



**Alpine Garden Society
Dublin Group**

www.alpinegardensociety.ie



NEWSLETTER NO. 74 – SUMMER 2020

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Cover: *Tropaeolum polyphyllum*, - see page 22. (Photo: Gavin Moore).

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From our Chairman

Hello to all our members in the middle of what must be one of the most difficult years that you and the Society have ever experienced.

Quite apart from the Society's issues, I know that some of you have been very closely affected by the Covid-19 disease, and my heart goes out to all of you. I'm well aware that our membership is largely in the most vulnerable age group, and so has had the most to be worried about. I hope you have found the support you need from family, friends and neighbours.

Your Committee has been meeting regularly - online, I hasten to add - since the lockdown began in March, gradually recognizing that the impact of the pandemic was likely to be much longer than we might have hoped in the early days. We have had to acknowledge that most of our scheduled events could not go ahead, most distressingly of course the Annual Show, then all our lectures, the trip to the Burren, and now we have decided that it is only sensible to cancel the An Grianán Alpine Weekend in November. Alas, it is not at all clear that we will be in a position to resume normal service in 2021, so our events for that year are also under review.



The Society provides many benefits to its members, of which I think four are key: the Shows, the lectures and trips, plant sales and finally, perhaps most intangibly but equally importantly, a chance to socialize with like-minded enthusiasts. So, here's how we hope to stay in touch with you and continue to deliver as many of these benefits as we can to you over the coming year.

First, the Show. As Gavin writes elsewhere in this newsletter, though bringing people together in any quantity doesn't seem feasible for many

months, we are determined to have a Show next year one way or another, so please keep your focus on your Show plants.

Next, we are moving our lectures online until we are able to return to normal. Many of you will now be familiar with Zoom for keeping contact with your family and friends, and perhaps you have watched some gardening lecturers online too. So, we are planning to put lectures online where possible. We tested this out amongst the Committee, and it works well so we are asking our lecturers to present online if they are comfortable doing so, and Ken Cox has already agreed to do this for his lecture in October. Please watch out for emails from me giving details of plans.

Our plans for plant sales have been hit by both the pandemic and Brexit restrictions. Sadly, it's unclear when we will next see Aberconwy Nurseries visiting us. We had already hatched a plan to overcome this at the end of last year and purchased a large number of alpines from Gerd Stopp with the intention of selling them to members at the Show. But don't worry, we still have the plants, a little bigger now, and well looked after by George Sevastopulo and Paddy Smith, and we have hatched a plan to hold a plant sale on 12 September, outside for safety, in my garden in Sandycove, where we will sell these and any other plants that members can contribute. Of course, you will be as aware as I am that our sales tend to be a bit of a scrum, so we will make sure that appropriate distancing is observed through a ticketing system. And with luck and some fine weather we can turn this into something of a social event too. Fortunately, my garden is looking a great deal better than it might have been, thanks to my locked-down family, but don't expect anything magnificent!

Your committee also recognizes that you haven't had much value for money from your subscriptions this year, and we plan to redress this by reducing your subs for next year.

Finally, I hope you enjoyed the RHSI email newsletters and the contributions from Fionnuala Broughan, Billy Moore and George Sevastopulo.

Many thanks to Billy for his work in putting together this newsletter in exceptional circumstances.

I hope to see you IRL (in real life) soon.

Take care.

Jamie Chambers



Meconopsis 'Mrs Jebb'. (Photo: Jim Jermyn) – see p.19.

ALPINE MISCELLANY

What a difference a few months makes! When you got your last newsletter in January, Covid - 19 was unheard of, while now we talk about it all the time, as do the media, and everyone in the world is affected by it, many very tragically. Even worse is the fact that as I write the virus is spreading faster than ever across the globe and we are seeing further waves of infection as some economies open up. Clearly, we are going to have to deal with it for some considerable time to come. As Jamie has said, many of our members, including yours truly, are in the vulnerable age category and it is my fervent hope that we all will come safely out of this crisis and will be able to resume our normal lifestyles. Meanwhile, as Jamie has said, the usual activities of the Group are suspended. If you feel you can come to the plant sale on 12 September, which Jamie is generously hosting, I hope to see you there. We will take all the necessary precautions and will expect all attendees to wear a face covering. Jamie will be providing more details about the event by email, including appealing to you all to bring along some plants for the sale, and I would like to add my voice to that appeal.

Online talks can only be but a pale imitation of the real thing, but they are better than nothing, and at least you won't have to venture out on a cold, wet, dark evening to enjoy them. We hope to get our first experience from Ken Cox on 15 October. As anyone who heard him speak at Termonfeckin a couple of years ago will attest he is a superb speaker and, on this occasion will be talking about woodland gardening. Again, you will get all the information you will need to access the talk from Jamie by email. We have had a positive response from a number of well-known lecturers, and we plan to arrange further talks both this year and next. We will, of course, have to pay the usual lecture fees but there will be no travel costs which will enable us to reduce the membership fee in 2021.

One thing which has become clear to me since the lockdown started is how fortunate we are to be gardeners. Like many of you, I'm sure, I have done more gardening in the past few months than I have done at any other period in my life. Both the garden and myself are the better

for it. The weather has been very mixed with too much rain earlier in the year, followed by a drought and a hose ban and rather unseasonal conditions in July. But apart from some losses in the dry period my plants have thrived.

This issue of the newsletter is a fairly radical departure from the usual. In the absence of reports on shows and other fixtures apart from the AGM and the annual lunch which are reported on by Silvie Higgins and Fionnuala Broughan respectively, I asked a number of well-known writers to contribute a short article on a subject of their choice. Before I come to the articles, I want to thank Silvie and Fionnuala for their excellent reports. It was Silvie's debut and I think she managed to convey not only the gardening lore imparted by Carmel but also the humour that peppered her talk. Fionnuala is a regular contributor (three items in this issue alone) and her account of Paddy Tobin's talk is well up to her usual high standard. Thank you both.

I hope you will agree that we have seven varied and interesting articles all of which should have wide appeal. I am most grateful to each and every one of the authors for their contribution which were all provided without payment. In strict alphabetical order by author name, we start with a joint offering from Fionnuala and Barbara on the construction of a homemade trough, an ideal project for the times we are in. Jim Jermyn gives us a superb survey of meconopsis in Branklyn Garden. When travel becomes feasible again, I will urge the Committee to consider organizing a trip to this unique garden which is thriving under Jim's care. Gavin Moore gives us an enjoyable, if brief, trip through his gardening year. George Sevastopulo tells us about his new crevice bed with some new ideas on the subject. Paddy Tobin offers some practical tips on how to conceal the dying foliage of snowdrops and other spring bulbs using hardy geraniums. Martin Walsh writes about corydalis species for the garden with advice on good companion planting to accompany these most desirable plants. I saw *C. 'Blue Heron'* in Martin's garden last year and it was love at first sight, get it if you can. Finally, Ian Young writes with great authority about good garden-worthy erythronium hybrids. We are all familiar with Ian's weekly bulb log, amazingly now in its fifteenth

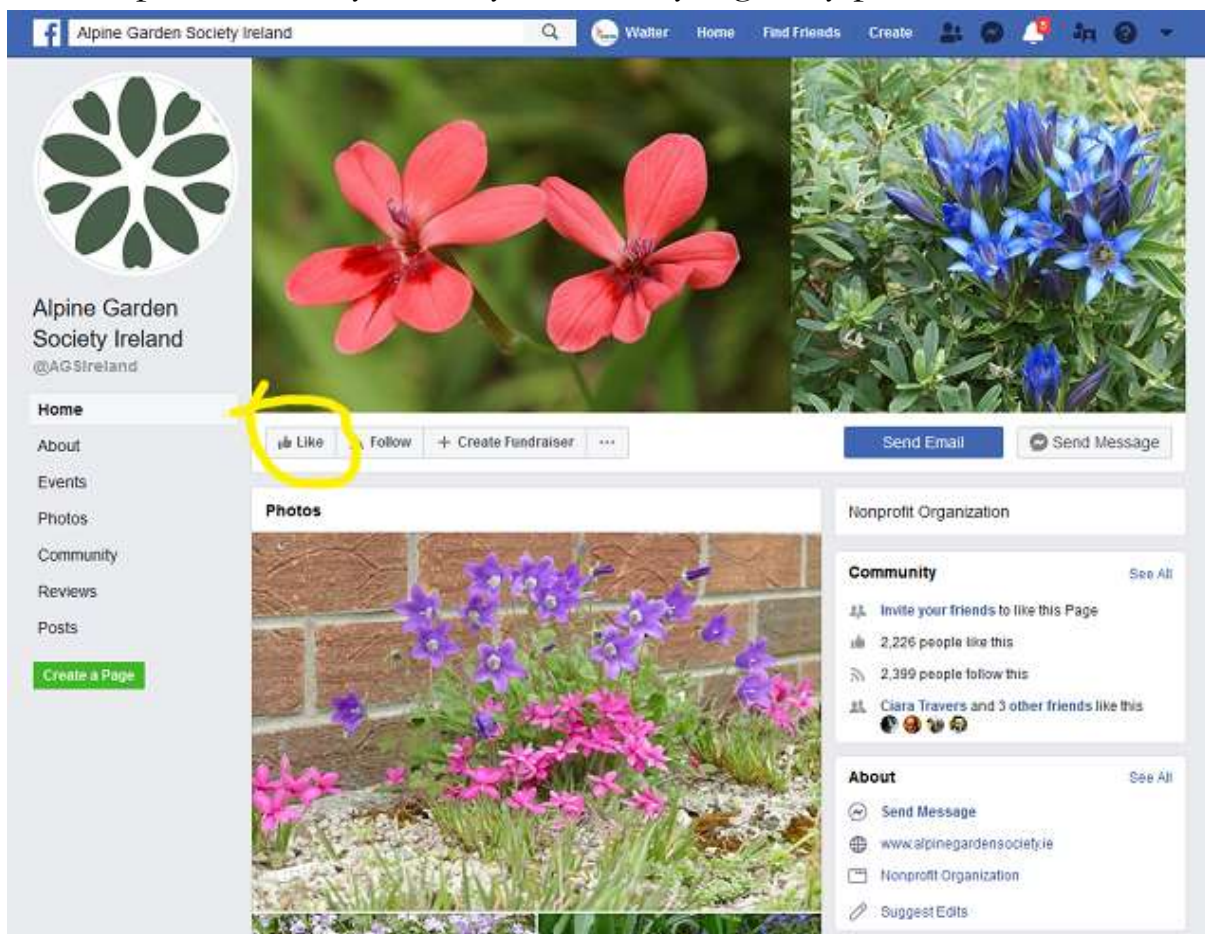
year, and remember the talks he has given us over the years, in which his expertise and experimental approach shone forth. I hope you enjoy the articles.

During these difficult times keeping in touch online has never been easier through our website and Facebook page. Fionnuala and Jamie provide some tips on how best to do this.

AGS Ireland Facebook Page, from Fionnuala

With Covid-19 still here for some time to come, more and more of us have been getting used to staying in touch online, through Zoom calls, through WhatsApp and maybe also through Facebook.

AGS Ireland has a Facebook page of which Jamie, Fionnuala, and Billy are all ‘admins’ and we do our best to keep it updated with articles and photos that we hope will be of interest to members. These may be links to posts and videos created by the AGS in Pershore, or to Ian Young’s Bulb Logs, or to Hilary McKelvey’s Model Garden which we visited back in pre-Covid days in May 2019. Billy regularly posts beautiful



photos of the plants in his garden and these are guaranteed to get many likes. If you'd like to stay in touch with what's happening in the world of alpine plants and in particular with our own society and our parent society in the UK, then you may wish to 'like' our page. If you're not sure how to do this, read on...

Already on Facebook?

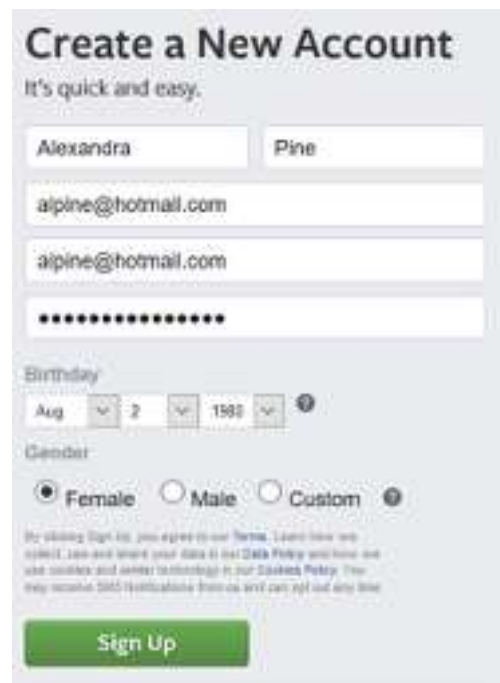
If you're already on Facebook, it's easy to like our page. Just search out the page (@agsireland), 'like' us, and then 'like' or comment on any posts you find interesting:

Remember, the more interaction you do with the page, the more you'll see it in your own Facebook feed.

Maybe you don't have a Facebook account?

If you're not on Facebook yet, it's very easy to sign up. Either get someone in your life who knows Facebook to do this for you, or just follow the steps below:

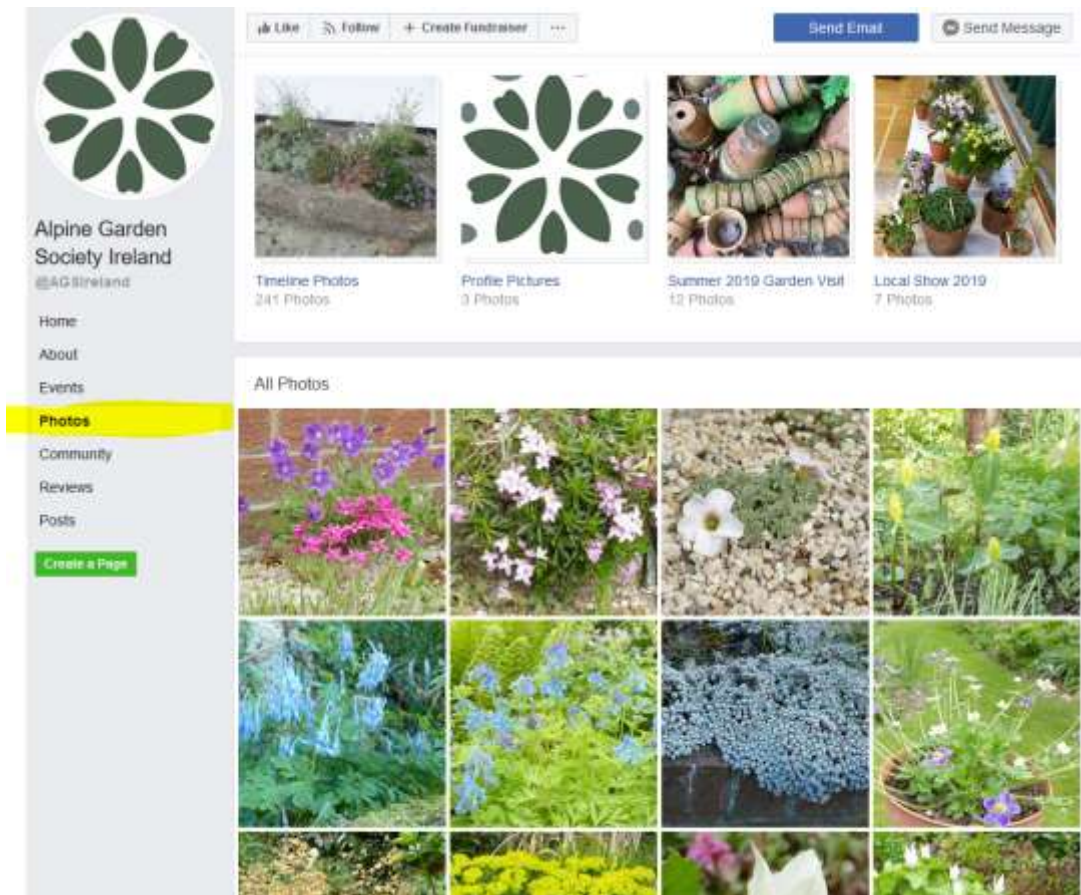
1. Open a web browser and enter www.facebook.com.
2. Create a new account by entering the required details and clicking 'Sign Up'; here's an example, (right).
3. Once you have your account set up, just search for @AGSIreland and 'like' our page.



The image shows a screenshot of the Facebook 'Create a New Account' sign-up form. The title is 'Create a New Account' with the subtitle 'It's quick and easy.' Below the title are two input fields for first and last name, with 'Alexandra' and 'Pine' entered. There are two input fields for email address, both containing 'alpine@hotmail.com'. A password field is shown with masked characters. The 'Birthday' section has dropdown menus for month (Aug), day (2), and year (1988). The 'Gender' section has radio buttons for 'Female' (selected), 'Male', and 'Custom'. At the bottom, there is a green 'Sign Up' button. Small text at the bottom of the form reads: 'By clicking Sign Up, you agree to our Terms, Learn how we collect, use and share your data in our Data Policy and how we use cookies and similar technologies in our Cookies Policy. You may receive SMS notifications from us and can opt out any time.'

Enjoy the information on the page

Once you've liked our page, check out what we publish for our members and other followers: photos, links to other items and so on. And again, remember the more you interact with our page, the more often you'll see it (that's how Facebook works!).



Our page is set up for members – if there’s something you’d like to see more often on the page, do let us know. Meanwhile, we hope you enjoy the photos, posts and links that we’ve been providing over the last few months.

Fionnuala Broughan

AGS Ireland Website from Jamie

While our Facebook page is the place for us to share our plants and experiences, the Society's Website has a different purpose: it's a place for us to record information of all sorts about the Society and its activities for you to consult whenever you want. No signing up required! Just open your browser and type in the address alpinegardensociety.ie to take you straight to our Home page.



Take a look around. At the top is the menu (more on that in a minute) but you will see immediately that there are four sections you will likely want to see straightaway: the Welcome area with any recent notices, the Seasonal Focus with pictures of a plant of current interest, the News On Facebook which shows you what is happening there, and Upcoming Events which shows the next few Society meetings, lectures, shows, etc. You can click on the Facebook heading to go to our page directly (it will open in another browser tab) and Events to see more details about them.

What else? Look at the Menu at the top of the page. You can explore that at your leisure, and the headings are self-explanatory (go to Calendar and you'll see what I mean). But I'd like to point you at some of the pages within the site that you might find helpful.

Can't find an old newsletter? Click on the Resources menu and you'll see there's a link to Newsletters. From there you can download all the old newsletters dating back to the Summer of 2006.

Interested in the books the Society has purchased over the years? Click on Library, also under Resources, to see what books we have, and where they are.



Gavin Moore's *Erythronium hendersonii* from the Virtual Show. (Photo: Gavin Moore).

Want to encourage a friend who has shown an interest in alpines? Show them the Virtual show page (under Shows on the main menu) to get them excited, then take them to the Getting Started page (under About Us) for pieces about plants for beginners, and finally take them to Contact/Membership to download a membership form and join up!

Jamie Chambers

Loughborough Show



On 7 March Liam Byrne, Paddy Smith, Gavin (replacing George who was recovering from surgery) and I travelled to Loughborough in England for the AGS Show there, paying a quick visit to Aberconwy on the way. The Loughborough Show is one of the biggest in the UK and gets exhibitors from all over. The range and quality of the exhibits was stunning, and we enjoyed the show immensely. Primulas, bulbs and dionysias predominated and the Farrer Medal went to a magnificent specimen of *Dionysia aretioides* (above) exhibited by Frank and Barbara Hoyle in a 36cm pot. See also p. 23.

Show 2021, from Gavin

While I got some consolation from attending the superb show in Loughborough, I really missed the Irish Shows this year. They are among my favourite days in the gardening calendar. Although it's impossible to know how we'll be living with the pandemic in April of next year, we're determined to have a Show in 2021. The most likely option will be that we can have a Show, but without inviting the public; just our members and our friends in the Ulster Group. This, of course, would be a big loss, both to the event itself and to the finances. Despite that, we believe we can still put on a good show and have a plant sale. The exhibitors would put on the usual great display, and it would be a nice way for both groups to meet safely and enjoy the day. We've checked with HQ who confirmed that it would still be considered an official show with points and trophies and all that goes along with it. There are still many things to consider before we can be sure, however, this is our plan so far. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

The Committee

To the great regret of her colleagues Patricia Maguire has for personal reasons stepped down from the Committee. She has been a very valuable member of the team providing constructive ideas at all times and has carried out the publicity function most ably. We thank her for her contribution and offer our best wishes to her and Michael for the future.

Billy Moore

Give it a go: make a trough and have fun with alpines

Troughs allow gardeners to create mini environments with just the right conditions for particular plants: acid or alkaline, gritty and free draining, or damp and peaty. Troughs also create a space where we can appreciate diminutive plants that might otherwise be swamped by larger border plants. For those of us with small gardens, troughs allow us to indulge a love for unusual plants and distant places, even in a limited space.

Finally, troughs provide the creative gardener with small canvases on which to make miniature, specialized gardens or landscapes.

Many of us have coveted the traditional granite and limestone troughs we've seen in others' gardens. But these traditional troughs can be very hard to find now, and very expensive, so a great alternative is to make your own!

We've recently made two troughs for our small garden, and both have settled well and provided great alpine gardening enjoyment. We found great resources online that show how to make troughs from polystyrene boxes and some mortar: just follow some of the links below. We used old broken roof slates and some discarded slabs of sandstone which meant the troughs were inexpensive to make and re-used materials that would otherwise have been thrown away.

Once the trough is made, the important thing is to experiment with the plants you love. I've planted tiny sea pinks and gentians to remind me of the Burren, *Celmisia* and *Leptospermum* from New Zealand, tiny willows and sedges, and of course Saxifrages and Sedums (great filler plants for troughs).

Visit these links for more:

<https://www.alpinegardensociety.net/plants/make-a-hypertufa-trough/>



<http://www.srgc.org.uk/bulblog/log2008/170908/log.html> (Ian Young's blog)

http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/logdir/2015Jun031433327631BULB_LOG_2215.pdf

The Beechgrove Garden episode 11 2015:

<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6vmr6s> (Skip to 07:12 if you want to get straight to the bit on troughs).



Fionnuala's trough, and her photo.

Fionnuala Broughan

Giving it a go: a lockdown project

Having read Fionnuala's article, I felt inspired to begin a 'Cocooning' project: that of making a trough! Fionnuala shared a link to Ian Young's blog on making a trough from a fish box and cement. I had a polystyrene box and had to cajole my son, Simon into getting some cement.

Following Ian's instructions, I made a great many holes in the box to help the cement to form a solid framework. I set up a large board on a table so that I could work at a comfortable height. I drew around the box--making sure to mark the site of the drainage holes—and then removed it. After mixing the mortar, sand, and water, I applied the mixture to the board working to about one inch outside the drawn shape. I wore a mask against the cement dust and gloves as I would be using my hands. So far, so good!

I then placed the box on top of the base, putting pieces of polystyrene in the drainage holes so that the mortar wouldn't block them. Another batch of mortar was mixed and full of confidence I began to cover both the inside and outside of the box together. This is so that the cement bonds through the holes. As soon as I took



my hands away it just fell off!! This was when I realized that the consistency of the cement was VERY IMPORTANT. Too wet and it slides off, too dry and it falls off! It took a lot longer than I anticipated to get it right and get it to stay in place. All this gave my husband Peter, who was watching, great amusement.

According to Ian, a 25 kg bag would make two troughs but either I was putting it on too thickly or the box I was using was bigger than his. I ran out of cement halfway through. I covered it up and went for a cuppa. I now had to call Simon again to get more cement. Fortunately, his local hardware shop was still selling by click and collect. Now that I had a better idea of the right consistency, the work went much quicker and

better. The trough was soon complete albeit still sitting on the board. I covered it up and left it overnight.

Next day it had dried to the board and had to be removed by using a hammer and chisel. I was terrified that it would break apart, but it didn't. It then had to be lifted off the board. I thought that troughs



made using polystyrene were supposed to be lighter, but it took the two of us to struggle and lift it into place. No wonder gardeners have bad backs!

I had stones left over from building a crevice bed, so I used them to give height in the trough. I filled it with a free-draining mix of John Innes No. 3 and grit, placed the stones, and used a sandier mix between them. I restrained myself and left it for a few days, but it needed a few plants, so I rounded up some small bulbs and seedlings, probably not planted in the right places, but I am very happy with the result (above).

What to do with the half-bag of cement left over will be a future project....maybe!!

Barbara O'Callaghan

Meconopsis in Branklyn Garden

Branklyn Garden was created by John and Dorothy Renton when, in the 1920s, they began to build a garden around their home. Forty years later, in a labour of love, having created the garden on a steep south-west facing slope from an old top-fruit orchard, they had crafted what one expert described as “the finest two acres of garden in the country”.

Over 3,500 species and cultivars from all over the world flourish here today, perhaps over half of them are direct descendants of the Rentons’ own plants. Today, Branklyn is maintained by the National Trust for Scotland but still retains the feel of an intimate, personal garden.

It is my intention to highlight one of the most famous collections of garden plant, raised by the Rentons from the very start of their time here in Perth. It is the genus *Meconopsis*! A firm favorite of mine.

We must recall the thrill when Kingdon – Ward first introduced *Meconopsis baileyi* from SE Tibet in 1922. It made an appearance at Chelsea



Flower Show a few years later much to the excitement of visitors to the event. It soon became obvious that this would be a plant happier in the climes of the North, Scotland, and Ireland. So it was that at this time Dorothy Renton drew her inspiration for these lovely Himalayan Blue Poppies from this early introduction. However, it was not until 1933 that an even finer species, *M. grandis*, now *M. gakyidiana*, was introduced from E. Bhutan by Ludlow and Sherriff. In the ensuing years until 1949 there would be many significant L and S introductions of *Meconopsis*, *Primula*, *Lilium* and *Nomocharis* from Bhutan and S.E. Tibet, many of which would thrive here at Branklyn.

The acid, sheltered conditions created by the Rentons would provide the perfect conditions for these iconic plants, and indeed, so important was her success with them, that Dorothy would supply Jack Drake with material to help him get going with *Meconopsis* (which he had all but lost) on his return to Inshriach Nursery after serving in the War. With the two key species *MM. baileyi* and *gakyidiana* growing cheek by jowl throughout the garden, Dorothy was able to create some very fine hybrids, mostly by chance. She would raise many plants from seed and gave away generously to friends.

Perhaps best-known today are the following *Meconopsis* associated with



this garden: *M. 'Branklyn'* (left), a fine plant raised by Jack Drake from L and S seed (possibly dating back to the original L.S. 600)

'Dorothy Renton' and 'Maggie Sharp', two very distinct cultivars that were raised at Branklyn in the early 1960s.

The cultivars, *MM. 'Slieve Donard'* (below right), 'Mop-head', 'Mrs Jebb' - see p. 5, and 'Mildred' are more recent arrivals than those grown by the Rentons and are immensely popular.

As well as the famous Himalayan Blue Poppies, the genus *Meconopsis* contains many wonderful species and hybrids which feature strongly in the garden. The chief flowering period extends from April until the end of June. Here are a few more favorites:

MM. punicea (below left), *integrifolia*, *sulphurea*, *superba* and the variable *x complexa* (formerly *M. napaulensis* hybrids) can be enjoyed here and visitors now flock from all parts of the globe to experience the quite unique legacy of the Rentons that Alison and I are very proud to be a part of.

All Meconopsis enjoy cool, sheltered situations, with an acid soil except for a few Chinese Alpine species, including *M. delavayi* and a few allies which grow in alkaline conditions! They can be propagated easily by division (if they are sterile hybrids) of 3-year-old clumps either in the autumn as the foliage dies down, or in early Spring as the new growth commences. Most species are also easily raised from seed and in most cases, this can be carried out around Christmas time, while *M. punicea* must be sown as soon as it is ripe in July.

We are open (in normal non - Covid 19 times) from 1 April to 31 October and we will welcome our friends and visitors from Ireland at any time!

Jim Jermyn
Property Manager, Head Gardener



M. punicea (left) and *M. 'Slieve Donard'*. (Photos: Jim Jermyn).

Highlights of my gardening year

The gardening year has phases. In my garden, each different area has its season, and certain plants signal the arrival of the next period of interest. For many, the gardening year starts with snowdrops, some of which appear in December. Happily, for my sanity and my bank balance I'm not a snowdrop enthusiast. They're very nice of course, and everyone should grow a few, however, when a couple of bulbs cost more than a nice meal and a few pints, it's time to take a long hard look at things.

My gardening year starts just before Christmas when the flowers appear on *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill'. It's a cliché, but like many clichés it is true: no garden should be without this shrub. The scent alone is worth it. It's easily obtained, simple to grow, and doesn't mind a gentle prune to keep it tidy. Despite the name, real spring arrives with the appearance of *Eranthis hyemalis*, the winter aconite. The small yellow flowers appear in January, often through a layer of frosted leaves. It's usually at this time that I make promises to myself that this is the year that I'll take lots of photographs and stay on top of the weeds. You'll note that there are very few photos attached to this article, this is because I'm not great at keeping my gardening resolutions, and my garden is seldom free of weeds.



Next is show season. I could list all the fantastic plants that make great show plants, but if I had to name one, it would be *Primula* 'Rufus'. Many show plants take an age to get ready, others require conditions seemingly unachievable in the garden, and others would prefer to die suddenly rather than oblige with a few flowers at the right time. *Primula* 'Rufus' is a banker. It's a born show plant and one of my favourite alpines. Away from the showbench, the garden is really getting going now, with the next big display being the rest of the daphnes. Some are difficult, but

some easy ones that flower reliably are *D. cneorum* ‘Velky Kosir’, *D. susanna* ‘Tichborne’, *D. x* ‘Arnold Chilartz’, the underrated *D. domini*, and the slow growing, but indispensable *D. retusa*. If you’re feeling more adventurous, try *D. arbuscula* or one of its many hybrids.

When the daphnes are finished, the alpine garden can sometimes hit a bit of a colour slump. When people come over, you’ll find yourself saying “the garden looked much better a couple of weeks ago”. I found a solution. It comes in the form of the widely varied and widely available helianthemum genus. I could list some hybrids, but most are good. Buy them when they’re in flower. When they finish flowering, gently take a shears to them. It keeps them tidy and could promote another sprinkling of flowers later in the summer. This is also when the utterly essential *Erinus alpinus* creates a great splash of colour. It does seed all over the place, but it rhymes, so what’s not to like?

There is one plant that I look forward to each year, almost more than any other. It’s not that easy to get hold of, and it’s not that easy to get established but, by no skill on my part, it thrives in my garden. It is *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* (see front cover)* and it’s a truly spectacular garden plant. The blue-grey leaves appear in early May on stems that can be up to a metre long. You would grow it for the foliage and buds alone, but then the large yellow-orange flowers appear in June. It provides a great display for about a month and, as the flowers fade, so does the foliage. By July, it has all but disappeared. Propagation is by either splitting the tubers (good luck finding them), and it comes easily from seed, which it rarely sets; the big tease.

The disappearance of the tropaeolum marks the start of rest of the summer. Of course, there are many alpines still doing their thing, but in my garden the herbaceous perennials, grasses and shrubs take centre stage. The idealist in me thinks of warm evenings sitting out in the lush green and bright colours of a summer. As I write this, I’m looking at plants bent at forty-five degrees by the wind and being lashed by the rain. But then all gardeners are eternal optimists.

Gavin Moore

*I agree with Gavin about this plant; it is quite wonderful and seldom seen. Helen Dillon had swathes of it in her Sandford Road garden and it was much admired. It grows from tubers which can be as much as a metre below the surface. I have been trying to establish it in my patch for years without success; I find that it throws up a few shoots each year for five years or so and then disappears. I suspect my garden is simply too dry. I will, however, keep trying as it ranks very high in my list of favourite plants. Ed.



Dionysias at Loughborough Show. (Photo: Billy Moore) – see p. 12.

Covid crisis crevices

Every cloud has a silver lining and for me, ‘cocooning’ since March, that lining is a newly constructed (actually not yet finished) crevice bed. I have built it using Donegal quartzite flagstones, which I had used to pave our patio. It is approximately 40cm wide and is situated above the retaining wall of a raised bed, approximately 4m long, which forms the northern side of the patio and then curves to flank the north-south steps that lead up our north-facing garden for a further 4m. I dug out the soil to a depth of approximately 20cm making sure that the remaining soil was gritty and well drained. I positioned the flagstones vertically with crevices between them, using short lengths at the bottom of the steps to achieve a smooth curve. There is a fine and very personal balance in a garden between the aesthetics of the design and the needs of the plants. I do not like crevice beds in which the rocks bounding the crevices are of uniform width, such as some that I have seen that have used broken up concrete paving slabs. But equally, the bed does not look well if the ‘stratum’ of rock changes width abruptly along its length. Luckily, I had slabs of differing thickness, between 20 and 40mm, which I positioned to form a set of narrow terraces varying in width (including the bounding stone) from 80 to 100mm. I filled the crevices with gravel that is sold by a local builders’ provider as paving sand. The grains are rounded, with a restricted range of size up to about 5mm diameter, with relatively little sand sized material. I made sure that the gravel was well tamped down, using the edge of a board. As the crevices become planted up, I intend to insert thin slivers of rock to fill the gaps – photo below.



My choice of material for filling the crevices was strongly influenced by the experiences of Peter Korn (*Peter Korn's Garden – Giving Plants What They Want*, published by the author) and Robin White, of the former Blackthorn Nursery, the expert grower of small daphnes and originator of the term 'daphnetum' (*Daphnes – A Practical Guide for Gardeners*, published by Timber Press). Daphnes, such as *D. petraea* and *D. arbuscula* are naturally chasmophytes, rooted into minute cracks in the rock, with very little food, a constant supply of moisture and oxygen, and no competition from more vigorous plants. There is a lot of discussion in the literature about composts. I reason that the plants, particularly dwarf daphnes, will get enough nitrogen from rainwater for their needs and if some require additional feed, a scattering of a slow release fertiliser on the top of the bed will suffice. I do not want or expect them to grow rapidly. Even in very dry weather, the lower levels of the gravel are moist while at the same time, there is lots of air and perfect drainage. In theory,



rounded grains of more or less even size provide higher porosity than so-called 'sharp' sand, commonly recommended. In gravel composts, such as I have used, it is noticeable that plants rapidly make more and longer roots than in richer soil.

What about the plants? So far, I have planted several small daphnes, including different cultivars of *D. arbuscula*, *D. malayana*, a dwarf *D. oleoides*, *D. petraea* and some hybrids. They were all very small (and this is essential) when planted, and I placed each one close to the edge of a crevice so that the roots could avail of the moisture that condenses on the stone at depth. They are all doing well so far. *Dianthus* spp. seem to

relish the conditions and quickly make masses of fine roots. Several small campanulas are just coming into flower as I write. I want to grow annuals, a group of plants in my view insufficiently appreciated on the rock garden, and hope that they will sustain themselves by self-sowing. I scattered seeds of various alpine poppies, *Erinus alpinus* and *Omphalodes linifolia*, most of which have germinated. In particular, I would like to maintain a population of one of my favourite alpines, *Linaria alpina* (above), which in the past I have struggled to keep. There is room for many more plants. Viva Herr Gerd Stopp!

George Sevastopulo



Crevices with thin slivers of rock between the main slabs. Note seedlings of *Aethionema capitata* by the label on the right. (Photos: George Sevastopulo).

Snowdrops: The big cover-up

The beauty and appeal of snowdrops in their season cannot be denied. There is little else which gives such a wonderful display of colour and interest. Like many others, I have been tempted again and again over the years to add a few more snowdrops to the collection so that they now occupy quite an amount of ground space. In some areas there will be a collection of small groups and in others some quite large drifts of long-grown and vigorous cultivars.

When they are in flower, they are quite impressive but when their flowering period is finished, they can leave a lot of bare and unattractive earth showing. No gardener wants bare earth, but the snowdrop enthusiast is faced with the conundrum of wishing to cover up while being fearful of overrunning those precious bulbs.

Vigorous or very dense-rooted perennials would most likely smother and out-compete the snowdrops and finding suitable companion plants can be challenging. We want something which will cover the bare ground efficiently without smothering the snowdrops and, after a number of years trying this and that, I have found a small number of solutions which have worked well with me.



Margery Fish was probably not thinking of snowdrops when she said, “When in doubt, plant a geranium”, but she might well have been, for geraniums provide an excellent solution and I have used them widely with snowdrops. I have chosen these geraniums for their growing habits: those suitable for interplanting among the bulbs and those suitable for overplanting.

The geraniums I have found suitable for interplanting are those which behave themselves at the roots. They have a compact root system which doesn't have a tendency to run about but remains tidy and relatively

small while above-ground growth is generous and flamboyant with summer-long colour. They take up little ground space but cover a multitude!

Geranium 'Rozanne' is a good example of this type: compact at the root, growing to 50cm in height and with a 1 metre spread. I grow it on top of a low retaining wall where it covers bare ground and also falls over the wall in an attractive manner. *G. wallichianum* 'Havana Blues' is similarly, a good blue-flowering plant, a light violet-blue with a white eye and magenta veins. Three, planted tight at the base of *Sorbus* 'Autumn Spire', fill a 2-metre circle within a low hedge which is filled with *Galanthus* 'S. Arnott' in spring.



G. Anne Thompson', above with *Galanthus* 'S. Arnott', is a hybrid of *G. procurrens* and *G. psilostemon*, and a great favourite here and three plants cover a circle of two metres diameter where *Galanthus* 'Colossus' and others flourish earlier in the year. Its first flush of foliage is a beautiful light green and the deep magenta flowers have a dark eye and black veins. *G. 'Anne Folkard'* is a hybrid with the same parents as *G. 'Ann Thompson'*. Both are quite similar, though the latter's flowers are a little larger and its habit is lighter and more open.

G. 'Patricia' (A.G.M.) is another with beautiful magenta flowers, a sterile hybrid of *G. endressii* and *G. psilostemon*, and one plant will spread to 90cm within a few years. I only have *G. psilostemon* 'Mount Venus' for two years and it has already proven itself an excellent garden plant. It is worth noting that, while these plants were chosen to cover areas where snowdrops were planted, they are all very attractive and beautiful plants and merit a place in the garden for their ornamental value alone.

There are a number of areas in the garden with snowdrops in larger drifts. Planting between them is awkward and a plant which will grow with them has proven more successful. *Geranium x cantabrigense* is a sterile hybrid between *G. macrorrhizum* and *G. dalmaticum* which was bred by Dr Helen Kiefer of Cambridge University Botanic Gardens. A mention of *D. macrorrhizum* in its parentage might cause alarm but it is a much smaller plant, lighter in all parts and of a loose growing habit so that snowdrops can grow through it with ease while it puts on growth as the snowdrop foliage is dying off, and conceals it, and the bare ground which would follow, perfectly.



Galanthus 'Magnet', 'Greenfields', 'Warham', 'Imbolc' and some others have become large drifts in the garden. These are very attractive in

spring and their planting areas are now equally attractive in summer when *G. x cantabrigense* comes into flower. I grow four cultivars of *G. x cantabrigense* in the garden. 'Biokovo' has white flowers flushed gently with pink and has strongly contrasting deep pink stamens. 'Karmina' (below) has dark red buds which open to lilac-pink flowers. 'Cambridge' (above) is another with pink flowers, a little larger than those of 'Karmina' while 'St. Ola' has white flowers with pink veins. All inherit the feature of aromatic foliage from *G. macrorrhizum* and are also the very easiest of plants to propagate. One plant can become 50 within two seasons simply by cutting off the rhizomes which run along the ground in autumn and planting them directly into the ground.

Covering-up your snowdrops is really so very easy with these geraniums.

Paddy Tobin



Path with snowdrops all along the left in spring, replaced by *Geranium cantabrigense* 'Karmina' later. (Photos: Paddy Tobin).

Woodland blues

The electric blue-flowered *Corydalis flexuosa* was something of a horticultural sensation when it was introduced back in the late 1980's by the well-known trio of British botanists, James Compton, John d'Arcy and Martyn Rix. The species had already been introduced into cultivation in the United States a couple of years before that by the nurseryman Reuben Hatch. This clone was given the cultivar name 'Blue Panda' as it was collected at the world-renowned Wolong National Nature Reserve in China's Sichuan Province, home of one of the largest populations of the Giant Panda. However, this cultivar never really attained the same popularity in this part of the world as the clones introduced by Compton, d'Arcy and Rix, which were given the now familiar cultivar names 'Pere David', 'Purple Leaf' and 'China Blue'.

There was a time back in the nineties when these various cultivars were widely grown by Irish gardeners. However, in more recent times its popularity as a garden plant appears to have waned. Some gardeners found it a bit invasive and particularly the cultivar 'Pere David', which is stoloniferous while others complained that it died out or was rather short-lived. I think the fact that it went summer dormant did not help its popularity as I am sure that many a gardener may have accidentally dug it up during its dormant period! Like a lot of growers, I have discovered that most of the corydalis referenced in this article like to be divided and moved to new ground every three to four years in order to maintain good vigour.

In the intervening years many other, mainly blue-flowered, corydalis have been introduced into cultivation, several of which are very fine garden plants. One of the better known of these is the strongly scented *Corydalis* 'Craigton Blue' (see back cover). This hybrid involving two Chinese species *Corydalis flexuosa* and *Corydalis omeiana* arose in the garden of Ian and Maggi Young in Scotland. This is a super garden plant with a very long flowering season, is also long lived and very easy to grow in good garden soil that does not dry out. I grow it in several different locations in my own garden and the plants that perform best grow in a moist part of the woodland garden receiving only a couple of hours of

early morning sunshine. As I write in early July it has now just finished flowering so I will shear it back to the ground as it looks a little bit untidy after flowering. However, it does not go summer dormant like *C. flexuosa* and will remain semi-evergreen throughout the winter.

Corydalis 'Spinners' which I got from Jimi Blake is rather similar and equally vigorous with blue flowers that age to purple and again flowers from mid spring until late June. This hybrid arose in the garden of British nurseryman, Kevin Hughes.

A favourite corydalis of mine is *C.* 'Wildside Blue', which originated in the remarkable garden of Keith, and the late Ros, Wiley in Devon. It is a slightly shorter plant with wonderfully scented, dark blue flowers and in addition to flowering in spring, it often flowers on and off throughout much of the summer. As it is such a good value plant, I have repeated it in several different spots throughout the woodland garden. Like all of the corydalises mentioned in this article it has a preference for woody soil that is open in structure and yet maintains sufficient moisture throughout the growing season.

Another clump forming corydalis that I got from Keith Wiley is 'Korn's Purple', a hybrid with the same parents as *C.* 'Craigton Blue' crossed with *C. capitata*. This hybrid arose in the former garden of Peter Korn near Gothenburg in Sweden. This is another very attractive corydalis that grows to around 40cm with rich purple flowers and lasts a good month in flower. In May, it forms a really nice plant association with the lavender blue flowers of the harebell poppy, *Meconopsis quintuplinervia* and the pure white flowers of *Epimedium* \times *youngianum* 'Niveum' in my woodland garden.

If I was to grow only one blue-flowered corydalis then it would have to be *C.* 'Blue Heron', which also happens to be one of my overall favourite garden plants. Like so many other choice corydalises it too was collected in Wolong National Nature Reserve in the 1990's and on this occasion by one of the most famous of the modern-day plant hunters, the American, Dan Hinkley. It has all the necessary traits that one looks for in a good garden plant as it looks attractive for much of the year and has a very long flowering season. The azure-blue flowers appear from

February to May, but it often has a smattering of flowers throughout much of the summer and autumn. It also a good doer, but at the same time does not grow too vigorously. It is a very distinctive corydalis with glaucous foliage and red flushed flowering stems with the most richly coloured flowers of all the blue-flowered corydalises that I grow. I have used several clumps of it as the main flowering plant in my woodland tapestry border, which I created under a semi-mature, evergreen *Magnolia grandiflora*. This particular border is largely dominated by plants with good foliage including numerous plants of the fine-leaved woodland sedge, *Carex lenta* 'Osaka' as well as *Podophyllum difforme*, *Mukdenia rossii* 'Karasuba', *Hosta* 'Blue Mouse Ears', various epimedium species and hybrids, several different hedychiums and the New Zealand rock lily, *Arthropodium cirratum*.

One of my favourite plant associations within this planting is *C.* 'Blue Heron' with the richly coloured flowers and foliage of *Epimedium* 'Royal Purple' along with early-flowering varieties of *Corydalis solida* such as 'Beth Evans' and 'Purple Beauty', pink *Erythronium* 'Lorraine Winifred' and various snowdrops. 'Blue Heron' will still be in flower when the later flowering *Wulfenia x schwarzii*, *Epimedium* 'Red Maximum' (photo below) and *E. acuminatum* 'Galaxy' come into flower.

Even if you only have a very small garden this corydalis warrants a place provided you can give it some shade and moisture.

Returning to *Corydalis flexuosa*, 'Porcelain Blue' is a newly introduced cultivar of that species from Hillier Nurseries in the UK and is now widely available here in most good garden centres. In a crowded field of blue-flowered cultivars of this species you may think it is difficult to find something new. However, the colour is quite different and to my eyes is more of an aqua blue. It also does not go summer dormant and the bluish-green leaves have very attractive, bronzy overtones. This corydalis flowers for quite a long time in the spring and then repeats in the autumn. I have grown it for just over two years and it certainly is not an overly vigorous plant and highly unlikely to invade any choice companion plants.

I have not as yet grown *Corydalis calycosa* but intend to rectify that shortly as I have heard great reports of this plant and it further extends the corydalis season as its blue flowers appear well into July.

There are, of course, many other choice blue-flowered corydalis, but for this article I have restricted myself to those that are relatively easy to grow, and are readily available from nurseries either here or in the UK.

There are very few woodland plants that can provide that same wonderful intense blue colour, and at the same time provide such a long season of interest, and are so easy to accommodate even in the smallest of woodland plantings. Hopefully, you will give some of them a try in your woodland garden.

Martin Walsh



Corydalis 'Blue Heron' with *Epimedium* 'Red Maximum'. (Photo: Martin Walsh.)

Erythronium hybrids

The first erythronium hybrid that I named was 'Craigton Cover Girl'; it was an open-pollinated, self-sown seedling which is likely to be a cross between *E. revolutum* and *E. 'White Beauty'*. It mostly has three pink flowers on a stem, and it forms clumps by division almost as readily as that garden stalwart, 'White Beauty' itself. There is an increasing number of hybrid erythroniums becoming available to gardeners which is no bad thing. I think it is impossible to improve upon the beauty displayed by the true species nature provides us with, but many of those are not so easy in cultivation, often slow to increase, if at all. What the hybrids can bring is plants that will tolerate a wider range of growing conditions as well as bulbs that increase readily by division.

Most of my attempts at controlled hybridization of erythroniums have so far failed, with the majority of the hybrids we have occurring spontaneously as seedlings in the garden, so their precise parentage is not always clear. *E. 'Craigton Beauty'* is an open pollinated seedling from *E. 'White Beauty'* which has darker marked leaves than the seed parent.



I selected *E. 'Craigton Cream'* from a group of *E. helenae* seedlings and indeed the bent style suggests that species is present in this hybrid.

There have been a group of yellow *E. tuolumnense* hybrids around for a very long time - plants such as 'Pagoda', 'Kondo', 'Citronella' and 'Sundisc' - which are widely available. They are all easy to grow and the fact that they increase well has allowed them to spread and persist in cultivation for so long. Stocks of these are often mixed up and not true to the cultivar name, but all offer a plant of similar look and size with

yellow flowers having some degree of red markings towards the centre, over large plain green leaves.

For me the two finest yellow erythronium hybrids were raised by the late John Walker and named after his granddaughters. *E.* 'Susannah' and 'Eirene' are both of similar size to *E. tuolumnense* but have larger yellow flowers without any red markings. Mature bulbs will have three to five flowers beautifully displayed above the plain green leaves.

E. 'Minnehaha' is another excellent John Walker hybrid this one being white and probably a hybrid between *E. oregonum* and *E.* 'White Beauty'. All these John Walker hybrids are outstanding and although they are still quite uncommon in cultivation, they do appear on some bulb specialists' lists. I hope that in time this will change and that they will all become much more readily available.

E. 'Joanna' was introduced by John Amand and is named after his daughter. It is a cross between a yellow-flowered *E. tuolumnense* and pink *E. revolutum*. So often such crosses between pink and yellow result in muddy-coloured offspring but this is not the case with *E.* 'Joanna' which combines these two colours together to produce a clean, free flowering plant with flowers that have a yellow face with a pink reverse.

One of my great joys is inspecting every single erythronium flower in our garden, and we have a lot. It was on one of those detailed inspections that I first discovered 'Craigton Cover Girl'. Many of the hybrids are fertile, producing seedlings that mostly look similar to the seed parent.

E. revolutum is the best species for seeding around the garden, regularly forming a range of hybrids which can have stunning leaves and flowers making them very desirable. I am now growing a selection of these hybrids to assess whether they will increase quickly enough and are sufficiently different to be worth naming and distributing.

Are there too many erythronium hybrids being named now? No – I think it is important that hybrids are named when they are first distributed. All the plants we have raised and named have the prefix

‘Craigton’, after the area of Aberdeen where we garden; this makes it easy to know the origin.

It does not bother me if there are hundreds of erythronium hybrids being named - time will sort them out. In ten- or twenty-years’ time many of those being named now may no longer be in cultivation – the ones that have persisted will have passed the best trial of all - that is they have proved that they will grow and increase successfully in a wide range of garden conditions.

Ian Young

If you want some expert guidance on growing and propagating erythroniums you will find it in Ian’s article in *Newsletter No. 49, Winter 2008*. Ed.



A selection of species and hybrid erythroniums in Ian’s garden. (photo: Ian Young)

REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

AGM and ‘The Making of a Plant Anorak’, Carmel Duignan, 17 January.

The tongue-in-cheek title of this talk comes from a Sunday Times article about Carmel, titled “The Plant Anorak”. The lady herself is very happy with this appellation: “Anoraks are people wearing anoraks, who go out in all weathers writing down the names of things they are passionate about: trains, or birds, or whatever. I’m a plant anorak. I’m passionate about plants.” She mentions other, less flattering definitions only to laugh them away. There will be a lot of laughter during Carmel’s talk.

When Carmel got the urge to be a gardener, she owned a small 5m² back garden in Harold’s Cross. She loved *Clematis* and planted many varieties ... that soon died of clematis wilt.

At this stage a friend told her “You should move out of here before you’re too old to get a mortgage.” Carmel took this advice and acquired “a field of grass in Shankill, that also had a little cottage in it.”

Turning the field into a garden had to wait for a few years, as the cottage had priority. Carmel’s first design was a scree bed. She was interested in alpines but was not quite sure which plants this meant. “I was given this definition of an alpine plant: a plant grown by a member of the Alpine Garden Society.”

For two years, her new scree bed looked very well. But then it started to deteriorate. Carmel understood that she lacked the patience to grow alpines herself. “So now I go to the AGS shows instead.”

Raised beds replaced the scree bed. Some alpines remained: choice ones like *Thalictrum orientale* and *Weldenia candida*, easy ones like *Thymus serpyllum*. Carmel speaks highly of *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* ‘Bracteata’, an Irish cultivar which does not spread.

Carmel’s gardening took a different turn once she discovered exotics. She has some herbaceous ones like *Ixia viridiflora* and *Senecio candicans* ‘Angel Wings’, but her preference is for woody plants. Among her tender

shrubs are *Hagenia abyssinica* (“like *Melianthus* on steroids”), *Amicia zygomeris* and *Roldana petasitis* (formerly *Senecio petasitis*).

Carmel has a passion for the Araliaceae family. Her *Tetrapanax papyrifer* ‘Rex’ grows so well, “it runs: bits of it are coming up in the pavement. I have to put something in my will about destroying the *Tetrapanax* when I’m gone.”

She loves the enormous leaves of her *Schefflera macrophylla*. She also grows *S. taiwaniana* and *S. rhododendrifolia*, and large specimens of *Pseudopanax adiantifolius* and *P. crassifolius*. All these Araliaceae shrubs are impressive architectural plants.

Carmel had many slides of flowers. She pointed out the leafless stems of *Polygonum scoparium*, the blue pollen on the filaments of *Fuschia excorticata* and the intense colour of the flowers of *Psoralea pinnata* (the blue pea bush from South Africa, a gift from Helen Dillon).

Speaking of gifts, quite a few of Carmel’s treasures were passed on by generous friends (like George Sevastopulo and Carl Dacus). Other plants were bought in specialist nurseries in Wales and in Cornwall. A few came from Murphy & Woods.

A favourite of Carmel’s is *Anisidontea* ‘El Rayo’, a tree mallow from the Cape, which has flowered in her garden for the last nine years.

She grows two cultivars of *Cantua buxifolia* (national flower of Peru), *C.* ‘Alba’ and *C.* ‘Dancing Hills’. She places these against a south-facing wall and wraps them during frosty weather.

The month of April is short of colour, so Carmel grows *Lunaria* ‘Corfu Blue’ and *L.* ‘Chedglow’ to fill the gap. These two cultivars have hybridised to create a third variety, a hybrid with the chocolate spotted leaves of *L.* ‘Chedglow’ and the blue flowers of *L.* ‘Corfu Blue’.

Carmel grows many *Salvia* varieties. *S. confertifolia* is hardy in her garden even though it was tender at the Beech Park gardens in Clonsilla. *S.* ‘Limelight’ is precious for its November flowering. *S. dombeyi*, carries its flowers high on 3m stems, so Carmel grows it at the back of the border.

S. ‘Amistad’, *S.* ‘Guanajuato’ and *S.* ‘Phyllis Fancy’ keep the garden in colour for months.

Dahlias abound in the late summer and autumn garden. *D.* ‘Jim Branigan’ must be grown in a pot, otherwise it gets lost in the soil. *D.* ‘Admiral Rawlings’ grows 2m high, flowers for months and must be lifted every few years.

All in all, this was a lively, entertaining and informative talk. Even as she took questions from the audience, Carmel still had everyone smiling.

“How do you manage to remember all the Latin names?”

“Oh, I forget the names of family members, but I remember plants.”

Silvie Higgins

‘Thirty years as the undergardener’, Paddy Tobin, AGS Annual Lunch, 22 February.

To open his talk, Paddy explained where the title had come from: a visitor to the garden in Waterford, which he and his wife Mary have created and tended over many years, commented that ‘this is a woman’s garden!’ and since Paddy insists he ‘takes direction well’ from the Head Gardener, he decided to go with this and so refers to himself as the Undergardener... Paddy pointed out that his talk would essentially be a tour of some of his favourite plants and places in their garden. He was ably helped in this by the Head Gardener who was in the audience and offered the occasional clarification.

Paddy’s tour started with the seasonal *Iris reticulata* ‘Katharine Hodgkin’ and ‘Katherine’s Gold’ and he also gave a mention to the later *Tulipa bakeri* which, from five bulbs planted in 1988, has spread widely, clearly very happy in its setting.

As well as guiding us through the garden with his beautiful slides, Paddy also provided some very useful insights and tips. So, for example, the seasonal succession in one of the beds moves from an early spring combination of hellebores, *Cyclamen coum*, *Crocus tommasinianus* and, of

course, Paddy's beloved snowdrops, to a mass of hardy geraniums from early summer: *G.* 'Rozanne', *G.* 'Mount Venus' and *G.* 'Patricia'. He recommends these as providing great cover and colour throughout the summer, but without too deep a root run so they don't disturb the spring bulbs and perennials with which they share the bed. Paddy also recommends *Geranium* × *cantabrigiense* 'Karmina', which he likened to a smaller and better-behaved version of *G. macrorrhizum*.

The succession in and around the bulb lawn/meadow includes snowdrops and crocus in the early spring and then moves through *Narcissus incomparabilis*, *N. poeticus* var. *recurvus*, various other daffodils, *Fritillaria meleagris* and then *Camassia cusickii*. Paddy was happy to report that orchids such as *Dactylorhiza fuchsia* and, one of his favourites, the March Helleborine are now happy in the garden too.

The garden has a lovely array of trees and shrubs. Some favourites that Paddy showed us included the Irish cultivars *Acer* 'Senkaki' and *Betula* 'White Light'. The garden also provides a home for woody plants from farther afield: *Magnolia* 'Yellow Lantern'; *Berberis valdiviana* (Espina en Cruz) from Chile; the Bee Bee Tree, *Evodia daniellii* (syn. *Tetradium daniellii*) which is native to Asia; the dwarf horse chestnut *Aesculus mutabilis* 'Induta'; and *Crataegus crus-galli* from eastern North America. Another hawthorn that Paddy heartily recommends as a 'wonderful plant' is *Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia' (Cockspur Hawthorn, the plum-leaved hawthorn), an award-winning small tree that provides interest in all four seasons.

If you're planning a white garden on your own patch, you might be inspired by these four lovely plants from Mary's White Garden: the very floriferous *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Jan van Leeuwen'; the elegant *Gladiolus colvillei* 'The Bride', which Paddy said grows and multiplies well for them; the bright white *Leucanthemum* 'Hazel's Dream', another Irish cultivar from Kilmurry Nursery; and *Aquilegia* 'Apple Blossom'.

There was more: a textbook-perfect fruit and vegetable garden and beyond the garden gate a small roadway heralding the presence of something special over the ditch with its verges lined with snowdrops, hellebores and primroses.

All in all, Paddy's talk was a beautifully illustrated and very personal guide to a garden that reflects the love and hard work that both the Undergardener and the Head Gardener have put into it over the years. It was an inspiring start to the growing season for all of us and now we just have to work out if we might be able to visit at some stage!

Fionnuala Broughan

FIXTURES

Saturday, 12 September, 1.30 pm. Plant sale at Jamie's garden, 34 Castlepark Road, Sandycove, Co. Dublin.

Thursday, 15 October, 8 pm. **Ken Cox**, 'Woodland gardening' – Web talk.

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Corydalis 'Craigton Blue' (in the centre) see p. 31. (Photo: Martin Walsh.)