



Irish Garden Plant Society

Newsletter
Autumn 2019

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Next copy date is 15th November

Cover Photograph: *Romneya coulteri* by Mary Montaut.
Native to California and Mexico. Named after 19th century plant collector Thomas Coulter from Dundalk and his friend Dr Thomas Romney Robinson.

Editorial

Editorial Team

As we move into autumn this issue rightly looks back to the most important event in the Society's year, the AGM weekend, organised most ably by the Munster Committee and enjoyed by all who attended. In his Chairman's Notes, Billy writes about what makes the Society different and special – namely, our interest in Irish plants and plants with an Irish connection – and this issue carries the first article of what is intended to be a series: Grow an Irish Plant. We hope you will be inspired to seek out one of the beauties featured and add it to your own garden.

Mary Forrest played a key role at the time of the foundation of the IGPS and in the subsequent couple of decades. We are delighted to welcome her back to the Committee after a long break, this time in the role of Vice Chairman. Read what she has to say on page 9.

Over the past year or so, Kilmacurragh and its Head Gardener and IGPS member, Seamus O'Brien, has featured a number of times in this Newsletter. It is one of the great gardens of this island and its standing was underlined by the recent visit of HRH Prince Charles. We have included a couple of photos of a memorable occasion.

A big thank you to members who have written for the Newsletter for the first time – Pat and Anne Coffey, Patricia Kernohan and Will Hamilton. Well done! Hopefully you will inspire others to contribute next time round; we need your input to keep it lively and informed.

You will probably notice that there are more photographs of members than usual in this issue; this is to try and make it more personal and to build a link between members and those serving on committees. Is this a good idea? Please let us know what you think.

Many congratulations to Stephen Butler whose 37 years at Dublin Zoo, first as Head Gardener and then as Curator of Horticulture, has been recognised by the Professional Gardeners Guild with the presentation of their Lifetime Achievement Award.

And finally apologies for the unfortunate mistake on the cover of the previous issue where *Primula* 'Tipperary Purple' was wrongly captioned as *Primula* 'June Blake'. We hope you enjoy the issue.

A Note from the Chair

I was particularly impressed with our Munster committee's achievement this year particularly as the smallest of the regional committees. Congratulations to Munster chair Margaret McAuliffe and her team on a very successful AGM.

The AGM is an opportunity to garner views and suggestions. The diversity of ideas this year was certainly food for thought. One in particular from my predecessor, Paddy Tobin, which I shared at the meeting, I thought worth reprinting from his internet blog. Recalling an AGM from some years back, Paddy writes:-

'As we left the meeting, I jovially commented that it was good that that was over and that we were now getting on to the important part of the weekend. A man turned to me, a man I had not met previously, a man I didn't know, and he commented – in what struck me at the time as a somewhat snooty tone - "The IGPS is more than a common garden club and, while garden visits are enjoyable, they are not at the centre of what the Society is about."

There was no further discussion on the topic but the moment has remained with me and John Ducie's words – for I later found out his name – have rung in my mind over all those years and are, perhaps, immediately relevant and worth remembering.

Irish plants, plants of Irish origin or Irish connection, have always been central to the aims of the IGPS. The Society aims to record them (Dr. E. Charles Nelson's book, *A Heritage of Beauty* is the outstanding volume of record); conserve them; distribute them through its regular plant sales and spread information about them through its newsletter and online. This particular interest is what makes the society special, different, important. Without it, the Society loses its identity.

The IGPS is not – or should not be – just another gardening club. John Ducie was right and his words should be shouted aloud.'

Yes Paddy, certainly worth remembering and thank you for sharing the memory.



*Billy
McCone*

Chairman

Report of 38th Annual General Meeting

by Honorary Secretary Claire Peacocke

The 38th annual meeting of the Society was held at the Minella Hotel in Clonmel on Saturday 18th May 2019 and attended by five officers and approximately 70 members.

Chairman, Billy McCone, highlighted some of the main events of the past year including the drive to increase the awareness and availability of Irish cultivars. Stephen Butler had continued to document the availability of Irish heritage plants with approximately 200 in the trade and 600 in members' private gardens. With vital importance of our own gardens as a source of Irish plants he encouraged members to propagate and share wherever possible. Meanwhile collections of Irish plants continued to be developed at the National Botanic Gardens (NBG), and Blarney Castle Gardens with smaller collections at the two gardens maintained by our volunteers, the Rectory Garden at the Ulster Folk Museum and Pogue's Entry in Antrim.

He saw the seed exchange as a tangible membership benefit with 180 varieties of seed being donated during the year and thanked Debbie Bailey for her work in sorting and

processing the seed and fulfilling 94 requests.

Nichola Monk, the Membership Secretary, updated members about recent developments. Nichola reported that using a spreadsheet to record membership details was no longer fit for purpose and that a modern membership database was required to improve accuracy and reduce the time commitment. Once fully operational, the new system, operated on our behalf by local company SmartClubSolutions, would save a significant amount of work and ensure that the Society remained compliant with data protection legislation. At the same time as registering, members were encouraged to use it to pay their subscriptions online. Billy thanked Nichola for the exceptional amount of work she and Diane Sprules had undertaken to implement the new database and asked members to note the contents of her written report.

He reported that a number of new projects are in the pipeline including a discount scheme for members with local nurseries, the introduction of direct debits for the payment of subscriptions, and plans to mark

the Society's 40th anniversary. He anticipated the publication of a further issue of Moorea to coincide with the anniversary and said that it was highly desirable to set up an Editorial Panel to spread the work load; he appealed for input from members with publishing or graphics experience and advised that Brendan Sayers of NBG had already offered to advise.

The position of Treasurer needed to be filled as Pascal Lynch had already completed his term of office. A new coordinator was needed for the eBulletin to succeed Ali Rochford. He encouraged members to come forward to serve on the Munster Committee which has only a small number of members; he paid tribute to them for their excellent job in organising the weekend.

Four Committee members had recently retired and he warmly thanked Anne James, a founding member, who had completed her ten year term the last four as Vice Chairman, Ali Rochford especially for her contribution to the eBulletin, Ricky Shannon who though standing down from the Committee would remain on the Leinster Committee, and Barbara Kelso who had completed 10 years on Northern Committee. Members showed their thanks and appreciation for their valuable contribution.

Leinster chair Anne-Marie Woods briefed attendees on the plans for following year. She advised that the next AGM would be held in Westport, Co Mayo on 17th and 18th May 2020.

Finance

Pascal Lynch reported on a satisfactory year and highlighted some key features of the accounts especially the major events in connection with the launch of Seamus O'Brien's book *In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker* which cost €10,000 with sales so far recouping €8,500 and a further 50 books in stock. He reported no significant liabilities and comfortable reserves. Attending members were provided with a copy of the certified accounts. The financial statements for 2018-2019 were adopted,

Elections

Mary Forrest was elected Vice Chairman, Nichola Monk was elected Membership Secretary, and Brid Kelleher was elected to the Committee.

Mary Davies and Mike Snowdon were awarded Honorary Membership. See page 8.

Income			
	2018 - 2019	2017 - 18	
Subscriptions	€14,461.00	€13,592.00	
Plant sales	€4,498.00	€5,000.00	
Lectures & visits	€3,859.00	€2,338.00	
AGM	€7,006.00	€6,370.00	
Raffles	€1,347.00	€1,254.00	
Sundry	€350.00	€351.00	
	€31,521.00		€28,905.00
Book sales	€8,637.00	€4,070.00	
	€8,637.00		€4,070.00
Total Income	€40,158.00		€32,975.00
Expenditure			
	2018 - 2019		
Newsletters	€3,786.00	€3,869.00	
Plant sales	€2,037.00	€1,389.00	
Lectures & visits	€8,453.00	€6,991.00	
AGM	€6,052.00	€5,612.00	
Raffles	€488.00	€188.00	
Print, post, stationary	€6,286.00	€2,554.00	
Bank charges & exchange		€1,267.00	
Insurance & accountancy	€1,108.00	€1,109.00	
Other	€1,683.00	€2,447.00	
	€31,143.00		€25,426.00
Book launch	€10,294.00	-	
Moorea journal	-	€3,861.00	
Heritage projects	€488.00	€4,977.00	
	€10,782.00		€8,838.00
Total Expenditure	€41,925.00	€34,264.00	
Net surplus/deficit	-€1,767.00	-€1,289.00	

Honorary Members

At the AGM the society was pleased to award Honorary Memberships to two long time members and celebrated horticulturists.



Mary Davies is one of the founding members of the Society joining in 1981–1982. She is a former Chairman (1985–87), a former Newsletter editor, and a co-editor of *Moorea*. Mary has just retired from her position on *The Irish Garden* magazine, the longest running, widely available horticultural periodical ever issued in Ireland, which she not only helped to set up 27 years ago in 1992 but co-edited for many years. Over the years, she has either written herself or commissioned hundreds of articles about Irish gardens and their plants and gardeners. She is also a co-author of a major work about the gardens of County Wicklow, as well as being a contributor to many other scholarly and general publications.

Mike Snowden has had a prodigious horticultural career. Joining the National Trust staff in 1967 at Bodant, NorthWales, he has been head gardener at the 18th century restored garden at Erdigg, Wrexham, also at Rowallane, County Down. Mike recalls:

“We arrived in Northern Ireland during troubled times. The horticultural fraternity took us to heart and we soon became members of the IGPS, where the only borders mentioned were shrub or herbaceous. We made friends the length and breadth of the country, meeting many plants people, experts in their chosen fields. During the period we were Northern Reps hospitality throughout was welcoming. At meetings particularly in Dublin dealing with IGPS business there was also much humour and very enjoyable, before a long return journey along twisting roads. The roads are much straighter now and the journey shorter, but the comradeship and welcome remains as strong as ever.”



Meet our new Vice Chair

Mary Forrest chats about her career and IGPS



While *Bean's Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles* travelled with me to every garden, access to the Library and staff of the Botanic Gardens ensured few plants remained unidentified. The catalogues of these collections and those in eight public gardens were amalgamated and published as *Trees and Shrubs Cultivated in Ireland*. Charles Nelson, the then Taxonomist, and the late Aidan Brady, Director of NBG, supervised the project.

What influenced your decision to make your career in horticulture?

From an early age I was interested in gardening. I recall selecting bulbs in a shop in Dame Street, Dublin and the excitement when rose bushes arrived from McGredy's of Portadown. On rambles by the seashore or in the countryside, my father told me the names of many wild flowers and the 'bug' of identifying plants has continued to this day. Once future careers were discussed in secondary school, horticulture was for me.

Tell us a little about your first job?

Following two years in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin and four years studying Commercial Horticulture in UCD, I was appointed An Taisce Heritage Gardens Fellow. Based in the Botanic Gardens, I travelled to twenty private gardens across the island and catalogued their collections of trees and shrubs.

What led you to join the Irish Garden Plant Society?

When Charles Nelson mooted the idea of a society concerned with Irish plants and pointed out that it would require a secretary, the task fell to me. I was Secretary from its inception in 1981 until 1983 when I became Head Gardener in Glenveagh National Park in Donegal. Over the years I have taken on other roles within the Society - Newsletter Editor, Editor of *Moorea* and in the 1990's Chairman. I've also worked at plant sales and helped with the two IGPS exhibits at Chelsea Flower Show.

Have things changed?

The Society continues to run an interesting programme of lectures and garden visits, many of these gardens are new to me.

With the developments in printing technology, what a contrast between current newsletters and *Moorea* and those from earlier years when the cost of printing in colour was prohibitive. Then there is the website, unheard of when the Society was founded. Over the years the Society has initiated projects such as the Rectory Garden at the Ulster Folk Museum, runs a successful seed exchange, and published books such as *A Heritage of Beauty*. As the Society approaches its 40th anniversary, it is time to record the success of these and other projects.

What developments would you like to see?

Members of the Society have a wealth of knowledge about plants and their cultivation and a member's space on the IGPS website would be a great way to share this knowledge. The Lisnacloskey Rectory Garden at Cultra is a wonderful showcase of the Society's work. In the years to come I would like to see similar projects in other regions.

Garden Visits at the AGM weekend

Kilmacomma Garden by Pat & Anne Coffey

Kilmacomma garden is the home of Pauline and Pat Hegarty which they purchased as a green-field site in 1971. It is a beautiful peaceful setting, with wooded hills both in front and to the rear of the site. They planned their garden layout carefully deciding to build their home to the right of the plot, thus creating room for access and for a large flower bed to the left while in the front garden we appreciated the pairing of a multi-stemmed, gently dancing silver birch with an elegant, soft, sea-green obelisk in its shade.

The sloping garden has two levels to the rear of the house achieved by building a low brick wall. The lower section is on the flat, while the upper part is on a gentle slope bounded by a beautiful, original old stone wall. Here are two seating areas where you can relax and admire the garden and the tree-clad hill in the distance. Kilmacomma garden had the warmth



AGM Visit to Kilmacomma Garden

and promise of summer: the faded brick-red of its terracotta walls and pots, coral-pink lupins opening into flower, soft wine-red heucheras close to the earth, paeonies about to burst forth, and a tall *Prunus* with its ringed trunk mirrored in the concentric rings of a terracotta pot, planted elegantly in its shade.

It is obvious to the visitor how much Pat & Pauline love their garden and how over the years they have shaped every square inch of it. What struck us was its easy flow; there were no straight lines anywhere but beautiful, gentle curves. The garden itself has a lovely balance between flower beds, trees, lawn and paths. Situated throughout the garden and very strategically placed were a number of empty unglazed pots, as well as other pots containing plants.

In a central position in the garden was a simple but effective water feature, where water trickled over rough slabs of old stone to a calm pool with the round smooth leaves of water lilies resting on top.

This was a stimulating garden to visit, created and cared for by Pauline and Pat. Many thanks to them for the refreshing, locally-brewed apple drink they provided.

Ballyhist House by Patricia Kernohan

We were welcomed to Ballyhist House by Joe and Mary Johannes. This is a one acre garden near Ardfinnan, Clonmel with beautiful views of the Knockmealdown and Galtee mountains.

A shrubbery defines the front of the house while a serpentine gravelled bed covered with *Cotoneaster dammeri* guided us around the side of the house where the garden spreads into a series of different areas all linked by gravel. At the back of the garden we reached a grouping of *Hydrangea* 'Annabelle', while *Geranium magnificum* glowed beside lichen covered boulders. Our group was further enticed by the stunning, aristocratic bearded irises, *Iris germanica*, closer to the patio area in colours of bronze, amber and purple.

One of the many covetable and admired features to counteract strong winds was a sunken garden room with a stone curved wall draped by one long run of white wisteria. This wall protects *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*

and *Callistemon* from the wind. The planted pine trees counteract the wind and has allowed the beautiful *Acer shirasawanum* 'Aureum' and *Tamarisk ramosissima* to thrive.

As Mary is a flower arranger, she has an array of varieties of plants, shrubs and trees to choose from such as *Sorbaria sorbifolia*, *Salix purpurea* 'Nancy Saunders' with which she makes Christmas cribs. As we headed to the left, a yellow tree paeony stood sentinel beside the curved pergola covered with *Clematis* 'Lady Diana' and C. 'Dr Ruppel'

The final surprise in this beautiful garden was the courtyard garden around which the house was built containing *Rosa* 'Gertrude Jekyll', hostas and ferns where the garden can be enjoyed all year round.

Thanks to Joe and Mary.



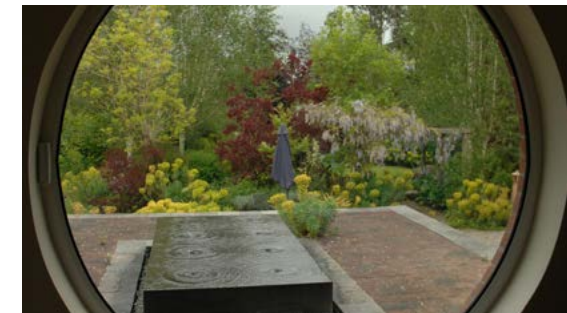
Petrovska by Janet Edwardes

Michael O'Riordan and Sanna Petrovska spent some years taming a 7 acre wilderness which surrounds their house in Kilgaineey, Clonmel. Both have travelled extensively and lived in many parts of the world so time available for the garden has been carefully utilised.

Looking out from within the house a circular window frames a most beautiful picture of the garden where you almost felt within the garden. Outside we were surrounded by lots of fennel, large plants of euphorbia, magnificent hostas, all big bold leaves. Immediately in front of the house was an intimate area to sit, have a coffee and be at one with the world.

Michael led us off down the meandering trail through the garden explaining the difficulties of the site. He has lost many trees through water logging. Rainfall is high and the lower areas are bog so trees have to be raised and planted within a mound to survive. Michael spoke of how lovely it was to see several deer wandering about in the early morning, but these lovely creatures have destroyed so many plants, he could be forgiven for feeling very frustrated. Although they have attempted to keep them out through fencing, they somehow manage to break through or leap over so philosophically Michael has learnt to live with the problem. How frustrating to plant a large display of

hostas for example and to find the next morning they have been sheared to the ground; in spite of this, Michael and Sanna's garden is brim-full with loads of gorgeous plants, artfully positioned along streams, paths, bogs, and the maxim ... right plant right place.... would be applicable here. Everything looked very natural with planting is carefully chosen for the situation. The garden is full of quirky artistic touches, bridges, towers, a bicycle abandoned, painted sculptures. We spent a very happy few hours meandering around the garden, accompanied by Michael's humorous anecdotes about the making of the garden and his stories of overcoming different challenges. The garden is a joy to be within and to just stop and listen to the birdsong would fill you with joy. It is everything a garden should be... a beautiful space, a haven for wildlife, a host of interesting plants. It is a garden to revisit again and again.



Petrovska Garden

Mildred Stokes' Garden by Paul Smith

Mildred Stokes' garden at Killurney nestles under Slievenamon, Co. Tipperary. The garden is deservedly well known and was the overall winner of 2008 Viking Irish Garden Award.

Mildred has been there for 52 years, gardening for the last 35 or 40. She says that when she first started she knew nothing about gardening, and made every possible mistake.

If so, and I doubt it, the mistakes are well in the past of this delectable and highly maintained garden of about an acre. The house was originally surrounded by conifers, very few of which remain. This was the first sign of Mildred's determination that to get the best out of the garden, tough decisions were required. Even in more recent times, she has not been afraid to make radical changes. She is unrepentant that hedges of box, privet and Alexandrian laurel, *Danae racemosa*, have been grubbed up, and yews and chestnut trees taken down. The garden is always evolving.

The house itself dates from the 19th century, but the site has a much longer history. Not many gardens can claim the ruin of a 16th century church as a hard feature. *Cill Urnaí*, the Church of Prayer, has *Schizophragma hydrangeoides* var. *hydrangeoides* 'Roseum' climbing up its last remaining wall. Beneath a Tulip tree, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, a stream runs along a wall and has

been diverted to create a pool, and if one listens attentively, the sound of tinkling water.

It would be impossible to do justice to the richness of planting. A paeony with peach-coloured blooms the size of small cauliflowers caught the eye. Among the many trees there were *Acers* in abundance including golden a golden *A. shirasawanum* 'Aureum'. The coralbark *A. palmatum* 'Sango-kaku' and the paperbark *A. griseum*, reflecting Mildred's love of trees with interesting bark. The Japanese cedars *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Sekkan- sugi' attracted lots of attention, (thanks for the name, Agnes). Almost hidden was a recent addition to the garden, *Pilgerodendrom uviferum*, a rare, slow growing, upright conifer belonging to the cypress family from South America.

There were plants for sale, including a *Celmisia* bound for our own garden. Mildred and her family supplied a gracious tea with scones and other home-baked treats; very welcome at the end of two days of gardens.



Faces at the AGM



Nichola Monk



Clíodhna & Mary O'Brien



Janet & Martin Edwardes



Anne James



Shirley Musgrave & Chris Fehily



Sarah & Charlie Angel



Agnes & Claire Peacocke

Royal Visit at National Botanic Gardens Kilmacurragh

by Billy McCone



Seamus O'Brien introduces Prince Charles to some of the guests.

In May, Leinster Chair Anne-Marie Woods and I were delighted to be invited to join others from various horticultural organisations to meet HRH Prince Charles at the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh. Head gardener and long-time IGPS member Seamus O'Brien treated Prince Charles to a guided tour of the garden. Near the lake the Prince planted a *Podocarpus salignus* conifer to commemorate the visit. An apt choice as the tree, endemic to Chile, had been grown from seed collected in Chile by Martin Gardener of the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh of which HRH is patron

We were honoured to be personally introduced to the Prince by Seamus. After a short conversation on plant conservation Anne-Marie (not one to miss an opportunity) presented the Prince with a copy of the IGPS journal *Moorea*.

With the formalities over it was an ideal opportunity to speak to some of the other guests; most from various horticultural organisations. We were able to catch up with some past acquaintances and meet some new ones.



RHSI President and IGPS member Brenda Branigan with IGPS National Chair Billy McCone and IGPS Leinster Chair Anne-Marie Woods

Pogue's Entry

by Billy McCone

It seemed not too long ago that the 'garden' at Pogue's Entry was an uninspiring patch of grass with weed infested borders and a selection of thuggish plants. My, how that has changed thanks to the work of the IGPS volunteers. Improving week by week, the garden is flourishing with flowers, fruit and vegetables; many of Irish origin. The garden has provided an added dimension to the historical site which attracts both local and foreign visitors. We were especially delighted that Antrim and Newtownabbey council included it in the judging for the town's entry for Ulster in Bloom.

As the work progresses the garden is revealing some interesting history. A forgotten well, thankfully capped, was uncovered during some of the planting.

Also uncovered were bucket loads of coloured glass and ceramic fragments, believed to be the residue of a 19th century shebeen. In the spirit of recycling, on-site Folk Museum volunteer, Bill McBride, has put them to good use in craft projects for visiting children.



Pogue's Entry

Drummond and Nelson

by Paddy Tobin

Dr. E. Charles Nelson has enriched my gardening for over twenty five years though it has been a disappointment that I have never had a plant from him – he has a special interest in plants of Irish origin or connection and he grows a few that I would give my eye teeth for. Charles was the Taxonomist at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin



Dryas drummondii

for quite a few years, was a founding member of the Irish Garden Plant Society and was commissioned by that Society to write a book on Irish plants – *A Heritage of Beauty* – which remains the most significant and reliable reference for those who share this enthusiasm.

Charles has also contributed to *The Irish Garden* magazine for many years, generally historic articles on plants, people, gardens or other matters horticultural with an Irish background. In 2009, The Collins Press published a selection of these articles in a book entitled, *An Irishman's Cuttings: Tales of Irish Gardens and Gardeners, Plants and Plant Hunters*, and it is through his writing that he has added so very much to my enjoyment of gardening for every plant is given added value when one has its background story, the story of its origins and of the people connected with it.

It was a while since I had read *An Irishman's Cuttings* but when I picked it up last week, a quick flick through brought me to an article relating to a plant, *Dryas drummondii*, I had admired and photographed that morning in the garden and it was interesting to read Charles' article on Thomas Drummond again.

The flowers are followed by attractive seedheads which persist for many weeks. Despite the large number of seedheads, I have never had a seedling in the garden.

To quote from Charles' article: "Who was he? A 32-year old Scot named Thomas Drummond who was born at Inverarity in Forfarshire. His father,



also Thomas, was a gardener on the local estate. Thomas had an older brother, James, and both lads were to follow in their father's footsteps, and then go much further to unheard-of places. They both trained as gardeners... James Drummond became the first and only curator of the short-lived Cork Botanic Garden, and Thomas became the first curator of the Botanic Gardens in Belfast."

Thomas went on to become an assistant naturalist on Sir John Franklin's second expedition (1825 – 1827) to the polar regions of North America and, as well as collecting and preparing herbarium specimens, he also collected seeds which were distributed to gardeners on his return and many of these plants are still in our gardens to this day.

Mountain Avens, *Dryas octopetala*, are common on The Burren in Co. Clare, a prostrate, ground-hugging shrub with white flowers. Its North American relative, *Dryas drummondii*, introduced to this side of the Atlantic by Thomas Drummond and named for him, is very similar in appearance but has soft-yellow flowers. Our plant came from Aberconwy Nursery, in North Wales, over twenty years ago and continues to be healthy and vigorous and to delight us with its flowers and attractive seedheads each year. The plant is beautiful in itself but one's enjoyment of any plant is augmented greatly when one knows its background story. So, thank you to Thomas Drummond and to Charles Nelson.

Originally published online.
To see more of Paddy's photos visit:
<https://anirishgardener.wordpress.com/2019/7/25/drummond-and-nelson/>

Grow an Irish Plant

by Maeve Bell, Stephen Butler, and Brendan Sayers

Dahlia 'Matt Armour'

Dahlia 'Matt Armour' came to prominence in the 1930s at Glenveagh Castle in Co. Donegal when the estate was owned by Henry McIlhenny. Named after the gardener who grew it from seed given to him by Lucy Porter, the former owner of the castle, it has been grown there ever since. It was registered by the present Head Gardener, Seán Ó'Gaoithín, in 1996. A single-flowered red, it makes a stunning display massed in the sloping *jardin potager* behind the Castle.

When the Society held its AGM at Glenveagh in 2015, Seán very



Dahlia 'Matt Armour'

generously propagated 60 plants to give to members and ensure its more widespread distribution. *D.* 'Matt Armour' gives a very long season of flower blooming (in Belfast at least) from mid to late June until the first frosts in November. It was featured in our recent (2016) joint publication with the Irish Society of Botanical Artists *Irish Heritage Plants – Plandaí Oidhreacht* and may be found from time to time at our plant sales.

Romneya coulteri

The Californian poppy is a gorgeous plant with glaucous foliage and huge blooms, their white petals looking like slightly crumpled tissue paper surrounding a central boss of golden stamens. But how can a poppy from California be an Irish plant? It has strong Irish associations having been collected by Thomas Coulter of Dundalk in the early 1830s and named in honour of him and the Irish astronomer, Thomas Romney Robinson. Not only that but it flowered for the first time at the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin in 1877.

Romneya flowers in late summer, the timing depending on whether you cut it to the ground in spring or merely

shorten it back. No shrinking violet, it needs a fair bit of room in the garden but on seeing it in flower you couldn't begrudge it. Ask in your local nursery or garden centre, eg there was one on sale in Clonmel at the time of the AGM.



Romneya coulteri

Sorbus 'Autumn Spire'

A relative of the native rowan or mountain ash *Sorbus aucuparia*, this is a wonderful, small, fastigiate (upright growing), deciduous tree, reaching about 4m in height but only 2m wide. Progeny of the popular *Sorbus* 'Joseph Rock', it arose as a chance seedling found at Flannery's Nursery, Staplestown, Kildare in 1996. Clean white flowers in May become yellow-orange berries, much loved by birds, in autumn. They contrast well with the leaves which

turn a very good dark red to reddish yellow in autumn.

A perfect tree for a small garden or a tight corner, it is readily available in garden centres around the country. Flannery's Nursery closed in 2018. Seeing such family run nurseries that have bred or found heritage cultivars closing due to pressure of commercial viability is a stark reminder of the importance of the Society keeping people aware of such cultivars.

Sorbus 'Autumn Spire'. Pictured growing in the Rectory Garden of Lismacloskey House at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra.



Agapanthus 'Kilmurry White'

Originating at Kilmurry Nursery, Gorey, Co. Wexford, *Agapanthus* 'Kilmurry White' is one of a range of varieties developed by the owners Paul and Orla Woods. Such breeding work was much more commonplace in past years, and gave us many of our heritage plants. A lovely clean pure white flower, prolifically produced in summer, it grows to a height of 40cm with the flowerheads about 15cm across. Flowers are partially sterile, enabling the plant energy to concentrate on flowers – a young plant will thus have many flower stems. It is also featured in *Irish Heritage Plants – Plandaí Oidhreachta*.

Agapanthus are among the easiest grown and most reliable of herbaceous plants. Full sun will give better flowering, with a gentle feed each spring, maybe a mulch to keep weeds down and reduce water needs. This would be ideal for a pot as not tall, but protect in severe winter frosts. Available from Kilmurry Nursery.



Agapanthus 'Kilmurry White'.

Around the Regions

Leinster

Planting for Bees and other Pollinators February/ March 2019

Report by Michelle Nolan

So good we had to do it twice. Mary Montaut had agreed to give us a talk on bees. What a turn out for the first talk in the Bots. 148 people with another 40 odd being turned away. Brendan Sayers to the rescue and gave the disappointed an impromptu tour of the gardens. We fortunately were facilitated again in the Botanic two weeks later. Anyhow, to the talk. What a pleasure it was, what an animated and inspiring lesson for us all to learn about all the goings on at this time of year for our one species of honeybee and about the other 97 of our wild bees (including 20 bumblebees and 77 solitary bee species).

We learned of the activities of the Queen bumblebee which can be seen (if you are lucky) flying around gathering pollen and nectar, gaining her strength before setting up her hive. It is at this time of year that we must provide all of our bees with as much variety as possible. This is where we plant our early flowerers such as *Crocus*, *Helleborus*, *Erysimum* and *Pulmonaria*, to name but a few, but as Mary explains it is the open-faced flower which attracts the most. The pollinating bee doesn't

like to get caught up in complicated double flowers such as roses. Open and pollinator friendly! Dandelions!! With no planning needed, these pop up everywhere and what a treat for them these golden wonders are.

Mary's garden plants were the vision at this talk. She may say that it is not the tidiest of gardens but all the more reason for the pollinator to drop in. Plenty of flowers (weeds to those unfriendly pollinator people) growing amongst the more cultivated species. A favourite of Mary's came up in her slides for both Spring and late Summer, is a variety of lavender (*Lavandula dentata*); It flowers so well it gives the bee food for the both the beginning of the season and for the end. Both of which is where the least number of good pollen-bearing flowers are available.

Mary being an expert on all things that buzz, is editor of *An Beachaire*, the journal of the Federation of Irish Beekeepers' Associations. As we become more and more aware of biodiversity and how we must protect that food chain, talks like these are very important so that we as gardeners can play our part to provide the green band of connectivity that is needed. We will have an advice table at our **Annual Plant Sale in Blackrock on 19th October** for any questions people might have.

'Expanding the Collection at Mount Stewart' Neil Porteous, 14 March 2019

Report by Billy Moore

A large audience enjoyed this talk by Neil Porteous, Head Gardener at Mount Stewart, at the NBG, Glasnevin, sponsored jointly by the AGS and the IGPS. Neil was appointed in 2011 and at once set about arresting the beginnings of a decline in what was once a large, eclectic collection of plants. One of his first steps was to build a propagation unit and to engage a propagator and his objective was to expand the collection by introducing exciting plants sourced from around the world.

Mount Stewart is a National Trust garden situated on the shores of Strangford Lough and was described by Neil as 'a magical place'. It attracts some 250,000 visitors each year. It is worth a visit at any time of the year but the first two weeks in April are best for the rhododendrons and autumn is especially good. As well as the extensive gardens created by Edith, Lady Londonderry (referred to throughout by Neil as Edith, and I will follow suit) there is a fine neoclassical house which is also open to the public. Growing conditions in the garden are very favourable: the proximity of the lough

keeps severe frost away, making it milder in winter and cooler in summer, so a wide range of plants can be grown. The mean average winter temperature is 4°C. The soil is a glacial till, 85% sand. Conditions are difficult for rhododendrons, for which Mount Stewart is famous, and they tend to be not as long-lived as in their native habitats. Despite the decline noted by Neil, the garden is still host to a wide range of exotic plants, an example being the beautifully scented autumn flowering *Schima khasiana*.

A few of the mouth-watering plants that Neil showed us. *Luculia grattissima* flowers in January and has a wonderful scent. *Rhododendron magnificum* lives up to its name also in January. *R. lindleyi* from Sikkim is gorgeous and also highly scented. *Cyathea dealbata* is a magnificent tree fern, most decorative as is *Dicksonia antarctica*.

Mount Stewart is a wonderful garden and under Neil's stewardship should get better and better. It is nice to think that he wants to keep faith with what he believes Edith would have wanted and we can all hope that she would approve.

Visit to Mount Usher Gardens,

Report by Mary Montaut

In chilly Mount Usher gardens in early April, a group of hardy enthusiasts gathered to meet Seamus O'Brien, who generously guided us, informed us, stunned us with his depth and breadth of knowledge, and amused us equally with strange and sometimes bizarre stories about the trees. At the very start of the walk, he introduced us to the huge weeping juniper which he told us is also known as the Chinese Coffin Tree (*Juniperus recurva* var. *coxii*). The story that followed was totally unexpected: Chinese aristocrats were apparently most particular about their coffins, and only a very



Rhododendron barbatum
at Mount Usher Gardens

hard, scented and special wood would do. Furthermore, they checked up on this, by digging up the coffins after three years to make sure they were preserving the remains correctly. After such a beginning, you might imagine that the more botanical information would be less curious, but Seamus' knowledge of the species in Mount Usher is so profound that even to hear about the provenance of many of them was to receive whole history lessons about Irish gardens. The connections with Glasnevin, the former Trinity Botanical Garden and also Kew and Edinburgh Royal Botanic Gardens, were many and extraordinary, with seeds coming to Mount Usher at the same time as they were received by the Botanics. It seemed as if the trees in Mount Usher are old friends of Seamus' and he knows all about them.

Northern

Visit to Seaforde Garden

Report by Julie Holmes

Members were given a glimpse into the past at Seaforde Gardens on a beautiful sunny afternoon in May as the house and gardens have been in the Forde family for the past 400 years. Starting our visit in front of the Butterfly House, Lady Anthea Forde's introduction and explanation competed with the cries of roaming peacocks. The first half of the walled garden offered an array

of herbaceous and semi-tropical plants. Underneath the woodland canopy, photographers were spoiled for choice as we explored the arboretum developed by Colonel William Forde, including the first *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (or Wellingtonia) to be grown in Ireland and a Crimean pine stretching over 100 feet into the sky. Seaforde also holds the UK National Collection of *Eucryphia*, including specimens collected in Tasmania by the late Patrick Forde. Seaforde reflects the Forde family legacy to bring beauty to future generations.

Old Balloo House and Barn

Report by Barbara Kelso

On sunny Saturday 1st June, around 70 members and guests thoroughly enjoyed a visit to Old Balloo House and Barn, situated in the village of Balloo, County Down. The two adjacent houses, originally one house and its barn, were built in 1809 and are owned by long standing good friends, Lesley Simpson and Moira Concannon.

Lesley and Moira greeted us and explained how for the last 32 years, they have worked, restored and extended their collection of gardens totalling an area of one acre. A map was handed out to help guide us along the winding paths through the various garden rooms, from the exuberant cottage garden with masses of hardy geraniums planted



Papaver orientale 'Patty's Plum'

under old apple trees, the productive vegetable garden and then on to the perfume-filled rose garden. A favourite plant of mine was the gorgeous oriental poppy, *Papaver orientale* 'Patty's Plum' (pictured), with its crepe-papery ruffled petals.

One had to be quite sure-footed to tackle the steepness of the path in the 'field garden' and at the bottom flowed the River Blackwater. This woodland garden had a wild feel to it, with a mixture of trees, shrubs and perennials, such as primula and the perennial honesty, *Lunaria rediviva*. We could also survey this wilder garden from a view point seating area at the top of the glen. To round off the day, there was a very successful plant and book sale. Many thanks go to Lesley and Moira, who also open their beautiful gardens by appointment as part of the Ulster Gardens Scheme, for kindly allowing us to visit.

Munster

Talk by Bernard van Giessen

Report by Janet Edwardes

In April we were very grateful to Bernard van Giessen for stepping in at short notice to give us a lecture on photography in the garden. Bernard explained to us that he came to garden photography through an unusual route by beginning his career in photography while working on shipping and oil rigs in the North Sea, so it was quite a journey to arrive at the gentle art of garden photography. Bernard was always fascinated by the world of ships, the sea and offshore rigs.

Bernard's first foray into photographing gardens was through the bamboo nursery of Peter Stam down in Waterford. He begins his day at sometimes 4 am to catch the early morning light which is so important to taking good shots of plants. Huntingbrook is a garden which has become very familiar to him and Bernard showed us many photos from this very beautiful garden. He explained that rain tones down the colour palette and gives a more natural image than full bright sunlight. One beautiful image which stands out for me is where a chair was placed in the woodland to give a sense of space in the photo. Another garden where Bernard has done a lot of work is Blarney. He used

ornamental grasses to catch the light and provide good entry points for the photos. Bernard explained how difficult magnolias are to photograph for example whereas crocosmia is a good flower to take shots of. We then saw many images taken at Kilmacurragh and the JFK Arboretum. Symmetry and geometry are things he looks for when setting up an image and Tourin provided several examples of this. Uneven numbers of flowers or subjects work better was another tip Bernard mentioned. He finished with a selection of different photos of flowers and pointed out details to look out for. We had a wonderful evening and plenty of tips for those of us who are keen photographers in the garden.



Dryas drummondii seedhead illustrating back lighting

Garden Styles

by Will Hamilton

From time to time television channels have given us many and varied gardening programmes, with arguably the BBC giving us some of the very best. So it was with great interest that I tuned into Channel 5 to watch a new series of 'Great British Gardens' with Carol Klein. One of the gardens she visited was Great Dixter and it was fascinating to see the gardens through the four seasons. I thought the programme was as good if not better than anything the BBC would do.

Carol tells us that the long border at Great Dixter is 15ft deep and 300ft long. I have what I thought was a long border in my garden, being a mere 8ft deep and 90ft long. Great Dixter was the home of Christopher Lloyd, one of the late 20th century's most influential gardeners, with quite a different style from the other earlier famous gardener, Gertrude Jekyll. When it comes to my own borders do I base my planting on Lloyd's scheme or Miss Jekyll's ideas?

A Lloyd border at first glance would seem to be outrageous with vibrant colours such as pinks with yellows and plants one would not normally think of putting together. However, I suspect that his border was carefully put together, but his skill lay in the fact that it looked natural, not

contrived. Lloyd broke the rules, but of course he had to know the rules first and had an eye for colour which not all gardeners can follow. So a Lloyd border may require a more expert eye than mine.

What about a Jekyll border? Such a border would be more nuanced with colours carefully toned. The softer pastel colours would gradually give way to the hotter reds and yellows, with the flowers then pulling back to the cooler colours towards the end of the border. It would also look good but in a very different way. Perhaps this type of arrangement would be easier to achieve for my long border. Pale geraniums could give way to deeper pinks and blues to the hotter yellows, red and orange in the middle of the bed. Jekyll used helianthus, rudbeckias, red poppies and gladioli to achieve this effect.

Luckily I or any other gardeners do not need to follow these rules slavishly. Most of us are just happy to have colour in our gardens, but of course one can always try to emulate the ideas of the great gardeners of the past.

Seed Distribution Scheme 2020

by Debbie Bailey

We had such a successful seed distribution scheme in 2019 with a great variety of seeds donated by collectors and a lot of requests for the seeds. Hopefully by now many of you have managed to germinate the seeds you received and are enjoying the fruits of your endeavours.



The seed collecting season is upon us again and indeed this year more than ever the trick is to catch the seeds when they have ripened but before the wind and rain wash them away or they are taken by birds in the case of berries.

Debbie Bailey
Clonguaire
Ballynacarrig
Brittas Bay
Co Wicklow.
debbiebailey797@gmail.com
086 6085849

Please do collect some seeds and send them for inclusion in the distribution list. I am happy to receive them at any time up to the end of December.

General guidelines for the best routine for collecting remain the same and are noted below:

1. Use a paper bag or used envelope.
2. Write the name of the plant and variety on the bag/envelope.
3. Cut off fully ripe heads as found - several trips to the garden may be necessary.
4. Put the heads upside down in the bag
5. Leave to dry on a windowsill or other dry warm spot
6. Clean the seed heads and put in to a clean paper envelope.
7. Ensure the envelope is labelled and send it in

Please do ensure that no plastic is used, not only because the seeds will sweat but also to eliminate the use of plastic where possible. Seeds should be perfectly dry before being packaged.

I look forward to receiving your seed donations – even one or two packs makes all the difference to the quality of the seed list for all members.

Dates for your Diary

Thursday 17th October.
Fifteen years on Kew's Rock Garden
Joanne Ryan at National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.
8pm -9.30pm

A joint AGS/IGPS event.

After 15 years hard labour, Kew's Rock Garden has been transformed from what it was in the 1920s and '30s. Many of these changes and improvements were overseen by Joanne Ryan. Joanne will guide us through those changes with an illustrative talk, a talk we hope which will inspire us in managing and developing our (smaller sized) rock gardens. Joanne Ryan (formerly Joanne Everson) is a passionate plantsperson and an experienced lecturer. She has recently moved on from Kew and now works for the National Trust as a Horticultural Botanist.



**Saturday 19th October 2019, 11:00 am – 1:00 pm
Annual Plant Sale**

Dublin at Guardian Angels Pastoral Centre,
Newtown Park Avenue, Blackrock,
Co. Dublin

We are delighted to announce a new venue in Blackrock for our annual Plant Sale. The Pastoral Centre, located next to the Church of the Guardian Angels, was opened to great acclaim last year. This venue has plenty of free parking adjacent to the building and there is a coffee shop on site too.

Stalls include:

Irish Heritage Plants
Rare and Unusual Plants

Shrubs
Bulbs

Herbaceous
Pollinator Botanical Advice
Homegrown honey for sale

Publications for sale: *In the Footsteps of J.D.Hooker, Moorea*

The Irish Society of Botanical Artists will be there too.

A Plant Creche will be provided so that you can browse, chat to friends and enjoy a coffee in the Coffee Shop. Free parking during the Plant Sale. Donations of plants welcome, ensure they are correctly labelled and include a photograph if possible. Please email igps.leinster@gmail.com to let us know what you are bringing or if you would like us to collect.



**Thursday 24th October
Adventures on the Road**

with Shirley Lanigan
Old Courthouse, Antrim 7.30pm -9.00pm

With a background in journalism and art, Shirley Lanigan has been writing about gardens and garden visiting in Ireland for around twenty years. She is passionate about Irish gardens and their gardeners and has spent her time criss-crossing the island visiting every open garden she can find, interviewing the people who made and work them.

Refreshments and raffle.



Saturday 16th November

Petal Power: A story of Edible Ornamentals

with Orlaith Murphy

National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. 2.30pm- 4.00pm

Dahlias and hostas for example, plants that serve multiple uses in the garden, not only do they look good but that at least some part of them tastes good too. Orlaith Murphy will take us on a botanical gastro journey, showing the bounty that's been hiding all along, growing right under our noses in your garden. You won't look at plants the same way again!

An organic gardening teacher with a background in forest gardening and permaculture, Orlaith Murphy has become known as Ireland's queen of "edimentals": ornamental plants which are also edible. As the interest in unusual edibles continues to grow, a new and typically urban generation of gardeners is increasingly seeking out the sort of plants that make maximum use of their tiny plots in exciting and environmentally sustainable ways



Wednesday 4th December

How to get the Most from a Smaller Garden

with T J Maher

Malone House, Belfast 7.30pm – 9.30pm



Patthana Garden, the creation of T. J. Maher, has merited the widespread praise since it opened for the public for the first time during 2018. It is the perfect embodiment of that old saying that the best things come in small packages for it is a small garden behind what was the rectory in the village of Kiltegan, Co. Wicklow which has been designed and planted to sparkle

and entertain within a compact area. As a result, it is very appealing garden to visit as it displays the possibilities of even the smallest space when artistry and flair are put to perfect effect.

Saturday 18th January

How Go the Gardens of Leinster

with Shirley Lanigan

National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. 2.30pm- 4.00pm

What is new? What is fab? What is drab? Is Leinster still the champion, or slipping down the rankings? What is the state of play in the world of Leinster gardens? Shirley shares her favourites and asks a few questions.

Saturday 15th February

Special Plants

with Derry Watkins

St. Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast 2.30pm - 4.30pm
A joint AGS/IGPS event.

Saturday 15th February
Mount Congreve- A National Treasure
 with Paddy Tobin

National Botanic Gardens, Dublin 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Mount Congreve Gardens, in Waterford, are of international importance as they hold a plant collection unparalleled in any other garden with 2,000 different rhododendrons, 600 camellias, 300 acers, 600 conifers, 250 climbers, 1,500 herbaceous plants and the greatest planting of *Magnolia campbellii* to be seen anywhere in the world. Though, primarily, a woodland garden – 70 acres – there is interest throughout the year as this talk will demonstrate.



Save the Date: AGM 2020
 17th May - 18th May in Westport

Worth a Read

by Paddy Tobin



Jackie Bennett explores seventeen island gardens in her *Island Gardens – Havens of Beauty around the British Isles*. In the course of her research she travelled 7,500 miles with photographer Richard Hanson and presents a very enjoyable record of those travels and of the gardens visited including the well-known Abbey Gardens on Tresco and gardens on the islands of Arran and Bute. It makes a very pleasant, interesting and enjoyable read and, for me at least, a longing to visit some of these remote places for the natural beauty of the areas alone is an attraction and the gardens would be very special treats indeed. Well worth a read!

[*Island Gardens: Havens of Beauty around the British Isles*, Jackie Bennett, Photographs by Richard Hanson, White Lion Publishing (Quarto Group), London, 2018, Hardback, 192 pages, £25, ISBN: 978-0-7112-3975-3]

A Garden Can Be Anywhere
 Creating Bountiful and Beautiful Edible Gardens
 Lauri Kranz with Dean Kuipers



A Garden can be Anywhere was written by Lauri Kranz, the founder of Edible Gardens LA. She expounds her philosophy that nourishment and beauty are what most people desire, that people need to be in contact with the earth and with their food and wish to involve their children in the process and that planting in the garden is best when it imitates nature, is part of nature and not separate from it. There is advice on good garden design, developing and maintaining the soil, compost and plant rotation and, invariably, the vegetable patches end up in raised beds – red cedar makes the most beautiful raised beds!

The author's company develops vegetable gardens for her clients and the book features many "case studies" discussing site, preparation, building and development of the vegetable garden. It would not be unfair to say that these are lifestyle rather than productive gardens and the style of photography in the book bears that out – moody and atmospheric: the languid lettuce, the fetching cabbages, the crispy kale and the glass of wine in hand all under the Californian sun. It reminds me of that old British television sitcom, "Never Mind the Quality; Feel the Width". It is a pleasant and enjoyable read, attractively illustrated but it won't tell you how to grow your spuds!

[*A Garden can be Anywhere: Creating Bountiful and Beautiful Edible Gardens*, Lauri Kranz, Abrams & Chronicle Books, New York, 2019, Hardback, 255pages, £28.99, ISBN: 978-1-4197-3319-2]



GARDENS

SWITZER/SUISSE/SWITZERLAND

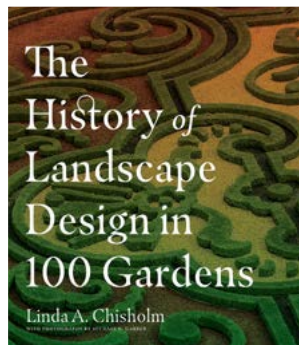


As the name might indicate, Hester Macdonald is English but moved to Switzerland and, among other activities, presented a radio programme where she interviewed Swiss gardeners and those interviews led to the book.

She describes 52 gardens open to the public across Switzerland and presents a page of photographs and a page of text on each – the text is quite brief, a single column, as it is given in English, French and German but it is sufficient to give a quick introduction and to whet the appetite of would-be visitors. It is an excellent introduction to the gardens of Switzerland and will be an

excellent handbook for garden visitors to that beautiful country.

[*Gardens: Switzerland*, Hester Macdonald, Bergli Publishers, Bergli, Basel, 2019, Softback, 135 pages, €26.40, ISBN: 978-3-03869-067-2]



The History of Landscape Design in 100 Gardens has been the most interesting, enjoyable and informative book I've read in ages!

At its very simplest, this book acts as a guide to 100 of the most significant gardens of the world with insights into their backgrounds, their cultural influences and place within the history of landscape design. However, the selection is arranged in an historic sequence so that the gardens illustrate how the prevailing culture of the day influenced their designs so that the reader is given an overview of the development of garden/landscape design over the centuries.

I recommend this book most enthusiastically – an essential read for any enthusiastic gardener. It is a large book with a style of writing so engaging and the material presented so interesting that it holds one's interest throughout. Michael D. Garber's photography is excellent and the gardens are well illustrated, a perfect combination of text and image.

[*The History of Landscape Design in 100 Gardens*, Linda A. Chisholm, Photography by Michael D. Garber, Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 2018, Hardback, 535 pages, \$50, ISBN: 9781604698671

Vacancies

Honorary Treasurer.

We are looking for someone to take over as Treasurer. It would be very helpful to have had previous experience of finance or of being treasurer of a voluntary club or organisation. The Society is in a healthy financial position and we have already a well-established system in operation using Excel spreadsheets. The Treasurer serves on the committee and usually attends four meetings per year.

Ebulletin Editor.

The Ebulletin Editor collates the notices of Society events such as garden visits, garden talks and plant sales from the regional event organisers and emails the members from a supplied list.

Moorea.

We hope to issue our next *Moorea* for the Society's 40th anniversary in 2021. We would like to put a small team together to select material, edit articles and liaise with authors and printers.

We already have a horticulture adviser and other committee members have agreed to act as proof readers.

As part of a team all the roles will have the support of both national and regional committee members.

All posts are unpaid but expenses will be reimbursed.

It is not necessary for the Ebulletin Editor or *Moorea* team to attend committee meetings.

If you are interested in any of the positions or would like more information please email Honorary Secretary Claire Peacocke claire.peacocke@yahoo.co.uk

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