

IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER NO. 87 JANUARY 2003

Dear Fellow Members,

“Anois teacht an Earraigh beidh an lá ag dul chun síneadh...”

Thank goodness, the seasons do follow one on another and indeed the days are stretching now with the coming of spring. Spring bulbs are above ground and promising better days ahead. The Irish cultivar *Iris unguicularis* ‘Kilbroney Marble’ is showing beautiful swelling buds and I look forward to its first flowering in the garden.

I hope everyone has had a good Christmas and that this New Year, 2003, will bring health, happiness and a totally weed-free, black spot-free, frost-free and trouble-free garden for the year ahead. By the time you read these lines you really should have come to the end of those long hours of Christmas reading and should, at least, be considering getting out into the garden again.

An account of the Botanic Gardens expedition to China was something I have looked forward to and Seamus O'Brien's article is most welcome. Stephen Butler has the seedlist ready again, trojan work, and Catherine Tyrie has a second seedlist for us this year which was kindly offered to IGPS members by Colin Morgan, of the National Pinetum at Bedgebury in Kent, following the Conifer Workshop which he conducted in late September at the Clondeboy Estate. He was obviously very taken with the enthusiasm of the members to make this offer.

Also in this issue we have accounts of gardening in other climes. Some correspondents of mine have very kindly given an account of their gardening at this time of the year, one from the east coast of North America, one from the west coast and another from Australia. I hope you enjoy them.

Members of the regional groups have very kindly helped with accounts of their activities since the last issue. I hope this will keep you up to date with what is going on around the country. There is also some information on upcoming events from other members. Hopefully their example will encourage others who have an interest in writing for the newsletter to make a start. I look forward to hearing from those with an interest in writing for the newsletter. Drop me a line if I can be of any help.

One disappointing note: You may remember the survey of Irish plants and cultivars which Brendan Sayers started last year and you may wonder what became of it. Brendan received only a handful of replies to his request for information. Have you any suggestions how better to go about such a survey? It is an important and worthwhile thing to do and rather central to the aims of the Society. Please let me know.

And finally, apologies for the mix up with the numbering of the last newsletter – Níl saoi gan locht!

Best wishes for the year ahead.

Paddy Tobin, “Cois Abhann”, Riverside, Lower Gracedieu, Waterford

pmtobin@eircom.net

051-857955

IN THIS ISSUE:

- The Glasnevin Central China Expedition by Seamus O'Brien
- Gardening in Other Climes – accounts of three gardens from across the globe; John O'Reilly in Australia, John Lyons in California and Marty Adams in Maryland, USA
- Moving Magnolias by Rae McIntyre
- Captivating Kirstenbosch by Phemie Rose
- Only a Rose But... by Tim Cramer
- Alexanders and Archaeology by Veronica Smith
- Parting with a Remarkable Tree by Sally O'Halloran
- Seed Exchange 2003 by Stephen Butler
- Regional Reports – accounts of activities around the country
- Looking Ahead – What's coming up
- Cuttings from the NCCPG – from the various NCCPG group newsletters
- Snippets – bit and pieces of news
- Letters to the Editor

Front cover: *Abies koreana* showing its cones on a clear frosty morning in early January of this year. The cones have lost their violet-purple colour of the summer but are still attractive at this time of year.

Back cover: *Garrya elliptica* 'James Roof'. It is at this time of year that the *Garrya* is at its best. The long slender and conspicuous catkins on male plants are a delight in January and February

Photographs: Paddy Tobin

Glasnevin Central China Expedition.

Having previously trekked the high mountainous terrain of Nepal, Yunnan and south east Tibet, it made a dramatic yet pleasant change to visit central China this autumn. In the past I had visited these regions with either Alan Clark, the former curator of Muncaster Castle Gardens in Cumbria, or with Keith Rushforth. This year (a little nervously) I led my first expedition to China, the first ever to have been organised from the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. The expedition was a joint venture in collaboration with Wuhan Botanical Gardens and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, who acted as our hosts and guides over a three week period.

Our itinerary included Emei Shan, (formerly Mount Omei) in Sichuan province and from there we sailed down the Yangtze, crossing the Hubei - Sichuan frontier to make a brief stop to visit the *Metasequoia* valley and from there to the world renowned Three Gorges, made famous not only by their spectacular scenery, but by the many plant hunters who have either lived in the region or passed through the region. From the Three Gorges our route brought us to Wuhan and its renowned botanical gardens on a magical lakeside setting before finally stopping over in Beijing, formerly Peking, where the group had an opportunity to visit the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square.

In late September, Dr Matthew Jebb, Noeleen Smyth, Jimi Blake, Helen Dillon, Paul Maher, Grace Pasley, Assumpta Broomfield and myself left Dublin bound for Beijing. In Beijing we were joined by Fiona O'Dwyer and Fergus Tighe from Gallivanting Media, who are making a documentary for RTE on our adventures. In Chengdu, the provincial capital of Sichuan, we were joined by the final member of the group, Stephanie Henry, a Belfast native and a great grand niece of Augustine Henry who had lived in Yichang at the terminus of the Three Gorges between 1882 and 1889.

In the airport at Chengdu we finally met with our Chinese host, Professor Ding, and his entourage of staff from Wuhan Botanical Gardens. Having spent a first spare day exploring the city of Chengdu and the Chengdu bamboo garden, we headed south through the intensively cultivated Chengdu plain, past terraces of rice and tea before reaching the town of Leshan where we boarded a small ferry and sailed onto the confluence of the Dadu and Min rivers to see the largest Buddha in the world. Carved from a limestone cliff overlooking the river, this enormous statue took 90 years to carve and was completed in AD 713. A record breaker at 71 meters tall, this enormous seated Buddha made an exciting start to our journey.

Emei Shan (Shan meaning mountain in Chinese) is famous the world over as both being a World Heritage Site and a mecca for the plant hunter. Supporting a flora in excess of 3,000 species, (remember this is a single mountain surrounded by plains) it makes our own native flora seem very poor indeed. Emei Shan is also the most important and remote of China's four Buddhist mountains. Amid its rich vegetation are numerous monasteries making it an important place of pilgrimage and a major tourist attraction. These temples have had their own troubled pasts; war with Japan and their destruction by the Red Guards during the desperate years of the Cultural Revolution almost brought their demise, but thankfully many have been resurrected and restored within the last two decades.

Emei Shan was a wonderland and far exceeded our expectations. One of the most amazing features of these Chinese mountains is how you can pass through so many vegetation zones in one single day. Below 1,000 metres the flora is subtropical to warm temperate. Above this is the temperate layer containing plants well suited to the rigours of the Irish climate, including a large endemic element. The upper coniferous zone does not really thin out until the summit is reached at 3,099 metres, making the mountain too low lying to support a good alpine flora, a feature I missed on this year's trip.

At the base of the mountain we met with a small garden of well labelled trees and shrubs native to Emei Shan, including the endemic (endemic meaning native to only that region and found nowhere else in the world) *Aucuba omeiensis* and *Parakmeria emeiensis*, making this a good introduction to what had yet to come our way; from there on it was just one exciting find after another. The lower slopes were dominated by forests of *Machilus*, *Lindera* and *Litsea* and beneath these was a sub-canopy of giant bamboos and *Trachycarpus fortunei*. Adding further to the exotic element were many tall "trees" of *Cyathea spinulosa* and extensive lush colonies of *Iris japonica* and fragrant yellow *Hedychium*s. The fern layer was especially rich with species of *Angiopteris*, *Hemigramma* and *Woodwardia*, laced through with *Selaginella deliculata*, all thriving in warm humid conditions. *Hydrangae aspera* ssp. *strigosa*, a rare plant in Irish gardens made small trees here with *Camellia oleifera*, (in full flower and fruit) and *Clerodendron bungei*. Though still at relatively low altitude our view from the Shanjue temple of the surrounding countryside and a distant monastery was spectacular and for the first time we began to appreciate just how vast this mountain really was.

It was the temperate zone we were most anxious to reach however and we were determined to make a rich collection of both seeds and herbarium specimens for what seemed like a very distant Glasnevin.

Along the way we met vendors in open air stalls selling traditional medicinal plants, like the roots of *Angelica sinensis*, *Aristolochia heterophylla* and the stems of *Clematis armandii* and *Sargentodoxa cuneata*. Other baskets contained the flower buds of *Magnolia biondii* and *M. liliflora*. Tu - Chung, the bark of *Eucommia ulmoides* was widely available as was the bark of *Magnolia officinalis*. Having bought a selection of these to add to the collection of Chinese Materia Medica at Glasnevin, we moved on.

The route towards the summit was relatively easy going compared to previous trips as all the tracks are paved, though having climbed almost all of the 21,000 steps we were all glad of a break at the summit. (a few of us clever folk took the cable car - plant hunting is easier on a downwards stroll than an uphill battle). The view from the glittering Jindling (Golden Summit) monastery was without a doubt an incredible sight. We were high above cloud level at the edge of a sheer cliff face that fell for one and a quarter miles with a distant view of the snow clad Gongga Shan to the west. The following morning we rose at 6 am to view what is acknowledged as the most spectacular sun rise in all China, as Buddhist monks chanted and beat drums and gongs in the background. We were not disappointed!

The upper slopes were clad with a dark, sombre canopy of *Abies fabri*, named for the Rev'd Dr Ernst Faber, the German missionary and botanist who explored this area in 1887, making many new discoveries. Amongst it grew small trees of *Sorbus setschwanensis*, a white berried mountain ash, originally discovered in Sichuan by Augustine Henry. Even more handsome were the many cliff side trees of the magnificent *Sorbus sargentiana*, with enormous clusters of red fruits and sticky horse chestnut like buds. The creamy-yellow flowered *Impatiens omiensis*, another endemic, was especially abundant, as were the many species of *Paris*, *Smilacina*, *Streptopus* and climbing aconites. *Viburnums* we found especially abundant and of these we made an enormous collection, which did raise eyebrows when it came to seed cleaning forays in the evening!

Acer davidii, too was common but the forms we encountered seemed to be poor in terms of bark pattern. It was a relatively bad year for seed on both *Acer* and *Rhododendron* and I suspect there was a frosty, late spring in this region of China. Many of our collections remain to be identified, and for each seed collection of a particular plant a matching herbarium specimen was made, but I must admit to never have been so baffled by so many obscure hollies and *Viburnums*. I think my lasting impressions of Emei Shan will be its magnificent trees. Imagine *Aesculus wilsonii*, *Tetracentron sinense* and the handkerchief tree, *Davidia involuocrata* var. *vilmoriniana* towering over head to 90 feet, or 1,000 year old trees of *Podocarpus* and

Cercidiphyllum japonicum, such is what this holy mountain can offer and more. My lasting memory of Emei Shan (not being the ill tempered wild monkeys) is however it's two endemics, the abundant and charming *Impatiens emeiensis* and *Aucuba omeiensis*, (from the mountain's former name Mount Omei), a plant a million times more refined than it's cousin *Aucuba japonica*, the stalwart of many a Victorian border. My one disappointment however was not to have found the rare *Bergenia emeiensis*, making a future trip a necessity!

From Emei Shan we drove, via Chengdu, to Chongqing, the largest metropolitan area in the world with a population of 13 million people. From this bright, modern, trendy city we boarded a ferry down the Yangtze to the rather grimy city of Wanxian, a 13 hour sailing. From Wanxian we drove across the Hubei - Sichuan border to the tiny village of Maoba, where in 1941, the fossil tree, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* was found, having previously been thought to have been extinct for millions of years. It was almost a pilgrimage to visit the original "type tree", i.e. the tree from which the genus was described, a 600 year old specimen that was almost felled during the Cultural Revolution. Having seen its American cousins, *Sequoiadendron giganteum* and *Sequoia sempervirens* in California last autumn it was like a final chapter to see their primordial Chinese relative in its homeland. A further drive brought us to the Metasequoia valley from where the Arnold Arboretum received seed in 1947 and from whence Glasnevin received a share of what is thought to have been the most important botanical discovery of the 20th century. At Glasnevin this seed was sown on the 3rd of April 1948 and from that single batch of seed gathered in the valley near Maoba six seedlings were raised of which three were planted in the gardens. The fossil tree, still rare in its wild state (only 10,000 wild trees exist) is now widely planted as a farmland and street tree in China, where it grows with remarkable vigour.

Our main reason for travelling to China was to visit the Three Gorges. This spectacular landscape is composed of three major gorges, the Qutang Gorge at 8 kms is the shortest, followed by the Wushan or Wixia Gorge at 40 kms and finally the Xiling or Yichang Gorge, which at 76 kms is the longest of the three. At its terminus lies the city of Yichang a place of legend in the history of botanical exploration. In the late 19th century the Irish plant collectors Thomas Watter's and Augustine Henry lived there, as did Ernest Wilson. Other plant hunters to pass through here include Antwerp Pratt, Ernst Faber, Reginald Farrer, William Purdom, Charles Maries, Jean Pere Armand David, Jean Marie Delavay and Frank Meyer.

The construction of the Three Gorges dam near the mouth of the Yichang Gorge added an element of urgency to our visit. When completed in 2008 at a cost of twenty billion

US dollars, the dam will create the world's largest water storage reservoir and raise the level of the mighty Yangtze River 175 metres above its present level, creating a lake that could stretch from Los Angeles to San Francisco. Alongside the Great Wall of China this will be the only man made structure visible from space. An estimated two million people have been relocated putting further pressure on an already vulnerable flora. The final section of dam was completed in mid November of 2002, so as you read this article, the level of the Yangtze will have been raised considerably.

We sailed through the Qutang Gorge at dawn on the morning of the 29th of September and reached the city of Wushan as the sun began to rise over the imposing cliffs at the nearby entrance of the Wushan Gorge. From here we visited the lesser Three Gorges on the Daning River in Wushan County, the area where in May 1888, Augustine Henry discovered *Davidia involucrata* var. *vilmoriniana*. From its many cliffs sprang the exotic *Lycoris aurea* sporting yellow *Nerine*-like flowers above riverside colonies of *Distylium chinense* and *Adina rubella*.

The following day we sailed on a large river ferry through both the Wushan and Yichang Gorges. By now the haze had cleared, thus improving our view and the landscape we passed through is impossible to describe by pen. Above the Yangtze raised sheer cliffs, in places a thousand feet high, in other places the grey limestone walls plunged two thousand feet into the frothing waters of the Yangtze and behind them mountain peaks soared jaggedly into the air. All about cities, towns and villages were being demolished to be replaced by entirely new cities at higher levels. The river acted as a busy highway as hundreds of Mississippi style ferries went their ways. The dam itself presented an extraordinary sight, somehow not at all on a human scale. The many thousands of construction workers seemed like ants when compared to the structure, even the most massive earth-moving machinery seemed like small toys.

Yichang itself has swollen massively because of the project. In Ernest Wilson's day the city supported a population of 30,000, today that figure is two million. As if by fate we arrived in Yichang on the very night before the house in which Augustine Henry had once lived was to be demolished and so it added much to a story due to be broadcasted on Irish TV this spring. From Yichang our journey continued onto Badong, formerly Patung, an area in which Henry had based one of his native collectors. Here we found and collected plants like *Itea ilicifolia*, *Anemone hupehensis*, *Lonicera henryi*, *Decaisnea fargesii*, *Populus lasiocarpa*, *Cardiocrinum gigantum*, *Rosa multiflora*, *Ilex pernyi* and even more *Viburnums* to the horror of the seed cleaners. From the city of Bodong we were given a noisy police escort by the local police (bureaucratic officials being a mild description) for our visit to a venerable 250 year old tree of

Emmenopterys henryi. Here we were interviewed by Badong TV about our venture and made prime time news that night!

Another ancient tree we were fortunate to visit was a 1,000 year old *Ginkgo biloba*, which according to locals produces 250 kgs of fruit every year. Not far away was another 800 year old giant. The farm on which it grows has been occupied by the same family for that entire period, so the history of the tree is fully documented. The chance to see such venerable, ancient specimens justifies travelling to Asia.

From Badong County we travelled onto Changyang, where Henry and Pratt explored in 1887, before finally arriving at the lakeside city of Wuhan where we spent a day exploring its renowned botanical gardens. Within its 70 hectares Wuhan has the largest area for the conservation of aquatic plants in the world and holds a staggering collection of cultivars of the sacred lotus, *Nelumbo nucifera*. The collection of *Actinidia*, too is staggering with 40 species and over 160 cultivars, many of which were bred in the gardens. The medicinal garden is one of the largest in China. The rare and endangered garden contains 160 of China's most threatened plants and in the glasshouses we met with the tiny *Adiantum reniforme*, a species endemic to the Three Gorges, which will become extinct with the riser of the Yangtze's waters. The garden is currently investigating a relocation project.

All too soon it was time to go home. Next autumn we hope to return to Yichang and travel north of the Yangtze to Shennongjia, Hubei's most heavily forested district. With the relocation of two million people it is expected that this region will face enormous pressures. A classic story is of a doctor who built his house on the forest's edge twenty five years ago, today he walks for half a day to collect wild medicinal plants in the forest. Back home at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, hundreds of seed packs have been sown and we look forward to growing on lots of new novelties in the New Year.

Seamus O'Brien.
National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

NOTE:

Seamus O'Brien will lecture on the Glasnevin Central China Expedition in the visitor centre of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin on Thursday 6th of February at 3.15 pm. Admission free. The documentary will feature on RTE early next year.

GARDENING IN OTHER CLIMES:

The following three articles are from gardening friends of mine with whom I made contact through the use of the internet. What they have in common is a passion for gardening. Their gardens are scattered across the globe. John and Mary O Reilly garden on the east coast of Australia; John Lyons, a native of Galway, gardens on the west coast of North America and Marty Adams, a professional in the horticultural field, gardens on the east coast of North America. I have always been fascinated by their accounts of what they were doing in their own gardens and often very jealous of the conditions in which they worked. I especially recall being very peeved at John O Reilly's comment that winter had arrived in Australia and that all he could then grow in his vegetable patch was ordinary things like lettuce, onions, cabbage, courgettes and the like. But his climate has its drawbacks. Read on. *Ed.*

Dry droughty Australia

I was jealous when Paddy complained about the wet conditions you are presently experiencing in Ireland. Here in Banora Point, which is situated at the border of Queensland and New South Wales in Australia we are now on water restrictions, being allowed to water only three times per week with a hand held hose. On Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday nights we can use the hose from 6-30 .m. to 7-30 p.m. Dedicated gardeners go out as it darkens to water and to be bitten by the midges. All other watering has to be done by watering can or bucket during the same hours on the other days of the week. We need a minimum of 150 mls or 6 inches in a day in the catchment area before the restrictions can be lifted. If we don't get some good rain soon the restrictions will be tightened even further. In my garden columns over the past three months I have been writing almost exclusively on replanting our gardens with local drought-resistant indigenous plants, on applying thick mulches to our gardens and replacing lawns wherever possible with gravel or pavers. This drought is the worst in 150 years, some scientists are claiming the worst in a thousand years, and the predictions are that we will experience even more of these, more frequently, as the earth warms up.

Our gardening at the moment is centered on keeping plants alive during the current drought. Annuals are not being planted unless they are very hardy, such as petunias, marigolds, sun flowers and calendulas. Vegetables again have to be hardy. At the moment I am digging my garlic. We have grown a large bed of it this year again, enough for our needs in the coming year. We still have a couple of dozen sugarloaf cabbages to harvest and, of course, lettuce and tomatoes. I have planted

pumpkins, water melons, cucumbers, rock melons and Rosellas and we are picking bananas (very small on account of the drought) pepinos and paw paws. I hope to get a crop of mangoes and avocados towards late summer. There are no pineapples so far this year (again due to the lack of water).

It is hard work maintaining a garden at the present because, not only are we lacking rain, we are also having a very hot period with day-time temperatures of around 28/32 Celsius and nights around the 15/16 Celsius with a lot of hot dry westerly winds. Inland the temperatures have been up to 47 degrees Celcius. Gardening is still a passion among members of our garden club. They all take buckets into the shower to catch any stray drops of water and we are bucketing out both bathwater and washing water to use in just keeping a bit of moisture in the soil.

Late on Christmas Eve we received a storm and this settled into a wet and windy night, or you could say an Alfred Hitchcock sort of night. By Christmas morning we had received 40 mls of rain followed by 11 mls on Christmas. This rain was fairly wide spread across the eastern states, not drought breaking yet but certainly welcome. Some farmers out west around Bourke, Brewarrina and Cobar haven't seen rain for over two years. Their paddocks, if they have been cropping wheat etc. are just dirt, not a blade of grass or a bush to be seen. Other farmers who have kept mainly to grazing have salt bush which is still surviving and they still have small numbers of sheep, though in poor condition. Water in those areas comes mostly from bores.

When we were in Sydney in late October we stayed with my daughter Clare. She and a friend Siobhan O'Gorman (born just west of Dublin) rent a old house at Manly. Mary and I went for a walk down to the Manly wharf where you look up the harbour to the Opera House and Harbour Bridge. The morning we were there was cloudy and windy. We were watching the view when it appeared that a storm was coming across the harbour and within a few minutes the whole view had disappeared as a dust storm enveloped us. That storm had travelled from the centre of Australia across hundreds of miles of dry paddocks taking thousands of tons of soil eventually out to sea. It is quite a frightening experience as one moment you are in daylight then it is night and cars, if still driving, have their lights on in the middle of the day. Within half an hour it was gone and everything, including yourself, was covered with dust.

We are all glad to experience a Wet Christmas. The rain has picked up the garden, even after only three days, with the daylilies in full flower. We have approximately 30 different shades of these, one of my favourite flowers, plus some roses, gerberas,

salvias and gingers. This year our Cardamom flowered, very unusual this far south of the tropics. In the vegetable garden I have a Red Dragon Fruit which had flower and fruit last year; this week four flower buds have started to form. These are a dark red fruit with a delicious flavour weighing around 1/2 kilo. We have been picking bananas, paw paws, passion fruit and pepinos for Christmas plus the last of the sugar loaf cabbages. Lettuce, carrots, beetroot with beans, sweet corn and pumpkins are almost ready to pick. I have some watermelon growing and they have appeared to take off over the past few days, really enjoying the rain. I dug my garlic crop at the beginning of the month, when cleaned and packed for storage it weighed just on three kilo's which is a lot of garlic for two people. We do use it a lot in cooking and I also use it as an insecticide spray.

I am starting to plan what to plant for autumn and winter. I think this looking forward; always looking towards the future is what keeps gardeners fit and young?

May all the members of the Irish Garden Plant Society have a very Happy New Year.
And send us a bit of your lovely rain.

Regards
John & Mary O'Reilly

It's too hot to cook or garden!

Many years ago, my auntie Peggy (who hails from Co. Meath), visited me in southern Virginia and even though it was late October and not hot by local standards, she would exclaim, "Oh it's too hot to cook" to the bemused looks of my friends and hosts. I often think of Auntie Peggy when I am out and about here in my Los Angeles garden fighting with the high desert's compacted soil and I want to say "Oh it's too hot to garden!" Peggy bought a house in Surrey, south of London in the 1950's and was delighted to discover that the previous owner was the head gardener from Wisley Gardens nearby. Her garden was wonderfully exotic as she, like my mother, was an avid gardener. She parted with that house just last year.

Hello. My name is John Lyons and I am originally from Galway. I moved to the US in the early 1990's and spent seven years in New York and the past 5 or so here in Los Angeles. Where ever I have lived, be it in London, Zurich, Dublin, New York or Los

Angeles I have always managed to root a little earth and grow something, in a pot, on a roof garden or my latest extravaganza, a former tennis court now laid bare and in the process of cultivation. My mother had ½ an acre of gardens and would disappear in May and emerge from the bushes in August, wondering why her five children had gone feral in the intervening summer months! All of us now garden on three different continents and between us we have 8 gardens. Gardening is very important to me and is almost my sole recreation and pastime. It is therapy and sustenance, life affirming and deeply rewarding. When I am not in the garden I represent actors for film, television and theatre as an agent in my company that I started 4 years ago.

When I moved here I found it very difficult to understand the seasons as we in the British Isles know them. In Southern California it is, hot (Spring), very hot (Summer), hot/warm (Autumn) or warm/cool (Winter). Having endured and enjoyed the rains in the west of Ireland and learned from my mother and grandfather how and when to plant in a wet climate, I was really perplexed as to how things would be grown here. Four years ago I rented a 600 square ft allotment near my house and I continue to maintain it in addition to my garden in progress out back. At the allotment I was fortunate enough to have a neighbour, Margaret, (originally from Alabama, in the Deep South) who has lived and gardened here for 30 years. As they say in Galway, “She had every trick in the book off”. I got a very rapid crash course in the do’s and don’t’s for this climate. At first I was bewildered. Sowing brassicas and lettuce in November? Garlic and peas in December when they are battening down the hatches on the west coast of Ireland for the winter? Well, needless to say, five years later I simply take it all for granted and organise my gardening life around these strange and wonderful seasons. There are a few things one cannot grow and I miss them terribly. Things such as peonies, tulips, and lupins, perennial favourites in my mother’s garden. On the other hand I have a communal cactus garden I created near my house with contributions from all the neighbours and roses that are wonderfully free of the dreaded black spot and other sundry ailments that come with a damp climate. If nothing else the art of gardening teaches patience and adaptability.

Last Spring I removed my tennis court and it was there since 1973. Luckily there was 3 feet of clean earth underneath. A very compacted desert earth that is fertile enough once you loosen it up and amend it with compost. The initial roto-tilling was like doing a long day in the bog footing turf, simply back breaking work! I managed to attack and defeat the tough soil over the course of one day and then dig in about 2 tons of compost which has raised the level of the 3000 square foot garden 6 inches all round. In addition, endless bags of Oak leaves, grass clippings, sea weed from Malibu beach, and 75 bags of dried chicken manure from my friend’s chicken coop. The latter

is potent but hot stuff. I must now leave the entire site to sit and compost for the next 4 months as you cannot grow anything in such a combustible concoction. It is difficult to be patient. In a few areas I have grown some green cover crops such as Rape and Vetch. They are doing OK and in the Spring I will dig them in and sow another summer crop such as Sorghum and Buckwheat until the soil begins to look like it can sustain some plantings. Young fruit trees have gone in all around the side in soil not amended in any way. This summer I decided to build raised beds using redwood boards. Raised beds are a terrific way to control soil content. They are also problematic in a warm climate as they need a lot of watering. I have planted peaches, nectarines, plums, apples and the obligatory citrus, oranges, lemons and grapefruit. The citrus are such an exotic to this Paddy and I really enjoy the intoxicating aroma of the trees in flower in late Spring. You can easily smell an orange blossom 100 feet away.

The heat is both a curse and a blessing. It gets so hot (105 degrees in summer for days on end) that you have to put shade cloth on tomatoes and lettuces or they will burn, but when you have the heat and a little rain, the effect is magical. Indeed the serious gardener must have all his or her crops in before the heat of summer as you can go weeks without the energy or inclination to go out in the tortuous climate to do more than water. It took me a long time to learn to always wear a wide brimmed hat as you can sunburn badly in 15 minutes of high noon exposure. The crops grow very rapidly and the yields are substantial. Crops that thrive here are tomatoes, corn, beets, cabbages, lettuce, carrots, courgettes, melons, cucumbers, certain long day onions, garlic, asparagus, beans of every hue and size. I have observed that in certain years and for no apparent reason certain crops do well and others fail. I garden organically so I allow whole crops to fail naturally and I have found that 5 years later a sort of equilibrium has emerged where the good insects eat the bad and in the total absence of chemicals the earth has attained a resistance to most of the worst diseases. Planting companion plants that attract beneficial insects has proven very successful in disease control. I am totally convinced that organic gardening is the only way to garden and what does it matter if you lose a crop here or there?

My latest interest is in Heirloom vegetable varieties that have been around in some cases for over 150 years. The taste of some of these varieties is beautiful. I grew a cabbage called Early Wakefield last year that was sublime. It is a small very conical shape and heads up very quickly. The tomatoes this year were wonderful, in particular a Roma / Paste variety called Martino, and a yellow variety called Lemon Boy. The selection of lettuce is very large and I cannot begin to describe the taste and texture of some of my favourites such as Black Seeded Simpson, Forellschuss, and Lolla Rossa.

This Spring I will grow Soybeans, Okra and believe it or not, potatoes for the first time, call myself an Irish gardener? Yukon Gold is a selection I have chosen and it looks like the terrific tasting Golden Wonders from my childhood.

I have set aside a large bed for a cutting garden. The roses I have selected so far are Madame Hardy, the Austin, Graham Stewart, an exquisite Bourbon , Eugene de Beauharnais, New Dawn climbers, and a hybrid tea French lace. The Austins tend to get very leggy due to the heat yet look beautiful in full bloom. All lilies do well from the Asiatics to the calla (very common in Southern CA) and my own favourites, tiger lilies and Siberians of every colour imaginable. Realistically you need to always think of choosing drought tolerant plants to have some colour at the height of summer. California natives such as Matilja Poppy (*Romneya Coulteri*), penstemon (*Penstemon heterophyllus purdyi*), Bee Balm (Monarda/various varieties), Salvia (*Salvia leucantha*) do the trick and are also good at attracting a wide variety of beneficial insects in addition to native birds such as the hummingbird. I am only in the planning stages of developing a flower garden and I am doing considerable research in choosing what is right for this climate.

I built a small hen house this summer and have ten pullets in it at the moment. My manure worries are over!

As always it takes much time and energy to maintain a decent garden but if this is what you love to do, then one can hardly call it work, can they?

John Lyons, California

A North American Woodland Garden

Winter in my area brings its own blend of beauty and starkness, often in the same day. Looking out my bay window at the snow on the ground, I was reminded of the changing attributes of my plantings from season to season. Beauty in the plant world is not limited to seasons and the observant gardener is poised to notice these subtleties.

Our house is situated in a wooded setting on about 3 acres of property. My employment as an arborist undoubtedly drew me to a forested area such as this. The local county in which I live is changing rapidly due to development and technology,

but still retains an agrarian and largely rural feel. I garden along the woods edge at an elevation of about 600' amongst the bowers of a deciduous eastern hardwood forest. Dominant tree species include White Oak (*Quercus alba*), Chestnut Oak, (*Quercus prinoides*), Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*), American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*), Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*) and Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*). There are many other mid story tree species such as Amalanchier, Crataegus, Chionanthus, Carpinus, Cornus, Hamamelis, and Ilex. The understory is complimented with shrubs such as *Lindera benzoin*, *Rhododendron nudiflorum*, *Viburnum acerifolium*, *Viburnum dentatum*, *Viburnum lentago*, Vaccinium and Rhus. The soil is a well drained forest loam with a pH value of about 5.5 - 6 and is blessed with high amounts of organic matter. There are many other trees and shrubs on the property which I have omitted due both to my inaccuracy and also to be concise.

I live in the Eastern United States in the northern most part of the state of Maryland. Maryland is located in a geographic region called the mid Atlantic. The Atlantic Ocean is about 3 hour travel by car in a south east direction and the closest big city is Baltimore which is about one hour travel by car, barring any unforeseen traffic considerations. The Catoctin Mountains are clearly visible during winter when the trees are devoid of foliage and they lie about 45 minutes to the west. These mountains are part of the immensely large Appalachian range which runs roughly north to south along the east coast of the United States. They are quite beautiful and are rife with folklore as old as the land itself, bespeaking the rugged nature of both our people and the landscape. Their maximum height is about 6000' in parts of the Carolinas to the south of my area.

Weather conditions in this part of the world can be extreme due to the proximity of both mountains and ocean. This becomes challenging when selecting and siting plants! Summer high temperatures can be as immoderate as 100 degrees Fahrenheit and the area is known for high humidity that is quite uncomfortable. Technically, I garden in hardiness zone 6b with the average annual minimum temperatures ranging between -5 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit. Spring and fall are welcome seasons, when the temperatures are more moderate and one is free from the summer's oppressive heat. Winter can bring a mixed bag of conditions, ranging from sudden high temperatures which can approach 65 degrees Fahrenheit to the single digit readings we experience. Several weeks ago I recorded a low temperature of 1 degree Fahrenheit. Precipitation amounts obviously vary, but we can generally expect about 35-40" of precipitation in a "normal" year. Summer is the driest season and typically spring brings the most rainfall. Summer thunderstorms often bring deluges that are damaging to both gardens and crops,

especially when they contain hail. The last several years have brought severe droughts featuring crop failures and dry wells, though this fall and winter have brought above normal precipitation thus far.

I am writing to attempt to describe to you a garden far, far away. The sights, smells and textures of gardens do not articulate well in the written form, do they? As gardeners, we all have our favourite plants and garden themes that we admire and love for reasons that often defy logic or science. We are fond of certain types of plants and often it is difficult for others to understand or recognize the elusive reason of "why".

My current horticultural fascination is the use of plants that are native to the eastern United States. I specialize in utilizing rare native plants that are threatened and in some cases endangered. Some of these plants are so rare that only one or two nurseries in this country will offer them in a catalogue, and information regarding their characteristics or cultural requirements is scant. I hope to someday write a book on these types of plants in an attempt to provide more accurate information regarding their use in the landscape. I will probably sell three copies due to their obscurity! My definition of "native" is simply that the plant is originally from this country and it is not an exotic species. These definitions can often be contentious and passionate gardeners debate zealously over the smallest detail. I would rather spend my precious time planting rather than engaged in protracted dispute over phrase meanings.

My garden is obviously a very special garden to me because it is MY garden, though it is probably special to no one else save my wife and a few other plant devotees. My botanical treasures were selected and carefully sited based on their cultural requirements and ornamental characteristics. I have seen and created the changing tableau that has become my garden over the last four years and I wear the sore back and blistered hands as proof. I have also made many blunders along the way; losing plants due to my impatience and ignorance and also transplanted specimens a few times to get the conditions right.

Since I tend to collect the native flora of my area, my garden lacks the ostentatious flash of many other gardens featuring exotic species grown primarily for floral display. I have no fine topiary, ornate statuary or sculpted benches to admire in my garden. The garden blends with the woods, creating just the natural look I intended.

Since the current season is winter, I will attempt to focus on the appearance of my garden and the subtleties of a few plants during this time of the year. Much of the landscape in my garden and in the surrounding environs appear rather drab and open at

present due to the majority of trees and shrubs here being deciduous. I feel that it takes a dedicated and imaginative gardener to be able to see the beauty of these plants during the winter months.

One of my favourite trees for winter interest is the Pagoda Dogwood, *Cornus alternifolia*. It is a shrubby tree that is small and often multi stemmed. The flowers or cymes are quite different from the typical *Cornus* species which feature the showy bracts. The flowers are white, lightly fragrant and develop into black fruit attractive to birds. The foliage can be an attractive red and the winter silhouette is very appealing, especially when festooned with snow. This is a tree of northern forests and will not take hot conditions. It is a challenge for me to grow it here because of our high summer temperatures and it needs to be planted in the shade to escape the heat of the day.

Shrubs such as Rosebay Rhododendron (*Rhododendron maximum*) and Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) are fairly common in the acidic woodland soils in this area. I have several of these in my landscape; they thrive in the shady sites and provide evergreen foliage. They are tough and adaptable shrubs which delight the senses with their large and showy flowers proudly displayed in spring and early summer.

Other, much rarer, shrubs for winter interest include the Mountain Pieris (*Pieris floribunda*) and dwarf Sheep Laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia* 'Pumila'). The Mountain Pieris is another tough and underused native plant primarily noted for its evergreen foliage and attractive white flowers. It is unknown in most gardening circles due to the difficulty of propagation. This plant can be differentiated from its showier Asian kin by the stiffer habit and upright flowers. The leaves are also smaller and coarser. It needs strongly acidic soil and well drained conditions to thrive. The Dwarf Sheep Laurel is one of my favourite shrubs and has grown well in my garden thus far. It is a creeping, stoloniferous shrub of northern bogs and needs the cool, peaty soil associated with these areas. In spring, I am treated to beautiful and long lasting dark pink flowers clustered along the stems that are typical of the genus. I have many small plantlets which have grown from underground roots, indicating that root growth is fairly prolific. Another treat is that this plant frequently has a partial rebloom in the fall!

Leatherwood or TiTi (*Cyrilla racemiflora*) is a shrub of the south. This plant is found in its native haunts in boggy sites known locally as "hummocks." It is a palustrine plant and is happy with wet feet that can even be submerged at times. It is happy far to the north, and does not require wet conditions as long as it does not experience prolonged drought. Ornamental features include fragrant white flowers in mid summer and fantastic red hues in fall as the seasons change. The flowers are prized in the south as a

source of "TiTi honey". The shrub is quite pretty in flower when it is begirt in pendulous, fragrant racemes. In the south it is fully evergreen. In my area, the plant is semi evergreen and often red and green foliage is on the plant at one time, creating a two toned effect that is quite handsome. It can be a sprawling plant with time and requires room to develop.

Cinnamon Clethra (*Clethra acuminata*) is another enigmatic shrub. This plant is not as showy as *Clethra barbinervis*, but is fascinating to me. Winter allows us to see the hanging, dried flower clusters of last summer as well as the exfoliating bark. The bark is lovely and is an attractive brown colour with a flaking quality on stems that are usually bent and twisted. This is a plant of dry, often rocky hillsides and can be easily overlooked while hiking. It is not a common plant either in the field or in plant catalogues, probably due to a difficulty in propagation and supposed lack of ornamental characteristics. It is related to other North American Clethra species such as *Clethra alnifolia* and *Clethra tomentosa*. The fall colour is an unspectacular yellow.

Though far from obscure, Red Chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia* 'Brilliantissima') is another fine shrub. This plant must be sited correctly for it to be used effectively. It is a gangly, multi stemmed, upright shrub noted for its tolerance of varied soil conditions. It prefers full sun and the fall coloration is an absolutely dazzling red that rivals *Euonymus alatus* for intensity. It has white flowers in spring which are not overwhelming, but attractive none the less. The flowers pave the way for the bright red fruit clusters which remain red for the duration of winter, even resisting the onslaught of hungry birds and raccoons. I guess the common name of Chokeberry is well deserved! I like to mass plant this shrub in tight groups and rejuvenate prune every other plant to encourage a varied height in the grouping.

This is a mere smattering of plants to whet your appetite for native North American plants. In future articles I plan to introduce you to more plants in my garden and describe other, more endangered plants you probably are not familiar with. I am hopeful we can all grow in wisdom and understanding as we appreciate gardens of varied descriptions from all areas.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share just a brief glimpse of my garden with you.

Marty Adams
Westminster, Maryland
USA

Moving Magnolias

The first magnolia I ever saw was when I was a child. It was growing against a west-facing wall of what used to be Loughry Agricultural College (it's upgraded now and has practically university status) which was about a mile walk from a stile at the end of our upper garden. In spring the woodland path alongside the river, thickly lined with anemones and primroses, was enchantingly beautiful and it was not unusual to see 'kingfishers catch fire' on the riverbank in those pre-slurry times. The college was on the other side of the river but there was a well-constructed footbridge across it. In the grounds there was Dean Swift's little gazebo where he was reputed to have written 'The Tale of a Tub' and a huge mechanical ram that was supposed to be the biggest in Britain, Europe, even the world which pumped water from the river to the college with gigantic regulated hiccups. There was a path from the ram house to the wall where the magnolias grew. It was very daring for a young child to walk up to this because I could have been stopped by one of the students who were learning dairy skills or chicken sexing or, even worse, by one of the instructors but I never was.

The magnolia was an awesome sight every spring. Being on a west-facing wall its blooms were never frosted and when I was about nine, I picked on to bring home to identify. Too scared to tell my parents that I had been trespassing I had to wade through the three volumes of my mother's gardening encyclopaedias to find out what it was. In those post-war years magnolias were rare in Co. Tyrone and it wasn't until I was a student that I saw one in the college grounds and in a few select private gardens. However none of them had the same impact on me as the Loughry one.

Let's go fast forward to my first garden, across the road from where we live now, when I ordered a *Magnolia soulangiana* from Daisy Hill Nurseries and planted it. It was only about two feet high in 1966 and I was impatient for it to be five times as tall and covered in blooms. I would love to be able to write that it thrived for me and has been a glorious spectacle every spring. It didn't and hasn't. In fact it did very little, just sat there reluctantly producing leaves every spring and dutifully dropping them every autumn but not growing an inch as far as I could see. I read somewhere that magnolias can survive up to twenty five years before producing a bloom but I think that was *Magnolia cambellii mollicomata*. At the time I was too ignorant about gardening to appreciate the difference between species and hybrids. Mrs. Templeton of Ganagh had *Magnolia soulangiana* in her garden and she advised me to dose my magnolia with Epsom salts – the amount that would sit on an old sixpence dissolved in a gallon or water and applied at least once a month around the base. That had no effect and neither

had taking it for a ride in the wheelbarrow and transplanting it somewhere else as someone suggested. At that time I had little interest in gardening anyway so when we moved across the road in 1976 the magnolia was still a two-foot dwarf and I had no regrets leaving it.

The people who moved into our previous house knew all about gardening and decided that their green fingers would soon make the recalcitrant magnolia flourish in a way that my very non-green ones hadn't. They tested the soil, planted things in the most fertile places and pointed out knowledgeably (and not a little smugly) that in my feeble efforts in gardening I had planted everything in the poorest soil. That included the magnolia which was moved yet again and, no doubt, told to perform or else.... It was with considerable glee that I noticed about five years later that the magnolia was still sulking and still only two feet tall. They had also managed to lose a *Eucryphia x nymanensis*, which I had planted in 1972, by moving it to a more fertile spot. *Eucryphias* shall not be moved. Meanwhile, across the road, I had become addicted to gardening and had a flowering (albeit, sparsely in the early years) *Magnolia soulangiana* of my own.

When those neighbours sold the house and dwarf magnolia in 1990 it was bought by Joe, a widower and retired G.P., with a passion for sailing and an interest in gardening only slightly improved on mine on sailing which is none. He likes to grow native trees but has a fondness for dogwoods with coloured winter bark which seem hell bent on taking over half his garden. The worst offender is *Cornus stolonifera* 'Flaviramea' which I can't stand. I loathe its sickly yellow, jaundiced stems in spite of writers on winter gardening waxing lyrical about it. A couple of years ago when Joe went off sailing to the Bahamas he asked us to keep an eye on things when he was away. I had almost forgotten about the magnolia by this time but I spotted it one day almost engulfed by the mass of bilious yellow cornus stems. There was still life in it and it had grown three feet tall.

You can guess what I did next, can't you? I went off to a garden centre, bought a *Magnolia stellata* about five feet tall and planted it in Joe's garden in a fertile spot. Then I prised out the original from among the sickly cornus stems. It was placed in the best soil in my garden and has had care and plant goodies lavished on it. I also talk to it often, the way Prince Charles is reputed to talk to his plants. It is now taller than I am but is a strange shape being almost two-dimensional and looks as if it would be completely at home against a wall. Alas, the only space I have left is on an east wall and that would be hopeless for a magnolia, an open invitation to early morning sun after frost to turn the flowers to mush.

There is another magnolia close to this, too close in fact. It was given to me on my birthday in 2001 and was only planted temporarily. It is *M. 'Wada's Memory'* which apparently was a selected clone raised at the Arnold Arboretum from seed of *M. kobus* sent by a Mr. Wada from Japan. Rather than shift the 36 year old that has had enough trauma in its life I am going to move 'Wada's Memory' up outside the windows of the house in a south-facing position. There is a bed here that is full of damp lovers like *rodgersias*, *filipendulas* and *irises* and all are quick spreaders in the rain. This bed used to be sodden because the pool beside it was incontinent and leaked all the time. The pool has been repaired and the invasive plants will be drastically culled which is my project for the winter; it seems obligatory nowadays to have a winter project to slave over rather than just slaving in the other three seasons.

M. 'Wada's Memory' won't be transplanted until spring even though its new home should be well prepared before that. Magnolias have fragile fleshy roots and need very careful handling to avoid damaging these. I suspect that that is what happened to the 36 year old. They also resent having plants growing over their roots and any form of cultivation that disturbs the roots. Hoeing is taboo. Jabbing around their base with a fork is really asking for trouble as far as I discovered to my cost when a jabbing gardener did so to a good specimen of the lemon-scented *M. salicifolia*. It died. He nearly did too because I had murder in my heart that day.

I look forward to having a magnolia close to the house. Their flowering is brief but wonderful and other things compensate. They keep their foliage while all about them are losing theirs. Then the furry flower buds, which form in autumn, are revealed when the leaves finally fall. All winter long they are there and, in certain lights, they look as if they are already in bloom.

Rae McIntyre

Captivating Kirstenbosch

I could hardly believe it. We were circling over Capetown. After many years of thinking how wonderful it would be to go to South Africa and particularly Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens, we were actually here.

Having settled in to our very comfortable hotel and having recovered somewhat from our jetlag and being gob smacked by the sheer size of the arrangement of *Proteas* in the

foyer, the first stop was of course to visit the Botanic Gardens. I have been an associate member for many years and have been experimenting with propagating and planting out South African plants for some time, with varying degrees of success, so you can imagine my excitement at the prospect of meeting mature specimens for real!

Kirstenbosch is a living museum of South African plants and was established to promote and conserve the indigenous flora of Southern Africa. It is situated on the Eastern slopes of Table Mountain and covers 528 hectares and includes both a cultivated garden and a nature reserve. I could have spent days there.

In the Protea or sugarbush garden *P. repens* delights with its lovely red tipped yellow flowers; *P. punctata* in contrast has grey leaves and pink flowers while *P. laurifolia* is a subtle greenish pink. Most silver and grey leaved plants have dense layers of hairs which reflect bright sunlight and prevent overheating. (Not a problem in West Cork!)

I love Restios and have a modest collection growing at present in the garden. I was certainly not disappointed in the Restio Garden, only slightly alarmed by the size of some of them, thinking where I had planted them in the garden at home!

The Cycad amphitheatre is very dramatic. Especially unusual were the *Encephalartos* species, some with short stems and leaves whorled in a terminal crown and large cone-like flowers borne within the leaf rosettes, others like *E. villosa* with a buried stem and arching deep green leaves about 10' long. We first viewed them from above and then descended in amongst them half expecting to meet a dinosaur round the next bend.

I have tried a few South African heathers, but here they have over 600 species of *Erica*, truly mind-boggling. In the Arboretum there is a collection of over 450 native trees mainly from the sub-tropical coastal and bushveld areas.

There are of course magnificent specimens of Tree ferns, Palms, *Leucospermums*, *Ensettes*, *Hibiscus* and much, much more. The smell of *Gardenias* will always remind me of Kirstenbosch.

The Fynbos walk is just that, a walk through an area of natural habitat (fynbos) and what a natural habitat it is. Small wonder that there is so much emphasis on preserving indigenous plants and rooting out the 'invaders' that are threatening to destroy the natural plant balance. *Eucalyptus* and *Jacaranda* are no longer available in garden centres as they use up too much water.

Kirstenbosch is magical and a feast for the senses of plantaholics. I can't wait to go

back. We didn't dare visit the garden centre as we might have succumbed to temptation; instead we visited the shop and bought some excellent books on Proteas and Restios which have proved very useful as we have planted several Proteas and Restios in our new Mediterranean area. Ah well, even though our plants are small in comparison they will still remind me of a fantastic experience.

Phemie Rose.

“Only a Rose”, but...

If nothing else, this is a tale of some honest endeavour, some amateur blundering, a lot of work, a little advice from an expert and some guidance from the Great Spirit which looks kindly on us gardeners.

Utterly besotted by roses, I grew them, revelling in colour, form and scent. I took cuttings – some of which actually grew – and even wangled a visit to a rose nursery whose kind people showed me how to bud them.

Eventually, the inevitable stage came when nothing would satisfy me but my own rose. How to do it? Well, I can read, can't I? So, I did, avidly gobbling every word I could lay my hands on, learning of seed parents (the mammy) and pollen parents (the daddy), of pollination with tiny brushes, of swelling hips and tiny plants.

Hey, this is easy. Or is it? So, let's keep it simple. Forget the form books, and, as for matching, I wouldn't know a chromosome if it jumped up and bit me. I selected two good, hardy, vigorous varieties, 'Arthur Bell' (the mammy) and 'Glad Tidings' (the daddy). Following the words and music in the book (in this case by Amanda Beales) I cross pollinated. For good measure I added two more pollen parents, 'Aloha' and 'Queen Liz'. After labelling carefully I sat back and waited, none too patiently, to see what would happen.

As autumn arrived so too did great, great joy when it was clear the crosses had taken. Three hips grew bigger and fatter. After collecting the seed and testing in water (the duds float) I stratified them in a bed of sand in the fridge – all very simple so far! So, why do people make such a fuss about breeding a new rose? I'll tell you – germination, that's the problem.

Altogether I collected some 40 viable seeds and in mid-January popped them into a nice mix of compost and vermiculite. After a month, nothing. Prayers floated heavenwards to the Holy Spirit and to St. Fiakra, the gardener's patron. A phone call was made to Peter Beales Roses, where a very kind and generous professional propagator said encouragingly, "Pop the seeds out and nick them with a file or knife – and be patient. It would help if you had a misting system". The only misting system I have is the one common to this whole country! Anyway, thank you Simon.

Then, Oh joy, a seedling appeared, just one out of 40. 'Árthur Bell' and 'Glad Tidings' had produced a tiny offspring, looking just like every other seedling but, so special, so wonderful. It was nurtured, cosseted, mollycoddled and it thrived on TLC, but what would it grow into? I'm told it's easier to win the Lotto than produce a viable rose.

Then, on a magical morning, it pushed out a bud, tiny but obviously bi-coloured, crimson and yellow. It was fussed over, admired, photographed and eventually opened to a fine many-petalled bloom, crimson with a cream-yellow reverse. And it smelled gorgeous. It has since grown into a nice healthy floribunda and because I have no budding facilities, I have taken cuttings which (another Novena) seem to have struck.

I have no commercial ambitions for this, as yet, unnamed rose. Almost certainly it will never make the big time. I don't care. It may be "only a rose", but it's new, it's unique, it's Irish – and it's mine.

Tim Cramer, Cork

Alexanders and Archaeology?

The oldest part of my garden is an ancient stonewalled hedgerow, which runs along the southern boundary. It contains most of the usual hedgerow plants, such as hawthorn, blackthorn, oak, ash, bramble, dog rose, and the like. However, it also includes Alexanders (*Smyrnium olusatrum*), a seaside plant that likes chalky soil and which should not, by rights, occur naturally in an inland county like Carlow and on heavy clay soil. So, how did it get in my garden?

According to The Flora of County Carlow, by Evelyn M. Booth, Alexanders occurs in only three specific areas of Carlow, one of which is my town land of Kilknock. Ms. Booth lists it as a garden escape, appearing occasionally in roadsides.

Then I spotted an interesting botanical item in Issue No. 53 of Archaeology Ireland, (autumn 2000), that offered an alternative explanation. Its title was: “*A Prior’s Herb Garden?*” by environmental archaeologist Dr. Ingelise Stuijts. Dr. Stuijts turned out to be a keen plants person, noting the occurrence of Weld (*Reseda luteola L., Resedaceae*) and Great Mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus L., Scrophulariaceae*) during a visit to the ruined Augustinian priory at Kells, Co. Kilkenny. She observed that they occurred only in one specific area, just outside the prior’s tower. As both plants were normal ingredients of a medieval monk’s herb garden and the seeds of Great Mullein can remain viable for hundreds of years, Dr. Stuijts put forward an interesting theory. Evidently, she had encountered a similar situation in Denmark.

“In Esrum Kloster, a large group of relic plants sprouted after some ground works were carried out locally. The seeds of the plants had lain in the soil for many centuries and provided the starting point for the reconstruction of the [medieval monastic] herb garden there.” (Stuijts, Archaeology Ireland).

Dr. Stuijts finished her article by suggesting that archaeologists working on medieval sites should seriously consider noting any strange plants around the site. Indeed, she proposed the establishment of a new research theme – “...*the checking of botanic matter on spoil-heaps!*”

Needless to say, there came a reply in the next Issue of Archaeology Ireland, No. 54, Winter 2000. John Feehan, of the Department of Environmental Resource in UCD, did not condemn Dr. Stuijts’ ideas outright. However, he did warn that one needed to be cautious about linking plants with possible past uses on archaeological sites. Mr. Feehan pointed out that both Weld and Great Mullein are common and widespread throughout Ireland, particularly in waste places. “*Their presence, therefore, is more likely simply to reflect ecological conditions (especially the character and maturity of the soil) than to indicate past use.*”

That said, Mr. Feehan then went on to list two plants of his own: Alexanders (*Smyrniium olusatrum*) and Wild Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) as having possible archaeological significance. Both plants are naturalized imports of medieval culinary repute. Alexanders rarely occurs naturally away from the sea, except at medieval sites.

Of course, his reference to Alexanders (*Smyrniolum olusatrum*), caught my eye because I live at a place called “Kilknock”, which in gaelic is “*Cill Cnoc*”, meaning “Church on the Hill”.

Yet another reference book, All Good Things Around Us” by Pamela Michael and Christabel King, has this to say: *“Alexanders in the plural, and usually written with a capital A, is an odd name for a plant. It was know as Petroselinum Alexandrinum (Parsley of Alexandria) in Medieval Latin and is one of the many Mediterranean plants introduced into Britain by the Romans. It grows in Western Europe and in Britain, particularly near the sea. It is unusual for Alexanders to grow inland and, where it does, it is usually on chalk...Alexanders was planted as a vegetable in the early monastery gardens and it is often found growing prolifically by the ruins of old abbeys and castles in Ireland and the west of England, but it was also used medicinally...”*

This intrigued me. The late Prof. O’Neill from Ballon, Co. Carlow, once told me that there are medieval references to Ballon (gaelic *Bálana*, meaning “*Place of the Lepers*”) somewhere in Oxford University. Neighbouring Kilknock, where I live, appears on Mercator’s map of Carlow dated 1595 and in the 17th century Down Survey, there is a reference: “*On Kilknocke there is a castle out of repair*”. So far, I have not been able to pin point the location of any castle or monastery in the town land of Kilknock but if Dr. Struijts and John Feehan are correct, the presence of Alexanders in my garden could lead to an eventual archaeological discovery!!!

Veronica Smith

References: Archaeology Ireland Ltd., PO Box 69, Bray, Co. Wicklow.

All Good Things Around Us, ISBN 0 510 00055 X,

Pamela Michael & Christabel King, published by Ernest Benn Ltd, 1980 The Flora of County Carlow, ISBN 0 86027004 I, Evelyn M. Booth, Published by Royal Dublin Society in 1980s.

Parting with a Remarkable Tree

While most people were enjoying the October Bank holiday weekend of 2002, the staff at Kilkenny Castle was coming to terms with the loss their prize specimen of *Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea Group'. For nearly two and a half centuries, the tree, known more commonly as the purple or copper beech, took pride of place in the middle of the Castle Park, facing the Castle for all to see.

It was a champion tree, measured on the 13th March 2000 by TROI (The Tree Register of Ireland), as having the widest girth of any copper/purple beech in Ireland at 6.150000095m (measured at 1.5m from ground level). Not the tallest specimen in Ireland, but impressive at 27m.

However, its existence had been at risk for awhile. Firstly, it had a double leader, which as it got bigger was always to be a point of weakness. Secondly, about fifteen years ago tree surgeons diagnosed it with having the fungus, *Ganoderma applanatum*, or more commonly Beech heart rot. Bracing was recommended as a temporary solution, holding the two leaders together artificially, as the fungus softened the wood. At that time also, a specimen of *Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea' was planted on one side of the tree so if it fell there would not be so big a void. Six years ago, another specimen was planted on the opposite side to allow for the chance of it falling on the young specimen. Ironically, the high winds on the night of Saturday 26th October 2002, broke the cable brace and brought one leader to the ground, not hitting either of the two smaller trees. With winds still strong on the morning of Sunday, 27th October, the only option was to take down the other leader.

In the week that followed the public interest was unbelievable. People stood in shock, looking on with sadness and nostalgia at a tree that was so much a part of the history of Kilkenny. Requests for even the smallest piece of wood were numerous, from commercial sources, to wood turners, to the regular walkers in the park.

The wood has been given to anyone who asked, except for commercial requests. It is hoped that a piece of furniture will be made for the Castle from the largest section, which will keep its memory preserved forever.

***Sally O' Halloran
Kilkenny Castle Park***

Before and after!



Seed Exchange 2003

Well, I am staggered at how much seed has come in this year - we actually received nearly the same number as last year, which is a real tribute to our collectors - you know who you are! - in such a wet miserable year. Many thanks to you all.

Last year was my first on the seed exchange, and I learned as I went along, with much help and advice, but I found it impossible to match seed requests to quantities as I deliberately sent out seed as requests came in. I therefore have a small quantity of last year's seed left, which we have decided to add to this year's list but only after removing obvious short shelf life seeds, and if no fresh seed of the same species/variety came in. All 2002 seed is marked with an asterisk - please note this!

No doubt you will have fun checking through the more unusual items - I used to regard this as the best part, but checking all names, spelling etc for the list has made it more arduous but still fun. I had better describe 2 plants on the list which I don't think you will find in any gardening book you have.

One is *Orobanche hederæ* - a native plant also found through Europe to Asia Minor, common name Ivy Broomrape, because it is parasitic on Ivy. You will need to have *Hedera helix* present to grow it, and probably expose some roots before sowing the seed and then waiting! Could take a few years, and then all you'll see is a flower spike about a foot high that lasts about 2 weeks, no leaves at all, and that's it. I'm not sure how viable the seed will be as it may be short lived, but worth a try.

The other is *Melampyrum pratense* - another native, common name Cow Wheat. This is an annual, very variable species about 2ft high max, with, according to Keble-Martin, yellow flowers if growing in woods, or white splashed pink if on bogland!

Apart from the excellent range of books on native plants the Ulster Museum Web Site is excellent - look for the Flora of Northern Ireland section.

Happy sowing 2003, and let us know how you get on.

Stephen Butler

ORCHIDS OF GLASNEVIN

An Illustrated History of Orchids in Ireland's National Botanic Gardens

E. Charles Nelson & Brendan Sayers

ISBN 1-904004-03-2

Strawberry Tree has just published this book detailing the history of orchids at the National Botanic Gardens. Individual chapters concentrate on the development of the collection from the Gardens beginning, the periods when David and Frederick Moore had charge of the Gardens, a chapter on orchid hunting and one on Native Irish Orchids. The most recent history is given in a chapter entitled *Garraithe Náisiúnta na Lus, Glas Naoin 1922 - the present*. There are two appendices listing the Glasnevin orchids that are described or named in the Kew Bulletin and the first published records of native Irish species.

Twenty five illustrations, including Chinese ink portraits of the most notable people in Irish orchid history, by botanical artist Wendy Walsh are placed throughout the 90 pages. There are nineteen colour plates, each 'tipped in'. These range from Raymond Piper's *Dactylorhiza elata* 'Glasnevin Variety', the book's frontispiece, to Susan Sex's *Bulbophyllum morphologorum* 'Glasnevin', the last of Glasnevin's orchids to be awarded by the Royal Horticultural Society.

The large format book (28cm x 36m) has a print run of 750 copies that includes 100 specially bound and slip-cased copies, each signed by the authors and book designer. These are offered at €280 with other copies retailing at €100. Copies can be obtained from Tony Moreau, Strawberry Tree, 18 Woodbine Drive, Raheny Dublin 5

01 - 847 2448.

The launch for *Orchids of Glasnevin - An Illustrated History of orchids in Ireland's National Botanic Gardens* will take place at the National Botanic Gardens on Friday, February 21 2003 at 6.30 pm.

Paddy Woods, who has worked with the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh for many years will launch the book. Orchids are one of his specialist areas and he was responsible for collecting the nucleus of the New Guinea orchid collection in the 1960s and 1970s. He is co-author of 'Wild Orchids of Scotland' and has been awarded the Dr.

Patrick Neill Medal for Distinguished Botanists and Cultivators in Scotland.

Members of the Irish Garden Plant Society are invited to the launch. Please RSVP to the National Botanic Gardens Visitor Center at 01 - 857 0909 by Friday February 14 2003.

REGIONAL REPORTS

The following are reports received on Society activities in the various regions. It appears that there were some very interesting and worthwhile lectures in the autumn/winter period. If you missed them, these reports may motivate you to make a better effort to attend upcoming lectures. My sincerest thanks to the members who took the time to send in these reports.

DUBLIN:

" Hedgerows of Ireland " by Dr. Declan Doogue.

This well - attended lecture at the National Botanic Gardens, on Thursday, October 24th, was a follow - up to the field trip led by Dr. Doogue on June 29th, 2002. Members had been asked to bring along hedgerow species for identification and study their condition at this time of year.

Dr. Doogue has been studying Irish hedgerows since the 1960's and is a mine of information about their history, geography and ecology. All of us are aware of the importance of hedgerows in a landscape that is fast disappearing and that their composition can vary enormously, even in just a small area. But it takes an expert to analyse the whys and wherefores for us and this he certainly did! The following are some points that will be useful the next time you are looking at hedgerows in your area.

Most hedgerows have a core of 3-4 species. There are 150 species of brambles, a marvellous food supply for birds and insects. Most hedgerows have actually been planted, as property or townland boundaries. Expect to find Elder in almost every lowland hedge, close to housing. Elder becomes established quickly and easily but is shaded out later as the hedge matures.

Euonymus europaeus can be found in lime - rich conditions, but expect to find *Sorbus* in acid conditions. *Solanum dulcamara* (Woody nightshade), can be found as fringe vegetation of lakes and rivers and drains associated with housing. Do not expect to find fuchsia in Leinster, except close to housing. *Carpinus* species used as hedging in Co. Wicklow shades out the lower - growing vegetation, eventually. There are 13-14 species of wild rose in Ireland, with a geography all their own, e.g. *Rosa stylosa*, a rare Irish rose, is only found in Cork and Waterford and *Rosa hibernica*, once common in the Belfast area, now only exists in cultivation. According to a survey of 1904, the

Early Purple Orchid was common in Co. Dublin. Now it is extremely rare. These are just a few little "gems" from Dr. Doogue's lecture to set us all thinking. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject would fill many volumes. Interested members might like to contact the Ballyboughal Hedgerow Society, which has a Hedgerow Festival in October. Contact Ann Lynch, Telephone 01- 8433745/ 086-3638487.

Mary Bradshaw

CORK:

Beyond the Window Pane - the Glasshouse Collections at Glasnevin. Brendan Savers, National Botanic Gardens.

In our October lecture Brendan initially spoke to us about the development of the Glasshouses giving us glimpses of their past, present and future. We saw superb slides of the ordinary and rare plants that are growing in the restored and yet to be restored glasshouses. The Curvilinear Range of houses stood out as an example of the beauty and creativity for which the Gardens were noted in times past and which, with continued support, will very rapidly attain again. In each of the different wings of the house we were shown examples of the many rare and delicate plants, which are on show.

Throughout our tour of the different houses Brendan was encouraging us to attempt growing some of these delights in our own gardens.

But it was some of the behind the scene pictures, which caught the imagination of the audience. The structure of the pond for *Victoria cruziana* is a case in point.

Weed Free Gardening – pipe dream or reality.

Dr. David Robinson, Former Director Kinsealy Research Centre.

This lecture, in November, was both enlightening and entertaining. To achieve a weed free garden with minimum effort is every gardener's goal. Following Dr. Robinson's expertise we now know this is possible to achieve. Perhaps the day is not too far away when we can sit and wait for the appearance of the first weed and we will be there ready to pounce on it. As they say in sporting parlance: -"Failing to plan is planning to fail"

To Burma's Icy Mountain – in the botanical footsteps of an Irish Lady. Dr. Charles Nelson.

Despite a technical hitch at the beginning of his lecture in Cork in November, Charles Nelson maintained his sangfroid and gave his audience a tantalising glimpse of a little-known area of the world and the part played in its horticultural history by a little-known lady from Co. Kilkenny, Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe.

Outstanding memories remain of the light so similar in the slides of Burma taken in 1998 and the watercolours painted 90 years earlier, the similar lifestyles of those indigenous to the rural areas now as in the earlier 20th Century, the shock of seeing *Primula denticulata* in very unfamiliar surroundings and the wonder at the resilience of members of the plant kingdom which have to live and, often, to thrive in such very different parts of the world as Burma and the British Isles.

This talk was very well received in Waterford also, a highlight of the year for the Waterford Garden Plant Society which is affiliated to the IGPS. Because Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe was local to the area there was considerable interest from people outside of the Gardening clubs also. Ed.

My Favourite Winter Plants. Charlie Wilkins, Gardening Correspondent Irish Examiner.

In his talk in December, Charlie showed a wealth of beautifully taken slides, all photographed in and around Cork - most of them in his own exquisite garden. Interesting features were a number of photographs showing the same subject taken in winter and then, a flashback to summer to show it taken from the same angle. One began to think that winter had much to recommend it when the focus was on the form and the foliage of the perfectly positioned plants – especially Mahonias and yuccas. The versatility of evergreens and large succulents in pots was highlighted. The glow given by a variegated or golden plant on a dull day was well illustrated. His trick of growing plants in ordinary pots and then dropping them, still in the plain pot, into really decorative pots just for their season is really useful. The pot, costing €50 and upward, needs to be featured all year round. Colour, too, was featured especially in Rhododendron Christmas Cheer, all the Mahonias and the useful December flowering *Camellia sasanqua* 'Yule Tide'

There seemed less enthusiasm for the grasses, which he loves but which cannot get much notice in his garden, packed as it is with more flamboyant jewels. He dug deep into the archives for slides showing the beauty of dark stemmed trees displayed against white snow. He reflected that there must be teenagers in Cork who have not seen a proper snowfall. We have winter, perhaps, but not as we used to know it. He stopped

short of a discussion on the effects of global warming - a subject for another lecture methinks.

His description of scented plants bordered on the poetic - what would Heaven smell of, he wonders? *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' will occupy a special place and *Chimonanthus*, *Sarcococca* and *Viburnum x bodnantense* will be there or thereabouts too.

The speaker has an engaging style and his enthusiasm is infectious. The garden centres were busy next day. Like all good gardeners he is not without prejudice and it is good to hear him denounce the odd boring plant, even if it is in a listener's garden. It is important that we should look at the old familiar plants in a critical way and see if it is time to replace them with something a bit more special.

It was an entertaining and thought provoking talk delivered by a master of communication.

David O Regan

NORTHERN IRELAND

Conifer Workshop

On Saturday 28th September 24 IGPS members and friends gathered at the Clondeboye Estate for a conifer workshop. This was organised by the Northern Region, and sponsored by Clondeboye Estate and the Ulster Museum, and conducted by Colin Morgan. Colin is a leading conifer expert and Curator of the National Pinetum at Bedgebury in Kent. He is from Northern Ireland and is well known to many IGPS members, as he trained with Sam Harrison at Castlewellan Forest.

The weather was beautiful as we drove through what is today one of the largest areas of broad-leaved woodland in the North. We assembled at the Ava Conference Centre in the Clondeboye Courtyard Complex. After coffee, we got down to the serious business of using a key to correctly identify the many specimens provided from the Pinetum and other areas of the estate. Colin was inspiring in his enthusiasm and more than patient – soon we were moving from the generic to the specific and even the most inexperienced novice was finding enlightenment.

All too soon it was time for lunch and we all trooped over to Dendron Lodge at the other corner of the courtyard, where the inner man or woman was very well catered for.

After lunch we set off to look at the conifers in Lady Dufferin's woodland and to practise our new skills. This, to our great comfort and pleasure, was no 'machete-in-hand' battle through the jungle, as Fergus Thompson (the wonderful Head Gardener at Clandeboye) had cleared paths of all the undergrowth, allowing access to the trees which we had to see. Some of the older ones (including a magnificent *Pinus radiata* and a very tall *Podocarpus salignus* were impressive in size, and, Colin assured us, were in some cases champion trees. During this part of the day, we were given many tips on how to recognise from a distance many of the species we had been studying at very close quarters in the morning – indeed Colin told us he had been told as a training forester that he should be able to recognise practically all trees from over 200 yards away.

We ranged widely over many aspects of the subject – from the re-naming of genera and hybrids to Japanese coffin wood, through alternative growing tips in trees, to frost-reddening in autumn, juvenile forms and toxic sawdust and beyond, to polycarbonate studs as opposed to copper nails for labelling and GPS systems for data recording.

We ended the day as we began, with coffee, and departed reluctantly, having learned a lot which I am sure will lead us to look at conifers in a different light in the future.

We are grateful to Lady Dufferin for allowing us to hold the Workshop at Clandeboye and to the Ulster Museum for providing all the refreshments, including lunch, and also the bound hand-outs, which will be an extremely useful reference for the future.

Maura Shah

Northern Area Annual Plant Sale:

The annual plant sale was held at Stranmillis University College on Saturday 12 October. The weather was kind for October and the unusually warm and sunny day encouraged a good turnout of “customers”. The stalls were all well set out and looked particularly effective with the addition of some new gazebos. A terrific variety of plants had been donated and all were of a really high standard. Great numbers of Iris and Crocosmia were in evidence and these sold out quickly, among the most popular being *Iris chrysographes* “Black Knight”. Another early seller was *Tricyrtis formosana* “Toad Lily”. The committee and volunteers all worked hard and are due grateful thanks for creating such a successful day, which realised over £1030 for funds. Next year we hope to improve on even this success, perhaps with a greater emphasis on Irish

Cultivars, so any one out there with an interest in these cultivars please start propagating for next year.

Abigail Craig

The Clotworthy Lecture: Stourhead – The Story within the Landscape. Alan Power

Stourhead, created by Henry Hoare in the 18th century, is one of the most famous landscape gardens in England. In October 23rd 2002, Alan Power, former gardener at Stourhead, gave a talk at Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim – ‘*Stourhead – the Story within the Landscape*’. It was Alan’s final task before leaving his position as head gardener at Mount Stewart to take up a new post at Cliveden, Buckinghamshire and the size of the audience reflected the high regard in which he has been held during his short spell at Mount Stewart.

His time spent at Stourhead gave him an intimate knowledge of the gardens. Not only did we learn about the history of the garden and its creator, Henry Hoare, but we were introduced to the artworks which inspired its creation. Alan’s stunning photography showed the incredible autumnal colours in the tree collection, the perfect positioning of the buildings within the garden and the wonderful play of light and shade within the landscape. Photographs taken in winter showed the structure of the garden without the colourful distraction of flowers. And we got more than just the well known views of the Temple of Flora, the Pantheon or the Palladian bridge - we also saw parts of the garden which do not often make it into books and magazine articles. Combined with slides showing paintings of the period, we could see how the gardens had developed and could only marvel at the great vision of their creator.

But this was more than just an illustrated history lesson – we also learned of the problems facing the custodians of such important sites. As a hands-on gardener, Alan was well able to tell us about the forward planning required to maintain the landscape and how to deal with trees blown over in storms, damage to buildings and so on.

The marriage of all the elements involved in the creation and maintenance of the garden was reflected in Alan’s own personal experience at Stourhead, for it was here that he met his wife who was working in the house. His knowledge of the gardens and her knowledge of the artworks combined to give a more complete vision of the garden. In an inspirational talk, we too learned to look at the broader picture, to see beyond the garden as merely a collection of parts and to see the whole ‘*story in the landscape*’.

Pat Quigley

LOOKING AHEAD

Please look at the enclosed programme for details of dates and locations for upcoming events. The following are some notes provided to give you a better idea of what is ahead.

DUBLIN:

GARDEN VISIT, Saturday 12th April 2003 at 2 p.m.

The first garden visit of 2003 is to Knockree, Glenamuck Road, Carrickmines, Dublin 18, the garden of Shirley and John Beatty. Knockree, on the edge of the Dublin Mountains, is a two acre garden dominated by a large granite outcrop. Soil is acid to neutral allowing for a wide variety of plants and shrubs including Rhododendrons, Hellebores, Pulmonarias, Cardamines, and Anemones. Hope you can join us and enjoy this wonderful garden.

Directions:

Leave Foxrock village by the Brighton Road. Turn right onto the Glenamuck Road and travel for about 1 km. Knockree is on the left. There is limited parking on the avenue. Cars may be parked on the Glenamuck Road. The No. 63 bus stops at the gate, Nos. 44 & 86 nearby.

Admission charge €4.50 per person.

Shirley hopes to have plants for sale.

A Year with the National Trust Ulster Gardens Scheme - a lecture by Rae McIntyre.

The Ulster Gardens scheme is in existence since 1969. Its purpose is to raise funds for special projects in National Trust Gardens open to the public.

To ensure a high level of interest a different selection of gardens opens to the public each year.

Rae - a regular contributor to both our Newsletter and The Irish Garden magazine has been involved with the Ulster Gardens Scheme for many years and has travelled throughout Ulster to garden openings. Anyone who has read Rae's articles in the Newsletter will know that this will be an interesting and entertaining lecture.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The New Year Lecture, Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast

This is the annual RHS Regional Lecture held jointly with the IGPS and the Ulster Museum, this year given by Maggie Campbell-Culver, and the title is:

'To Boldly Go – the Intrepid Plant-Hunters'.

Maggie Campbell-Culver is a garden and plant historian who has worked on a number of gardens in Sussex and Cornwall. She was the Garden Conservationist at Fishbourne Roman Palace near Chichester, and in Cornwall was in charge of the conservation work and running of Mount Edgumbe for fourteen years. In September 2001 after five years of research she published her first book 'The Origin of Plants', which is a chronology of the plants and people who have shaped much of the garden history of these islands from the earliest times. Currently Maggie is one of the editors for the new edition of 'The Oxford Companion to Gardens' due to be published in 2004.

For many years she has lectured on historical and horticultural matters and continues to do so regularly. Maggie has had a long involvement with the Eden Project in Cornwall and is currently involved in planning a series of seminars on plant introduction for the autumn of 2003. In her leisure time Maggie is helping her husband Michael create a new garden at their home in Brittany from what was a field. A great joy for her is growing vegetables as she enjoys cooking and creating new dishes on her Aga.

This should be a most interesting lecture, and not one to be missed.

Wednesday 22 January 2003, 7.30pm. Members/Non-members £3/4 Stg. Tickets can be purchased from Museum Reception in advance or on the night. Book signing. Information desk.

Maggie will also be lecturing for the IGPS in Dublin on Thursday 23 January 2003 and in Cork on Friday 24th.

CUTTINGS FROM THE NCCPG

The Irish Garden Plant Society is affiliated to the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens in Britain (NCCPG). There are local groups of the NCCPG around Britain and these each produce their own newsletter. I am fortunate to have these newsletters forwarded to me and the 'snippets' below are taken from these newsletters. I hope you find them interesting. Ed.

KIPLING

Linda Eggins quotes Kipling in the Worcestershire Group's newsletter and the message might get some of us out of the armchair and into the garden.

*There's not a pair of legs so thin, there's not a head so thick,
There's not a hand so weak and white, nor yet a heart so sick,
But it can find some needful job that's waiting to be done,
For the Glory of the Garden glorifieth every one.*

A BLESSING FOR GARDENERS

Gill Denman, a member of the same group quotes James Shirley Hibberd to give a blessing to gardeners: *'May your hours of rustic recreation profit your body and soul. May your flowers flourish, your bees prosper, your birds love you, and your pet fish live forever. May the blight never visit the tendrils that make your arbours and porches leafy.'*

THOSE PRECIOUS RARITIES

In echo of the quotation regularly attributed to Mrs. Phyllis Moore, formerly of the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, – the best way to keep a plant is to give it away - Ann Hooper, of the same group quotes George Yeld:

*Hast thou plants in plenty say
Of a species rich and rare
Don't forget to give away
Those thine affluence can spare*

*And should any evil chance
Your garden of its pets bereave
You are no slave of circumstance
A thought will bid you cease to grieve*

*For it you gave, you will be given
The plant you lost and you'll perceive
It is the rule of Heaven
That he who giveth shall receive.*

DAISIES AND BUTTERCUPS

David Barker, writing for the Essex Group gives some interesting local names for two of our common lawn weeds, buttercups and daisies. The name 'daisy' derives from Old English meaning "Day's Eye". It was used widely as a wound-herb. David quotes Geoffrey Grigson in his 'The Englishman's Flora' where 36 local names were given for *Bellis perennis*, including "Miss Modesty" (Somerset), "Silver Pennies" (Northampton) and "Billy Button" (Wiltshire). Buttercups, however, had over 100 local names for the various forms, including "Kingcup" (Essex and many other counties), "Gye" (Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk). Gerrard quotes an ancient Roman source that if the root "be hanged in a linen cloth about the neck of him that is a lunatike in the wane of the moon then he shall forthwith be cured". Perhaps our daisies and buttercups deserve greater respect than we presently afford them!

SCHIZOSTYLIS COLLECTION

The Dumfries and Galloway group holds the National Collection of Schizostylis, commonly known as Kaffir Lily. The collection currently consists of 34 examples of this attractive, late-flowering genus, at its best in the autumn and early winter months when most other floral colour has gone from the garden. These rhizatomous plants originate from South Africa, particularly the Drakensberg Mountains, where they are found growing on the banks of streams and are in flower there from September to March. The different shades of the red form are most common but pink and white varieties are beginning to become more widely available. In our gardens they require a moist, heavy but will-draining soil and, with flower stalks of 30 – 60 cms, they are a valuable addition to the autumn and early winter displays.

EXCHANGE

The various groups of the NCCPG in Britain arrange an annual plant exchange. Members send in their list of "wants" and "haves" to a nominated co-ordinator who then attempts to match plants and people. They do insist that no plants on these lists must have more than two nurseries/garden centres listed as suppliers in the Plantfinder. Rarities, indeed! Other groups propagate rare plants to order for members and the money generated this way goes to the group's funds.

SNIPPETS:

- **Helen Dillon** will give a talk in the Waterford Institute of Technology, Cork Road, Waterford on 16th Jan 2003 entitled: '**Reviving a Tired Old Garden**'. The talk will be held in the Auditorium at 8.00 pm. Admission per Lecture €10.00. Contact Dr Anne Jordan, Manager, Education Development Centre Tel: 051-302271. E-mail: ajordan@wit.ie or Mairin Grant 051-302476
- **Snowdrop Week – Altamont Gardens Mon 10th – Sun 16th February 2003**
A guided tour will be given through the Snowdrop collection at Altamont Gardens, Tullow, Co. Carlow, each day meeting at the car park at 3pm. At this time, the snowdrops will be seen at their best, together with other seasonal plants, including other spring bulbs, hellebores, and witch hazels. For further information, contact Pauline Dowling at: Phone: 0503 59444 Fax: 0503 59510 Email altamontgardens@ealga.ie
- The **floods** of earlier in the winter caused a great deal of damage in the Glasnevin area and the **Botanic Gardens** suffered also as a result. Cleaning up and repair work is still in progress.
- **Annette Dalton**, previous editor of the newsletter, has landed herself a job at the **Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew** as Horticultural Amenity Manager in the Hardy Display Section. Congratulations and Best Wishes. However, she has promised to produce more crosswords for the newsletter to test the members' horticultural and linguistic knowledge.
- Speaking of Kew reminds me that **Brendan Sayers** attended and successfully completed a Diploma course of the **Management of Botanic Gardens** there during the year. Congratulations and well done, Brendan.
- Now that he has shaken off the dust of China, **Seamus O'Brien** finds all his time taken up with cataloguing Augustine Henry's Chinese Collections, all 16,700 of them! Further trips to follow in the collecting steps Augustine Henry are planned and this will lead towards the publishing of a modern biography of Augustine Henry from a plants man's point of view. His **Plantae Henryanae** is a huge undertaking as Augustine Henry collected almost 20% of the Chinese flora. Seamus hopes to add lots of interesting cultivation and historical notes to make what might otherwise be simply a catalogue a more interesting book.
- On the subject of books, **Brendan Sayers and Dr. Charles Nelson** are just putting the final touches to what will, I expect, be one of the most desirable and beautiful books we will have seen for a long time. They have collaborated

in writing a history of the 100 years of the cultivation of *orchids in Glasnevin*. See Brendan's article in the newsletter for details of the launch.

- Again on books, *Dr. Charles Nelson* is in the process of preparing a book on the life, travels and art of *Mrs. Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe*. Those of you who were fortunate enough to hear Charles talk on this subject before Christmas will realise that this promises to be a most interesting read and well worth waiting for.
- *David White*, formerly of the Botanic Gardens Glasnevin, has made a change in vocation and has moved to *Glenstal Abbey*. I'm sure all our best wishes go with him and that he finds great happiness in his life there as Brother Kevin. He has not forgotten about gardening and tells me that "the grounds here are very interesting with the oldest Italianate terraced garden in Ireland and some very interesting trees in the woods." I have also heard that Finola Reid has been to Glenstal to investigate the possibility of restoration work being carried out there. David, Br. Kevin, will have plenty to report to the newsletter.
- **MISSING VASE:** Would anyone knowing the whereabouts of a green and red glass vase which was part of the Augustine Henry display at the Garden Heaven Show. Please contact Malcolm Rose at 027 61111 or kilravock1@eircom.net.
- Those who manned the *Augustine Henry exhibition* report that a great deal of interest was shown in *Tilia henryana*, one of the plants discovered by Augustine Henry. The Hilliers Manual describes it as, "A very rare, medium-sized tree with broadly ovate leaves up to 13 cm long, oblique at the base and edged with conspicuous bristle-like teeth. They are softly downy on both surfaces with axillary tufts beneath and are often conspicuously carmine-tinted when young. Flowers in autumn. Very slow-growing in cultivation. C. China. Discovered by Augustine Henry in 1888. Introduced by Ernest Wilson in 1901." I located one during the year and it is truly beautiful.
- **CORRECTION:** The flyers from Cruise Direct give the E-mail address as: becky@gocruisedirect.co.uk, but the actual email address is: beckyh@gocruisedirect.co.uk
- Even at this early stage preparations are in hand for the next *Annual General Meeting* of the Society. This will be in Northern Ireland at the start of June. Pat Quigley is finalising a list of gardens at present for those attending to visit and by the sound of his plans this is an event to pencil into your diary immediately. More details from Pat in the next issue.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Perhaps the following note would be of interest to your readers.

I was sorry to read of Rae Mc Intyre's sad experience of slug damage this wet summer (IGPS Newsletter, October 2002).

Various remedies have been applied for slug damage in the past. Years ago we had the Meta and bran bait (Meta was a solid tablet for use as a fuel for camp stoves etc) Powdered and mixed with bran it had a fatal attraction for slugs.

This was followed by the blue pellets widely used today. There are suspicions that they may be harmful if birds and hedgehogs eat the poisoned slugs. There is a better way, completely environmentally harmless.

This is the old remedy of a half grapefruit skin tucked under the leaves of plants favoured by slugs. So, have your grapefruit for breakfast, then sally out to the garden with the skin. In this way we have captured as many as eleven slugs under one skin after one night's baiting.

Strangely though, orange skins do not seem to be effective. There is the alternative of traps baited with beer, but we do not favour buying beer especially for slugs!

Keith Lamb, Clara, Co. Offaly

I cannot but concur with Dr. Lamb that beer for slugs seems most inappropriate, a dreadful waste of one of the good resources of this world.

Over the past year, in what is a time of political correctness, I have found it amusing to hear presenters of television gardening programmes suggesting we "dispose of" our slugs. Personally, I take great pleasure in squashing, stamping on or cutting in two any slug which comes my way. Yes, I know it may sound offensive to the gentle ears of some gardeners, but I do "dispose of" them, don't I? Ed

Cottage Garden Herbs BallyConnell Lodge Tullow Co. Carlow

Forthcoming Workshops & Courses for Spring 2003

Sat 1st March: Sensual Vegetarian Cookery (with Danette O Connell)

Sat 8th March: Colourful Kid's Rooms (with Penny Crawford Collins)

Sat 22nd March: Real Food Fast, Part 1 (with Danette O Connell)

Sat 29th March: Fun with Fabrics (with Penny Crawford Collins)

Sat 5th April: Real Food Fast, Part 2 (with Danette o Connell)

Sat 12th April: Organic Fruit Vegetable Growing (with Brian)

Sat 26th /Sun 27th April: (two day course) Ceramics & Mosaics (with Collette o Brien)

Fri 9th/Sat 10th/Sun/11th May: (three day course) Creative Willow Work (with Lynn Kirkham)

Sat 17h May: Body Cleansing & Nutrition for Better Health (With Annie O Neill)

Sat 24 the May: B.B.Q. & Eating al Fresco (with Danette O Connell)

For further details or brochure please contact Michelle Power at:

Tel/fax 0503 56312

[email info@cottagegardenherbs.ie](mailto:info@cottagegardenherbs.ie)

www.cottagegarenherbs.ie

IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR THE YEAR 2002-2003

	<u>£ Sterling</u>	<u>Euro</u>
Single membership	£15.00	€25.00
Family membership	£22.00	€35.00
Student membership	£7.50	€10.00
5 year single membership	£70.00	€120.00
5 year family membership	£100.00	€165.00

IGPS COMMITTEE:

Malcolm Rose (Chairman); Dermot Kehoe (Vice-chairman); Patrick Quigley (Hon. Secretary); John O'Connell (Hon. Treasurer); Brendan Sayers; Mary Bradshaw; Maire Ni Chleirigh; Anne McCarthy; Edward Bowden.

Regional representatives (ex officio members):

Patrick Quigley - Northern group: Kitty Hennessy – Munster group.

NCCPG representative: Mary Forrest.

Correspondence and enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Sec., IGPS, c/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. **N.B.** Letters only please. **No phone enquiries.** **E-mail:** igps@eircom.net

Please send copy for the next issue of the Newsletter to: The Editor, IGPS Newsletter, c/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 (or E-mail direct to Paddy Tobin, “Cois Abhann”, Riverside, Lower Gracedieu, Waterford.: pmtobin@eircom.net) **by early March 2003.**

