont took a keen interest in our boys and Johanna, and here is a fine example of friendships forged across generations. Harold Esslemont guided me in my showing career and was generous with gifts of plants. Each visit to their big granite mansion was just like 'visiting your auntie'. I still look forward to butteries in Aberdeen, even though I can now buy them at our local Tesco in Dunblane.

The Aberdeen Show has recently been held in a long greenhouse in the Winter Gardens in the Duthie Park. Catering facilities are minimal, but the group provides an excellent selection of salads, rolls and cakes. The important thing is the camaraderie. Sitting in a nice warm greenhouse while the rain splatters off the glass above your head gives a feeling of contentment. Not only do you stay dry while picnicking, but you may also walk round the indoor gardens. One minute surrounded by cacti and succulents, the next – subtropical shrubs brush the top of your head.

Between these venues the show was held in Ruthrieston Church Hall. I think the locals attend for the food as much as for the plants. Because the servers' window was quite small, only a selection of the patisserie could be displayed at any one time; repeat visits were needed.

For years the **Edinburgh** Show has been held in Frogston Church Halls, north of the Edinburgh bypass. The dining hall is almost as big as the show hall. All the food is 'home made' and served by a rotation of members. Even though he is one of the high heid yins at the RBGE, the group convener, John, joins in. Long tables give plenty room for lounging around while waiting for coffee or tea to cool down in its polystyrene cups; you may devour several cakes during that cooling. In the kitchen, ladies and men are opening, buttering and filling rolls for the hungry. For many years the Edinburgh Group, like others, took judges to a local restaurant for lunch. It was expensive but delicious. More recently, most groups offer judges all-day food in the hall, with the advantage that there is more time to see plants and chat. As at Perth, any cakes at the end of the afternoon are bagged up and sold or given away.

The **Perth** Show has long been famous for its food. Our good friend Jean Band was in charge of catering for many years. As well as the cakes and rolls, Jean and her daughters Susan made up a central posies of her garden flowers for each table and at the end gave them to deserving members. Where else would you find such generosity? It is such details that encapsulate the spirit of the SRGC.

The Perth caterers have an added difficulty in that there is no kitchen in the huge sports hall. Water must be imported to fill the boilers. Soup is in big iron kettles. Dishes are taken away to be cleaned. Washing-up is kept to a minimum with paper plates and cups and by encouraging members

to personalise their cup and use it all day. My wife Anne's favourite choice was a few of Jean's jam tarts. In former years when the Perth Show was held in Kinoull Church Hall, judges were offered lunch in the Isle of Skye Hotel but it later burned down.

I associate the **Glasgow** show with meringues and great cakes partaken with innumerable cups of tea. Members enjoy sitting chatting around the four-seater tables discussing their view of the judging. You can't please all of the people all the time but you can give them topics for conversation. The lunch for judges and officials is served in an adjacent room where a veritable delicatessen of quiches, cold cuts and salad buffet is laid out. I always feel virtuous when I can offset my calorie intake with salad. Is fresh fruit salad with cream a healthy choice? Who cares so little for the judges' dentition that they put chocolates on the table? How much is too much? Is it rude to refuse seconds?

Catering at **Ponteland** started in the morning with fine locally baked biscuits ... big biscuits. I liked the ginger ones best but all were delicious. I admit I sometimes had more than one. For lunch there was home-made soup and filled rolls; I commend the roast pork and stuffing versions. The pork and boiled ham are prepared by former show secretary and local butcher Alan Newton. For morning coffee and afternoon tea there is a choice of wonderful cakes, all baked by local members. At the autumn show, food vies for attention with the plant sale in the same hall. However, if you are lucky enough to judge at Ponteland the lunch provided is excellent: soup, main course, pudding and coffee all served in a private room. The dependable catering team is led by Brenda and Victoria Newton. Once again judges from the AGS and SRGC sit around and chat while enjoying glasses of grape or apple juice followed by coffee. Is it any wonder life slows down after two o'clock?

Up until two years ago, at the **Hexham** spring show members could buy their food from the leisure centre cafe or may have preferred sandwiches from Waitrose next door, where a visit is essential to stock up on crisps, pork pies, tomatoes and milk for the journey home: there are several scenic lay-bys on the A68. Despite the sports centre cafe, Brenda and Victoria with their helpers served a delicious buffet in the upstairs lounge. Overlooking the show made you feel like royalty.

The last two Hexham shows have been held in Hexham & Northern Marts. This is wonderful venue, probably the best of all, with plenty free parking, and a large carpeted hall with windows down one side, on-site catering, and just on the outskirts of the town. Top quality food is served all day just as on market days. Judging by the high standard, Northumbrian farmers know all about good living and good food. Perhaps, being descended from Hadrian's army, they have Italian genes. I wonder if the cafe in the agricultural centre is open every day? If you need to stay overnight there are many good hotels and gastropubs.

I don't remember much about the early **Morecambe** shows but when the venue changed to Lancaster College we were offered superb fare, especially exhibitors and judges. Why? The college runs a catering course and our meals were prepared by the students. The modern equivalent is to be served by the contestants on television's 'Bake Off' or 'Masterchef'. Beautifully prepared and attractively presented delicacies tempted the eye as much as the stomach. Salads and healthy choices were popular in the college.

The show venue moved again, this time to the Collegiate High School in **Blackpool**, still under the stewardship of Lionel Clarkson. Everyone was offered a continuous supply of good food from the school kitchen. You could choose from filled rolls to stews and potatoes. Sponge pudding ran out quickly. They say that as men get older they prefer food that reminds them of their school days. Judges were catered for in a separate room. There you were in plantsman heaven: friends at the table, kitchen on one side, plant sales on two and a show of rock plants, bulbs and alpines on the other. Nowadays the Morecambe show is held in **Kendal**. Judges are still well looked after, some eating out while others stay in the hall. There is a good take-away hatch near the main hall where a range of filled rolls and delicacies tempts you to eat too much. At one time rolls could be served piled up on a plate but now each must be individually wrapped with their own labels. Food preparation is a labour of love. Last year I bought a few rolls and Anne, Andrew and I enjoyed eating them homeward along the Cumbrian coast. Another reason I like the Morecambe, Lancaster, Blackpool, and Kendal show is that I have been lucky in their tombolas or raffles.

The Highland show in **Nairn** is held in the modern Community and Arts Centre, which has its own caterers on site. I can recommend the lentil soup and bread roll. During the day there is a rolling choice of sandwiches and cakes. The difficulty is finding a seat - SRGC members know how to chat. I feel at home at the Highland show because my first club meetings were in Inverness. Jim Sutherland was the convener. Entry was by raffle ticket(s). There were dozens of plants as prizes - Perth has a similar system. As I was a beginner, Jim explained how and where to plant my prizes. I was hooked. Jim invited superb speakers like Jack Drake, James Aitken, Alasdair McKelvie and Alf Evans. I will never forget the warm welcome and friendships formed at Inverness group meetings. It is a privilege to show plants there and even greater thrill to be invited to talk at the Inverness and Moray local groups. Speakers are well fed and looked after - you cannae whack Highland hospitality. On the way home there is world-class chip shop in Aviemore, open late.

The show I know best is the **Stirling** show, where I was show secretary for thirty or more years. Our group always had a capable team, first directed by Jean Wyllie. Our first show was in the somewhat cramped Girl Guide

hut. Before I could hire the hall I had to be interviewed by the district commissioner. Luckily a couple of local guide leaders were patients of mine and they put in a good word. The facilities were limited but we coped. Jim Jermyn won the Forrest medal with a *Callianthemum anemonoides* presented in a wooden orange box. The team catered for the public as well as having reserved tables for the judges and members of the Joint Rock Committee. The latter included eminent members like Mrs Knox Findlay, Sir George Taylor, Bobby Masterton and Alf Evans. Despite a few protests, one year we removed a plant that was infested with greenfly from the show bench and put it on a shelf in the kitchen. At another show, a lady member pointed out that the plastic basins in which two rhododendrons were shown would be more use for the washing up. These were the days when even plastic pots were frowned upon.

After a few years the show moved to Stirling's Albert Hall where the plants were downstairs in the main hall and the food served upstairs. We held a lecture in the upper hall in the morning during judging. The chairs were redistributed and the self-service cafe opened. The judges had a wee room to themselves. Anne catered for them as if they were having lunch in our own home. Sometimes, if a show was held on Easter Saturday, I gave each exhibitor a Cadbury's Creme Egg. These were appreciated, although Jim Jemyn taunts me that my motive was to increase work for dentists.

Over the years the Stirling group has been blessed with a succession of ladies who organise the catering. I pay tribute to them all, Jean, Janet, Helen, Marion and Anne. Each year at the group meeting before the show, there is a call for volunteers to help. Members are encouraged to make pots of soup and filled rolls. A lot of the food was prepared on the day. I can still see in my mind's eye Ailidh McLaurin, one of the founder members of the Stirling group, cutting and buttering rolls in a wee anteroom. An expert, she and her sister used to run the tea-room in the Lade Inn near Callander. Eventually, the Stirling spring show moved to Dunblane, where the Early Bulb Day had been established.

The distinguishing feature of the **Early Bulb Day** was Anne's introduction of bacon rolls early on. They are popular on an icy February morning. Sales are boosted when the bus from Aberdeen arrives. After leaving the bus, the Aberdonians' second stop is the cafe. It was usually my job to shop for the rolls and bacon. I got many a strange look when pushing a trolley full of rolls out of the supermarket. Anne followed Jean Band in providing flowers for the table. Like Jean, she gives them to members at the end of the day. It is encouraging to see how many people muck in and lend a hand. You may have no idea of how many crates and baskets of food, utensils and table covers need to be transported to the hall until you take them yourself. Nowadays the Stirling show is held in Kincardine. Catering is provided by the lady who runs the nearby cafe. One year, Anne invited the ladies of Stirling Inner Wheel Club to provide the catering. They excelled.

Catering at the shows involves a lot of hard work and the workers are exhausted at the end. I know this from first-hand experience. All dishes must be washed and put away. The tables which were set out on Friday night have to be cleaned and tidied away. Why do they do it? Each one is a member of the club and while they work hard at their own show they know that at all the other shows their fellows will do likewise. Everyone realises that the funds raised are key to the finances. Take a moment to look and listen. Just seeing lots of members sitting chatting, reminiscing while enjoying a wee treat lets you know that all the hard work is appreciated. Next time you are served at a show, please smile and say thank you; enjoy your purchases; take your dishes back or put disposable ones in the bins; please offer to help tidy up at the end.

Times change and people change but the camaraderie continues. The SRGC culinary experiences extend to the discussion weekends and events. At *Gardening Scotland* the Joint Rock meetings started with bacon rolls at 08:30. The Uist weekend is memorable for the huge daal that Matt cooked for more than 30 people. I also remember the huge portions of food at dinner and breakfast in the hotels. How else would I have had a dram in *The Politician*, pub of *Whisky Galore* fame, on Eriskay? Among my favourite food memories are the alpine sugar flowers on a birthday cake baked by Margaret Taylor at one discussion weekend. Was it for Brian Mathew? The beautiful *Meconopsis* sponge cakes Julia baked and decorated for the 75th anniversary were a triumph. From a family point of view, the fabulous spread which the *Stirling Inner Wheel* under Anne's presidency provided at the Royal Botanic Garden for the 70th celebration lives on in my memory.

What more would I like? I would like a show at Christmastime. Then we could have mince pies, turkey sandwiches, mulled wine, non-alcoholic mulled wine for drivers and a great get-together. If it snows on the way home, never mind. Many years ago I paid attention to the weather forecast and left the Morecambe show promptly. Snow began to fall as I left Lancaster and by the time I reached Shap summit the visibility was very poor. North of Shap I drove in front of the storm and arrived home safely. Harvey and Winnie Milne left the show half an hour after me and found that the motorway was closed. They spent two nights with the hospitable Duncan Lowe till the road north was safe to travel. Here again the generosity of club members triumphed over adversity.

At every show we are well served in our club. To end on a practical note, please remember that the food on offer is usually home-made and of exceptional quality; prices are low and the money raised funds club activities; you are with like-minded people, many of whom will become firm friends.

Soup, Rolls & Great Cakes? SRGC yes please!



The Restoration of Duthie Park Rock Garden

Mike Hopkins

Duthie Park in Aberdeen was first established in 1883 on land gifted by Miss Elizabeth Crombie Duthie for the '*wellbeing and recreation of Aberdeen inhabitants*'. A great feature is the David Welch Winter Gardens, added in 1900. It is one of Europe's largest indoor gardens, featuring the largest collection of cacti in the UK.

The Rock Garden at Duthie Park was first built in 1922 but in recent years had become overgrown and neglected to such an extent that it was completely concealed by vegetation. Indeed, you would have been hard pressed to know that a rock garden was there.

The restoration was undertaken as part of a multi-million pound project to renovate Duthie Park in its entirety. In particular, some monies were made available from various donations for rock garden plants and for sundries like gravel topping and fencing. The rock garden area was cleared by park staff and volunteers and latterly the Aberdeen Group of the SRGC became involved in the selection of plants, and in the planting up in 2015 and 2016. Since then the garden has matured a little and various dotted plants like dwarf rhododendrons, acers and dwarf conifers are establishing themselves, as can be clearly seen in the photographs. The Aberdeen Group has continued to be involved in maintenance and further development but a lot of the work is carried out by the park staff and volunteers like the *Friends of Duthie Park*, who also kindly financed the large selection of bulbs that was planted out in October 2019.

Some of the fill-in plants have already exceeded their allotted space and a programme of cutting back and removal of undesirables started in 2019 and was planned to continue throughout 2020. Unfortunately, events have rather overtaken us and so far in 2020 no further work has been undertaken.

Above: The overgrown darkness before

Below: The scene now





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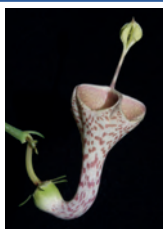
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