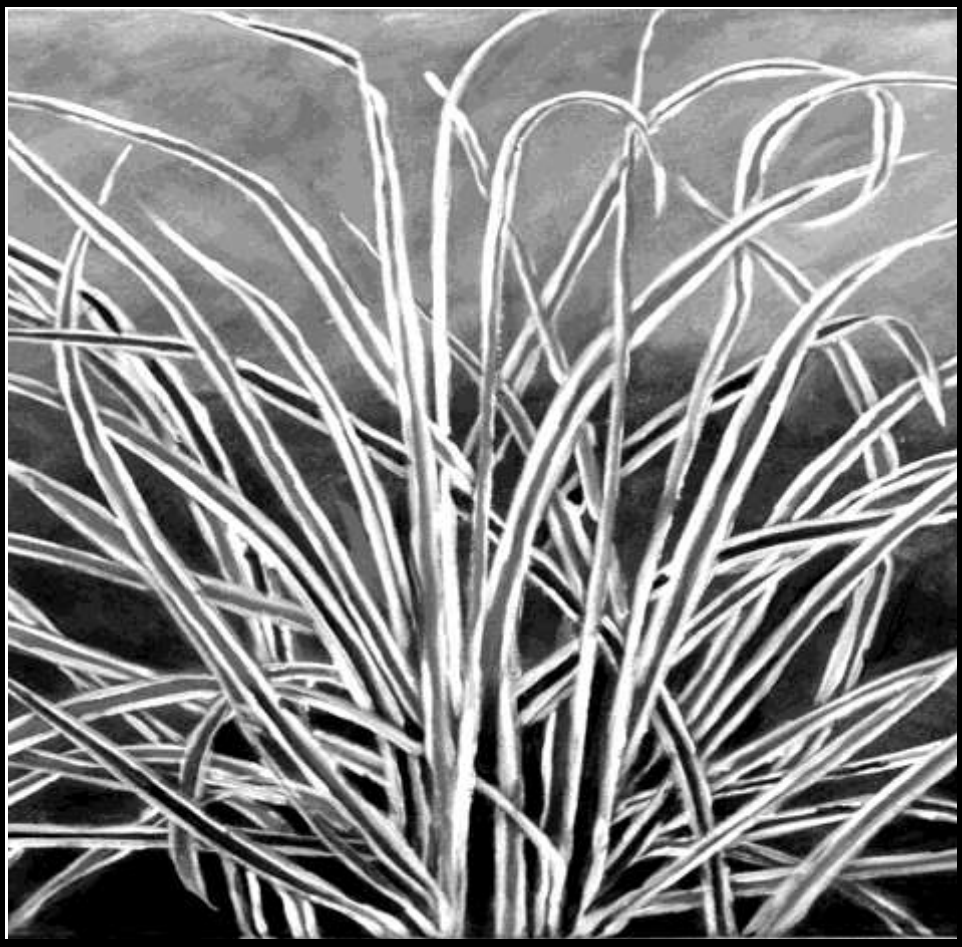
# The Newsletter of the Irish Garden Plant Society



Issue 110 October 2008

# *In This Issue*



Front Cover Illustration: *Carex oshimensis* 'Everest'

One of a range of new and interesting foliage plants developed at Fitzgerald Nurseries in Stonyford, Co. Kilkenny. FitzGerald Nurseries was established by Patrick FitzGerald in June 1990. The nusery was built in stages since then on the FitzGerald family farm in Co.Kilkenny Ireland. The farm land has been farmed by the FitzGerald family since the 1700's and was a typical traditional farm of the time containing aproximately 100 acres. There have been at least nine generations of the family involved in agriculture and horticulture on the family holding. Due to the major changes in agricultural production opportunities Patrick FitzGerald diversified from the traditional Cattle, Dairy and vegetable enterprises to focus mainly on nursery production. He established the nursery and specialized in the production of young plants for sale to growers in Ireland and now has an international business and reputation. Despite the demands of business, Pat retains a very keen interest in plants of Irish origin and connection and is an enthusiastic supporter of the ideals of the IGPS

# *Editorial*

All good things come to an end and so it is with my time as editor of the newsletter. I have enjoyed gathering together the work of so many kind and generous people over the past five years and will certainly miss the opportunities to correspond with such an enthusiastic and interesting group of people.

My parting words are not 'Goodbye' or 'Best Wishes' but a deeply felt 'Thank You'. The list of those to thank is a very long one and would fill many pages of this issue. Would a collective 'Thank You' suffice? I hope it does. Those who have corresponded over the last few years will know, I hope, how much I have appreciated their contributions. They have been the lifeblood of the newsletter and the quality of many of the articles carried in the newsletter compare very well with what one would read in commercially produced horticultural magazines. In fact, I believe that if the newsletter had a fault it was that it exceeded its brief and carried material which might have more appropriately been published in Moorea, the official journal of the Society. However, the newsletter was my little pride and joy and I was always delighted to have writing of such quality and felt the editors of Moorea could chase their own material.

Occasionally, days came when other things in life were more important than preparing an issue of the newsletter and on such occasions I always blamed Patrick Quigley for plonking me in this position. I had come to know Patrick, who was on the national committee at the time, and often complained of how centralised the activities of the society were and how people who did not live in Dublin, Cork or Belfast were out of range, so to speak, and that the IGPS did very little to encourage their participation. Patrick's response was always to tell me to get involved and when the position of editor became vacant he suggested I take it. Well, 'suggested' is a somewhat weak way of describing how it was put to me; it was more a case of 'put up or shut up'/ 'you wanted to be involved, so here is your opportunity'. I took on the position, to be honest, with no great reluctance and have enjoyed it greatly so that Patrick is thought of more fondly nowadays.

The national committee did what, I believe, was best for me and for any editor: they allowed independence while assuring support when needed. It was an excellent arrangement which suited me perfectly. I work best independently and while I believe teamwork is an excellent concept, I believe it would work most efficiently if the team realised that my way of doing things was really best after all.

Mary Rowe will be the new editor of the newsletter beginning with the January 2009 issue. Mary hardly needs any introduction as she has served the society in a variety of capacities over many years and will, I am perfectly confident, bring the enthusiasm and energy she has shown in other areas to bear on the newsletter so that it will go on to develop and improve under her care. She has my very best wishes and I ask the regular contributors and the occasional contributors to keep writing and keep Mary busy.

A final word on this topic; I could not let this opportunity pass without saying a very special thank you to that contributor who has never let me down, who has had an article in every issue I have edited, who forwards her material on each and every occasion without having to be asked and whose sense of wit and humour has entertained me and you over the past number of years. Yes, RaeMcIntyre is still fighting those weeds, up to her eyes in water, transplanting this to there and that to the other place and has portrayed the most pleasant and accurate picture of gardening possible. I have enjoyed her writings so very much and know from correspondence that she has a very appreciative readership among our members. Many thanks, Rae.

To present day matters: I had thought I might have an update on the society's plant conservation project for this issue but, unfortunately, do not have it to hand, prevented by pressure of work. I believe this is an excellent and extremely important thrust in the society's activities and feel that it is extraordinarily important to keep the members informed, updated and constantly invited to be involved. This can be done through the newsletter. On the other hand, there is a great need for members to become involved and take the workload off the shoulders of the very few who are carrying it at present. Please, do not imagine you cannot be involved or that your involvement would not be welcomed. If you were to take on the care of one single plant, propagate it and spread it about, you would have done an outstanding service to the conservation of Irish plants. So, get involved!

Finally, it is a special delight to see an Irish company developing, propagating and distributing Irish plants around the world having its work recognised by the leaders in this business. I refer to Pat Fitzgerald's Nurseries in Stonyford, Co. Kilkenny where Pat has developed a number of new Irish plants and whose plant concept "MyPlant" was voted best consumer concept by the International press at the Plantarium Show in Boskoop in the Netherlands recently – read further inside. As well as developing new plants, Pat has a very strong interest in the older Irish plants and has plans to continue this work of preserving the older Irish cultivars. It is a reminder that while we have wonderful old Irish plants, we also have many wonderful new Irish plants.

*With best wishes, Paddy Tobin*

***Contact Mary Rowe at: maryarowe@yahoo.com***

# *MyPlant™ Receives Major Award*

**MyPlant™** is a new concept developed by Fitzgerald Nurseries, based at Oldtown, Stonyford, Co. Kilkenny, a very successful Irish Nursery with an international reputation and leading the way in the production of new Irish cultivars. FitzGerald Nurseries new MyPlant™ concept is an example of good collaboration between companies in different countries coming together to produce and deliver a niche range of plants which are easy care, colourful, and aimed at younger to middle aged consumers who want all year round colour and form with minimum care.

On 26th of August MyPlant was voted best consumer concept by the International press at the Plantarium Show in Boskoop in the Netherlands. The chairman of the jury Mr Lieuwe Zander presented Mr Pat FitzGerald, Managing Director of FitzGerald Nurseries, with the top Plantarium Press award. Plantarium is one of the most prestigious shows in the European Nursery Industry. In accepting the award Pat said it was a great honour to receive such an important award especially as an Irish company coming to The Netherlands.

This is the company's second major European award in 2008 having won Best Plant in the patio and balcony plant category with *Phormium* 'Black Adder' at IPM Essen Germany, in January. IPM Essen is one of the world's most important Nursery Trade Shows. Phormium 'Black Adder' was bred at the company MyPlant laboratory here in Ireland.

The Plantarium 2008 Jury Chairman Lieuwe Zander had the following to say at the awards ceremony presentation on behalf of the International Press jury. *"MyPlant is an extremely interesting concept, with a beautiful product range with striking colours, for gardens, terraces and balconies. These are foliage plants that provide colour even during the winter. They are also extremely suitable for small rooms. This concept clearly focuses on a wide target audience. MyPlant is intended for consumers who may not have green fingers, but who do realise that plants are good for the living environment and that they will adorn their garden, terrace or balcony. These consumers want a wide range of products to choose from, but they also want to keep shopping simple. This group can be found in all age categories, yet particularly among 30 to 45-year-olds. They are open to new ideas, but have little spare time. The jury feels there is a large market for this concept and says it has a good chance in the retail channel."*

**Other awards at Plantarium 2008:** In addition to winning the top Press Prize FitzGerald Nurseries also had 1 Bronze medal winning plant, *Ceanothus* 'Tuxedo' and one silver winning plant *Carex oshimensis* 'Everest' both from their own breeding programme. In addition two bronze medal winners are produced exclusively by FitzGerald Nurseries for young plant sales in Europe.

*Ceanothus 'Tuxedo', one of the award-winning plants developed at Fitzgerald Nurseries*

***Carex oshimensis* 'Everest' (Silver Medal)** created amazing customer interest and comment at the show from visitors from Japan, USA, and Europe alike. It is clear that *Carex oshimensis* 'Everest' is set to become an outstanding plant in collections for patio and balcony.

It is worth considering for a moment the international nature of this business. *Ceanothus* Tuxedo (Bronze Medal), for example, is marketed in the USA and South Africa by Anthony Tesselaar Plants and in the rest of the world by Plantipp. *Ceanothus* Tuxedo is marketed in USA by Anthony Tesselaar Plants and produced by Pacific Plug and Liner, Watsonville, California. Irish plants, originating from the small village of Stonyford in Co. Kilkenny, are making their way right round the world. What an achievement for an Irish plant.

***Cordyline australis* 'Burgundy Spire™' (Bronze Medal)** Together with Anthony Tesselaar International FitzGerald had a bronze medal with Cordyline Burgundy Spire which is sold around the world by FitzGerald Nurseries and was bred in New Zealand by Mr Geoff Jewel a well known Cordyline breeder. Burgundy Spire is marketed worldwide by Anthony Tesselaar Plants, produced in USA by Pacific Plug and Liner and in Europe by FitzGerald Nurseries. Burgundy Spire is a truly fantastic bold Cordyline and is set to become an industry standard. Burgundy Spire is now on the market .

***Uncinia rubra* 'Belindas Find' (Bronze Medal)** FitzGerald Nurseries produce the bronze medal winner *Uncinia rubra* 'Belindas Find' from Plantipp and bred by Lyndale Nurseries New Zealand and marketed in Europe by leading Dutch plant licensing and marketing company Plantipp. 'Belindas Find' is an outstanding *Uncinia* and is likely to become a great success in the market as it provides an outstanding colour palette not already available in this form of plant. 'Belindas Find' is produced in Europe by FitzGerald nurseries.

The unique specialty for FitzGerald Nurseries over the past five years has been the development of patio and balcony foliage and architectural plants. It has also developed to become a major international player in what is termed 'Global Business' and the company ships to USA, Australia, South Africa and general European market. FitzGerald Nurseries new MyPlantTM concept is an example of good collaboration between companies in different countries where they have come together to produce and deliver innovative plant solutions for local markets. Their focus is on a niche range which is easy-care, colourful and focused on younger to middle aged consumers who want all year round colour and form with minimum care. The interesting aspect of this development is that plants bred in Ireland and New Zealand are now taking their role in urban planting and container gardening across the world. It is wonderful to see an Irish company, producing Irish plants having such an international success. May it continue and flourish.

# *At last…forecast is sunny and dry*

*by Rae McIntyre*

It is September 15th. On the front page of *The Daily Telegraph* it said 'At last … forecast is sunny and dry'. Under this heading it said "*The best weather for more than three months is predicted to bring a sunny end to the rain and cloud that has blighted the British summer."* That may be what is happening in Britain but here in the far north of Ireland it is raining. It is not the kind of rain that there is any doubt about. I don't look out of the raindrop-streaked windows and wonder if it is really falling. Instead it is coming down like stair-rods – a cliché, but true. Every tree and shrub in the garden is water-laden, and tall perennials like *kniphofia* and *acanthus* are sprawling drunkenly over borders.

Someone complained in one of the English papers about the *sodden credit crunched summer*. Someone else said summer had been bypassed and we were going straight from a cold wet spring into a cold wet autumn. Someone else again said that she preferred autumn to come before winter because it has been so cold at times.

And yet … summer is lingering. The only trees that are acknowledging the onset of autumn are the horse chestnuts and some willows and poplars. The chestnuts are doing their fiery colour-change thing in spite of the abundant rain but some willows and poplars are utterly hideous. The willows may have come into leaf early in spring but now, in spite of all the precipitation, they have turned an unattractive dirty muddy brown. The variegated poplar *Populus candicans* 'Aurora', that is so ubiquitous in Ireland, and which I have for a long time called the vomit tree has excelled itself in sheer hideousness this year. The sickly green and yellow variegation is not calmed but exacerbated by murky brown patches.

Weeds are still growing apace. I've been battling all non-summer against bindweed which Andy and I introduced inadvertently last year in imported top-soil. I've been untangling the long strands, stuffing them in polythene bags and zapping them gleefully with glyphosate but just when I think I have won the war a strand appears from nowhere so another battle takes place. I hope I am not tempting fate when I say I have much less ground elder than I used to. There was one particularly bad colony of it in a border at the bottom of a hedge in the stackyard which I could never spray because it was always full of ladybirds. I don't know what the attraction was but they were there until autumn last year. Before spraying the ground elder I went over it very

carefully (with a magnifying glass) and saw no ladybirds. There was no ground elder this spring and, I hate to confess, only a few ladybirds around.

Apart from Japanese knotweed which used to be in the garden and mare's tail which I still have, I didn't think that weeds could be much worse that convolvulus and ground elder. That was before I discovered the pernicious nature of plum suckers. At this point, gentle reader, I am about to return to the sheugh saga which I have dealt with in the past two issues so if you don't want to be bored senseless please stop here.

On the other side of the sheugh, at the bottom of the garden, there's a plum tree. It's a bullace, a wild plum tree closely related to the damson and, in alternate years, the branches are laden with small, sour dark plums from which delicious, but stony, jam can be made. This year is a rest year although there is still a reasonable crop. Instead the tree has put much energy into expanding its territory and there are suckers everywhere. Initially I thought that the strong woody little seedlings had grown from seeds or stones from the fallen fruit. They're not. The tree has somehow managed to have a complex network of root suckers underground and, above ground, the growth is like small dorsal fins in shark-infested waters. Andy sprayed these with brushwood killer on one of the very rare days when there was no wind, no rain and it wasn't going to rain. It had absolutely no effect. What I can't understand is how these suckers spread so much in what's going to be a border on the far side of the sheugh from the tree.

I've eventually decided what's going to be done with this border. It's where the *leylandii* hedge used to be and had three magnolias planted in it in the spring. Between the magnolias, which are well spaced out because they have great growth potential, are specimens in varying sizes of *Rhododendron yakushimanum* – not 'yak' hybrids but the species. These are natives of the island of Yakushima which is very wet and windswept and they do well here where it is also unequivocally wet and windswept. Planting the rhododendrons has not been easy because the plum suckers have had to be prised out first. As soon as I achieve this – although sometimes I think I never will – I am going to plant 100 'Rijnvelds' Early Sensation' daffodils here to cheer me in the dark days of January before the hellebores get into their stride elsewhere.

The swampy border in the stackyard has been a total failure since I removed all the damp-loving perennials from it. I had become fed up looking at these and decided to replace them with rhododendrons. At my age, and with thirty years experience of gardening behind me, I should have learnt some sense. Apparently not! Rhododendrons are not aquatic or even semi-aquatic which is what this border has become since the perennials stopped mopping up the copious moisture. So the latter are going to be reinstated. This time round instead of wishy-washy flowers like *Persicaria campanulata*, sparsely flowering *Rodgersia podophylla*, and the like, I'm going for the zingy colours of *Ligularia clivorum* 'Desdemona' (gourmet slug food)

the matching *Hemerocallis* 'Burning Daylight' and drifts of *Primula bulleyana.* That's the plan this month. Next month it will probably be changed again

Let's return briefly to the sheugh for what, I promise, will be the last time. All it needs are murky-leaved autumnal willows and *Populus candicans* 'Aurora' to make a tableau of extreme ugliness. The water in the sheugh itself has been running, as I hoped in spring, but has managed to acquire a thick coating of duckweed. Where does this wretched stuff come from? I'm constantly removing it by net from the three pools in the garden but I'm definitely not going to start into the sheugh which is about 35 metres long and has steep vertical sides more than a metre deep. Weeds grow lustily on the field side of it but glyphosate cannot be used because this sheugh runs into another, then another and finally into the Agivey River and there's enough damage being done to local waterways by slurry leaching in from fields.

Andy removed the *leylandii* hedge by cutting off the stumps at ground level but other trees like ashes and sycamores had grown in the banks. Their stumps are like so many decayed teeth and I'm going to cover these unlovely things with groundcover plants. *Vinca major? Cotoneaster horizontalis?* At least the soil is fertile judging by the weedgrowth.

## *VIOLA 'HELEN DILLON': REAL OR PHANTOM PANSY?*

*by Dr. Charles Nelson*

I wrote the following entries in *A heritage of beauty*:

**'Etain'**
**syn:** 'Helen Dillon' (see below)
Flowers creamy, edged with blue and with orange eye; 'yellow with a mauve edge'*, scented.

**Origin:** this is not an Irish plant, but was raised by Richard Cawthorne, one-time holder of the national collection of *Viola*.

**refs:** Rosemary Brown (*in litt.* 25 January 1998), M. May (pers. comm. March 1998); Beth Chatto (*in litt.* January 1998); Chatto, *Unusual plants 1997*, 121.*

'Helen Dillon' = 'Etain' (see above)

**Origin:** this viola came to Helen Dillon from Rosemary Brown's garden, Graigueconna, Bray, Co. Wicklow; Rosemary had grown it for many years. Helen Dillon passed it to Beth Chatto, Elmstead Market, Essex, and it was named after her, although it is correctly called 'Etain'.

**refs:** H. Dillon (pers. comm.); Rosemary Brown (*in litt.* 25 January 1998); *The RHS plant finder*.

In plain words, the consensus of opinion in 1997 and 1998 was that a *Viola* which was called 'Helen Dillon' was an already-named pansy which was correctly called 'Etain' (this name looks Irish but I suspect it isn't). Consequently the name 'Helen Dillon' should have dropped out of literature and should have ceased to be used by all and sundry.

However, that is not the case and the situation now is decidedly "muddy", with plants called 'Helen Dillon' still being marketed and *claimed* to be different from 'Etain' – see, for example, the May 2008 issue of *The garden* (Viva violas! pp298–301) in which 'Helen Dillon' (but not 'Etain') is pictured. It is possible, of course, that within the last decade there has occurred a mutation and two different clones of *Viola* are now grown under these names, or that the two were indeed different to start with in which case the plant that Rosemary Brown gave to Helen Dillon (in the early 1990s) was probably an unnamed clone. Helen has confirmed her opinion that the pansy is properly 'Etain' and that her name should never have been attached to it.

To attempt to resolve this conundrum, which has been discussed by the Royal Horticultural Society's (of London) Advisory Committee on the Nomenclature and Taxonomy (ACONAT, formerly APONAT), a "scientific trial" of *Viola* 'Etain' and 'Helen Dillon' will be held by the RHS at its Wisley garden, and any assistance with it will be more than welcome.

Does any member of the IGPS grow either 'Helen Dillon' or 'Etain' from stock that they obtained in the 1990s, perhaps from Helen or Rosemary (although that is not essential: any local Irish source is of interest)? If you do, *please* contact me, either by e-mail (use tippitiwitchet@zetnet.co.uk or editor@shnh.org) or by ordinary mail. I am especially keen to hear from anyone who has continued to propagate this pansy themselves without recourse to restocking from a nursery or garden centre.

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# *In a Garden of Death*

*by Bob Bradshaw*

We all wish our garden pests a speedy end, by organic or by other means, but on the whole little bad happens in gardens and death is not often associated with gardens. True, gardens are always transient places with plants coming and going all the time but there is a feeling of calm and continuity. This garden was for me to be slightly different.

Until very recently my job made me a world traveller. There were some crazy trips, out to Indonesia on a Thursday morning and then back in time for work in Dublin on the following Tuesday morning, after two full days of meetings, and also changing planes six times, was probably a little too compressed to be much fun. One strange thing I did discover is that while you will find it hard to view an exotic museum with significant jet lag, or an art gallery either, visiting a garden when just off the plane seems to work very well. Indeed the therapeutic, calming, value of seeing a garden in a strange city helped me often. There are so many gardens to visit in Kyoto, as some members already know, that no quick visit could cover them all. My trip there was very short, very intensive and with any spare time at the edges of the day. I was pleased to see that the spouse programme for the (mainly) wives of the conference delegates included a garden visit. Amazingly, it coincided with my one block of free time. I signed up, even if not really a "spouse".

After a bad scare when this diary gap was closed, and then rescheduled open again, I ran breathless from a breakfast meeting out to the waiting bus. Not late, but I was still in big trouble; I was a male; I was not from the Philippines and I was unknown to the rather social group of ladies who all knew one and other already. A few minor dramas about missing "friends" and we were off but I was still very much a man sitting alone, and suspect. Usually the social events at these international meetings are so strictly sanitised that any possible cause of controversy is airbrushed away, past and recent wars go unmentioned by default and colonial escapades are ignored. It was curious then that we were to visit the Murin-an, of all the gardens in Kyoto.

The Murin-an is a small squareish garden of 3,200 sq meters and it was built by Aritomo Yamagata in 1896 to accompany a tiny western villa he had constructed. The garden itself is by landscape architect Jihei Ogawa (1860-1933), perhaps the most famous local designer after Saito. Aritomo was a strong personality; he may have

issued strict instructions to his landscaper. It is what the Japanese call a *stroll* garden, designed to take you through a short walk, up a slight incline and back down again. Walking through this distinctive garden which borrows the natural mountain landscape of Higashiyama, through gaps in the trees, and uses the abundant water from the then recently constructed Lake Biwa Canal to feed a three tiered waterfall, with narrow streams and small ponds, you observe the plants and rocks and return refreshed, perhaps to take tea in the tea house. A small lawn there is usually seen as an early western importation into the Japanese garden style, one that had rather avoided lawns in favour of moss or gravel, - a very good practice in my view to avoid lawn and I often wonder why we make so little of moss in our gardens here, except to scarify it or to line baskets. It ought to work very well with ferns, as it often is used in Japan.

*Murin-an Garden. Photograph by Bob Bradshaw*

The Murin-an does not have particularly exotic plants, so I was able to curry favour with the ladies by elemental plant identification of azaleas and low growing maples. It must be really spectacular in the autumn but the soft green of the maples and strong use of ferns gave this small garden a woodland feel. It looked so natural, but nothing was

really natural, perhaps the ultimate tribute to a landscape designer. You can practically see all of it in these photos and there are no hidden corners or rooms. It is however, perfectly charming, with soft water sounds and it makes a lovely foil to accompany his small second home.

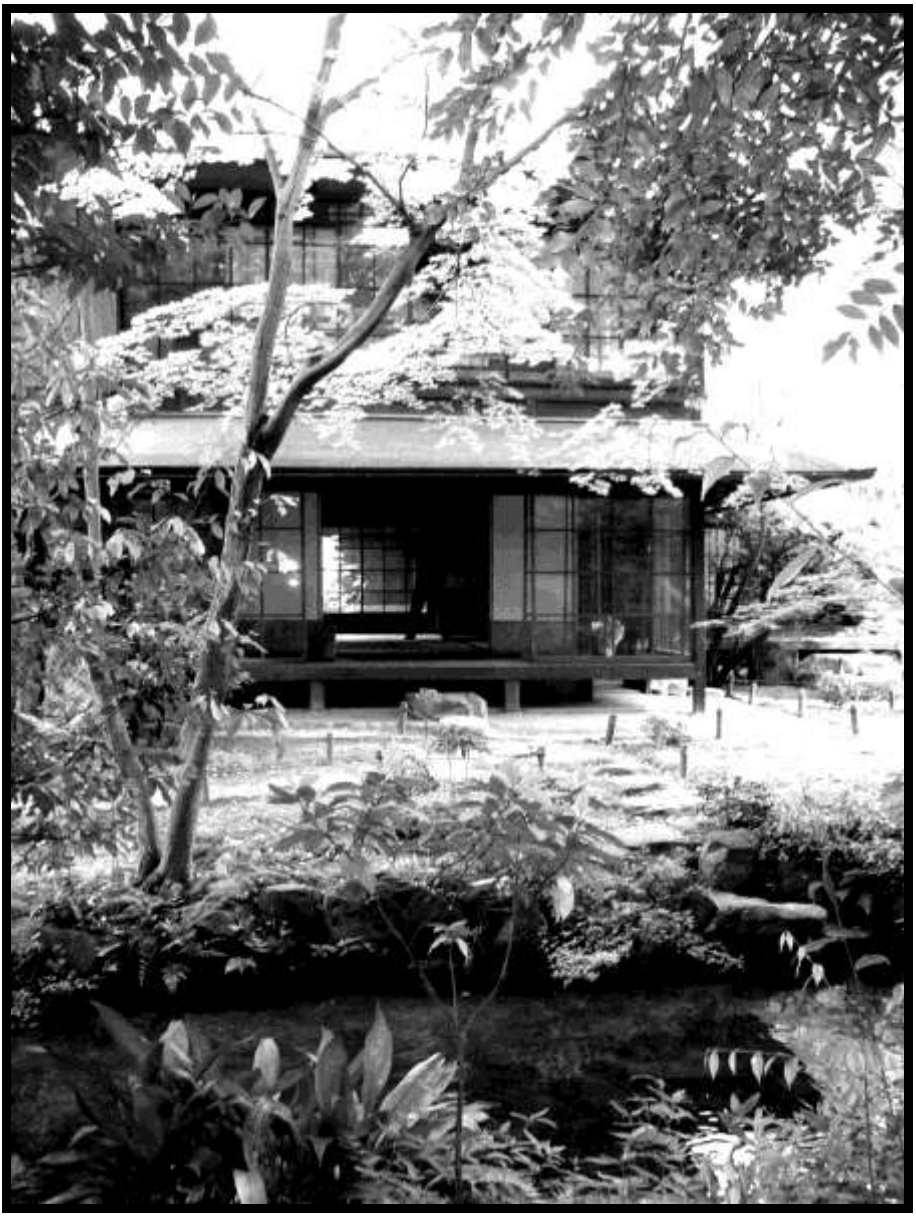
Yet, I was uneasy there as I sat on the steps looking out. I knew, as probably the others did not know, that something not very lovely had been agreed in this lovely space by the garden owner and his associates, something that has repercussions going on to this day. Is it really possible to divorce a garden from its context?

In 1903, the owner, then Prime Minister of Japan, met with other key politicians in this very house and, doubtless, with strolls in the stroll garden to break the tension agreed on the secret strategy for Japan to deal vigorously with conflicting claims by Japan and Russia for influence in China.

As a direct consequence of this conference, Japan began a war with a stunned and overconfident Russia. Japan issued a declaration of war on 8 February 1904. However, three hours before Japan's declaration of war was received by the Russian Government, the Japanese Imperial Navy attacked the Russian Far East Fleet at Port Arthur, an historic precedent for Pearl Harbour. In a long siege, Japan was ultimately victorious and a relief Russian fleet sent round the world from the Baltic, including many antiquated vessels, was massacred by Admiral Togo in the Straits of Tsushima, losing eight battleships, numerous smaller vessels, and more than 5,000 men, while the Japanese lost only three torpedo boats and 116 men.

The success of this robust strategy and the easy victories against Western powers encouraged the Japanese militarists. Aritomo Yamagata, the owner, who died in 1922, is often seen as the true father of Japanese militarism. Did the Filipina ladies, so bemused by me, see any link between the discussions once held here in his property and the destruction of Manila in World War II, as one of the final acts of Japan’s new militant policy? I somehow doubt it.

For once I was glad to leave a garden. I still do not know why, I can walk easily in the Phoenix Park without reflecting on the murder of Cavendish and Bourke, yet the Murin-an with all its borrowed scenery, carefully arranged walks and splendid trees rather scared me, even though it is long in the benevolent care of Kyoto City.



*Murin-an Garden. Photograph by Bob Bradshaw*

# *Keeping the Doctor Away*

*by Peter Milligan and Nicola Milligan*

One of the many 'old sayings' that I am sure we all heard as children was "an apple a day keeps the doctor away' – how true this is I can not say but I can say that the pleasure to be derived from growing (and eating) your own fruit is almost too good to be true.

When we moved to our current home there were a few old apple trees positioned about half way down the large front lawn. Sadly these trees, which had been damaged by an invasion of sheep that thought the bark of the trees was manna from heaven, were lost when repair work was carried out on old sewer pipes.

When the repair work was completed the entire front lawn was ploughed and re-sown. That took care of the lawn but what about the apples?

We decided to replace the trees but felt that the main lawn should be left undisturbed so an alternative site was required. We selected a section of ground, close to the house, that was surrounded on three sides by an old mixed native hedge, and with a south-facing aspect that was largely tree-free. It was sheltered and yet sufficient air circulated in the area to avoid any of the problems that can arise from a 'stagnant' site.

Then the interesting question arose - what cultivars to buy? It is sad that many modern cultivars have evolved to meet the needs of those who grow and transport the fruit rather than those who will eat the apples. The desire to have cultivars that produce fruit, of uniform appearance, in a short period of time and with a tough skin appears to have overridden the important factor of flavour. We decided that we wanted a range of apples that would give fruit, both for eating and cooking, and that would store well, while at the same time offering a good range of flavours.

In addition, all fruit trees have a pollinator requirement. The modern apple flowering period is broken into seven groups numbered 1-7. In general a variety will be pollinated by trees in the same flowering group and those in adjacent flowing groups, e.g. Group 4 is pollinated by Groups 3, 4 and 5. The only exceptions are the triploid varieties – those that are sterile and require *two* pollination partners for good fruit set. For example, both 'Bramley's Seedling' and 'Blenheim Orange' are triploid.

In the end we went for a mixture of old and new, whilst ensuring that all had the requisite numbers of pollinators. On the culinary side the choice was simple - 'Bramley's Seedling' (Nottingham, 1809) was a must as a good, all round cooking apple with a great flavour. According to Morgan and Richards [1] it is almost the only cooker grown commercially and remains a good garden variety. We supplemented this with the dual purpose 'Blenheim Orange' (Oxford, 1740) – initially this can be used as a culinary apple but as it ages it will sweeten and be useable as a dessert apple - and 'Howgate Wonder' (1915). 'Blenheim Orange' has quite a dry flesh and nutty, sweet flavour when fully ripe, and goes well with cheese. 'Howgate Wonder' keeps its shape well when cooked, so can be used to provide a bit of texture in apple pies and sauces, but we have found it a bit insipid.

On the desert side of things we are both big fans of Russet apples, so 'Egremont Russet' (Petworth, Sussex, 1872) and 'Ashmead's Kernal' (Gloucester, 1700) were selected. 'Egremont Russet' is probably familiar to everyone, as the most commonly sold commercial variety of russet apples around Halloween, and has a firm flesh which is sweet and nutty. 'Ashmead's Kernal' is rising again in popularity, having been winning taste tests for centuries. It has a firm crisp flesh that is very juicy and sweet with a beautiful aromatic flavour – we cannot recommend it highly enough!

Also on the crisp side of things are 'Spartan' (British Columbia, Canada, 1926) a fine-textured, juicy apple with a refreshing flavour, i.e. just the slightest bite, 'Katy' (a synonym for 'Katja', Sweden, 1947), a lovely sweet apple of firm flesh, and 'Winter Gem' (Faversham, Kent, 1975) which is crisp and juicy with pale cream flesh.

Currently there is one other apple, 'Discovery' (1949), which gives wonderful juicy sweet apples with an amazing aroma. If you like a softer apple this is definitely the one for you. Your friends and family will also adore you – it doesn't keep so is best passed around straight off the tree!

We were very fortunate in that our selected site was laid down in well cultivated lawn, saving us the need to remove any perennial weed.

The next important factor was to decide what rootstock to select for the trees. This was very important as the choice of rootstock will determine the ultimate size of the tree and, in many cases, determines when the tree would come into full production. The choice of rootstocks is quite wide and it was interesting to note how the numbering system has changed over the years. In the 70's very dwarf rootstocks were usually the Malling IX, or the 'more recent' Malling-Merton MM104 and MM106. Semi-dwarf rootstocks; recommended for average gardens were Malling IV and vigorous rootstocks, requiring a spacing of some 20 feet, would have been the MI and MII. Finally robust rootstocks, requiring a spacing of 20-30 feet and not coming into full production for some 15-20 years would have been MXVI and MM109.

For us, the process was somewhat simpler. We wished to have reasonably sized trees that would not require the purchase of a 'cherry picker' to gather the crop. We considered the choices and rejected the use of dwarf rootstocks (M27 – extremely dwarfing, M9 – very dwarfing and M26 – dwarfing) as we wished the trees to reach a reasonable height and, well, to look like real apple trees – trees grown on a dwarfing rootstock do not look the part. Obviously, to avoid the 'cherry picker' we wished to avoid the other extreme and so rejected MM111 and M2 – the very vigorous rootstocks. This left us the middle ground – MM106 which makes a good 'bush' tree around 12-15 feet in height and spread.

Having made this decision ground preparation was completed. Circles of turf 3 feet wide were removed, and the ground within those areas double dug to a depth of 2 feet. Some well rotted manure, our own compost, and a little blood, fish and bone meal were mixed and added to each planting hole and the site was deemed ready for the trees.

All of the trees were obtained as bare root stock in the dormant period. We are firm believers in buying direct from specialist nurseries as the quality of the stock obtained from such sources will, in general, far surpass the poor trees obtained in little pots from the garden centres. We opted to purchase from a nursery in Norfolk – Reads of Loddon – which was recommended to us by Alan Bloom. We visited the nursery, obtained a catalogue and then settled down to choose the cultivars. We opted to buy young trees and selected maidens (as opposed to maiden whips) – basically two year old trees rather than one year old tress.

This firm did not disappoint – our trees arrived in two batches over two seasons. On arrival they were inspected for any damage (of which there was none) and then stored in the old one-roomed cottage that doubles as our garden store/shed, and as the base structure for our *Rosa* 'Paul's Musk', prior to being 'heeled in'.

Once suitable dry, crisp weather arrived they were planted. Each tree was staked individually with a simple vertical stake and finished off with a small fence of chicken wire – to deter the rabbit population.

Once planted little needed, or needs, to be done. The ground around the trees should to be kept clear of weeds, grass, and any other invading growth to reduce competition to the young trees. This process can be carried out for a few years until the trees are well-established and then the grass can be allowed to grow in.

A watch is kept for any signs of pest or disease and spraying is carried out as required. To date our main problems have arisen from aphids which have been controlled with a proprietary spray when nature fails – 2006 was a superb year for ladybirds which munched their way through the aphids. A bigger problem arose from some 'brown rot' – a fungal infection – that occurred last year and caused a number of fruits to rot on the

tree. We have experienced some problems with canker – one tree has been saved but it is likely that we will lose another to this problem. On the whole we have been fortunate and the trees have prospered.

In the first few years apple production will be sparse and some books recommend that if fruit does set it should be removed. We decided to let nature take its course and allowed the trees to set whatever fruit they could. Last year, in their fifth year, we had what we would call a good harvest. The trees are still youngsters and will produce better crops as they settle in. Some trees will always be problematic, e.g. Ashmead's Kernal is notorious for bearing well but in alternate years. Bagnell [3] recommends thinning to two fruits per cluster to help prevent this. We do not care as the flavour of this apple is exceptional and well worth waiting for.

As usual, we like to include some book references. In addition to Morgan and Richards you might find the following of interest. A classic text in every sense is *The Apple* [2] by Hall and Crane – Sir A. Daniel Hall (K.C.B., LL.D., Sc.D., F.R.S.) was the director of the John Innes Horticultural institution and the text, dedicated to The Worshipful Company of Fruiterers, was intended to be a very formal treatise on all apple related matters. From the same era comes *Fruit Growing* [3] by Bagenal and the slightly later text, *Fruit From Trained Trees* [4] gives the view of fruit production in the 50's. The first book that I bought on the subject was *Planting Fruit Trees* [5] by Roy Genders and this is a good book for the beginner.

While I find these early texts fascinating (I like to compare gardening methods and practises across the decades) two more recent texts should be the bed time reading for all budding fruit growers. *Growing Fruit* [6] and *The Fruit Garden Displayed* [7], both by Harry Baker, are excellent reads. Mr Baker was the Fruit Officer of the RHS Garden at Wisley and is noted as a leading world authority on cool temperate fruit. Finally, the RHS Fruit Group publish occasional texts which cover diverse topics and generally provide a good mix of short articles on a variety of topics, e.g. *Fruit Past, Present and Future* [8] is such a text and is a very enjoyable read.

As usual we like to mention something with an Irish connection. Unfortunately, at the moment we do not have any native Irish apples. However, we do have a few spaces left, and there are plans afoot to extend the vegetable garden by adding some more fruit trees around its northern perimeter (to ensure that the trees will not interfere with the light as they grow in due course). This will enable us to add a few native cultivars and there is a wide range to choose from. The Irish Seed Savers organisation has collected over 140 native Irish cultivars and their list is a fantastic read. The only problem is that we want one of everything on the list!

However, a number of choice cultivars do catch the eye, e.g. 'Irish Peach' (Sligo, 1819) which appears to be 'best eaten from the tree' and is "noted as a beautiful dish

for dessert" [1], and 'Uncle Johns Cooker' named after John Daniels of Piltown, Co. Kilkenny and noted as a very wind resistant cooker.

Finally, my father grew a range of soft fruits at our cottage at Loughries – black currants, green and red gooseberries, and raspberries – we decided to follow a similar path and via Ken Muir at Croxley and Reads of Loddon in Norfolk, we purchased a range of bush and cane fruits, and subsequently, an old variety of strawberry, mentioned by Bob Flowerdew, but that is another story.

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***Editor's Note**: Peter and Nicola have said above that 'Ashmead's Kernal' is one of their favourite apples. Nicola has kept a photographic record of this apple during the season and I think the images are well worth your attention. I have included them below rather than disrupting the text above.*

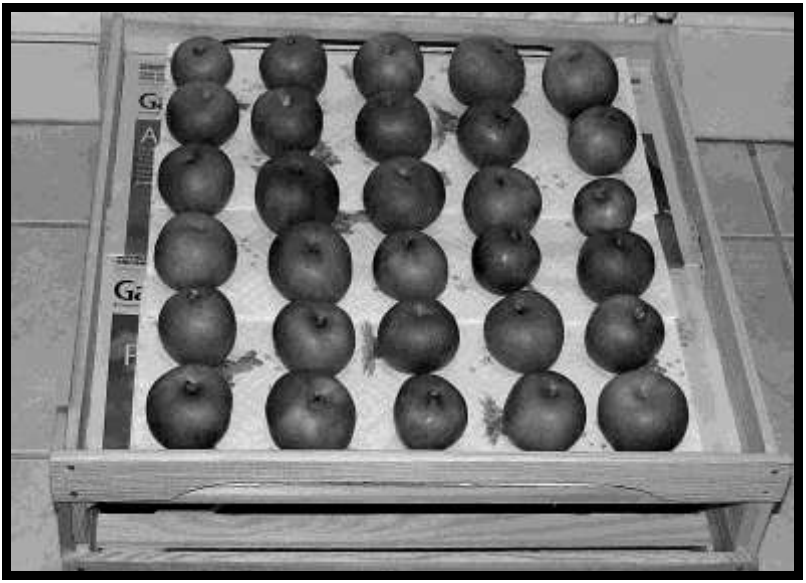
*'Ashmead's Kernal' in bud in April*

*'Ashmead's Kernal' with buds and first flowers in May*

*'Ashmead's Kernal' in flower in May*

*'Ashmead's Kernal' in fruit in July*

*'Ashmead's Kernal' in fruit in September*



*And finally, 'Ashmead's Kernal' in storage*

# *Out on Summer Pasture*

*by Paddy Tobin*

Last July, as I sat on the front terrace of a Swiss holiday hotel the peace of the evening was gently broken by the soft clanging of cow bells. The farmer and wife (or was it farmer and husband?) passed along with the herd, three cows and two heifers. The proprietor of the hotel arrived on the terrace and in our subsequent conversation told me that the rest of the herd was "on the Alps". Farms in the area are very small, she explained, and could only support a very few animals during the milking season so that the greater part of the herd (the other ten cows in the case of the couple mentioned above) were sent to the high pastures where they were in the care of a cowherd for the summer period; the milk being send down by train to the farm below where, nowadays, much is used to make cheese as this is more profitable than simple milk sales.

*A view of Wengen, taken from the village of Murren on the opposite side of the valley. P. Tobin*

While Swiss cows and farming methods are of passing interest it was the opportunity to see Alpine plants which had brought me to Switzerland, though cows were to play a part later in our week in the mountains. We were based in Wengen, a town high on the slopes of the Lauterbrunnen valley, south of Interlaken. Wengen has no road access though this does not seem to have hindered the development of its tourism as it now

has 2,000 hotel beds and a further 2,300 apartment beds. I read this with great surprise in one of those tourist information booklets and found it frightfully surprising as it seemed one of the quietest places I have ever stayed. The train station was the hub of activity and the village seemed to close down around six o' clock.

*Paris quadrifolia, a familiar plant from home encountered in woodland near the village of Murren. P Tobin*

Travel in the area is best by train. The Bernese Oberland Railway has connected Interlaken and Lauterbrunnen since 1890 and the Wengeralp Railway, a narrow-gauge cog railway, has run up and down the steep valley side between Lauterbrunnen and Wengen since 1893. The cobweb of railway lines and cable car services makes travel around the valley reliable, easy and enjoyable. All in all, Wengen proved an excellent location which gave easy access to the higher areas immediately about and also to other interesting areas in the vicinity.

There were several walks roundabout Wengen where one may see a wide selection of interesting plants with little effort – martagon lilies, several campanulas and phyteumas, innumerable dactylorhizas with *Aconitum napellus* and *Geranium sylvaticum* simply everywhere.

A five minutes cable car ride from Wengen to Mannlichen leads to a gentle walk to the railway station at Kleine Scheidegg along an area above 2,000 metres high, above the tree line and simply brimming with beautiful and interesting plants. The rhododendrons

of these mountains are *Rhododendron ferrugineum*, commonly called the Alpine Rose, and *R. hirsutum* and both are scattered about in good numbers. Also in generous numbers were several species of gentians, *G. verna, G. clusii and G. acaulis*, all sought after alpine plants, but the delight of that day was coming on a large patch of *Soldanella alpina* with a generous number of *Ranunculus glacialis* nearby in an area where the snow had just cleared. This was a special treat indeed as these flower immediately after their snow cover melts and I had doubts of coming on any during our visit.

A very interesting visit was to the Alpine Botanic Garden at Schynige Platte. This garden is run by a group of enthusiasts; there is no admission charge and the totally natural setting displays labelled plantings of a fabulous collection of alpine plants. In retrospect, it might have been a good place to start as it would certainly have made one more familiar with the plants of the area and would have made subsequent plant spotting all the more enjoyable. One plant seen there but not in any other locations was *Campanula thyrsoides*, an extraordinarily beautiful plant which I imagine would be good to grow in our gardens. And surprisingly, and disappointingly, it was only here and in a garden in Lauterbrunnen that we saw the famous Edelweiss.

The boundary between the Botanic Gardens and the surrounding countryside was a simple wire fence aimed, I believe, at keeping out grazing animals, and access to further walks on the mountainside around the garden was very easy. Our chosen route took us to a viewing point well above the gardens which gave great views down over Lake Brienz which we had toured by ferry on a previous day. Two small incidents here brought home to me the heights at which we were walking. While we were viewing the lake we were also looking down on a group of paragliders far, far below and also on a red helicopter which looked very like a Dinky model at the distance. I found it surreal to be looking down on both of these. On the train journey up to Schynige Platte we saw large numbers of *Gentian lutea* growing in the meadows but none was in flower higher up. It was here that the Swiss cows came once again to my attention. I took more notice of the plants on the way down and saw that the cows also liked the yellow gentian as many of them had been grazed but, fortunately, there were plenty left for the flower tourists to enjoy. By the way, observing plants, certainly such big plants, from the train was not a difficulty as the trains on the high slopes travel at a very slow pace.

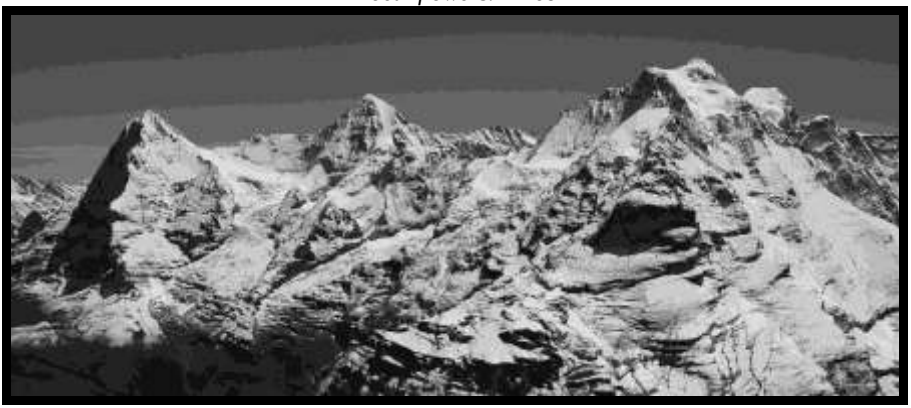
Another outing took us to the base of the Eiger and the only area in which we came on androcase, good numbers of *Aster alpinus* and saw *Dryas octapetela* in vast numbers. There was also time to visit the filming location of the James Bond film, "On Her Majesty's Secret Service", on the summit of the Schilthorn (2960 metres). The views of the surrounding mountains and the three big local peaks, the Eiger, The Monch and the Jungfrau, were simply amazing but flowers were scarce here as it was still under snow cover.

Should you be considering a visit to this area I suggest you purchase a good pair of walking boots in advance and also accept that the weather in the mountains is very

variable with the most brilliantly sunny clear days followed by ones of rain, cloud and very limited visibility. We even had snow on one night in early July.

This was my first holiday in this area and also my first holiday of this nature and it was one I can heartily recommend.

*Schynige Platte, a botanic garden maintained by a group of enthusiasts, not only has great plants but also excellent views and areas immediately outside in which to walk and explore the local flowers. P Tobin*



*The three famous local peak at Wengens: Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau. A train runs up to the base of the Eiger and, from there, to the Jungfrau. P. Tobin*

# *NCCPG 30TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR 2008*

## *"BE INSPIRED BY PLANTS"*

Some 1,500 people attended the first regional Plant Heritage Day, staged by NCCPG as part of its 30th anniversary celebrations at Cambridge University Botanic Gardens on Sunday 8th June. From unusual *Aesculus* (horse chestnut tree-relatives) to dry garden *Yucca* plants, 30 different National Plant Collections® took part from across Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

A special cake was cut by plantsman Roy Lancaster to celebrate NCCPG's 30th anniversary. At the ceremony, event organiser Richard Gant of NCCPG's Cambridgeshire group, exhorted gardeners attending to: "Be inspired by plants and by the plant conservation work of NCCPG," which was on vibrant show in the marquee.


Roy Lancaster, who is also one of NCCPG's vice-presidents, added: "Plants bring fun, happiness and joy; they appeal to young and old, expert and amateur - and many of the greatest gardeners are amateurs. NCCPG is a family of people interested in plants. I believe it has a bright and growing future and I'd say to everyone: join in; play an important role in saving the world of plants, and enjoy yourself in doing so."

*[Material supplied by the NCCPG, Ed.]*

*Plantsman Roy Lancaster cuts the NCCPG's 30th anniversary celebration cake at Plant Heritage Day in Cambridge on 8th June.*

# *Regional Reports*

## "Wild Plants" with Dr Matthew Jebb
## Friday 7th March 2008 at S.M.A.Wilton, Cork

I.G.P.S. members in Cork had the pleasure to listen to Dr Matthew Jebb on saving Ireland's wild plants through horticulture. Mathew is Horticultural Taxonomist at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin. He began his lecture by outlining the history of our wild plants and the Irish landscape.

Everything came from the Celtic sea 9500 years ago. Back in the ice age, woodland was pushed down under the sea, and was pushed back up to sea level to south west. Oaks had taken 550 years to travel 150 miles. The Irish Sea is only 8500years old while the Celtic Sea dates back to 500 B.C.

Among our present-day threatened habitats are our wetlands which despite their apparent lack of interest contain quite an amount of plant life. Of course, turf has always played a major part in Irish life. Matthew continued to talk about what happened to our lovely wild flora, how many plants were considered to be extinct only to be discovered at a later date. Matthew recalled a survey carried out by David Moore one and half years before he became director of Botanic Gardens. He discovered a plant of Sedge on an island which he named Harbour Island. Fifth years later, in 1888, it considered extinct. Matthew showed slides of rare flora, including *Saxifraga granulata*, and a single plant o bog cotton and a beautiful bog Orchid.

Matthew and his team look forward to sowing acorns in woodland in Wicklow. He also said they were experimenting with the propagating of sea-kale in Greystones Harbour, a venture which has failed many times as it is difficult to propagate. However, they are now having some success with it. He also spoke of our forests. Ireland today is one of the least forested lands in Europe. Below the bogs and raised bogs remains of forest trees can be found that once dominated the Irish landscape. There is amazing forest of pine stumps sitting on the original soil surface of 4500years ago at Shanvally Cahill, on the shores of lough Mask.

Having a horticulturist like Dr Matthew Jebb working to save Irelands wild plants is very fortunate indeed. It was one of our most pleasurable and inspiring lectures on our wild

plants and the landscape of thousands of years ago and a salutary warning of the need for us to take care of our present-day environment to ensure its survival for the future.

*Kay Twomey*

## Garden Visit to Burtown House, Athy, Co. Kildare. Saturday, June 14th 2008.

A group of fifty members visited the gardens and studios of Wendy Walsh and her daughter Lesley Fennell on June 14th. We were greeted warmly by Lesley on an overcast afternoon but luckily we were spared rain which marred so many garden activities this year.

Burtown House dates from the early 18th century. Some sixty years after the original build, another section was added, which virtually doubled the size of the house. There are now four generations living on the property, and the place exudes evidence of all the talent that this family possesses.

*Burton House. Photograph by Therese Murphy*

First to the gardens: The house is approached along a drive across some ancient parkland. There is a definite feeling of antiquity. Seemingly, according to some very

old maps, there were two earlier homesteads and possibly a castle built on the property. There is no evidence of either there now.

Planted directly in front of the house is an Oregon Maple with an interesting history. It was given as a seedling to Wendy Walsh's husband, who worked in Trinity College, by a gardener who also worked there. He had found a whole group of seedlings thriving on a heap of debris. Is there a lesson here? How good does your planting medium need to be? The tree is now twenty-five years old. There is another very interesting tree in Trinity which, legend has it, dates from the time of Queen Elizabeth I. It is a Mulberry, and was planted near the Arts Faculty. At some stage, a gardener took one hundred cuttings. Only one struck and it also is happily growing away in Burtown House Garden.

Other plants of note growing on the northern aspect of the house are a climber and a very beautiful chestnut. The climber was acquired on the recommendation of Corona North, and is highly successful in complete shade. There was some debate about it-possibly *Cyphomandra*. The Chestnut is small and beautifully formed, with a pendulous habit and was also the subject of debate and uncertainty.

The main garden is not visible until accessed through an arch to the left of the house. Whereas the architecture of the house and wall are aged and sombre what greets the visitor, as one passes through the arch, is an explosion of colour-filled borders. Views to the south are very carefully framed by beech hedging and this also encloses the garden from the rolling farmland beyond. The garden consists of a semi-circular lawn completely surrounded by deep, richly planted borders. The paeonies, the roses and the irises are memorable. There are gravel beds close to the house, full of planting new and old, with roses being trained on obelisks, and the house itself is clothed in wisteria, roses, clematis etc. This aspect of the house is four stories high, so the wisteria is an impressive sight.

William Fennell, Lesley's husband, inherited Burtown House. His grandmother, Elizabeth, was a cousin of Ernest Shackelton, and she left her stamp on the garden here. This is particularly evident in a rock garden which has survived beautifully to this day. When Lesley Fennell began to garden here she discovered some wonderful treasures. There is a spreading *Prunus* 'Mount Fuji', which shelters masses of spring bulbs - *Cyclamen*, *Galanthus* and sheets of aconites - mostly survivors from Elizabeth's time. From Christmas there is a succession of colour. Peeping out all around the edges of this shaded area are very many *Helianthemums*. Lesley says they are very old and dainty plants for which the conditions must be just right. This area is a real joy in Spring. The scent of daphnes fills the air. She says her children and, now grandchildren, really love it, with its shady nooks, trickling water and many ferns.

When Beech Park closed down, many of the plants were given a home here. Some were left here and more left progeny when they were relocated. There are collections of phlox and michaelmas daisies dating from that time.

Next to see was the vegetable garden. It is a walled area but the walls have ceased to be, in places, and are being restored as aged materials can be sourced. It is a wonderful area, with very healthy looking crops. The work it takes to restore it makes one shudder. Interestingly, it is here that any evidence of previous gardeners, come to light. They have found a lot of stone, and even some Martagon lilies which Lesley thinks predate any of the gardeners they know of.

A yew walk, just eight years old, and a pergola connect the garden of the main house, to another exceedingly pleasant garden where Wendy Walsh lives and paints. This garden is horseshoe shaped and again the planting is totally eye catching in June. On entering, we were bowled over by the scent of 'Madame Blanc de Coubert'. There were clumps of irises, one metre high and in perfect health, again paoenies, roses, Libertia, clematis and many other flowers in abundance. One of my must-haves after seeing them in full flight here is the *Gladiolus cardinalis* hybrid 'The Bride'. A really generous planting was impressive. A few bulbs do not 'cut the mustard'.
On the patio there were pots overflowing with colour.

*Burton House. Photograph by Therese Murphy*

Lesley's son James is an enthusiast for planting in pots and urns and his handiwork could be spotted in his own garden also, which has a distinctly Italianate air about it. It consists of a simple but perfect lawn surrounded with limestone paving. Standards of clipped privet, lots of lavender and large stone urns bursting with Agapanthus were a joy to behold.

Lesley says that a rare small bee visits that general area and that the lavender, particularly, is a major attraction. Birds of all sorts also inhabit the garden and are remarkable in their diversity. All of this area was rebuilt in the last ten years as retirement beckons, and another generation arrive on the scene. It is great to see an old place being restored and injected with fresh ideas.

Lesley also has major plans for the future. She is beginning to plant up an area through which a stream flows. Originally designed to irrigate the farm, it is now being pressed into service as a water feature. This is a mammoth undertaking, but her energy seems boundless. So far she has sourced twelve different varieties of iris, several candelabra primulas and a host of hostas. She has a lot of clearing to do but she has a dream and the work is incidental. Last, but not least in gardening terms, she has plans for an arboretum. A field for the planting of Oaks is step one. We must watch this space!!!

As if all this was not enough, the icing on the cake was our visit to both artists' studios. After refreshments we met Wendy Walsh and saw a collection of her work. Those who had bought 'A Lifetime of Painting' had an opportunity to have it signed. There are still a limited number of copies available from Strawberry Press. Wendy only paints from fresh material. She is such a special person. She is now elderly, but exceedingly generous. Paddy Tobin has told me that he has experienced this many times. On occasion he has asked her to do an line drawing for the cover of the newsletter. Invariably, her reply would be, "I'll go to the garden and see what I can find" The sketch would arrive in a few days.

The acorn does not fall far from the tree. Lastly, we visited Lesley's studio. As I said, the talent is all over the place. The studio is sited right beside the house, in a small walled courtyard - very discreet if you decide to sit for a portrait! Lesley paints gardens in gardens, portraits in her studio, and just about anything else you commission.

This visit was truly inspiring. Those who gardened here in the past, those who garden here today, and those who plan the gardens of tomorrow really contribute an enormous lift to the human spirit.

*Therese Murphy.*

# *Looking Ahead*

## *Munster Events*

**Notice change of date of meeting:**

**IGPS Munster Branch meetings will now be held on the first Tuesday of the month and not on a Monday as previously mentioned in July newsletter. The change is due to the fact that the SMA Hall at Wilton, Cork is completely given over to Bingo on a Monday night. All meetings will start at 8.00pm.**

**The January meeting will be held on the second Tuesday 13th January.**

**Tuesday 7th October**
**"Fota a decade of change" David O'Regan**
David O'Regan is head gardener at Fota Gardens, Cobh and a former Chairperson of the IGPS Munster group.

**Tuesday 4th November**
**"Plant hunting in Chile" Seamus O'Brien**
Seamus O'Brien is head gardener of Kilmacurragh Arboretum and has travelled extensively on plant hunting expeditions.

**Tuesday 2nd December**
**"Invasive Weeds and their Ornamental Cousins " Charlie Wilkins**
Charlie Wilkins is a weekly columnist in the "Examiner" and a regular contributor to The "Garden Heaven" magazine

**Tuesday 13th January**
**" Pushing the Boundaries" Hester Forde**

Hester Ford is Hon. Secretary of the Alpine and Hardy Plant Society and has a very well-known beautiful garden in Glounthaune Cork.

**Tuesday 3rd February**
**"My garden through the seasons" Carmel Duignan**
Carmel Duignan writes for the "Garden Heaven" magazine and is also the Features Editor of same.

**Tuesday 3rd March**
**"Irish Ferns and Ferns for Irish gardens" Jim Dennison**
Jim and Val Dennison own a very well-known garden growing a large range of Southern Hemisphere plants near Kildimo Co. Limerick.

**Tuesday 7th April**
**" Out of the Frying pan!" Donal Synnott**
Donal Synnott is a former Director of the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin. He retired from the post in 2004.

# *Leinster Events*

**Saturday October 4th at 6.30.pm Hamwood House and Gardens.**
Rita Craigie and Sarah Angel have arranged a visit for members to the home of Mrs. Ann Hamilton, Hamwood House near Dunboyne. A small Palladian house was built in 1768 by the Hamilton family, agents to the Dukes of Leinster. The gardens developed with a conifer walk, many interesting shrubs and spring bulbs. We expect to see a walled garden and a rock garden also. The visit will involve a tour of house and gardens, a social evening and supper.

**Sunday 12th October Leinster Plant Sale**
Our Lady of Dolours Church Hall, (Pyramid Church) Glasnevin.
Doors open at 11.00 a.m. All plants and volunteers welcome!

**Thursday 23rd October**
**'Ireland's Beautiful Bogs' Lecture by Dr. Catherine O'Connell.**
Chief Executive of the Irish Peatland Conservation Council.

**Wednesday 29th October Joint lecture with RHSI**
**At The Wesley Centre, Leeson Park ------PLEASE NOTE**
**' Contemporary Mixed Borders' by Jimi blake.**
Jimi is the well- known proprietor of Huntingdon Gardens,
Co. Wicklow.

**Thursday 4th December 'Christmas Lecture'**
**'Elegant Leaves, Favourites and Hens' a personal look at current fashions in gardening.** By Carmel Duignan, Plantsperson and Gardener.

**Thursday 22nd January 2009**
**'Rare and Unusual Plants for your Garden'**
Lecture by Paul Maher . Curator of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

**March 19th 2009**
**Wol Staines talking about Glen Chantry. Essex**

# *Northern Events*

## OCTOBER 4 - ANNUAL PLANT SALE,

St Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast. 12.00 - 2.00pm - deliveries from 9.00am.
***Plants & volunteers wanted. Contact Peter Milligan on 028 4278 8739.***
**NB CHANGE OF VENUE.** We have received comments from members for a number of years regarding the use of outdoor venues for our annual plant sale. This year we have moved to a new indoor venue which we hope will be more appealing. There is car parking available and access for disabled. As always we need a good supply of plants so please start propagating early ! Customers also required so don't forget to spread the word and tell your friends

**DIRECTIONS:** St Bride's Hall is at the Malone Road end of Derryvolgie Avenue which runs from Lisburn Road to Malone Road. There is a car park adjacent to the Hall

## OCTOBER 29 - THE CLOTWORTHY LECTURE,

Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim; 7.30pm. 'Bantry House – A History of the House and Garden', Nigel Everett, Bantry, Co. Cork. Situated in an enviable position overlooking Bantry Bay, Bantry House and Gardens have a long history of development. Restoration of the gardens started in the late 1990's and continues to the

present day. Refreshments provided. Members free, non-members £2.00. Joint with Antrim Borough Council. **Please note that the Arts Centre is due to close for refurbishment later in 2008 and the venue for this talk may change. For confirmation of venue closer to the time please contact Patrick Quigley 07801 299263 or check web-site www.habitas.org.uk/igps**

## DECEMBER 3 - THE MALONE HOUSE LECTURE,

Malone House, Barnett's Park, Belfast; 7.30pm. 'Tender Plants at Home in Irish Gardens', Paul Maher, Curator of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin. We have seen an increase in the range of tender and semi-tender plants being grown in our gardens. Paul will discuss the experiments which have been conducted in recent years showing how we are pushing the boundaries of accepted wisdom on plant hardiness. Free. Refreshments provided. Joint with Belfast Parks.

*As ever, the local branches have planned an interesting and exciting programme of winter lectures for members and these are a wonderful opportunity to meet fellow members, to hear of interesting aspects of horticulture and to increase your range of interest and knowledge. They are well worth attending and stand as a great credit to the various committees who organise them.*

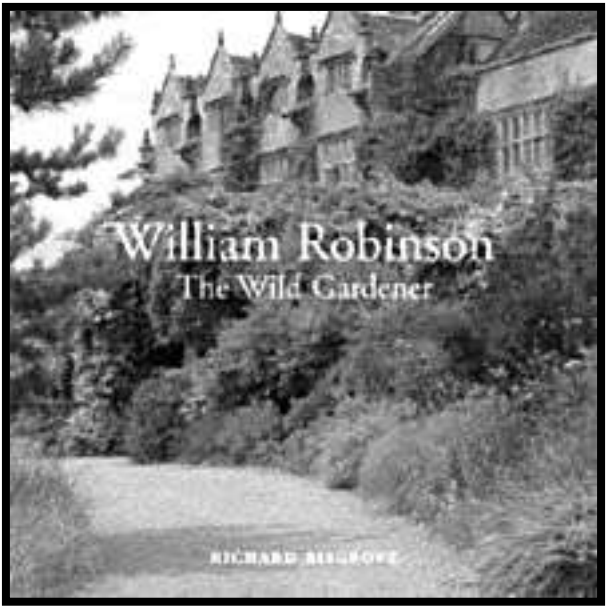
*Do make a special effort to attend over the winter. You will be inspired to delve further into various aspects of gardening and make plans for next year's activities in your own garden.*

*Enjoy!*

*Editor*

# *Worth a Read*

*by Paddy Tobin*




The name 'William Robinson' will be well known to members of the Irish Garden Plant Society but it seems that he is a little known figure among the English public despite the fact that he was such a prolific author and that his book, "*The English Flower Garden*" is regarded by many as the most widely read and the most influential gardening book ever written and had fifteen editions released from 1933 to 1933.

He is best known for his fervent endorsement of wild gardening with his particular passion for the naturalising of bulbs. "*The Wild Garden*" was published in 1870. However, he also wrote on a wide range of other topics including the growing of mushrooms. He also wrote extensively on his visits to Paris, the USA and of his travels to see alpine plants in Europe. His was truly a wide ranging interest in all things horticultural and extended from discussions on secateurs, proper wiring of walls for fruit growing to asparagus cultivation and cremation, from the advantages of wood fires to the evils of the bedding out system, from recommendations on town planning to include green spaces for the good of the poor classes to commendations on good fruit and vegetable growing so as to provide cheaper food for the masses.

His writing, says the author Richard Bisgrove, was "authoritative and authoritarian" and was both eagerly sought out and read by those who valued his guidance and vehemently criticised by those who viewed Robinson as an upstart. Criticism and controversy seem to have been part and parcel of his life and he seemed to thrive on it. He would dismiss critics with distain, claiming that they had not read his material with due diligence to properly understand what he was advocating or, even if they had read

it with care, that they were insufficiently experienced to be properly able to evaluate it. To read his writings is a joy and the author of this book quotes from them extensively so that the reader gains a great insight into and experience of William Robinson's work.

He must have been a most extraordinary man, having left Ireland under a cloud as a young man he was within a very short number of years a very successful horticulturalist and author in England. He travelled extensively, initially all around England to visit the various botanic gardens and the great gardens of the day and later to Paris, the continent, North Africa and North America. Each journey led to voluminous writing in the gardening journals of the day and in the many books he wrote, books which inevitably, it seems, were republished regularly with continued success. His hugely successful journals, and later his home at Gravetye Manon, provided a platform and focus for other great horticultural names such as Gertrude Jekyll, Samuel Reynolds Hole, Frank Crisp, Ellen Willmott and E. A. Bowles.

The book begins with background information on William Robinson and acknowledges the contribution of Mea Allan and Dr. Charles Nelson before continuing to document the major chapters in his life: his time in Regent's Park and the subsequent garden tour, time in France, the publication of "*The Wild Garden*", the visit to America, his publications, "*The Garden*" and "*Gardening Illustrated*" the publication of "*The English Flower Garden*", his purchase and development of Gravetye Manor, his railings against architects and landscape architects and finally the latter part of his life based mainly at Grevetye Manor where his fervour was undiminished and his prolific writing continued.

As well as being most informative, this book especially appealed to me as it allowed William Robinson to speak again to us through the extensive use of quotations from his work. I thoroughly enjoyed my first reading of this book and have turned around on completion to read it again. William Robinson's words are so extremely entertaining and Richard Bisgrove has chosen his selection with great care to both represent Robinson's work and also to give the reader a true taste of his style and personality. William Robinson was a great subject and Richard Bisgrove made the best of it. A great read.

***[William Robinson: The Wild Gardener, Richard Bisgrove, Frances Lincoln, London, 2008, HB, 256pp, £30, ISBN: 13:978-0-7112-2542-8]***

# *Annual Plant Sale*
# *Sunday, 12th October*

## Irish Garden Plant Society
## Annual Plant Sale

Will be held on
**Sunday 12th October, 2008**
In The Parish Hall,
Our Lady of Dolours Church,
Glasnevin
(opposite the National Botanic Gardens)
from 11.00am to 3pm

This sale is renowned for its unusual selection of plants, many of which are not normally commercially available