



Irish Garden Plant Society

Newsletter

April 2021

Issue 152

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Copy for the September issue as soon as possible
please and no later than **20th July**

Cover: **Glenarm Castle Gardens**, Co Antrim. Photo courtesy of Connor Tilson and Glenarm Castle. Grateful thanks to our Horticultural Advisers: Stephen Butler and Brendan Sayers.

Welcome



Forty years ago, in July 1981, a group of keen gardeners and horticulturalists came together and formed a new society. An appreciation of the need for conservation and for preserving our plant heritage was a key driver. Today this is just as — if not more — important than it was four decades ago. This issue of the Newsletter reflects some of the fundamental aims of the Irish Garden Plant Society, the key things which make us a little different.

Naming and registering a new plant is a special thrill. Seamus O'Brien writes about the formal registration of four new rhododendron cultivars, two of which commemorate the Acton family who used to own Kilmacurragh.

Given that daffodil breeding has had a long and distinguished history in Ireland, north and south, what could be more appropriate to mark the 40th anniversary than by acquiring new daffodils and naming them in honour of Charles Nelson, Kilmacurragh, Birr Castle and Lismacloskey Rectory Garden? Find out more on page 25

Annes Grove in Co Cork has long been recognised as an important and distinctive garden. Having been closed to visitors for some years, it is due to open again this summer. Neil Porteous tells us about its history and what is happening now that the Office of Public Works is in charge.

Mary Forrest, our Vice Chairman, looks back to 40 years ago when, not long after her graduation, she embarked on the adventure of a lifetime having applied for and been awarded the job of cataloguing all the trees and shrubs in the major gardens and collections on the island.

Sadly the pandemic has scuppered the plans for a number of initiatives to mark the anniversary, at least for this year. And perhaps for the first time ever, there are neither reports of meetings nor lists of scheduled events in this Newsletter. But hope is definitely on the horizon and, once the governments have given a timetable for groups to meet outdoors, the regional committees will swing into action to see what can be organised.

Till we meet again, let's wish ourselves and the IGPS a happy anniversary.

Maeve

Maeve Bell
Editor

2021 AGM Announcement

Notice of the 39th Annual General Meeting of the Irish Garden Plant Society to be held via Zoom on Wednesday 26th May 2021 at 8pm.

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of AGM held on 18th May 2019
3. Matters arising (if any)
4. Chairman's report.
To note the report
5. Treasurer's report and accounts for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021
To adopt the accounts
6. Election of Officers and Committee Members
Chairman
Honorary Treasurer
Honorary Secretary
Munster representative
Leinster representative
Northern representative
7. Discussion of any other business

The current Committee and coming vacancies.

Currently the Committee consists of Billy McCone as Chairman, Mary Forrest as Vice Chairman, Agnes Peacocke as Acting Hon Sec, Pascal Lynch as Treasurer, Nichola Monk as Membership Secretary, Will Seery as Leinster representative, Margaret McAuliffe as Munster representative, together with Stephen Butler and Brid Kelleher. Billy McCone and Pascal Lynch have completed their terms of office and will stand down.

Agnes Peacocke does not wish to stand for election. Will Seery has also stood down. The position of Northern representative is currently vacant.

The Leinster regional committee has selected Breda Cummings as its representative. The Munster regional committee has selected Margaret McAuliffe as its representative. The Northern regional committee has selected Billy McCone as its representative. **Nominations are therefore sought for the following positions: Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.**

Nominations may be sent by email to igps.ireland@gmail.com or by post to IGPS, Honorary Secretary, c/o 15 Finnebrogue Road, Downpatrick, BT30 9AA to arrive no later than 8th May 2021

Organisation of the Meeting

Due to the uncertainty arising from the restrictions surrounding the Covid pandemic, which prevented the holding of last year's AGM and are still extant, the Committee have decided to hold the meeting online using Zoom. All members who have registered their email details with the Society will receive a link to join the meeting along with information on how it works. The Committee regrets that this may exclude a small number of members. We ask online members who may be aware of some who do not have access to offer to share their screens with others, subject to any regulations in operation at the time.

A Note from the Chair



At our AGM in May there will be three vacancies on the National Executive Committee where members have either exceeded their periods of service or stepped in temporarily to keep the Society running through the many difficulties thrown up by the pandemic. It is time now for others to come forward and take on the task of guiding and building the Society through the next few years. In addition, the need for new members to join the regional sub-committees and working groups is probably greater than ever.

Although committee meetings are enjoyable and only number four or five per year, time and distance can be a barrier for some when thinking of volunteering. Now, with online meetings so easy to arrange and the benefit of saving time and money, it is likely that many meetings will be held on Zoom or similar online platforms. So if time and distance have deterred you from stepping forward in the past, please do reconsider.

Talking about Zoom, it has been extremely useful in allowing us to continue to deliver talks. It is great to see large numbers of members signing on, not just from all over Ireland but even from

overseas. Thank you for the many complimentary emails and phone calls we have received; all very encouraging for those involved across the three regions — all down to great team work. Of course online is not the same as a live talk and meeting other members and friends. Well, why not both? Eventually!

I am conscious that some members do not use computers and are missing out on Zoom talks. If your only access to a computer is through a friend or relative, then please contact our Membership Secretary, Nichola (see the back cover for details), and she will arrange for them to be sent a link to any talks.

Finally, at the AGM, I say goodbye as Chair after serving my four years and a further one as temporary Chair. I plan to stay on the committee as Northern representative so I'll not have moved too far. I am very indebted to the many people who supported me, the Society, and their region, particularly over these difficult times.

Let's wish for better times ahead.

Billy McCone
Chairman

New Irish Rhododendrons

by Seamus O'Brien



While David Moore and his son, Sir Frederick Moore, are perhaps best-known for their work with orchids, another of their great interests was rhododendrons. Sir Frederick in particular was an expert on the group, supplying gardens like Headfort, Kilmacurragh, Annes Grove, Mount Usher and Rowallane with the latest introductions of George Forrest, Joseph Rock and Captain Frank Kingdon Ward through the nursery at Glasnevin.

During the mid 19th century David Moore grew and displayed rhododendrons in Richard Turner's newly-constructed curvilinear range of glasshouses and in 1860 he crossed one of Joseph Hooker's Sikkim seedlings of *Rhododendron campanulatum* with a white form of *Rhododendron arboreum* subsp. *cinnamomeum*. At the time, Moore had taken up the role of garden advisor to siblings Janet and Thomas Acton at Kilmacurragh. *Rhododendron arboreum* had grown there since the 1820s and, by the time Janet and Thomas began to transform the gardens, rhododendrons were extremely

fashionable; like many other gardeners of the time, they were gripped by 'rhododendromania'.

The former Veitchian plant hunter and Curator of the Trinity College Botanic Gardens in Ballsbridge, Frederick William Burbidge, knew the gardens well, writing of Janet's contribution in 1893:

Beside one of the main walks, there is a veritable avenue of hybrid rhododendrons 10 feet or more in height, and 12 to 15 feet in diameter, and nothing less than a painter's brush and canvas would give a notion of their light, and shade, and colour, as seen at their best in April and May; and yet fine as these specimens [are], some of them were cuttings or layers, lovingly rooted by the owner's sister only twenty years or so ago.

The avenue Burbidge refers to is of course the famous Broad Walk, and the rhododendrons are *R. 'Altaclarensis'*, a cross made in 1826 by J R Gowen (garden advisor to Lord Caernarvon on the Highclere Estate in Hampshire), by forcing a plant of *Rhododendron x superponticum* (*R. ponticum* x *R. catawbiense*) under glass, to flower in time with *Rhododendron arboreum* subsp. *cinnamomeum*. Burbidge dates the planting of the Broad Walk to the early 1870s and little did he, or the Actons for that matter, realise just how enormous Janet's rhododendrons would become in time.



Rhododendron 'Thomas Acton'

During the 1860s, David Moore supplied a seedling of his *R. campanulatum* x *R. arboreum* subsp. *cinnamomeum* cross to the Actons and had it planted to the east of the Broad Walk beside a young Prince Albert's yew, *Saxegothea conspicua*, supplied a decade previously by the Veitch nursery. It grew well, bearing all the best qualities of both parents — a tree-like habit inherited from *R. arboreum* subsp. *cinnamomeum* and a suede-like fawn indumentum and rose-pink fading to white blossoms inherited from *R. campanulatum*.

Following the death of his father in 1879, Sir Frederick Moore took up the mantle of garden adviser to the Actons, and a year later, in 1880, he informally named the seedling *Rhododendron 'Thomas Acton'*.

The name was first published in *Irish Gardening* in 1914, though the cultivar was never formally registered. Last year, 160 years after the cross was first made at Glasnevin, *Rhododendron 'Thomas Acton'* was finally registered with the Royal Horticultural Society.

Another 2020 registration with the RHS is a *Rhododendron arboreum* subsp. *cinnamomeum* x *Rhododendron ponticum* cross that is planted in at least five locations through the gardens here at Kilmacurragh. The best plants are directly behind the pond and on the east side of the Bleach Green, both forming enormous 7m mounds, smothered in April with huge trusses of 14 to 22 rose-pink blossoms,



Rhododendron 'Janet Acton'

spotted black in the upper part of their corollas. It's a spectacular plant that was admired by rhododendron expert Kenneth Cox from Glendoick when he visited a few years back and we both agreed it deserved a cultivar name.

Since she had such a love of big, blowsy rhododendrons and was responsible for the planting of Kilmacurragh's iconic Broad Walk, I decided that Janet should be commemorated in this Kilmacurragh seedling; it was formally registered with the RHS as *Rhododendron* 'Janet Acton' last year; between the first second waves of the pandemic.

It is pointless naming cultivars unless they are propagated and made available to share with other gardeners and for this reason we dispatched propagation material to Millais Nurseries in Surrey last autumn; as a result plants of both *R.* 'Janet Acton' and *R.* 'Thomas Acton' should be commercially available within the next two to three years. To quote Lady Moore, wife of Sir Frederick Moore, 'the best way to keep a plant is to give it away' and it is reassuring that both Kilmacurragh cultivars will be grown in other gardens in Britain and Ireland.



Rhododendron 'Lady Rose'

Two other Irish rhododendron cultivars were also registered with the Royal Horticultural Society last year, *Rhododendron* 'Dromana 800' and *Rhododendron* 'Lady Rose'. The latter was first published (as *R. magnificum* 'Lady Rose') in the IGPS Newsletter in May 2015; as I stated in the piece, it is believed to be a natural hybrid between *R. magnificum* and *R. protistum*, raised at Mount Stewart, Co Down, from seeds collected by Captain Frank Kingdon Ward in northern Myanmar. It is named as a compliment to Lady Rose Lauritzen, whose grandmother Edith, Lady Londonderry, sponsored several of the great plant hunters. *Rhododendron* 'Lady Rose' has been propagated by Kenneth Cox at Glendoick (by grafting scions on to *R. macabeaenum*) so this cultivar is now also commercially available.

Lastly, a new rhododendron from Co Waterford. *Rhododendron* 'Dromana 800', was raised by Michael White at Mount Congreve in 2006 when he crossed *R.* 'Award' with *R.* 'Sunbeam'. He passed on a seedling to Barbara Grubb (née Villiers-Stuart) at Dromana House, near Cappoquin, Co Waterford, in 2015, the same year Barbara and her family celebrated 800 years of continuous family ownership of the Dromana Estate (hence the cultivar name).

While the first three cultivars have tree-like habits, *R.* 'Dromana 800' is not quite as large and will appeal to those with smaller gardens. It's a lovely selection with trusses of large, frilly-edged, scented blossoms, scrambled-egg colour in their centres and fading white towards the extremities of the individual blossoms. Again, this cultivar has been propagated and plants are for sale or can be pre-ordered from Dromana House.



Rhododendron 'Dromana 800'

Beauty in Miniature

by Hester Forde

When it comes to daffodils, small is beautiful; they are easy to grow and withstand our weather better than the taller varieties. Their short stature allows them to mix with many other diminutive spring bulbs and woodlanders including *Muscari*, *Dicentra*, *Pulmonaria*, fritillary, crocuses, snowdrops, and wood anemones. They are also ideal for pots and containers. Like standard daffodils, miniatures flower at different times; there are early, mid and late bloomers so they can add colour to your garden over a long period.

My interest in daffodils started in childhood; they were the first bulbs I planted and I have loved them ever since. Here at Coosheen, our garden in Co Cork, they grow in raised beds as this is a great way of viewing them and they can be inspected closely for slug damage. I also grow some of the smaller miniatures in alpine troughs and some, but very few, in pots. Throughout the garden beds I grow many of the historic varieties which are a real favourite of mine because they are so elegant. I'm a member of the Northern Ireland Daffodil Group and try and get to see the annual winter show as often as I can. It is here that you will see these miniature beauties at their best. The displays are always spellbinding and the keen competition between growers is something to be witnessed.

Miniatures are highly sought after and it is due to the hard work of the breeders that we have these beauties

to admire. We are lucky to have Brian Duncan, who is based in Omagh, Co Tyrone, as one of the foremost show daffodil breeders. Anne Wright who owns Dryad Nursery in North Yorkshire has for the past 36 years been a leading miniature daffodil breeder in the UK.

I am a great admirer of the many daffodils bred by Alec Gray (1895-1986), an English nurseryman and horticulturalist noted for his daffodil breeding. He developed more than 110 new cultivars over 60 years and was the first person to use the *Narcissus* species of Spain to produce miniatures, his most famous introduction being *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-Tête'. Many may dismiss it as being too common but it's such a good garden plant.

Most will like a well-drained soil in full sun or light shade; sharp drainage is essential as we get such wet weather during the winter. I sit the bulbs on grit or sharp horticultural sand. If potting, add broken crock to the bottom of the pot and then a layer of grit followed by a potting mix of two thirds John Innes number 3 which is loam-based with one third grit or sharp sand. This is the minimum amount of grit or sharp sand; you could use a 50% 50% mix. Place the bulbs on this, then cover with the mix, top off with grit and don't forget to label. All bulbs need feeding with a high potash fertiliser such as tomato feed or seaweed otherwise they deteriorate. Add when planting and again after flowering.

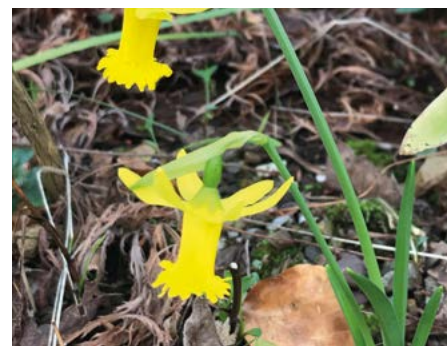
Some miniature gems for the garden.



1. *Narcissus* 'Cedric Morris': a dwarf trumpet daffodil to 25cm. in height with lemon-yellow flowers up to 4cm in width, the petals narrow, pointed and separate and the trumpet narrow with a flared and notched mouth. Blooms appear as early as Christmas week. I have grown it for many years having had it recommended by Dermot O'Neill.



2. *N. 'Xit'*: a classic flower bred by Alec Gray, glistening white with a green eye. A personal favourite and very long lived. 20cm



3. *N. Fringella* Group: bred by Brian Duncan, a *N. asturiensis* x *N. cyclamineus* cross, having a wide spreading "fringe" at the mouth of the corona. It's a little beauty to grow. Around 10cm



4. *N. marvieri*: a lovely small species with golden yellow flowers and slightly larger than *N. rupicola*.



5. *N. Minicycla* Group. This is an old cross between *N. asturiensis* and *N. cyclamineus* registered before the First World War. This is best in the garden and I grow it in a raised bed where it has thrived for the last twenty years. A humus rich soil in light shade is what it desires. 10cm.



6. *N. cyclamineus*: a delightful petite daffodil and nothing delights me more than to see it growing in drifts. Vivid yellow petals are swept back to reveal its long flower tube — it is cyclamen-like in appearance, hence its name. It likes moist but well drained, slightly acidic soil and dappled shade. 12cm.



7. *N. 'Wee Dote'*: bred by Brian Duncan, it opens bicoloured with a yellow corona and matures to white. It is a consistent show winner. 20 cm.



8. *N. 'Candlepower'*: a stunning Alec Gray miniature bred in 1975. Starts off a lemon yellow and fades to creamy white. Likes a cool position. 15cm.

Annes Grove Past and Present

by Neil Porteous

A mile north of Castletownroche in north Co Cork lies an unassuming gem of a garden. The landscape of Annes Grove is an ancient one comprising two facing, sinuous limestone bluffs eroded over the millennia by the Awbeg River, a tributary of the Blackwater. The landscape first came to prominence in the late eighteenth century after Anne Aldworth, a tenant, ornamented the valley with picturesque planting, walks and bridges. These embellishments were renewed and maintained into the late nineteenth century. The garden's creator, Richard Grove Annesley (1879-1966), inherited in 1891 at the age of 12 and, by 1902, at the age of 23 began augmenting and enhancing the existing ornamental landscape into the garden we enjoy today.

I first visited Annes Grove as a student in the early 1980s and I was struck by the treasures on offer: rhododendrons raised from seed collected by Frank Kingdon Ward (1885-1958), trees and shrubs I had never seen before such as *Maytenus boaria* from Chile or *Myrica faya* from Macaronesia all jumbled together amongst naturalized exotics such as *Hoheria* and *Acer cappadocicum*, the Himalayan Maple. Until 2010 the garden was open to the public in a charmingly low-key way. However, the planting had become increasingly naturalised and relaxed and many invasive plants from trees to water weeds had gained a toehold. In that year, the garden was offered to the Irish state. It took a few years to iron out the legal details but, in 2016, the Office of Public Works (OPW) took over Annes Grove and began reversing the decline and restoring the house and buildings of the small demesne.

I had visited Annes Grove in 2008 but, when I saw it again in the spring of 2018, the process of deterioration was well advanced. Trees had been blown over, crashing down and shattering their neighbours, many paths were utterly impenetrable and yet there were treasures still surviving. In late March, the huge light pink flowers of *Magnolia campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata*, were breath-taking while self-sown *Photinia davidiana* with their fluorescent pink/red berries were an added highlight.



River Garden c.1935

Many of the rhododendrons had not survived the lack of attention as the soil on top of the limestone bluffs was thin and, while just acidic, not acidic enough. In the past these plants had been top-dressed every few years by the farm workers, who stripped peat from the bog to dress the root-plates. Rhododendrons in the soft Irish climate are not nearly as long-lived as they would be in their native Himalaya and eighty years is about the norm without regular top-dressing. Nonetheless, there were treasures: *Rhododendron 'Cornubia'*, an early flowering hybrid, which was bred at Penjerrick in Cornwall before 1911 and is the first to flower in early March along with some fine 'homemade' hybrids such as *R. campanulatum x arboreum*.

Hugh Carrigan, the OPW area supervisor, had made huge in-roads into clearing up the decay by late spring that year; this was when

I joined him and the sole gardener and began planning to re-plant. Working closely with the donor, Patrick Grove Annesley, it soon became apparent that what was required was not so much a restoration but a reinvigoration so the garden would be in good heart for the next hundred years. This required paring back the self-sown invaders and retaining only what was worthy. This prompted the question: "Could the design and layout be improved since we have this one opportunity?" If the answer was yes, then we improved the feature.

Richard Grove Annesley grew the tree fern, *Dicksonia antarctica*, at Annes Grove in his day and today there is a new collection of tree ferns in the old Smithy and a restored cesspit where they can be protected over winter until established. In 1956 he had acquired the 'Wilson 50', a selection of Japanese azaleas from



Rhododendron Garden 2019

RHS Wisley; only 38 are available today but cuttings of these have been sought from Wisley and Exbury Gardens. The informal herbaceous planting of the Central Border in the Walled Garden was always a late summer *tour de force* and was constantly re-invented. Its current incarnation is a scented succession of blue, white and silver.

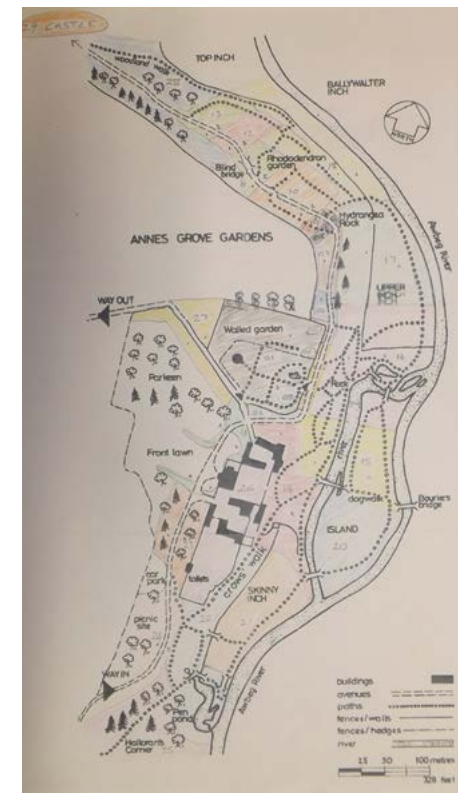


Central Border newly planted

The garden at Annes Grove is about 30 acres. It has, naturally, what every garden maker strives for – variety including the relaxed formality in the Walled Garden, the River Garden with its charming bridges and waterside walks, a large and varied Rhododendron Garden, and the precipitous Woodland Garden resplendent with magnolias, camellias, bamboos and many rare and exotic treasures. The planting is full and complex. Self-sown opportunists are allowed if they add to the composition and where trees,

shrubs, climbers, herbaceous and bulbous plants are near neighbours.

Plants grow quickly at Annes Grove in the humid, sheltered river valley. Many of the newer plantings have made rapid headway and are now becoming imposing. Pandemic permitting, the garden should be open for guided tours later this year and, in future years, fully open to the public. Annes Grove has retained its unique magic and will continue to be a source of delight for many more years.



Gardening in Dry Shade

by Philip Hollwey

I remember Verney Naylor (Chair of the IGPS1985-87) talking about her lovely garden in Sandymount, Dublin and commenting on how she had started with an open, south-facing site and, after about twenty years of planting, was now gardening mostly in dry shade. I planted a grove of birch twenty years ago and have a similar problem. Birch are particularly difficult to plant around as they are shallow rooted. In my garden, the ground beneath the trees has become progressively drier as the trees have developed. Pruning the lower branches and mulching the soil have helped to bring in light and conserve moisture, but the plant choice for this challenging location is limited. Planting well is part of the solution. I dig large planting holes, incorporate plenty of compost and keep young plants watered in their first growing season. Then, if you've chosen the right plant and your luck is in, the plant grows away under its own steam.



Lamium orvala

What is the right plant? For me it has been a process of trial and error and I've witnessed the slow demise of a small nursery of failures! The survivors include shrubs such as skimmia, mahonia, holly, hydrangeas and *Astelia chathamica*. This last has silvery spears which provide a lovely accent in shade and stand out well in low light. Herbaceous perennials and ground cover include *Helleborus foetidus* (which doesn't stink and seeds about gently) and *Lamium orvala* together with its white form *L. orvala* 'Album'. Both these dead nettles both have lovely flowers in early summer. There are geraniums for every position and the shade-tolerant include the underrated *Geranium nodosum* and *Geranium phaeum*, both also seeding around in a mannerly fashion.



Brunnera 'Jack Frost'

For stand-out leaves I find *Brunnera* 'Jack Frost' hard to beat with *Epimedium x versicolor* 'Sulphureum' adding variety together with *Chrysosplenium macrophyllum* and *Astrantia* 'Star of Billion'. What a dreadful name for a nice plant! Dotted through the planting are ferns including *Polystichum* and *Dryopteris* in their varieties, one of my favourites being *Polystichum polyblepharum*. This has glossy fronds that shine in the deepest of shady places. The Pheasant Grass, *Anemanthele lessoniana* (formerly *Stipa arundinacea*), mixes well with ferns and, while it can be a pest in many parts of the garden, it will grow in the most inhospitable root-ridden areas of dry shade. I grow it with *Alchemilla mollis* and *Lamium galeobdolon*, unstoppable in many places but useful here where I let them sort themselves out in terms of who dominates the space. I just want it covered!

I have limited the bulbs and corms to *Cyclamen coum*, *Cyclamen hederifolium* and *Muscari* in the parts I still cultivate while bluebells are happily colonising the rest of the area, fighting it out with that *Lamium galeobdolon*.

I am not looking for a lot of colour. The contrast of the white birch bark and the various green tones and textures creates an area of calm in contrast to busier parts of the garden. Where there are flowers, they are often in cream, white and silver, all of which show well in low light.

Not every challenge is an opportunity but at least there are options.

[This is an extended version of an item in the joint RHSI/IGPS ebulletin in spring 2020.]



Grow an Irish Plant

by Maeve Bell, Carmel Duignan, Brendan Sayers & Paddy Tobin

Meconopsis 'Slieve Donard'



The last time rhododendrons were in fashion perhaps thirty years or so ago, I was taken to see a woodland garden with many fine specimens but what actually bowled me over was the sight of a swathe of glorious blue Himalayan poppies weaving between them. I fell in love with *Meconopsis* 'Slieve Donard' on the spot.

Although this hybrid was originally raised in Scotland, it carries the name of the famous Slieve Donard Nursery in Newcastle, Co Down and was closely associated with it. Like all Himalayan poppies, it enjoys cool, damp conditions and grows best in acidic soil in semi-shade. As a result it tends to thrive the further north one

goes. Growing to about one metre tall, the hairy buds open in May to reveal sumptuous, slightly crumpled petals ranging from a deep sky blue to almost indigo at the base. It is infertile and has to be propagated by division; this, however, has the great advantage of ensuring one gets the true plant. It has the reputation of being a short-lived perennial but this may be because it likes to be divided on a regular basis. Philip Wood, a lovely man who was Manager and a Director of the Nursery, advised that it should be divided in early spring when the emerging leaves were no bigger than a mouse's ear. That works for me. **MB**

Escallonia 'Donard White'



Escallonia are much loved as garden plants, producing blooms over a long period of the summer. They are also noted for their resilience to winds and are popular as wind breaks and shelter belts in coastal areas around the island. It is no surprise to learn that *A Heritage of Beauty* lists 29 cultivars of Irish origin, more than half of them coming to us from the famous Donard Nursery in Co Down.

Most Irish cultivars of *Escallonia* have flowers in various shades of pink and red; a nice exception is *Escallonia* 'Donard White'. The flowers are held in tight clusters, coloured pink in bud, opening to white on the inside. Flowering begins around the summer solstice and continues for a month or more.

Escallonia make ideal plants for milder gardens. Although capable of growing into large shrubs over 2.5m tall, they can easily be kept

in shape with regular pruning following flowering. Their summer flowering season is an added bonus but, when not in flower, most have glossy foliage that makes a good background to more colourful garden inhabitants.

Propagation is relatively easy and can be undertaken throughout much of the year. Early summer cuttings of approximately 12.5 cm long can be rooted under a low polythene cover. The same method can be used in July and August by nodal, basal or heel cuttings; hardwood cuttings up to 30 cm long can be inserted outdoors in October and November in milder areas. **BS**

Pulmonaria 'Blake's Silver'



Pulmonarias are given to self-seeding, regularly producing inferior or indifferent forms, but our gardens are occasionally blessed with something worth keeping and

growing. *Pulmonaria* 'Blake's Silver' is one of those good seedlings and arose in the garden of June Blake at Tinode, Kilbride, Co Wicklow. Following commercial propagation, it is widely available in the trade and is now grown in many Irish gardens.

The broad, lush silver foliage is the notable feature of this low-growing herbaceous perennial plant giving it an ornamental presence in the garden whether in flower or not. The flowers are those of the old and traditional lungworts, an attractive mixture of pink and blue. It spreads with ease and regular division allows one to bulk up its numbers in the garden.

Lungworts can be propagated with ease by dividing larger plants and replanting immediately. They will also self-seed in the garden but the resultant seedlings will almost certainly differ from the parent plant — so, if you wish to keep your valued plant of 'Blake's Silver' true to type, it is worth removing the spent flower spikes as the flowers fade. **PT**

***Clematis* 'Glasnevin Dusk'**



This beautiful clematis came from seed collected by Seamus O'Brien,

Head Gardener at the National Botanic Gardens Kilmacurragh, when he was in Tibet in the late 1990s.

Clematis tibetana subsp. *vernayi* usually has yellow or orange flowers and the best known variety is *Clematis* 'Orange Peel'. Seamus himself wrote that the plants were in seed when he visited so he had not seen the spectacular black flowers until one of his seedlings subsequently bloomed. The flower opens as a small, almost black, dark ball and slowly spreads out into a hanging bell shape with four thick sepals of a dark purple colour. These sepals expand further finally creating a star-shaped flower that eventually produces fine, silky seed heads.

It is a vigorous plant that flowers from late June into September and needs to be cut back each winter. It roots easily from inter-nodal cuttings especially if these cuttings are taken in early summer. It is not readily available but is mentioned in The Plant Finder and is listed in two Irish nurseries — Ardcarne in Co Roscommon and Deelish in Co Cork — although the best place to source this plant might very well be an IGPS plant sale. It could probably also be obtained by sweet talking a grower into offering propagation material or, better still, good rooted cuttings. **CD**



Clematis 'Glasnevin Dusk' by Susan Sex: reproduction by kind permission of the artist.

Around Ireland with a Notebook

by Mary Forrest

In May 1979, a notice in the newspapers caught my attention: 'An Taisce — the National Trust for Ireland — intends to appoint a person to catalogue the plant collections of gardens of international importance'. My main interest while a horticulture student in the National Botanic Gardens and at UCD had been plant identification, so I was delighted when my application was successful.

The Heritage Gardens Committee of An Taisce had received funding from the Heritage Trust to carry out a three (later four) year project to prepare an inventory of all woody plants in private and public gardens, to be based at the National Botanic Gardens under the supervision of then Director, the late Aidan Brady, and then Horticultural Taxonomist, Dr Charles Nelson. While a project to catalogue trees and plants was underway in selected National Trust

properties in the UK, the scope of this project was unique to Ireland.

Twenty private gardens with significant plant collections were to be catalogued and the catalogues then combined with those of publicly-owned collections to create an inventory of woody plants, i.e. trees and shrubs, in outdoor cultivation in Ireland. The private gardens were Annes Grove in Co Cork; Mulroy in Co Donegal; Ballywalter Park, Guincho at Helen's Bay, Mount Stewart, and Rowallane all in Co Down; Kilbogget in Killiney and Fernhill in Co Dublin; Derreen, Dunloe Castle and Rossdohan in Co Kerry; Kildangan, Co Kildare; Abbeyleix in Co Laois; Headfort in Kells, Co Meath; Birr Castle in Co Offaly; Ardsallagh, in Fethard, Co Tipperary; Mount Congreve in Co Waterford; Dargle Cottage, Mount Usher, and Powerscourt in Co Wicklow.

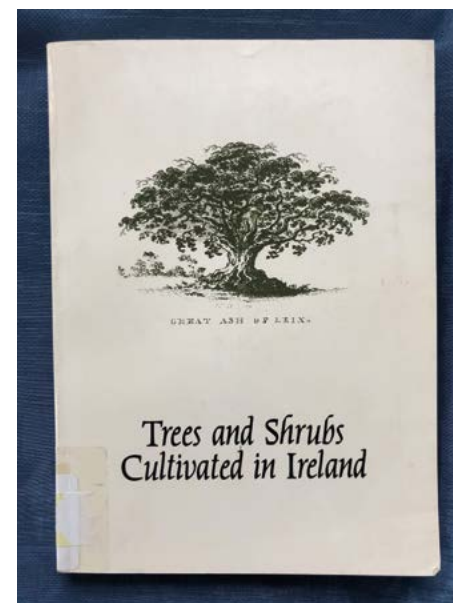


Magnolias at Mount Congreve: photo courtesy of Paddy Tobin

Preparing each garden's catalogue fell into two parts: data collection in the garden and clerical work in Glasnevin. Before visiting, I noted published information on the garden and records of trees and shrubs, for example, Alan Mitchell, the dendrologist, had measured many conifers and broadleaved trees. Then I did a recce to meet the owner or head gardener, tour the garden, and decide the route to follow. Each garden was divided into sections, usually bounded by physical features, then numbered and named, usually with existing names for the areas of the garden. The field work entailed attaching a metal tag with a unique number and a two-letter code for the garden to the trees and shrubs in each section. I recorded the tag number and species name in a notebook and where necessary took samples for later identification. The time taken to record a garden varied from two days to several weeks in the case of Mount Congreve.

For each numbered tree or shrub, I completed a record card based on those then used in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh: it recorded the scientific name, common name, family, tag and section number, the date of planting when known, source, and any published references to the plant. Some gardens such as Mount Usher and Birr Castle already had extensive planting records which proved very useful. Plant identification was often a challenge but, armed with Bean's *Trees and Shrubs Cultivated in the British Isles*

when in the garden and the resources of the Library and staff of the National Botanic Gardens when in Glasnevin, few trees and shrubs were left unidentified. Using the completed cards, a numerical and alphabetical catalogue was prepared for each collection and given to the owner.



The inventory was completed when the catalogues of gardens in private ownership were amalgamated with the catalogues supplied by managers of properties in public ownership: these were Castlewellan Arboretum in Co Down; Fota and Inacullin in Co Cork; Talbot Botanic Gardens in Malahide, Co Dublin; Killarney National Park in Co Kerry; J F Kennedy Arboretum in Co Wexford; Avondale Forest Park and Kilmacurragh in Co Wicklow. Glenveagh in Co Donegal was added

later. The inventory was then edited by Charles Nelson and published by An Taisce in 1985 as *Trees and Shrubs Cultivated in Ireland*. The record cards were deposited in the National Botanic Gardens followed later by my original notebooks and other notes relating to each of the gardens.

Figures from this four-year project show that 17,500 plants representing 7,000 different species, subspecies, varieties and cultivars were recorded. While these numbers are impressive, I also had the thrill of seeing memorable plants in some stunning settings. Some still come to mind: *Populus lasiocarpa*, the Chinese necklace tree, in the parkland at Birr Castle; *Davidia involucreata*, the handkerchief tree, and *Drimys winteri*, winter's bark, standing side by side and in flower at Rowallane; groves of *Magnolia campbelli* in flower at Mount Congreve; and the sweep of shapes and colours of trees around the lake at Mount Stewart and the river Vartry at Mount Usher.



The Vartry River at Mount Usher: photo courtesy of Paddy Tobin

Trees and shrubs grown from seed of known wild origin always have a special caché, e.g. at Birr Castle, a walnut *Juglans cathayensis* and a large-leaved lime *Tilia henryana* were grown from seed supplied by Lushan Arboretum and Botanical Garden, Jiangxi, China. Rhododendrons from seed collected by Frank Kingdon Ward and George Forrest in China are in cultivation respectively at Annes Grove and Fernhill, Rowallane and Headfort.

Some plants caught me out! *Sorbus reducta* and *Betula potaninii* are both shrubs not trees as one might expect from rowan and birch, as are *Syringa pinnatifolia*, a lilac with small white flowers and pinnate foliage, and not least *Aesculus parviflora*, a shrubby horse chestnut which flowers in August.



Paeonia 'Anne Rosse': photo courtesy of Brendan Sayers

Given that the IGPS was formed while this inventory was underway, Irish cultivars in these collections had a special resonance. I recorded the following in their respective gardens: *Eucryphia x nymansensis* 'Mount Usher', *Viburnum plicatum* 'Rowallane' and *Chaenomeles* 'Rowallane', *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Guincho Purple', and *Paeonia* 'Anne Rosse' at Birr Castle.

Over the years *Trees and Shrubs Cultivated in Ireland* has been consulted by nurserymen, botanists, gardeners and plant enthusiasts to locate the whereabouts of often uncommon plants in cultivation. Some trees, impressive forty years ago, remain so today, such as the *Pinus montezumae* planted in Mount Usher in 1909, while the majestic conifers — including *Picea*

orientalis, *Abies* and *Sequoiadendron giganteum* — planted in 1913 to form a 22-yard-wide ride at Headfort now line a golf fairway. Comparing collections then and now, what was uncommon such as *Olea europaea*, the olive, is now commonplace. New collections have been established, such as Tullynally, Co Westmeath, and Oakfield Park, Co Donegal. The greatest change has come in cataloguing with digital devices recording a plant's name with its GPS coordinates, the location, image and so on. Armed with such equipment, has the time come to re-catalogue Ireland's plant collections?



Chaenomeles 'Rowallane': photo courtesy of Claire McNally

40th Anniversary Daffodils

by Billy McCone

Last summer the Committee learned that daffodil breeder and Honorary Member, Brian Duncan, was planning to sell some of his unregistered daffodil seedlings. He kindly offered the Society first pick from some 50 unnamed bulbs. We purchased four selections and, in recognition of our 40th anniversary and their contribution to the Society, offered to name the daffodils for Charles Nelson, Birr Castle, Lismacloskey Rectory Garden and the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh.

1. *Narcissus* 'Charles Nelson'. Charles Nelson was a founding member and first Chairman of the IGPS. A horticultural taxonomist, he is an author and has been awarded the prestigious Veitch Memorial Medal by the RHS. Charles selected a *N. 'Chinchilla'* x '*Bridal Chorus*' cross described as "a pure white daffodil with ethereal appeal that will gladden in the garden".

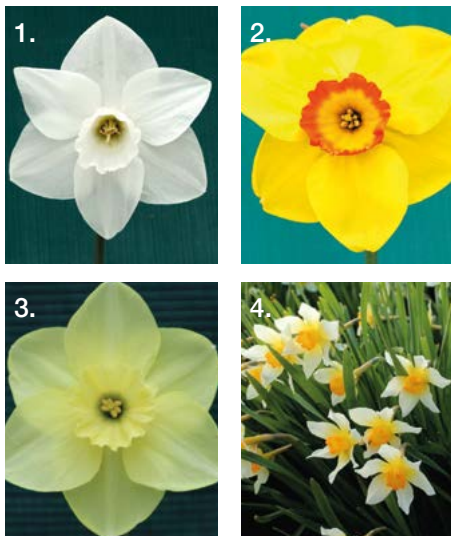
2. *N. 'Birr Castle'*. Long time supporters of the IGPS, Lord and Lady Rosse of Birr Castle, County Offaly selected a cross with unnamed parents described as "A very cheeky looking, medium sized flower with bright yellow petals and a cup with clearly defined red rim".

3. *N. 'Lismacloskey'* was chosen in recognition of the volunteers who, since 1987, have created and tended the Lismacloskey Rectory Garden at the Ulster Folk Museum, County

Down. Their choice was a *N. 'Vendell'* x '*Chortle*' cross described as "a luminous lemon colour that will light up the garden. Top exhibition quality".

4. *N. 'Kilmacurragh'*. Since its foundation, the Society has had a close association with the National Botanic Gardens and it has been the official address. With Glasnevin already having a daffodil named for it, we thought to complement it with one for Kilmacurragh: the *N. asturiensis* x '*poeticus*' cross is a vigorous 20cm miniature ideal for naturalising in a rock garden.

All are now registered with The International Daffodil Register and will be listed in due course. All photographs courtesy of Brian Duncan.



Salvaging a Dream

by Tim Guilbride

When we moved to Rush Hill, a former vicarage in rural Roscommon, in 2002, it was to restore the house and land to something close to their original form, not to modernise them in any way. We reused everything that could be saved, but there are always projects which need extra pieces, and we learnt very quickly that if you want to replicate the proportions and character of an old property, you need to use old, second-hand items. I became a regular customer at salvage yards, occasionally buying from dealers in England and even on the Continent. I vividly remember trying to explain to a customs official at Dublin airport why I had three cast-iron gully covers in my hand luggage after a trip to Lyons. Like most owners in our position, before long we became addicted to the patina of age and the intangible character of salvaged stone, iron and wood.



In re-establishing the formal gardens at Rush Hill, my partner and I were guided by the character of the house, the layout of the site, and what little we knew about the original gardens.

Rush Hill is a 'high vernacular' building over which no architect ever sharpened his pencil. More than a farmhouse but less than a mansion, it asks to be treated respectfully but not grandly. The house is approached down a dead-straight avenue nearly 400 metres long, and the garden is in line with the facade so a formal, rectilinear plan suggested itself. The original house was built c. 1700, but substantially restored after a fire in March 1900, so a neo-Georgian compartmental scheme was a logical choice. The site is reasonably level but it billowed up and down rather



erratically, so my digger-driving neighbour disciplined it into three levels which became rectangular lawns framed by a network of yew hedges.

Three levels mean at least three sets of steps, so off I went to Enniskillen to my most regular salvage supplier. Ray McKenzie found me 14 sandstone steps, like stone railway sleepers, to group into flights between the different lawns. Taking our inspiration from the Lutyens-designed garden at Heywood, in Co Laois, we framed the steps with dwarf piers built of lime-mortared rubble-stone, topped with shallow limestone caps, and created a cross-vista halfway up the main axis to draw the eye out into the surrounding fields.

I visited Ray for suitable eye-catchers for each boundary and found a massive plinth that was originally part of Killadeas House, in Co Fermanagh. When double-digging soon after we started on the garden, I had found broken sections of an enormous Handyside urn, but to buy an antique one now was out of the question, so I crowned the plinth with a composition stone urn from Chilstone. The other eye-catcher has just been completed this year: a rainwater cistern constructed from a septic tank, perched above the ha-ha on a salvaged sandstone doorstep, cloaked in lime-mortared rubble-stone, topped with salvaged sandstone mouldings and crowned with a limestone urn from Victor

Mee's auction at the Bishop's Palace near Cavan. I bought its gorgeous Victorian tap via Ebay.



The centrepiece of the formal gardens is the sundial, which sits at the crossing of the main axis and the cross axis. A friend arrived for lunch about a decade ago with, instead of the usual bottle of wine, an eighteenth-century slate and iron sundial plate, calibrated for almost exactly our position. It took nine years to find a suitable column: it was at the sale of Joristown House in Co Meath. The surrounding flags were originally edged in *Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Fota Blue', but the plants wouldn't stand up to the cold winds and had to be replaced with prostrate yew. At last, however, the whole plan has come to life, and Rush Hill once again has gardens to be proud of.

Salvage is a diminishing resource, and we have to be responsible in how and where we acquire it. If you 'take' bits and pieces that appear abandoned, you are destroying our joint heritage, risk prosecution, and will damage your karma. Salvage yards are an invaluable and legitimate source, but are finding it increasingly difficult to find stock. In Northern Ireland, I visited excellent yards at Campsie, Coleraine, Newtownards, Enniskillen, and Wilson's near Hillsborough, while in the Republic I bought from architectural salvage dealers in Co Offaly, in Kilkenny and from several in Dublin. Check on-line for those nearest you, but you will usually need to find your own shipper. Country auctions are becoming a richer source for interesting pieces with a history, especially for heavy items like stone gully-covers, gates and gate-piers. Our leading country auctioneers will often have great pieces, particularly when they are selling a complete estate. If you are prepared to ship things internationally (it is far cheaper than you might think), there is a dedicated salvage website www.salvoweb.com on which most of the good dealers throughout Europe advertise their selection, and some private vendors.

Hard landscaping works best when it reflects the character of the house and location. If you live in a vernacular house like Rush



Hill, materials and items that draw from traditional Irish artefacts look right, but it is important to avoid the tendency to 'trade up' and buy items which are too grand or 'reproduction'. Like most people, I like my stone to look ancient, so everything gets a coating of Greek yoghurt to speed up the aging process — even new sandstone flags will start to grow lichen after a couple of months. If your house is modern, you will find there is a wealth of high-quality stonework, composite and metalwork available from recent buildings, which will enhance your garden in an exciting, innovative way. There are far fewer customers for modern-looking pieces, so you can get better prices in many cases.

Gertrude Jekyll may have felt that, when creating a garden, one should resist the instincts of 'the bargain basement' but in an age where budgets are not limitless and skilled artisans few and far between, one has to look for beautiful things where one may!

The Joy of Gardening

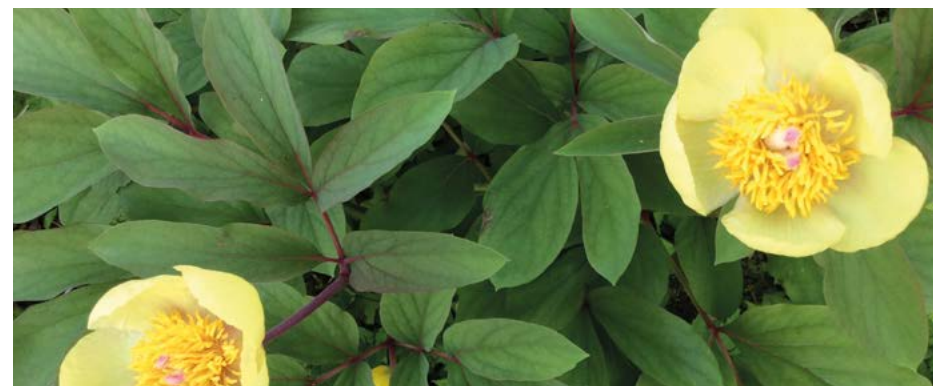
by Caro Skyrme

Twenty years ago we came from Scotland to Broadward Hall in the Welsh Marches. An archery lawn with giant sequoia trees can be seen for miles around and these enormous old trees are one of the notable features of the gardens. My husband started planting a new arboretum while I gradually got to grips with a much-neglected garden. 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.

I designed twin borders as a mirror image of each other either side of the wide, central path which leads to the fountain pond. This central path continues to the greenhouse by the south wall, beyond which an orchard was planted in 2008 containing quince, medlar, damson, apples, bullace and other heritage fruit trees, a living memorial to my parents.

Every morning, my eye falls on some newly emerged plant or freshly opened flower and my spirits are lifted. From early March, as the snowdrops fade, great ribbons of daffodils crowd together along the hazel walk and by the sides of the main carriage drive. Varieties, too numerous to name and many unknown, brighten the damp, often misty, early spring mornings, with frosts which fall into the Clun Valley as late as mid-April.

In May it is the peonies; of the more than twenty different varieties of peony we have here, the earliest to bloom is usually *Paeonia rockii* in the sheltered bed by the drawing room window. Now over four feet tall, with large white blooms opening to reveal deep crimson purple spots at the base of the petals, it branches out to a good four feet spread. This is closely followed by the bright yellow tree peony, *P. ludlowii* flourishing on both sides of the walled garden's central herbaceous borders. Every spring, *Paeonia mlokosewitschii* (officially known as *P. daurica* subsp. *mlokosewitschii* these days but widely referred to as Molly the Witch), brings great excitement, it blooms briefly in the relatively warm environment of this garden before dropping its soft yellow single petals.



Paeonia mlokosewitschii

In mid-May and early June the next stars of the show are wonderful tall bearded irises, the statuesque *Iris* 'Queen of the Night' and 'Hello Darkness'. These velvety, dark purple irises and clumps of various, more delicate Siberian iris tower above *P. 'Garden Treasure'*, with its fragrant, semi-double, primrose-yellow flowers opening to reveal raspberry pink flares at the base of each petal. Beneath this, *Scabiosa* 'Irish Perpetual Flowering' with lilac blue heads cascades toward the edge of the path. A little later, *Aconitum* 'Newry Blue' rises nearer the spine of the border, carrying the blue theme through summer.

At the back of the border, tall, spindly stems of *Knautia macedonica* bear crimson flowers which attract bees and butterflies. The only problem with this red scabious is that it tends to flop over and bury anything within two feet of it; we now know to place a sturdy, steadying, metal ring to support the stems when it

first begins to emerge in late March. No such problems arise with the pale yellow *Cephalaria gigantea*, the giant scabious, which soars over six feet tall in several of our herbaceous borders. It seeds prolifically and needs to be controlled; always greatly admired, we have great demand for divisions or the seed in the autumn from our plant stall.

Sisyrinchium striatum provides care-free clumps of stiff stems of small, creamy yellow flowers, which never flop about or need staking. Another benefit of this plant is that it will tolerate both a fairly dry, sunny, south-facing area and the semi-shaded, damp, border along the main lawn. It enhances beautifully the deep blue of the Siberian irises, *I. 'Silver Edge'* and 'Lady of the Night'. Carrying on the blue theme along the edge of the border, large cushions of *Geranium* 'Johnson's Blue' fall gracefully on to the path. Later the yellow, frothy plumes of *Alchemilla mollis* break up the march



of this blue ribbon along the path, while *Hosta* 'Aurea Marginata', edged with golden yellow, comes early in the season to carry the theme throughout the summer.

Plants are one of the most welcome gifts friends and family can give me. My late friend and art tutor, Betty Charlton, gave me a division of the magnificent pink poppies from her garden in Howth, Co Dublin. In the long damp border at the bottom of the lawn, a deep pink candelabra primula was given me by a friend from her Welsh garden where it did not do well. Here it thrives in the damp, semi-shaded border and increases every year. I love to have labels which tell visitors what the plants are and, in the case of gifts, who gave them.

Thirty years ago we had many more Irish plants, some carried from my parent's garden, some from our own walled garden near Hillsborough, our first married home in the early 1970s. Other plants purchased from the wonderful nursery at Seaford created by the late Patrick and his wife Anthea Forde were carried in the boot of the car on the ferry to our then home in Scotland, where I hope they still grow and increase happily.

Keeping the garden up to scratch for openings is a great deal of hard work but sharing the garden with many hundreds of visitors is a rewarding experience. Knowing how much can be raised for worthy causes by the generosity of visitors is massively uplifting. The additional pleasure of meeting other gardeners and enjoying stimulating conversations, sharing experiences, knowledge and horticultural tips, is one of life's greatest joys. No matter whether one tends a window box or a tiny green space in a town or city, a pocket-handkerchief sized allotment, or a vast acreage surrounding an historic house, we all have something to contribute to the conversation. Visitors from all over the world find their way to our gardens and enthusiastic and knowledgeable Irish gardeners come again and again. We hope that we can welcome new visitors from across the Irish Sea this year, perhaps we can also exchange seeds and seedlings to bring a little more of the land of my birth to this beautiful south Shropshire valley.

Worth a Read

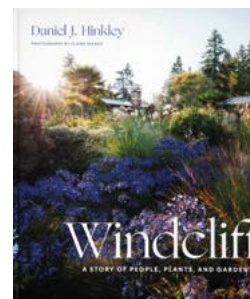
by Paddy Tobin

New Nordic Gardens, Annika Zetterman, Thames & Hudson



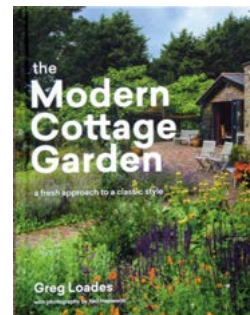
Elegance, simplicity, sustainability, functionality and grace are at the centre of Scandinavian design. In recent years, Nordic gardens have undergone major transformations but continue to look to Scandinavian design heritage as a strength. Today's garden developers, while influenced by the past, are pushing the boundaries of modern design in innovative and interesting ways. This book will give you a wonderful insight into these trends and may well influence your own space!

Windcliff, A Story of People, Plants and Gardens, Daniel J. Hinkley, Timber Press

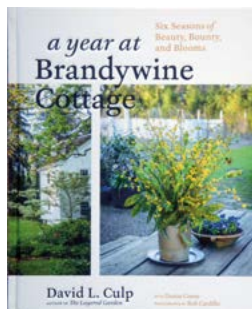


Dan Hinkley is a leading light in the world of gardening, a plant explorer and collector, and the introducer of a vast array of the most interesting, unusual and beautiful of plants. His book, *The Explorer's Garden, Rare and Unusual Perennials*, published in 1999, became the handbook of choice for those in search for the latest and the greatest for their gardens. His garden at Heronswood became world famous and this book describes the development of his new garden, Windcliff.

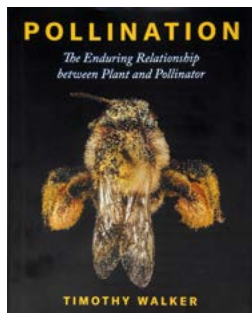
The Modern Cottage Garden, Greg Loades, Timber Press



If you were starting out in gardening you would be well served by this book. It could very well be considered the essential guidebook for the beginner and for anybody gardening in a small space who wished to have plant interest throughout the year. Greg Loades gardens in a very small space but his ambitions for a beautiful garden are not at all hampered by this and his suggestions and example will guide readers to achieve similar results on their home patch.

A Year at Brandywine Cottage, David Culp, Timber Press

David Culp's writing transports his readers, even those on this side of the Atlantic, to an enjoyment of his garden in Pennsylvania, USA. It is a gardener's garden and a gardener's book, written for fellow gardeners who will understand so very well the happiness, dreams, successes, trials and errors, and great fun and pleasure which go into the making of a garden. I have enjoyed this book very much, a wonderful distraction in the middle of a miserable winter, a transportation to a garden on the other side of the Atlantic which holds so very much of beauty and interest for us.

Pollination, The Enduring Relationship between Plant and Pollinator, Timothy Walker, Princeton University Press

It may be stated simply that pollination is essential to life on earth, but the interaction between plant and pollinator is one of the most extraordinary and interesting areas of biology. Here it is described in the most fascinating, insightful and informative manner.

This book will appeal to those who have an interest in nature, plants, pollinators, as well as to the amateur enthusiast, home gardeners, naturalists and horticulturalists. The final chapters emphasise the importance of pollinators to people, to our well being, our food supplies, and the global economy.

A fuller review of each book is available on the Society's blog page – go to the website, <https://irishgardenplantsociety.com/>, and click on "Blog" <https://irishgardenplantsociety.com/category/society-blog/>

Membership Renewals

by Nichola Monk



Zoom lectures. The Zoom lectures in particular prompted many to renew their membership!

There are 164 membership payments due this May. I hope that many of you will sign up for Direct Debit. The alternative is to pay by cheque.

Last year we introduced payments by annual Direct Debit which has been a great success and proved to be a great advantage under lockdown; 58% of the year's payments, a total of 220 members, are now by Direct Debit: this was the first year so it can only get better.

The total membership at the end of February was 525 with two months to go until May 1st. With new members joining most weeks, we might almost reach the previous year's total of 558 which, under the severe restrictions of the past year, is remarkable. This is in huge part due to the efforts of Maeve Bell, Branka Gaberscik, Joanna Loanne, Billy McCone and members of the National Executive who, between them, have produced an extra Newsletter, numerous ebuletins and some wonderful

If you have an email address and your membership is due this May, you will received an email from igps.membership@gmail.com inviting you to sign up for a Direct Debit mandate.

Online Direct Debits can be started at any time of the year and will recur in the same month each year and are our preferred method of payment. Payments by cheque or Postal Order will continue as previously and are due by May 1st each year in either Euros or Sterling and should be posted to:

Nichola Monk, Membership Secretary, 5 Sixth Avenue, Baylands, Bangor, BT20 5JU

Subscription Rates: Pay your subscription by annual Direct Debit and save 10%

Euro payments

Membership	Annual Subscription	Annual Direct Debit
One Adult	€30	€27
Joint for 2 members	€42	€38
Full time Student	€15.50	€14

Sterling payments

Membership	Annual Subscription	Annual Direct
Debit		
One Adult	£25	£23
Joint for 2 members	£36	£32
Full time Student	£13	£12

Please get in touch with me by email or telephone if you want any help or have any queries. See the outside back cover for my contact details.

Not yet a member? Please join via our website:
<https://irishgardenplantsociety.com/online-payments/>



***Crocosmia* 'Comet' from Bressingham**

Does this plant hold the answer to the mystery of Malahide?

The Mystery of Crocosmia 'Malahide'

by Nicola and Peter Milligan

In the September 2020 issue (No 150) we wrote about Irish *Crocosmia* and concerning C. 'Malahide' we wrote: *One Irish cultivar has created an air of 'mystery' — perhaps 'mystery' is too strong a term, but read on and see what you think.* Who could have expected the degree of interest and comment this paragraph created? This gives a very brief summary of the work undertaken to try to clarify if C. 'Malahide' is a 'true' name and the source of this cultivar.

The problem starts with the fact that two crocosmia are listed with the name 'Comet' — one bred by Davison in Norfolk in 1909 and one obtained by Fred Nutty as C. *masoniorum* and subsequently named 'Comet' by Gary Dunlop pre-1980. The second of these cultivars has several names attached and it is this overabundance of additional names that have added to the mystery of 'Malahide' creating a problem in terms of trying to find out where and when the names appeared and who was responsible for the naming process.

This search for the identity of 'Malahide' turned into something akin to a plot worthy of an Agatha Christie or a Colin Dexter with possible cultivars disappearing and reappearing in the horticultural literature. We even had a red herring

thrown into the mix when a cultivar listed as C. 'Malahide Castle Red' made an appearance.

We were ably supported by a number of people who came forward with information or delved into the horticultural archives to provide helpful facts. Anne James supplied information based on the excellent records that were maintained at Malahide Castle which indicated that no cultivar with the name 'Malahide' was grown there. Stephen Butler spent a huge amount of time tracking through nursery lists to follow the appearance and disappearance of these cultivars over time. Brendan Sayers talked to his contacts in the horticultural world to see if they could throw any light on the origin of C. 'Malahide'.

All of this has resulted in some of the names being eliminated as either inappropriate or errors. As a final stage we are undertaking a flowering trial by obtaining new corms of C. 'Comet' Knutty, and C. 'Malahide', growing them and comparing the foliage and flowers. Hopefully this will cast some light on the mysterious 'Malahide'.

[The full article from which this summary comes is available on the IGPS website.]

Melanophylla dianeae

A new species of rainforest tree from Madagascar

by Seamus O'Brien

Recently discovered *Melanophylla dianeae*, a new, critically endangered rainforest tree from Madagascar, has been named for Dublin woman, Diane Wyse Jackson, for her 'tireless efforts' for the Missouri Botanical Gardens and the Garden's Madagascar Program.

I first met Diane Wyse Jackson at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in the summer of 2006. At the time I was completing Kew's International Diploma in Botanic Gardens Management and Diane was based with Botanic Gardens Conservation International who had an office just off Kew Green.

Diane was one of our tutors, her area was computers, particularly plant databases and record keeping for large plant collections; her husband Peter was by then Director of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, a post he held till his appointment as President of the Missouri Botanical Gardens in St Louis in 2010.

The Missouri Gardens have a major focus on the conservation of the flora of Madagascar and in 2016 staff from the garden collected material in a remnant fragment of highly threatened humid forest in east-central Madagascar. This included herbarium specimens from a previously unknown tree reduced to just five adults growing in an area heavily impacted by forest clearing

for slash-and-burn cultivation. Several uncounted immature individuals were also found in the same small area of unprotected forest; attempts are being made to propagate the tree by air-layering and seeds have also been collected.



It is a fitting honour that Diane, who is based between St Louis and her second home at Dunlavin, West Wicklow, has been commemorated in such a way, given her work at Botanic Gardens Conservation International and the Missouri Botanical Garden.

A number of Irish women have had plants named in their honour over the years: for example, *Quercus edithiae* from China and Vietnam bears the name of Lady Edith Blake, and *Rhododendron cufeanum* from Myanmar was named for its discoverer Lady Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe following its blossoming at Glasnevin in the early 20th century. *Melanophylla dianeae* is the latest discovery to bear the name of an Irish woman.

Meet our Contributors

Carmel Duignan is a gardening writer and a keen plantswoman whose Dublin garden is full of plants of all kinds from the rare and exotic to the ordinary and useful.

Hester Forde is a plantsperson, lecturer and garden writer with an insatiable appetite for plants, she is well known for her part in organizing the annual Co Carlow Snowdrop Gala.

Mary Forrest has recently retired as Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture at UCD; she is a former Chairman of the Society and is currently its Vice Chair.

Tim Guilbride, designer and former academic, lives in rural Co Roscommon where he is actively involved in several heritage and restoration projects.

Philip Hollwey lives in North Wexford and, having retired early from teaching, is a garden designer and Chairman of the RHSI; he is also a member of IGPS.

Nicola and Peter Milligan garden at Mount Stewart on the shores of Strangford Lough in Co Down. Both are past members of the IGPS Northern Committee.

Neil Porteous is a plantsman and historic gardens consultant; he was formerly the National Trust Gardens Advisor and Head Gardener at Mount Stewart, Co Down.

Seamus O'Brien manages the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh, Co Wicklow; he serves on two important committees of the Royal Horticultural Society.

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.

Caro Skyrme now lives in Shropshire but grew up in Northern Ireland; she and her husband open their garden at Broadward Hall for the National Garden 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.

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