

Since my stay at the Eden Project and Heligan in January and February, much has happened that has broadened my perspective of horticulture and brought me in touch with many fantastic people.

March in Devon was wet and rainy, but the garden staff was welcoming and eager to put me to work. From mulching the new car parks with Martyn of the arbor team, to fixing turf edging with Patrick near the front entrance, the wet spring held a lot of practical work. The surrounding countryside was still hanging on to the grey scene of winter when I arrived, but slowly the garden began to brighten up. As bulbacodium Narcissus burst forth from the turf, I pruned trailing roses and wall trained



Charlie and I at Slapton Sands

*Chimonanthus* in the cottage garden. There was plenty of mulch to be applied and last years dead growth to be removed from perennials after winter. My time away from the garden was partly spent in Dartmoor with Charlie Ives, a previous Fellow, exploring The Garden Room and seeing the Slapton Sands beaches of Devon. More amazing sights to check off my list of the UK. As I travelled, my appreciation for so much geographic diversity in such a small nation continued to grow. In the last week at Rosemoor, I saw a noticeable improvement in the

weather and a chorus of spring flowers. I also saw some of the largest *Nothofagus obliqua* and *N. antarctica* that I have seen in the UK.

Upon finishing my placement at Rosemoor, I traveled far north to Edinburgh to spend three weeks at the fabulous Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, working with staff to divide, repot and care for the impressive, large and comprehensive Zingiberaceae collection housed there. That was truly a highlight of my trip, getting to wander through rows of steamy tropical gingers, many beginning to flower with the onset of some bright weather in the beginning of April. While I was working at the garden, I received a publication by Dr. Mark Newman who has done extensive work in Vietnam and Laos, surveying and collecting gingers. I also got to talk to Dr. Axel Poulsen, who has done a major revision on the torch gingers, *Etlingera*. It was he who led me around the herbarium at Edinburgh and introduced me to his pickled ginger flowers and other specimens.

At Edinburgh I was privileged to work with the *Zingiberaceae* collection, but I also got to work with several projects revolving around native flora of the Scottish Highlands with a friend named Gavin Powell. With his guidance, I got to divide and repot *Cicerbita alpina* to be reintroduced into the wild. I was also able to help inspect plots of potted *Euphrasia arctica* and *E. fouldensis* for



*Narcissus bulbacodeum* at Rosemoor



*Globba brachyanthera* var. *rubra*



A native *Sorbus* from the Isle of Arran.

germination. Additionally, we also sorted and worked to differentiate a native *Calamagrostis* species from a non-native more competitive species of the same genus, *Calamagrostis stricta*. Outside of that, I was also involved with a weekend planting of native Scottish plants and the removal of gorse from an area of Calgary Hill. This is one of the tallest highest viewpoints in Edinburgh and the site of an unfinished coliseum.

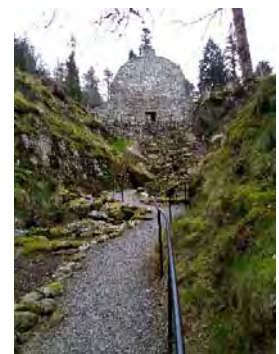
In the middle of April, I said goodbye to the lovely staff of RBGE, and traveled to the Northeast to RBG Benmore, near the peninsular town of Dunoon. Here,



Me with an *R. macabeianum*

life moved at a slower pace, and a magnificent, informal garden was formed from the remnants of a Sitka spruce plantation. Under the direction of their curator Peter Baxter, Benmore seeks to creatively display native flora from Japan, Chile, China and the Himalayas. I went to work for two weeks at this garden in the Chinese and Himalayan rhododendrons. In here, we removed invasive perennial shrubs, Sitka spruce seedlings and pruned and transplanted multiple specimens. I was especially impressed by the *Rhododendron falconeri* and *Rhododendron macabeianum* collections that were showing their stunning red and yellow flowers. The *Neriiflora* subsection rhododendrons of the Himalayas were also flowering a gorgeous red.

Additionally, Benmore had an incredible fernery that was reconstructed from a Victorian era fern house. Its precarious position on a cliff made for an



The Benmore Fernery

impressive sight! In fact, I was heavily impressed with the entire garden's use of elevation change and steep ledges. The horticultural staff embraced a "play the hand you're dealt" attitude that was refreshing and energetic.

The time since my travels at Benmore has been a whirlwind of sight, sound and color. The last week of April I had the pleasure of flying to Northern Ireland for a joint RHS Bulb Committee and Northern Ireland Daffodil group show in Belfast. Over that trip, I had the pleasure of meeting the president of the RHS, Sir Nicholas Bacon



Belfast Botanic Garden

and visiting the botanic garden in Belfast. We also had a lovely time at the fantastic Mt. Stewart garden in Ireland and at the home and garden of the pioneering *Narcissus* breeder Brian Duncan.

In the month leading up to the organized chaos of the Chelsea Flower Show, all hands were on deck at the Chelsea Physic Garden next door. Here, I worked beside a small, faithful garden team to create a dicot order bed that was perfectly manicured and filled with pea sticks for growing perennials. I was involved with rotations of annual displays of tulips, removing a whole bed of white and green tulips so that their bed could be filled with more appropriate summer colors. Weed pulling, gravel raking, watering and tying in was done across the four-acre garden, for the deluge of footfall that inevitably graces this small London proving the longevity and resilience of a garden that has survived nearly three and a half hundred years.



Mt. Stewart

preparing in garden;

Days under glass were spent tending to a Pelargonium collection started 1724 or damping down walls and controlling pests in the (hopefully) steamy tropical corridor. Gingers were transplanted to new pots; fresh, draining media was mixed for them and they were placed back in the conservatory where we awaited an eruption of new stems.



Dicot order bed at Chelsea Physic Garden

Fabulous mixed borders at the physic garden were cleaned and weeded, preparing them for all the eyes that would search over them in excitement in the coming month. I traveled from Cyprus to California to China in seconds by perusing the different beds in the garden, each segment jam packed with native flora from specific region. The biggest avocado I had ever seen in a temperate climate sat just out of the shade of an enormous zelkova that embraced the offices and gardeners' cottage. Hops climbed up poles in the Philip Miller beds, while ferns thrived in the fernery and its cases. Lunch time was filled with exotic cheeses, fruits and all the fancy shops around London could offer. The staff at Chelsea Physic garden including Jess, Nell, Nuria, Jeff and Allison were welcoming, curious and hard working. Everyone was willing to include me in their daily tasks and projects, so I got to be involved in every part of the garden. A truly busy month.

The last two weeks of May involved coughing from plane trees, and the incredible Chelsea Flower Show. Beginning with my brief words at the Sloane Club to GCA members and a rendezvous with Claudia Lane and previous GCA Fellows, the flower show was a spectacular display of what talented designers and faithful crews could accomplish in mere days. I was blown away by the show and artisan gardens present. The floral marquee was breathtaking and there was a fabulous stand of flowers everywhere you looked. I must also remark that the weather for the show was terrific



The Barbados stand at Chelsea Flower Show

and that my girlfriend Ayrianna was equally impressed with the lavishness of the show.

The very last week of May was filled with touring my Dad and stepmom around London. As if to wave the flower show goodbye, the weather cooled down and clouded over, marking the end of the UK summer. The city had many museums, galleries and Hampton Court Palace on view for my families' enjoyment. All in all, it was good to see my family again before my hasty and crowded train to Manchester.

June was filled with the aftermath of the flower show and the reception of many plants from the RHS Bridgewater garden designed by Tom Stuart Smith. Many of the plants from that design are now heeled into a long row at Bridgewater; a flash of beauty amongst the hustle and bustle of diggers and dumper and workers travelling to and fro. Bridgewater is very much a developing site, with most of the work including moving gravel, weed eating, mowing and sorting plants. The real planting has yet to begin and until the contractors are finished with creating the car parks and installing underground fixtures, the garden staff within the walled gardens are excavating and wiring ties to the walls. The arbor and outer walled garden teams continue to clear, clean and delineate paths and borders while a host of willing volunteers pour in to speed up the process. Bridgewater will be a dynamic garden and will provide a much-needed manicured green space, venues, shops and a place for healing and meditation to the people of Salford, Wigan and Greater Manchester.



Treasurer's House in York, England

Over my weekends, I got to visit Liverpool and several National Trust properties including the Treasurers' House and the incredible Quarry Banks. Although Manchester was quite rainy, even in June, the visit at Quarry Banks provided a refreshing break from the rain. Another weekend I was able to visit York and see the terrific sites like the York Cathedral. My hosts during June, a gardener at Bridgewater named Lisa Hudson and her husband Tom were fantastic hosts.



Aberglasney in Wales!

My final placement was a stunning month at the National Botanic Garden of Wales, where I got to work alongside Marilla Burgess. This massive glasshouse had beds devoted to all the Mediterranean climates throughout the world; South Africa, Chile, Western Australia, the Mediterranean Basin and California. In this incredible glasshouse, the largest single span house in the world, I took on the responsibility to rework and repair much of the drip and riser irrigation throughout the glasshouse. I was also able to visit and tour Aberglasney with good weather.

In total my time during the Interchange Fellowship was nothing short of life changing and I will treasure the connections I have made over my stay in the UK. I know that these friendships and the knowledge I have added to my skills will only further my development as a horticulturist and help to provide valuable insights at any gardens I work at in the United States.

I have applied to work as a horticulturalist at the North Carolina Botanic Garden in Chapel Hill. With luck I can continue my horticulture career in the United States and within public gardens as is my wish. I would like to thank everyone in the RHS and the GCA for all their help, especially Claudia Lane and Rowena Wilson for their endless patience, kindness and advice.

Sincerely,

Brady Hedgecock



Amongst the greenery of South Africa in the Great Glasshouse