

Issue 150

# Irish Garden Plant Society

---

Newsletter  
September 2020

## Contents

Page 3	Welcome
Page 4	Meet our Contributors
Page 5	A Note from the Chair by Billy McCone
Page 6	A Touch of Africa in Ireland by Nicola & Peter Milligan
Page 12	Home Thoughts from the Welsh Marches by Caro Skyrme
Page 15	Grow an Irish Plant by Maeve Bell, Stephen Butler and Brendan Sayers
Page 18	Eat Your Greens by Stephen Butler
Page 20	<i>Betula</i> 'Trinity College' by Pat & Anne Coffey and Brendan Sayers
Page 22	Plant Hunting IGPS Style by Michael Kelleher
Page 24	Glasnevin's <i>Sarracenia</i> by Brendan Sayers
Page 27	The Flowering of <i>Victoria</i> 'Longwood Variety' by Adrian Walsh
Page 29	Kilmacurragh Re-united by Seamus O'Brien
Page 31	The Promise of Seeds by Debbie Bailey
Page 32	Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin
Page 34	Society Snippets
Page 36	Around the Regions
Page 39	Advice for Contributors
Page 40	Contact Us

Copy for the January issue as soon as possible and by **20th November** at the latest.

Cover: The Rectory Garden at the Ulster Folk Museum. Photo courtesy of Carrie Mercer. Grateful thanks to our Horticultural Advisors, Stephen Butler and Brendan Sayers

## Welcome

Back in the early days of spring none of us could possibly have imagined how our lives would change over the following months. Hopefully our gardens will have provided a haven, a safe outdoor space and a consuming interest. Now as the seasons change we are enjoying the plants which signal autumn. Crocosmias are one of the best families of plants for autumn colour but did you know that many of the best have Irish origins and are often associated with some of our leading gardens? Peter and Nicola Milligan write about several lovely cultivars and recommend that you grow at least one of them.

This is Issue 150 of the Newsletter, quite a milestone. A quick re-read of issue 100, which came out in 2006 while Paddy Tobin was Editor, showed the longevity of some of our hardy perennials who are still contributing – Stephen Butler, Seamus O'Brien, Brendan Sayers, and Paddy himself of course, while in our July issue Mary Davies, Carmel Duignan, Mary Forrest and Rae McIntyre graced the pages. A special welcome to a new contributor – Caro Skyrme who gardens in Shropshire – and welcome back to Michael Kelliher from Macroom. Very many thanks to all our writers and photographers.

For me, two themes from that earlier issue stood out. One was the celebration of the plants of our heritage coupled with much wringing of hands about the precarious nature of the Society's efforts to conserve and promote them. The second was the recognition of the importance of the knowledge, camaraderie and enjoyable events associated with membership. Both are equally relevant today.

In his editorial Paddy wrote: '... neither books nor strategies will keep our plant heritage safe – it comes down to us as members to ensure the survival of this treasure.' And he continued: 'Propagate your plants of Irish interest, bring them to the plant sales, give them to friends and tell them of their connections. To the keen gardener you will be giving a treasure which will be cared for and appreciated for life.'

Next year, 2021, is the Society's 40th anniversary. How about making it the year you include a plant of Irish interest in your garden if you don't already have one or searching for and adding something scarce and special if you do?



Stay safe, stay well and stay gardening.

*Maeve Bell*

Editor

## Meet our Contributors

**Debbie Bailey** is a horticultural therapist and also teaches flower arranging. She has co-ordinated the seed scheme since 2017.

**Stephen Butler** retired recently as Curator of Horticulture at Dublin Zoo. He takes the lead in all matters to do with Irish Heritage Plants.

**Anne and Pat Coffey** are keen members, regular participants at the AGM weekend and garden on the wind-swept shores of Ballinskelligs Bay.

**Michael Kelliher** lives and gardens in Macroom, Co Cork and is a member of many years standing.

**Drs Nicola and Peter Milligan**, now retired, garden at Mount Stewart on the shores of Strangford Lough in Co Down. Both are past members of the IGPS Northern Committee and Peter was Chair of the committee about 10 years ago.

**Seamus O'Brien** manages the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh, Co. Wicklow. A past committee member of the IGPS, he is Irish Branch Chairman of the RHS Rhododendron Camellia Magnolia Group and a corresponding member of its Woody Plant Committee.

**Brendan Sayers** is Glasshouse Foreman at the National Botanic Gardens and has spent almost 30 years working there; he specialises in orchids, both native and tropical, and maintains his interests in Heritage Irish plants and botanical art.

**Caro Skyrme** grew up in the north of Ireland; she and her husband are passionate about opening their garden, Broadward Hall, in Shropshire for the National Gardens Scheme.

**Paddy Tobin**, a former Chairman of the Society and Editor of the Newsletter, lives in Waterford and is in charge of the Society's website and Facebook page.

**Adrian Walsh** is treasurer of the Northern Committee and Chair of the Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens. He opens his garden by appointment.

**Patricia Kernohan** and **Mary Montaut** are members of the Society.

**Photos** are by kind permission of the author unless otherwise attributed.

While every effort is made to ensure that content is correct at the time of printing, views expressed in the articles are those of the author(s) and may not reflect those of the Society. Any factual errors will be corrected as soon as possible.

## A Note from the Chair

With the gardening volunteers returned to both IGPS gardens at Lismacloskey and Pogue's Entry and carefully managed garden visits being hosted, we have cause to be optimistic. We even managed a click and collect plant sale. Initial concerns about a low turnout were quickly dispelled when all events were booked out within days: great work by the regional organisers and volunteers and many thanks to the members who gave their support, greatly encouraging. Incidentally, both the Folk Museum and the Lismacloskey or Rectory Garden are now open to the public.

In her editorial Maeve, quoting Paddy Tobin, speaks of propagating and sharing plants. We are seeking members to join special interest groups for various plants. Nothing too involved, just a keen interest in a helping us gather and distribute various Irish Heritage plants. We are particularly interested in forming a small group to source Irish-bred roses but if you have any other favourite plant species that includes Irish Heritage plants and you would like to be part of a group, we would like to hear from you. Please email me or Stephen Butler and let us know.

A few years back I was asked to give talks on the IGPS, one to a student group and the other to a housing association. On reflection,

while I covered the Society's objectives (and very well as I thought at the time!) I now know I missed so much of what the Society is about — the unstated ethos of the IGPS, nothing that you will find in our constitution. I speak of the social character and the camaraderie that Maeve refers to. Perhaps that dimension of the Society denied to us over the past months has accentuated the importance of our events, the need to meet friends and fellow gardeners, and enjoy gardens together. It's the horticultural therapy that Debbie Bailey wrote about in the July issue, a wide concept that we all need and benefit from in varying degrees. In the same issue Claire Peacocke talked about the tangible difficulties her group encountered during the lockdown which had, I suspect, a severe impact on their daily lives. Have we been taking gardening pleasures for granted? Or is it just me? Probably me.

Best wishes everyone



*Billy  
McCone*

Chairman

## A Touch of Africa in Ireland

by Nicola Milligan & Peter Milligan



Crocasmias give excellent autumn colour

It may seem a long way from South Africa but the distance has not stopped a native South African from putting down roots in Ireland, Britain and elsewhere in Europe. The crocosmia, originally referred to as montbretia, became a very popular garden plant. Between 1880 and 1900 Victor Lemoine, a nurseryman based at Nancy in France, raised over forty crocosmia cultivars. In England a number of gardeners, typically those working in large private gardens, produced numerous cultivars too.

In 1895, George Davison, head gardener at Westwick Hall in Norfolk, named his first crocosmia cultivar after himself and to this day

*Crocospia* 'George Davison' is to be found in most garden centres. Davison, now thought of as the father of British crocosmia breeding, went on to develop another eleven cultivars. Norfolk seems to have been a centre for crocosmia breeders such as J.E. Fitt in the period 1910 - 1930, George Henley in the period 1910 - 1920, and during the 1960s and 1970s Alan Bloom, owner of the famous Bressingham Gardens in Norfolk, all of whom bred a number of good cultivars. One of these, *Crocospia* 'Lucifer' raised by Alan Bloom, puts in a regular appearance at most garden centres today. Alan's grandson, Jason, who runs the family nursery at Bressingham introduced another superb cultivar this year,

*Crocospia* 'Bressingham Flare'.

Ireland, both north and south, has not been slow to add to this plant family. Turning to Dr. Nelson's ever useful texts, *Daisy Hill Nursery Newry* (Nelson and Grills, NIHGC, 1998) and *Glory of Donard A History of the Slieve Donard Nursery* (Nelson and Deane, NIHGC, 1993), we find that Daisy Hill Nursery listed three crocosmia cultivars in its catalogues; two of them — *C. 'Daisy Hill'* described as a large orange-yellow flower with a dark zone and *C. 'Newry Seedling'* described as a rich yellow with a dark ring round the centre — were raised at the nursery. The Donard lists only one crocosmia, namely *Crocospia x crocosmiiflora* 'James Coey' which was raised in Norfolk at Earlham Hall and named for James Coey who became the owner of The Donard in 1912. Dr Nelson's other excellent text *A Heritage of Beauty* lists another fifteen crocasmias which were introduced from other sources.

The gardens of the great and good — members of the Irish aristocracy and well-to-do families — provided such sources. *C. 'Castle Ward Late'* (*Crocospia paniculata* x *C. aurea*) comes from one of the family homes in Co Down of Lord and Lady Bangor. On the eastern shore of Strangford Lough we find Mount Stewart. Originally called Mount Pleasant, the demesne land was purchased



*Crocospia* 'Castle Ward Late'

in 1744 by Alexander Stewart. The estate has remained in the family ever since, the gardens becoming prominent under the care of Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry. Subsequently, the gardens were offered to the National Trust which accepted them in 1957. *C. 'Mount Stewart 1'* and *C. 'Mount Stewart 2'* come from the gardens of the Londonderry family.

Other Irish gardens gave rise to yet more crocasmias. Covering some 40 acres overlooking Dublin Bay, Fernhill was established by Mr Justice Darley and his descendants. The property came to the Walker family in the mid-

1930s and *C. 'Fernhill'* — sometimes written 'Fern Hill' — comes from this old garden. This cultivar is described as a form of *C. masoniorum* with orange flowers with a yellow eye.



*Crocosmia 'Mount Usher'*

Mount Usher in Ashford, Co Wicklow was developed by the Walpole family from the mid-1880's onwards coming into the possession of the Jay family in 1980. The gardens contain many wonderful collections but our interest is focused on *C. 'Mount Usher'*, a beautiful crocosmia with small, pale yellow flowers. We obtained our initial specimen of *C. 'Mount Usher'* during a visit to the gardens when we were given some corms by a member of staff.

Not to be outdone, the gardens at Rowallane just outside Saintfield in Co Down produced three fine crocosmias. This garden was created in 1860 by the Reverend John Moore and further developed by his nephew Hugh Armitage Moore, a famous plantsman, who took over the garden in 1903. At least one of the Rowallane crocosmias, *C. 'Rowallane Yellow'* is well known and widely available in the horticultural trade and 'Rowallane Orange' can be found in certain select nurseries. The third member of the family, 'Rowallane Apricot' described as a soft apricot orange form with a long inflorescence, appears to have resulted from a cross between *C. 'Rowallane Orange'* and *C. 'Rowallane Yellow'*. This third Rowallane cultivar will prove a challenge to hunters of Irish cultivars but it is well worth the hunt.



*Crocosmia 'Rowallane Yellow'*



*Crocosmia 'Malahide'*

One Irish cultivar has created an air of 'mystery' — perhaps 'mystery' is too strong a term but read on and see what you think. It appears that the well-known Irish horticulturist Fred Nutty [Fred was elected an Honorary Member in 1997. Ed.] introduced this cultivar from his nursery at Malahide. It became mis-identified as *C. 'Comet'* and this name has been retained by some. We obtained our first specimen from Alan Bloom while staying with Alan in the 1990's. Alan had this labelled as *C. 'Malahide'* and we were given to understand that he had obtained it from Milo Talbot of Malahide Castle during one of his trips to Ireland. Subsequently we obtained a second specimen labelled as *C. 'Malahide Castle'* from Michael Wickenden of Cally Gardens.

It appears that this cultivar is in circulation under various varietal names — *C. 'Comet'*, 'Malahide', 'Malahide Castle', 'Fred Knutty's' (note the misspelling of Nutty), and 'Jim Reynold's'. Hunting for it (listed as *C. 'Comet'* or 'Knutty') will be problematic. The RHS Plant Finder lists seven suppliers, but only three offer mail order and of these none have the plant listed in their current catalogues. It is worth keeping an eye on Elmlea Plants at Old Minnigaff in Newton Stewart in Dumfries and Galloway ([www.elmleaplants.co.uk](http://www.elmleaplants.co.uk)) as they have this plant in stock sometimes; this is a favourite stop for us on our visits to Scotland as they always have something good on offer.

The good news is that the interest in breeding and introducing crocosmia cultivars did not stop but continues to this day in Ireland. If ever a star had to be awarded for introducing them in Ireland, it must go to Gary Dunlop of Ballyrogan Nursery in Co Down who, to the best of my knowledge, bred and named over forty. Rather than try to list and describe all of Gary's plants in this article, seek out a copy of the book Gary co-authored and enjoy reading about crocosmias in all their glory (*Crocosmia and Chasmanthe*, Goldblatt, Manning and Dunlop, RHS Plant Collector Guide, Timber Press, 2004).



*Crocosmia* 'Lemon Spray'

In 1999 another Irish horticulturist, Shelia Harding, introduced three cultivars all having the forename 'Irish' – these are *C.* 'Irish Dawn', 'Irish Flame', and 'Irish Sunset'. We have grown two of these plants, 'Irish Dawn', and 'Irish Flame', and found them to be handsome plants. Most recently Paul and Orla Woods of Kilmurry, Co Wexford are raising and introducing a fine range of Irish plants including *C.* 'Kilmurry Orange'. In terms of cultivation we have found these plants relatively easy to grow. We grow ours in good garden soil or in large pots, in a sunny or partially shaded position. We feed them after flowering with a general purpose fertilizer. We believe that some growers like to feed with a fruit and flower enhancing fertilizer once the flower spikes start to show but we have not tried this. In terms of growth we divide our crocosmias



*Crocosmia* 'Raspberry Spray'

into two very crude divisions: the clumpers and the runners. As the name suggests, clumpers tend to form clumps of increasing size which can be lifted and divided every three or four years. *C.* 'Jenny Bloom' is a good example of a clumper – the last time I lifted and divided a clump I was able to pot up one dozen sets of corms for distribution and to have three good sized clumps left for replanting in the garden. *C.* 'Lucifer' is a good example of a runner. Given its head it will spread out over time and happily occupy a border. This expansion is controlled easily by the use of your spade to lift and move corms to form new colonies elsewhere. Alternatively plant some in a large pot and enjoy the wonderful red flowers that way.

Many of these crocosmias can be found with relative ease.

As mentioned above, *Crocosmia* 'Kilmurry Orange' can be bought from Kilmurry Nursery and they offer a mail order service ([www.kilmurrynursery.com](http://www.kilmurrynursery.com)). Now that Gary Dunlop's Ballyrogan Nursery has closed, some of Gary's cultivars (e.g. *C.* 'Apricot Queen', 'St. Clements', 'Tangerine Queen', etc.) can be bought from Holden Clough Nursery in Lancashire ([www.holdencloughnursery.com](http://www.holdencloughnursery.com)); again this nursery offers a mail order service as does Trecanna Nursery in Cornwall ([www.trecanna.com](http://www.trecanna.com)) which offers Gary Dunlop's beautiful *C.* 'Ballyrogan Sundown'. Shelia Harding's plants, *C.* 'Irish Dawn' and 'Irish Flame', can be found at Holden Clough Nursery.

Our Rectory Garden in Co Down contains a small collection of Irish *Crocosmia* obtained through the good offices of IGPS member, Ian Scroggy of Bali-Hai Nursery. They include *C.* 'Fugue', 'James Coey', 'Malahide', 'Mount Usher' and 'Peach Sunrise'.



*Crocosmia* 'Irish Flame'

Why not go out and buy some of the many fine Irish crocosmias, old and new, and enjoy these wonderful plants in your gardens?

## Home Thoughts from the Welsh Marches

by Caro Skyrme

I grew up in Co Down where my parents had five acres of garden on the outskirts of Belfast. My father was much involved in the local hunt so we had horses which provided a plentiful supply of good manure, rotting in a great steaming heap in the dell garden, as precious as gold dust to gardeners. It is something I miss having in later life. My father also loved sailing so he built a bungalow where we could spend weekends and part of our school holidays in Sandylands near Ballyhalbert on the Ards peninsula, the most easterly point of Ireland. This allowed me to experience some of the challenges of a seaside garden which was often beaten down by salty 'breezes' (putting it mildly); it was an early lesson on choosing plants to suit the location, whether soil or weather conditions, and the value of digging-in organic material and manure along with chopped-up seaweed, gleaned at low tide from the beach only yards from our gate. I learnt a lot from these contrasting gardens, watching seaside gardeners struggle with the elements and improve the soil, gradually discovering the most sympathetic things to grow in each location.

Riding our ponies along winding bridlepaths paths edged with bright whin bushes, Irish gorse *Aiteann galida*, intertwined with honeysuckle

and fuchsia, is an abiding memory of happy seaside holidays in the 1950s and early 1960s. Visits to the garden at Mount Stewart which is also on the Ards peninsula, though more sheltered and protected than Sandylands because of its location on the shore of Strangford Lough, were inspirational. Along with other Irish coastal gardens, much was to be learnt of the blessings of the kiss of the Gulf Stream.

From the rich conditions of an Ulster garden, I carried as many Irish seeds and cuttings as I could to a very different chalky, stony, Hampshire garden in the early 1980s. I found many of these would not thrive in their new environment but, for fear of total loss, some of each were potted up and, when possible, further seed saved. When I read in the IGPS Newsletter some time ago that *Narcissus* 'Countess of Annesley' had been presumed extinct, my heart sank. This daffodil, along with many other exquisite narcissi, grew in great profusion in our garden at home.

I always remarked to the children how its petals resembled a little windmill, a successful ploy to spark their interest in the flowers around them at an early age. Sadly, the area where it flourished is now beneath a block of flats!



Mount Stewart: photo courtesy NT/Rowland White

In the 1990s I spent a happy decade digging the rich and fertile soil on the northern banks of the Firth of Forth in Fife; here we opened our garden for the first time for the Scottish National Garden Scheme. The ancient fortified dwelling was surrounded by garden on all sides enclosed by high stone walls with already established old roses. I made my first attempt at creating a wide, serpentine herbaceous border, filling it with many of my beloved, old-fashioned plants. Valuable lessons were learnt as I soon discovered how the impressive *Macleaya microcarpa* 'Coral Plume' at the back of the bed would spread if left unchecked. The main joy of my Fife garden was how similar it was to 'home' in so much that anything I could grow in Ulster grew well in that part of Fife.

Eventually, on the death of my father-in-law twenty years ago, we came to farm in the Welsh Marches. Another learning curve ensued, with successes and failures, as gradually I got to grips with a much-neglected garden. Some curious patches of thin, dry soil I discovered lay where ancient yews had once stood. While digging, other areas revealed cobble stones; paths and driveways lay not far beneath the surface and were revealed after weeks of hot, dry, summer weather when the grass turned yellow. Discovering the varying types of soil over several acres took the first few years of trial and error. After two or three years concentrating on the main garden south of the hall, we began to restore the long-derelict Victorian walled garden, an effort still ongoing.



*Veronica spicata* 'Ulster Blue Dwarf'

I regularly find myself trying to replicate the long-lost gardens of my Ulster youth. It is often a vain attempt to grow such things as vast mountains of rhododendron where the soil proves unsuitable bringing feelings of sentimental longing followed by disappointment. However, now we are in Shropshire, there seems to be a margin along the edge of the garden here overlooking the parkland where we have had some success and managed to establish several good specimens. Whilst these may never be quite as magnificent as they were 'back at home', with a wistful sigh, they do give some small consolation.

There are long Irish connections to our Marches home which resonate through the architecture and the garden. As far back as the seventeenth century, the Baily (later spelling their name Bailey) family came from Ireland and settled here for over a hundred years. Their influence and presence can certainly still be felt in many romantic touches throughout the estate. I don't know what brought them to the Clun Valley but often wonder whether they were attracted to this place because of the resemblance to the rolling, green Irish countryside?



Dahlia 'Café au Lait'

## Grow an Irish Plant

by Maeve Bell, Stephen Butler and Brendan Sayers

### *Crinum moorei*

Dublin may have been the first home outside its native habitat of South Africa for the Natal lily. Initially grown from seed, plants grew but did not flourish indoors. They were eventually moved outdoors and planted in the bed that runs in front of the Curvilinear Range at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. Here they thrived and remained in situ for more than 100 years when they had to be removed to facilitate the building's magnificent restoration. Once it was complete, they returned to their original outdoor site and currently form a substantial clump where the Central Pavilion meets the East Wing corridor.

stems of late summer flowers. **BS**



*Crinum moorei*

It is a stately plant with large, robust leaves, their rolled bases forming a stout stem. From these, in late summer emerge stems to 1.5 metres tall with large, slightly nodding pink flowers. There are various forms in cultivation in shades of pink and also a pure white form. There are also forms with variegated foliage.

Not a plant for every garden, *Crinum moorei*, as it was named in 1874 after the Glasnevin Director, David Moore, is an investment in space. I have seen it growing in tight spaces and it may make a good candidate for a large pot but it is best when given ample room to produce multiple

### *Epilobium canum* 'Dublin'

It is a plant name, both scientific and horticultural, that gives cause for confusion and consternation. When I first saw this plant in the 1980s it had the wonderful name of *Zauschneria californica*, and the clonal identifying name of Dublin. I learned more of its muddled history from accounts in *An Irish Flower Garden*, *An Irish Flower Garden Replanted* and finally the entry under *Epilobium canum* (its currently accepted name) in *A Heritage of Beauty*. Although there is confusion as to who found it and in which garden the plant originated, it was most definitely Dublin.



The lesson in the tale is that among great gardeners a forgetfulness can set in and tales are told that may or may not be absolutely true. What is true is that this willowherb is a real stunner. It forms a plant of approximately 40cm tall and can spread to the same amount by means of rhizomes. In late summer the spikes of fiery-red flowers cannot be ignored. It enjoys a sheltered, well drained site and gets its name from part of its native distribution, the California fuchsia. Testament to its calibre is an Award of Merit from the RHS. **BS**



*Epilobium canum* 'Dublin'

### **Rosa 'Souvenir de St Anne's'**

I was fortunate to find this rose in the garden when we moved here 25 years ago but unfortunate in that it lost out to some building works a few years later. It had been acquired

by the previous owner at an IGPS plant sale in the 1980s when such specialties occasionally became available and, if you were very lucky, you were allowed to buy one.

At the start of the 20th century Lord and Lady Ardilaun lived at St Anne's in Clontarf and the rose was found there by her head gardener as a sport of *Rosa* 'Souvenir de la Malmaison'. As so often, we are dependent on the publications of Dr Charles Nelson for the back story. It seems that Lady Ardilaun was very possessive of her rose and gave cuttings to just a few trusted friends who had to promise not to pass it on. One of the friends was Phylis Moore, the wife of Sir Frederick Moore of the National Botanic Gardens, who cherished it for decades before giving it to the noted rosarian, Graham Stuart Thomas, then working at Hilling's Nursery in England, who propagated it and made it available.

It is an excellent shrub rose with an exceptionally long flowering period and exquisite semi-double shell-pink blooms, darker in bud, which open to give a flat flower with a gentle fragrance. If you can't find it locally, it is listed online as being available from at least two well-known rose suppliers. I think it's time she made a return to my garden. **MB**



*Rosa* 'Souvenir de St Anne's':  
photo courtesy of Peter Beales Roses

### ***Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin'**

Solanaceae, what a useful plant family: potatoes, aubergines, tomatoes, chillies and peppers of many kinds, but also one with many poisonous plants including mandrake *Mandragora*, and tobacco *Nicotiana*. Ornamentally, not so useful? But think of *Brugmansia* or *Cestrum*. Surely though, the member of the family one sees most frequently is the climbing potato, *Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin'. Common names though can be very misleading; you will get much pleasure, but no spuds, from this lovely plant.

This cultivar, a chance seedling probably, was noticed before 1882 at the then Royal, now National, Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, as being more vigorous and having larger, better coloured, flowers, and was

distributed. The blue flowers are highlighted by the yellow anthers, an eye-catching combination, and one instantly recognisable as belonging to the potato family. Flowering can start in March, most will be in early summer but some blooms will persist into autumn. With mild winters there may even be some all winter in sheltered spots. It is a very vigorous grower, with shoots to several metres each year, a challenge maybe to keep under control but wonderful if allowed to fill a space; it tolerates a heavy prune in late winter if need be. It is still very popular, grown widely and easily available.

One last benefit, it is not eaten by the normally very destructive Squirrel Monkeys as I found out when trying to find a screen for their surrounds at the Zoo. Both the animal and the plant are from South America. Interesting. **SB**



*Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin':  
photo courtesy of Paula McIntyre

## Eat your greens...but perhaps not

by Stephen Butler



Many years ago, when first working at Dublin Zoo, being tired of members of the animal team demanding plant material for food for their charges, I planted some comfrey to see if any animals would take it. Sean McKeown (who's now Director at Fota Wildlife Park) tried some with the Siamang gibbons. He gave a few leaves to a mother with a young baby. The mother reached out, grabbed a leaf and tucked in. The baby copied her, thought it was awful, and spat it out. Mum took another leaf, so baby, with a look of horror on its face, took another and carried on munching.

Which got me thinking: what makes a plant tasty or, more usefully from a zoo gardening point of view, not tasty? Plants can be edible, whether they are palatable or not, or downright toxic. This question gave me many reasons to research plants and try again. Comfrey has very hairy leaves, which would put off most animals until the leaves

flag and the hairs are then not stiff. Hairy leaves may deter while thorns are there to reduce animals nibbling it. Some physical defences are not visible. Another early lesson had been *Cistus ladanifer* not being eaten by peafowl. Its leaves are sticky with resin, the source of labdanum, used as incense. Would you still eat lettuce if it was sticky?

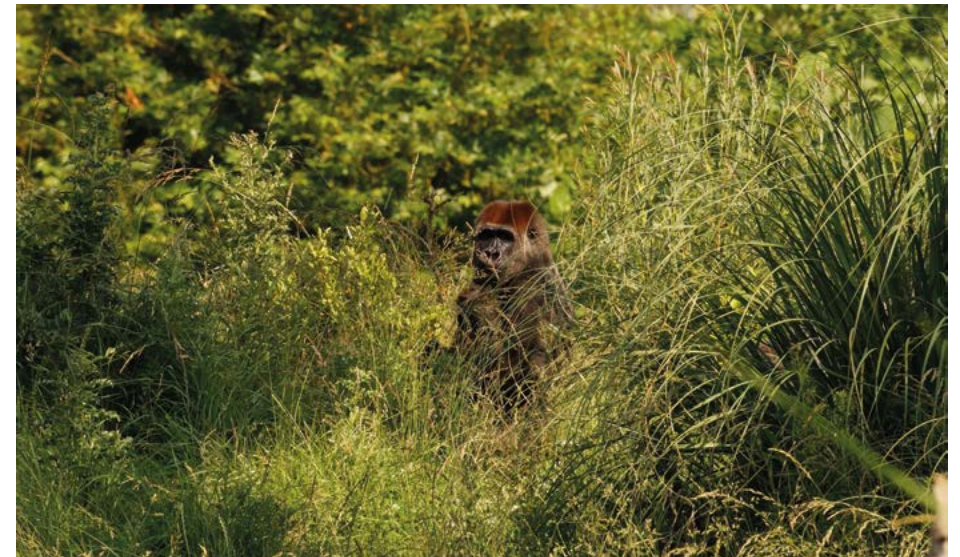
Many plants in the Iris family have crystals of calcium oxalate, not poisonous but probably not agreeable. That's why all those *Libertia* I planted in the zoo were not eaten by geese, or indeed anything else, until we were asked for a screen for young oryx. A few old clumps of *Libertia* worked perfectly – until the parent oryx nibbled them. Now think on that: oryx come from an area with limited plant growth. Maybe they are less picky? Or more adapted to tough plants?

Many plants produce chemicals that either make them bitter, so not palatable, or poisonous, so eaten only once! One good example of bitterness is aspirin. Go back to the old Doctrine of Signatures where a plant was deemed useful if it resembled a bodily organ or a symptom of a disease. Willow, with its shivering leaves, was considered good for fevers and so, by luck, it proved. The chemical involved is

salicylic acid, and an even better source was found in meadow sweet, *Filipendula ulmaria*. Reading up on willows, I found a note that rabbits never eat *Salix purpurea* as it has the highest levels of salicylic acid in the genus. That's why it was planted in the new gorilla habitat, to see if it was eaten and, if eaten, that it wasn't poisonous. The first day in the new habitat plants were pulled up, leaves stuffed into mouths only to be spat out seconds later and left alone from then on until, a few springs later, both gorilla and mangabeys were spotted eating the young growth. Only through binoculars could it be seen that in fact they were eating only the catkins, no young leaves. Once flowering finished, it was left alone again.

*Pterocarya fraxinifolia*, the Caucasian Wingnut, is in the *Juglans* (walnut) family, with very many toxins; not much grows under a walnut tree, even the roots give out toxins to reduce competition. But *Pterocarya* is not listed as poisonous...so try some...maybe throw some in with the goats...they literally ran away once they sniffed it. Grand so, throw some into the gorillas...left alone too. So, I planted some on their new habitat 10 years ago, and they are still there.

Working with plants is always a pleasure, and maybe not just in our heads but because a soil-living bacteria, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, gives us a gentle natural serotonin dose of happiness. How many of us feel better once we get our hands dirty? I wonder if this works for any other primates?



## Betula 'Trinity College'

by Anne & Pat Coffey and Brendan Sayers

### From Blarney to Ballinskelligs

We were thrilled to win the beautiful birch, *Betula jacquemontii* 'Trinity College', in the raffle at the AGM in Blarney in 2016. We were remaining in Cork for a few days after the AGM so we carted our beautiful prize, already over 6 feet tall at that stage, in our Honda Civic from Blarney to Douglas, back seat folded down, pot in the boot with the delicate tip of the tree almost touching the gear stick. We had large plastic bags, damp tea towels and our rain jackets wrapped as carefully as we could around it. We couldn't leave it in the car for three days so we asked the reception staff at the hotel where it could go. The only solution was to bring it to our room. The receptionist said that she had many requests over the years to bring various objects to the rooms but this was a first time she had a request for a tree!

Our 'Trinity College' sojourned in the en-suite although it took a bit of manoeuvring to place it safely and comfortably in situ. While Pat went for a swim, I gave it tepid water and it drank **pints**. We worried about the room being too warm and the air being too dry so I sprinkled it with water as regularly as I could. A splint was put in place to save a small branch. After three days it was back into the car again with all of our own paraphernalia and we headed for

Ballinskelligs via Killarney.

We love our Jacquie. She is now over 12' tall, dances with the flow of winds from every direction, and was untouched by severe gusts last autumn. There is an interesting connection too as Trinity College was the landlord in this area many moons ago. We hope to plant more birches here in Ballinskelligs later this year. That's part of her story. **P & AC**



### Production and Pride

*Betula utilis* subsp *jacquemontii* 'Trinity College' was raised at the College's Botanic Garden at Ballsbridge from seed sent by Sir Joseph Hooker in the 1880s and is noted for the purity of its white bark. Its history is well documented starting with the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* as early as 1901 and more recently in *An Irish Flower Garden*, *An Irish Flower Garden Replanted* and *A Heritage of Beauty*. In the last, there is a note that in 1998 the tree was not commercially available; however this does not reflect an article in *The Irish Times* in 1996 by the late Fred Nutty of Malahide Nurseries, who did much to reintroduce it, that approximately 2,500 trees had been distributed in recent years.

The value of these cultivars with exceptional coloured bark is noted by Tony Schilling of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew when, in his *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* article, he illustrates the thinking behind the inclusion of selected clones when developing the birch collections at Wakehurst Place: 'Cultivars and hybrids would also be included in the collection in order to better illustrate the variety within and between species. Wherever possible good clones (selected for characters such as bark excellence and strong apical dominance) should be evaluated and promoted for their horticultural or silvicultural merits. *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* 'Grayswood Ghost'

(Plate 125) is one of many interesting and potentially valuable examples.'

While Tony Schilling championed cultivars of *Betula utilis*, we have John Joe Costin as our Irish cultivar advocate. One of the best ways of keeping cultivars alive is for their value as garden plants to be accepted and for them to be available in the horticultural trade. In *Horticulture and Landscape Ireland* John Joe Costin highlighted the two Irish *Betula* cultivars and promoted their value as exceptional plants well able to hold their own among other selected clones.

And that is what we do too when members grow and write about their Irish cultivars. It is unfortunate that on the World Wide Web *Betula* 'Trinity College' is described as either a 'new selection' or a 'new variety'. After all it is a venerable elder of more than 130 years. **BS**

## Planting Hunting IGPS Style

by Michael Kelleher

Over the years I have acquired a wonderful range of plants at a variety of IGPS events, whether lectures, plants sales or visits during AGM weekends. Some of the very best and my favourites are as follows.

### **Hoya carnosa**

This is an indoor tropical plant often called the Wax Plant which I bought at a plant sale, possibly in 2005. It is a climbing or trailing perennial of the dogbane and milkweed family and the only one that can be grown in a porch or unheated greenhouse. This is a real classy plant to grow and it creates beautiful, porcelain-like fragrant flower clusters which in warm weather can drip clear nectar; the tight rounded umbels of wax-like flowers have to be seen to be believed. Another unusual feature is that new flowers are produced on the same flowering spurs year after year. A must-have plant.

### **Abutilon x suntense**

I acquired this at a garden visit as part of the AGM weekend in Limerick in 2007. This is a choice member of the mallow family which is not totally frost hardy. It is a fast growing but reasonably short-lived, semi-deciduous shrub. In spring and late summer it produces a profusion of long-stalked, pendant, saucer-shaped, violet blue flowers. In full flower this is an absolute head-turner

and everyone who sees it hopes for a cutting. It may be difficult to source; my plant was unnamed but I think it must be *Abutilon x suntense* 'Jermyns'. I discovered the hard way that if this plant is rocked around by wind, you can say goodbye to it; luckily I had given a baby to a friend, so when I lost mine, I was able to get a slip back from her. Now I always try to take slips so that I continue to have it growing in my garden. Lesson learned: the way to keep a plant is to give it away. I could not live without it.

### **Auriculas and Primulas**

Much more recently in February 2018 I attended a lecture by Paul Smith; Paul is from Co Carlow and works as head propagator at Crûg Farm Plants in North Wales. The plant sale which followed the lecture gave me a second chance opportunity to acquire some auricalas as I had lost a small collection way back in 1999 due to some misfortune. I had received the original plants from Brenda Hyatt — they included *Primula auricula* 'Argus', 'Cortina', 'Lovebird', 'Prague', 'Rolts', 'Hawkwood', and 'Fleminghouse'; the loss still almost makes me cry. Anyway, one can always start again. This time I walked away with six plants under my arm: P. 'Old Irish Yellow', 'Old Yellow Dusty Miller', 'Googie', 'Tim', 'Duke of Edinburgh'

and 'Nickity'. I must take more care of this lot. Again, my advice is to be careful as it is so easy to get hooked on these beauties.



Courgette

### **Vegetables, Gardens and the Soul**

In March of this year, despite the impending doom and gloom because of global warming, the hole in the ozone layer, the adverse effects of climate change, and just before we were all locked up because of the Covid-19 pandemic, a very large number of us were privileged to be present at a lecture by Klaus Laitenberger, *Vegetables, Gardens and the Soul*. I must say it was a most enjoyable, uplifting, informative, intelligent and charming lecture that instilled in us the pure joy and benefits of growing one's own vegetables, how to do so in our own climate, and what varieties do best here in Ireland. Again I walked away with some loot, some plants to save

the world: yacon, oca, Jerusalem artichokes, and some potatoes including Mayan Gold and Shetland Black.



Mayan Gold



Shetland Black

## Sarracenia – Our Cultivars

by Brendan Sayers

The North American pitcher plants (*Sarracenia*) form a distinct, well disputed and investigated group of carnivorous plants that have fallen in and out of fashion with gardeners through the years but have always held a core group of fans throughout the world. The disputed topics are the exact species count and the names and status in which their forms and varieties fall under. To dwell too much on the various species count and correct names is not for the pages of this newsletter. To this end I will keep to what are the most modern and widely accepted names of the species and varieties.

The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin grew *Sarracenia* from seed as early as 1850 and was a leader in hybridisation of the genus on this side of the Atlantic Ocean. Under the guardianship of David and Frederick Moore, a large and complex breeding programme was created while the growth of seedlings and development of the programme was overseen by the Conservatories Foremen, David Orr and William Pope. Although hundreds of hybrids were created at Glasnevin, I will discuss three here. The most noted of the three is *Sarracenia* × *moorei*, the first artificially produced hybrid pitcher plant, a cross between *S. flava* and *S. leucophylla*. It was named for the Director of the time, David

Moore, introduced to the world at the International Botanical Congress and Horticultural Exhibition in Florence, Italy in 1874 and promoted through the pages of the *Gardener's Chronicle*. Some years later the hybrid was recognised in its native habitat in North America where the two parental species grew side by side.



*Sarracenia flava*

The second of note is *Sarracenia* × *popei* with *S. flava* again as a parent and *S. rubra* as the other, named for the aforementioned William Pope. The third is named for a lady gardener/technical assistant at

Glasnevin, *Sarracenia* 'Rosamond Pollock'. The parentage involves three species: *S. leucophylla*, *S. flava* and *S. purpurea*. *Sarracenia* 'Rosamond Pollock' is probably no longer in cultivation but there are other cultivars that hold the same parentage such as *Sarracenia* 'Kiyohime', *S.* 'Daniel Rudd' and *S.* 'Evendine'.

*Sarracenia* are variable species and many of the old hybrids have been remade using different clones of the species. This results in plants with striking differences but which still hold the same hybrid name. We can take *Sarracenia* × *moorei* as an example. One parent, *Sarracenia flava*, is probably the most variable pitcher plant species with varieties or forms quite distinct from one another. The variety selected for breeding will contribute its own distinct morphological traits to the offspring. *Sarracenia leucophylla* is variable to a lesser degree. To date I can find reference to 33 registered or described cultivars of *Sarracenia* × *moorei*. Of the 33, most are artificially created but occasionally one arrives from native habitat such as the remarkable *Sarracenia* 'Leah Wilkerson' with leaves 130cm tall. Trials of *Sarracenia* have recently been undertaken by the Royal Horticultural Society in order to assess candidates for culture on indoor windowsills or similar settings. They were selecting for ease of culture, attractiveness throughout the year with leaves of interesting colour,

patterns and form. The criteria used to judge was colour and venation, height and proportion, form of lid, mouth and pitcher, along with quality, vigour, stability and number of pitchers.



A selection of leaves from *S. x moorei*

In 2016 I purchased seed from Les Burdett of three *Sarracenia* × *moorei* crosses. These are fully accessioned to and cultivated at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. The germinated seed batches produced 13, 16 and 33 seedlings. In 2018 staff and horticultural students were invited to select their favourite five cultivars and to comment as to why they made their choice. The comments reflected the criteria

used by the RHS and the selected seedlings for trial were whittled down to 19, nine were selected by staff and students and another five each selected by myself and Peter Downes who cares for the collection. We hope to involve more people in

the selection process next year and hope to have a cultivar or two worthy of naming in commemoration of the history of *Sarracenia* breeding here at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin and those who cared for the collections over the years.



Four plants from the current trial

## Flowering of *Victoria* 'Longwood Hybrid'

by Adrian Walsh



In the night of 22nd or early morning of 23rd June this summer, a giant water lily, *Victoria* 'Longwood Hybrid', flowered in the recently restored Tropical Ravine in Belfast Botanic Gardens.

In 1853 Daniel Ferguson, Curator of the Royal Belfast Botanic Garden, was the first person in Ireland to successfully produce flowers on the giant waterlily *Victoria amazonica*, in a specially constructed house (which he initially self-funded) in the Garden. Glasnevin did not succeed in getting the plant to flower until 1855, one year after they had constructed a Victoria Waterlily House in 1854.

Ferguson's achievement cannot be overestimated and a contemporary report in the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette* recorded the event: 'The Victoria Regia Lily has recently bloomed for the first time in Ireland, in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Belfast. The possession of such an ornament there is due to Mr Ferguson, the curator, at whose expense the plant and the house for it have been provided: they will become the property of the Gardens if the amount is paid to him. To show the buoyancy and strength of the magnificent leaves of the lily, it is mentioned that one bore a child of six years without sinking below the water.'

It has been approximately 30 years since a giant waterlily last flowered in the Ravine. Ideally, the temperature of the water needs to be between 24°C to 26°C and cessation of flowering in recent decades was mainly due to the state of the old roof which was leaking and affecting the water temperature. The Ravine closed to the public in November 2014 and re-opened again in April 2018 following a £3.8m restoration thanks to the support of Belfast City Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens. Since the re-opening it has been a focus of the gardeners to re-establish the giant waterlily in the lily pond.

*Victoria* 'Longwood Hybrid' derives from a cross between the two species, *V. amazonica* and *V. cruziana*, and was bred in Longwood Gardens, Pennsylvania, USA where it first flowered in 1961. Seed was sent from Longwood Gardens to Belfast and was sown in January 2020 by Derek Lockwood, one of the gardeners. With his skill and knowledge, the seed germinated and the young plant was transferred to the lily pond in April where it quickly became established. One school of thought is that the closure of the Ravine to visitors during lockdown may have helped flowering as the inside temperature was more stable due to doors not constantly opening and closing within the building. More flowers have since been produced and hand pollination has been carried

out in the hope that seed will develop to sow for next year.



Tropical Ravine

## Kilmacurragh Re-united

by Seamus O'Brien

Kilmacurragh's heyday effectively ended with the death of Thomas Acton in 1908. Thomas and his sister Janet (who predeceased him by two years) reigned though a golden era of plant introduction, sweeping away much of the old Dutch Park and creating the present wild Robinsonian garden. Thomas financed the venture through the income of an estate that covered almost 5,500 acres and benefited enormously through his friendship with garden advisors, Dr David Moore of the then Royal Botanic Gardens and his son, Sir Frederick Moore, who succeeded him. Lady Moore continued to visit the gardens long after the house was abandoned and the gardens and park grew wild, thus creating a link with the Moores of Glasnevin (and later Willbrook House, Rathfarnham) that lasted over a century.

By the early 20th century, the various Land Acts had seriously reduced the size of the estate. In 1908, following his uncle's death, Captain Charles Annesley Ball-Acton resigned his commission as a soldier in Myanmar (Burma) after he inherited the demesne. All of the Annesley Ball-Acton brothers were to die on the early 20th century battlefields: Vere in the Boer War, Charles and Reginald (Reggie) in the Great War. By the close of the Great War, no Acton heirs survived and Reggie's widow, Isabel, inherited death duties that amounted to 120% of the value of the estate.

In November 1958, R C Jenkinson published an account of Kilmacurragh in *The Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*. He had first visited with Sir Frederick and Lady Moore in 1932. His guide in May 1958, twenty six years later, was Lady Moore, who, as he stated, at that time



knew the gardens better than any other living person. It was, after all, at Kilmacurragh where Sir Frederick had proposed to her.

By then the house lay empty ‘... a shambles, a nesting home of jackdaws and starlings ...’ and the pair waded through a collection of ‘... rare, choice trees and shrubs crying in the wilderness to be released from rotting fallen trees and brambles.’ Jenkinson had indeed a good guide. He revelled in the garden’s many surviving rarities, like a 15 foot tall *Telopea speciosissima*, the waratah from New South Wales, concluding that ‘This is a sketch of a tragedy, but any enthusiast who girds up his loins and takes shillelagh and bill-hook and pays a visit to Kilmacurragh would be well-rewarded. He would be amazed at the will-to-live of all sorts — many more than I have mentioned — of trees and shrubs after over forty years of neglect.’

Isabel Annesley Ball-Acton had long hoped to see Kilmacurragh become an official annexe of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. Her efforts, sadly fruitless in her lifetime, began in the 1920s. It would take a further century for Glasnevin to acquire fully the bulk of the ornamental parts of the demesne. Following the part purchase in 1996, the historic estate was, happily, reunited earlier this year when the National Historic Properties division of the Office of Public Works which owns the gardens purchased the

Regency-era walled garden, the early 18th century Deer Park, woodlands, avenues and fields beyond from Coillte which had occupied the site since the 1970s.



*Viburnum betulifolium*

The purchase more than doubles the existing area open to the public to 104 acres and plans are now afoot to restore and re-develop these. This includes extending the existing garden into the adjacent fields which will further allow expansion of the plant collection and the creation of new formal garden areas. The Deer Park, which contains the burial place of Thomas and Janet Acton, will see ongoing restoration and it is hoped to open it to the public as early as next spring. It is planned to re-open the vista to the great lime allées in the Deer Park that were once aligned to the vista leading from the drawing room of Kilmacurragh House, through the garden and across the pond. This area also contains a ring fort, ancient oaks and a tract of primeval woodland that will be subject to a sensitive restoration.

## The Promise of Seeds

by Debbie Bailey

This year has been very different in many ways with the effects and restrictions of Covid-19 and it seems we will continue to be restricted for some time to come.

I would love to think that there is a silver lining in this crisis for the IGPS seed distribution scheme. With so many of us spending a lot of extra time in our gardens, how wonderful it would be if a lot more members would collect some seed and send it to me for distribution in the new year.

In previous years we have relied on the wonderful work of a small number of seed collectors to ensure we had a varied and abundant seed list. If you have never taken part before, please think about collecting and sharing the seed of even one or two of your own garden plants. Please 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 November. Seeds should be perfectly dry before being packaged in paper, never plastic.

1. Use a paper bag or envelope.
2. Write the name of the plant and variety on the bag/envelope.
3. Cut off fully ripe heads as you find them — several trips to the garden at different times 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 seedheads and put into a clean paper envelope.
7. Ensure the envelope is labelled and send it in.

When I look at the lists of seeds we have issued over the years, it is such a pleasure to see a wide and varied selection, some of which are hard if not impossible to come by. Many are treasures from gardens handed down from previous generations or given as slips on a garden visit or from a fellow enthusiast. A plant that seems commonplace in your garden could be an absolute treasure for someone else.



My contact details are:

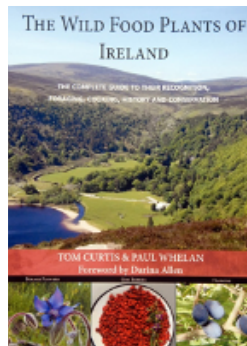
*Debbie Bailey*

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



## Worth a Read

by Paddy Tobin



***The Wild Food Plants of Ireland: The Complete Guide to their Recognition, Foraging, Cooking, History and Conservation*** by Tom Curtis & Paul Whelan comes at an opportune moment when interest in our wild plants and their conservation is especially keen. Both authors have highly regarded previous publications: Tom Curtis on Irish orchids and Paul Whelan on the lichens of Ireland so the quality of research and depth of information in this book comes as no surprise. *The Wild Food Plants of Ireland* is another high-quality publication and one I recommend without hesitation.

In her introduction, Darina Allen says, 'gathering food in the wild is a forgotten skill, hardly a necessity, but in reality, much of the food we eat nowadays is nutritionally deficient. However, wild foods that have been untampered with provide a wide

range of vitamins, minerals, trace elements and micro-nutrients that are no longer available to those who live on a diet of highly processed foods.' There is a worldwide reliance on a very limited genetic range of foods and, as this continues to decline, the genetic resources available in wild foods become more and more invaluable, a safeguard for the future. It is essential, vital, that we conserve these wild varieties as a gene resource for future agricultural crops. These are our Crop Wild Relatives, ancestors of our present-day food plants, which we can still gather and eat and this book will act both as a record and as a reference for future use. There is a serious message in this volume but it is also filled with interesting recollections of how wild plants were used formerly and how we might once again enjoy them, collecting and trying the suggested recipes.

**[*The Wild Food Plants of Ireland*, Tom Curtis & Paul Whelan, Orla Kelly Publishing, Softback, 259 pages, €25, ISBN: 978-1-912328-47-5]**



***Summer Wildflowers of the Northeast, A Natural History*** is a companion volume to Carol Gracie's extremely successful earlier book, ***Spring Wildflowers of the Northeast, A Natural History***, (now reprinted and released with the present volume). Along with their intrinsic beauty and interest, their relevance to us is that we actually grow a great number of the plants described in our own gardens, something I found quite surprising and remarkable.

Both books are far, far more than mere plant listings and descriptions for there are notes on plant history, on those for whom the plant was named, on traditional practical and medicinal uses of the plants and on its natural growing conditions which act as excellent guidelines for the gardener who wishes to grow them. A significant part of every entry is given to the pollinating insects associated with each plant and describes the interactions between plant and insect, always interesting, regularly fascinating.



The quality of the photography is outstanding and the number of photographs used is unusually generous with a dozen or more used to illustrate each species in its various stages, guises and with its usual plant and insect companions. These illustrations are perfect companions to a text which is a delight to read for it is not only extraordinarily informative, bearing the hallmark of years of fieldwork, observation and research, but is also written with passion, love and enthusiasm for the subject matter – a wonderful combination! Wonderful books!

**[*Spring/Summer Wildflowers of the Northeast, A Natural History*, Carol Gracie, Princeton University Press, Oxford, 2020, Softback, 272 and 372 pages, £25, ISBN: 978-0-691-19953-5 and 978-0-691-199344]**

Both are available online from Princeton University Press

## Society Snippets

### Events in autumn and winter

At the time of going to print, it has not been possible to confirm whether any of the Society's regional lecture programmes will be able to go ahead as there is no certainty about what government restrictions will apply at any given time. The Executive Committee is considering whether lectures could be provided online if the speakers are willing. More information will be contained in the flyer in this Newsletter.

### Award for Charles Nelson

The Society for the History of Natural History awards Honorary Membership to persons who have performed signal service to the Society. They maintain a limit of ten Honorary Members and the latest to be awarded is Dr E Charles Nelson. Charles Nelson was the former horticultural taxonomist at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. He resigned in 1997 and pursued a freelance career continuing to take an interest in Irish gardening and garden plants of Irish origin. The Society is indebted to him for his work which many IGPS members use frequently as a reference. One of his most comprehensive publications, *A Heritage of Beauty*, lists over 5,000 plants of Irish origin or association. Warmest congratulations to Charles.

### Return to the Rectory Garden

Glowing clumps of crocosmia greeted our volunteers in August, when they were finally able to return to the Folk Museum having missed the primulas and daffodils completely. After five months of enforced neglect, Lorna Goldstrom reports that they are still battling the willow herb, buttercups and cleavers, but that the agapanthus bed looks lovely and there's colour everywhere. The Museum staff were able to keep the grass cut and Lorna hopes it will not take too long to get the garden back in half decent condition.

### Irish Heritage Plants.

As reported in April, we have already received a number of young plants of *Iris unguicularis* 'Kilbroney Marble' and, thanks to the kind assistance of our Honorary Member, Brian Duncan, are due to receive a small consignment of bulbs of *Narcissus* 'Foundling'. Plans are in hand to plant them in a number of safe havens to try and ensure their continued survival. It is not clear if there will be sufficient stock to make any more generally available just yet but, following the success of the online plant sale organised by the Northern region earlier this year, this method may be a way to ensure wider distribution among members.

Interestingly, the report of the repatriation of *N.* 'Foundling', a pretty little pink-cupped daffodil bred by our Honorary Member, the late Kate Reade, led to one member getting in touch to say that she had quite a number still growing in her garden. Great news. Does anyone else have it? If so, please get in touch via [igps.ireland@gmail.com](mailto:igps.ireland@gmail.com)

### Plant Heritage

The Society has joined the UK based organisation Plant Heritage as a corporate member. Plant Heritage aims to conserve cultivated plants in Britain and Ireland pointing out that, when a plant is gone, it's gone. More details in the January issue.

### John Anderson.

We are delighted to report that John Anderson, a sometime member of the Society, former head gardener at Mount Usher, and current Keeper of Garden at Windsor Great Park and the Savill Gardens, has been awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal by the RHS.

### Irish *Bergenia* Trial

Issue 141 in the spring of 2018 carried a report by Brendan Sayers of the trial of *bergenias* of Irish origin being carried out at the National Botanic Gardens. At that time he had sourced 27 plants of 11 different cultivars and he expected to add more. Brendan hopes to report to the committee in the early part next year and to have an update for this Newsletter as well, a very appropriate development for the Society's 40th anniversary year.

### Appointment

Congratulations to our member, Claire McNally on her appointment, as Head Gardener at the National Trust's Rowallane Gardens in Co Down in succession to Averil Milligan.



### Jane Powers

Hot off the presses is a new book by IGPS member, Jane Powers. *An Irish Nature Year* will be reviewed in the next issue.



Visit to Coille Garden, photo courtesy of Adrian Walsh

## Around the Regions

### Northern

#### Visit to Finnebrogue House and Coille Garden

Finnebrogue House was built in the early 1660's. The current owner, Noel Lamb, led tours of the house, generously imparting a wealth of knowledge about its history, contents and the latest renovation process which restored many of the finest rooms to their 18th century condition.



*Stachyurus chinensis* 'Joy Forever'

structure with various seasons of interest, including the illuminating variegated *Stachyurus chinensis* 'Joy Forever', *Paulownia tomentosa*, *Crinodendron patagua*, *Acer davidii*, and *Eucryphia x nymansensis* 'Nymansay'.

A beautiful golden elm acted like a beacon and guided us upwards to interlinking courtyard gardens. The house and garden are aptly named Coille meaning a wooded area. Undoubtedly it is a garden for all seasons and all tastes and, despite restrictions, thanks to our hosts we had a super day out on 1st August.

Patricia Kernohan

Coille is a one acre garden hidden away the Finnebrogue estate which was acquired in 1998 by John and Agnes Peacocke. Not only did this fulfil their desire for a bigger garden but it came with several outbuildings including a cow byre, ancient kennels and a dairy. The restored cow byre is now their home and the front stone walls are bedecked with *Clematis cirrhosa* var. *purpurascens* 'Freckles', *C. armandii* and the hardy kiwi climber *Actinidia kolomikta* with its stunning variegated leaves tipped with silver and pink. The wall opposite was clothed with the lacy foliage and pink flowers of *Indigofera heterantha* and *Cotoneaster lacteus* weighed with clusters of berries.

A meandering path, burgeoning with plants including a pink deciduous ceanothus, roses, crocosmias and heleniums, led to a sweeping lawn with mixed borders where many unusual trees and shrubs provided

### Leinster

#### Royal Hospital Kilmainham Gardens and National Memorial Gardens, Dublin

It was with a feeling of defiance (Covid and Storm Ellen) that the enthusiasts of IGPS attended two of Dublin's hidden gems on Saturday 22nd August. Both gardens are unusually formal, though for completely different reasons. The gardens at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, date from the end of the seventeenth century. Today they seek to revive the original appearance, now lost. The work was planned and beautifully carried out by conservation architect, Elizabeth Morgan, since the 1980s brought about a kindlier view of the heritage site. We were conducted around the gardens by the head gardener, Mary Condon, whose careful management is visible everywhere. It is a green garden, with various features such as immaculately clipped box hedges and topiary which will be familiar to anyone who has also visited Kilruddery House in Co. Wicklow.

Mary took us into the beautiful little lodge which is the focal point at the far end of the garden facing the Royal Hospital main building. Though this was built as a banqueting room originally, it later became the home of successive gardeners and finally was just left vacant. Some fine restoration work is now being carried out here.



Passionflower bloom and fruit at Royal Hospital Kilmainham: photo courtesy of Robert Trotter

A rampant passionflower was growing up the wall beside the lodge: the fruit were ripe — something I have not seen since I left Australia — emphasizing the exceptional warm microclimate of this walled garden.

The National Memorial Gardens, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens to commemorate the 50,000 Irish soldiers who lost their lives in the Great War, has in my experience a feeling of peace which is unique. The beautifully-placed granite buildings, the simple altar and high cross, the quiet completeness of the symmetry: all these conspire to make you feel calm and also somehow very sad. The Head Gardener, Craig Savage, told us that, in spite of the changes in fashion for roses, the Memorial Gardens as far as possible maintain the varieties and colours laid down by Lutyens himself.

Behind the roses in their formal circular beds surrounding the fountains and central ponds, Craig maintains wonderful ebullient borders of perennials: japanese anemone in full bloom, agastaches, salvias, *Romneya coulteri* and a gorgeous *Actaea* 'Brunette'

I was fascinated to hear him describing the way in which he plans the pruning of the trees so that the vista from the top to the bottom of the garden is visible, although it has well grown trees on either side. Similarly, he clearly cares for the ranks of cherry trees by the Temple, calling them by name, and telling us we must come in spring and see the blossom.

He told us that Lutyens designed it so that the fallen petals would represent the blood of the fallen men of the Somme.

Some years ago at the time of the centenary of WW1, the Society presented *Escallonia* 'C F Ball' to the Memorial Gardens to commemorate Charles Frederick Ball of the then Royal Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin who was killed at Gallipoli. This time, thanks to Stephen Butler, we were able to present *Escallonia* 'Alice' which was named in honour of his wife. She will be planted alongside her husband.

Mary Montaut



Memorial rose garden, Islandbridge: photo courtesy of Wikimedia

## Advice for contributors

### Length of articles.

If writing a report of a regional event such as a visit or lecture, please keep it short and sweet: 250 to 300 words are very suitable. Articles are always welcome; 650 or 950 words work well especially when accompanied by two or three good quality, high resolution photos. It's very helpful if you can alert the editor ahead of time about what you plan to write.

**Photos.** Take photos at as high resolution as possible. A low resolution photo from a tablet or basic smart phone will often be too fuzzy to reproduce. Attach them to an email as a separate jpeg. Do not embed them in the text.

### Newsletter conventions

**Book and magazine** names should be in *italics* with a capital letter for all the principal words e.g. *A Heritage of Beauty* and *The Irish Garden*. Do not enclose the title of the book with either single or double quotation marks.

**Scientific names of plants.** The scientific or Latin name of the plant must be in *italics*. The initial letter of the species name has a capital letter, e.g. *Nerine*, while the second does not, therefore *Nerine bowdenii*.

**The cultivar name,** which is often but not exclusively in English,

is printed in standard type and enclosed within **single quotation marks** e.g. *Nerine bowdenii* 'Alba'. If more than one is referred to, the second and subsequent ones can be shown with just a capital letter in italics for the genus, e.g. *N. undulata*.

**Common plant names.** When plants are referred to by their common names, they are in standard type rather than italics and the initial letter is **lower case** e.g. nerines, roses, hellebores and peonies. Likewise for the names of wild flowers.

**Capital letters.** Use an **initial capital** letter for proper nouns, i.e. the names of people, countries, gardens, and institutions. Thus the National Botanic Gardens, Rowallane, or Kilmacurragh; the Society when referring to the IGPS but gardening societies in general; the Chairman when referring to the person who has been elected to this post in the IGPS. Seasons of the year are in lower case e.g. spring, autumn.

**Abbreviations.** Write IGPS rather than I.G.P.S., Co Kildare rather than Co. Kildare, etc rather than etc., and Dr rather than Dr. But include a stop or point for the following two abbreviations, e.g. and i.e.

**Spaces.** Leave just **one space** at the end of a sentence.

## IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY

C/O: National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9

### Contact Us:

**Email** [igps.ireland@gmail.com](mailto:igps.ireland@gmail.com)

**Website** [www.irishgardenplantsociety.com](http://www.irishgardenplantsociety.com)

 [www.facebook.com IrishGardenPlantSociety](https://www.facebook.com/IrishGardenPlantSociety)

 <https://twitter.com/igpstweets>

### Officers:

**Chairman** Billy McCone

**Phone:** +44 7411 244 568

**Email:** [igps.ireland@gmail.com](mailto:igps.ireland@gmail.com)

**Acting Hon Sec.** Agnes Peacocke  
15 Finnabrogue Road, Downpatrick, BT30 9AA

**Email:** [igps.ireland@gmail.com](mailto:igps.ireland@gmail.com)

**Membership Secretary** Nichola Monk

5 Sixth Avenue, Baylands

Bangor BT20 5JU

**Phone:** +44 7828 434 350

**Email:** [igps.membership@gmail.com](mailto:igps.membership@gmail.com)

**Leinster Region** [igps.leinster@gmail.com](mailto:igps.leinster@gmail.com)

**Munster Region** [igps.munster@gmail.com](mailto:igps.munster@gmail.com)

**Northern Region** [igps.northern@gmail.com](mailto:igps.northern@gmail.com)

**Irish Heritage Plants** [igps.heritageplants@gmail.com](mailto:igps.heritageplants@gmail.com)

**Newsletter Editor** [igpseditor@gmail.com](mailto:igpseditor@gmail.com)

Registered Charity No. CHY 7893