



*The
Irish Garden Plant Society*



Newsletter No. 121 September 2011



The story of *Two New Irish Cultivars* by Seamus O'Brien on page 10



Primula 'June Blake'



Iris chrysographes 'Thomas O'Brien'



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Editorial

This year the IGPS celebrates the 30th anniversary of the founding of the society. The regional groups have organised events to mark the occasion so please come along and give them your support. On Saturday 1st October The Leinster group have planned a tour of Maynooth College Gardens in Co. Kildare with John Joe Costin as guide. On the same day from 12 noon to 5:00pm the Northern group will hold their annual plant sale at Rowallane Gardens, Saintfield. Their anniversary celebration, a lecture and buffet supper, will be held on Thursday, 20th October, at The Old Court House, Antrim. It is their Autumn Lecture in association with Antrim Borough Council, and it will be given by Seamus O'Brien whose widely acclaimed book *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry* is reviewed by Paddy Tobin in this issue. The Leinster Plant Sale will be held on Sunday 9th October at Our Lady of Dolours Church hall in Glasnevin from 11am to 2.30 pm. Details of all events are included with this newsletter.

The continued support of the newsletter by contributors with their writing and photographs is much appreciated. Through the newsletter we are reminded that there is much to cherish in our horticultural heritage, both older plants and twenty first century ones, and there are many that deserve a place in our own gardens. It is by growing and sharing them that we will ensure they are available for future generations.

Congratulations to Brendan Sayers who last May received the H. H. Bloomer Award from The Linnean Society of London. The award is made to "an amateur naturalist who has made an important contribution to biological knowledge", and was established in 1963 from a legacy by the amateur naturalist Harry Howard Bloomer.

Mary

**Copy date for the January 2012 Newsletter is December 2nd.
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*Moore's hardy ginger lily:
a "new" name with Irish connections
by Charles Nelson*

Gardeners get impatient, rightly, with the seemingly endless procession of names that are changed - the scientific, Latin names of plants are meant to be fixed and permanent, and so they are, mostly. The problem with garden plants, the ones gardeners are most likely to know, is that they often are not what they seem. "Mistaken" identity can persist for a very long time, and when the true nature of a plant is revealed we are sometimes reluctant to amend our way and call the plant by its correct name.

Today, one of the main reasons for changing a name is new evidence from DNA about relationships – DNA does not allow for "mistaken" identities. A recent example is the lesser celandine which for as long as I can remember was given the Latin name *Ranunculus ficaria*, indicating it was in the same genus as buttercups. DNA studies have shown that it is not an integral part of the genus *Ranunculus*, and so it has been argued that the lesser celandine should be returned to the genus *Ficaria*. Many botanists who study the wild flowers of Ireland and Britain have accepted that the Latin name for the lesser celandine should be *Ficaria verna*, although gardeners have not yet, it seems, made a decision!

Another reason a name may be altered is that historical research has yielded evidence that an earlier name, validly published, exists. A variant on this is that a name, abandoned long ago because it was thought to be of no consequence or use, is purposefully resuscitated. This is the case with the ginger lily which we can now call *Hedychium x moorei*.

In *A Heritage of Beauty*, I listed *Hedychium x moorei* on the basis of two references, one in the *Gardener's chronicle* of 23 August 1900 and the second, much later, in the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*. The information published in the *Chronicle* provided a sparse description of this ginger lily with leafy stems to 5 feet in height with bright rosy red flowers. The plant described was a seedling that had been raised at the Glasnevin Botanic Gardens in the late 1800s by crossing *Hedychium coccineum* and *Hedychium gardnerianum*. It was given the name *moorei* after Frederick Moore.

In the late nineteenth century no one knew of any other plants of this particular cross, but by 2000, as far as we knew, Moore's plant had vanished and the hybrid no longer existed. There was nothing to indicate the original cross had survived beyond 1900. I did note that it would be possible to recreate the hybrid - the ginger lilies are not unfamiliar plants nowadays.

Recently, at a meeting of the RHS's Advisory Committee on Nomenclature and Taxonomy, of which I am a member, Julian Shaw mentioned that he was looking at the hybrid ginger lilies and that some were clearly crosses between *Hedychium coccineum* and *Hedychium gardenerianum*, but he could not find a valid name for them. I remembered the Glasnevin cross and, on checking back, we found that *Hedychium x moorei* was valid and that it could be used.

So there are now three "new" cultivars with the "new name" *Hedychium x moorei* although none represents the original plant that was raised in Glasnevin. That does not matter. Of these the best known is 'Tara', a splendid, stately plant with butterfly-like orange flowers spiked with scarlet styles arranged in a huge cylindrical panicle. 'Tara' was raised from seed collected in the wild in Nepal by Tony Schilling - its name has no Irish connotations, despite the spelling, but is Nepalese for star and Tony actually named the plant after his daughter. Reaching at least 6 feet in height, 'Tara' is an excellent plant for the back of a mixed border and will bloom in late summer and early autumn. It is now generally treated as "hardy". The other clone of *Hedychium x moorei* currently available is 'Raffillii', which was raised at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and was named after C. P. Raffill, one-time Assistant Curator there.

So, please let's welcome this change of name as it brings back into use the name of one of our most respected horticulturists.

Regional Reports

MUNSTER

May 7th A visit to **Tourin House and Ballynatray House**

We visited Tourin House and gardens in the morning and started our tour with a very civilized tea and scones in the new tea rooms, which is situated close to the stables near the walled garden. Tourin House is owned by Kristen, Tara and Andrea Jameson. They have been developing the house and gardens as a popular tourist attraction over the last number of years.

The IGPS held a summer lunch at Tourin a good few years ago, so we were interested to see what changes had occurred since that last visit. After our tea, we went to the walled garden, which once had a very large commercial raspberry bed. Due to severe die back in the raspberry bushes, it was decided that they should all be removed and edible cherry trees planted instead as another commercial venture. Also within the walled garden, there is an important collection of American bearded Irises with extraordinary colours.

After the walled garden we walked through the woodland area which has a number of beautiful mature trees, including a champion London Plane. There were many colourful rhododendrons and azaleas to see and a great display of candelabra primulas and hostas.

To finish our visit to Tourin, we had a short tour of the main house which was built in 1840. The designer of the house is believed to be the renowned Dublin architect Abraham Denny, who designed a number of distinguished and public buildings in the Waterford area. On entering the house, you are greeted with a magnificent double oak staircase which sweeps up to the top floor. One could visualize a beautiful lady such as Scarlet O'Hara sweeping down the staircase in a voluminous ball gown. There were lovely paintings hanging on the walls some of which were painted by Andrea, who is an artist, and a magnificent bookcase stretching the whole length of the left hand wall of the drawing room. Outside the drawing room there was a magnificent display of yellow roses which fronted on to a sunken garden which contained a large formal pond.

In conclusion, it was very evident that a lot of work had been done to the upkeep of the gardens. Everybody enjoyed the visit and were very well looked after by our three hosts.

Ballynatray House

After lunch, we went to visit the demesne of Ballynatray, which is also situated on the bank of the Blackwater river a few miles upriver from Youghal bridge. Entrance is through a very grandiose gate and then across a small causeway which leads to the main driveway.

After passing a second large gate, we arrived at the stable yard at the side of the main house where we were met by Neil Porteous, the estate manager. Neil was working with the National Trust in England until he took over the running of Ballynatray estate. He is a very knowledgeable person who during the tour gave us very interesting information on the history of the house, gardens, trees and various plants.

The visit started with a visit to the main house, which for Janet and myself was a dream come true as we always wanted to see inside this magnificent Georgian

mansion. The first recorded house was built in the seventeenth century by Sir Richard Smyth. This house which was described as a “castellated dwelling” was virtually destroyed in 1645 and later rebuilt a number of times until its final state, a Georgian mansion as re-modelled by Grice Smyth in 1795-97. The house remained in his family until the end of the 20th century.

The surrounding landscape was laid out in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, during which time a causeway was built connecting Dairinis, where Molana Abbey is built to the shore east and west. We were given tea and cakes in the magnificent entrance hall, after which we were shown around the house.

After the tour of the house, we were then taken to see various sections of the estate. An arboretum, very much in its infancy has been set out and planted within the outer section of the walled garden. The design comprises a series of elliptical glades connected by lawns commanding various views of the Blackwater river. A number of exotic trees from Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan and China have been planted in this area. The main section of the walled garden is under development. The development plan for this area is quite ambitious and expensive. The plan is currently on hold as it would appear that the recession has also had a big impact on the pocket of the current millionaire owner.

After a visit to the boat house, which can be rented out to those seeking serene and tranquil accommodation, we made our way to visit the ruins of Molana Abbey, which is famous for its collection of Irish Canon Law and the resting place of Raymond (le Gros) Fitzgerald.

Heading back to the stable yard we passed through the fragrant garden, which was designed by Richard Taylor of Taylor-Tripp Associates from Hampshire in 2008.

A ‘parterre de broderie’ has been planted in Box surrounded by an informal planting of fragrant flowering plants. We finally ended up in the kitchen garden, which was designed by Patrick Bowe back in 2000. The kitchen garden, which is on the site of a small brew yard is managed organically and provides fresh fruit, cut flowers and vegetables to the house during the year.

I think without any exception, everybody enjoyed our visit to Ballynatray House which was made very special by the knowledge and enthusiasm of our host Neil Porteous.

Martin Edwards

NORTHERN

March 24th and June 15th Bangor Walled Garden. Lecture and Visit.

Ian Beaney, Grounds Superintendent for North Down Borough Council gave us a comprehensive review of the historical creation, decline, fall and restoration of this walled garden set in Bangor Castle grounds. The grounds were the former demesne of the Ward family.

The walled garden first appeared on Ordnance Survey maps of 1840 and in keeping with those times supplied vegetables, fruit and flowers to the big house. In common with many others of its type the decline of the estate occurred after the two world wars until it was acquired by North Down council in 1948.

For many years the garden supplied bedding plants for all the municipal schemes of the North Down area. However, production of plants became uneconomical for the council and by the late 1980's the walled enclosure was mainly being used for storage of horticultural machinery. In 2002 a major project to construct a 50m swimming pool in Bangor was initiated, sited very close to the existing walled garden. In parallel with this project funding of £1.2 million was secured to begin the restoration of the walled garden.

Ian described the lengthy and tortuous process of planning, designing and construction of this major landscape project in great detail. Construction began in 2008 and many problems were overcome along the way e.g. adverse weather, working in a tightly enclosed space, soil compaction and an infestation of Mare's-tail. Interestingly, the original Victorian paths were discovered in good condition and were used as the base for the new layout.

Having had our appetites whetted by Ian's description it was with great anticipation that we visited the garden on a pleasant evening in June - we were not disappointed. Nickki Kerr, the head gardener, gave us a comprehensive and enthusiastic tour of the garden and it's planting – which uses mainly extant Victorian varieties.

The garden today is laid out in four quadrants around a central axis. The axis is made up of an arched pergola with climbing roses flanked by an allée of pleached lime trees. The pergola is under planted with a good combination of *Nepeta* 'Walker's Low', *Stachys byzantina* interspersed with purple *Alliums*. The axis itself is punctuated by a fountain with a modern sculptured centrepiece. Several other pieces of sculpture are located at focal points throughout the garden.

The First quadrant is planted in the style of a Victorian flower garden with seasonal schemes for summer and winter.

The Second quadrant is laid out as a herb garden edged with boxed hedges and individual topiary.

The Third quadrant has been developed as a damp garden with a range of interesting plants, *Iris siberica* 'Snow Queen' was looking particularly good during our visit.

The Fourth quadrant is the kitchen garden containing an impressive array of fruit and vegetable varieties; some of us sampled peas, broad beans and gooseberry's which were already ripe.

On the walls are trained a wide selection of climbers and espaliered fruit trees with herbaceous beds at their base. A small lean to green house is situated on the west facing wall, in addition two small gazebos are positioned in the north west and south west corners, in which nesting swallows had taken up temporary residence at the time of our visit. Some plants with an Irish heritage were noted including *Rosa* 'Rambling Rector' and *Itea ilicifolia* an Augustine Henry introduction.

The garden and it's planting, now in its third season, is continuing to evolve as the head gardener and her team learn about its soil and growth conditions but is already a special place within the seclusion of its enclosing walls. With the proposal to open a small café within the gardens a return visit will be an even greater pleasure.

Paul G Boyce

August 10th Coille Finnebrogue the garden of Agnes and John Peacock.

After a year of jungle clearance, Agnes and John finally found the buildings that would become their home. Only when the Upper Byre had been converted into a comfortable home did work begin on the garden. After 12 years hard work, they now have the kind of garden you wander around with your mouth open. Soon we were scattered throughout the gardens, oohing and ahing. The soil is clay; we know clay is nutritious but how do you to persuade a plant trying to force its delicate roots through primeval gunge/concrete that this is good for it? 10 tons manure and 40 tons topsoil for a start. In last winter's cold and mud, they lost 30 shrubs, mostly evergreens.

Agnes has a highly detailed plan of what was planted where, and her plants stay where they were planted. Does anyone else position a plant in one part of the garden only to discover the next season it is happily growing in quite a different place?

The lower garden began life under 5" of water each winter. Trenches and raised beds were the solution. This is now an area of lawn surrounded by deep and lush herbaceous borders. From tropical Asia came the elegant and feathery *Panicum virgatum*, the dark purple *Sanguisorba sp.*, deep orange *Alstroemeria sp.* rich blue/violet/purple flowers of Honeywort, *Cerinth major* 'Purpurascens' and a purple leaved *Actaea sp.* I have only recently become aware of the range of colours of *Achillea sp.* and here was a deep red one, lovely. As I headed for a fun plastic seat moulded to look like a sofa, I had to walk around a very long erect stem. This was *Paulownia tomentosa* (Foxglove Tree) and it made a spectacular specimen plant in the corner of the lawn. This is fast growing and will grow 20' a season but can be chopped to the ground each year. The flowers are abundant and fragrant.

This is a garden of nooks and crannies and beside a path wandering through a shrubbery a lime green *Gladioli* made a bright patch. The vegetable patch was full of plump pea pods and raspberries, red apples and ruby chard. The house is covered in creepers, the evergreen *Clematis cirrhosa* var. *purpurascens* 'Freckles', with its beautiful pink and maroon mottled flower, cascaded over the front door. Amongst the melee, a pink flowered *Indigofera*, one of a large genus of about 700 species of flowering plants. Some *Indigofera* produce the dye indigo.

In the courtyards pots abounded, planted with herbs, miniature roses, *Agapanthus*, *Begonia* and *Clematis sp.* Around another corner, and here is a row of golden *Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata', each surrounded a clipped hedge of a yellow variegated *Elaeagnus sp.* This leads to the Spring Garden and the pond, all packed full of plants. In this garden the Japanese anemone, *Anemone x hybrida*, which comes from China, is considered a weed and it is intended by next year that there will be a lot less of it! A robust green leaf with a maroon edge caused much discussion, a *Ligularia sp.* was the consensus.

Onwards and upwards into the woodland garden, here the mature beeches are under planted with *Camellia* and *Azalea*, with snowdrops and daffodils for the spring. From here, there are views over the gardens.

In Coille there is a profusion of the unusual plants mixed with the old time favourites. It is indeed a rare garden.

M.D.B. Allen.



Two New Irish Cultivars by Seamus O'Brien

In the autumn of 1997, while based at Beech Park in Clonsilla, I travelled with a party of British botanists, horticulturists and plant enthusiasts to south-east Tibet. It was late September, optimum seed collecting time, and we collected seeds from a wide variety of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. The following spring the Victorian cold frame at Beech Park was full of pots brimming with tiny seedlings.

Four years later, while based at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, I travelled again to Tibet, this time in July to see the same plants in flower. Our mid summer expedition was an enjoyable one, though we were thoroughly soaked – mid summer in Tibet corresponds with the Indian monsoon!

Despite the daily deluges, we saw a myriad of wonderful plants. Mountainsides were turned gold by great sheets of the yellow Himalayan poppy, *Meconopsis integrifolia*. We trekked through valleys full of thousands of giant Himalayan lilies and in the meadows were millions of wild flowers including the honey scented *Primula alpicola*.

Another abundant wildflower in those Tibetan meadows was *Iris chrysographes*, a rhizomatous perennial that is native to the mountainous areas of Sichuan, Yunnan and south-east Tibet. There it revels in damp mountain meadows, watered by thawing glaciers and ice fields and often growing alongside other colourful herbaceous plants like *Primula sikkimensis*, *Thalictrum delavayi*, *Anemone rivularis* and a wide variety of *Pedicularis* species.

Iris chrysographes was described in 1911 by W. R. Dykes from a plant collected in Sichuan Province, western China, by the English plant hunter E. H. Wilson. Dykes chose the rather apt specific epithet '*chrysographes*', meaning 'written on with gold' or 'with gold markings'. This refers to the vein-like golden streaks on the falls of the inflorescence, which is one of the characteristic features of this species. Frank Kingdon Ward who met this iris several times during his 1924-25 exploration of south-east Tibet described one form (K.W. 5783) as having blossoms 'with a cobweb of golden threads woven over the falls'.

During our 2001 expedition to Tibet we explored wild meadows that often covered over a hundred acres and *Iris chrysographes* was in full bloom during this visit. I was particularly surprised at how variable this species was in its native habitat, both in habit and in the colour and markings on the falls of the flower. On the Showa La we met with an altogether different form with velvety purple-black to almost jet-black flowers and on this mountain it was the only form we encountered, unlike the more purple-blue forms that grew in the meadows by our campsite at Chunima.

We had previously explored the Showa La in the autumn of 1997 and unknown to me, I had introduced this form to cultivation through Beech Park and had sent out seedlings from there. The finest of these seedlings was grown on by June Blake in her Blessington garden and I propose to give this plant a cultivar name.

Iris chrysographes ‘Thomas O’Brien’ is a vigorous selection of this species with flowering stems to 70 cm tall (as opposed to ‘Black Knight’ which is 40 to 50 cm). Two velvety black-purple scented flowers are carried per stem, these being much larger than ‘Black Knight’ and the upper parts of the falls are neatly pencilled with gold markings. It is an easy *Iris* to accommodate, needing a rich, moisture retentive soil and a sunny border. It commemorates my late brother, Thomas (1969-1998).

Another new Irish garden plant, raised closer to home is a *Primula* selected several years ago by the well-known plantswoman June Blake, whose well-stocked garden and specialist nursery is located at Tinode near Blessington in Co. Wicklow. In the spring of 2002 June sowed seeds collected from a garden hybrid, cowslip-type *Primula*. One seedling proved to be outstanding, though as June relates, it wasn’t for quite some time that she realized that it was significantly different and noteworthy.

I have grown this plant for several years now and can vouch that it is an exceptionally good plant, bearing over a very long period (early January to the end of April) up to 17 cowslip-like blossoms on 25 cm long stems. It sometimes repeats flowering again in mid summer. The individual flowers are primrose-yellow with an orange line marked down the centre of each petal. Apart from its long flowering season, the other great quality of this lovely plant, which I propose to name *Primula* ‘June Blake’, is that it is heavily and heavenly scented!

Primula ‘June Blake’ is easy to grow in ordinary garden soil, reveling in a sunny position or semi-shade. It appreciates regular division, and like many other primulas in this group, it is best moved to a new location in the garden every couple of years to avoid exhaustion and the build up of pests.



The Annual General Meeting May 2011

It is customary for us to give a report of the AGM in the first newsletter after the event, but rather than give a full report I would like to concentrate on an issue which was raised at the meeting – a subject which I have referred to previously but which remains a concern.

This year there were no new members elected to the committee – the first occasion that I can remember from my entire period of membership of the society. The shortage of people willing to participate in the running of the society is a very serious worry; we are currently sitting with just about enough committee members to have a quorum and there is no sign of anyone coming forward despite repeated calls for members' assistance. If no new committee members can be found by next year's AGM, we will be in crisis.

This lack of participation at committee level is also reflected to a large extent in attendance at our events, and we now seem to have entered a vicious circle where we have had to cut back on events due to lack of members attending, which in turn gives very low incentives for people to remain members if they cannot see any events worth attending. This does seem to be a particular problem in the Leinster area at the moment – certainly when it comes to garden visits. You will have noticed that there have been no events arranged in the Leinster region since the AGM back in May; this is a frustration for those who are prepared to attend, but has arisen due to the very low numbers attending in the past, leaving the Leinster sub-committee unwilling to organise a group outing for just a very small handful of people to turn up. At the same time, the Northern regional group has always aimed for one event per month, including the summer months, and our recent visits to Bangor Castle Walled Garden, Oakfield Park in Donegal and the John & Agnes Peacocke's garden were all well attended with at least 30 people on each occasion. I am certainly not trying to score points over other regions, but I would love to know what is causing the problem with poor attendance elsewhere.

If members are not satisfied with the events being organised, then putting it bluntly – either put up or shut up. Don't just sit back and moan about it – get involved and help to make the programme better for all. Stop relying on other people to do all the work and put a bit of effort into it yourselves. If it is left to the same few people, it is inevitable that it will become a struggle to come up with new ideas; fresh blood is sorely needed on all the regional committees and unless this is addressed with some degree of urgency, I have very serious

concerns about the future of the society. If you share these concerns, and wish to get more actively involved but are not sure how to go about it, or if you don't feel you know any of the current committees, then contact me either by email or phone Patrick.quigley@live.co.uk; Tel: ++44 7801 299263 (m) or ++44 28 90225484 (home). I would also invite feedback from all members on any improvements they can suggest, or on why they have not been willing to support events more fully.

On a more positive note, this is the 30th anniversary year for our society and a couple of special events have been lined up for the autumn – these are highlighted in our events programme. Not only are they celebratory events, but we would also like them to be good fund-raising events too. Our income has been dwindling in recent years, but costs have been going up so we need to raise some additional funds for the society. Please do your best to support these and indeed, all our events. I know finances are very tight for many of us these days, but even a small contribution from a lot of people soon mounts up.

I also would like to remind you of another special event planned for next year – a trip to the gardens of Iran. This was mentioned in our last newsletter (p4) and a programme is now available. Cost is around £2500 fully inclusive with departure from London in Spring. If you would like further details contact me by email or phone at the numbers given above. Our organiser is Andrena Duffin, a fully qualified tour guide known to some of you already following our trip to Edinburgh last year.

Until next newsletter, best regards.
Patrick Quigley, Chairman.



A.G.M. Garden Visits

Newcastle House

After our AGM in Leixlip our first garden visit was to the garden of Bernard and Ann O'Dowd at Newcastle Co. Dublin. The large garden surrounds the house, a Queen Anne building with original wooden shutters and fascia. A talented gardener, Ann first planted trees and shrubs which have now developed into fine specimens and provide a wonderful backbone to her garden. The woodland garden on the left as one enters from the back of the house is mass-planted with *polygonatum*, hellebores, snowdrops and a lovely specimen of *Cornus mas*. The enormous herbaceous borders in the front paddock showed promise of an amazing display of colour during the summer months. Her large iris bed

in the same area was a sight to behold and really shows how stunning and dramatic a mass planting of irises can be. In the larger woodland garden beyond the herbaceous borders there was a fabulous collection of trees and shrubs under planted with a carpet of ferns, hellebores and many other shade loving plants. Her arboretum-like collection of trees contains a fine specimen of *Parrotia persica*, a beautiful cut leaf beech, a large leafed oak, pines, a lovely *Acer griseum* and some fine *Cornus* species including a *Cornus argentea*. Her apple trees are host to a wide variety of climbing roses and clematis with a fine collection of hydrangeas arrayed beneath them.

Ann very kindly allowed us to use her polytunnel for a mini plant sale with an emphasis on Irish cultivars, including *Rhododendron augustinii*, *Lilium henryi* and *Athyrium filix-femina* 'Frizelliae' (the Irish tating fern), *Saxifraga* 'Lissadell Variety' and *Primula* 'Lady Greer' which was very successful for the society.

Emer Gallagher

The garden of Ann Love, Newtown, Celbridge

Our final visit on Saturday was to the garden of Ann Love at Newtown, Celbridge. It is always good to get a variety of gardens to visit, and this was a nice addition to the selection of gardens over the weekend. Still quite a young garden, it is settling in very nicely to its site.

Just inside the entrance a small woodland area had been planted up – screening the house from the road. I have found in recent years I am more and more drawn to the understatement of a woodland garden and this was very nice indeed. Some stand of angelica gave a structural presence to the herbaceous planting, with *Dodecatheon* living up to its common name of shooting stars, firing shots of colour at ground level amidst the ferns and *Cornus canadensis*. Further along, a small path wove through the understory bringing us through some lovely simple planting including the white form of *Dicentra spectabilis* which always looks so coolly elegant in a shade garden. Unfortunately our visit was interrupted by a very heavy shower of rain, so typical of our summer in recent years, and we had to take shelter where we could find it, but it soon brightened up again and we continued through the garden, down past a meadow to the charm of a rustic summer house built around a tree by the river's edge. There was a lovely atmosphere in this part of the garden – a lazy quietness by the slow moving water, with views of a borrowed landscape of what appeared to be mature parkland on the far side of the river. All in all, a charming way to finish off our day and our thanks go to Ann and her family for hosting our visit. And for some, a gift of white forget-me-nots which I hope will seed in my garden as a reminder of our Leixlip AGM weekend.

Patrick Quigley

The Twin Chimneys, Parsonstown

A very successful visit to the Walled Garden at the Manor House Hotel that was the original garden of St. Catherine's Estate, Leixlip and where Graham Stuart Thomas, the renowned Rosarian, found the Rose 'Fortune's Double Yellow' growing almost wild in a derelict glasshouse. It was delightful to find it still flourishing. The next visit was to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Collins at the 'The Twin Chimneys' garden situated at the back gates to Castletown Demesne, an estate that is renowned for its very fine landscape and mature trees. The garden was only started about twenty years ago – a very young garden being dependent mainly on trees for its impact. The site extends to one and half acres approximately and originally benefited from the mature trees of the adjacent property which now sadly are dying due to the damage caused by the squirrels. They have created their woodland garden around the existing material, felling old trees as their young plants start to mature. They have space, and took the opportunity to plant the less common trees in particular the southern beeches, *Nothofagus* species which come from Australasia and South America and so far are resistant to the depredations of squirrels. Several species were planted including a very fine specimen of *NN. antartica* and *dombeyi*. I personally believe that the specimen of *Parrotia persica* in the National Botanic Gardens is possibly the best as it has been given plenty of room to expand, and in this garden maybe the specimen will in time equal in beauty the Botanic's plant.

Betula albosinensis 'Septentrionalis' is seen in several larger gardens with its lovely coppery pink bark similar to *Acer griseum*, but here it was the species that is rarely seen in Ireland, and having seen it I would now prefer it to the variety. Alongside were several snake bark maples with their lovely striations and not too far distant were plants of *Hamamelis* spp. and the golden and purple bamboos.

While the trees were a major player in this garden the woodland could not be complete if it did not have its associated planting of numerous bulbs from snowdrops to crocuses, tulips, ornamental alliums and trilliums as well as numerous primulas, hellebores and ferns.

Anne James

"The Old Glebe" The Garden of Frank Kerins, Newcastle

Built between 1720 and 1727 as a Glebe House, the house, gardens and ornamental lake are a fine example of a listed Queen Anne style residence. We were welcomed by Frank and his gardener on a beautiful sunny afternoon.

The garden was planted up with a wide variety of flowering plants and bulbs well grown and cared for. We will always remember the stunning view from the front door through the house to a huge fountain at the end of the garden misting the surrounding area in a magical way. The Old Glebe formed part of

the Newcastle Church of Ireland Estate until recent times, and the history of both are closely interlinked. Open to the public from Monday to Saturday inclusive, appointments preferred.

Marcella Campbell

Lodge Park, Straffan

Our last visit of the day was by kind permission of Mrs Sarah Guinness to her beautiful walled garden at Lodge Park, Straffan. Guided by Patrick Ardiffe, head --gardener at Lodge Park and long standing member of the IGPS, we were certainly offered a real treat to round off the weekend. Stepping through the gate, a path edged with low box hedging, punctuated with finely clipped cones of yew, provided a long vista to the far end of the garden. To the left, first a small white and silver garden, set round an old stone well head, with delightful pure white fringed tulips, white *Camassia*, and a gorgeous pure white *Meconopsis*, next a manicured lawn flanked by a purple border with *Galega*, a herbaceous clematis, geraniums and a paeony border laden with the full heavy heads of blowsy pink paeonies. A restored brick fronted glass house, from 1834, comes next, providing a backdrop for a small pool garden, and hidden inside *Clematis florida* 'Sieboldii' was covered in a mass of flowers. Moving along the main path, arranged on either side of a broad expanse of lawn were double herbaceous borders, unusually backed by the elegant black leaved elder – *Sambucus* 'Black Lace' – the borders themselves richly coloured with *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum', *Alliums* in profusion, a wonderful dark wine red *Astrantia*, and enlivened with shots of white *Cammasia*. Passing through a gap in the hedge, a vivid splash of blue *Meconopsis* provided an unexpected change of mood from the dark tones of the herbaceous borders.

Other features of the garden include a crown shaped wrought iron rosarie, well clothed in a variety of roses (although none in flower during our visit), a tennis court, beautifully trained fruit trees and a good productive kitchen garden. The mixed shrubby borders lining the walls were full of interest, and included a great clump *Papaver* 'Patty's Plum' which just confirmed my covetousness in this garden – for some reason I cannot get this to perform and here was a great display of its moody greyish plum crumpled tissue paper flowers.

Our visit finished with refreshments in the tearoom and the opportunity to visit the steam museum for which the property is also well known – a collection of steam engines and model locomotives housed in what was once St Jude's Church in Inchicore, Dublin but which was dismantled and re-built here at Lodge Park. All in all, a great way to finish a great weekend and thanks are due to our hosts here – Sarah Guinness and Patrick Ardiffe, head gardener. Thanks are also due to our organisers – Mary Bradshaw, Marcella Campbell and last but by no means least Emer Gallagher who pulled together a great range of gardens for us to visit and put a huge amount of work into the organisation of the 2011 AGM weekend. It really was appreciated by us all.

Patrick Quigley



The Gentle Giants by Peter Milligan and Nicola Milligan

In a previous article we wrote about my passion for ‘Big Roses’ [1]. There can be little doubt as to the sheer volume of flowers produced by these giants or the exquisite scent they provide.

A wonderful example, just coming to the end of some eight weeks of flowering, is *Rosa* ‘Paul’s Himalayan Musk’ – it presents a wall of colour for weeks on end and the scent lingers. This pervasive and long lasting scent prompted one of the gardeners on the estate, a recent arrival, to ask what this rose was as he wanted to take cuttings – he remarked on the fact that the ‘scent just hangs in the air’.

However I have to be truthful and admit that it is the sheer size of these old roses (in some cases 15-20 feet in terms of height and spread), coupled with the typically vicious thorns, that poses the real problem.

So, for me, the challenge was to find a large, free flowering, long flowering, and preferably scented group of plants that would counter the thorny problem of the ‘big roses’.

For me the gems that answered this challenge were easy to find - the members of the *montana* group of clematis.

I grew my first clematis in 1969 – we had just moved to a new property in Belfast in July of that year and in September of the same year I bought and planted *C.* ‘Jackmanii’. Perhaps this is not the most exciting of the clematis family but I bought and planted this after reading *Covering a Wall* by Roy Genders [2].

The simple beauty of this plant sparked an interest in the clematis family and led me to seek out further texts on the subject. In turn, such was the interest these books created that *C.* ‘Jackmanii’ was followed by *C.* ‘Perle d’Azur’, *C.* ‘Ville de Lyon’, and then, fatally, *C. montana* ‘Elizabeth’.

I say fatally because once this clematis was in place, started to flower, and started to spread I was hooked. The sheer size of the plant and the fact that the flowers carried a wonderful, light scent made it an instant success as far as I was concerned.

According to John Howells [3] *C. montana* was brought to Europe by Francis Buchanan in 1805. Howells notes that the name, ‘montana’, means ‘of the mountain’ and it was under this name that the clematis was recorded by de Candolle₁ in 1817. This name has stuck notwithstanding an attempt by David Don₂ in 1825 to list the plant as *C. anemonifolia*. Howells provides an interesting scheme for grouping clematis depending on their approximate order of flowering and in this scheme the ‘montanas’ appear as Group 4 – the group of giant clematis.

The limited size of that Belfast garden put a check to the introduction of further members of this family (as it had held back the introduction of my much loved ‘big roses’) but on moving to our current garden these limits were removed and the introduction of the ‘montanas’ began.

The first plant to arrive was *C. montana* ‘Marjorie’. This was introduced as a companion plant to a large cotoneaster and as the photograph shows has developed well, presenting a solid wall of colour.



‘Majorie’ is recorded by Howells as “.... one of the more vigorous double montanas. The colour is interesting; against a background of cream-yellow there is a salmon pink profusion” . Apparently opinions are divided on this plant “.... either enthusiastic support or damning derision” . All I can say is that we like it but you can judge for yourselves from Nicola’s photographs.



C. montana 'Marjorie'

Both of the small 'front beds' (so called for the unimaginative reason that they are, guess what, at the front of the house) became the next targets with *C. montana* 'Broughton Star' and *C. montana* var. *grandiflora* taking up residence.



Clematis montana 'Broughton Star'

'Broughton Star' is recorded by Howells as "... a fine double clematis - probably the finest - depending on your taste. There are two rings of tepals. The inner, truly pistillodes, are dark purple-red and harmonise well with the outer ring of purple-pink to make an attractive flower".

For us, this has grown well, covering the original trellis work and has now been trained over the roof of the small conservatory.

Care has been taken to install a wire frame over the roof to avoid the risk of the plants deciding to investigate the undersides of the roof tiles.



Clematis montana var *grandiflora*

‘Grandiflora’ is noted as “.... one of the glories of this group. It has large white flowers and makes an immense plant”. Again, this has covered the original trellis work and has ‘expanded’ into a neighbouring *Viburnum x bodnantense*. This has been a happy colonization for shortly after the viburnum has finished flowering ‘Grandiflora’ starts providing a colourful white canopy in the spring.

The next cultivar to arrive was *C. montana* ‘Mayleen’. Howells somewhat staccato description tells us that this plant “.... has a large flower. The broad

tepals overlap. It has a strong scent. It grows on a very large plant. Its foliage is mid-green". This does not do justice to a fine plant with a wonderful scent.

As can be seen from Nicola's photographs these are handsome plants and in truth require little attention. Most authorities indicate that no annual pruning is required. We have found this to be the case with the obvious exception caused by too much vigour – in other words the plant becomes rampant and has to be cut back – this is best carried out in the summer after flowering. Also, and again obviously, if a plant is becoming weak due to age some judicious pruning may be carried out to prompt re-growth.

If you are interested there are many books which address this 'Queen of Climbers'. Among my favourites are: Howells (mentioned above) who provides an excellent review of the montanas; one of my favourite writers, the late Christopher Lloyd, provided another excellent monograph [4]; Ruth Gooch, owner of Thorncroft Clematis, (they do mail order and have a wonderful list of plants) provides her 'complete guide' [5]; and Jim Fisk, who set up and ran his own clematis nursery at Westleton in Suffolk, is well known as a grower, propagator and introducer of many clematis [6].

As usual we always like to refer to any Irish cultivars. Unfortunately we could find no montanas of Irish origin. Turning to Nelson's texts *Daisy Hill Nursery Newry* [7] and the *Glory of Donard*, [8] gives little hope. The Donard nursery appears to have listed only one plant *C. 'Blue Rosette'* which was not of Irish origin and Daisy Hill lists two, *C. recta 'Purpurea'* and *C. reticulata*. *C. reticulata* is noted as an introduction from England but *C. recta 'Purpurea'* is noted as "A seedling raised here from one of the forms of *C. recta*". A check using the RHS Plant Finder produced a list 1265 records for clematis and included in this huge list was *C. recta 'Purpurea'* offered by 26 suppliers.

More recently one can find references to a *C. tibetana* subsp. *vernayi* 'Glasnevin Dusk'. This appears to have been raised in Ireland by Seamus O'Brien in 2003 but does not appear to be available commercially.

So, has our clematis journey ended? Well in one sense the 'rot continues' – the latest arrival is *C. montana 'Freda'*. At the moment this baby of the family looks so innocent sitting in a small pot. This innocent pose should not confuse the unwary – it will grow but only to around a height and spread of 10 feet thereby justifying the tag of 'baby'. In addition, it is another of the scented montanas.

To conclude, most people know the clematis family and most will grow several in their gardens but try to find a tree, large shrub, or wall and enhance the beauty of that spot with the introduction of your own 'gentle giant'. Go on, give a 'montana' a home.

- ¹ Augustin Pyramus de Candolle, 1778-1841, Swiss botanist
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The First National Tree Day - 1919

By John Joe Costin

National Tree Week is a Tree Council of Ireland initiative launched in 1985. In 1990 Mr. Haughey honoured it by the first official planting of the government's newly designated National Tree, *Quercus petraea*, the Sessile Oak, in Ardagh, Co. Longford. The planting commemorates the town's National Tidy Towns Award in 1989. That week the Tree Council distributed 10,000 broadleaved trees to awards entrants. Unbeknown to the organisers Tree Week was in fact a revival.

Our first national tree-planting public holiday took place 66 years previously on November 29th 1919. Amazingly it was one of the first initiatives of the newly formed Dáil comprised of Sinn Féin TDs elected in December 1918. The report to the Dáil stated that between 250,000 and 300,000 trees were planted on National Arbor Day.

The organisers of Tree Week, John McCullen, Richard Webb and Christy Boylan, were unaware that their laudable achievement was dwarfed by comparison. Nevertheless, it was an initiative of substance. It created a structure to acknowledge and develop a level of appreciation of the importance and permanence of trees in our lives and landscapes. A week long event was also perhaps an unconscious belated flourish to reach the level of the many countries that already celebrated trees with a National Arbor Day or Week.

The first took place 113 years previously on April 10th 1872 in the state of Nebraska. The culmination of a relentless campaign by an ardent proponent of the necessity to plant trees, rather than leaving it to nature. Julius Sterling Morton was born in New York in 1832. He moved to Nebraska City in 1854 when that territory opened to settlers. He was appalled by its virtual treeless condition but Nebraska is a quintessential prairie state where grasses are the vegetation. Early explorers saw the prairie as a flat, featureless, treeless, waterless wilderness which was mapped as the Great American Desert. His apprehension about the future was influenced more by the mindless and avaricious harvesting of timber that he witnessed in the vast forests of the east. Timber felling was then classified with mining as an extractive industry. By 1900 the volume extracted was six times that of the replacement growth.

Morton founded and edited a newspaper and began campaigning on the need for afforestation. On January 4th 1872 he proposed a tree planting holiday to be

called Arbor Day at a meeting of the State Board of Agriculture. The date was set for April 10th 1872. As a Democrat, he served as Territorial Secretary and later became Secretary of Agriculture under President Grover Cleveland serving from 1893-97. Arbor Day was a success. More than one million trees were planted. It is a public holiday in Nebraska since 1885. All states eventually came to observe Arbor Day by legislation or proclamation. In 1970, President Richard Nixon proclaimed the last Friday in April as National Arbor Day, but states observe it earlier or later to suit local planting conditions.

The Dáil adopted a proposal by the Irish Forestry Society published in a pamphlet in 1918. The Society's founders were passionate tree enthusiasts buoyed up on ideas of Gaelic revivalism. They were influential opinionated farmers, had access to government and are credited as the first group to make it take forestry seriously. They proposed November 1st 1919 as the first National Arbor Day. Thomas Davis's composition from the 1840s of 'A Nation Once Again' was the anthem of nationalists. They published a theme song with stirring lyrics to this rousing tune as the Arbor Week Song:

Plantation Once Again (Arbor Week Song)

When boyhood's fire was in my blood,
And all my joints were limber,
I roamed through many a noble wood
Of fine Irish timber;
But scarce a tree to-day I see,
The stumps are all remain,
And that is why we ought to try
Plantation once again!

Chorus:
Plantation once again,
On wasted hill and plain;
The time is nigh when we must try
Plantation once again!

The timber in each Irish house
Norwegian is or Russian;
The trap we buy to catch a mouse
Is either French or Prussian;
The wood to make a three-legged stool
At home we can't obtain,
And that is why we ought to try
Plantation once again!

Chorus

While we prefer to send our cash
To make the stranger wealthy,
Our splendid woods of pine and ash
Have changed to swamps unhealthy;
Consumptive chills, and all the ills
From damp and cold and rain,
We might defy if we but try
Plantation once again!

Chorus

We might with ease plant useful trees
On hill and waste and mireland-
Our people might not cross the seas,
But work and live in Ireland;
If only sticks, not politics,
Possessed the Irish brain,
And that is why we not try
Plantation once again!

Chorus

Author: W O'Leary

The Marquis MacSwiney of Mashanglas (Macroon) in the January issue of the Foresters' Journal 1918 added an Irish proverb that incentivised planting with the portency of a threat.

“Is maírg ná cuireann crann”

“Woe to the man who does not plant a tree”

There is a truism that things do not get done until there is a political will to make them happen. Politicians have to see votes in it. Occasionally you get a serendipity of interests, where a politician espouses a policy and adopts a cause from conviction. In the 90 years or so of sovereignty, three politicians embraced afforestation policy with zeal.

Arthur Griffith was the first. He championed the need to correct the devastation inflicted on our woodlands over the previous 250 years. He was a passionate advocate of economic nationalism, an indefatigable policy researcher, a brilliant propagandist and a prolific journalist. As a persuasive promoter of progress by our own efforts, he founded Sinn Féin (ourselves) in 1905 which embodied these principles. He saw the futility of the personality politics of O'Connell and Parnell. He prepared and educated the public over 20 years on what policies and structures we should have once we achieved self governance. While others dwelt on revolution he pondered on what needed to be put in place in its aftermath. He was the John Hume of the nationalist movement of the 1900s, articulating abstentionism from Westminster, self-sufficiency, self-dependency and of having to take responsibility for our own destiny. He urged a rejection of the sterile cant of blaming our woes on British rule.

In 1904 he published a book '*The Resurrection of Hungary*' which sold over 30,000 copies. In it, he drew parallels with and took inspiration from a country of similar size, with a distinctive language and culture but like us appended to an empire, insensitive to its needs. He upbraided our MPs attending Westminster and compared their inertia to the assertive behaviour of Hungarian MPs who refused to attend parliament in Vienna. He advocated passive resistance and civic disobedience but rejected violence as a means of achieving objectives. Gandhi studied the methods he advocated.

He did not take part in the Easter Rising of 1916. Nevertheless he and almost all others associated with Sinn Féin were interned under martial law as the British authorities belatedly realised the influence of his writings in reviving the national spirit. In May 1918, Arthur Griffith was interned again as part of the 'German Plot', together with almost the entire leadership of Sinn Féin for which no evidence was ever found.

On December 14th 1918 a general election for Westminster was held. Sinn Féin on an abstentionist policy won an overwhelming majority and established the first Dáil. The first session was held on the 21st of January, 1919, while a great number of the deputies were in prison. It was on April 1st, 1919 when most were released that his Sinn Féin policies were put into effect.

They set up their own Department of Agriculture, parallel to the existing British administration. They were distinguished as the illicit and the enemy departments. The Dáil nominated Robert Barton, Teachta Dála for West Wicklow, as Minister for Agriculture. Extracts from the first Dáil debate demonstrate the priority and urgency attached to a National Arbor Day.

**STATEMENT OF THE ACTING PRESIDENT - FORESTRY-
Arthur Griffith**

“The percentage of the area of Ireland under woodland was the least of any country before the war, and during the war fifteen years of the twenty years' supply has gone. Ireland is now worse off in this respect than any other inhabited country in the world with the exception of Iceland. It will be the duty of the Dáil to find a remedy for this condition of affairs.”

Three factors converged to deplete the woodlands. World War I created an unprecedented demand for wood. Augustine Henry, Professor of Forestry repeatedly pointed out that the World War consumed as much timber as it did steel.

Secondly, Ireland was going through a great structural change in land ownership. In 1870 only 3.5% of the population owned land. By 1916 this had risen to 64%. In 1870 there were 13,000 landlords, 300 of whom each owned more than 10,000 acres. There were 535,000 tenants. By 1903, 316,000 of these were peasant proprietors. The average size of holding was 36.4 acres yet demand and the hunger for land was insatiable. The number of small holders continued to increase after Independence. The government distributed an additional 2.5 million acres among 110,000 farmers between 1923-33 an average of 23 acres (c 10 hectares).

Thirdly, harvesting the woodlands suited both the landlord and the new smallholders. The buoyant market gave the landlords their last cash crop as no value was imputed to the trees in the sale of their estates. It gave the new smallholders their first cash windfall. They held an antipathy towards trees, what was the indulgence of the landlord, was for them an unaffordable luxury. Eoin Neeson in the History of Irish Forestry stated that “trees were seen as a waste of space occupying land that they could grow a crop on”.

Their focus was on food production and self sufficiency. These people were only two generations removed from the famine. Their holdings were too small to sterilise any part of it from production for 50 years. Furthermore, trees in their mind symbolised the alien culture, that they wanted supplanted. Cutting down trees was perceived as a sound thing to do by their peers. Equally planting trees attracted opprobrium, such as notions of grandeur and of wanting to rise above their station (Neeson).

Dáil Éireann Volume 1-18 June, 1919

MINISTERIAL MOTIONS AFFORESTATION

Arthur Griffith the ACTING PRESIDENT moved that:

“Dáil decrees November 1st a National Arbor Day and authorises the appointment of a National Inspector of Forestry and that a sum of £1,000 be appropriated for the purpose for the present year”

LIAM DE ROISTE (Cork City) seconded the motion and suggested that the County Councils should be circularised in the matter and that a small committee be set up to assist the Ministry in dealing with the question.

Dáil Éireann Volume 1 - 20 August, 1919

Robert Barton T.D. The DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE moved the adoption of the Report on Forestry. He mentioned that the man proposed to be nominated as National Inspector of Forestry was not available and that he had invited Mr. Cole to act in the meantime.

Mr M.Staines (St Michan's) referred to a proposal made at a meeting of the Committee of Forestry that every farmer should plant at least sixteen trees, i.e. a tree to represent each man shot in Easter Week. If sixteen trees were not considered sufficient, they could plant sixteen of each species of tree.

Dáil Éireann Volume 1- 27 August, 1919

REPORTS ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Arthur Griffith, the Acting President read the reports of these Committees.

“The arrangements for Arbor Day have been almost completed. The assistance of local bodies, the Sinn Féin Organisation, Colleges, Convents etc. had been secured in the organisation of the Planting programme. Trees had been procured from Nurserymen and supplied to Sinn Féin Cumainn and others and expert advice regarding planting had been provided.

Owing to the mildness of the weather it was found necessary to defer the holding of Arbor Day until 29th November.”

Near Gorey a Fr. Sweetman provided 8 acres (3 hectares) to the local Sinn Féin Cumainn for the purpose of tree planting. Mr Cole advised the Dáil that **the consecration of the day in the service of Ireland** would be celebrated with the planting of this site. His circulars advised that Arbor Day activities should include:

- planting of Forest trees, undergrowth and seeds;
- planting of Fruit trees and bushes;

- demonstrations of planting;
- addresses on Forestry in all its phases;
- pledging the children of Ireland to promote, conserve and extend the forests of all the country and
- to learn the names, uses and properties of trees.

They issued instructions on how to evaluate a site. They recommended trees to plant in a range of sites giving consideration to the characteristics of each, such as their drainage, elevation, exposure and aspect. On the bogs they recommended planting alder, buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus*) and the dogwood. Willows were recommended on river banks. Prices were quoted to local organising committees included delivery to their nearest railway station.

The Selection offered included :

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Price (in Euro)/ in Bundles of 100</u>
Alder	0.25
Ash	0.25
Beech	0.44
Birch Common	0.28
Birch Silver	0.40
Dogweed Scarlet	2.54
Elm	0.22
Chestnut Horse	0.39
Chestnut Spanish	0.42
Mountain Ash	0.35
Oak	0.35
Willow – Golden or Crimson	0.90
Thornquicks	0.22
Douglas Fir	1.27
Larch native	0.48
Larch Japanese	0.50
Pine Austrian	0.76
Pine maritime	0.76
Silver Fir	0.76
Cypress macrocarpa	1.27
Lawson cypress	0.72
Apple tree 1 year old	€0.05
Apple tree 2 years old	€0.10

There was a choice of 19 apple cultivars listed including Irish Peach.

The Sinn Féin government had no access to or control over prominent sites such as the Phoenix Park. However, the Local Government Act of 1898 was a

key factor in facilitating its success. It brought some of the most sweeping measures introduced during the 19th century. It established local government on democratic principles which destroyed the rotten borough arrangements that blighted the management of local affairs. It handed control to the nationalists. Most local authorities were under the control of Sinn Féin councillors and were willing participants. Tree planting ceremonies were also arranged in the grounds of public spirited sympathisers.

- ***The Irish Times*** and the ***Dublin Evening Mail*** published the arrangements for the official ceremony in Inchicore at 3p.m on November 29th 1919 ***The Irish Independent*** and ***The Irish Times*** December 1st, 1919 reported on the ceremonial planting undertaken at three Dublin locations.
- Arthur Griffith planted a tree at **St. Ultan's Children's Hospital, Charlemont Street**, and was photographed with the Matron, Dr. Kathleen Lynn and the Lord Mayor, Laurence O'Neill. The matron, a daughter of Canon Robert Lynn, the Church of Ireland rector in Cong, Co. Mayo was on the Sinn Féin Ardchomhairle. She made remarkable military, political and medical contributions to Irish life and was a pioneer of equality for women.
- Over 40 trees were planted in the grounds of the **Oblate Fathers in Inchicore** including Elm, Copper Beech, Sycamore as well as six Oaks planted in memory of the dead. The planting of the trees was supervised by Mr. H. Callan and Staff of the Paving Committee of the Corporation.
- “In the vicinity of the Park a number of trees were planted as well as along by the footpath at **St. Laurence O'Toole's Church – Seville Place**. It was granted that it would improve the appearance of the street if they survived the regular passage of cattle walking to the steamers in the North Wall”.
- ***The Freeman's Journal*** also reported that Arbor Day was observed at Midleton, where by direction of the **Midleton Urban Council** a row of young trees were planted along the footpath of a suburban part of town. The planting was conducted under the supervision of Mr. John Lawton, Town Surveyor.

A Brief Survey of the Work done by the Department of Agriculture (April 1919 to June 1921) was presented to the First Session of the Second Dáil, 16th August 1921 by Art O'Connor, Deputy for South Kildare and Substitute Minister for Agriculture.

Robert Barton was in jail arrested on false suspicions that he was implicated in the German Plot. It included **Mr. Coles report on Arbor Day up to June 1920** -

“My work began towards the end of last August. Some ten weeks only were available to circularise the whole country, get all the Cumainn to work, stir up the County and Urban Councils, write to all educational institutions in rural districts, to each school manager and all clergymen in ditto, to societies interested in forestry and to call forth and reply to endless queries and problems that arose in individual instances. Mr. Cole distributed throughout the country some 50,000 leaflets of an informative and educational nature and arranged for lantern lectures on the subject. The main result is that in practically every case the work was got in hand, and as nearly as we can reckon some 250,000 to 300,000 were planted. Considering the shortage of time and the harassing circumstances which prevailed at that period, this, it will be admitted, was a praiseworthy achievement, especially when it is recollected that the entire organisation was done on the small net outlay of £70”.

Mr. Cole served as a temporary and unpaid National Forestry Inspector up to Arbor Day, 1919. He was a Dublin businessman and a Sinn Féin city councillor.

The Minister acknowledged in his report “the amenity value of Arbor Day but its primary purpose was to raise awareness and draw attention to the needs for the afforestation of the country. He was encouraged by the interest shown and the level of feedback he received. His attention was also drawn to cases of excessive felling”. A felling licence was introduced. Permits would have to be obtained from the courts (***Cabinet minutes from 20/8/1920***).

The Minister pointed out: “that within their limited powers many Co. Councils have done splendid work. Kildare set an example for all to emulate. It had a whole time forester and wood rangers for its 360 acres of woods and plantations under its control, the nurseries it created for raising young trees and the hundreds of shelter belts it had made available around homesteads.”

There was no Arbor Day in 1920. The War of Independence raged. The country was under martial law and Arthur Griffith was in prison again from November 1920 until July 1921.

Dáil Éireann Volume 4 - 25 August 1921

Estimate for Agriculture and Forestry:-

£1000 was put down for the organisation of Arbor Day in November 1921. It too was a victim of events.

Arthur Griffith was nominated leader of the delegation to London that over a two month period, October to December 1921, negotiated the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Despite winning both the Dáil vote on the treaty and the subsequent election which approved the treaty with 71.5% of the vote, Civil War ensued. He then sanctioned force to defend and repel this threat to the integrity and viability of this new democracy. Griffith defeated de Valera in the election for President of the Dáil. Disconcerted by events, exhausted and overworked, he died of a cerebral haemorrhage on August 12th 1922 at the age of 50. With him, so too did Arbor Days and the dream of state forestry.

He is the first Irish leader to be buried as the head of state. Griffith Avenue named in his honour is one of the finest landscape legacies of visionary planning of Dublin in the 1920s. It is a fitting tribute, one of a few avenues in Dublin with boulevard planting, that is two rows of trees on each side. Ten days later on August 22nd Michael Collins was shot in an ambush. Collins' Avenue memorialises his name. It runs from Donnycarney church to Whitehall church, east of, parallel to, but without distinction, lacking the scale, grace and the trees of Griffith Avenue, the elegant reduced to the anonymous.

Those who worked with Collins said his real genius was as an organiser. Therefore, we can only speculate on what the Irish landscape would look like today, if the visionary and the organiser had survived. Ireland's tree cover then was 1%. The European average now is 37%. Our present tree cover of 10% was achieved largely in the past 20 years since the formation of Coillte and with the planting incentives of EU grants. It is conceivable it could be on a par with the European average, if Griffith's tree planting policies were driven by Collin's organisational skills from the 1920s onwards.

Griffith's commitment to tree planting would be exemplary in ordinary times, but he was multi-tasking his way through a maelstrom of unpredictable and unprecedented political events. Even his bitterest enemies acknowledged he was the ablest man in the nationalist movement. Yet he has been strangely neglected. It seems journalists, memoir writers, film makers and historians prefer the box office allure of militant revolutionaries and republicans, to the contemplative passions of a tree planter.

If readers have information on Arbor Day events in other years and at other locations, please email details to the address below.

sales@costins.com



The Seed Distribution Scheme

by Stephen Butler

Here we are again, with flowers all around us, and of course, after successful pollination, plenty of plump seed pods just waiting for the keen gardener to notice, collect, and send off to me!

I seem to have a good crop of various seeds both at work and home, and I am certain our valiant band of seed collectors are already drying and cleaning seed ready to send in as usual.

All we need is more people to use the seed list and request seeds – every year the number of requests is slightly less than the year before. If you have not used the seed list before do give it a try, raising plants from seed is one of life's pleasures, seeing the tiny seedlings emerge, grow larger, and eventually enhance your garden, and of course you should have spares to give away (or bring to our plant sales!) which is always particularly rewarding. Our list often has unusual species too – did anyone get germination of *Dactylicapnos* (*Dicentra*) *scandens* from last year's list?? I ask because I lost the parent plant in the last winter, after giving away all the carefully collected seed, young replacements would be gratefully received!!

Raising plants from seed is cheap, usually gives large numbers of plants, germination is often better from our list as seed can be fresher, and sometimes you get something new too as all our seed is open pollinated – that is no control, bees or wind do it all, so there is great potential for something different!

Do give seed collecting, and seed raising a try, you will not regret it.

All seed donations, as always to

Stephen Butler
Curator of Horticulture
Dublin Zoo
Phoenix Park
Dublin 8



Ruth Draper Time

by Rae McIntyre

Many years ago we had close friends staying for the May Bank Holiday weekend. As always they wanted to see round the garden and, as always, they were outspoken in their comments. However they were silent when I gave my commentary on the following plants

- i. *Magnolia stellata* 'Royal Star'. "That has only a few flowers now but it was magnificent last month".
- ii. *Paeonia mlokosewitschii*. "It's budded now and will soon flower."
- iii. *Sanguinaria canadensis*. "That's a real beauty but has just finished."
- iv. Rhododendrons. "Some of them have flowered really well over the past two months but you can see that there are still a lot to come into bloom."
- v. Daffodils. "They're finished now but they were really good this year."
- vi. Tulips. "They're all late-flowering and won't be in bloom until the middle of May."

The comment made by the husband at the end of this guided tour was, "So it's a case of jam yesterday, jam to-morrow but no jam to-day." I had believed that there was still quite a lot in flower in the garden with interesting foliage but there's no accounting for tastes.

Anyway about a couple of years later they gave me a book of gardening essays they had come across in a second-hand bookshop. One of them was about an American woman called Ruth Draper who, when showing people round her garden would say, as I had. "Oh it was wonderful last week and it will be wonderful next week but unfortunately there's nothing in bloom at the moment." This assumes that the main criterion of garden excellence is always having abundant flowers. There are flowers that bloom for a very long time but there are also some that I have mentioned and others that are very transient, but in their brief spell of flowering are truly spectacular.

Magnolia stellata ‘Royal Star’ is usually described as a shrub or small tree suitable for small gardens. How small is small? Here it has grown so much that it dominates the main garden. All winter long it is festooned with furry flower buds that are nearly as good as flowers. This year it came into bloom on March 24 and the flowers lasted until Friday April 8 when they started falling. It had been sunny but windy that week. It’s quite magical when this tree is in bloom because it seems to reflect a white light that can be seen from the south-facing windows of the house. This year the flowering period was almost two weeks shorter than usual. It was the same for the younger, and therefore smaller, *Magnolia* ‘Wada’s Memory’.

Paeonia mlokosewitschii (Molly the Witch) in mild winters can have its deep crimson leaf buds pushing through the ground in early January. These develop into bluish-green slightly metallic leaves to form an attractive background for the exquisite primrose-yellow globe flowers. Flowering time varies; it can be anytime from late April until late May and often doesn’t last for any longer than five days. Ivor Coburn, the botanical artist from mid-Ulster, wanted to paint this peony so he arranged on a Tuesday to come on the Friday of the same week. Alas, the peony had just dropped all its petals when he arrived so he has never painted one. Pity. If you’re lucky *Paeonia mlokosewitschii* will have fertile seeds. The seed pods look like pinky-red teeth in a smiley green mouth but only the black ‘teeth’ seeds are viable. The lovely *Paeonia emodi* ‘Late Windflower’ has single white blooms that last for a fortnight.

Sanguinaria canadensis f. *multiplex* ‘Plena’ is a member of the poppy family with scalloped leaves not unlike those on the much larger *Macleaya cordata*. The latter consistently refuses to grow here but the little *sanguinaria*, so far, seems to like the garden. However I’m always waiting for it to be attacked by slugs and/or vine weevils. The rather anemone-like flowers are fully double with about fifty pure white petals that last for two or three weeks – surprisingly much longer than the single-flowered form. It’s a plant that has to be visited and admired several times a day when it’s in bloom.

The small tree *Stewartia pseudocamellia* is, as the name suggests, a relation of the *Camellia* but, unlike camellias, it is deciduous. Like the advert for *Fry’s Turkish Delight* used to claim, it is full of eastern promise – a native of Japan – because it forms flower buds from April onwards. These open out in June to 5 cm white flowers that last for seven days if it’s calm and three or four if it’s windy. Having performed it settles down for a snooze again until sometime in October it’s leaves turn to brilliant autumn colours and these last for 5 – 7 days depending on the wind. I used to read in *Hilliers’ Manual of Trees and Shrubs* that it had an attractive flaking bark but the one in our garden was resolutely unflaky. Until this year. It’s older – about 25 years I would say – and the trunk has become thicker. The bark is misty grey-green and taupe,

very tasteful and muted like Farrow and Ball paint colours, and it peels rather than flakes.

This year some roses had fleeting blooms in the rain and continual northwest wind. You could see that, like me, they were yearning for summer. I do not know the names of some of the old white roses in the garden because they were grown from cuttings taken from the gardens of derelict houses around here. In bloom they are lovely and the scent is heavenly but their petals become brown and rain-battered in record time.

Rosa pimpinellifolia managed to do its flowering in early May before the weather became really vile. It's a thorny, prickly, bristly little rose but it bears small pale pink flowers profusely for a fortnight. Now in late July these have turned into not very attractive liver-coloured fruits that birds don't seem to like. What they do like are the hips on *Rosa moyesii* 'Geranium'. It flowered briefly in early June with large single brilliant red blooms that had an historic look about them. The books say that these are followed by large flagon-shaped – always flagon-shaped – red orange fruits. In all the time I've had it I've only seen about three of these in total because the birds plunder it very diligently indeed. I don't mind. If it's a choice between well-fed birds and flagon-shaped hips I'll choose the birds every time.

I wish some irises stayed around a while longer than they do. The bearded irises have no time for me or my works so I gave up on them long ago. I am fond of *Iris graminea*, the plum tart iris, which has long narrow leaves among which nestle the flowers which have narrow standards and falls. They smell of warm ripe plums as do the flowers on *Centaurea montana* which last much longer.

Iris unguicularis flowers, like so many, suffered last winter. Avon Bulbs usually offer them for sale in their autumn catalogue but, because of crop failure last winter, are unable to provide any until next year. That's from sunny Somerset so it's hardly surprising that mine here in the far north didn't bloom until April and that was brief and sparse. I got Andy to make a small raised bed with railway sleepers and limy, gritty soil just for *Iris unguicularis* in a sheltered south-facing corner of the yard. It looks dreadful at the moment, horribly scruffy with flattened foliage and bare patches and I've discovered that visiting cats are using it as a bed. Possibly B & B because there are house martins in a nearby farm building and the young ones are learning to fly which makes them very vulnerable.

Berberis temolaica is one of my favourite plants. I first saw it in Jim Reynolds' garden many years ago and immediately broke the tenth commandment. It's difficult to propagate apparently which means that it's not often available in commerce but I eventually tracked one down in Spinners Nursery in

Hampshire. The man who sold it to me *put his arm in* as they say in Ulster (i.e. he overcharged) but he could see the gleam of greed in my eyes and knew I would pay up. I posted it home at great expense. *Berberis temolaica* has leaves that are the most attractive blue-grey. The blooms, which lasted briefly this past spring, are like tiny roses, beautifully formed in pale lemon and harmonise perfectly with the glaucous leaves.

To compensate for these beautiful but brief bloomers there are some that stay in flower for a long time and avoid the Ruth Draper scenario. *Astrantia major* is one such – just the plain form but sadly not desirable cultivars like ‘Buckland’ or ‘Roma’ and the delectable *Astrantia maxima* only lasts here for three years at the most; its flowering time is shorter than that of *Astrantia major*.

Thalictrum delavayi ‘Hewitt’s Double’ has borne its tiny mauve flowers since early June (it’s now late July) and they’re only fading now to dusky lilac. The plant is at least 2.5 m tall with very dark, almost black stems that sway gently in the wind.

Cornus canadensis a.k.a. *Chamaepericlymenum canadense* is the creeping dogwood. It has typical *Cornus* leaves, but doesn’t grow much higher than 15 cm. The plant has been studded with little white flowers since early May. It didn’t use to flower and just sat there looking almost sulky for years. Strangely it only started to flower in the spring of 2010 after that vicious winter. Maybe it was reminded of its native Canada.

Another very long flowering sub shrub is *Lithospermum diffusum* or *Lithodora* as it is now known. Why are there always these changes in nomenclature? It bears its lovely blue borage flowers for at least three months. I got the ‘Album’ form for the white garden. It started off, a couple of years ago, being pure white but its blue blood is becoming increasingly apparent and it’s now a faded blue colour.

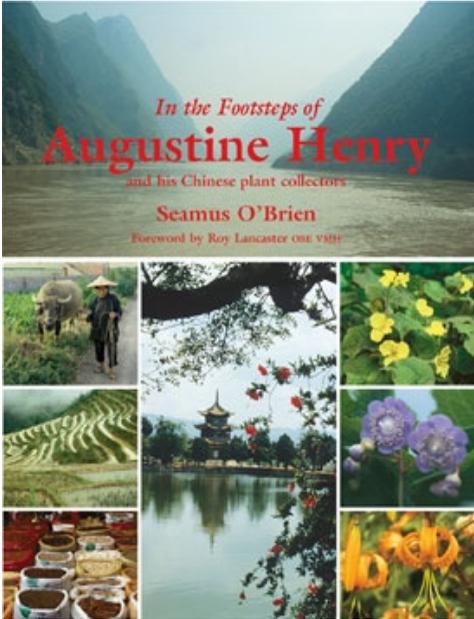
The longest flowering roses here are ‘Westerland’ and ‘Bonica’. ‘Westerland’ is a tall shrub that started blooming at the beginning of June. It has flowers that vary between deep orange and light apricot. For a fortnight at the beginning of July it took a rest but is flowering profusely now and it has grown even taller in the rain.

‘Bonica’ takes occasional naps for about a week but then produces another flush of warm pink flowers. It is fairly unfazed by rain and the flowers don’t become sodden brown balls as they do sadly on many roses in our dismal climate. I’m hoping that both these roses continue to bloom until September.



Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

We have had the pleasure of reading snippets of this book in our newsletter many years ago. When editor, I was so grateful that Seamus would take the time to write for us. When many far more prestigious publications were requesting material from him, Seamus always took the time to write for the I.G.P.S. newsletter because the society has always been a cause close to his



heart. Seamus has been an active and leading member of the I.G.P.S. for many years and, I suppose, it really should not have been any surprise that he would have been so supportive of the newsletter. Many will recall with pride the wonderful exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show and Seamus' part in that. Those who know Seamus will also know of his long interest in and admiration of Dr. Augustine Henry and it was only a matter of time before he organised his research, put it together and published it so that we might all benefit from his work, enthusiasm and deep knowledge of his subject. It has been worth the wait!

This is simply an outstanding book, a monumental work and, for this readership, as close to the heart of the *raison d'être* of the society as it is possible to get. We often do not appreciate our own nor give them the recognition and praise which is their due. How well then to read the comment E.H. Wilson wrote of Augustine Henry, "*No one in any age has contributed more to the knowledge of Chinese plants than this scholarly gentleman.*" This simple statement from such a renowned plant collector sums up the magnificence of the work of Augustine Henry.

A summary of someone's life's work into facts and figures can be a dry assessment but also an impressive one. In the book, Seamus gives some statistics which simply astound me: Augustine Henry collected 158,050 plant specimens, 6,000 distinct species, 5 new families, 37 new genera, 1,338 new species, 338 new varieties, 30 new subspecies, 20 new forms, a total of 1,726 new discoveries. Isn't this a simply astounding volume of work for one man and more so for a man who didn't train as a botanist?

I find it impossible to relay how impressed I have been at the achievements of Augustine Henry on reading this book and how impressed I have been at how this work has been recorded so well in Seamus O'Brien's book. I have thought for some time of Augustine Henry as the man who opened the door to China's wonderful flora, the man who alerted the world to the treasures which were there and which were in danger of being lost, the man whose work led to E.H. Wilson, George Forrest, Frank Kingdon Ward and William Purdom travelling to China but I find from this book that there was far more to the man than I had previously known. His years in China were followed by a career in forestry and writing, additional phases of achievement in a marvellous life.

Seamus lead three expeditions to China and Taiwan, travelling "In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry", searching out the plants we associate with him, describing them and their habitats and mixing past and present, plants and people into a wonderful narrative of his great hero. It is an astonishingly wonderful book which will appeal to the reader at many levels. There are wonderful insights into life in China at the latter part of the 19th century but, as was Augustine Henry's work, it is the plants which weave their way through this book making it essential reading for the enthusiastic amateur gardener as well as for those who do so professionally. I don't think I will ever truly comprehend the magnificence of Augustine Henry's work nor the vastness and beauty of the flora of China but I have read a wonderful book which has entertained, enthralled and educated me and it is one you simply must read.

We generally seem to have a reluctance to praise our contemporaries and people seem to feel a certain embarrassment in showing admiration for others but I cannot admire nor lavish enough praise on Seamus O'Brien or on this book to do it justice. I feel fortunate to know him and to have read his work. ***[In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry, Seamus O'Brien, Garden Art Press, 2011, HB, 367pp, £40, ISBN-13: 978-1-87067-373-0]***

Although Seamus' book has been at my side for the past three months I have managed to read a few others also, some of which might interest you. I know Peter Jones through a gardening club in Cork. He is Associate Professor in the Department of Zoology, Ecology and Plant Science at University College Cork.

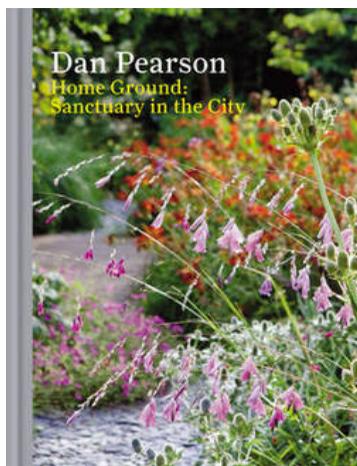


**THE SCIENCE OF
GARDENING**
The hows and whys of successful growing
Professor Peter Jones



He is an enthusiastic gardener with the scientific background to understand how plants grow. This book explains the scientific basis underlying each aspect of gardening and tells us how to apply this knowledge to our own gardens to ensure greater success in our efforts.

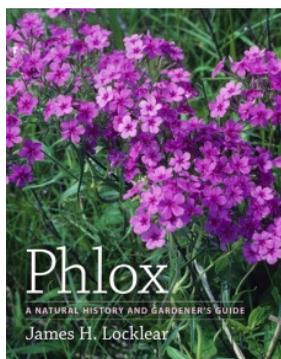
[*The Science of Gardening, Peter Jones, Crowfoot Press, 2011, HB, 256pp, £25*]



Dan Pearson
Home Ground:
Sanctuary in the City

This is a very pleasantly written book from Dan Pearson recounting the development of his own London garden. It is a mixture of the story of his garden and an imparting of lessons learned, gardening tips, plant suggestions and growing advice and all written in a conversational tone which makes for very easy and enjoyable reading. The book is well illustrated with excellent photographs, very enjoyable in their own right.

[*Home Ground, Sanctuary in the City, Dan Pearson, Conran Octopus, 2011, HB, 272pp, £28*]



Phlox
A NATURAL HISTORY AND GARDENER'S GUIDE
James H. Locklear

The North American phloxes, of which there are 61 species, are among the most wonderful of rock garden plants, generally easy to grow and generous with their flowering. Here is a comprehensive and authoritative work on the *Phlox* genus where each entry has a general description, comments on ecology and guidelines for successful growing. The photographs are grouped in the centre of the book.

[*Phlox, Jim Locklear, Timber Press, 2011, HB, 316pp, £35*]



A rambling Irish rose *by Esther Schickling*

'Belvedere' is a vigorous rambling rose which can grow to some 12m or more. It has small cup shaped double rose coloured flowers with a delicate scent. Though the flowers themselves are small, they are carried in large trusses and an established rose in full flower is quite a sight to behold. According to Charles Nelson's "A Heritage of Beauty" its origins aren't known. The rose grows at Belvedere House in Co. Westmeath. The late Countess of Rosse got it from there and seems to have distributed it.

I first came across this rambler in the National Exhibition Centre in Kilquade, Co. Wicklow some years ago, where it was grown over a wide arch along the Harlequin Walk. Here it was regularly pruned and new shoots tied in to keep it in check. I took cuttings from it for the garden centre there.

Quite a spectacular specimen grew in a private garden in Newtownmountkennedy Co. Wicklow, where the rambler was 'let loose' and grew through an ancient Lawson Cypress.

Needless to say, I brought a cutting home with me, grew it on and repotted it for a few years as I had no suitable place for it at the time. Eventually it became too unruly and I decided to grow it through a Bramley apple tree which at this stage was in its 10th year and well able to cope with such a strong growing rambler.

I planted the rose at the base of the tree with plenty of manure and homemade compost. There it sat, sulking and not growing very much for the remainder of that year. Another year went by and I had forgotten about the rose completely. When I did take a closer look while mulching it, I noticed that strong shoots had emerged from the base and that it had started to grow well into the tree. There was no sign of a flower though. Another year went by with yet another wet summer.....

Finally, last summer there was suddenly more rose than apple tree to be seen. In fact the tree was smothered in the rambler and each arching branch was laden with flowering trusses. The wait had certainly been worth it!



The Irish Garden Plant Society



The front cover and back cover photographs are of *Rosa* 'Belvedere' growing in a Bramley apple and were taken by Esther Schickling.

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