



# THE CALEDONIAN GARDENER 2021

Journal of the Royal Caledonian  
Horticultural Society

  
The Caley



Many floral tributes to the NHS were made throughout the country. (top) Edinburgh's floral clock in Princes Street Gardens had no hands in 2020 as they were being repaired but the gardeners still mounted an effective display. © Edinburgh City Parks. East Lothian Council gardeners designed NHS tributes in Prestonpans (middle) and Dunbar (bottom). © James Scott.

# THE CALEDONIAN GARDENER 2021

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**Cover:** *North Berwick's carpet bed originally planned to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE day but the council gardeners changed this to thank the NHS. The display has been adapted for the winter as the virus is still with us. © John Stevens.*

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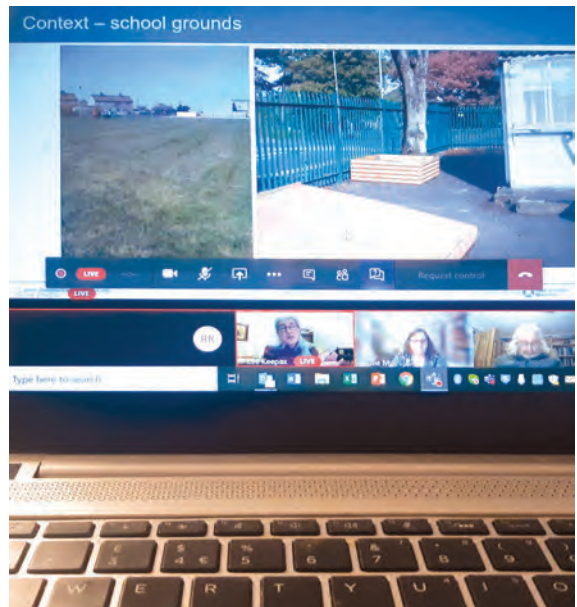
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# Foreword

This year has been difficult for so many people for so many different reasons due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For The Caley, shows, walks, tours and educational activities had to be severely curtailed particularly during March, April, May and June. Our last Caley event before Scotland went into lockdown in late March was our annual awards ceremony. This event recognises the hard work, skills, knowledge and enthusiasm of many individuals right across Scotland who have made a significant contribution to Scottish Horticulture. It is too early to say what the wider and long term impacts of this year have been, however this year saw the unfortunate demise of Gardening Scotland.



*Logging onto a virtual talk on a home computer. © D. Knott.*

The value of plants, gardens and greenspace is now widely recognised as beneficial to our health and wellbeing. However these plants and greenspaces do not look after themselves and we should take time to recognise and applaud the hard work of the many individuals and groups who work to maintain their local parks, gardens and greenspaces right across Scotland. They have helped brighten all our lives in the darkest of days. We, and hopefully you, know who you are; a huge thank you to all these horticultural champions!

Post lockdown only a limited amount of work, socially distanced, at Saughton and on The Caley allotment was initially possible. This gradually increased as the wider situation improved. Saughton, with its magnificent floral displays and the café now open, is an extremely popular destination.

Like everyone else The Caley has had to embrace technology with virtual Council meetings while regular updates on our website and social media platforms have kept members updated. These posts have allowed The Caley to reach new audiences, something we hope to build on in the future through creating a number of topical video clips. This move to a virtual world has also allowed our educational programmes *Grow and Learn* and *Grow and Learn in Nature* to be available to wider audiences. The Caley's winter lecture programme is now online.

Looking to the future the society can only plan for future activities on the ground and in person in the hope that the impact of the pandemic lessens next year whilst at the same time having virtual platforms as back up. The key challenge for The Caley and Scottish Horticulture will be helping maintain the renewed interest in plants and gardens and building on this to create a more healthy, sustainable and environmentally aware society.

*David Knott, President*



*The 2019 show. © Clive Davies.*

## Shows 2020 - what happened!

Pam Whittle

We started the year full of optimism. The Caley office was coming together and plans were well in hand for the School and Junior Group show which was due to take place on 28th and 29th March at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, followed by the main Spring Bulb Show at Saughton on 4th and 5th April. Early March saw the first few cases of Covid-19 arrive in Scotland and, by the middle of March, all large-scale events were advised to cancel and then, on 24th March, lockdown started.

As soon as we knew the show had to be cancelled, we decided to try to do something online. We were not sure what or how, but we were determined to try. The first attempt would need to be the Schools and Junior

Group show. Before schools were told to close, all participating groups were contacted and encouraged to submit photographs for a virtual show. It was a relief and a pleasure to receive pictures of daffodils and artwork, all of which resulted in the first Caley video. A quick downsizing of the schedule for the main show and again people were invited to submit photographs. It was a real pleasure to receive 244 entries from 39 entrants. Power point presentations were created which covered all the entries. However, the number and range of the entries were slimmed down to produce three videos of the highlights, one focusing on daffodils, one on the other classes and a third on a special Amaryllis Challenge set up by members of The Friends of Saughton Park. All presentations and the videos continue to





*Brunstane Infants.*



*Donibristle PS.*



*Roseburn P1.*



*Children's artwork.*



*North Berwick Nursery.*



*48th Fife cubs, Dalgety Bay.*



*'Viking' div 1, Simon Drozdek; 'Ombersley' div 1, Richard Canning; 'Cape Cornwall' div 2, Gillian Sharp.*



*'Pink Pride' div 2, Peter Westbrook; 'Ballynichol' div 3, Barbara MacGregor; div 4, Kirsty Quinn.*



*'Lemon Drops' div 5, Claire Ross; 'Yellow Sailboat' div 7, Susan da Prato; 'Mimow' div 8, Moira Stevenson.*



*'Golden Bells' div 10, Margaret Tait; 'Menehay' div 11, George Anderson; Narcissus cyclamineus div 13, Stan da Prato.*



*'Carnegie', Gill Anderson; 'Angel's Wish', Alison Murison; 'First Impressions', Ros Marshall.*



*'Jetfire' div 6, Millie Cotter, Young Gardener; 'Fritillaria michailovskyi', Esther Mendelsohn; 'Men an Tol' div 2, Sophie Cotter, Young Gardener.*



*'Old Clove Red', Sarah Bennett; 'Stella South', Bill Copland; 'Sophie', Shona Nelson.*



*'Pinstripe', Colin Ainsworth; 'Anne Carlaw's auricula theatre'; 'Pumpkin', Pam Whittle.*

be available on the website, and have featured on Facebook, Twitter and The Caley blog. Thank you to everyone who took part. Your images were much appreciated by many people across Scotland.

The Caley, along with the Royal Horticultural Society of Aberdeen, the Dundee Daffodil Group, the Banffshire Horticultural Association Daffodil Group and Keith Horticultural Society usually participates in The Jim Davidson Trophy. Sadly, all shows were cancelled, but the Dundee Daffodil Group produced a virtual show which they shared on their Facebook page, which is still available for viewing.

Lockdown was by now in full swing and it was evident that people welcomed the opportunity to be engaged. The Auricula type of primulas



*Six floating flowers, Lynn Corrigan.*

is a group of spring flowers that have a short season and do not normally feature in The Caley show as it is too early but several of our members particularly like them. I am one of those members and encouraged others to share images of their blooms as they came into flower. These were shared each week and at the end of the season collated into a video to be enjoyed and used as a reference.

Writing in November 2020 we are not currently in full scale lockdown but some restrictions remain and are likely to continue for some time. We hope to hold a full spring show on 3rd and 4th April 2021 with the children's and youth groups show on the same weekend. We will have some form of virtual show if that is not possible. We have learnt a lot about the technology in the last few months and are improving our skills every week. So, look forward to spring 2021 and enjoy your gardens!

*Pam Whittle, Spring Show Convenor  
Email: [springshow@rchs.co.uk](mailto:springshow@rchs.co.uk)*



*Hippeastrum 'Grand Diva', Rona McDowall.*



*Meconopsis gaykadiana* at c 4,000 metres, Sakden, Bhutan. Species photos © Margaret Thorne.

## The Meconopsis Group

David & Margaret Thorne

The well attended inaugural meeting of The Meconopsis Group was organised by the late Evelyn Stevens and Mervyn Kessler and took place at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) on 12th September 1998. The Group was founded initially to clarify the considerable confusion which then existed in the naming and nomenclature of the perennial blue *Meconopsis* in cultivation. However, its members were clearly interested in a much wider range of issues relating to the genus and in 2004 this was recognised and the Group's objective became "to study the genus *Meconopsis* by scientific research and to promote its cultivation and conservation".

This broad ranging interest in *Meconopsis* is reflected in the topics covered at the first and subsequent meetings, still held at the same

venue, up to the latest in 2019. Historical and current explorations in the Himalaya and China, species distribution and introductions have featured on most agendas, advice on cultivation and propagation techniques has always been popular and talks on *Meconopsis*-rich gardens have provided ideas to emulate and inspiration for future visits. How molecular biological techniques might be used to assist with taxonomic issues has been an underlying thread throughout the proceedings of the Group.

An important factor, in view of the Group's worldwide membership, is that transcripts of talks are made available in the members' area of The Meconopsis Group website and therefore accessible both to those able and unable to attend meetings. Although much of

the information was summarised in two important complementary books on wild and cultivated *Meconopsis* in 2014 and 2017 respectively, the members' archive gives a fascinating insight into the background discussions which led up to the thinking current at the times of these publications and continues to chronicle subsequent developments. As with many similar groups of like-minded individuals which thrive on meeting to stimulate thought and exchange ideas, we face the challenge of maintaining momentum when pandemic restrictions prevent us from holding our customary indoor events.

### Historical background

*Meconopsis* have been grown in our gardens for more than 150 years, the majority introduced during the golden age of professional plant collecting in the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth. At this time it was discovered that many plants originating from the Himalaya and China would be hardy and thrive outdoors in our temperate climate and genera such as *Meconopsis*, *Primula* and *Rhododendron* grew particularly well in cooler, wetter northern

gardens. Seeds of *Meconopsis* species introduced from places separated by mountain ranges were grown together in close proximity and hybridised freely creating swarms of plants which were vigorous but often increasingly sterile. In this way, several species were lost from cultivation, in some cases even before their true taxonomic status had been circumscribed. Careful examination of historical collections preserved as herbarium specimens and photographs taken during more recent study visits to the original locations have helped clarify what actually arrived in our gardens.

The species with evergreen rosettes represent one such group, the hybrids of which were until recently referred to as *Meconopsis napaulensis* hort. but are now recognised for their complex hybrid status and ascribed to *M. x complexa*. From this group, the pure species *M. paniculata* and *M. wallichii* are still in cultivation as are forms of *M. regia* and *M. staintonii* which are fertile but not quite like their wild counterparts. *M. taylorii* was introduced in 1954 from the Stainton, Sykes and Williams Expedition, but lost before 1972



*M. staintonii* in habitat.



*M. simplicifolia* ssp. *simplicifolia*



*M. sherriffii*



*M. simplicifolia* ssp. *grandiflora*

when it was described and named after Sir George Taylor who raised the funds and instigated the expedition. The smaller, prickly blue poppies have also hybridised freely but many of the resulting plants are fertile. They have long been referred to as *M. horridula* hort. but in recognition of their hybrid status and the likelihood that *M. horridula* played no part in this, they should now be called *M. x setifera*.

By far the most popular *Meconopsis* in cultivation are the 'big blue poppies' which, despite hybridising and becoming infertile, are easier than most others to maintain in cultivation because they are perennial and may be propagated by division. It was this group of plants which The Meconopsis Group initially set out to study. They arose from what we now recognise as the three species *M. baileyi*, *M. gakyidiana* and *M. grandis*, all of which have a whorl of bracts at the apex of tall leafy stems with flowers on peduncles above and white filaments. Petal colour includes white, red and purple but the best are exquisite shades of blue. Occasionally *M. simplicifolia* was involved but probably not *M. betonicifolia* which has become successful in cultivation only in recent years. Described in 1889 based on Delavay's collections from north western Yunnan, seed of *M. betonicifolia* was subsequently collected by George Forrest and Joseph Rock but did not thrive in western gardens. Most plants currently known as this are attributable to *M.*

*baileyi*, this name having been reinstated (Grey-Wilson 2014) for the species originally discovered in south-eastern Tibet in 1913 by the intrepid explorer Colonel F M Bailey. Seed introduced by Kingdon Ward and later by Ludlow and Sherriff became widely established in gardens and this species is the original 'blue poppy' of gardening catalogues.

*Meconopsis grandis* is almost endemic to Nepal but has tiny populations in the Everest region of southern Tibet and around Jongri in the extreme west of Sikkim. It was, however, described from Sikkim in 1895, at a time when Nepal was not accessible to foreign visitors and seed was introduced to Europe around this time too. In August 1906 about a dozen plants had flowered at RBGE and were proving to be perennial whereas at Kew the seedlings always died. Wild plants typically have broad leaves and multiple peduncles above the false whorl, unlike the named cultivars of this species which have single pedicels and narrow leaves. Tall blue flowered poppies found further east in Sikkim and around Chomolhari in western Bhutan are attributable to *M. simplicifolia* subspecies *grandiflora*, specimens of which were incorrectly labelled as *M. grandis* at the herbarium in Thimpu when we visited in 2009. There are no Ludlow & Sherriff collections of what we now regard as *M. grandis* and it is a matter of speculation as to

whether or not they were familiar with this species at the time of their Himalayan travels. However, we do know (Stevens 2015) that Betty Sherriff grew *M. grandis* ‘Sikkim Form’ in her garden at Ascreavie in 1975 where, as in many other Scottish gardens, it could have been hybridising with *M. gakyidiana* and *M. baileyi* for many years.

*Meconopsis gakyidiana* is the last of the three species to have been described (Toshida et al 2016) which is perhaps surprisingly recent considering it has always been regarded by gardeners as distinct from the Nepal and Sikkim derived *M. grandis* under which name it was previously included. Herbarium specimens of plants in full flower were collected in eastern Bhutan on 4th August 1933 (L&S387) and 6th June 1934 (L&S600) during the first two expeditions of the Ludlow & Sherriff partnership and on 20th October 1934, George Sherriff returned to the Nyuksang La for seed. His diary describes how the area in which he had collected L&S600 had been devastated by grazing animals, so he was able to collect only a little seed which could not have been from the original plant. There is no record of what happened to this as the Field Notes record

*Lomatogonium stapfii* (L&S1073) for that day but no *Meconopsis*. Had the seed been recorded, it would have been given an adjacent number. Seed of what we now know as *M. gakyidiana* was, however, collected twice earlier that year (L&S875 in Tibet & L&S1021 in Bhutan). This was distributed and grown successfully in Britain and in 1952 Jack Drake wrote for the AGS Bulletin “The plant which attracts more attention than any other in the garden is one which I grow under the name of *Meconopsis grandis*, Form G. S. 600. It looks far more like a giant form of *M. betonicaefolia*, but I am given to understand by the best authorities that it is truly a form of *M. grandis*. Anyway, it is a tremendous and stately plant, introduced before the war by Major George Sherriff...Great stout stems rapidly ascend to 6 feet and over in a favourable year, each carrying several enormous saucer-shaped full-petalled flowers as much as seven inches across. The initial bursting of the buds tends to be disappointing, for the colour is usually a dull deep purple. But in a day or two, as the flower opens out, the colour changes to a most deep peacock blue. The plant makes huge and very perennial clumps and is the easiest of all the *Meconopsis* I have grown.” Later the ‘Form’ was dropped from the name



*M. paniculata*, one of the easiest evergreen monocarpic species to grow.



*M. taylorii* was introduced in 1954 and named after Sir George Taylor in 1972.



which became *M. grandis* GS600, leading to the unsubstantiated supposition that L&S600 had been a seed collection. The report of John Lawson's talk about Inshriach Nursery to The Meconopsis Group meeting on 29th May 1999, quotes him saying "*Meconopsis grandis* GS600... is one of the great introductions to our gardens. Jack Drake got seed from the Rentons of Branklyn in 1938 or '39 when he started the nursery. The seedlings came on very well and were then left to their own devices during the war. After the war, when Jack Drake returned, some had survived, and were propagated by division. For the most part, they were no longer raised from seed". The report continues "John showed a slide of a drift of *M. grandis* GS600 at Inshriach, but said that he also has an earlier photograph of the same drift taken in early 1950s before these plants had become very well-known and had had the opportunity to become as hybridised as happened subsequently...".

In 1949, Ludlow & Sherriff were once again back in Bhutan and Tibet, accompanied by Betty Sherriff and Dr John Hicks. During this expedition four further herbarium specimens of *M. gakyidiana* were collected, including one of 'Betty's Dream Poppy' (L,S&H20671) and

two were also of seed (L,S&H21069 and L,S&H21431). This was widely circulated but, just like the earlier seed collections, rapidly became hybridised and seems no longer to have been in cultivation as a true fertile species when The Meconopsis Group was formed.

### **Trials**

The main problems which the newly formed group set out to tackle were that some names had been applied to two or more different cultivars, other cultivars were known by more than one name and some cultivars had no name at all. In order to address these issues, the plants had to be grown together in close proximity, since the differences were not always obvious in photographs and *Meconopsis* cannot reliably be grown in character in pots. The RBGE was very supportive of the work of the group and at its outset allocated a nursery bed for identification trials of several years' duration after which the trial plants were transferred to the large garden of Dr Evelyn Stevens at Sherriffmuir. This was registered as a Plant Heritage National Collection in 2001 and provided better, wetter, growing conditions than Edinburgh. Founder members of the group were generous in donating plants, each of which was allocated a holding number



*M. regia* is very susceptible to hybridisation in the wild.



*M. grandis* ssp. *grandis*.



*M. aculeata* occurs over much of NW India and is one of the easiest species to grow.



*M. tibetica* is native to a limited area in the Everest region of Tibet and has been briefly in cultivation.

and then planted adjacent to similar ones based on morphological characteristics and provenance. An assessment committee of members with good knowledge of the blue poppies was appointed. After initially clarifying the identity of existing named cultivars, a process was put in place for selecting and naming the many distinct plants which did not have cultivar names. This is an ongoing process and plants may still be submitted for consideration by The Meconopsis Group.

Features found to be of particular importance in describing plants are:

- Flowers - size, shape, colour, petal shape and texture, the extent of petal overlap, flower posture e.g. nodding or lateral facing, pedicel length, time of flowering.
- Emerging foliage - time of emergence, whether upright or spreading in stance, leaf shape and petiole length, leaf colour and the presence or absence of any red-purple pigmentation, shape of indentations or teeth on the leaf blade margins, details of leaf hairs.
- Mature foliage - basal leaf shape, petiole length, and the shape and positioning of any teeth or notches on the leaf margins.

- Fruit capsule - size and shape, length and thickness of the style, shape and size of the stigma, details of the bristles on the capsule body and their presence or absence on the sutures between the carpels.

### Cultivars

Although hybrids are usually named according to the species from which they arise, this could not be established with certainty in most cases, due to the uncontrolled way by which the *Meconopsis* cultivars had arisen. On the advice of Chris Brickell, the Chairman of the International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants, a more pragmatic approach was therefore taken to divide them initially into groups based on a defined similarity for the purposes of comparison. All species in cultivation were regarded as one group and sterile clonal cultivars believed to have *M. gakyidiana* parentage were ascribed to the George Sherriff Group. The remaining plants were divided according to whether or not they were fertile and ones which did not fit into any other category. Allocating them was not always clear cut as the last three groups have no biological significance. Now that their purpose has been achieved and the majority



*M. wallichii* var. *fusco purpurea* has brighter flowers in the wild than in cultivation.



*M. baileyi* alba. The original 'Blue Poppy' common in cultivation in both blue and white forms.

of cultivars named, their use is declining and being phased out. The Meconopsis Group has recently embarked upon a DNA project which should eventually help to shed light on the parentage of cultivars as well as providing valuable information about the relationships between species.

### Naming cultivars

The Meconopsis Group has been the International Cultivar Registration Authority since 2002 and there are now over 70 cultivars named and described on the register which also lists synonyms, invalid names and those which do not have published descriptions. The majority of the approved cultivars were added thanks to the hard work of those who grew and assessed the plants and proposed them for approval at meetings of The Meconopsis Group over many years. Cultivars named after a long period of assessment have each been given a star rating to indicate the committee's consensus view of their garden worth. Criteria considered in coming to this rating include: reliability, ease of cultivation, hardiness, flower quality, number of flowers and distinctiveness. Many of these cultivars have been given plant awards by the RHS Joint Rock Garden Plant

Committee and in 2013 the Award of Garden Merit (AGM) was given to 10 cultivars following a three year assessment trial at the RHS Garden Harlow Carr near Harrogate.

### Seeds

The Meconopsis Group seed exchange started in 2001 and is now in its twentieth year having provided an excellent service to members throughout this time. The exchange plays an important part in making seeds of fertile cultivars available for experimental purposes and also companion plants to grow alongside *Meconopsis* for those members who have no wish or no room to extend their collection any further. But the main focus is on Meconopsis species and subspecies, an area in which it excels, and we know of no other exchange which offers as wide a selection as ours has done consistently since it started. Three species have been available every year (*M. baileyi*, *M. delavayi* and *M. grandis*), five have been absent for only a couple of years (*M. aculeata*, *M. paniculata*, *M. punicea*, *M. sulphurea* and *M. superba*) and another five have featured more than eleven times (*M. dhuojii*, *M. integrifolia*, *M. quintuplinervia*, *M. rudis*, *M. wallichii*). For these species which are popular, relatively secure in



P18  
*M. 'Mildred'*.  
*M. 'Cally Purple'*; *M. 'Lingholm'*.  
*M. 'Ascreavie'*; *M. 'Crewdson Hybrid'*.

P19 (opposite)  
*M. 'Bobby Masterton'*; *M. 'Louise'*.  
*M. 'Barney's Blue'*; *M. 'Susan's Reward'*.  
*M. 'Mop-head'*; *M. 'Marit'*.

*Cultivar photos © Pat Murphy.*







*M. staintonii* occurs with white, red and, rarely, bicoloured flowers.



*M. gaykidiiana*. Some flowers open red and become blue influenced by temperature.

cultivation and straightforward to grow, the exchange is effective in encouraging more people to grow them which is a key objective of our Group.

*M. gaykidiiana*, introduced several times by Ludlow & Sherriff, subsequently lost by hybridisation and only described as a species in 2016, has been in the exchange 10 times. It was originally received as *M. grandis* 'ex NAPE' in 2007, derived from a collection, NAPE 178, made on 5th October 2003 in eastern Bhutan by Kelly Dodson and Sue Milliken during the Nagaland Arunachal Pradesh Expedition. This illustrates the importance of maintaining individual wild collections named and separated. Sadly, this seldom happens and in most cases individual wild collections appear only once on the list or sometimes more if the original seed is stored in a seed bank for subsequent years. When members receive it, we either fail to bring it to maturity and seed set or the seeds are returned to the exchange with only a species name attached. In this way many numbered seed collections have been lost. In addition to losing individually named collections, twenty nine species and subspecies have appeared fewer than four times on our seed lists. Fortunately, the majority of these are very recent listings and we hope they will be grown successfully and seed returned in future years, but some such as *M. tibetica* are long gone. Two perennial species which have been in cultivation but never in the exchange are the tall, stoloniferous *M. sherriffii* with pink fluted petals, white filaments and a bright yellow boss of anthers and the contrasting compact, blue flowered *M. bella* with beautifully marbled buds and dainty leaves. How welcome it would be to get these species back into our gardens again.

The more different species we grow in close proximity in our gardens, the more likely it is that hybridisation will occur resulting in sterility and since the majority of species are monocarpic, not perennial, this can mean losing them, at least in their natural form. If we

are to be effective in conserving *Meconopsis* in cultivation, we must find ways of minimising our losses, as it is likely to become increasingly difficult in the future to secure replacement seed collections from the wild.

### Challenges

Our first step in trying to achieve this has been to encourage members to champion a particular species, by planting a batch of 20 or more plants somewhere they cannot be hybridised, studying its requirements, becoming expert in maintaining it and generally taking responsibility for conserving it for the future. We have begun to establish the status of species in cultivation through consultation with our members. One giving cause for concern is *M. simplicifolia* which is tall with scapose blue flowers, matching filaments and compact foliage. Of the two subspecies recognised, the one with more spectacular flowers is monocarpic, the other is perennial, but evidence from the wild suggests the two can hybridise. What a challenge it would be not only to conserve both subspecies but also to create a perennial hybrid with superior flowers. Experiments in hybridisation might also help to shed light on how the many cultivars arose in our gardens and comparing crosses such as *M. gakyidiana* x *M. grandis* and *M. grandis* x *M. gakyidiana* would be of considerable interest. There are many such studies, very straightforward to carry out in our gardens, which would add considerably to our knowledge of the genus.

### The future

The Meconopsis Group can celebrate a significant achievement in largely having sorted out the names of the perennial blue Meconopsis in cultivation and setting up a robust system for further cultivars to be assessed and named in future. This work has never precluded an interest in other Meconopsis species and this aspect of the Group's work has become increasingly important. Damage to habitats, collection for medicinal purposes and climate change is putting wild plants under threat as never before. We have a responsibility to be more

proactive in maintaining in cultivation these amazing treasures and ensuring that they live on for future generations to enjoy.

Further information about cultivars and species can be found on The Meconopsis Group's website and although we are prevented from meeting at present, we can still share our enjoyment of this genus through the Forum. We welcome new members who enjoy growing and studying Meconopsis in their gardens or visiting the Sino-Himalaya to investigate wild populations, especially if they are willing to share their knowledge and experience in the pursuit of the Group's objectives.

**David & Margaret Thorne. Email:**  
[species-gallery@themeconopsisgroup.org](mailto:species-gallery@themeconopsisgroup.org)

[www.facebook.com/groups/893138847765822/?ref=group\\_header](https://www.facebook.com/groups/893138847765822/?ref=group_header)

*Margaret is an ecologist who spent 29 years working for the Wildlife Trusts and the Woodland Trust, the last 20 in Scotland, before becoming a self-employed botanical tour leader. Together with David, a retired teacher, they have led trips to the Himalaya and to Greece for the Alpine Garden Society. David and Margaret are now concentrating on tackling more demanding explorations in Bhutan, India, Nepal and Tibet, as well as botanising in Greece, studying seabirds on the Isle of May and gardening.*

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Summer in the third greenhouse. All photos © Sue Simpson & George Watt.

## Pelargoniums at Burnside

Sue Simpson

Friends who know us at Burnside will be used to hearing about our alpine houses, woodland walk, world class sheds and George's arboretum! However, I also have a great love of anything flowery, thus, my rather large collection of *Streptocarpus*, which lives on the kitchen floor and my growing collection of *Pelargonium*, both species and hybrids.

When we moved to Burnside we inherited a tiny glasshouse which served as a propagation site for the first few years. However, my pelargoniums were increasing in number and eventually were moved out of our small sunroom and into this for the few good months we enjoy in our frosty hollow. As this collection increased, George was kind enough to suggest that we could replace the old glasshouse with a third Rhino; the first two hold over 350 saxifrages, dozens of primulas, a tufa wall etc.

The third alpine house, 20 x 8 ft, was erected in 2016. This serves as a bulb house with a sand plunge in the winter and spring months, followed by pelargoniums and lewisias. These sit on trays on the plunge beds. I grow my plants in the glasshouse because of our very wet and windy conditions. For potting I use a multipurpose compost, with additional John Innes 2 and grit. During the early spring months, I give the plants a good haircut and a balanced feed to get them going. A weak tomato feed during the growing season is used at almost every watering, never allowing the pots to become too wet. We have blinds on the roof and sides of our alpine houses, and these are used occasionally for the pelargoniums during unusually hot spells. The most annoying pest is whitefly with which I constantly fight a losing battle. Greenfly and root mealy bug occasionally appear but are not big issues.





*Pelargonium endlicherianum.*



*P. australe.*



*P. barklyi.*



*P. lawrencianum.*



*P. sidoides.*



*P. tomentosum.*



*'Ardens'(Sp hy); 'Arnside Fringed Aztec'(R); 'Berkswell Carnival'(A).*



*'Black Knight'(A); 'Blackman Beauty'(Sp hy); 'Captain Starlight'(A).*



*'Frank Headley'(Z); 'Covina'(R); 'Concolor Lace'(Sc).*



*'Imperial Butterfly'(A); 'Lara Jester'(Sc); 'Lord Bute'(R).*



*'Pink Hindoo'(De); 'Nellie Nuttall'(SZ); 'Mr Wren'(Z).*



*'Quantock Candy'(A); 'Quantock May'(A); 'Quantock Perfection'(A).*



'Renate Parsley'(Sp hy).



'Splendide'(Sp hy).



'Stadt Bern'(SZ).



'Trudy'(D).



Unnamed hybrid.



'Voodoo'(U).



I love the angel pelargoniums: 'Imperial Butterfly', 'Captain Starlight' and the Quantock series - so floriferous and easily propagated. The incredible red of 'Stadt Bern' and the simple flowers of 'Trudy' set off against dark zonal leaves are other favourites. The species pelargoniums are interesting, but I do not find them particularly easy, apart from *P. sidoides* and *P. tomentosum* with its mint scented leaves. I grow *P. barklyi*, *P. australe* and *P. endlicherianum* from Scottish Rock Garden and Alpine Garden Society seed. The species need very little feeding and do not take kindly to repotting, as I found to my cost. *P. barklyi*, with its attractive leaves, is winter flowering and likes a dry summer rest. Primary hybrids in my collection include *P. x 'Ardens'* with wonderful red flowers, *P. 'Splendide'* and *P. 'Renate Parsley'*, their growth habit suiting hanging baskets. There are also, of course, the scented leaf varieties, notably 'Prince of Orange' and 'Concolor Lace'. *P. 'Frank Headley'*, an old fancy leaf variety, produces an abundance of salmon flowers. Well known regals in my glasshouse include 'Lord Bute' and 'Covina'.

**Sue Simpson, Burnside, Little Mill Road, Drongan KA6 7EN.**

*Sue is a member of The Pelargonium and Geranium Society which has lots of valuable information on its website. She recommends Geraniums and Pelargoniums by Jan Taylor, 1988, as a valuable source of information. She uses Fibrex ([www.fibrex.co.uk](http://www.fibrex.co.uk)) and Woottens (<https://www.woottensplants.com/>) as sources, always ordering early in the season as the popular varieties can sell out quickly.*

*Sue described how she and her husband George Watt developed the garden at Burnside in the Caledonian Gardener 2018. The garden is open by invitation under Scotland's Gardens Scheme and the owners are very happy to welcome groups or individuals by arrangement.*

**Photograph key:** A - angel; D - dwarf; De - decorative; R - regal; Sc - scented leaf; Sp hy - species hybrid; SZ - single zonal; U - unique; Z - zonal.



*The garden today. All modern photos © Michael & Sue Thornley.*

## For the record: documenting a garden

Michael Thornley

### Introduction

If gardening is First of the Arts, as the motto of the Incorporation of Gardeners of Glasgow proclaims, it is also the most ephemeral. In 1911 Sir Herbert Maxwell published his book *Scottish Gardens* subtitled *being a representative selection of different types old and new*. Today, more than half of the 42 gardens he described no longer appear to exist, and, of those that have survived, many have changed, including the author's own garden at Monreith, which he would hardly recognise. Ultimately, our gardens will only continue to exist in the record. This article seeks to highlight the importance of garden records, not just for posterity, but for the way in which they enhance our current understanding and appreciation of our gardens. It is based on the experience of looking after the rhododendron collection at

Glenarn, in Rhu near Helensburgh, the lessons from which may be applied, it is hoped, to other gardens large or small.

### Glenarn

The house at Glenarn was completed in 1849, as a second home for Andrew MacGeorge, a Glasgow lawyer, and the 12-acre garden laid out as a miniature estate. Paths wound through little glens, the burn was enhanced by the careful placing of rocks, and considerable planting of indigenous trees took place: Scots pine, oak, and yew for instance. There were no flower beds and a paddock for the carriage horses took precedence over a vegetable garden, which came later. The only concession to formality in this low maintenance landscape was the sloping front lawn, defined by what we now call old hardy hybrid rhododendrons, which at the time were quite novel.



*The house in 1850.*

In 1927 the Gibson family arrived at Glenarn and the two brothers, Archie and Sandy, set about creating the garden that we see today, using the underlying Victorian structure. They were taken in hand by the eccentric John Holms of Formakin who encouraged them to acquire rhododendrons which were flooding into the country from the expeditions of George Forrest and other collectors. However, rhododendrons were not their only interest, and the two young men gathered together a plethora of interesting plants seen typically in west coast gardens while, at the same time, developing a rock garden that emerged from the quarry that had supplied stone for the house. Two greenhouses overlooked an extensive vegetable patch; peacocks, cranes and other exotic birds strutted through the garden.

### Documentary sources

None of the above history was known to Sue and I when we first saw Glenarn in the spring of 1983. Sandy Gibson had died the previous year (pre-deceased by his brother in 1975). The only information available to us about this fabulously planted but overgrown garden was a short entry in *Scotland's Gardens* published in 1981 to mark 50 years of Scotland's Gardens Scheme. A useful starting point was an article written by Sandy Gibson in 1967 for the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* and an appreciation by Sir Ilay Campbell, which led us to the pithy notes that Archie had contributed to the RHS Rhododendron Year Book between 1959 and 1974. Going back further in time, the first edition of the Ordnance Survey showed that the entire property had been laid out by 1860 and counting the rings of fallen trees has



*OS map from 1860.*

confirmed the date of their planting, dispelling any notion that the garden had been carved out of existing woodland. Historic photographs have gradually accumulated, sent by people who knew the garden or who had stayed at the house, for instance during World War 2. A packet of negatives in the attic revealed the rock garden in its making; a box of slides thrust into my hand at a Scottish Rock Garden Club show caught the rhododendrons in all their glory in the mid-1970s. The importance of this type of informal record to supplement published sources cannot be over-stated.



*Garden records. © RBGE.*



*Rhododendron lindleyi* record card.

## Plant records

When submitting our offer for Glenarn, and in order to indicate our intention to try to restore the garden, we requested that any information on the plants be provided and, somewhat naïvely, asked for a map showing all the principal trees and shrubs. A month after the sale had been completed a box was delivered, containing the garden records (and a map that Archie Gibson's eldest son had kindly drawn from memory). Later, the family sent the Award of Merit certificates for their rhododendrons.

The Gibsons' first garden record was a previously used accountant's book, from which the first 22 pages had been torn out. The space created had allowed a small alphabetical notebook to be inserted as an index and to allocate codes for planting locations, the latter quickly falling in to disuse. The remaining pages were divided in two and assigned numbers. As each species or hybrid rhododendron was acquired its details were entered on a numbered half page. All subsequent acquisitions of the same rhododendron were included in date order, along with the source, size (and cost when they considered it to be extortionate). Where known, collectors' numbers are given, and other interesting notes and comments were added by the brothers from time to time. At the back of the book there are ten pages listing plants other than rhododendrons - magnolias, acers, embotriums, eucryphias and the like, a couple of pages of primulas, another of lilies - that give more than a hint of their early ambitions. By 1937, with 301 different rhododendrons in the collection (and many

duplicates), the Gibsons transferred their existing record to a bound card system, each different variety of rhododendron allocated a numbered card, cross-referenced to an index. By the time we received this record, nicknamed *The Bible* by the brothers, the number had risen to 582, but one of the lessons learnt is that existing records are rarely infallible. When synonyms, taxonomic changes, errors and other invalid entries were taken into account, the number reduced to 450 rhododendron taxa.

What emerges from the information is how Archie and Sandy Gibson had obtained their plants, from a combination of leading nurseries, such as the distant R. Gill and Son in Cornwall and, nearer at hand, from major landowners in Scotland who were collecting rhododendrons, including the well organised Sir John Stirling Maxwell at Pollok, Rye (Lord Stair's head gardener at Lochinch) and the Balfour family at Dawyck (with whom they swapped Chinese rhododendrons for Chinese pheasants). Each spring they would travel north to Larachmhor, John Holms' other garden in Arisaig, returning with a trailer load of plants. On Card No 48, *Rhododendron campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum*, Archie had written: *Glencoe awful. Had to go by Inveraray and Glen Orchy as Glen Falloch closed by a rockslide.* What changes?

We hesitated on how to best use this important record, wishing to preserve it while also continuing the entries. Eventually, we arranged for *The Bible* to be photographed, creating an exact copy. New blank cards, matching the originals were also printed and are used for our own entries, interleaved, and easily identified within the copy of the Gibson record. The original documents are now in the library at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. All of this took some time to resolve when our attention was elsewhere: putting the house in order, working in the garden, gradually understanding what we had acquired. We began to buy new rhododendrons and other plants whose invoices were stuffed in envelopes, and lists

written on scraps of paper, which inevitably became muddled and sometimes lost. Even now, it is immensely frustrating that we cannot put a name to a rhododendron purchased by ourselves 35 years ago. We should have kept a better record, from the start, as our predecessors had shown.

### Identification and labelling

Although the records detail every rhododendron acquired and each hybrid created in the garden, where they had been planted is rarely indicated, and while the Gibsons used labels most had fallen off. After experimenting with lead 'snakes' and various other methods, the two brothers had settled on their own home-made tallies, as they called their labels, snipped out of zinc sheet and onto which they wrote in black permanent ink, indelible even when it faded away, leaving a faint residual image etched into the metal. As we cleared through the garden we gathered up all the labels that we found in the leaf litter as well as a few labels still on plants (but not always the correct ones) and drew rough sketch maps showing where they had been found, which proved useful later. Overall, we collected nearly 200 rhododendron labels and as many again of other plants (from 'Arran Pilot' to *Lilium mackliniae*).

Gradually, by reference to the Gibson records, books and visits to other gardens, we

started to put names to rhododendrons. It is tempting to ask a third party to undertake the task, but we soon learnt that enthusiasts, and even experts, rarely agree on plant identification. It is best undertaken by garden owners themselves, even if it means resorting to a hand lens to study the parts of the flowers and leaves, which opens up another new and detailed world; in this we found that *The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species* by Peter and Kenneth Cox is the best guide. (Hybrids are another story, best approached we think via their species parents). We chose Alitag professional aluminium labels in two sizes (P1 and P2) attached with 2.5 mm brown Flexi-Tie. The details can be easily written on the labels, using 2B pencil, and, coincidentally, resemble the earlier zinc labels, whose contents we have adopted: botanical name (although written in capitals) date of accession and, often, where it came from, to provide a mini-biography which identifies the provenance of individual plants and which visitors appear to appreciate. The process is easy and quick and labels can be re-used again after being washed with an abrasive cleaner. Labelling took two seasons and involved endless journeys up and down the garden, hands full of samples to confirm, or often reject, final identifications of plants. After eight years the lettering in most cases is still legible but some will require re-marking when we renew the ties, a task viewed with



Old labels and mapping book.



New labels.

some trepidation as 1200 labels are now deployed in the garden. There are no quick fixes for identification or labelling: it is more a long voyage of discovery.

### Mapping

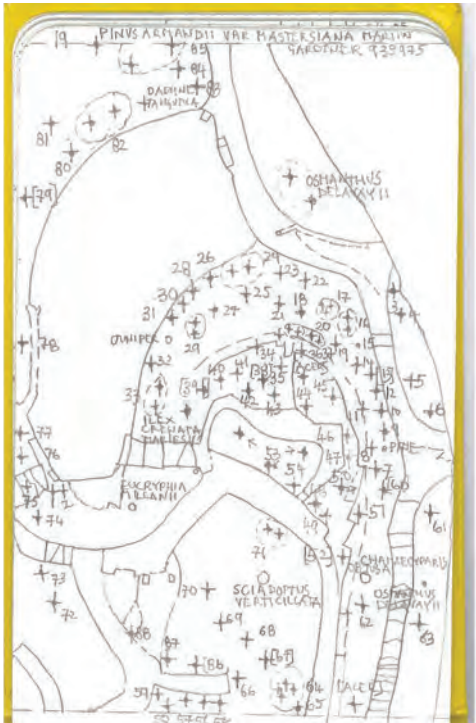
Labelling did not tell us where the plants were located and some form of map was required or, in this case, a collection of small maps. I realised that a double page of the surveyor's

note books I use in the garden represented a 60 x 20 m rectangle at 1:200 scale, a good mid-range scale for depicting features and having enough space for plant names and the details on the labels. The task was to set out the rectangles on the ground, until they covered the whole garden. Initially, we aimed to relate these to the Ordnance Survey grid but this proved to be illusive, although we did achieve a north/south orientation.

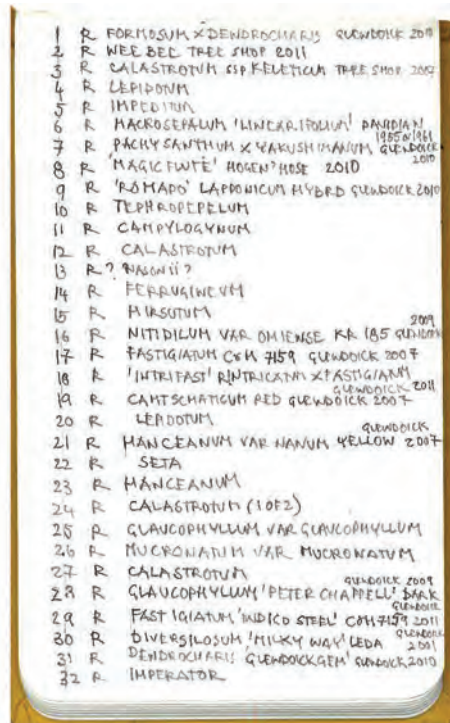


The rock garden c 1939.

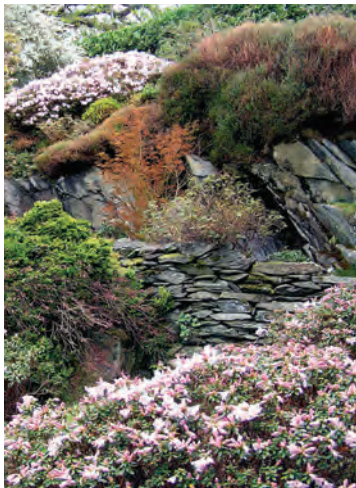
Armed with a compass, and a cheap 50 m survey tape, we began by setting out the rectangles along an east/west baseline at the bottom of the garden, using ranging rods and bamboos at the corners and the garden hoses (later supplemented by 220 m of thin blue draw rope) to define the sides. Once a rectangle was laid out measurements could be taken from the sides to fix features such as paths, further details being added by eye. As each rectangle was completed we moved eastwards, shifting the bamboos and checking for square by measuring diagonals. On reaching the opposite boundary the whole



Rock garden map.







*The rock garden in the quarry today.*



baseline was moved 60 m northwards. It was this that took the time, in one case the best part of a week, when the 350 m baseline dipped down into water courses and rose up slopes through thickets of rhododendrons. It reminded me of the survey of India when men would disappear into the jungle to establish the next trig point and not be seen again for six months. When we arrived at the house, we realised that it could have been used as alternative setting out point, and this is how many people with smaller gardens might proceed, projecting and measuring the lines of house walls to the surrounding boundaries.

The final map comprises 48 double pages. Each identified and labelled rhododendron, significant tree or shrub is shown. The information on the map matches that on the label and, importantly, rhododendrons that have evaded identification are also shown and indicated [R?]. The plant density in the rock garden led to the adoption of a numbering system. The maps are drawn in pencil and when a plant is moved, or dies, it is simply rubbed out. I have been asked why we did not start with a digital map, or commission a specialist survey, use GPS for locating plants, and draw the results on a CAD system, but I was happier with a pencil and paper than struggling with half understood technology. Any form of recording will only be done well, if at all, when it is enjoyable.

### **Other garden records**

Earlier I noted the importance of historic photographs and this applies equally to more recent photos, often taken of our own family, now studied for the plants in the background and evidence as to how the garden has changed, without our noticing. And if keeping track of a collection of rhododendrons is taxing, nothing compares with the discipline required to catalogue an accumulation of old slides and colour prints that ceased abruptly in 2004 when we bought a digital camera, ushering in another order of chaos on our laptop, which might have been avoided with some foresight and planning.

In a drawer in one of the outbuildings we found the work diary of an apprentice gardener, employed by Sandy Gibson towards the end of his life. It is often repetitious (much chopping of firewood for the house) but it also gave an insight into the garden tasks that we found ourselves undertaking, and since have recorded in our own diaries, a reminder of what needs to be done and when, in order to keep the show on the road. For the last 12 years we have recorded weekly rainfall and temperature readings and spasmodically noted the flowering dates of rhododendrons but wish we had taken phenology more seriously from the outset. Thirty-seven years of data from these types of citizen's science might now throw more light on changes in the climate locally and how it affects our garden.



*Two magnolias.*



*Acer foliage.*



*Rhododendron wiltonii.*



*R. orbiculare.*



*R. campylogynum.*



*R. strigillosum.*

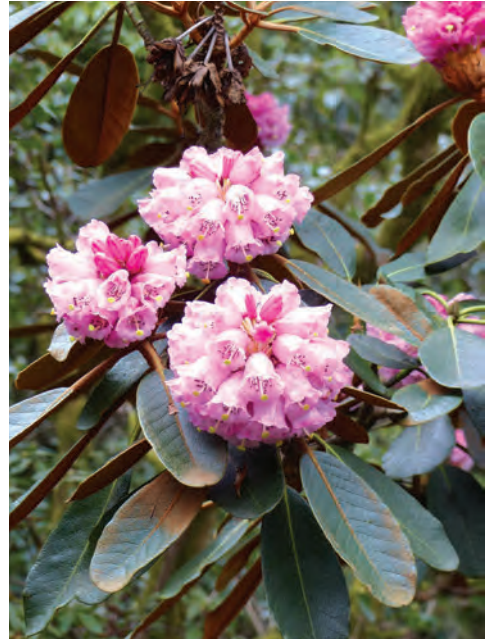


*R. sinogrande.*

## Harvesting the records

Historic records, photographs and documentary sources start to reveal the social, botanical and horticultural history of a garden. However, only when the plant records are cross referenced to the labels and maps does the full picture start to emerge on the ground. First, it answers the obvious question, asked by many visitors, on how many rhododendrons are in the garden. More usefully, the number of each species and hybrid can be determined. This allows a check to be made against the BGCI Red List as to which of these are threatened in the wild and require conservation, and also to show those at risk in the collection, prioritising propagation. Mapping by planting date gives clues as to how the garden developed over time and, when combined with archived photographs, informs how areas might be re-developed, especially if the aim is to preserve the character and ambiance of the garden. The noting of unlabelled rhododendrons focuses efforts on specimens that need to be identified, testing hypotheses against possible unidentified candidates in the earlier records, which will eventually confirm the status of the present collection and how far it represents different periods of planting.

In the opening paragraph I suggested that Sir Herbert Maxwell would not recognise his own garden at Monreith and the same might be said of Archie and Sandy Gibson if they could return to Glenarn. The earlier statement that they created the garden we now see today has to be questioned. The Gibsons arrived at Glenarn 70 years after the grounds had been laid out by Macgeorge. Now, a further 90 years on in time, while much of the Macgeorge and Gibson legacy remains, trees and rhododendrons have grown to such great heights, projecting the ground plan of the garden so far in to the sky, that one fears it will all topple over. Andrew Macgeorge, in later life, self-published his *Journal* based on earlier diaries. Frustratingly, but significantly, he says little about the garden at Glenarn except to note how quickly the trees had grown, the heights of which he recorded on a sketch.



*Rhododendron falconeri ssp. eximeum.*

Sandy Gibson's RHS article captures Glenarn as a woodland garden reaching maturity; 35-year-old rhododendrons under a canopy of 100 year old trees. Records, including this article, not only fix a garden in time; they, like the garden itself, are also fluid, changing, and can be as interesting and informative as the plants themselves, reminding us of past and recent histories, making us appreciate what we have, but also pointing to the future, to lay down markers for those who may follow.

**Michael Thornley, Glenarn, Rhu, Helensburgh G84 8LL.**

*Michael Thornley has written on the history of the garden that he and his wife Sue look after, in Glenarn, The Rock Garden, Journal of the Scottish Rock Garden Club, Number 112 January 2004 and A gardening debt: a tribute to the legacy of plants at Glenarn from John Holms of Larachmhor, Rhododendrons Magnolias and Camellias, 2017. Glenarn is open every day from 21 March to 21 September under Scotland's Gardens Scheme and is a member of the Glorious Gardens of Argyll. A synopsis of the garden's history and its importance, including its records, can be found in Historic Environment Scotland's Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes.*



*Pitmedden: the box parterre in spring. Photos © Colin Wren.*

## The Gardens of the National Trust for Scotland in 2020

Colin Wren

The NTS manages 38 significant gardens and designed landscapes for the people of Scotland as well as several lesser designed landscapes and open spaces. From the great gardens of Culzean and Pitmedden to small spaces like Inveresk Lodge and Barrie's birthplace, each one special and with its own story of Scotland's heritage. Many gardens cared for by the Trust have inventory status, meaning they have national or international importance and we have a duty of care to maintain them for future generations.

### Challenges

Because a garden is not fixed in time, like a statue or painting, this leads to challenges when trying to maintain a garden to a particular period or style. When newly planted a garden lacks maturity, which is often not achieved until many years after planting or even until after the original owner's death. Trees do not stop

growing and so the garden changes; with few exceptions a garden cannot be held in time. The challenge to gardeners of the NTS is to maintain their garden in the style set out for the property, perhaps using a similar palette of plants to the original design, replacing lost trees, like for like in key positions, or propagating from the original tree.

Not all the gardens in Trust care are in their original format. Some have been created by the Trust to demonstrate a particular style or to enhance a period property. The current 17th century Pitmedden garden was laid out by the NTS in the early 1950's and is an early example of a garden creation, appropriate for the age of the property but not based on what was actually on site as all records had been lost during a house fire. The initial design for the parterres was taken from an old historic map of Edinburgh and drew its inspiration from the

gardens depicted. Whilst this garden is not 'original' it does demonstrate the style of the period and has become iconic on its own merit. The Palace at Culross was one of the first properties acquired by the NTS in 1932, passed to the former Ministry of Works who looked after it until 1991. Following extensive research it was decided to create a 17th century garden, with 1650 being the year chosen as a cut-off date for plant introductions where practicable. There are very few vegetables or fruits available today from pre 1650 so other heritage varieties have been used. The garden is laid out in a formal design but planted informally, with the most often used plants around the outside and seasonal larger ones to the centre of each bed. One of very few gardens of this type in the UK and unique in Scotland, Culross sits well beside the Palace and provides an immersive educational opportunity to learn about medieval plant use in a domestic setting. Fyvie Castle walled garden has been redesigned to house a collection of Scottish fruits and vegetables. This NTS project is more about maintaining the diversity of our plant heritage rather than any particular garden style or period. Completed by 2003, here you will find all the available top fruit with a link to Scotland, displayed in a formal setting and pruned to traditional forms of goblets, cordons and espaliers.



*Kellie Castle. Alliums and Thermopsis in the walled garden.*

### Contemporary

A few gardens are contemporary and managed in a manner appropriate for their age, a fine example being the gardens at Falkland Palace. These gardens were laid out to a design by Percy Cane, an eminent landscape architect of the 1940's and 50's. Falkland is one of four projects that Cane worked on in Scotland and the most intact. It was completed shortly before the property came under Trust guardianship in 1952 and is currently undergoing a restoration project funded by NTS supporters in the USA. A fine example of 1940's design and maintained to reflect a golden age of garden design, with its characteristic 'glade', the long border of yellows and reds at its peak in mid-summer and iris, peony and delphinium walks. By contrast, on the other side of the Palace, is the orchard with trees dating back to the late 1800's and managed in a more naturalistic manner, with extensive wildflower areas and a willow labyrinth.



*The historic orchard at Falkland overlooked by the palace.*

## Owners

Many of the Trust's gardens maintain their earlier layout, some examples being Branklyn, Broughton House and Crathes, which continue to be managed in a similar way to how they had been by their original owners. Records for Kellie go back to 1150, but it was James Allan Lorimer, Professor of Public and International Law at Edinburgh University, who discovered Kellie during a family holiday in the 1870's. He took on an improving tenant lease and began restoring the castle and garden. Today the 400-year-old garden retains its Robert & Louise Lorimer designed layout and some of the plants date back to their time. The garden was described by Gertrude Jekyll in her 1904 book *Some English Gardens*, where she describes the roses and herbaceous plants to be found there, along with the training methods used. She would still recognise the garden today if she were to visit. The castle and gardens came to the NTS in 1970, again having been neglected for a few years, today it is managed organically and once again vegetables and roses fill the space in the traditional Scottish manner with flower beds surrounding production areas.

House of the Binns was the first property to come to the NTS under the Country House Scheme, with the owners continuing to live in the house but passing ownership to the NTS. House of Binns is one of the most extensive designed landscapes in the NTS portfolio. There is little of a garden in the traditional sense, but a wonderful parkland of 200 acres planted in the English natural style of the late 18th century. Many fine and champion listed trees are located across the grounds, including the Lime Avenue to the north of the house. This style of planting is rare in Scotland and has several outstanding ratings in the Inventory of Designed Gardens and Landscapes.

Newhailes Estate came to the Trust in 1997 having been in the same family's possession since 1709. One of the earliest surviving garden features is the water garden from before 1721, and this, along with many B listed structures including the Ladies Walk, Long Walk, HaHa, Tea House, Shell Grotto and many other 17th century features, remain largely unchanged since 1838, providing a rare example of this period without more modern features imposed over the previous design.



*The House of the Binns in early spring.*



*Culross. Summer in the medieval garden.*

## **Heritage**

The importance of the plants held within Trust gardens is recognised by our participation in a number of Plant Heritage National Collections. You can find National Collections from Malmaison dianthus and *Nothofagus* to 19th Century shrub roses and *Meconopsis* across our gardens. Many of the plants were collected by plant hunters of the last century, such as George Forrest and Frank Kingdon-Ward.

In conclusion, The National Trust for Scotland manages more gardens and designed landscapes for the enjoyment of the nation than any other organisation and is the largest employer of gardeners in Scotland. These national treasures are managed to ensure their survival and to maintain their authenticity for future generations to appreciate and learn from, a true living library of garden history and design in Scotland.

## ***Colin Wren, National Trust for Scotland, Newhailes House & Garden, Musselburgh EH21 6RY.***

*Colin is one of four Gardens Managers for the NTS, overseeing the management of gardens throughout East and Central Scotland. On leaving school he started his career at RHS Wisley Garden, then joined the staff of the rock garden. He worked in private gardens in France and London then for the Ministry of Defence, before moving to Scotland to study at RBGE, then worked with the tropical orchid collections. He moved to Edinburgh Zoo in 1990 where he established the Federation of Zoos' plant group. For twelve years prior to working for the National Trust for Scotland, Colin was the Nursery Manager at Binny Plants, West Lothian.*



*The Northern Group's visit to Tracey William's garden in Letham, Angus. Photos © Colin Ainsworth except where stated.*

## The Hardy Plant Society and its Scottish and Northern Borders Group

Colin Ainsworth

The Hardy Plant Society (HPS) is the largest specialist plant society in the UK! Its remit is to promote the growing and distribution of hardy herbaceous perennials in their widest sense. The HPS has a UK wide network of 41 local groups who are autonomous in what they do but are linked to the main society which gives some administrative backup and holds photo banks, lists of speakers, publishes quarterly newsletters and a twice yearly glossy journal. The main society also assists with seed distribution and acts as a central point of contact for the local groups and specialist plant groups.

### **HPS formation**

In March 1957, Alan Bloom, Arthur Hellyer, Will Ingwersen and John Sambrook called a meeting to discuss the formation of a society to promote hardy herbaceous perennials which at the time were a Cinderella group of plants. This meeting resulted in the formation of the Hardy Plant Society and Alan Bloom was elected as its first chairman. It soon had approximately 1,000 members. Unfortunately, by 1961 this had dwindled to 500 and the chairman called an Extraordinary General Meeting to dissolve it. Miss R. B. Pole spoke strongly against the motion to dissolve the



society. Fortunately she was backed by enough of the attendees to save the HPS and she then took over as chairman. We owe a debt of gratitude to Miss Pole as without her intervention the society would have disappeared. She ran a small nursery specialising in herbaceous perennials near Woking in Surrey. She bred and brought to the market *Achillea* 'Coronation Gold' and a Michaelmas daisy 'Lye End Beauty'. She was a feisty lady who ran her nursery single handed and worked very hard to make it a success. From then on, the HPS has made steady progress and now has a membership of around 7,500 throughout the UK. The long standing president Alan Bloom died in 2005 and Roy Lancaster became the HPS President and remains so to this day.

### HPS activities

**Specialist groups** These include the Hardy Geranium group, Pulmonaria group, Variegated Plant group, Paeony group, to name a few. These groups meet as discrete parts of the HPS and the activities of these specialist groups are reported in newsletters and in the main HPS publications.

**Handbooks** The HPS has published a number of single genus handbooks: *Hardy Geraniums*, *Pulmonaria*, *Paeony*, *Ranunculaceae* are examples. Each one has been researched and written by an expert on the particular genus. All are very reasonably priced.

Seed distribution. A seed list is included in the November edition of the Newsletter. Members can get 20 packets of seed for a small administration charge. If a member submits seed to the scheme then extra free packets are awarded. As an avid user of the seed scheme for the past three years I can vouch for the quality of the scheme and some real gems have been grown.



**Plant conservation** The HPS has a conservation list and propagation scheme which works informally using contacts within and outwith the society. The scheme has a list of genera and varieties that are currently very rare or lost to commerce for example: *Astilbe* 'Sheila Haxton', *Epimedium* 'Milky Way', *Dianthus* 'Gold Dust' and *Geranium* x *oxonianum* 'Diane's Treasure'.

**Horticultural advice** Members can contact the HPS Horticultural Advisor with plant or gardening problems. Some of the pertinent answers are published on the HPS website.

**Events and exhibits** The HPS exhibits at shows throughout the UK and local groups also organise events. All events in 2020 had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 but the following examples give a flavour of UK wide involvement.

- April The Annual Lecture Day & Society AGM organised by the Dorset Group; Passionate about Plants organised by the Middlesex Group.

- A lecture day featuring Fergus Garret of Great Dixter, organised by the Norfolk & Suffolk Group.

- May Special lecture day in Manchester organised by the Shade & Woodland Plants Group; RHS Malvern Spring Festival, to be attended by the HPS National Team.

- June BBC Gardeners World Live HPS exhibit by the Staffordshire Group.

- Summer Lecture Day, Sheffield Botanic Garden, organised by the South Pennine Group.

**Kenneth Black Bursary** The society received a substantial bequest in 2009 from the estate of the late Kenneth Black who was a local authority gardener with Enfield Council. The resulting bursary is awarded mainly to young people but open to any practising horticulturalist. The application form can be downloaded from the HPS website or by contacting the HPS Administrator.



*Hylolephium/Sedum spectabile* contrasts with *Stachys byzantinallanata*.



Autumn colour from a *Rodgersia*.



The reliable *Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm'.



Grasses at Saughton Park.



*Perennials provide food for insects.*



*Actaea/Cimicifuga racemosa has both floral and foliage interest.*



*The tall Rudbeckia 'Herbstsonne'.*

**Young horticulturalists** The HPS is active in encouraging young horticulturalists and has a discounted rate for them.

**Image library** A large collection of digital images taken by members is maintained by the HPS. Members can gain access to the image library via the website. They can also be used by HPS members who require images for talks or lectures.

**The HPS Archive** Held online via dropbox. Invaluable for this article!

The Hardy Plant Society Journal is published twice a year. Newsletters are published three times a year.

### **The Plant Finder**

Following an observation in a newsletter that there were many unusual plants that were difficult to obtain, members of the

Nottingham group decided to sponsor a reliable list. In 1975, with assistance from members throughout the country, the Directory of Hardy Plants was published giving a list of plants and where they might be purchased from some 80 mail order nursery catalogues. Several editions followed but it was becoming too cumbersome. Chris Philip and Denys Gueroult joined the society in 1986 when Chris was creating his own database of where to source plants. Chris required assistance in ensuring that plant names were correct and Jack Elliot, then chairman of the HPS, introduced him to Tony Lord, Gardens Adviser for the National Trust at the time. In return for the HPS endorsement of Chris's publication, which he called *The Plant Finder*, Chris offered the Society half of the book's profits. The first publication of *The Plant Finder* was in 1987. The RHS acquired the copyright in 1994 and it became the *RHS Plant Finder* in 1995.

## Local groups

The first local group was formed in Nottingham in 1968 - and now there are 41 local groups throughout the UK. A Groups Co-ordinator was appointed in the mid-nineties with an annual group secretaries' meeting to facilitate the exchange of information between the groups and the trustees.

## The Scottish and Northern Borders Group

Here mention must be made of Jean Harman. Jean lived in Castle Douglas and was an avid supporter of the HPS. It was Jean who ensnared ( in the nicest possible way ! ) my wife and I into joining the HPS back in 1981. We were on holiday in South- west Scotland and visiting Threave. Jean worked at Threave and we fell into conversation; the rest is history. We got to know Jean well over the ensuing years and at least once a year a very detailed letter using *every* scrap of paper arrived on our Angus doorstep. The contents would be a detailed itinerary of a day or weekend visit. Instructions as to finding the garden, where to meet, speakers at the event were all included

with a handwritten tear off slip to be returned to Jean. From the visits organised by Jean we discovered Balbithan garden in Aberdeenshire, The Cruikshank Botanic Garden, Aberdeen and many other gardens in Angus, Fife, Glasgow and elsewhere. Attendances at these visits began to increase and it was decided to form a local group. Over 50 HPS members from around Scotland and the north of England came to an inaugural meeting in September 1995 in Castle Douglas village hall and the HPS Scottish and Northern Borders Group was formed. Northern Borders include Northumberland and Cumbria. As a public thank you, the new group Treasurer, Russell Gilchrist said a few words regarding Jean's input into the HPS *My first impression was of a small, assertive but kind lady with a small dog, who could certainly talk (Jean that is, not the dog), who made me very welcome and put me at relative ease by introducing me to as many members as possible. To me, and doubtless to many other new members, that made the difference between a one off and ten year's continuous involvement.* The current membership of the group is c.140.



*Hemerocallis 'Gentle Shepherd.'* *Hemerocallis* is the HPS logo. © HPS Image Library.

To earn some money to run the group, a plant sale was held. Ever since, at most meetings there will be a members' plant sale and some gems have been picked up over the years. Support for specialist nurseries has always been a part of the group's ethos. A garden visit would wherever possible be linked to a local nursery. The owner of the nursery was told that 40 plus avid plant buyers were to descend and everyone at the end of the day was very happy. Scottish & Northern Borders Group holidays hardly having room in the coach's luggage compartment for actual luggage as plants have taken up most of space. This would be especially when a visit to Norfolk included Blooms of Bressingham and then down to Beth Chattos in Essex. Also Scottish nurseries have always been at the heart of the group with strong ties to specialist nurseries who also advertise in Northern Leaves. Group meetings centre around garden visits during the Spring to early Autumn with at least one lecture day in November usually held in Auchterarder as it is quite central. Garden visits and the Lecture

days regularly attract between 40 to 50 people from all over Scotland. So popular have they become that ceilings on attendance to some gardens have to be made. It is to the credit of the organisers that a wide range of large and small gardens are visited. Some are never open to the public. The ethos at all times for the group is plants and being open and friendly to all. Newcomers are soon taken in and made to feel part of the hardy plant family. The group publish Northern Leaves twice a year which has over the years morphed into a glossy publication in full colour. Northern Leaves is the main way the group communicates especially with members who don't go on garden visits. The publication has plant portraits, reports on garden visits and a general pot-pourri of short articles by members.

The group staged exhibits at RHS Strathclyde Country Park, where they gained an RHS Silver Gilt medal for an exhibit centring around *Ranunculaceae*, Dundee Flower & Food Festival, Dundee Spring Show and hosted a UK members' weekend based in Dundee with garden visits to Fife and Angus for approximately 150 HPS UK members.

**Colin Ainsworth, Fordell East Garden Cottage, Hillend, by Dunfermline KY11 7HB.**

*Colin has over 40 years horticultural experience starting in Blackpool and finishing (professionally) in Dundee via RBGE and Warwickshire College of Agriculture. He has been a member of the HPS since the early 1980s and was Vice Convener of the inaugural Scottish & Northern Borders Group. He is one of Keep Scotland Beautiful's longest serving judges and assessors and is a volunteer with The Caley at Saughton Park. Information about the Hardy Plant Society and the Scottish and Northern Borders Group can be found on the HPS website or by writing to the The Administrator, Hardy Plant Society, 3 Basepoint Business Centre, Crab Apple Way, Evesham, Worcestershire. The Scottish and Northern Borders Group email is [scottish@hardy-plant.org.uk](mailto:scottish@hardy-plant.org.uk). The HPS has a very good website at [www.hardy-plant.org.uk](http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk) and also a presence on Facebook [www.facebook.com/hpshome/](http://www.facebook.com/hpshome/) and Twitter <https://twitter.com/hardyplantsoc>. For help and assistance in writing this article thanks go to Jan Murray HPS National Chair, Brian Hackett HPS Archives, Matthias Dejaegher HPS Photo Librarian, Scottish & Northern Borders Group, Helen Thomson current Secretary, Joan Gilchrist, Sheena Macgregor, Albert Heasman and Andrew Normansell.*

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*Dalswinton Mill. Photos Colin Crosbie.*

## Returning home

Colin Crosbie

*You can take the man out Scotland but you can't take Scotland out of the man!* I had lived, worked, married and brought up a family in the south-east of England for nearly 30 years yet when people asked me and my wife Pamela, an English lass, where we were going on holiday the answer would always be *Home! we're going to Galloway.* When we decided to move back home as I was approaching that frightening age of fifty, the question arose of where we would live. We looked at properties in Kirkcudbright and Gatehouse of Fleet as they were towns which had family connections; they also had a good gardening climate. Nothing quite met what we were after and so we looked further afield without any success. We rented a lovely cottage in the village of Dalswinton, just north of Dumfries. Anyone who has moved house will know that

there are always priorities when moving, normally with furniture and clothing at the top of the list. Those were not our priorities or perhaps it would be more accurate to say my priorities. Top of the list was my plant collection which I had accumulated over 30 years and each plant had a story associated with it! Five Transit vans, with plants loaded onto Danish trolleys, were driven from my large garden at Wisley. I was fortunate that my mother lived in Kirkcudbright and the plants were temporarily stored in her garden. The Danish trolleys, which the Wisley Plant Centre allowed me to borrow, enabled me to pack three times as many plants into the van using their shelving system. It was quite a military style operation but also an eye opener showing what a diverse range of plants I had gathered over the years.

With the plants in their temporary home we looked for a permanent residence for ourselves and the plants. Wednesday 30th December 2015 is a date we will not forget. Storm Frank had deposited an incredible amount of rain on the Dumfries area, causing severe flooding. In a short respite in the weather, we headed out for a walk. We followed a road up the hill, stood on a wonderful old sandstone bridge and watched the Pennyland Burn raging past an old watermill which had been converted into a house. An old conservatory was attached to the house, my wife commenting *Wouldn't it be lovely to have morning coffee in that conservatory?* Through chance, good fortune and faith in a journey that was meant to be, Dalswinton Mill became our home in May 2016 and we celebrated with morning coffee in the conservatory!

### Creating the garden

When we first viewed the garden in December 2015 it had been a rather dark, gloomy place. On its northern side it was flanked by a huge *Leylandii* hedge over 40ft tall; there were no real beds or borders visible; ivy was growing alongside brambles and young damsons, blackthorns, elderberries, ash, rowan, birch and alder grew everywhere. However, we had always dreamt of having a garden with a burn running through it and the Pennyland Burn dominates the garden. The garden also had great stonework and statuary,

a legacy from the previous owners, Rex and Judy Taylor. They had saved one of Scotland's historic mills by turning it into a unique and very special home.

In the spring of 2016 we found that the garden had a collection of AGM worthy bindweed, nettles and bishop weed (ground elder). Creating a garden was going to be more challenging than we first thought! Thankfully, we had access to the garden before we were able to move into our new home. I spent many weeks cutting down and removing scrubby trees and brash. I've lost count of how many bonfires we had in the initial period. I've been asked many times why we didn't put everything through a chipper to provide a useable product for the garden. Our garden sits in a hollow and can only be accessed by two sets of steps and there is no access to get even small machinery into the garden. There are areas which are not accessible even for a wheelbarrow!

I couldn't spend all my time in the garden although I'm sure to Pamela it seemed as if I did! I had also set up my business as a horticultural consultant and I had become an independent tour guide/manager leading tours to gardens throughout the British Isles and further afield. You cannot garden when you are not at home and we all know how fast things, especially weeds, grow when you are away for a week let alone four weeks at a time.



Following the clearance of the scrub it was time to control pernicious weeds and start creating beds for my plants which by now were starting to dominate my mother's garden. I make no apologies for saying that I had to use glyphosate-based weedkillers to kill off the pernicious weeds and spray out the areas of coarse meadow grass to create the flower beds. By June 2016 I had sprayed out an area which was to become our long border, the vegetation had died and it was ready for me to dig over. I should not have been surprised by what I found, but I was! The soil in most of the gardens I had worked in in England had been Bagshot Sand with occasional pockets of clay. It's a soil which is hungry and acidic but very easy to cultivate almost all year round. Dalswinton is part of a glaciated landscape. The Pennyland Burn was part of this and it is obvious that, many years ago, it was more than just a burn feeding into the River Nith. Every time I put my spade into the ground, stones, rocks and boulders of different shapes and sizes were found. I was discovering the glacial moraines which I could remember studying for in O Grade Geography many years ago! I soon realised that spades were not the best tool for the ground in our garden. Mattocks and pickaxes became the tools of choice alongside an implement I picked up at a tool sale. Described as a root cutter it resembled a very narrow spade but with an extremely strong blade.



## Organic material

The only organic material which I had at hand to dig in were the piles of wonderful leaf mould which had accumulated in corners of the garden and fresh grass clippings. Eventually the area was cultivated and I tried to plant as many of the trees and shrubs in what would become their permanent position. However, as most gardeners will know, when you have a shortage of space (or it might be that I had too many plants) then there is a lot of overplanting. At the same time, we were excited to find areas which had appeared as an impregnable carpet of ivy to have wonderful terraces which would become home for many of my epimediums.

I realised that I needed more beds and borders in the garden and I tried to create these using a technique which did not involve the hard labour of digging. I sprayed out the areas which would become my future beds and borders; once I was happy that the coarse meadow grass, nettles and docks had died, I then piled on as much organic material as I could get my hands on. My favourite organic material has always been leaf mould and I had a good supply from the huge specimen beech trees which dominate and add character to the garden. All the grass clippings were spread thinly over these areas. The grass would dry and almost disappear before the next week's clippings were added. This stopped the formation of that smelly anaerobic layer which can quickly be created when grass is piled on too thickly. I then waited almost 12 months before I started planting. The organic material had been absorbed into the ground and it did have a good, friable appearance. The only digging that ever gets done in these beds is when anything has to be planted and virtually everything that was planted required the mattock to dig the hole due to the large stones.

I would describe the soil in the garden as being fertile and stony with a slightly acidic pH which is wonderful for ericaceous plants. The garden will be anchored with a backbone of white flowered trees including magnolias, Japanese cherries and selections of my





favourite of all trees *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*. I have visited Japan on many occasions and I believe the best Japanese gardens can only be found in Japan. This is to do with culture, climate, architecture, history and a true understanding of what those lovely gardens symbolise and how they are maintained. However, they give me inspiration and Japanese maples are being planted in our garden where their autumn colour will brighten shady areas and arch over the Pennyland Burn.

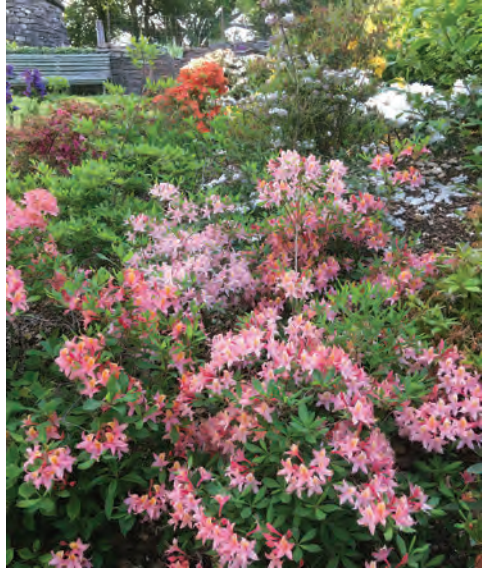
### Range of plants

Our garden contains an eclectic range of plants. There are many more selections of cultivated plants than pure species and much of this is down to my training in horticulture and the gardens in which I have worked. I did not take the botanical garden route into horticulture but instead studied at the West of Scotland Agricultural College. In all the gardens I have managed, the importance has been more on the aesthetic rather than the botanical conservation of plants and I believe that by careful plant breeding you can take the attributes of two species to create a more garden worthy hybrid.

I love rhododendrons and nearly all the plants which I grow have stories like *Rhododendron* 'Hope Findlay'. Hope helped create the Savill and Valley Gardens alongside Sir Eric Savill and, of course, Hope's father was the Head Gardener at Logan in South-west Scotland before becoming Curator at RHS Garden Wisley. Then there is *R. yakushimanum* 'Koichiro Wada', which was the first plant I was asked to identify in my interview to get a sandwich year placement in the Savill Garden and Valley Gardens. I remember calling it 'a yak' only to be very sternly rebuffed by John Bond, the Keeper of the Gardens in Windsor Great Park, who said that a yak was a long-haired creature found in the Himalayas and what I was looking at was *Rhododendron yakushimanum*, one of the finest of all introduced rhododendron species. I was very fortunate to call Arthur George from Hydon Nurseries a friend and I still grow some selections of *R. augustinii* which he obtained from the Tower Court Garden near Ascot as well as the beautiful Tower series of azaleas which Arthur obtained from the same garden. When I moved back to Scotland, Jim Inskip, who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of deciduous azaleas and camellias, very



*Meconopsis.*



*Azaleas.*



*Hydrangea.*



*Geraniums are invaluable.*



*The burn.*



*Late summer colour.*

generously gave me a collection of deciduous azalea hybrids which he had raised. These are now starting to establish and become a highlight of the garden during May. In spring the white flowered trees anchor the garden. It is the selections of *Hydrangea paniculata* which anchor the garden in summer. They have always been a favourite shrub and I often quote John Bond who used to say that there is no shrub which flowers more beautifully, or ages more gracefully, than *H. paniculata*.

Amongst the trees and shrubs in the garden is a wide range of perennial and bulbous plants. I have been fascinated by *Roscoea* since first encountering them growing in the Savill Garden peat beds many years ago. I now have a large collection of the species and named forms and have been having fun hybridising them for many years. The wonderful *Meconopsis*, with their electric blue flowers, thrive so well in this damp corner of Scotland and are becoming stars of the garden in late May and early June. I could only dream of growing *Meconopsis* in South-east England, but this shows the effects of climate change. I have photographs of the Savill Garden peat beds full of *M. GS600* in the mid to late 1980s. It is often forgotten that when this specific selection first came to public attention, it was from the huge clumps growing in the Savill Garden. Sadly, climate change has made this something which is unlikely ever to be seen in southern gardens again.

Our streamside is becoming home to primulas, *Rodgersia* and *Iris ensata*. We are currently trying to increase the range of summer flowering perennials so that we do not run out of colour in early June but have colour and interest through to the end of September. We look forward to the Japanese maples and *Sorbus* we have planted giving us foliage and berry colour in autumn.

We noticed that there was nothing anchoring the garden during the winter months, so two years ago we started buying and placing slow growing conifers in strategic locations to give the garden an evergreen backbone. A

collection of seed raised *Betula utilis ermanii* and *albosinensis* have been planted relatively close together to give winter stem interest, while we are spreading snowdrops throughout the garden which are then followed by bluebells for late winter and early spring.

We are creating a meadow in the heart of the garden. It will be a long-term project as we are slowly managing to reduce the vigour of the grass through harvesting everything we cut in August. Yellow rattle has now become established and is helping to reduce grass vigour quite visibly. I am hoping that eventually we will see some orchids starting to appear, though I think I might have to plant a few to help them get established. *Fritillaria* and *Narcissus* are followed by the small *Camassia quamash* which I think is a more natural meadow plant than its larger cousin *Camassia leichtlinii*.



*Our first open day.*

## A young garden

Our garden is young and there are no straight lines or formality; that's just not our style of gardening and it wouldn't fit in with the topography. We were quite touched when a visitor said that our garden had the feel of the Savill Garden, the fact that they didn't know I had worked there made their comment all the more special. We were very surprised to be asked if we would open our garden for Scotland's Gardens Scheme. We were persuaded by the argument that people would enjoy seeing a new, young garden and then watch it develop over the years. We opened the garden for the first time on August 5th 2018, not really knowing what to expect. It took us completely by surprise when over 200 people turned up. We thankfully had a great team of volunteers serving tea, coffee and homemade cakes. My great friend Kevin Hughes from Cally Gardens set up a plant stall and we had musical entertainment from a young Scottish folk singer. It felt more like a garden party rather than a garden opening!

Our charity of choice as garden owners was the River Garden Auchincruive. I started my horticultural career at Auchincruive, and it's a garden very close to my heart. River Garden Auchincruive is now a residential

community for those recovering from addiction to drugs and alcohol. People are always quick to judge others when they hear about addiction and addicts. I have worked alongside the residents on their recovery journey and they are good people; they could be your sons or daughters. Addiction is no respecter of social class, upbringing or education. If you have been fortunate in life then it is important to give something back. I'm proud to say that I'm a trustee and supporter of River Garden Auchincruive and please to witness the residents grow and develop, working in the surroundings of a garden and slowly bringing the garden back to its former glory in the process.

## Propagation

We have erected a large polytunnel on land next to our garden. It is here I spend many hours sowing seeds from clubs such as the Scottish Rock Garden Club, the Alpine Garden Society and the Scottish Rhododendron Society plus the seeds I gather from our garden and the gifts given by fellow gardeners. I have always had a great passion for propagating plants and there are many which I am grafting or growing from cuttings. It is our aim to sell any surplus plants when we open our garden for charity. In the area adjacent to the polytunnel, I created a vegetable garden this year to have our own supply of home-grown food during the Covid-19 situation. The digging was horrendous because of the stones. However, we have been almost self-sufficient for many months. Eventually the whole area will become home to many of the trees, rhododendrons and other shrubs which have been grown in the tunnel.

## Climate

One thing I've noticed since returning home is that the climate is changing, with April, May and early June becoming drier whereas July, August and September are becoming wetter. We seem to have heavier rainstorms causing flooding at almost any time of the year. We also seem to be getting more frequent storms. Our garden suffered in September 2018 during storm Ali when a large beech tree was blown



*The polytunnel.*



*The author with his Roscoeas.*

over causing a huge amount of damage. It took a long time to clear the damage because no large machinery could be brought into the garden, the wood either had to be burned or carried out. Thankfully we had many friends who helped us. We left a large piece of the beech trunk standing and had the face of a Greenman and a Red Squirrel carved into the trunk.

The story of our garden is not finished, a garden is never finished! We have plants which have thrived, we also have some which are struggling. My large collection of *Epimedium*, which grew surprisingly well in the shade and poor sandy soil at Wisley, do not seem to be enjoying the damp conditions at Dalswinton Mill where I expected they would thrive. In any new garden it always an experiment to find what grows well and what doesn't grow. Within a garden there are many microclimates and it does pay to grow plants in different locations as you can get different results.

The garden we have created has many plants with stories behind them about gardens I have worked in, gardens I have visited and people I have met and worked with over the years. We are having great fun creating our garden and

we love sharing it on open days and with groups and people who ask to visit. We must admit that our garden always has a few weeds in it! I believe that if a garden is too clean then you have too much time on your hands and I am away from home for long periods. Luckily Pamela is becoming very skilled at watering the plants in the polytunnel which all have different requirements as well as keeping on top of the weeds. If you are ever in this wonderful part of Scotland then please do come and see our garden!

**Colin Crosbie, Dalswinton Mill,  
Dalswinton, Dumfries DG2 0XY.**

*Colin is a widely travelled plantsman with a keen interest in garden design. He studied horticulture at the West of Scotland Agricultural College and worked in the Savill and Valley Gardens in Windsor Great Park before being appointed Head Gardener to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother at Royal Lodge Windsor. Following this, he moved to RHS Garden Wisley as a Superintendent and then Garden Manager before becoming Curator. In 2015 he returned to Dumfries and Galloway and set up his own horticultural consultancy business. He has appeared on radio and television and is a popular speaker and tour leader.*



*Dwarf apple trees at the allotment; (inset) 'Discovery' is a delicious early eating apple with bright red skin and firm juicy white flesh. Photos © George Anderson.*



## An apple a day

George Anderson

There was a tradition in our family that a steamed apple dumpling was prepared and eaten on 5th October, Father's birthday. The apple that was favoured for this delicious dessert was one that we knew as 'Gold Medal,' a cooking apple, a small tree of which I have just recently managed to acquire. It awaits a favoured spot either in the garden or allotment where it will join the various other apple cultivars I have managed to accumulate over the years since I retired.

### Tradition

Apples have always fascinated and excited me since childhood where the family garden and orchard held many apples, some of which had interesting names: 'Warners King', 'The Doctor', King of Tompkins County', 'Gold Spire', 'Cats Head', 'Early Victoria', 'Irish Peach', 'Bramley', 'Laxton's Fortune', 'Worcester Pearmain', 'Beauty of Bath' and the family favourite 'Gold Medal'. Later, when I left school and went to work in the walled garden at Smeaton, East Linton, more apple varieties were added to the now extensive list: 'Peasgood

Nonsuch', 'Sunset', 'Grenadier', 'Epicure', 'Red Delicious' and many, many others long since forgotten. Many of the apples we know today as familiar cultivars perhaps started life as seedlings from two unknown parents created by chance or from the crossing of two well-known named cultivars in the hope that the resultant offspring would be bigger, better and sweeter than either of the parent plants. 'Bramley's Seedling' the well-known and popular cooking apple possibly arose as a chance seedling while 'Discovery' that sweet juicy red apple popular in today's gardens was raised from a batch of seedlings the result of a deliberate cross between 'Beauty of Bath' and 'Worcester Pearmain'.

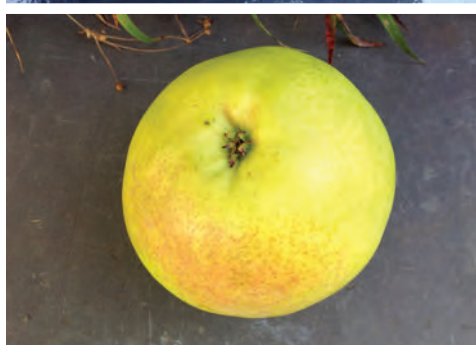
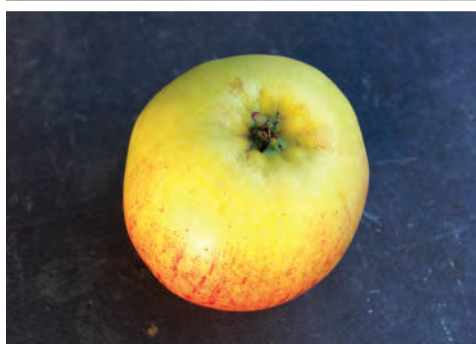
### Cultivation

Apples grow in almost any good soil where the pH is around neutral (pH7). In the garden they respond well to an annual dressing of well-rotted organic material such as garden compost, seaweed or local authority compost. My garden and allotment are blessed with a light, sandy, free draining soil, a relic of an

ancient, raised beach, and as such it drains quickly even after very heavy rain. I need to be diligent and apply an annual mulch each winter, a dressing of sulphate of potash in autumn to encourage fruit bud formation and, because they are growing on dwarfing rootstocks, some extra nitrogen in spring.

My current collection of apples runs to some 28 different cultivars covering both culinary and dessert sorts. All except three, a recently purchased plant of the cultivar 'Gold Medal' and the two old trees on the allotment 'Howgate Wonder' and 'James Grieve' which I planted in the allotment some 30 years ago have been grown from scratch by budding or grafting scions onto Malling 27, a dwarfing rootstock. I bought the rootstocks online from a specialist supplier and the scions of the various cultivars came from various walled gardens, collections and specialist growers. Gardeners like to share. The reason I selected M27 as a rootstock is because trees grown on it are very dwarf, even after 15 years many are about 1.5 metres tall and the tallest only about 2.5 metres. I don't want trees much taller as I prefer to prune the trees and pick the fruit with my feet firmly on the ground. The only downside in using M27 as a rootstock is that any tree grown on it needs to be staked throughout its life.

Apple cultivars grown on M27 come into crop early and make good step over or upright cordons but, in order to crop well, they need to be kept well fed and watered. I grow all of my apples as free-standing upright cordons or as dwarf open bush forms. I don't want large crops of apples because there are only two of us in the household and while we both enjoy eating apples more than one a day is just too much! Most of the pruning to create tree shape and to encourage cropping is done as summer pruning. Summer pruning is best done just when the new shoots are starting to



*'Bloody Ploughman' a dark red Scottish apple which in the best forms has red coloured flesh.*

*'James Grieve' raised by James Grieve, manager of Dickson's Nursery in Edinburgh, first recorded in 1893.*

*'Norfolk Royal Russet' raised in 1983 from a sport of 'Norfolk Royal'.*

*'Shoesmith' a good cooking apple that produces large fruit with pale green skin.*



firm up and growth is slowing down. I usually summer prune my apple trees in late August, reducing lateral extension growth down to about 2–3 leaves. Reducing lateral growth in this way encourages the formation of fruit buds and the creation of short shoots or fruiting spurs close to the main stem. This in turn creates a compact tree which allows close planting. In my garden at home the trees are planted out at 600 mm centres while at the allotment, where more space is available, they are set out 1 metre apart in rows. However, apples on M27 or even the more vigorous M9 rootstock, can also be cultivated as pot grown specimens. Pot grown plants, however, require more careful cultivation as they have a much more restricted root run than those in the open ground. Constant feeding and watering are needed to keep them in perfect health.

So which apples would I recommend as must haves from the long list I grow? I like them all but here are some for you to choose from. Do your research and choose wisely.

Further information on apples is available online from the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale and in *The Apple Book* by Rosie Saunders. *Fruit ID* is also a good online site for the identification of apples.

**George Anderson, 52 Coillesdene Avenue, Edinburgh, aka: Sunny Joppa.**

*George started growing plants on the family small holding in East Lothian. After school he was a gardener's boy at Smeaton Gardens, East Linton, attended Edinburgh and East of Scotland College where he completed his City and Guilds in horticulture then worked for J Warnock and Sons Garrion Farm Wishaw growing tomatoes. He joined the DHE course at RBGE in 1966 and went on to become Head of the School of Horticulture. He retired from RBGE in 2004 and has presented on The Beechgrove Garden since 2005. He was president of the Caley from 2004–2011, later succeeding Jim McColl as honorary president.*

*'Ribston Pippin' a dessert variety that can also be used in cooking.*

*'Jupiter' AGM was raised at East Malling Research Station in 1966 and is a mid-season dessert variety.*

*'Red Elstar' a red skinned sport of 'Elstar' raised in the Netherlands in 1955.*

*'Howgate Wonder' a culinary variety with large white fleshed apples which will keep to March.*





## Apple Day became Apple Week in 2020

Pam Whittle

In 2020 we had been keen to build on the success of our first apple day event at Saughton Park in 2019, but Covid-19 clearly meant we had to think differently. There are 42 different varieties of apple planted in the park and The Caley and The Friends of Saughton Park were keen to do something to continue to celebrate apples. We decided to go virtual, not just for a day event but for a week. The Caley, The Friends, The Orchard Project and The Garden Bistro all joined in the fun for a full week of activities from 24th–31st October. We started with a great video from our Honorary President George Anderson followed by three other videos during the week focusing on the different varieties growing in the park: eating, dual-purpose and cookers. On the Monday and Friday mornings, thanks to the support of The National Trust for Scotland, we displayed examples of many of the apples grown in the park, and some from The Caley's allotment. No tasting opportunities were possible this year though. Other activities included a feature on apple problems, a video on choosing apples by The Orchard Project, an apple quiz on



*Hon. President George Anderson introducing apple week. © RCHS.*

Facebook, recipes, down-loadable colouring sheets for children, instructions for making a bird feeder, and a longest peel competition. The Bistro included apples on the menu as well as offering free apples for children to take away. All in all a very busy and successful week.

**Pam Whittle**

**Email: [caleyatsaughton@rchs.co.uk](mailto:caleyatsaughton@rchs.co.uk)**



*The public enjoying the show. Photos © Clive Davies.*

## Gardening Scotland: retrospective

*The Caley was instrumental in setting up Scotland's national gardening show which fell victim to Covid-19 in 2020.*

### Background

On a dreich November afternoon in 1986, Jim McColl and Bill Romanis put together a business plan for what was to become ScotGrow, Scotland's national horticultural trade event. The first event, a one-day affair for the trade, took place at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, in October 1987. It proved its worth with stand holders, including many Scottish growers, suppliers to the trade, advisers and consultants all reporting a successful day and asking for another. Jim McColl then moved on to the unforgettable Glasgow Garden Festival in 1988 which attracted over four million visitors between April and September and was the most successful of the five national garden festivals held in the UK between 1984 and 1992. With an enthusiastic new chairman in Adam Train,

ScotGrow grew from strength to strength becoming an essential day in the UK horticultural calendar. The ScotGrow Initiative took Scottish growers to events, particularly south of the border, even creating an award-winning Scottish show garden at Chelsea Flower Show.

### A gardening show for Scotland?

On a February evening in 1994 the new chairman, Dougal Philip of New Hopetoun Garden Centre, and the organiser met to discuss a national spring gardening show in the east of Scotland, knowing that the well-established Ayr Flower Show occupied the autumn slot. Dougal contacted the Royal Horticultural Society in London and the Society's Shows Director, Stephen Bennett, came to Edinburgh for a meeting with

interested individuals which ended with an agreement that the RHS would, in association with a number of Scottish directors including Dougal Philip, Jim McColl, Bill Romanis and Jim Jermy, then of Edrom Nurseries, form a Scottish Board to organise a national spring gardening show. Once it was agreed that an RHS show would go ahead in 1997 the RHS invited Scottish growers to visit a number of English shows to learn at first-hand what was expected when they came to exhibit at a national Scottish show.

### **RHS shows at Strathclyde Country Park**

Back in Scotland after considering possible sites including Scone Palace, the Royal Highland Centre and Glasgow, the RHS decided on Strathclyde Country Park, and the first Scottish show went ahead there in 1997. It was given royal patronage with the attendance of the Princess Royal. For many it was over successful! Traffic was backlogged for miles, VIP's required police escorts, the sun shone, there were three days of glorious weather recalling the Garden Festival in 1988. The weather for the following two years was not so kind, with torrential rain and gusty winds blasting the tented exhibitors. The RHS had invested heavily in the event and the financial outcome was unlikely to be successful one, but they saw it as an investment for future success.

### **Back in Edinburgh**

Realizing that financial losses made continued RHS involvement in a Scottish show problematic, members of The Caley were determined to put together their own show and the president Fred Last and the secretary Tom Mabbott were asked to investigate the possibility of establishing a major flower festival/show. To develop the idea Fred met up with Bill Romanis, by then of Rural Projects. In 1999 Fred, Tom and Bill put together a business plan knowing that if the RHS continued in Scotland it would not go forward. By October it became evident that not all was well at Strathclyde and the Caley/Rural Projects project was first aired as a



*Royal visit.*



*The Caley stand in the floral hall.*

possible alternative. It was several more weeks before the RHS eventually announced six figure losses and that they could not sustain a show in Scotland. Late in November RHS officials flew into Edinburgh to meet the Caley/Rural Projects team in an attempt to continue a joint event in Scotland, but to no avail, and the RHS left giving assurances that they would not organise events at a time to compete with a Scottish one if held in late May or early June. The reaction of Scottish members on the organising committee was that a show must go on. With precious little time Gardening Scotland was created. Unfortunately, we couldn't move the dates which, like the choice of venue, had been chosen by the RHS to fit in with their annual shows programme. Prospective stallholders based in the south already had it in their diary. Much of the positive reaction of visitors to the Strathclyde Park shows was being able to speak to and buy directly from the people who had grown the plants.

A Scottish organised national gardening show was now on for spring 2000, but that was only six months away and there was nothing in place! The draft business plans were hurriedly redrafted, the Royal Highland Centre, after much time wasting, agreed to certain areas being available for a show. Several banks were approached for loan funding but were not interested. Both the Caley and ScotGrow

agreed to each loan £5,000 as start-up funding, and a bank account was opened on the understanding it could not be overdrawn! Gardening Scotland 2000 was the working title. Insurance was essential, and although all the necessary public cover was in place a cancellation policy was prohibitive, and we went without! By January 2020 Jim Jermyn and his wife Alison were contracted by Rural Projects to sell and manage trade stand space and soon deposits began to augment the funds. There was no time to sign formal agreements; the first show went ahead with a Fred Last/Bill Romanis handshake representing the Caley and Rural Projects. While all this was going on Caley members were recruited as Sinclair's Soldiers the finest team of volunteers ever to grace a gardening show anywhere. Their enthusiasm was truly inspirational under the leadership of David Sinclair. Every exhibitor arriving on site was welcomed, assisted in the buildup, banners erected, even rehearsals for stewards were put in place. Nothing was left to chance apart from the weather! At the show itself Caley members learned the skills of gatekeepers, carpark attendants, plant crèche assistants, welcoming team, even directing the lost and enquiring visitors. Some exhibitors returning in later years said they did so because of the exceptional welcome and help they received from the Caley team.



*The Bravehound display in 2019.*



*A young recruit meets the president on the Caley stand.*



*The Caley allotment team's pallet garden.*

The success of the first show was recorded in *The Caledonian Gardener* 2001. The £5,000 start-up loans were repaid to The Caley and ScotGrow. The show now had its own identity and a board of directors with The Caley formally represented on the Board of Gardening Scotland, under Fred Last's successors as Chairmen, Jim McColl, Donald Wemyss and Jim Gilchrist, all of course Caley members with Rural Projects, now with Martin Dare at the helm, managing the events.

### **Successful years**

There were many highlights: a visit from HRH The Princess Anne, lord provosts, the first minister of Scotland. We moved to the new Highland Hall and continued to receive support from a number of noted English colleagues such as Roy Lancaster, Peter Seabrook and Jim Buttress. Judges were recruited from across the UK and the judging criteria used were in line with the gold, silver gilt, silver and bronze awarded at other national shows. We organised a dinner for them on the Friday evening in the hotel. It was christened the Gairdners' Getherin and hosted by Prof. Fred Last. The craft tent was filled to the brim with artisan craftsmen and

many famous nurserymen moved their stands up from Chelsea the previous week to delight the Scottish public at Ingliston. We conducted various exhibitor surveys and one of the commonest comments was that they found Gardening Scotland the friendliest show on the circuit. Friday, the opening day of the show would see the biggest sales day and in the early days it was not unknown for some exhibitors to have to replenish their stock completely after the first day. In the early years traffic jams created by eager visitors were an annual occurrence. Eventually Lothian Buses provided transport from the city centre to and from the showground. Horticultural societies from around Scotland also ran buses to the show, Tern Television moved their editing suite to the show on the Wednesday before it opened. Filming was then done on the Wednesday and Thursday with the final roundup on the Friday morning when the show opened to the public. Filming often ran on until late on the Thursday and with the final inserts filmed on the Friday morning the completed programme was delivered to the BBC in Glasgow by motorbike courier just after lunch on the Friday to be transmitted at 7.30 that evening.



The end of May start of June was obviously not the traditional time when most amateur gardeners expect a flower show. To involve the general public the Pallet Gardens, organized by the Scottish Gardeners' Forum, started in 2005. Garden clubs, in Bloom and other groups could turn up on the Thursday with a vehicle containing all their plants and props and create a one metre square display in the surround supplied. The pallets proved very popular with the public with an enormous variety of topics used as themes for the mini gardens. Over the years garden clubs tended to drop out while school and youth groups increased which led to the creation of a second category for the educational groups. The displays of first-class botanical painting by BISCOT attracted international entries and added another competitive dimension to the show as did the introduction of a large Scottish Bonsai show within the show in the floral hall. The show was well supported by a variety of environmental groups. The show in recent years was well described by Pam Whittle in *The Caledonian Gardener* 2016.

### Endgame

As time passed footfall at around 30,000 plus was lower than typical of shows in the south with larger populations to draw from. Funding for large show gardens was always limited. Several exhibitors decided the costs of coming to Scotland outweighed the income they could expect. Exhibitors from the south started to drift away. This was exacerbated when the RHS started an early June show at Chatsworth in Derbyshire in 2017. The Highland Hall became more difficult to fill. The 2020 lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic brought matters to a head and Gardening Scotland closed permanently.

*Compiled by the editor from material from the late Bill Romanis with further contributions from Jim McColl, Jim Ferymyn, George Anderson, David Knott, Dougal Philip and Pam Whittle. It is now hoped that another national garden show will be organized at Scone Palace from 29th to 31st May 2021.*



*The Kirkcaldy team planting on the showground. Photos © Growing Kirkcaldy.*

## The Bavarian State Horticultural Show, Ingolstadt 2020

Keith Jackson

2020 was to have been a very special year for the historic city of Ingolstadt, Bavaria, the twin town of Kirkcaldy, Fife, and hosts to the Bavarian State Horticultural Show 2020 (LandesGartenSchau2020). These shows are hosted by a different community each year, following a successful application which includes a commitment to continue the maintenance following the show, leaving a magnificent public park for the community to enjoy. As part of this very special occasion Ingolstadt extended an invitation to all its ten twin towns to participate and present an exhibition garden at the show, each reflective of their traditions and heritage. This follows the occasion in 1992 when Ingolstadt last hosted a similar event and when the former Kirkcaldy District Council presented a rose garden and stone cairn that is still maintained by Ingolstadt.





*Growing Kirkcaldy volunteers at work.*

Fife Council delegated the invitation to the Kirkcaldy Ingolstadt Association (KIA) a voluntary group, established over 25 years ago that facilitates all aspects of a very successful twinning link. Working with Fife Council staff and Growing Kirkcaldy, a local community environmental group, a suitable design was developed. A dedicated area was set aside for Kirkcaldy, and the five other twin towns taking part. on a 23 ha. site within a green belt to the north-west of Ingolstadt. The 245 square metre garden was planted in late autumn 2019 underneath some fantastic blue skies. The design, by Alan Bissett and Keith Jackson, recognised the heritage of Kirkcaldy by planting that included ferns that reflect Kirkcaldy's coal mining heritage and tree planting featuring our native silver birch and Scots pine. Other planting featured *Hosta*, *Echinops* and *Eryngium*



*Kirkcaldy in spring.*

with form provided by *Phormium* and colour by *Geum* and *Heuchera* cultivars. Structurally, the garden featured a bespoke trellis with circular cut out panels recognising the world-renowned linoleum manufacturing tradition of Kirkcaldy which began in 1878 and for which the town and its sweet smell became famous! Three life size hobby horses reflected Kirkcaldy's Links Market, the longest established street market in Europe, with a fun fair set up along the Kirkcaldy promenade every April. Dry stone dykes with seating were an additional focal point of the garden. Hard landscaping included Scottish granite. Interpretation boards, both in German and English, represented rolls of linoleum and explained the meaning of the garden. Construction was organised by the State Garden Show Landscaping Company. Planting was undertaken by a small Kirkcaldy team of two professional gardeners, two volunteers from Growing Kirkcaldy and Robert Main, a representative from KIA who had worked in an Ingolstadt landscape garden company in the early 1970s as a consequence of the twinning link.

The show was planned to run from April to October 2020 allowing the expected 700,000 plus visitors to experience the strong bond that exists between Ingolstadt and its twin towns. However the show had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All concerned hope it will take place in 2021. After the show the garden will be maintained by the City of Ingolstadt as a lasting legacy for local citizens. Ingolstadt plans to present Kirkcaldy with a sculpture of the historic Ingolstadt Old Town for the town's waterfront as part the 60th anniversary celebrations between Kirkcaldy and Ingolstadt which will take place in September 2022.

***Keith Jackson, Homelea, South Street, Falkland, Fife KY15 7AT.***

*Keith recently retired from Fife Council where one of his roles was to operate the successful Beautiful Fife Campaign. Keith has 35 years' experience in community horticulture, having formed and chaired Falkland in Bloom for over 20 years, steering the community group to national and international recognition. A recent recipient of the Queen Mother Memorial Medal, Keith is currently a Britain in Bloom national finals judge.*





*Phythophthora lateralis* on *Cupressus x leylandii* in Argyll. © David Knott.

## Plant health matters

David Knott

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2020 as the International Year of Plant Health (IYPH). The year is a once in a lifetime opportunity to raise global awareness on how protecting plant health globally can help end hunger, reduce poverty, protect the environment, and boost economic development. Plants are the source of the air we breathe and most of the food we eat, yet we often don't think about keeping them healthy. This can have devastating results. Current estimates are that up to 40% of food crops globally are lost due to plant pests and diseases annually. This leaves millions of people without enough food to eat and seriously damages agriculture, the primary source of income for rural communities.

Plant health is increasingly under threat. Climate change and human activities have altered ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and creating new niches where pests can thrive. At the same time, international travel and trade has tripled in volume in the last decade and can quickly spread pests and diseases around the

world causing great damage to native plants and the environment. Protecting plants from pests and diseases is far more cost effective than dealing with full-blown plant health emergencies. Plant pests and diseases are often impossible to eradicate once they have established themselves and managing them is time consuming and expensive. Prevention is critical. As I wrote in the 2017 *Caledonian Gardener* plant health is key to the success of Scotland's rural economy including the wider natural environment. The Scottish Plant Health Strategy estimated then that the value of the Scottish rural economy, which includes agriculture, horticulture, parks and gardens, forestry and the wider natural environment to be c. £1.8 billion. The financial benefits of the wider natural environment alone are in the region of £21.5 million.

There has never been such a time, need and requirement for gardeners, horticulturists and land managers to be vigilant and aware of the potential risks and impacts and take measures to mitigate them. Recognising the importance

of plant health to Scotland, the Scottish Government has been instrumental in setting up and funding the Scottish Centre of Plant Health Expertise (CPHE). The Plant Health Centre is a virtual centre of expertise funded by Scottish Government through RESAS (Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services Division) to help tackle plant health challenges for Scotland. Working with the Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland, Professor Gerry Saddler from Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA), the Centre brings the sectors for forestry, horticulture, environment and agriculture together to co-ordinate plant health knowledge, skills, needs and activities across Scotland. It provides scientific evidence to help make important decisions about pests and pathogens that threaten Scotland. The Centre Directorate is headed by the James Hutton Institute, and has sector leads from Scotland's Rural College (agriculture), the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (horticulture and environment) and Forest Research (forestry). It has a Science Advisory and Response Team (SART) from the above organisations as well as partners from the Universities of Edinburgh, Exeter and Strathclyde, The Centre for Ecology & Hydrology and Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland (BioSS), each bringing with them a range of skills from understanding public perceptions to long-term disease forecasting.

In response to the International Year of Plant Health the Centre has been promoting five key principles which outline important steps to protect plant health in Scotland with the first two and the fifth one being directly relevant to Caley members and gardeners generally.

Source plants with care. Human movement of plants is an important pathway for spreading pests and diseases which may hitchhike on plants, in seed, soil and packaging. Taking steps to start with healthy plants is vital, purchasing locally sourced and well-grown plants when acquiring new material also supports reputable and quality assured growers.

Keep it clean. Biosecurity best practice can reduce the spread and establishment of plant pests and diseases. These organisms may be microscopic and can easily go unnoticed. Cleaning footwear tools and equipment regularly can help reduce spread.

Plan now for future challenges. Designing, modifying and managing systems to increase their resilience can reduce the impacts of pests and pathogens in future. This will be multi-faceted and apply to choices over specifications, actions on the ground, training and research.

Embed plant health into policies and practices. Developing consistent practices, incentives, guidance and regulation can minimise the risk of outbreaks and their consequences. Encouraging best practice at all stages from planning, through procurement to planting will reduce plant health risks.

Promote widespread awareness and understanding of plant health threats. Informed individuals and businesses can minimise the threats to plant health and reduce the unwanted impacts of pests and diseases through raising public and trade awareness of the risks to plant health and the benefits of good biosecurity practice.

We should all use this International Year of Plant Health to make ourselves fully aware of the many plant health challenges we face. We can all make a difference by buying good healthy plants from the many fine growers and garden centres we have here in Scotland. We can practice simple biosecurity measures by cleaning our footwear and tools. We are known as a nation of gardeners, green fingered and passionate about plants. Let's use this passion to benefit our plants, trees, gardens and the wider Scottish environment.

*David Knott, Royal Botanic Garden  
Edinburgh, 20a Inverleith Row,  
Edinburgh.*

*David is Curator of the Living Collection at  
RBGE as well as the current Caley president.*



*Mosses on the stonework in Saughton Park. All photos © David Adamson.*

## Mosses in Saughton Walled Garden, Edinburgh

David Adamson

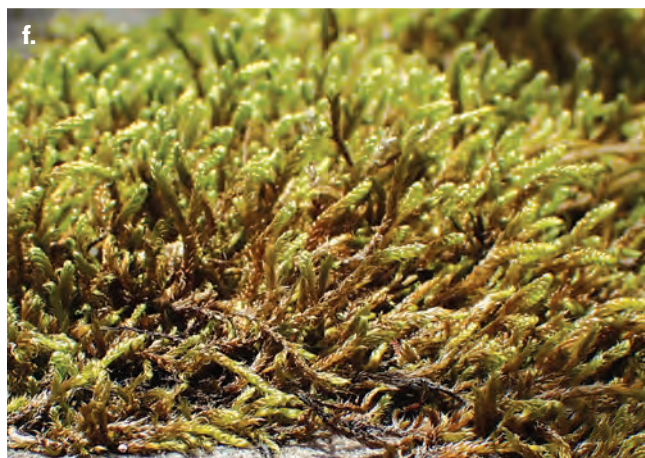
On an Edinburgh Natural History Society outing last year I showed one of our group a moss. The response was ‘I feel sorry for anyone who has moss growing on their roof.’ A recent Twitter post asking what names gardeners give to some very different types of mosses was answered by the one word: Moss. Search moss plant online and the first page will produce at least one site offering advice on its eradication. All in all, the impression is that mosses are unwelcome, except when deliberately grown in Japanese-themed gardens. I was introduced to mosses over 35 years ago and think that all gardens should have some moss; they can be as varied and interesting as flowering plants.

### **Bryophytes**

Mosses are small, usually green, flowerless plants that reproduce either by spores or vegetatively. They lack roots, instead having rhizoids that are the equivalent of root hairs on higher plants. Along with liverworts they are referred to as bryophytes, and their study is

called bryology. There are many different types; Britain and Ireland have well over a thousand species of bryophyte and Scotland alone has almost two-thirds of all the species found in Europe. David Chamberlain, the local bryophyte recorder, has found about half of all the British species in the Lothians; Edinburgh is particularly rich due to its varied geology and range of habitats. Some bryophytes can be very particular about where they grow: there are wall-top specialists, species found on the bark of trees, mosses that grow under galvanised crash barriers, and others that can appear almost anywhere including on dumped carpets and around car windows. Like some lichens, their occurrence and disappearance can indicate changes in air quality, so they are valuable indicators of environmental change.

Saughton Walled Garden in Edinburgh has superb displays of flowering plants, and in the summer months it is easy to overlook the presence of bryophytes. However, a visit to the



garden on a Sunday afternoon in late September 2020 turned up a variety of species with very little effort. This was not a surprise because a mosses afternoon in February of that year had already shown that the walled garden had plenty of bryophyte interest. On the west side of the main glasshouse there is a low terrace with a sandstone wall on which mosses and liverworts have been allowed to grow. One of the most noticeable species to be found there is a very common moss called *Hypnum cupressiforme*. English names have been given to bryophytes in recent years, but the scientific names are generally used by those interested in mosses. *Hypnum* belongs to a large group of mosses described as being pleurocarpous, or pleurocarps. This term refers to their branching, sprawling, growth form and the spore-bearing capsules arising from the ends of the branches. *Hypnum*'s pointed leaves are one cell thick and overlap one another in a cypress-like manner, hence its specific name. While *Hypnum* forms a branching, tangled mat, there are mosses on that wall which form small cushions made up of many tiny, upright, unbranched plants. These mosses tend to have capsules arising from the tips of their shoots and are referred to as acrocarpous mosses, or acrocarps. Many are short lived, although this particular species, which has leaves with whitish hair-like tips, seems to persist longer than most. The hair tips allow the moss to retain moisture from the air and prevent it from drying out. The hair tips also give the whole cushion a distinctive frosted appearance and help to identify it as *Grimmia pulvinata*. It produces abundant capsules which sit at the end of curled stalks, half-buried among the leaves, until the spores are ripe.

## Liverworts

Around the base of the same wall are two species of liverwort. Unlike mosses, these liverworts lack stems and leaves, instead

**a.** *Barbula unguiculata* at the base of the wall; **b.** *Amblystegium serpens*, a tiny pleurocarp. **c.** *Grimmia pulvinata* with fine point hairs on a wall; **d.** A liverwort *Lunularia cruciata* with crescent shaped gemmae cups. **e.** *Marchantia polymorpha*, another common liverwort; **f.** *Hypnum cupressiforme* on a wall. **g.** *Orthotrichum* on ash bark; **h.** *Funaria hygrometrica* aka bonfire moss with swan neck stems and capsules.

resembling flattened green tongues on the surface of the soil. A pale green one is called *Lunularia cruciata*; on its surface are crescent-shaped ridges containing reproductive material known as gemmae. It rarely produces capsules. The other liverwort, which prefers the shade at the very base of the wall, and which has large circular gemmae cups on its dark green surface, is called *Marchantia polymorpha*. Both *Lunularia* and *Marchantia* can thrive in greenhouses and plant pots; understandably you may consider them as weeds.

If you visit Saughton Park and want to look for other species of bryophyte, I recommend that you take a x20 hand lens; most mosses are very small and need some form of magnification to allow you to identify them and to appreciate their beauty. The old solitary ash tree near the Garden Bistro is worth inspecting for its own suite of mosses, and a semi-wild area close to the Gorgie Road bridge has an abundance of acrocarps. If you become intrigued by mosses and want to know more, there is an excellent book produced by the British Bryological Society (BBS) called *Mosses and Liverworts of Britain and Ireland: a field guide*. The BBS has local groups which will meet when restrictions are lifted. As with any hobby, the company of others of a like mind helps to maintain enthusiasm and advance your knowledge, and I would encourage beginners to join one. However, bryology is not everyone's cup of tea and, if nothing else, I hope you will think twice before removing that green stuff called Moss from your garden.

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*David has attended bryophyte outings with Edinburgh Natural History Society since 1985 and, more recently, with the Lothians Bryophyte Group, which is a branch of the British Bryological Society. One of his aims is to encourage wider interest in mosses and liverworts among non-specialised naturalists. He finds that studying bryophytes works well in winter as they don't die back like many other plants while in the summer months he concentrates on hoverflies. He and Sarah are mainstays of the Edinburgh Natural History Society.*



*Green-veined white butterfly on a dandelion. © Martin Warren.*

## Gardening for butterflies and moths

Anthony McCluskey

If 2020 was good for anything, it was that more people spent more time outside to experience the natural world around them. Some people heard birdsong in their town for the first time as the traffic-free streets were silent. Others spent time in their gardens, noticing the different butterflies feeding on the flowers. Alas, of the UK's 59 species of butterfly, three quarters have declined in the past four decades, with populations of even common species like the large white and small tortoiseshell dropping because of widespread changes in land management. Yet Scotland is seeing new species like the wall butterfly arrive from the south, and others like speckled wood and orange-tip expanding their ranges, possibly because of climate change. Gardens are more important than ever, providing havens in a landscape where food can be hard to find. They can also be stepping stones to aid the migration of butterflies across the country, and even across continents.

### Spring

The first butterflies are a sure sign that spring has arrived. Most of us see them during the first few warm sunny days in late March when the worst of the winter is over. Typical species to see then are three of those which over-winter as adult butterflies: Small tortoiseshell, peacock and comma. You might already have found them tucked away in your shed, or an unheated room in the house. Yet they will have first opened their wings the previous year, emerging as adult butterflies in August or September, then gorging on nectar and other sugars which they store in their bodies and use to sustain themselves for five or six months through the winter. When they emerge, they are close to starving. This is one of the most precarious times for these butterflies; the warm air wakes them up from their winter torpor but there often isn't much in bloom to feed them and it is essential to have early-

flowering plants in the garden, which bloom from around the middle of March. The early-flowering heathers, including *Erica carnea* and *E. x darleyensis* varieties, flower early and, being incredibly hardy, their flowers survive hard frosts or snow.

It's also a joy to see the first lungwort *Pulmonaria* and hellebore flowers appear, and if you sit in the garden for any length of time in early spring you will hear large queen bees feeding on them too. But it's also at this time that many gardeners go on dandelion watch and as soon as they see one of the flowers emerging they spray or dig them out. I believe that if dandelions were difficult to grow, everyone would want one! What's not to love? The delightful yellow flowers are a boon for insects at a seriously tough time of year for them, and later the seed heads are eaten by birds like goldfinches. So I am hoping that more gardeners will take a different view of dandelions and spare at least some of them from the chop.

### 'Plastic plants'

The temptation in spring is to rush out to the garden centre and get lots of colourful bedding plants to fill flower beds, pots and hanging baskets. Unfortunately, most of these are what I call 'plastic plants', as they might as well be made of plastic when it comes to insects as they

produce little or no pollen or nectar that insects can feed on. This short list includes pelargoniums, begonias, petunias, most pansies, polyanthus and Busy Lizzie. And that's the good news - it is a very short list, and almost everything else in a typical garden centre is good for insects! The range of suitable plants is almost endless and avoiding those few bedding plants will leave no garden lacking. If I was to pick a few insect-friendly plants for early-mid summer, I'd go for herbaceous perennials like any of the geraniums (my favourite is 'Brookside'), and those with large heads of flowers such as *Cirsium x rivulare*, scabious, cardoon and *Verbena bonariensis*.

### Wildflowers

Some of our springtime wildflowers also fit very nicely into gardens. I recommend bugle *Ajuga reptans*, native primrose *Primula vulgaris* and cowslip *Primula veris*, wild violas and pansies (*Viola riviniana* and *V. tricolor*). Some of our colourful garden butterflies will lay their eggs on nettles. If you are happy to grow a patch of nettles for butterflies (or just not cut them down!) then it's best to grow them in full sun, and in a fairly large patch around one metre across. This is because the adult butterflies are choosy about where to lay their eggs, and large patches in the sun provide plenty of food for caterpillars and help them to develop more quickly.



*Elephant hawk- moth caterpillar on willow herb.* © Heath McDonald.

The white butterflies are often less welcome in gardens and two species, the large and small whites, have earned the title of cabbage whites because their caterpillars do feed on brassica plants including cabbage, broccoli and Brussels sprouts. I encourage people to net the brassicas they want to keep safe, but also to grow extra plants to put into their borders and other areas which the butterflies can feed on. If you find yourself with too many cabbage seedlings, why not set them free for the butterflies? That way the butterflies may give up on trying to get to your safely netted cabbages. I also recommend growing some other brassicas which can be host to the caterpillars of other white species such as orange-tips. Sweet rocket, nasturtium and honesty all come into this group, and you will almost always find caterpillar eggs on nasturtiums.

### Garden management

Talk of caterpillars reminds us that butterflies are still using our gardens even when we can't see them. They might spend weeks or months as caterpillars, cocoons, or even eggs attached to vegetation. So when it comes to tidying the garden I always consider that insects might still be using the dead stems or hedge clippings. I take a relaxed approach to tidying which gives me more time to enjoy the garden. When I am tidying dead material I usually stack it in various quiet corners instead of putting everything into the compost bin so that the insects can complete their life cycles. I neither burn or chip. Dead and decaying wood is such a useful resource for other insects such as beetles, so again I stack it here and there under trees and shrubs.

I apply this attitude to 'pest' control too; when I have large problems with aphids I hose them off the plants, but in general I leave them because they are food for ladybirds and their larvae, which can consume hundreds of aphids per day. If we eliminate all the aphids, the ladybirds go too. So when the aphids return the following year, as they always do, the ladybird population won't be there to control them and we end up helpless. Whatever the

circumstances, I never use chemical insecticides in the garden. Many insecticides remain in the plant long after spraying and make their way into the pollen and nectar poisoning the butterflies and bees visiting them. Gardening this way brings more wildlife into the garden. A single pair of blue tits needs around 20,000 caterpillars to raise a brood of ten chicks! Feeding them things like peanuts in the winter is fine, but they must have live food when feeding young.

### Meadows

Wildflower meadows have become more prominent in garden shows and display gardens, and my hope is that this trend makes its way into peoples' private gardens. While most of those we see in magazines and on television are somewhat native in appearance, with lots of long grass, some people prefer to use wildflower seed mixes which are purely wildflowers, with stunning displays. Those are certainly better for insects than bedding plants, and bees are definitely attracted to them. However, research has shown they are of limited use to butterflies. If you want a meadow, I recommend researching native wildflower meadows and buying perennial seed mixes. One of the key plants to include in a mix is yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor* which is a parasite on grass roots. It weakens grass, helping other wildflowers to thrive. Those meadows should be cut only once per year, in autumn, and all the clippings removed. Do bear in mind that caterpillars may be on the plants still, so lift the blade a few inches higher, or leave some patches unmown.

- a. *Male orange-tip*. © Iain Leach;
- b. *Large white* © Steve Maskell;
- c. *Male common blue* © Pete Eeles;
  - d. *Red admiral* I. Leach;
  - e. *Comma* © I. Leach;
  - f. *Peacock* © Dean Morley;
- g. *Small tortoiseshell* © M. Warren;
- h. *Painted lady* © I. Leach.







## Autumn

It is important to keep the garden blooming well into October to help the butterflies which spend the winter as adults. Some of the best are *Hylotelephium* (formerly *Sedum*) 'Autumn Joy', Japanese anemones, *Eupatorium*, *Eryngium* and the late-flowering purple or blue asters. You can also leave fallen fruits and butterflies will drink up the sugary liquid from those. In autumn they will find sheltered spaces to settle down, though some species embark on an epic southerly migration. Red admirals and painted ladies can't survive our winter and will fly to southern Europe and beyond. It's remarkable to think that the nectar from your garden can fuel this flight and butterflies seen in France or Spain might have hatched as caterpillars in your garden in Scotland.

While the butterflies are gone you can turn to bulb planting. My top recommendations are *Muscari*, hyacinths and *Allium*. Butterflies and bees tend not to bother with cultivated forms of daffodils or tulips, so I use those plants for a splash of colour if I need it but try to keep as much space for the other plants. You can also plant some bare-root trees in autumn. I always turn to apple trees as they are hardy and you can get varieties which will fit into almost any size of garden. The flowers are loved by adult butterflies, while the leaves are sometimes eaten by moths. Other leafy trees and shrubs like birch, oak and hazel are excellent sources of food for moth caterpillars. There are around 2,500 species of moth in the UK, compared to only 59 butterfly species, 35 of which are found in Scotland! Most gardens probably have dozens of moth species flying each night, including some remarkable ones like the elephant hawk-moth and canary-shouldered thorn. Having more moths will help insect-eating birds and bats.

- a. *Garden tiger moth* © I. Leach;
- b. *Poplar hawk* © I. Leach;
- c. *Canary shouldered thorn* © I. Leach;
- d. *Elephant hawk* © H. McDonald;
- e. *Buff ermine* © Bob Eade;
- f. *Angel shades* © Bob Eade;
- g. *Silver Y* © Dave Green;
- h. *Ruby tiger* © Garry Barlow.



*Orange-tip pupa* © Jim Asher.

All of this work can help boost local populations of butterflies and other insects. Three quarters of butterfly species have declined in the past forty years, and we are seeing declines in wild bees too. Nobody can watch the documentaries of Sir David Attenborough and be unmoved at the scale of extinctions of wildlife across the planet. These extinctions are happening in our communities and countryside, and our lives are all the poorer for it. Gardening for insects allows you to do your bit to turn the tide and help ensure that our gardens are filled with fluttering butterflies and buzzing bees in decades to come.

**Anthony McCluskey, Butterfly Conservation Scotland, Balallan House, Allan Park, Stirling FK8 2QG.**

*Anthony graduated in biology at Queens University Belfast in 2008 followed by a master's degree in ecology in which he studied bumble bees in orchards. He worked with the Bumble Bee Conservation Trust for nine years and is now urban butterfly officer with Butterfly Conservation. He has also done survey work for the NTS on Ben Lawers. In 2021 Anthony will be running workshops to train new volunteers to identify and record butterflies, as part of the Helping Hands for Butterflies Project. To find out more about our work in Scotland visit [www.butterfly-conservation.org/scotland](http://www.butterfly-conservation.org/scotland). The Helping Hands for Butterflies project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and NatureScot.*



*In the potato park. Photos © John Marshall.*

## Parque de la Papa

John Marshall

I had slept fitfully and woke shivering in spite of wearing all the clothes I had with me. We had rented a room with a family living in an adobe house at 4,000 metres in Paru Paru. It was 6am, daylight was streaming through a colourful old manta, the curtain. I stumbled out of bed and made my way down the dirt path to the lake where the mist was clearing and the sun breaking through to give perfect reflections of the sacred mountain which towered above. The cries of colourfully dressed local women, herding their llama and alpaca flocks back to the high pastures, echoed round the lake. This was the Parque de La Papa, Cuzco, in the Andes. After 26 days we had reached our destination and were about to hear first-hand the story of the potato, the



*Llamas and herdsman coming home.*

world's fourth most important food crop but first we wanted to discover the country and its people. We joined a small group tour that was to take us overland from the capital city Lima along the coast then ascending the Andes to Lake Titicaca, incorporating a hike to Machu Picchu and from there to The Parque de la Papa beyond the sacred valley near Cusco.

### Spanish influence

Francisco Pizarro, leader of the conquistadores, founded the capital city in the early 1500's. Today Lima hosts the headquarters of the Central Potato Centre C.I.P. which was founded in 1971 as a research-for-development organization with a focus on potato, sweet potato and Andean roots and tubers. It delivers innovative science-based solutions to enhance access to affordable nutritious food, foster inclusive sustainable business and employment growth, and drive the climate resilience of root and tuber agri-food systems. (www.cipotato.org.) There are close ties between this and the James Hutton Research Institute. Leaving the city behind us we immediately entered the rain shadow of the Andes, the Atacama Desert with the Pacific and Humboldt Current on the westerly side.

On an exciting trip in fast boats to the Ballestas Islands, dubbed the poor man's Galapagos, we saw a small colony of sea lions and crowded skies filled with screeching seabirds mostly guanay (guano) cormorants. The remains of the guano workers' accommodation blocks and cranes are decaying and rusting, no longer working to fertilise the Angus potato fields.

### Travel

We continued on the Pan American Highway southwards with a stop to climb a scaffold to get a partial view of the unexplained NASCA lines. Then an overnight stop in Chala, a ramshackle fishing village, before we began our ascent of the Andes. The street market, a treasure, was rich in a wide range of vegetables and of course potatoes of all colours, shapes and sizes. It was the end of the season so buyers were crouched sprout picking as they selected their buy. Next day we changed to a mountain bus with new drivers to tackle the scary hair pin bends rising to 4,800 metres. We spent two days in the beautiful city of Arequipa, taking in the flight of the condors in Colca Canyon then continued to Puno, the main port on Lake Titicaca, where we boarded a small tourist boat. Heading out through the



*Potatoes in Arequipa market.*

reed beds I noticed a rusting dredger. This was mentioned in Jack Hawkes' book *Hunting the Wild Potatoes in the South American Andes*. This three man British expedition of Ed Balls, Bill Gourlay and Jack Hawkes in 1938–1939 travelled 9,000 miles in three months starting in Lima but moving along the Andes through Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia collecting native and wild potato specimens and sending over 1,000 samples back to Britain. The collection today is held as part of what is known as the Commonwealth Collection, maintained by the James Hutton Research Institute Invergowrie with seeds of the lines stored at Svalbard in the Arctic seed bank. <https://ics.hutton.ac.uk/germinate-cpc/#home>. A brief stop was made to visit the Uros people who have lived on reed bed rafts for centuries, then outward into the lake which covers 3,000 square miles and is 3,800 metre above sea level and shared between Peru and Bolivia. The fishing has declined and they are now dependent on tourism. Taquile Island, our overnight destination, is an outcrop of rock which had amazing terraces created by the early Incas. Our local guide Ruben explained how hunter gatherers had left the inhospitable jungle, ascending to the Altiplano to become farmers, domesticating the llama and cultivating and selecting maize, quinoa, beans and potatoes. The potato story was interesting as the native species were bitter and often quite poisonous, with high levels of the plant alkaloid solanine. Following 9,000 years cultivation, breeding and selection it became a staple part of the local diet along with corn, beans and quinoa.

### Trekking

We were now fully acclimatised for our trek to Machu Picchu which involved four days hiking and three nights camping along the Inca trail. We only carried day packs as there were 24 porters to carry the tents, mess tent, toilets and food. November was the beginning of the rainy season so from a bright sunny start we ascended to the cloud forest with steady rain. En-route we saw llamas, amazing Inca settlements with terraces, flowering *Solanaceae* and other high-altitude plants. The view of



*Paru Paru potato fields.*

Machu Picchu when the clouds cleared was worth all the pain and we were in awe of the Incas and earlier civilisations' ability to feed themselves in these inhospitable locations thanks to their sophisticated knowledge of agriculture. Two nights of celebration in luxury hotels and further visits in Cusco, rich in Inca history, concluded our tour. We said our farewells, the group headed for the Amazonian rain forest whilst Rhona and I prepared for our adventure in the Parque de la Papa. I had arranged this trip through contacts of my colleagues at the James Hutton Research Centre Invergowrie with the help of CIP.

### The Parque

We spent two days and one night in the park. Leaving the street markets and tarmac roads at Pisac we started to climb on dirt roads though quick growing timber *Eucalyptus* trees. Our presence was announced by the blowing of a conch shell a signal for a three piece band flutes and a drum to entertain and flowers were thrown in our hair. Our translator explained that The Parque covers 15,000 hectares rising from 3,800 to 4,800 metres, three lakes and a network of tracks. The reserve was established to conserve the regions potato biodiversity, a task that has become increasingly difficult as warming climate has altered the growing patterns of some of the local varieties. The reserve is

home to five indigenous Quechua communities whose residents manage their communal lands jointly for their collective benefit. The communal activities are spearheaded by the organisation known as The Guardian of Native Potatoes, The Papa Arariwa. A typical farmer may grow 200 varieties, most of which are for local consumption or regional barter. Local potato farmers now experiment at higher altitudes where the temperatures are lower, ironically they are using many varieties that had already disappeared from their fields but had been saved in the gene bank of the International Potato Centre. The treaty benefit-sharing Fund Project is working with local farmers as they repatriate varieties from the gene bank into their fields. Of the 1345 varieties now found in the Potato Park 779 accessions were collected locally, 410 were repatriated from CIP and 157 were received through seed exchanges. In addition to the work with potatoes the communities are earning money with various enterprises: weaving, ecotourism, cooking classes, creating and making products from medicinal plants, teas, potato shampoo.

The reception was followed by a snack of potatoes with a spicy sauce and a potato drink. Revitalised, we toured the park going even higher. We enjoyed snapshots of the lifestyle: alpacas, llamas, sheep, a family planting potatoes, a fascinating textile demonstration all about the natural dyes producing those familiar brightly coloured mantas. A superb potato lunch was then created in their restaurant. We were shown the stored potatoes in the cold shed and then moved to the colder exhibition room where hundreds of potato types and cultivation tools were displayed. The names were explained: A man potato, a woman potato, Quwi sullu (guinea pig foetus), Waka quallu (cow's tongue), Puku Pepino (red cucumber) and the favourite Papa Illunchuy waqachi (the one that makes the bride cry because she can't peel it!). The interpreter departed, leaving us with our host and anthropologist Jacob Weisman. We chatted in Spanish to our host, Celestino, whilst watching the returning flocks of llamas coming home with



*Potato snacks with our hosts.*



*Breakfast in Paru Paru.*



*Guinea pig casserole with potatoes.*



*Potato drinks.*



*Scotland meets Peru.*

the backdrop of the lake and sacred mountain. Our supper consisted of guinea pig stew, quinoa and, of course, potatoes. We had an early night, still shivering under a llama blanket fully clothed.

I awoke early and went for a walk. Following a hearty breakfast including, of course, potatoes, we were kitted out in traditional gear. Ascending the llama path we circumnavigated the lake, learning about the herbs and plants and how the llamas dunged in the same place each day, important if you are a potato grower. When an indigenous plant, the ruca *Eruca vesicaria*, has wide flower blooms planting is earlier, when the flower is not so open normal planting time, if closed later. Celestino pointed to a clump of the muna plant, a type of mint ‘This is picked and stored with the tubers for the winter to prevent sprouting.’ I discovered later this has been commercialised and a company based in Kent is using spearmint in trials with some leading packers in anticipation of a ban on CIPC used to prevent sprouting. He led us to the fields on the opposite shore. Mario, his brother, proceeded to explain the potatoes on the ground. This one is good for boiling, this one for fries these for chuno and so on. One is even said to represent the nose of the alpaca!



*Traditional costume and adobe hut.*

### **Traditional tools**

A ploughing and planting demonstration followed. The tacla was the foot and hand plough. The only alteration from Inca times was that the digging part is no longer wooden but made of steel. Ploughing was a three-person job, two plunging taclas simultaneously at right angles, with the third, generally a woman, turning the turf. The process left a trench either side of a raised bed to allow the water from heavy downpours to rush down the mountain into the lake. The next step was to plant. One tacla operator



*Learning to plant with the tacla.*





*Ploughing with taclas.*

makes a hole and then the planter carrying a mixture of varieties, inserts one to two tubers depending on size. The third person has the fertiliser, a mixture of llama dung and fine gritty soil. Turf is lowered and the tacla is plunged again. Next the clods are battered with a sturdy stick and the trench is cleared. Then it was our turn! At 4,500 metres I could not stick the pace. Bashing clods with a branch and ensuring a good trench between the rows was my strength, acknowledged by smiling faces. The rotation was seven years: three years fallow and then maize, quinoa and beans dependent on the altitude. Homage paid to mother earth. Five coca leaves were taken and buried and then five leaves were taken by the workers and chewed. Traditional chicha beer was passed round but on this occasion there was none. Alcohol at that altitude, we had been advised, was not a good idea!

The last item on our packed agenda was with the tecnicos, not in a lecture room with PowerPoint facilities but on a mountain top looking down into the Sacred Valley. I explained my lifetime in potatoes. Then there were the questions, gentle at first, becoming more probing. Yes I organically grew potatoes in my garden but when I ran out I purchased from the local farmer. How could I live with a clear conscience?! A storm moved in with amazing lightening and terrifying peels of thunder almost instantaneously. We moved quickly inside tucking into a snack of boiled potatoes chuno, moraya and coca tea. Chuno and Moraya are freeze dried potatoes. Pre Inca

days this technique was used to conserve food stocks from one season to the next. The bitter potatoes grown higher up were dug and exposed to the elements which froze and softened the tubers. These were trampled over a period of weeks to remove the liquid and with intense morning sunshine produced the dehydrated product known as chuno. Moraya, the whiter product, was a result of constant washing in streams over a period of weeks.

We said adios to the tecnicos and returned to our hotel in Cusco. We have not stopped reliving the experience since.

**John M Marshall, Auchtermuchty.**  
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*John has spent a lifetime working with potatoes, first on his father's specialist potato farm in Perthshire, then as a student potato inspector, a supervisor with the Potato Marketing Board UK and international seed potato trader with Dalgety/Greenvale, Project Manager with the Mylnefield Research Services, Invergowrie (now James Hutton), seed buyer for WCF Horticulture supplying and packing seed potatoes for gardeners. In retirement John has used this knowledge in supporting Annual Potato Days throughout Scotland, workshops, The Royal Highland Educational Trust (RHET) potatoes in the classroom. He enjoys talking about his potato experiences around the world including Vietnam, Mongolia and Saudi Arabia. His next project is to research his father's work in the production of virus tested potatoes with leading scientists, also passing on his own experiences to a British Museum researcher who is collecting for an oral history of farming after the war.*



Photos © Fiona Thackeray

## Gardening - in good times and bad

Fiona Thackeray

All you need to do is go out into a garden for a little while and things start to happen. As if by magic, certain changes begin: a subtle slowing of your pulse, a moment when you notice the mental static/hum of random thoughts and worries has fallen quiet, and somehow your breathing has slipped into a gentle, easy rhythm. After a little longer, you may find that tight spot between your shoulders has loosened up and you've lost track of time; perhaps you even forgot to stop for coffee. These are the feel-good effects offered by your garden, for free, any time you care to grace it with your presence for a few minutes.

You probably know the feeling I'm talking about; if you're an experienced gardener, you may know it very well. But for a lot of people, it's a joy denied to them by circumstance, a *terra incognita*, always out of reach behind a locked gate. Some people live in a flat with no garden in a neighbourhood with few green spaces, and any nearby parks or gardens are

run down, forbidding places. Others find themselves mourning a hobby they think lost to them after a stroke, arthritis or back problems forced them to down tools. Still other people are put off gardening by lack of confidence and knowledge or a sense it's not for the likes of them.

### Trellis

At Trellis we try to help people harness these beneficial effects so they can use gardening to feel better and improve their quality of life. We help find the key that unlocks the garden gate. At projects across the country, garden activities are used to help people manage and recover from depression, stroke or cancer, to build strength after an accident and regain confidence after an absence from work, sport or hobbies. Garden projects help people with learning disabilities and other support needs to gain qualifications, new skills and a precious sense of pride in their achievements. They can help people stay fit after a cardiovascular disease

diagnosis or the onset of arthritis. For many, participating in a garden project is a tool to manage chronic pain conditions. No matter the circumstances, the way we garden can be adapted and redesigned to ensure its benefits are within reach for everyone. This is the essence of what we mean by therapeutic gardening.

Did you know just being near a plant can reduce your blood pressure, slow your heart rate and decrease feelings of pain, stress and fear? There are some fascinating Japanese and Korean studies that have measured these changes taking place. For all the scientific endeavour devoted to plants and gardens in the last few decades, the precise mechanisms of these beneficial effects on human health remain somewhat mysterious. We don't know quite how gardening works its magic on us, simply that it does. Gardens restore us in so many ways, coaxing us into a better mood or getting us moving when we don't feel like it, gently distracting us from nagging worries when a beautiful blossom opens. It's no wonder then, that across Scotland, at 480 therapeutic gardening projects in the Trellis network, skilled practitioners work to maximise these benefits, helping over 12,000 people feel better each week, memories of gardens in times gone by, scents and colours recalling a lifetime of people and places. The planting can be done around a table in the dining room if the weather is uninviting. It's

not unusual for residents to burst into song during these planting sessions, or for a normally reticent person to participate with real enthusiasm. Typically, care staff will learn things from residents' wealth of gardening wisdom (a refreshing reversal for people who may often feel a little helpless and dependent, always relying on younger carers to do and explain things). And in the weeks that follow, the bowl of sprouting hyacinths or tray of pea shoots become real conversation starters.

### Care

It can require extra care to bring compost and cuttings and well-worn tools into palliative care facilities where hygiene protocols can be strict as patients' immune systems may be fragile. But it's truly worth the effort. One gentleman, after cutting daffodils for a vase and sowing rocket seeds, said he'd forgotten the overwhelming pain he'd had before he started the session. He got so absorbed in the plants, their scent and texture, it allowed him to escape his symptoms. The effects lasted long after the gardening activity ended. There's good research evidence confirming this pain-relieving effect of being among plants.

Even with the best interior design efforts and homely touches, the corridors and treatment rooms of a psychiatric care unit can be oppressive. Being away from home and your routine can be disorientating, especially if



you're a young person who's waited months for therapy. Some time spent outdoors, feeling the sun or rain on your face and noticing how the air smells offers a crucial chance to reconnect with normal life. Patients in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services say how important it is to escape the ward for a time, get some fresh air and explore their surroundings. Digging can be an outlet for strong emotions while tending young plants is a powerful antidote to the addictive attention drain of screen time. Therapists find working side by side with young people in a garden allows more progress and a less intimidating experience than sitting face to face in a consulting room.

### **Funding**

Although there's growing recognition for the health benefits of gardening, it's not easy for therapeutic gardening projects to find sustainable funding, access to suitable land and all the technical and practical support they need. Groups often find themselves isolated, under-funded and poorly recognised. Trellis support services are designed to address these problems. We provide inspirational demonstration sessions in care homes, hospitals and other healthcare settings that give staff, volunteers and residents the confidence and ideas to start gardening. Sometimes these are tabletop sessions, specially designed to enable everyone to take part whether they're wheelchair gardeners or affected by the fatigue of cardiovascular disease or psychiatric medications. We also make 'how-to' videos, such as our 'Stay Well and Garden' lock down film series that care workers can consult any time the opportunity arises to squeeze in a gardening session. Our training programme lets practitioners learn new skills and is going online in light of the virus restrictions. We provide training in everything from basic horticulture skills to how to adapt gardening techniques in ways that help someone to carry on growing things when they're dealing with the effects of dementia.

In addition, we run a comprehensive information service and make advisory site visits. With matters horticultural, it's so

important to go and see - quite literally - how the land lies. Meeting people on location means we can give customized advice on how to make a plot accessible, relaxing and fun for the unique group of gardeners who will be using it. Sure, you can describe on the phone how that damp, shady spot that's infested with horse tail has *so* much potential, but when we see it at its unique intersection of longitude and latitude, with its special micro-climate, we can really appreciate that potential and give tailored help. We are able once more to offer site visits, with social distancing measures in place, but the service is regularly reviewed as lock down measures change.

Thanks to the generosity of funders and supporters from all walks of life, we're able to help people get the most out of gardening every week. If you're interested in learning more about therapeutic gardening, or would like some help with a project idea or an adaptive gardening query take a look at our website, [www.trellisscotland.org.uk](http://www.trellisscotland.org.uk) or drop us a line, [info@trellisscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@trellisscotland.org.uk) If you feel you'd like to share the joy you get from gardening with others, consider joining our Friends scheme. We love to hear about all things garden-related and will do our very best to answer any questions you may have.

***Fiona Thackeray, Trellis, Unit 8, Perth Business Centre, Glasgow Road, Perth PH2 0NX.***

*Fiona has worked in therapeutic gardening for 26 years, in Bristol, Brazil and, more recently, Perthshire. She is the proud recipient of the RCHS Andrew Duncan Medal for her contribution to horticulture. Now Head of Operations at Trellis, the support organisation for therapeutic gardening projects in Scotland, she works with a small team to act as a collective voice for the sector and provide the information and training that practitioners need to run high quality therapeutic services. Before finding these roles, she pursued her interest in the natural environment through conservation work with sea-turtles in Greece and rainforest ecosystems in Brazil. In her spare time, Fiona writes fiction and pursues her quest to grow the most delicious, rare tomato and radicchio varieties, from seed saved from memorable dishes.*

# Grow and Learn Awards

## Connecting people, plants and nature

*'The Caley's Grow and Learn award aligned with our beliefs, a person-centred award, recognising individual progress and achievement. It's been hard work, but that's made it even more rewarding. We are beyond proud of the work our volunteers have achieved. Their knowledge and skills go beyond the garden, and they have all blossomed in so many ways.'*

**Danielle Gaffney du Plooy: Manager, Uppertunity, Dundee.**



*Uppertunity, Dundee. © Grow & Learn.*

## Grow and Learn, just keeps on growing

Now more than ever, we are turning to gardening and nature as a source of inspiration, learning and solace. Even the not so green fingered among us have become more aware of the natural world around us. Whether it has been sowing some seeds or observing nature from your garden bench we've all enjoyed the transformative power of plants and green spaces. Even despite projects and gardens having to close due to government guidelines, many participants, Scotland wide have continued to garden at home. With support from family, friends and carers, seeds have been sown, tatties have been harvested and flowers have flourished. Continuing to garden and develop skills has given many a routine, a sense of purpose and a positive distraction from world events.

*'This idea has gone down really well and has proved an invaluable way of not only keeping in touch with the guys but also keeping them using the skills they have learned.'*

**Andy Logan, Support Co-ordinator, AHSCP, Banff Day Opportunities**



*Max from Banff Day Opportunities. © Grow & Learn.*

## Grow and Learn, celebrating achievement

Participants, the length and breadth of Scotland, have also successfully completed their awards this year. For many, this has been a positive achievement and has given not only participants a boost but also family and support staff. We have even managed to facilitate online awards ceremonies for participants to be presented with their awards and many thanks in particular to Scotland's leading horticulturists George Anderson and Jim McColl for supporting this opportunity.

## Our class of 2020

A total of 71 Grow and Learn participant's completed their awards since March 2020. Projects include, Banff Day Opportunities, Capability Scotland Renfrewshire, Watch us Grow Cumbernauld, Turning Point Scotland, Parklea Branching Out, Port Glasgow, Help Yourself Grow, Glasgow, The Pitscurry Project, Inverurie, Richmond Fellowship, Glasgow, Uppertunity, Dundee, Highlife Highland, Inverness Botanic Gardens.



The Caley

Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society

# grow and learn

*The Caley's flagship award, recognising individual progress and achievement in horticulture.*

## Learn about

Seasonal, practical horticultural activities.

Other topics that interest you, such as cooking, arts and craft, garden maintenance or biodiversity, the list is endless.

Developing personal life skills and setting your own goals.

## How it works

Flexible learning leads to your award, no formal learning required.

No exams - use your portfolio.

Learn 7 core horticultural activities.

Choose additional activities that interest you.

Achieve 3 personal goals.

Minimum of 80 hours of activities.

Minimum age requirement 13 years.

Two stages of the award if you want to develop your skills further.

## What you achieve

Awarded The Caley's 'Certificate of Horticultural Achievement'.

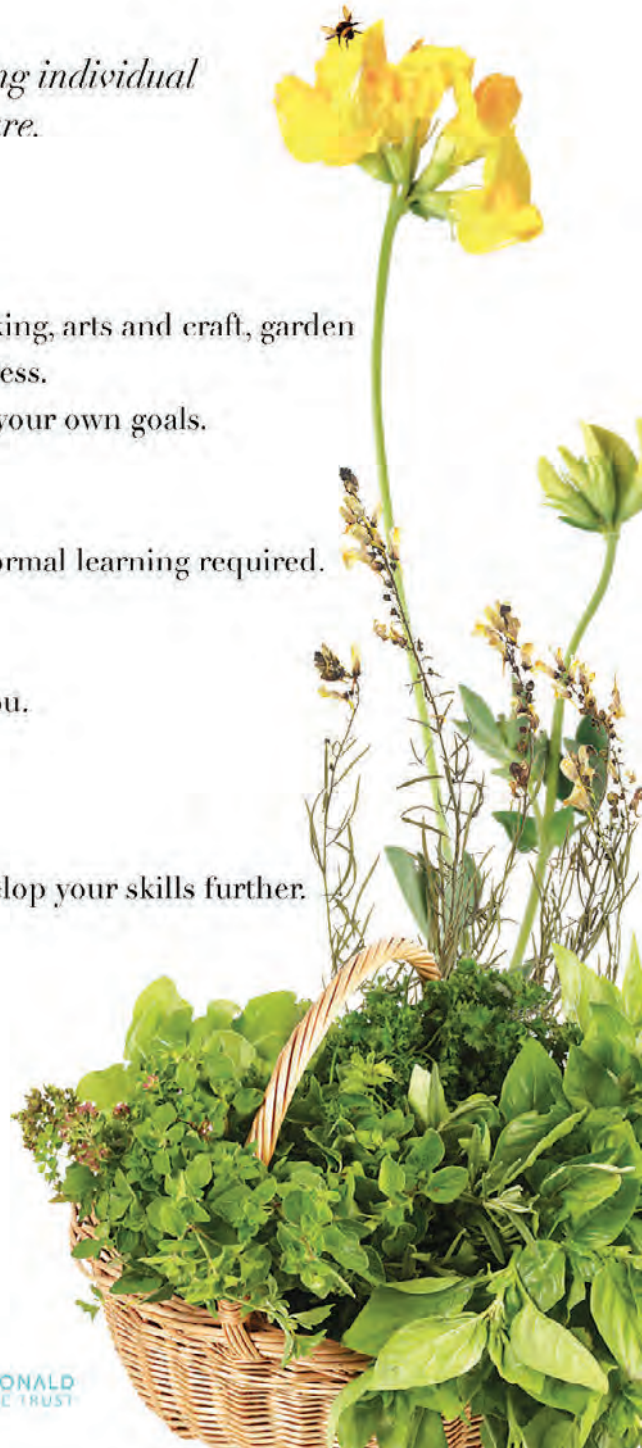
A portfolio of your work to evidence all you have achieved.

Ready to get started, contact:

[caleygrowandlearn@gmail.com](mailto:caleygrowandlearn@gmail.com)

[www.thecaley.org.uk](http://www.thecaley.org.uk)

[@caleygrowandlearn](https://www.instagram.com/caleygrowandlearn)





a. Parklea Branching Out; b. Capability Scotland; c. Help Yourself Grow; d. The Pitscurry Project; e. Richmond Fellowship; f. Inverness Botanic Garden; g. Turning Point; h. Watch us Grow; i. Uppertunity.

### Supporting our projects

We have also seen many of our projects new and old participate in our online Grow and Learn, train the trainer session. This FREE session lasts one hour and offers practical tips and advice on how to record progress in participants' portfolios. Finally a warm welcome to all

of our new projects, recently registered, in particular our very first project south of the border, Rhubarb Farm, Nottinghamshire.

**Jean Gavin, RCHS Grow and Learn co-ordinator. Email: [caleygrowandlearn@gmail.com](mailto:caleygrowandlearn@gmail.com)**



*Bumble bee on chives.*

## Grow and Learn in Nature (GLiN) award

After extensive evaluation and feedback from Grow and Learn projects throughout Scotland, we are delighted to announce the launch of The Caley's new GLiN award, a project-based award that connects people, plants and nature.

*'This award will inspire individuals to protect and understand the natural world through gardening and nature-based learning. All life on this planet depends on plants, we need to do more to nurture and cherish them.'*

**Kirsty Wilson, Herbaceous Supervisor,  
Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh**

If you are interested in finding out more about Grow and Learn in Nature contact: [caleygrowandlearn@gmail.com](mailto:caleygrowandlearn@gmail.com)



*GLiN St Cuthberts Primary.*





The Caley

Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society

# grow.

and learn in nature

*The Caley's new project based award  
that connects people, plants and nature.*



## Learn about

How to make your outdoors space more nature friendly.  
Developing your skills in biodiversity, plant care, soil health,  
propagation and so much more.

## How it works

You decide what your Grow & Learn in Nature project will be.  
Practical learning outdoors leads to your award.  
No exams - use your portfolio.  
Minimum of 30 hours of activities.  
Can be a group or individual award.

## What you achieve

Awarded The Caley's GLiN 'Certificate of Achievement'.  
Gain new gardening skills that work in harmony with nature.  
Develop your connection with the natural world.

Ready to get started with your learning, contact:

[caleygrowandlearn@gmail.com](mailto:caleygrowandlearn@gmail.com)

[www.thecaley.org.uk](http://www.thecaley.org.uk)

[@caleygrowandlearn](https://twitter.com/caleygrowandlearn)

Supported by:





*GLiN Stenhouse Primary.*

### **GLiN at Saughton Park, Edinburgh**

With thanks to our funders Nature Scot, since April 2019 we've been delivering outdoor learning at Saughton Park, Edinburgh to 5 participating local schools. Weekly sessions enable pupils to gain practical horticultural skills through active participation in nature-based learning. Learning at Saughton Park encourages our pupils to connect with various park groups, visitors and events at the park as well as contributing to greenspace improvements at the park. We've also facilitated monthly sessions for teachers and support staff, giving practical tips and ideas as to how to use the park as an effective outdoor classroom. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 restrictions, our sessions were suspended in Spring, but we are hoping to be back in the park again late autumn, 2020.

*'We received funding from Action Earth as part of their Volunteers Matter initiative. It really shone a spotlight on what a difference we can make to our local community. We planted a LOT of bulbs throughout the park as well as fruit trees and bushes in the Caley demonstration garden. We were also able to buy some new forks and spades, brushes to keep our tools clean and an all important wheel barrow!'*

**Shona Nelson, GLiN Facilitator,  
Saughton Park.**



Photos © Eve Keepax/KSB

## Pocket Gardens, lockdown learning and looking ahead

Eve Keepax

### Origins

Pocket Gardens began when the Garden for Life Forum invited Keep Scotland Beautiful to create a garden for their space at Gardening Scotland, 2016. The Pocket Garden Design Competition was conceived as a national competition for Scottish schools, with the grand prize of growing and showing the winning designs at Gardening Scotland. Pocket Gardens are small but perfectly formed gardens, created using sustainable principles, including food growing and illustrating given themes. They are a creative design challenge with the most serious of ambitions. They are also a joyful explosion of playful ideas and innovation. The standard and volume of entries we received, and the delight of the visitors in seeing those winning gardens, has inspired us to continue and build on these successes each year.

### Five principles of sustainability

I'm guessing most readers here will agree that gardening brings pleasure. The five principles of sustainability for the Pocket Gardens support young gardeners to enjoy gardening without harming other life now or in the

future. They are part of how we can respond to the climate and ecological crises. The principles are:

- Locally sourced
- Seasonal
- Waste reduction
- Organic
- Ethically sourced

### But what do they mean in practise?

We encourage schools to include plants grown from seed at school or in local gardens and to use native plants as much as possible. Growing from seed gives that fabulous experience of seeing the first shoots appear and nurturing their growth into full glory. Native plants are usually well adapted to our climate, have rich associations with Scottish wildlife and are sources of food or shelter.

Plants need to be looking their best for the show, so we ask pupils to choose plants that are in flower or leaf at that time of year. All the gardens must include edible plants for people, so this links well to becoming more aware of when Scottish foods are in season too.



Waste reduction can correlate to reduced consumption, and this principle has generated some inspiring creativity in reusing containers and materials. Using your own compost is part of this too.

Integrating food for people into the garden helps to remind us to avoid pesticides and fungicides. We rely on insects and minibeasts for pollination and healthy soils and they are fascinating, strange, and beautiful. Creating a garden that attracts natural predators or that can confuse pests, e.g. through companion planting, works to protect both crop and the people who will eat it.

Ethical sourcing includes being peat free. Peat bogs store vast amounts of carbon; they absorb precipitation and prevent flooding. To avoid releasing more carbon into the atmosphere and to protect downstream communities from floods, it makes sense to leave them where they are. Peat bogs also preserve a record of the past and provide habitat for rare species.

### Lockdown learning

At the start of 2020, the Design a Pocket Garden competition was run as normal, receiving 123 entries from schools across 21 of the 32 Scottish local authority areas. Winners were chosen and told the good news, and then



we went into lockdown and Gardening Scotland was cancelled. Like many others, I was keen to find a way forward that would still provide positive experiences and learning. After discussion with the winners about options for building and growing their design with pupils, I decided to offer a Pocket Gardens at Home project for pupils to garden with their family, taking inspiration from their school design, or crafting something new. Titled PopUP Pocket Gardens it was a project to get involved with for a few weeks before the summer holidays, using the themes and principles of the original competition. Online training was offered for teaching staff and 90 teachers signed up from across 26 Scottish local authorities.

### **Beechgrove Garden**

Imagine the excitement when the schools and children heard that the producers of the Beechgrove Garden were interested in featuring the PopUP Pocket Gardens that they were creating. Lockdown meant that film crews couldn't travel, so the families set about creating the film footage of their PopUP Pocket Gardens as well as the garden. Children's imagination in garden design is not confined to 'normal' or even 'possible' and it was a breath of fresh air to see their enthusiasm and ideas on film. Congratulations go to the families who supported their young people to get involved and bring their ideas to life. The episode (number 13 for this year) is available on iPlayer at the time of writing, otherwise you can have a look at the Pocket Garden Stories on the Keep Scotland Beautiful website.

### **Silent spring**

During lockdown, many people enjoyed the lack of traffic noise, enabling them to better hear sounds of nature instead. This inverts the silent spring idea written about by Rachel Carson, which describes the loss of those natural sounds due to declining biodiversity, but her warning is more relevant than ever. The 2019 State of Nature report sets out figures showing continuing decline of many species across the UK. It cites agricultural intensification and climate change as the primary drivers of population decline. It also

describes the positive impacts of conservation work done by individuals, communities, organisations, and businesses. What we choose to do makes a difference.

### **Looking ahead**

It will be party time in 2021 as Keep Scotland Beautiful celebrates its 21st birthday. It would be an appropriate response to be alarmed by the current crises so why are we celebrating? Because fun solutions need to be part of our response. Indeed, if we're going to maintain sustainable ways of doing things over time, we should enjoy them. The young Pocket Gardeners were part of thousands of people who reconnected with the outdoors during lockdown, discovering the world at their doorstep. They relied on ingenuity to build gardens from existing resources and discovered the profound pleasure of creating something from scratch. I hope that by the time this article appears in print, we will be busy presenting Pocket Gardens 2021 as an opportunity for schools to take practical action learning why and how to look after our climate and wildlife. If you have a garden, pocket-sized or larger, you can choose to garden sustainably too. The five principles of sustainability can be applied to gardening in all sorts of spaces. A compost heap is a great place to start and growing some edibles in amongst your other plants means you can have a wee snack as you work. Mangetout were my favourite last year.

***Eve Keepax, Keep Scotland Beautiful, Glendevon House, The Castle Business Park, Stirling FK9 4TZ.***

*Eve was recruited by Keep Scotland Beautiful in June 2010 to develop and write the Food and the Environment topic for the Eco-Schools Scotland programme. Her work there includes the development of One Planet Picnic and the Pocket Garden Design Competition. She wrote an earlier article on this topic in The Caledonian Gardener 2018 and in November 2020 gave one of our first virtual talks. She has worked as a Biodiversity Education Officer for eight years, delivering sustainable living training, events and programmes to formal education and community groups.*



*New housing increases pressure on the environment that attracted the new owners. © Clive Davies.*

## One local authority's outdoor response to 2020

Roger Powell

East Lothian Council's Ranger Service was established in 1970 with the appointment of Archie Matheson, Scotland's first local authority ranger. The service now manages over thirty separate sites for informal recreation and nature conservation, both coastal and inland. This includes designated protected areas such as SSSI's, Historic Monuments, Geosites and Listed Wildlife Sites. Most of the coast is of international importance and has Ramsar Site designation for its population of waders and wildfowl. The countryside section of the council has expanded to meet the challenge of managing this large and diverse estate, and now consists of a Senior Countryside Officer, a Countryside Officer, an Access Officer, a Biodiversity Officer, a Senior Ranger and eight Rangers. East Lothian is relatively well-staffed compared with many other parts of Scotland.



*(top) Flower rich turf close cropped by rabbits.  
(bottom) Sea buckthorn is good bird habitat but crowds out smaller plants. © Stan da Prato.*

## Pressure

Part of the work of the Countryside Section is to try and accommodate visitors to countryside sites, promoting responsible access whilst maintaining and, where possible, enhancing their conservation value as visitor pressure on has increased over the years. Increased housing developments with little or no local green space means people have to travel to get access to countryside areas. East Lothian's proximity to Edinburgh and the promotion of countryside sites on social media has also resulted in more visitors travelling from further afield. People visit for a variety of reasons. Traditional walking, cycling and horse riding has now been joined by other

pastimes. Water sports such as surfing, kayaking and paddle boarding have become more popular, as have bigger group activities such as cross-country runs, orienteering, boot camps and coasteering. More people have become dog owners and are looking for good places to take them for walks.

This, of course, is not just an East Lothian problem. Other areas of Scotland have also seen unprecedented numbers of visitors in recent years, and particularly this year as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is putting even further strain on already busy countryside sites. Lockdown came into force on 23rd March. The weekend prior to this saw



*Closing car parks for lockdown. © East Lothian Ranger Service.*



*Social distancing on a nature reserve. © S. da Prato.*





*Tents at Tynninghame.*



*Party remains. Fire debris. © East Lothian Ranger Service.*



a large number of people visiting the coast. Although this was the first relatively warm day of the year, there were still many more visitors than we would have expected. In line with Government guidelines, we closed our car parks on March 24th. Countryside staff worked from home from this time. We developed a rota system for a limited number of staff to patrol countryside sites each day, including weekends, in order to ensure car parks remained closed, to carry out essential maintenance including litter removal, to monitor visitor numbers, to put up or replace signs, and to monitor the health of the ponies in the conservation grazing programme on Traprain and North Berwick Laws. A daily

report was sent to a senior management team, which included representatives of the emergency services as well as council officials.

From the moment we closed the car parks, we began planning for their re-opening. As lockdown progressed, we drew up plans for widening paths, introducing one-way systems where necessary, and ordering signs. We continued to check Government announcements and liaised with other ranger services around Scotland. At the end of May, there was an initial easing of lockdown. Unfortunately, this was misinterpreted by many people, and we experienced a large number of visitors to the coast, often from

quite far afield. This was despite the 'stay within 5-miles' guidelines issued by the Scottish Government. We continued to keep car parks closed in line with guidance from the Scottish Government. By this point we had ended the rota system, with all rangers as well as other countryside staff out at countryside sites. Weekend shifts were organised in order to maintain a presence seven days a week.

## Numbers

From the beginning of June, we began preparing for car park re-opening by widening paths, putting up signs to guide visitors and putting together on-site information. Car parks opened on 20th June. Since then, we have seen an unprecedented level of visitor numbers to our coastal sites. Visitors have come from far and wide, often travelling over 50 miles to get here for a day trip. We have also seen large numbers of campers. On one weekend we counted 92 tents at Tynninghame Links and 37 at Yellowcraig. Most of those turning up to camp do not fall into the definition of wild camping and we feel we have been let down by a lack of a proper official definition of wild camping. However, rangers have been talking

to every camper they have come across. Campers are offered bags for collecting their litter, asked to take their litter home and told to only have fires on the beach below high water. It has been gratifying the next morning to find the sites all virtually spotless. Good old fashioned rangers has helped. The camping related mess reported in the Pentland Hills and Loch Lomond hasn't happened here. We have been able to concentrate largely on the issues of fire lighting and responsible toileting. Estimated coastal visitor numbers for July, based on our car counter returns, indicate a massive increase compared with figures from 243,000 in July 2019 to 352,000 in July 2020. From 7th June till 30th August we recorded 1,871 campers at coastal sites in tents and camper vans. These were the ones we engaged with. We know from reports from the general public that there were also campers accessing more remote areas of the coast that are not included in this figure. Where littering has occurred, it has largely been as a result of gatherings of young people in evenings. We have worked with police and community wardens regarding camping and gatherings of young people to try and reduce the impact on coastal sites. We have also received support from our Roads team in the management of car parking at hotspots.

We need to manage this visitor pressure in a sustainable manner. For this we need the support of the Scottish Government, countryside and other agencies, user groups and local communities, to ensure that the natural beauty of the Scottish environment is protected, not just for people, but for the wildlife that lives there too.

**Roger Powell, Sport Countryside and Leisure, East Lothian Council, Block C, Brewery Park, Haddington.**

*Roger is Senior Countryside Ranger for East Lothian Council and has been a ranger for over 30 years. He has a degree in Zoology from Cardiff University and a PhD in Marine Biology. He has been an active member of the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (SCRA) for 25 years and was chair from 2011 to 2016.*



*Shorebirds harassed by off lead dog. © Ian Andrews.*



*The allotment at Slopefield. Photos © Leigh Houston.*

## Airyhall children growing at Slopefield Allotments

Leigh Houston & Terry Stott

Slopefield Allotments in Aberdeen is a council owned site which opened to tenants in the late 1970s. Slopefield Allotment Association (SAA) was formed in 2008 after the council decided to reduce maintenance in communal areas and allotments. In 2011 SAA decided to enter It's Your Neighbourhood and the assessor commented on the limited involvement the association had with young people. Two SAA members went to the annual presentation of certificates in Stirling and, after listening to speakers and talking other groups, they came back with the idea of speaking to the local Airyhall Primary School about the possibility of the school taking on an allotment at Slopefield. Airyhall School was rebuilt in the early 2000s and there was little space available

for children to enjoy the experience of practical horticulture. The head teacher and her staff welcomed the idea which would give children both experience in horticulture and widen their knowledge of biodiversity, an important element in the Scottish Government's Curriculum for Excellence programme. In 2011 Airyhall rented an allotment and, as TS had recently retired from Aberdeen parks dept., he had spare time to assist the children with growing produce.

Twice a year the school meet with the SAA to plan a timetable for the activities on the allotment within the school curriculum. From September till November and March till June a different class of 24–28 children from Primary

2 to Primary 7 visit on a Thursday afternoon every week along with a teacher and some parents/helpers. SAA volunteers assist the children with the practical tasks. The weather has to be very inclement for the children not to attend on the day as planned. All the sowing and planting is done by the children along with some of the watering and weeding, under supervision by the adult volunteers. Volunteers assist with weeding and watering when the children are not attending. The winter cultivation of the allotment is done by adult volunteers. On the plot there is a large polytunnel which is a great asset as it allows seeds to be sown and grown on before planting out in the allotment. Fruit bushes on the allotment include blackcurrants, gooseberries, blackberries, blueberries and strawberries which the James Hutton Institute donated to the school; there is also rhubarb. On the plot the children grow onions, shallots, potatoes, beetroot, turnips, swedes, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, lettuce, beans, peas, leeks, courgettes, marrows and pumpkins which are harvested by

the children and taken back to the school for use there or taken home to their parents. In the polytunnel tomatoes, grapes, cucumbers and strawberries are planted. In the bottle greenhouse (made from plastic bottles) sweetcorn is grown. The strawberries are on a three-year rotation. The children take the runners off the strawberries, pot them up to plant out in the spring. The school hold a Spring Fare in May when spare plants which the children have grown are taken to the school for sale. There are three compost bays in which all green waste from the allotment is composted. After three years turning, which the children think is a great job, this is then dug into the allotment. When the RHS gave a packet of sunflower seeds to every It's Your Neighbourhood Group a few years ago the children planted the seeds and now keep one flower head each year to grow next year. The other seed heads are used for bird food in the winter. Various varieties of bulbs are planted in pots for the children to enter the R.H.S. (Aberdeen) Spring Show. Different varieties of



*Our base.*



*Our plastic greenhouse.*



*Sweet corn.*



*Protected cropping.*



*Productive growing.*



*Red onion.*



*Terry and friend.*



*A good-sized marrow.*

spring and summer flowers are planted in tubs by the children to give colour in the community area on the allotment. When Beautiful Scotland or Britain in Bloom judges visit Slopefield as part their tour of Aberdeen they have always given us highly positive feedback. The James Hutton Institute regularly give the children talks and demonstrations on the soils and biodiversity at Slopefield.

This year has been very different from previous years. The children had started to plant onions and sow seeds in pots to plant out but Covid-19 lockdown arrived and children could no longer come to Slopefield. The volunteers sowed the seeds and planted the plants and the produce grew as well as it had in previous years. As the children could not come to the allotment to harvest the produce they donated it to a food bank. Looking ahead to 2021 we all hope that the Airyhall children will once again come to Slopefield to experience growing their own food.

***Leigh Houston, Airyhall Primary School, Countesswells Road, Aberdeen AB15 8A.***

***Terry Stott, 10 Braeside Avenue, Aberdeen.***

*Leigh is deputy head teacher at Airyhall Primary School in the Hazelhead area of Aberdeen. Airyhall also has an ECO Group which includes pupils, teachers, support staff and the school janitor. The ECO Group has an action plan which details ways in which the school continues to become increasingly ECO friendly. Airyhall has achieved five Eco Schools Scotland Green Flags. Terry recently retired from Aberdeen City Council parks dept. He is actively involved at Slopefield, a very successful grower of cut flowers which he exhibits at many late summer shows, a judge for Beautiful Scotland and recipient of a Caley award.*



*At work at Saughton. Photos © SSBA.*

## The Scottish Society of Botanical Artists

Anne Carlaw

The Scottish Society of Botanical Artists (SSBA), was formed in 2014 and is an inclusive society open to anyone interested in botanical art. We encourage a high standard of artistic achievement providing members, from beginners to experts, the opportunity to exhibit their work annually. We are a registered charity and provide free public access to exhibitions

and, when possible, to artists' demonstrations during exhibitions. Over the last six years, we have gone from strength to strength, now with a membership of 80 keen amateurs, professionals, students and friends. Most of our members come from across Scotland, others are located in England, Europe, the USA and Canada. We hold at least one, often two, exhibitions annually, run workshops with top tutors on a variety of topics, talks on a variety of botanically based topics, painting days and more. We also have our own website and Facebook and Twitter accounts.



To anyone with an interest in nature, botanical painting gives them the ability to capture, on paper, the details they see around them. The artist learns to observe the delicate components of plants while considering their variations in tone and colour. A walk in the countryside will never be the same again! Conventional botanical illustration is about creating a scientific record to enable plant identification whereas botanical art/painting, although botanically correct, has more

emphasis on the aesthetic value of the painting. It brings art and science together without the requirement for all plant information. Talking and working with other botanical artists helps to further our knowledge and understanding of our subjects. Botanical artists love flowers, plants and all things botanical. Many are gardeners. A stem with leaves, buds and flowers will be carefully picked and placed in a container, before being explored by the artist to discover the structure, to accurately capture the form, shape, beauty and colour on paper. Good light and magnification are essential and artists use a magnifying glass and/or a microscope and sometimes a dissection kit, before picking up a pencil. Drawing to scale is essential if the work is to be an illustration of use to a botanist. Measurements are given in this type of artwork. Some readers may be familiar with

*Curtis's Botanical Magazine* where line drawing illustrations are used to accompany scientific articles. Alternatively, the botanical artist may produce a flower portrait or a specific in-depth study of one plant, but without the cross-section illustration of a bud or seed head or roots. The same standard of work in terms of accuracy, scale, dimensions and use of colour is still needed.

Moving from a drawing in a sketch book to watercolour paper or vellum is a challenge. You can trace the original drawing and transfer the image to a hot pressed, smooth paper, or you can use a light box where you place the watercolour paper on top of the drawing on the light box. You may wonder why artists do not draw directly onto the paper. It is to reduce the risk of damage to the paper by removing graphite with an eraser. Achieving a smooth



*Magnolia cambellii* © WD Phillips.



*Anemone japonica* © Anne Carlaw.



*Gentiana sino-ornata* © Kathleen Munro.



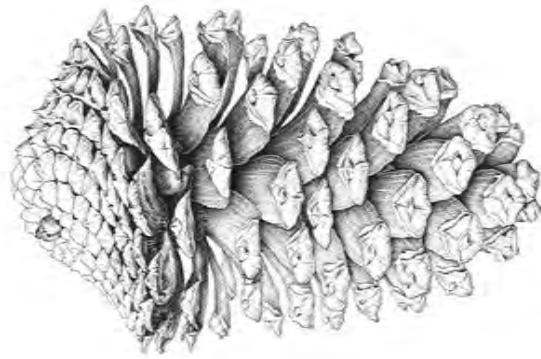
Spring composition © K. Munro.

application of paint on a damaged surface is difficult. The outline that is traced is then used as a framework for painting, with the original drawing acting as the reference point for the overall composition. Meanwhile the original specimen may have grown or wilted or dried! Photographs are useful and good images do help to record the specimen, but often the depth of detail is inadequate, possibly out of focus and the colour is not true. Therefore colour matching, particularly of flowers, before stems and leaves, is often done once a drawing is finished but before a painting is started. Ideally a fresh specimen is used and will sit in front of the artist while painting progresses. Slow progress is needed to achieve accuracy. Therefore botanical artwork takes time, perhaps 40+ hours, weeks or even months to complete a painting. It is not unknown for an artist to start a painting one year and finish it

the following year when a plant emerges and flowers again. The final work may be small or large. Most botanical artists use artists' quality watercolours, some use acrylic paints, or polychromos colour pencils or pen and ink. Kolinsky fine sable brushes, sizes 1 to 4 and miniature brush sizes 1 to 3 and down to 000 are also used. The techniques used can vary from watercolour washes, wet on wet where colour is diffused, glazing using transparent watercolours or dry brush work where multiple layers of colour are built up on the paper using small brush strokes. The aim of whichever technique is used is to capture and present the form and colour of the specimen in an artistic manner. Contemporary botanical artwork today presents art in an innovative and challenging way, displaying different aspects of plants, such as the changing colours of the wilted flower head that has dropped



*Snowdrops © Lyn Campbell.*



*Pine cone © Jenny Haslimeier*



*Christmas fruits © Nicola Macartney.*



*Dried lime leaf. © Nathalie Wallace.*





*A young art critic.*

some of its petals or the complex composition that uses a background of foliage to contrast with a bold flower.

For botanical artist Lyn Campbell, her interest in botanical illustration started 15 years ago when she attended a class, *Beginning Botanical Illustration* at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. She eventually started the Diploma course in Botanical Illustration at RBGE, graduating in 2010. For Lyn, painting plants in intricate detail is a fascinating and an all-absorbing pastime; watching the plant appear on the page, working out the composition, matching the colours and seeing it come to life on the paper is intriguing. It is the perfect way to switch off from this strange life we are experiencing at present! As a Caley member, I was aware of the improvements being carried out at Saughton Park and, in the autumn of 2018, we were offered the opportunity to hold painting days in the conservatory. For those of us used to painting alone or in quiet classes, it was a revelation. Members of the public, parents, children and people with dogs wandered in and had a look at our efforts. The highlights were our weekly visits from the local schoolchildren undertaking the *Grow & Learn*

*in Nature* project with their teachers and group leader Shona Nelson. Our artists built up a great rapport with them and when we moved to the McHattie Room in November 2019, we asked if they would please continue to visit us, which, to our delight they did. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our painting days and planned talks by invited guests were postponed in March 2020. We are looking forward to the time we can return and again become a part of the Saughton Park community. Nevertheless, despite Covid-19, in October we had a successful exhibition at the Frames Gallery in Perth which was visited in person as well as being available online. When we can, we shall return to weekly painting days at Saughton Park and Kilmardinny House in the Glasgow area. All being well, our next exhibition will be held at the Scottish Arts Club, Edinburgh in June 2021.

If you're interested in picking up a pencil or paintbrush and joining us we'd be delighted to hear from you. There are examples of botanical art on the SSBA website [www.thessba.org](http://www.thessba.org).

*Anne Carlaw, SSBA Chair.*



*Seaton Park was as colourful ever. Photos © Aberdeen City Parks.*

## Lockdown and aftermath 2020

### Aberdeen

On 24th March a decision was made to stand down all services not seen as critical. The majority of grounds maintenance and gardening was put on hold and work associated with these services stopped. During lockdown, the parks experienced exceptionally high visitor numbers as local people took daily exercise and made more trips to their local green space. The priority was to keep on top of litter and staff emptied bins on a rota. Due to the pressure on the bins in some locations, additional large wheelie bins were supplied by the council's waste team. Staff continued to water facilities that had been closed such as the David Welch Winter Gardens and Hazlehead Grove Nursery. This work was essential to keep our stock healthy and protect our plant collections. Permission was granted to recommence grounds maintenance and gardening on 1st June. We had lost ten weeks of

work with none of the key, early summer work to our parks or green space carried out. The service faced a huge challenge getting our parks and green space back on track. There was strong support from senior officials and elected council members, who all recognised that access to safe and maintained green space



*Bryan's vegetable collage, an entry to our virtual City in Bloom event.*

was important to the health and wellbeing of the citizens of Aberdeen. When lockdown ended the priorities were to cut grass, weed beds and plant annual bedding. A team was formed with the appropriate grass cutting machinery and they systematically went around the parks cutting the grass, prior to this machinery being used on road verges and playfields. Beds were prioritised for weeding and mulched afterwards where possible. Prior to lockdown we had decided not to cancel the annual bedding ordered for the parks and the city centre locations, but suppliers were asked to delay delivery by one to two weeks.. Annual bedding sites were prepared, and suppliers were contacted to agree delivery times for plant supplies. Overall, we were able to keep the majority of our formal planting and gardening in place with annual bedding only reducing by 20%. However our sponsorship work was impacted, especially our hanging baskets which saw a decrease of 45%. A number of our many Friends groups returned to the parks to

undertake some litter picking and help the park staff with weeding. This help was very welcome. The Spaces for People project in the city centre required the help of the service to plant up and add colour to the planters. This scheme was put in place very quickly and put additional pressure on the service as there was a shortage of plants available. Plants were used from cancelled sponsorships and from areas that were not highly visible to the public. Overall Covid-19 has been a significant challenge for the parks service but Aberdeen has been able to continue our tradition of first-class public horticulture and provide the city with well cared for and accessible public parks and green space. The service did all that was asked of it and we have been immensely encouraged by praise for our work from the communities we serve.

*Steven Shaw, Environmental Manager,  
Aberdeen City Council, Hareness Place,  
Aberdeen AB12 3GX.*



*More entries to the virtual City in Bloom. Rhonda: bees on a ceanothus; Suzanne: magnolia.*



*Fiona: garden wildlife; Shiona: proud of my garden.*

## Bonnie Dundee

Bonnie Dundee is an umbrella organisation that co-ordinates the work of the many community groups within the city for our entry into Beautiful Scotland. We enjoy close co-operation with the City Council's Neighbourhood Services Dept. Throughout 2020 the council produced four newsletters under the Take a Pride in your City banner highlighting the work of the groups. Four of the groups featured in the Keep Scotland Beautiful virtual event in September. When lockdown was looming Bonnie Dundee decided not to cancel our plant order to allow people to benefit from Dundee's streets remaining colourful. We managed to grow on and plant out 1,750 plants for the Year of Coasts and Waters and Sunny Dundee. As people have been out and about more, lots have told us how much they appreciate colour in the streets and what we do. Community collaboration played a big part; we gave plants to a volunteer in Lochee for their planters in the central area there, plus the council lent us a watering barrow for our city centre planters as they were unable to water them this year. Also, many of our volunteers were isolating or shielding but thankfully Broughty Ferry in

Bloom were able to help us out. We have learned that we can work on our own but it's more enjoyable together! For Seeds of Hope Scotland we handed out 95 packets of wildflower seeds and received some lovely pictures and comments back. We aim to reduce our carbon footprint, including taking part in a Carbon Neutral display at Dundee Transport Museum so we have started to work with The Gate Church carbon project and are in touch with PLANT which is a carbon related gardening group. Other noteworthy activities included 100 families being able to access fresh produce through the Maxwell Centre while Growing Dundee continued to provide practical information on their Facebook and blog pages. Ninewells Hospital's Community Garden also posted their progress on social media. Fintry Community Garden doubled the number of raised beds as well as continuing to cultivate their potato patch. Craigiebarns Primary School's edible garden received awards from the UK wide Cultivation Street campaign. The Friends of Riverside Park reported an increase in the numbers of singing skylarks during lockdown although the park still has issues with vandalism and stray dogs. The



*Weeding at Slessor Gardens. Photos © Bonnie Dundee.*



*Produce.*



*St Francis PS allotment.*



*Roadside annuals.*



*A summer planter.*



*Fintry Community Garden.*



*Spring colour.*

Dundee Daffodil Group held their spring show virtually this year while the Dundee Flower & Food Festival also went online in September. Our near neighbours Broughty Ferry in Bloom also kept active through lockdown, keeping a diary including holding their annual Secret Garden Trail virtually on their Facebook page. Their local secondary school Grove Academy's eco group manage

two community gardens and the video described the hand carved fisherman statue, the frog hotel, the tree bench, pond, QR codes to learn about wildflowers and much more.

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## North Berwick in Bloom

This has been a year like no other but NBiB volunteers have tried to keep things as normal as possible at a time when the world seemed to be turning upside down. Many volunteers are in the vulnerable categories and had to shield at home. Initially, everyone stayed inside. Gradually, we realised that we could go outside for a daily walk. Once outside, North Berwick residents saw the 4,000 tulip bulbs we had planted in November flowering all over the town and everyone enjoyed talking about something other than 'the virus'. Our Tulip Festival had to go online, with a brochure describing the 40 varieties, and our fundraising Tulip Tea turned into a cheerful video that can be viewed on our website.

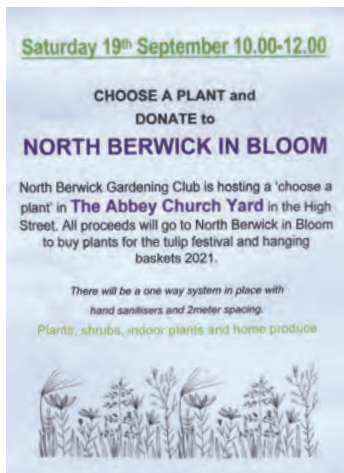
Volunteers looked after the tulips while on their daily exercise. Our council colleagues carried out essential maintenance on beds where we were unable to work as a group. Following official guidance we gardened in pairs, working side by side rather than face to face, and making sure that we wore gloves. Hand sanitiser was provided, and people brought their own tools. We communicated via WhatsApp and spread out to safely cover the tasks. We kept the rest of our group updated by weekly emails, including lots of photos, for those who were unable to leave the house. We were encouraged by appreciative comments from passers-by. East Lothian Council's nursery had continued to grow plants for floral displays and these were



One of our many boats. Photos © NBiB.



Non-stop begonias are recycled every year.



Autumn plant sale.



Socially distanced watering.



*After the spring display polyanthus are lifted and propagated.*



*Tulip festival 2020.*



*October in the historic rock garden which has interest all year.*



*Socially distanced potting.*

delivered in June. We set up a one-way system to unload the plants and took them to each planter to be planted by pairs of volunteers. Throughout the summer we carried on our usual work of weeding and maintaining the planters as well as our many beds of perennials and shrubs. We changed our usual meeting place to a large car park behind the Police Station where we could collect and sanitise our tools but still stay two metres apart. As it became clearer that the risk was relatively low outdoors more volunteers rejoined the group. Several new recruits have joined which has been very welcome, as, apart from hands on gardening, we still need to raise funds, email out newsletters and post on social media. At the end of August, we took advantage of the

government's Eat Out to Help Out scheme and had a coffee morning at the golf club for the whole group as a thank you to everyone. In October we were able to replace the summer bedding in the tubs and planters with winter /spring plants and bulbs. Amidst all this uncertainty, I was touched to receive an email from one of our former volunteers *I have been thinking, often, that the only normality this year has been the wonderful range of seasonal displays in the town.* One day everything will return to normal but for now we just take each day as it comes and continue to do our best to keep things blooming and beautiful.

***Libby Morris, Chair, NBiB, 13 York Road, North Berwick EH39 4LX.***

## Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh during Covid-19

In early March, like so many other gardeners across the world, the RBGE horticultural teams at Inverleith, Benmore, Logan and Dawyck watched nervously as the impact of Covid-19 spread across the world. Small teams working on rotas and observing strict human biosecurity, undertook essential maintenance in the glasshouses and protected environments. This work ensured that some of the most important plant material within the RBGE's Living Collection, including plants used in the scientific research programmes, and new young wild collected plant material being grown on to be planted out in each of the four gardens, has been looked after. Even smaller teams of horticulturists carried out a limited amount of time critical maintenance in each of the garden landscapes, ensuring that the worst



*An extra entrance gate. Photos © RBGE.*



*Socially distanced staff meeting.*



*Queuing arrangements at the palm house.*



*One-way system.*

of the weeds were kept under control, the grass was cut and tree inspections and work completed. The horticultural teams also shared images and videos of each garden on social media and on RBGE's website as part of RBGE's online Virtual Spring. After a great deal of careful planning, reorganisation and required Covid-19 signage and infrastructure put in place, each of the four gardens reopened to visitors in July. To limit numbers a free ticketing system was introduced in the Edinburgh Garden and when the public display glasshouses opened in September a timed entry system was introduced. With the wider restrictions on travel, each of the gardens have been very popular with visitors enjoying the wider health and well-being benefits of the plants and the garden landscapes.

*David Knott, RBGE, Inverleith.*



## Caley at Saughton Park

Early in 2020 Saughton began to feel like home for both our office and activities. Things began to get on track, when the poor soil in the teaching garden and demonstration garden areas was replaced. Then came Covid-19 and lockdown. Bulbs were removed from their winter plunge, our spring shows were cancelled, our administration moved into a house and the park closed in March. In June, when restrictions began to ease for essential work such as watering, we managed to re-establish a working presence and began to tackle the abundant, albeit colourful, weeds that had appeared during lockdown. One of the new demonstration garden sections was planted by Ian Christie with a range of meconopsis, later, thank to Jasmin Cann and the support of The

Stanley Smith Trust, we were able to plan and plant two more of the main demonstration garden areas. By now we had two of the smaller raised beds in the demonstration area planted, one with alpines, the other with dwarf rhododendrons, conifers and gentians, thanks to Ian Christie and Stan da Prato. The raised beds which had been earmarked for the schools *Grow and Learn in Nature* groups were planted with edible flowers, although schools were not allowed back in the park. Much of the gardening focused on weeding, although we did manage to grow some things that were used by the Garden Bistro, as they are keen to be true to their name!

*Pam Whittle, Saughton Park organiser, RCHS.*



*New planting in our demonstration garden. Photos © RCHS.*



*Colin at work.*



*Making a video*



*Our established herbaceous border.*



*Salad crops in the schools' bed*



*Friends of Saughton Park.*

## The Caley allotment

Lockdown came just at the start of the growing season. The Scottish Government acknowledged the health promoting value of allotments so we were able to continue to work, always following the restrictions on numbers. By greatly simplifying the planting plan and with the help of our team of volunteers, who did a great deal of sharing seeds and sowing at home, we had the allotment fully cultivated by the time summer came. A dry warm spring helped keep the weeds down and led to the wonderful crop of fruit, especially the apples, that we had this year. We are still out every week, on different days, now mostly doing the

jobs like weeding we didn't manage earlier and enjoying picking the fresh winter vegetables. The open day and pruning workshop had to be cancelled but the allotment blog on the Caley website is still keeping people up to date with what we do every week and the allotment notice board is a popular checklist noting what we have done. We have all over this difficult time greatly appreciated the benefits - mental and physical - of going to the plot and talking to other plot holders there; it was a common theme with everyone.

*Moira Stevenson,  
allotment convenor, RCHS.*



*A good apple year. Photos © Caley allotment group.*



*Monster cabbage.*



*Pak choy*



*Ripening onions.*

## Gifford scarecrows

We were disappointed that we had to cancel our flower show but, thanks to the creative minds of many local residents, the community council, community woodland and local shops, 31 scarecrows were on display for a week in August. Visitors and locals enjoyed walks around the village, wondering what they might find round the next corner! Local businesses noted extra customers. The standard of entries was high and we had a Judge's Vote and a People's Choice, using a slip from the Scarecrow Trail map. The event attracted people who hadn't taken part in the Gifford Horti Society before. We followed up with a Hallowe'en Trail, and for the Christmas Trail we asked people to seasonally decorate their front garden, windows or doors so that they were visible from the road.



*Worzel and Aunt Sally. Photos © Gifford HS.*



*Giraffe over a hedge.*



*Mr B Kind.*



*Freddie Fox.*



*NHS Superheroes.*

## Bonnie Blantyre

Was established in 2017 and since then, Bonnie and Grumble Bee have buzzed about Blantyre, getting the community excited about where they live. With the help of Jim Bee, who refuses to dress as a bee, they showcase the beauty on their doorsteps and keep people going and growing with their antics. Lockdown was one of the busiest times since Bonnie Blantyre was established, with over 2000 sunflower kits, 250 giant pumpkin growing kits and 400 seed kits distributed over the summer. Even with the restrictions, the team managed to get support from friends in South Lanarkshire Council's Ground Services and Community Payback schemes to create a second community orchard in the town. In the autumn 2000 daffodil bulbs and 400 hyacinth bulbs were planted to brighten up Blantyre next spring.



*Blantyre bees.*

## Roadside plants in Lauder

Throughout May Lauder in Bloom ran a roadside plant stall with an honesty box for locals out on their daily exercise. Plant lists were posted online the night before. Many folk were new to gardening or hadn't had the chance to garden for a while - it was a huge success. We raised over £2,000 which helped fund our hanging baskets this year as many of our sponsors have been hit hard financially.



*Lauder plant sale.*



*A young enthusiast.*

## Beautiful Perth

When lockdown eased in the summer, we were able to resume some activities in very small groups, all socially distanced of course. We worked with our Community Payback team on a City Blitz to ensure that any areas that suffered during the lockdown were addressed, such as cleaning signs, removing graffiti and painting railings. As Perth and Kinross Council operations squads were working flat out to ensure domestic bin collections and keep our greenspaces litter free and the grass cut, we helped by weeding the large display beds. We also planted 750 pansies at the war memorial to bring some much-needed winter colour. We are planning improvements to the Riverside Heather Garden including better interpretation of the heathers, information panels, some replanting and producing new booklets about the heathers.



*The heather garden in Riverside Park.*



## Muthill in Bloom

A local resident suggested the red phone box (waiting for a defibrillator to be installed) could become a village ‘food larder’ and the group used plant shelving to make the idea a reality. Local residents have been giving regular donations of food; local businesses supported the project financially and with donations, including chocolate Easter bunnies which went down well! and farmers dropped off fresh vegetables. The scheme made it to *The Times* and Channel 5. It was also shared on Facebook with 1,500 comments worldwide. Many other small communities have taken up the idea.



*The phone box.*



*Nurse, postman & teacher.*

*Uddingston produce.*



**Kinneswood's essential workers**

We have six figures which we dress as characters relating to the Beautiful Scotland theme each year. They started off as golfers for the Ryder Cup. When lockdown came in they were dressed as essential workers. The postie helped with a hat and real postman's tabard. His parcel is addressed to Mr and Mrs I. Solation, Lockdown St, Kinneswood. The six figures are about three feet tall but the heads are life size. Their arms are in different positions as they started off holding golf clubs. The one with arms outstretched had to be the bin man. The school's headteacher was waiting to welcome everyone back; one little girl regularly visited to give her a hug. The school became involved with distance homework and the children wrote poems or stories about essential workers. We chose some to be displayed beside each figure. They certainly kept people amused as they went on their daily walks and we had lots of positive feedback

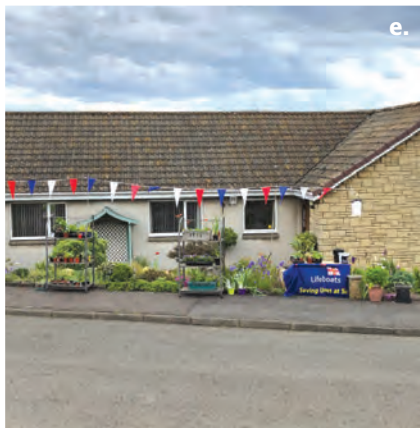
**Uddingston's Viewpark allotments**

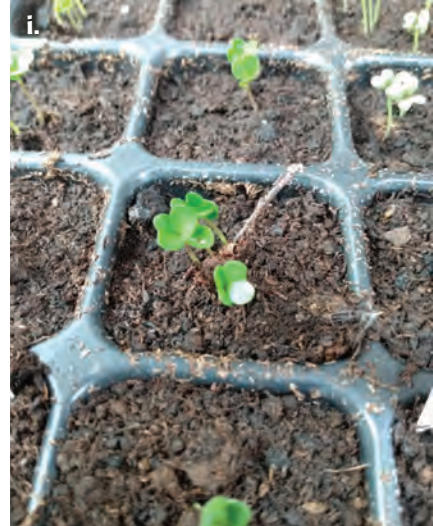
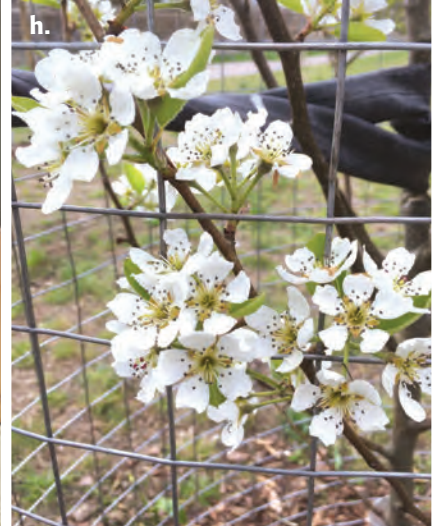
Has become much more than just an allotment group. We all got together to make it a place of solace for those with physical and mental health difficulties. We contacted those who were shielding or who just could not get on site, to see if we could take over their space until it was OK for them to return. Soon we had produce available for local foodbanks, a local hospice and other community groups. When it became clear Covid-19 was here for the long term, we applied for £27,000 in funding which enabled us to help even further. We also started produce days; anything we had grown was available to anyone who came along free of charge; most people donated something, which allowed us to spread the funds further.

**Memories of lockdown**

Caley members were asked to send in one photo with an accompanying sentence encapsulating how plants in their garden helped them through this difficult time.

**Page 117:** **a.** Juodupe grapes, an early ripening Lithuanian table grape, on 3rd August. Enjoyed because of the blueberry-flavoured fruit. Alan Smith, Glenkindie, Aberdeenshire. **b.** Dwarf cherry grown in a container on south side of Edinburgh. Beautiful blossom, abundant, attractive fruit, and delicious to eat. Jennie Jackson. **c.** During lockdown, happiness was being in my garden and Meconopsis 'Mildred', bought at Gardening Scotland 2019. Sheila Whitehead, Livingston. **d.** While weeding a Morningside garden this peacock butterfly landed on a dandelion which I was about to remove; perhaps a few weeds can be an asset in a garden! John Chalmers, Edinburgh. **e.** Part of the pop-up plant trail in aid of the RNLI in Kinghorn, all plant stations socially distanced. Anne Carlaw, Fife. **f.** Rosa primula ....also known as the incense rose. A favourite rose which has delicate pale-yellow flowers throughout May and the added bonus of beautifully scented foliage. Gill Buchanan, Newington, Edinburgh. **Page 118:** **g.** The NHS rainbow created in my greenhouse from some spare pots, mini herb garden from recycled milk cartons and wind charm made from tin cans in my garden. Had to keep myself amused! Rhonda Reekie, Bucksburn, Aberdeen. **h.** Blossom on one of the apple trees in the new orchard at Saughton Park, Edinburgh, through the wire protecting cage. It shows nature blossoming during the lockdown and from within its own cage - here's hoping we have all blossomed too. Sarah Bennett. **i.** My lockdown photo memory is of the many and varied seeds that I sowed. Fresh vitality and new life amongst all the uncertainty. Kate White, Kinross. **j.** Squeezing in every last minute in my garden. Truly grateful to have had my own personal green space during lockdown. Karen Laing. **k.** 'Lockdown unlocked' I used my time to do woodwork and tend the garden, both of which bring great enjoyment. Robbie Brechin. **l.** Early on in the crisis our garden really became our front room. Colin Ainsworth, Fife. **m.** The rose in my Edinburgh front garden with a tree bumblebee. I don't know the variety; the rose came with the house. Gardening keeps me outdoors, busy, content and appreciating nature. Rona McDowall, Edinburgh. **n.** Spring colour from my alpine primulas. Pam Whittle, Borders. **o.** Tulips ready to burst into bloom in Sauchie Community Garden, a peaceful place to visit on my lockdown walks. Robert Ross. **Page 119:** **p.** My sunflower field is flowering!! I love them. They're 7ft tall and turn their big, happy, yellow faces to follow the sun. Sarah Curtis, East Lothian. **q.** We were very fortunate in Scotland to have a number of skilled, passionate and enthusiastic gardeners and horticulturists looking after our gardens and plant collections during the lockdown. This picture was taken at midday on 12 May on a beautiful spring day when the Botanic should have been very busy with visitors. The only person in picture is skilled alpine grower Elspeth MacKintosh. David Knott. **r.** I love this Choisya, I can see it across my garden; it brightens up a slightly shady area. My first successful cutting taken more than 20 years and two house moves ago. Napolie Kennedy, Blackhall, Edinburgh. **s.** Dierama, the angels fishing rod, is a graceful South African plant that enjoys a sunny spot in our garden with a lacecap hydrangea in the background. William Tait, Edinburgh. **t.** I have been so lucky to be able to garden throughout lockdown. I love the combination of Acer palmatum dissectum 'Garnet' with Saxifraga umbrosa. Jacquie Ekwin, Duddingston, Edinburgh. **u.** Even a neglected patch of kale like this one provides food for bees. Jean Gavin, Glasgow. **v.** I love everything about the tall spires of lupins and usually grow purple ones. This year, I added some white lupins to the borders and I cannot get enough of them now! M. T. O' Donnell. **w.** This ceanothus brightened our garden and attracted hundreds of bees. Clive Davies, Longniddry. **x.** Twelve weeks, no family or friends but the pond is a thriving community. Kathryn Pitts, Penicuik.









## Scotland's Gardens Scheme

Following Scottish Government guidance, we were able to open our participating gardens again in July, although far fewer in number than the 500 openings originally planned. Some opening dates had passed and other garden openers decided to wait and see how things progressed. We are very grateful to those who did open and we still managed to have a good programme. Although it's been a difficult year with income seriously reduced, we learned how gardens can open during the pandemic, with social distancing measures in place, for example, the use of one way signage, entrance by exact change only, donations in a bucket, extending opening hours to allow visitors to spread out over a longer period of time. Ongoing guidance coming from the Scottish Tourism Alliance and Visit Scotland has been really helpful. All this enables us to plan for next year. We were also hugely encouraged- and touched- to hear from visitors who really valued their garden visits this year. Our District Organisers are now working on

garden openings for next year's Guidebook and web listings, and we're encouraged to note that many individuals and groups are still keen to open their gardens. While it is hard to know what 2021 will throw at us, we do know that of all attractions, gardens and open spaces have been the most accessible throughout the restrictions this year. New audiences have been drawn to gardens and gardening at this difficult time by the need to spend time outside. This has meant a new appreciation of gardening with according to the Horticultural Trade Association three million new gardeners with a younger age profile. That's good news for the Scottish horticultural community as we welcome new gardening enthusiasts into the fold.

*Liz Stewart, National Organiser,  
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[www.scotlandsgardens.org](http://www.scotlandsgardens.org)*



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## Beautiful Scotland

The usual competition had to be cancelled so a celebration day was organised for 17th September which would have been the date of the national awards presentation. Community groups showed some of their 2020 activities virtually while electronic tours of some well-known gardens were also available. A **Brighter Bervie** volunteer led a virtual walk through their Voyage of Life community garden. **Brighter Bucksburn** showed off their planters. **Brighter Bothwell's** canine mascot Bobby Bothwell took viewers on a virtual tour round the town, where a rainbow was prominently displayed, looking at planters, community gardens and wildflower areas. **Coupar Angus Pride of Place** featured the work they are doing to enhance biodiversity in and around the local burn. **Cove in Bloom's** video took viewers on a car-based drive as though they were the judges. **East Haven Together**, on the Angus coast, was one of several communities to invite the public to join a virtual tour meeting the volunteers and showing activities, including planting kidney vetch for the small blue

butterfly. The group's mantra for the summer was 'edge, weed, hoe and mow'. **Growing Kirkcaldy** have had to take over responsibility for many beds and planters due to council cutbacks. Part of this involves replacing annual bedding with more sustainable perennials including an attractive stumpery with ferns and other woodland plants. The group is also working to improve their seaside esplanade which is such a prominent feature of the Long Toon. **Inspiring Inellan** on the west coast provided a humorous tour, to Scottish music, visiting group projects, meeting the Vikings and getting a glimpse of the weather the community has to contend with. **Inverurie Improvement Group's** video explained how their projects are funded, planned and put into action, including the benefit of working with local business in the Inverurie Business Improvement District. The day closed with the participants raising a glass or cup in a virtual toast.

*Juliette Camburn, Co-ordinator, Keep Scotland Beautiful Glendevon House, The Castle Business Park, Stirling FK9 4TZ.*



## Scottish Horticultural Medal

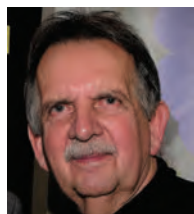


**Euna Scott** was appointed Bloom Campaign Co-ordinator by Perth & Kinross Council in 1993. She helped to establish the local authority's *Take a*

*Pride in Perthshire* campaign working hand-in-hand with the new voluntary Bloom Groups. There were just two committees in 1990 which rose to 28 by 1998. Numerous awards for local communities quickly followed at both Scottish and UK levels. In 2011 history was made when three Perth & Kinross Communities, Comrie, Pitlochry and Perth, competed in the Champion of Champions category in Britain in Bloom. Euna combined her full-time role with the council with that of chair and volunteer of the multi award-winning Perth in Bloom Committee. Perth in Bloom won eight Britain in Bloom Awards and two Queen Mother's Birthday Awards under Euna's chairmanship. In February 1998 she was a founder member of the Take a Pride in

Perthshire Association. She played a vital role in the smooth running of the association for 18 consecutive years, firstly as Project Co-ordinator, then as Secretary and as the Council Representative. She was also an active member of the Royal Horticultural Society of Perthshire including the role of President. In 2009 Euna was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Honour's List *for her selfless dedication to local communities and their environment and improving the quality of life in Perth & Kinross*. Euna is now retired, but she hasn't hung up her gardening gloves. She is an expert Fuchsia grower and a regular prize-winner at shows. She is currently Secretary of the Perth & District Fuchsia Society.

## Dr Andrew Duncan Medal



**John Smith** has spent a lifetime teaching and imparting enthusiasm, knowledge and professionalism into both young and more mature people hoping to make a career

in horticulture. His early career involved working for RBGE, SASA and local authorities before he became a lecturer at Oatridge College in 1986. For almost 30 years John has taught horticulture, turf care, forestry and social and therapeutic horticulture, sometimes unpaid. He helped get the Caley's Grow and Learn programme started and was key in writing and structuring the Master Gardener programme. John has never stopped learning himself continually developing his skills to be a better educationalist. Recently John set up his own consultancy business continuing to impart his knowledge. He taught students from 1986–2010 but also supported charities that have education at their core. He is still a member and trustee of Trellis and Scottish Gardeners' Forum as well as a member of Thrive and a previous council member of the Caley. His almost 50-year career in horticulture is an example of perseverance and dedication to any aspiring young gardener.

### **The Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Memorial Medal**



**Keith Jackson's** first career was in the police service. He has over 30 years experience in community horticulture having founded and chaired Falkland in Bloom, leading them to success in Beautiful Scotland, then Britain in Bloom as winners of the small village category. They won the champion of champions category two years in a row. Falkland then won the European Entente Florale. After retiring from the police he was recruited by the head of Fife parks to co-ordinate community horticulture throughout Fife. He organised Beautiful Fife which involved around 60 communities improving their local environment using a similar structure of categories and awards to Beautiful Scotland. Besides enhancing the Fife environment this experience has led a series of Fife communities to further success at both Scottish and UK levels. Keith has chaired the Beautiful Scotland Advisory Group and

chaired the Britain in Bloom Regions and Nations until the formation of a Federation in October 2013. A former member of the RHS Britain in Bloom Development Steering Group, he chaired the Judges' Working Group of the Britain in Bloom Federation and is a UK finals judge. He has been involved in several very successful large scale exhibits at Gardening Scotland and Dundee Flower Festival with Fife Council then with Jon Wheatley Associates for organisations such as Poppy Scotland and the Caley.

### **Lifetime Achievement Award**



**David Sinclair** trained as a horticulturist at Reading University but ended up working with young people and building a career in Community Education.

When he retired, he was Head of Service for Community Education with the City of Edinburgh Council. Since his retirement he has completed an HND in Horticulture with Plantsmanship at RBGE and devoted his time to supporting The Caley and voluntary youth organisations. In his hometown of Linlithgow David supervised the establishment of Annett House Museum Garden and its volunteer programme. He took over the Caley study tours in 2004. David's last study tour was to Shropshire, Staffs and Derbyshire in 2007, although in 2011, supported by David Ferro, he organised the tour of Cornwall gardens. He was secretary of the spring show for years and remained on the committee after he resigned the post. His organizational skills and management of volunteers were exemplary. He was involved with Gardening Scotland from its inception in 2000 and was integral to its success. He organised the Caley volunteers from the beginning. He not only organised the judging panels with Jim Jermyn but re-arranged the judging criteria, something that other shows benefitted from. He was secretary of the Caley Education Committee for years. David worked with John Smith initiating the Recognition of Individual Achievement in Horticulture Award for people who found

mainstream learning challenging. It grew into the widely acclaimed Grow and Learn programme with projects all over Scotland. David was involved from the very start with the Caley Demonstration Allotment in Edinburgh. Since then he has been a stalwart member, driving in from Linlithgow every week. He was also a valuable member of the Caley Council for eight years. Finally, no Caley event which involves fundraising could do without David's raspberry jam and wonderful scones.

### Certificates of Merit



**John Nicol** is the guiding light in Kinnesswood in Bloom. He is a quiet and methodical organiser. He plans the year ahead for the group by organising

the plant requirements, as well as visiting the suppliers to ensure quality is maintained, and as the season progresses suggests the order that tasks should be carried out. John is keen to stress that the success of Kinnesswood in Bloom is a team effort, although the Bloom team are also keen to stress that without John their successes would be limited. He helps the pupils at Kinnesswood Primary School learn about gardening from pond dipping to growing edibles. In 2019, with John's guidance, Kinnesswood won a Gold Medal in Beautiful Scotland while in the Take Pride in Perthshire competition Kinnesswood has won Gold and the Small Village Category together with Best School Working Partnership, with a special award to John for his outstanding contribution.



**Kathryn Pitts** is a keen amateur gardener and an active member of her local Penicuik Horticultural Society. She was elected to the committee as minutes

secretary in 2012 and became president the following year, a post which she has held ever since. She joined the council of the Scottish

Gardeners' Forum in 2016, initially updating and organising the Judges and Speakers Registers. She became vice chair in 2017 and in 2019, when the president became ill, took over as interim chair. Besides running local flower shows in both spring and autumn Penicuik mounted impressive displays at Gardening Scotland. Kathryn has proved herself to be a positive, constructive and enthusiastic member of both Penicuik Horticultural Society and the Scottish Gardeners' Forum.



**Coral Prosser** was one of the founders of BISCOT, the international exhibition of botanical art and illustration which in 2019 held its fifteenth annual exhibition at Gardening Scotland and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Starting from the suggestion that botanical artists should be able to exhibit in Scotland, rather than having to take their work to the RHS show in London, Coral assembled a small committee in 2005. With support from the Caley and RBGE, she has steered it to the successful and internationally acclaimed exhibition which it has become, showcasing the work of many well-known and up-and-coming botanical artists. She has placed Scotland firmly on the world map of botanical illustration. In addition, she has taught botanical painting at the RBGE, exhibited both at BISCOT and RHS Malvern, and she was part of the committee which put together the Flora Scotia exhibition in the RBGE as part of the Worldwide Season of Botanical Exhibitions. Coral's contribution to botanical art in Scotland has been outstanding.



**Peter Sandwell** has worked in horticulture for 46 years. He started as an assistant green-keeper at Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club. After Askham Bryan

College in York, Peter moved to Dundee City Council and worked as a technical assistant, horticultural officer, principal business development officer, and finally environmental asset manager, a position he retired from in September 2019. He led on major council greenspace improvement plans and projects, Beautiful Scotland and Britain in Bloom competitions and has transformed the Dundee Flower and Food Festival from a local gardening show into a three-day horticultural extravaganza in his role as organiser. Peter has been the foundation upon which all things environmental, horticultural and community have been built over many years both in the council and more widely in Dundee. Peter has long involvement with the Beautiful Scotland and It's Your Neighbourhood campaigns, initially as an entrant and later as an assessor. Before his retirement, Peter also led on the Keep Scotland Beautiful Green Flag and Seaside Awards for over 20 years. In his own time, Peter assesses both IYN and Green Flag parks, gently passing on his enthusiasm and expertise, inspiring communities and individuals to showcase their local projects and talents. Peter is the embodiment of commitment to the public horticultural sector. His knowledge and passion for horticulture will be sorely missed by his team and all the community groups he supported.



**Sandy Scott** has been contributing to public horticulture in Aberdeen for 40 years. He started gardening aged 14 in a local nursery then became an apprentice gardener with Aberdeen City Council in 1979 serving his time in Amenity Horticulture. He steadily progressed through to become area officer responsible for over 100 staff. His last post was to head a team developing strategies for the city's parks and open spaces, including the Duthie Park Heritage Lottery Fund restoration project and Hazlehead Park, Scotland's first Climate Change Park, and the location for

two superb rose gardens. He was heavily involved in the change of emphasis within Aberdeen Parks dept which saw a reduction in traditional labour intensive displays of seasonal bedding to more emphasis on partnerships with local community groups in the city; there are now nearly thirty of these groups. One example of their value was the huge cleanup operation after the serious flooding in Seaton Park due to Storm Frank in December 2015. He has also encouraged schools and other youth groups to use the parks. He chaired Aberdeen's allotment forum and sits on many friends and community groups. He is often asked to give talks on Aberdeen's heritage of parks. Sandy has been chair of Aberdeen in Bloom and has many years' experience encouraging voluntary groups. He is a Beautiful Scotland judge and often represents The Beautiful Scotland campaign. He wrote a definitive article on Aberdeen's parks for the Caledonian Gardener in 2017.



**Louis Wall** trained at Probus Gardens, Cornwall. Louis is a keen railway enthusiast and in 2011 he started SWRAGG the South West Railway Adopters Gardening Group. The gardens he has created at stations such as Ayr, Dumfries, Irvine, Stranraer and Troon all reflect a trend towards biodiversity, plus pockets of 'incredible edibles.' He inspires his fellow volunteers and visitors to his stations to think creatively and see that any dead space can be brought back to a living one. What Louis has achieved in making numerous railway stations colourful is immense. He travels on buses and trains tending to station gardens and planters. Such travel is of course more eco-friendly and even taking a water bowser on the bus is not a deterrent for Louis. A visit to any of Louis' stations and time spent in his company can only enrich any horticulturist and increases one's knowledge of how to run a highly successful community gardening programme.



**Anne Webster**, along with her husband, runs the high-quality Ashbrook plant nursery. Her skilled horticultural team includes students from Dundee & Angus

College whom she encourages. Anne and the team at Ashbrook help local community garden associations such as Colourful Carnoustie, Brechin in Bloom and Edzell Village Improvement Society to source plants for their displays. They also host visits from local schools and groups and regularly give talks and demonstrations. The nursery's open days and fun days raise money for local charities and good causes such as youth music, The Learning Tree Partnership and Friends of Keptie Pond. Anne and her staff grow and supply plants, with the proceeds from sales going to the Trellis therapeutic gardening network.



**Tom Williamson** is dedicated to his Bonnybridge garden. The garden has an extensive plant range of c680 different plants, 240 pots and containers and

includes a cottage garden where many old and forgotten herbaceous plants flourish. Tom opens his garden under the Scotland's Gardens Scheme which attracted over 160 visitors in his first year, raising £1000 for charity. Tom and his garden have featured on Beechgrove in the Scottish Farmer and several horticultural magazines. Tom has glaucoma and problems with his sight but is determined to encourage others to use gardening as a hobby and as a self-help therapy.

### Caley special award



**Gill Anderson** has played a key role in the operation of the Caley for many years, making sure that members attending lectures had the opportunity to meet

socially with a tea or coffee at the end of the evening. Over the same period, she provided catering for volunteers for the Caley spring flower shows. She has also been a regular volunteer at Gardening Scotland. Another important role played by Gill has been the organisation of the annual Caley Charity Knitting Challenge at our spring shows, displaying the resulting products there before they are distributed to deserving charities in Eastern Europe, Africa and also closer to home. These have included garments for premature babies, beanie hats, baby clothes and bed and cot blankets. Gill has also been a regular successful exhibitor at the spring shows over the years, sometimes beating husband George with some of her wonderful daffodils and hyacinths.

### Carter Patterson Student Memorial Medal



**Tim Turnbull's** first interview for an apprenticeship with the National Trust for Scotland showed that he had a passion for horticulture. Since his

first day on the job he has been, hardworking and committed, acquiring new skills quickly and enthusiastically. He consistently scores highly in college assessments and workplace tests. In the college environment he has been a key member of the class encouraging and supportive to other class members. Tim is an excellent team worker, showing great empathy with everyone he meets, whether workmates, members of the public or classmates at SRUC Oatridge Campus. During his first year at Crathes Castle Garden Tim impressed with his horticultural knowledge and has also enjoyed taking part in a television interview about Crathes. He has impressed one of the major donors of the NTS apprenticeship scheme and been recognised as one of their top apprentices.





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