



**ALPINE GARDEN
SOCIETY Dublin Group**



NEWSLETTER NO. 46 – Summer 2006

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Front cover illustration is of *Primula auricula* var *albocincta*, Tremalzo, N. Italy. Photo: G. D. Sevastopulo. Back cover illustration is of Liam Byrne's plant of *Lewisia tweedyi* 'Rosea' at the Ulster group Show at Greenmount in April. Photo: Billy Moore.

EDITORIAL

The Dublin Group of the Alpine Garden Society offers members excellent value for money. The annual fee is just €12, which covers ten high quality talks from local and overseas speakers; two 'local' shows with practical demonstrations of cultivation techniques where helpful advice is provided freely by the more experienced growers; the main show in spring which includes an artistic section, and has been described as "the premier flower show in Ireland"; and plant sales and visits to superb gardens and nurseries. Members also have access at some extra cost to the annual lunch in February at the Royal St. George Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire, to the highly acclaimed, and highly enjoyable weekend each autumn in Termonfeckin; and to trips such as the visit to North Wales in 2005 and the visit to four excellent Cork gardens this year. Meetings are informal and friendly and the Group provides a warm welcome to new members. There is an extensive library from which members can borrow books on many aspects of gardening at no cost. We have a new website which will get better and better and is a very useful resource to those of our members (the majority) who have access to the Internet.

The Group is not just another garden club. We are interested in the growing, propagation and conservation of alpine, rock garden and woodland plants, small hardy herbaceous plants, hardy and half-hardy bulbs, hardy ferns and small shrubs. Anyone can grow these diminutive beauties and with the trend towards smaller plots they are ideal for the modern garden - they can even be grown in a window box. There is a myth about that alpiners are very difficult to grow. Some are, but the majority, provided their simple requirements are met are quite easy. What we offer members is the opportunity to acquire a hobby that will give them joy and satisfaction for the rest of their lives, as many of us have discovered.

In the light of these facts it is difficult to understand why our membership numbers have been declining in recent years. The problem is often shrugged off by pointing out that other societies, including our parent, are experiencing the same phenomenon. This is defeatist: we need to show some missionary zeal and make a real effort to attract new members and to retain existing ones. The Committee should give formal responsibility for publicity to one individual who should have a plan to exploit all opportunities to bring the Group and its aims and activities to the attention of the general public and especially to those who already have an interest in gardening. But the job cannot be left solely to the Committee. Each member of the Group should do his or her best to encourage friends or relatives to look at what membership has to offer. At the end of this year membership numbers are likely to be about the same as at the end of 2005. With a little effort by us all, 2007 could be the year in which recent trends are reversed and the healthy growth in numbers experienced in the Group's early years is resumed.

NEWS & VIEWS

New Editor

Valerie Keegan has edited the last three newsletters but having agreed to take on the duties of Chairman on top of the onerous responsibilities of Show Secretary, she felt unable to continue and I was asked by the Committee to be her replacement. Valerie has made significant improvements to the newsletter and I hope at least to maintain the standard she has set.

I believe the newsletter should reflect the views of the members as far as possible, so I am introducing a miscellaneous column that will, hopefully, include contributions from members which can be either anonymous, or attributed, as the contributor wishes. What I have in mind is a modest version of the Alpine Anthology which appears in each edition of the Bulletin. For this, my first edition, most of the content of the column will have to be my own but, in future, I hope most of the items will come from you. The sort of contributions I have in mind would include any plant related items, such as an account of a favourite plant or a cultivation tip; suggestions about fixtures or about newsletter content; complaints; indeed anything that you think might be of interest to other members of the Group or that might further our aims. Contributions should be fairly short—if you have more to say perhaps you could contribute an article. Material can be sent to me by post or email. Please remember that the newsletter is for you. It should be a platform where members' views, controversial or otherwise, can be aired so I appeal to you all to help me fill the pages of future editions with material that will be relevant to all readers.

Michael Meagher

Michael stepped down from the Chair at the AGM in January having spent three years in the role. During his term of office he endeared himself to AGS members north and south with his warm, friendly and good-humoured approach to the job. Nothing was too much for Michael – if something needed to be done and there were no volunteers he would tackle it. For example, at one stage we had no treasurer so Michael stepped in and did an excellent job. While Chairman, Michael had to deal with a great tragedy in his life as a result of the illness and finally the loss of his beloved Gráinne. We are all indebted to him for his efforts on our behalf during those three years and he is due our sincere thanks for his contribution. But he hasn't gone away you know.

A Message from our New Chairman

In January I took over the job as Chairman from Michael Meagher – a very hard act to follow! Michael was an excellent Chairman and very good at getting everyone involved. I just hope that I will keep up the good work and hopefully add something of my own to the job.

Our programme for 2007 is currently being organised. We want to provide lectures/workshops/visits to suit all tastes, so please do let us know what you as members would like to see in the programme.

I would like to see our membership increasing, but this is not just up to me. It depends on everyone – try to encourage a friend to join during the coming year. Good luck with the gardening and enjoy the rest of the summer!

Val.

2006 so Far

In future editions I hope to include a brief account of each lecture to be written by different members. As all the lectures were over before I was asked to do this job I can

provide in this issue little more than a record of the fact that the talks actually happened. Apologies to all the speakers for necessarily being so brief.

After the AGM in January **George Sevastopulo** and I talked about our visit to the Prague Alpine Show and to some Prague gardens in 2005. On 9 February **Jens Nielsen** gave us a fascinating talk on some rock plants of NW Yunnan. After the usual excellent lunch in the Royal St. George Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire, kindly arranged by **Joan Carvill**, we had an entertaining and interesting series of reminiscences about people and plants from **Pat Crossley** of the Ulster Group, standing in for **David Lapsley**, who will now give his talk after next year's lunch. On 4 March the local show in Sandymount was enjoyed by all who attended. **Rod Leeds**, a former President of the AGS gave a terrific lecture on bulbs on 16 March. On 18 April **Ron McBeath** kept up the standard with his talk on plants for the alpine house, rock garden and peat bed. A good indication of Ron's standing as a lecturer and plantsman was the presence at the talk of five members of the Ulster Group who had travelled from as far north as Ballymena especially to hear Ron speak. **Michael Higgins** entertained and enlightened us with an excellent talk on his year in Sydney Botanic Gardens. Our main Show was held on 8 April and the Ulster Group's on 29 April. An account of both Shows is given below as are reports of our visits to four gardens in Cork on 27/28 May, to **Carmel Duignan's** garden on 11 June and to the garden of **Philip and Bridget Jacob** on 2 July.

Fixtures to the Year-end

Our fixtures for the remainder of the year are at the end of the newsletter and also on the fixture card. I think it is a superb programme.

Our first speaker is **John Grimshaw** who will tell us about plants from Africa that we can grow in our gardens. John is a great enthusiast and the quality of his work is very evident from that wonderful article on snowdrops that he wrote for the Feb./March issue of *Garden Heaven*. This is his first engagement in Dublin and presents a unique opportunity for us all to hear from this highly influential figure in the plant world.

The Autumn Show will be accompanied by a practical demonstration on easy plants for showing. There will also be a clinic on plant problems so bring your questions, your problem plant, or a sample for diagnosis by an expert. The Show provides an opportunity to gain experience of showing and staging in a more informal setting than at the main Show, and there is always plenty of help and advice available from more experienced exhibitors. The practical demonstrations are always very popular and no matter how much you know about the subject you will be sure to learn something new or at least to see things from another perspective.

Keith Lever's talk is a must. He is an alpine grower *par excellence*, as those of us who visited his nursery on our trip to North Wales last year can testify.

Rosemary Cox, a noted botanical artist, will talk on 'Alpines through an Artist's Eye' and on the following day she will give a workshop to a very limited number of participants – see the booking leaflet enclosed in the mail out.

Our 22nd Alpine Weekend promises to at least equal its predecessors. The lineup of speakers is impressive and full details are included in the programme and booking form. If you have been before you know what to expect – if you haven't, you don't know what you're missing. I will certainly get my booking form off early because places are limited.

We will finish the year on a seasonal note with 'A Christmas Miscellany' to be delivered by the redoubtable **Dr Sevastopulo** with his usual *panache* followed by seasonal refreshments. Not to be missed.

Dr Molly Sanderson Memorial Lecture

The lecturer this year is none other than Roy Lancaster O.B.E, V.M.H., F.D.I.Hort. Roy will be speaking in Belfast at the Drama Theatre, Stranmillis University College on Saturday, 21 October at 2.30 p.m. and the title of his talk is *A Plantsman's Garden – Plants, People, Places* Admission is by ticket only. Tickets are Stg£10 and are available from Mrs Margaret Glynn, 2, Old Galgorm Road, Ballymena, BT42 1AL. Early booking is advised.

Cabinteely Show

Our main show this year on 8 April was earlier than usual. Val writes:

The cold weather before our Annual Show had me very worried about the numbers of plants likely to be exhibited at Cabinteely. In reality our fears came to nothing and we actually had more plants than last year with the Show looking absolutely stunning! On the evening before the Show the team swung into action like any well-oiled machine. Everyone seemed to know what to do and did it. The same could be said for clearing up afterwards. Very well done and thank you.

The weather was disappointing and a smaller number of visitors came, though they seemed to enjoy the Show and many stayed for George's demonstration. He was in his element and held his audience in the palm of his hand. Thank you to all who produced food and those who have started to enter a few plants! Until next year.

Books

AnneMarie is missing the following books from our library. They are not marked out to anybody but some members may have borrowed them and forgotten to return them. If you have one of these books please return it to AnneMarie as soon as you can. There is no overdue charge.

Cerfton	<i>The Genus Geranium</i>
Cribb	<i>The Genus Pleione</i>
Ground	<i>Ferns</i>
Halde	<i>Gentiana</i>
Handel-Mazetti	<i>Botanical Pioneer in South China</i>
Kohlam	<i>Gentians</i>
Lowe	<i>Alpines in Raised Beds, Troughs and Tufa</i>

On the subject of books we gardeners are faced each year with a bewildering number of publications on our hobby, some of which are essential, but many of which are of the coffee table variety and are pure dross. This and future newsletters will include reviews of important new books by members with a particular interest in the subject matter. In this issue **Anna Nolan**, whose collection of hellebores is in the first rank, reviews a new book on the genus and **George Sevastopulo** reviews new books on daphnes and tulips.

Our New Website

Jamie Chambers writes:

Since the beginning of the year the Dublin AGS has had a website of its own, devoted to the activities of the Local Group. My hopes are that this will be a helpful resource for members, and a useful way of publicizing what we do and attracting new members. Try typing in 'alpine garden dublin' to the Google search engine and you'll find we come top of the list.

When you go into the site, the first thing you see is our Home Page, with up-to-date news and a reminder about the next lecture or event. Each month we exhibit a new flower of the season, with photograph and information provided by one of the members. On the left is a menu of options to choose from, which takes you to different pages on the site.

The Programme will always have the latest dates and locations for forthcoming activities.

Information about the Shows and Workshops is given in Main Show and Local Shows. Thinking of exhibiting and can't remember the classes and requirements? Look here.

The Library page lists all the books in our collection that you can borrow. AnneMarie looks after the library so ask her (or send me an email) if there's a book you'd like.

About Us is mainly for newcomers to the site. Most readers of this newsletter will be familiar with our activities, but it's important to tell new members - and possible recruits.

Having excited prospective members, Contact is about getting in touch. If you want to know who's in charge, look here.

Finally, Links is a list of other websites of use to alpine gardeners. Just click on the name of the site to go there. If you know of other interesting sites please let me know and I'll add them.

As I'm only an amateur webmaster there are still a few teething problems with the site. On my computer it looks fine, but yours may be different and if something doesn't look right I'd appreciate it if you'd let me know by sending me an email. For the moment, if you view it with the browser window maximized (i.e. set to the full size of the screen) it will look best.

I will be delighted to get your feedback on the site, and to hear any suggestions you might have about things to add to it. This is a resource for you and it will be improved by your ideas. You can reach me - and anyone on the committee - by emailing to agsinfo@eircom.net.

So go to your computer right now and take a look at: www.alpinegardensociety.ie

IGPS Chairman

At their AGM in June our member **Petronilla Martin** (Nilla) was elected to the Chair of the **Irish Garden Plant Society** replacing another of our members, **Dr Dermot Kehoe**, who had just completed a very successful two years as Chairman. Congratulations to them both and we wish Nilla every success in her term of office.

Nilla has been a member of our group for many years and has always been a solid supporter. She writes on page 12 of her experience of the Group. As well as for her serious contributions to both societies Nilla will always be remembered for her inspired portrayal of *Ranunculus ficaria* 'Brazen Hussy' in a game of charades at Termonfeckin a few years ago.

Pots and Labels

In the early years of the Group the Committee made bulk purchases of rigid square black plastic pots and made them available to members at a reasonable price. It has been decided to reintroduce this service and we hope to offer 7.5 cm and 9cm pots at as low a price as possible. We will also have white plastic labels. We are having some difficulties in sourcing these items as we go to press but will let you know as soon as we have them.

Deceased Members

Sadly, we have lost three members to the grim reaper this year.

Neil Shortall a member of long standing died in February. Neil was a major contributor to the plant sale in the early years.

Liz Cowap, a more recent recruit and an enthusiastic plants woman passed away in April.

Dr Ita Logan died in June. **Joan Carvill** who was a close friend writes:

*Dr Ita Logan, who died in June, was a long-standing member of our group. When she moved from her fine large garden in Kilkenny, she continued to grow alpines in two small gardens. Many were grown from seed or cuttings and she cultivated the largest and best *Paeonia cambessedesii* I have ever seen. Her love of mountainous regions stemmed from her young days as a mountaineer, conquering Mont. Blanc when it was not so easy as to-day. Just before her sudden death, she was making preparations and looking forward to a trip to the French Alps with a botanizing and bird watching group - not bad for a lady in her eighties. She will be greatly missed by those close to her.*

Our sincere condolences go to the relatives and friends of all three.

The Shows - 2006

The **Dublin Show** was held at an earlier date than usual and followed the coldest winter and spring for many years. Indeed some northern exhibitors started their early morning journey on snow-covered roads.

Despite the late season the benches were covered with a wide range of interesting and colourful plants.

Dionysias are rarely seen at Irish shows usually being well past their best by mid-April. So it was nice to see an excellent pot of *D. aretioides* 'Phyllis Carter' (Billy Moore) amongst the award plants.

Trillium rivale in its various colour forms was very popular and there were a number of entries. This *Trillium* when grown from seed reaches flowering in 2/3 years, however a fine 36cm pan raised from seed sown in 1993 was much admired.

While no plant on show was deemed to have reached Farrer medal standard a long-tom pot of that most elegant of Erythroniums, *E. helena* (Pat & George Gordon), was judged best plant in show. It just needed a few warm days to encourage its remaining buds to open and it would surely have qualified for the premier award.

In the foliage classes a very fine form of *Astelia nivicola* (Billy Moore) was much admired by exhibitors & the Show visitors. It had an attractive bronze upper surface to its leaves unlike the type plant which is usually pale green. This mat forming New Zealander is well established in several Irish gardens where it enjoys well drained conditions but with adequate moisture during the growing season.

Exhibiting at AGS shows is not all about rare and difficult plants. In the Open Section a very well flowered pan of *Viola labradorica* (Hugh Mc Alister) caught the judges' eyes, the leaves being almost completely hidden by the violet/blue flowers. This North American violet can be an aggressive spreader in the rock-garden but it makes an attractive exhibition plant and seems to enjoy being confined to a pot.

A well supported artistic section had many very welcome entries from England, however on this occasion the home entries more than held their own.

H. C. A. McBride

Traditionally, the two Irish Shows are held on three weeks apart in April, and alternate. This year it was the turn of the **Ulster Show** to fill the later slot and was held on 29th April. In a late spring this undoubtedly benefited what proved to be a full and colourful Show. The Greenmount Horticultural College is situated in the depths of the Antrim countryside, and forms an excellent venue with a good hall facing the college cafeteria which stayed open throughout. There were six trade stands, and it was evident that the many visitors were attracted by these facilities, and the beautiful grounds of the college, as well as the Show. I was most impressed to find some very attractive plantings in the gardens provided by the AGS Ulster Group, and conspicuously labeled as such. This is an idea that could well be copied elsewhere, and may have helped to persuade a number of new members to join on the day.

The Irish Shows are evenly patronized from throughout the island, and the Show was delighted to welcome back Dubliner **Liam Byrne** after a year's furlough. His 36 entries brought a shower of silverware, including the Cooke Cup for the most points in the open section, the Garratt Cup for three pans bulbous plants, and the Festival of Britain Trophy for three pans rock plants at 19 cm or less. He also won a Certificate of Merit for a very well-flowered *Ranunculus parnassifolius*, and I particularly enjoyed his *Pleione aurita* with vivid pink flowers, although it did not win its class.

Despite competition from a large and evenly-flowered *Daphne petraea* 'grandiflora' (Susan Tindall) which was given a Certificate, there was little doubt amongst the judges that the premier award should go to a magnificent *Paeonia cambessedesii*, no less than 13 of the 12 cm flowers in perfect condition, resting on the foliage in an excitingly compact form. The exhibitor, **Gordon Toner** lives not far from the Show Hall and was gaining his first Farrer Medal, as well as his Gold Merit Medal on the day, giving much pleasure all round. Amongst other prizes the Alpines '96 award for the best Australasian plant went to **Mr and Mrs George Gordon** for *Leucopodon* (formerly *Cyathodes*) *colensoi*. We expect good New Zealand plants in Ireland, and I also enjoyed **Billy Moore's** dwarf golden form of *Astelia nivicola*. The Betty Hill Trophy for the best plant in section B was won by **Mary McAlister** for *Vaccinium nummularium*, the C H Hammer trophy for the best plant in section C went to **Mark Smyth** for *Daphne* 'SDR 2', a hybrid of David Rankin's raising, and the Phebe Anderson Trophy for three plants from seed was won by **Harold McBride**.

There were two special exhibits, both of primulas, and both of which were given a Silver Award. **Glasnevin National Botanic Garden** showed Auriculas mounted in a black 'theatre', and **Joe Kennedy** presented his new Irish primrose crosses. Glasnevin exhibited some very unusual plants in 16 classes, including a 40 cm black spaceship labelled *Amorphophallus riveri*. This 'dwarf' relative of the titan arum, seen at Kew, smells less repugnant than its massive cousin, and apparently tolerates culture under cold glass, at least in Dublin. Their visit was also rewarded by winning the SRGC Quaich for the best plant in a 19 cm or smaller pan. The well-flowered plant was a good deal more creditable than the label '*Iris japonica*'.

As always the art exhibits were of a high quality, and I particularly enjoyed the South American photographs by **Liam McCaughey** whose shots of *Oxalis erythrorhiza*, *Oreopolus glacialis* and *Ranunculus semiverticillatus* cunningly melded foreground and background, both as a result of good technique, and in one example, digital cunning. The photographic judge **Dr Gordon Gray** had pleaded a year off so that he as a founder member could attend the 50th anniversary meet to celebrate the founding of his rowing

club at the celebrated Castlewella regatta. His replacement as Show judge had to cry off at short notice and Gordon nobly drove the 50 miles from the regatta to the Show and back, to return in time for the celebratory lunch.

John Richards

Lewisia tweedyi

The North American genus *Lewisia* is very popular among alpine gardeners. Many species are showy, compact and suitable for growing in rock walls and in pots in the alpine house. The uncrowned king of the genus, and for me the gem, is *L. tweedyi*, a species that must at all times be grown under glass. The flowers vary in colour from pure white to apricot and pale rose suffused with yellow. It is easy to understand why it is so popular with its large shapely flowers over rosettes of succulent green leaves: it is really a splendid sight in flower. *Alba* is a warm ivory white form and *Rosea* a pale salmon pink both found in the wild. The plant is named after its discoverer Frank Tweedy (1854 – 1937), an engineer and amateur botanist.

Cultivation

L. tweedyi is easy enough to grow, but to grow it to show standard requires special care and attention. The compost I use is one part John Innes no. 3, two parts peat and two parts granite grit. Young plants should be potted on at least twice in the first year, thereafter annually. If under-potted they will flower early and never reach their full potential. From September onwards there will be a natural withering of leaves. Do not remove the withered leaves as this encourages a proliferation of offsets. Some experts state that plants are at their best with a single large rosette. I agree with this but if you are showing, and wish to see a red sticker for your exhibit, allow three to five well-spaced peripheral offsets, having rubbed off any unwanted ones while they are very small. In spring, once the plants are growing well, remove all withered leaves.

L. tweedyi grows on rocky slopes at about three thousand feet in the Wenatchee Mountains in Washington State and also in the Walathian Mountains of British Columbia. In spring it is saturated with water from the melting snows and in the summer is sun-baked. Some experts advocate plenty of water in spring and none in summer or winter. I don't do this as I believe plants in pots are in an alien environment. I keep the plants just moist during this crucial period. Under no circumstances should the pots be saturated with water; if this occurs the carrot-like root will rot.

Propagation

If possible sow seed in autumn in a 50:50 peat and gritty sand mix and cover them with a layer of grit. Seed sown in spring can take up to a year to germinate whereas autumn sown seed usually germinates that winter. Vegetative propagation is best carried out in spring. The offsets should be cut off cleanly close to the *caudex* (the root above the soil), inserted in sharp sand, watered and kept in a closed atmosphere for a few weeks. Sometimes for no apparent reason healthy offsets, even though rooted, may collapse.

The rewards of growing this wonderful plant are well worth the small effort required. Do give it a try.

Liam Byrne.

Talbot Botanic Gardens

Auricula collection

The Talbot Botanic Gardens are renowned for their southern hemisphere collection but from spring to early summer it is the little glasshouse known as the 'Ivy House' that generates the most excitement when the Auriculas come into full flower. This little house is a riot of colour and wonderful scents. The glasshouse was first constructed in the early 1900's for Lady Isobel Talbot. It is a freestanding 'A' line house 20' by 12' with side benching and a central two tier display bench ideal for showing off the auriculas.

Primula auricula is a native of the European Alps. In cultivation auriculas are subdivided into three groups - alpine, border and show. It is the latter group that has the farina on its flowers and leaves excepting the green edged flowers. Nearly every colour is represented from the brown of 'Brownie' to the green and grey of 'Green Frill' not forgetting the deep blue of 'Old Irish Blue'.

I have always had a special love for the auriculas, but building up the collection was very slow in the early stages. However, to provide a reasonable display, seed was collected from a number of the plants and germinated. From this batch of seedlings the best were chosen and used to augment the collection. Then as a result of a chance meeting one day with **Rose Sevastopulo** outside the Botanic Gardens, who mentioned that she was looking for a home for a number of auricula varieties – what a windfall - the collection took off and the house became devoted entirely to these plants. In recent years I have been exchanging cultivars with Ina Howe from Holland so that now nearly all of our plants are named varieties.

The plants are easy to grow provided they are given cool conditions in summer and, for the show varieties, protection from rain. As we are not in a position to place the plants outdoors for the summer, the house is shaded with white fleece, which is pinned to the rafters on the inside. This shading still allows good light levels which are necessary considering that these primulas are plants of high altitudes. The door and the ventilators are left open from early spring until the weather gets very cold, except of course in very windy weather. This house has additional ventilators under the benches, which aids air circulation. During very cold damp weather in winter a fan is used to ensure a buoyant atmosphere.

The plants are repotted in early spring in between the summer bedding production and the compost used is our normal potting compost of one part sharp granite sand and three parts peat moss with the long term Osmocote fertilizer and lime added. No pesticides are used against wine weevil. Control of this pest is by constant vigilance and any plants looking poorly are checked immediately. Any found contaminated are repotted in fresh compost. To-date this method has worked very well. During the repotting, offshoots are removed and potted separately to provide exchange material or where necessary to increase the numbers. The aim eventually is to have three pots of each variety placed in alphabetical order.

If desired plants are readily raised from seed, but obviously they will not be true to name. As soon as the seed is ripe it is collected and using a 50:50 peat/sand mix, omitting the fertilizer, the seed is scattered on the surface of the pot, pressed down with a good smooth tamper and then placed in a cool frame. The seeds are not covered with compost, as they are tiny. All pots are watered from underneath by placing in a soak tray. When the cotyledons are well developed, they are pricked off into trays using the bedding mix of peat and sand and a short-term fertilizer and grown on until they are ready to be planted in their final clay pots. We have been lucky recently to obtain clay

pots of the size required with the old-fashioned roll edge. In time all the plants will be in the same size pot, which will greatly enhance the overall design.

Choosing just a few varieties is difficult, but some of the more popular are: 'Brownie', which has a brown outer edge, white bank and yellow centre; 'Roweana' - light lilac outer edge shading to a deeper colour with a white centre; 'Old Irish Blue' - deep blue with a white centre; 'Sirius' - most unusual shades with greenish yellow outer ring, deep maroon inner edge and yellow centre; 'Helen Ruane' - lime green edge shading to yellow with white centre and dusted liberally with Farina; and 'Tosca' which has a deep green edge with maroon ring, white bank and yellow/green centre.

In mid-summer when the flowers are faded, this little house holds it own, as trained up the rafters are plants of *Rhodochiton sanguineum*. This is very easy from seed which is germinated in early January and grown on in the heated glasshouse until March/April when the young plants are placed *in situ* and then trained up the wire running along the rafters. The flowers of a deep maroon colour are pendulous but when they fade the calyx of deep red remains while the seed is forming, the whole making a wonderful display throughout the summer. We sometimes forget that it is the simple easy plants that often provide the greatest satisfaction.

Anne James

My AGS Experience

Many years ago I was on an outing to visit **Dr Keith Lamb's** garden in Clara. It was my first such outing with a horticultural society. The garden was really wonderful. Walking up the avenue I saw these fascinating but unfamiliar plants which I later learned were Trilliums. I learned more as we came to Dr Lamb's raised beds where the array of many little plants from the mountains of the world with their wonderful colour fascinated me - they included an amazing amount of different Primulas. As I sat on the side of one of these raised beds a most charming lady who introduced herself as **Margaret Orsi** spoke to me about the plants and asked me if I would like to meet "hill people", i.e., people who were interested in growing mountain flowers. Of course I said yes. We exchanged phone numbers and sometime later Margaret 'phoned me and suggested that I send £4 to Mr Billy Moore with my name and address, and invited me to attend the next meeting in Wesley House, which was then the venue for the Society's talks. So began my membership of the Alpine Garden Society.

There have been many highlights over the years but two in particular stand out, the first being my participation in the annual AGS weekend in Termonfeckin. The friendly atmosphere, the fascinating lectures and the great fun got me hooked. I went home with my little notebook with **Peggy Parker's** lovely painting of an Iris on the cover, lovely cards, pottery, books and of course lots of little plants. Troughs were new to me but I was now armed with all the information necessary regarding soil, grit, placement of rocks etc. The first thing the next weekend was to rescue the old sink from the bottom of the garden and plant it up – it is still white, but the plants grew beautifully that first year. I had become an alpine grower.

The second highlight was my first visit to the AGS Show in Cabinteely. I joined the long queue and eventually the doors opened. I bought a few plants at the members' sales table and thought I would have a cup of coffee before I returned to DNS (de north side). I proceeded into the hall and was literally stunned by the brilliant display of fantastic plants. At that time I was aware of the beauties of Chelsea but never expected to see such

perfection in Dublin. It was at this Show that the alpine bug really bit and over the years I have really tried hard to emulate my great friends but have failed; nevertheless I will keep on trying.

The Alpine Garden Society has many facets. The Weekend in November is always interesting and great fun. Our show in Cabinteely and the Ulster Group show in Greenmount are fascinating and a great challenge. Through the lectures we travel the world, see great plants in their native habitats, meet the people of other lands and learn about their culture and architecture, climb all the various mountain ranges, go down the valleys and gorges and walk the meadows, bogs and forests. We do all this through the great lectures from the hardy few who go to the four corners of the world to record the plants and their habitats and gather seed which eventually we, the members of the AGS, get through the seed lists each year. Through my membership I have met lots of nice people, north and south of the Border, many of whom became great friends, my knowledge of the mountains of the world and of plants and how to grow them has increased, but I have yet to produce that elusive great show plant - maybe next year.

Petronilla Martin

(Margaret Orsi was an active and much-loved member of the Group. She died unexpectedly some years ago and is still missed very much by those of us who knew her. In her memory the Margaret Orsi Bowl is awarded each year at the Show to the exhibitor of the best plant from North America. Ed.)

Book Reviews

HELLEBORES

I am addicted to hellebores so I had no guilty feelings whatever in taking out the credit card and buying this long overdue new book on one of my favourite plants.

It is described as a comprehensive guide and it certainly is that. There are excellent chapters on growing, propagating, and breeding hellebores, lots of good practical advice and interspersed there are personal stories from growers giving us the benefit of their hands on experience - mostly American but included are our friends from Ashwood and Blackthorn nurseries in the U.K. Add in interesting chapters on the history of hellebores, hellebores in the wild and in the garden and photographs of a very high quality and you have a book which I certainly will be dipping into regularly for years to come.

If, however, you are looking for photographs of the sumptuous doubles which are now high fashion you will be disappointed. To get one other negative out of the way the authors are American and there is an American slant to the book but do not let this dissuade you from buying.

This book has broad appeal – it would make an excellent present for beginners or for the Helle BORES in your life.

Burrell, C. Colston & Tyler, Judith Knott. *HELLEBORES – a Comprehensive Guide*. Portland, Oregon, Timber Press, 296 pp. ISBN- 13: 978-0-88192-765-8. Stg£25.

Anna Nolan

TWO FOR YOUR (OUTSIZE) STOCKING

What have **daphnes** and **tulips** in common? Apart from including desirable plants for the rock garden and alpine house, both are the subjects of recently published books. Books on gardening topics, like many cookery books, are commonly merely rehashed

versions of earlier literature. However, both 'Daphnes' and 'Tulips' are full of information based on the personal experiences of the authors.

Robin White, the author of 'Daphnes' is well known as an expert grower, who has produced numerous daphne hybrids and whose displays at the RHS shows are legendary. His Blackthorn Nursery is a mecca for daphne enthusiasts. The book contains chapters on daphne species, hybrids, propagation (an extensive treatment including discussion of taking cuttings and grafting), cultivation, pests and diseases, and the garden use of daphnes. Almost every daphne that is described is illustrated by good colour photographs. In surveying the systematic section of the book, I was struck by the recent enthusiasm for naming cultivars, particularly of *Daphne petraea*. Members who attended the Greenmount Show this year will have noted that this trend is set to continue, with a 'yet to be formally described' cultivar of *D. petraea* exhibited by the President of the AGS. One feature of the book that I liked particularly was the estimates of the eventual sizes of particular hybrids and cultivars. I wish I had been in possession of this information when placing daphnes in our garden. Because they dislike root disturbance and competition from their neighbours it is important to give young daphne plants plenty of space when planting them out. I was interested to read the description and see the illustration of *D. acutiloba*, a species which regularly appears in the AGS seed list and which I regularly disregard. Next year I will try it. Two illustrations, at least, show Robin White's 'daphnetum', a slightly raised area, in which he successfully grows a range of small daphnes including various clones of *Daphne petraea*. I look forward to the day when daphnetums, or should it be daphneta, are a regular feature of Dublin alpine gardens.

Richard Wilford works at Kew, where, amongst other duties, he is in charge of the alpine collection. He served his apprenticeship under Tony Hall, so it is no surprise to discover that he has become an expert in growing bulbs. Tulips, particularly the species, have not had the publicity given to other bulbs, such as snowdrops and daffodils. This book will do much to remedy the situation. It concentrates on the species, with good descriptions and illustrations of most of the taxa likely to be available to all but the most specialist grower. It also includes a less comprehensive account of hybrid tulips, as well as short sections on pests and diseases and on the cultivation of tulips. A good number of the species are described as being suitable for the open garden as long as they are planted in sunny, well drained sites. Others, particularly those from areas, such as central Asia, with severe continental climates are safer kept dry during the summer in an alpine house or bulb frame. I was delighted to see a fine photograph of my favourite tulip, *Tulipa sprengeri*, which is unusual in its late flowering (commonly early June) and its liking for partial shade.

Both of these volumes are welcome additions to our collection of gardening books. A word with Saint Nicholas or Father Christmas may be in order for AGS members.

White, Robin. 2006. *Daphnes: a practical guide for gardeners*. Portland, Oregon, Timber Press 232pp. ISBN-13:978-0-88192-763-4. Stg£25.00

Wilford, Richard. 2006. *Tulips: species and hybrids for the gardener*. Portland, Oregon, Timber Press 211pp. ISBN-13:978-0-88192-752-8. Stg£25.00

George Sevastopulo

GARDEN VISITS

A Visit to Cork

On Saturday 27th May a group of 26 people set off on a cloudy, rainy morning on the journey to Cork. The programme for the week-end was quite ambitious - four gardens to visit over two days. The weather had been quite dismal and being gardeners ourselves, we could feel very much for the owners of the various gardens concerned. We were all quietly hoping that the weather would improve as even the most beautiful gardens don't look quite the same in the rain.

A quick morning stop for scones and tea refreshed us all, and having our lunch on the hoof, i.e., on the bus, allowed us to get off outside Cork around one o'clock and launch straight into **Mary O'Brien's** wonderful garden. Our hopes for the weather were realized as the sun came out and the clouds cleared. The garden occupies a normal sized suburban plot, but was packed with plants. So there goes the excuse about not having the space to produce a splendid garden! Mary's front garden slopes towards the house and the back away from the house. In a mild climate she is gardening on neutral soil and has a good 30 years of experience behind her. She is also an accomplished artist and the 'Artist's Eye' is very evident in her garden, i.e., her use of shape and colour and general design.

A lovely compact *Pinus parviflora* 'Gyokusui' in her front garden attracted much attention. There were many wonderful troughs with delightful collections of miniature hostas, 'Popo', 'Cat's Eye', *Hosta yakushi* and many more. *Rhodohypoxis* 'Goya', a lovely double, was admired as was the collection of wonderful ferns-all beautifully grown. Other plants that stood out for our group were *Restio elegia capensis*, *Acer dissectum* 'Filigree', *Acer glauca* 'Tiny', various forms of *Acer palmatum* and many more. Reluctantly we left this treasure trove for the next garden.

Sonia & Neil Williams' Cedar Lodge, an award-winning garden of two acres has only been in existence for the last 9 years. We were astonished as it contained many mature trees and shrubs. Neil told us that he owned a nursery before and had brought a lot of these mature specimens with him. Still, what an accomplishment in such a short space of time, and at the age of 80! At the entrance we were greeted by the flaming red of the Chilean Firebush, *Embothrium coccineum*, making quite a statement! Further along Neil pointed out a new Hellebore 'Beatrice Le Blanc' which had started to flower in November and was still going strong! Certainly a plant to notice. A wonderful large Tree Fern had many of us posing in front of it, Neil proudly pointing out the new green fronds coming up. There were many more lovely trees and shrubs, some excellent Euphorbias, ie *Euphorbia x martinii*, *E. tanobri* and 'Jayne's Golden Giant' speaking for itself. *Aquilegia* 'Christa Barlow' took somebody else's fancy. The garden had a beautifully laid out pond with rockery and bog garden which was visible from the kitchen window due to an inset of panels with glass in between the hedge dividing the patio area from the general garden area. What a great idea as it also gave some protection to a magnificent 40 year old Australian Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea*) growing in a large earthenware pot on the patio. All this plant viewing was thirsty work and we gladly accepted the tea and biscuits served by Sonia Williams. The weather was still holding and it was very pleasant and relaxing to sit around and chat but time dictated that we had to leave and search out our hotel.

We had quite an early start the next morning and arrived in **Hester Forde's** garden around ten o'clock. The site of a former quarry, where soil had to be brought in, she has

been gardening there, still full of enthusiasm, for the last 18 years. It's about 1/3 of an acre and again packed with plants. The front garden immediately impressed with *Cornus controversa variegata* making a great focal point. Hester told us that Acer, Cornus, Trilliums, Ferns all do very well with her, also there was a great collection of small hostas, irises, anemonellas, tritelia, and again, some good Euphorbias, e.g., 'Blackbird' and 'Red Wings'. I admired an *Echeveria* 'Doris Taylor' in a pot and, last but not least, some people were very impressed with Hester's composting facility which I had missed. To the delight of all of us, Hester had lots of plants for sale and was also generously digging up bits of things for people to bring home. There is no greater feeling for a gardener than to return from visiting somebody else's garden with a bag full of treasures.

Reluctantly, we had to leave this garden in time for lunch in Lakemount, nestled in the hills high above Cork. The garden was started in the early 1950's by **Mrs Peggy Cross**, who laid out the basic design and as all readers of *The Irish Garden* will know is now looked after by her son, Brian. It is south-facing and slopes gently away from the house, supporting the cultivation of a multitude of plants from all four corners of the world. It is a garden for all seasons with carefully chosen plants and shrubs which provide colour and interest all the year round. After a quick lunch served by **Rose and Brian Cross**, Brian led the walk around his 2 acres plus of magnificent garden. Again we were struck by the artistic input (Brian is an artist and also teaches art?) in selecting urns, pots, figures and sculptures tastefully displayed around the garden. The Lily sculpture in the pond drew many admiring comments from our group. Around every corner there were new treasures, Camellias, Acers, Rhododendrons. The gravel area was of great interest to many and the plants beautifully placed. Many people loved the Restios (*Restio rhodocmo* in particular)-a plant I had not been aware of until this week-end. Some other highlights included one of the loveliest wisterias many of us had ever seen *Wisteria rosea*, and a fantastic trough of Haberlea in full bloom - when questioned how he could get it to bloom so profusely Brian just shrugged his shoulders... and none of us were any the wiser as to why our own plants don't do the business.

Larix x kaempferi nana, *Ourisia coccineus* 'Loch Ewe', *Amsonia* sp., *Scilla peruviana*, *Dryopteris wallichiana*, *Acer japonicum aureum* (for deep shade), *Schizandra grandiflora alba*, *Pinus strobus*, *Rhododendron macabeum*, *Podophyllum hexandrum*, *Cornus* 'Norman Haddon', the list is endless and everyone will have their own favourite memory.

Some people who had visited Lakemount before claimed that this year the garden was at its best ever, and one of our resident New Zealanders, **Gwenda Wratt**, was particularly delighted to have seen so many New Zealand plants doing so well in all the gardens.

The whole week-end was a delight for both the gardeners and the few non-gardeners. There was something for everybody. A great 'Thank you' to all the kind and patient people who let us roam around their gardens and gave their time so generously. Thank you also to all the organizers who made this another memorable week-end away. Well done.

AnneMarie Keoghan

Visit to Carmel Duignan's Garden

Carmel very kindly opened her garden to the members of the Society on Sunday 11 June. On entering the garden many people were immediately attracted to the beautiful tall blue/white flowering shrub, the South African *Psoralea* sp whose pea-like flowers have an unusual fruity scent. Beneath it were examples of Carmel's good plant combinations – *Clematis durandii*, a strong-growing *Salvia* and at ground level a *Veronica*. On climbing the steps the first stop for many people was what we thought was a superb crimson

clematis with very large stamens. It was in fact a rose – ‘Bengal Surprise’ – which Carmel told us she had grown from a cutting and is a long flowering very old cultivar. Nearby was another beautiful rose, the climber ‘Phyllis Bide’, with its lovely colour variations, from red to pink to cream. It had some nice purple foliage plants as neighbours. We saw a number of other very good roses in the garden also, amongst them the very fragrant ‘Verschuren’, ‘Souvenir de St. Annes’, *R. chinensis mutabilis*, and a very interesting looking reddish brown rose yet to put on its full display.

Carmel is very interested in unusual foliage plants and grows an amazing variety with great success. There was a lovely specimen of what I believe is a fairly recently available plant, *Schefflera taiwaniana*. The tiered arrangement of its leaves, especially the young leaves which look like an opening parasol, is very attractive. This is just one of many very fine foliage plants which give the garden such structure. Others which appealed were *Pittisporum eugenioides*, *Eleagnus* ‘Quicksilver’ with its willowy silver foliage and strongly scented yellow flowers, a rather exotic *Aralia* which was grown from seed which had been brought back from China. I particularly liked *Kalopanax pictus* and nearby a *Rubus lineatus* with its very attractive palmate green foliage. There was a very large specimen of *Acacia baileyana Purpurea* and a large *Cercis* ‘Forest Pansy’ whose leaves caught the sun and the light breeze and Carmel also has a number of fine *Acers* in various colours.

On my second walk around I saw some interesting plants which I had missed on the first one – a beautiful *Geranium maderense*, its stems almost lit up by the sunshine and the flowers picking up the colour of the wonderful *Polygala myrtifolia* near the gate. It was much admired. Here too was a lovely *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*. Standing tall in the border was *Aconitum* ‘Stainless Steel’ which I feel is a very soft colour to use in the border and it does not need staking even in windy conditions.

Among the small plants which caught my eye were a white *Anemone trullifolia* on the raised bed with the seedheads of *Clematis* ‘Lunar Lass’ tumbling over it and in a trough the beautiful miniature *Clematis tenuiloba* ‘Ylva’ and a dwarf *Leptospermum*.

Carmel has taken on the challenge of growing many rare and unusual plants and has a collection of excellent specimens. She positions plants to give very good colour contrasts, textures, shapes and scents and the garden has some hidden paths and resting places all surrounding a perfect lawn. We are most grateful to her for sharing her superb garden with us and we were so fortunate to be able to enjoy her hospitality on a perfect summer Sunday afternoon.

Mary Glennon.

Visit to Abingdon

On Sunday 2 July in an addition to our advertised programme we had a visit jointly with the RHSI to the garden of **Philip and Bridget Jacob** at Abingdon in Shankill. This is a garden in the grand style, full of character with sweeping lawns, large mature trees, herbaceous borders, several garden ‘rooms’, an impressive walled fruit and vegetable garden and other features. The lawns were magnificent having been resown a couple of years ago. Among the large trees two fine pines, *Pinus patula* and *P. montezumae* were dominant and provided an exotic air while fitting very comfortably into the overall picture. Six superb specimens of *Cupressus macrocarpa* provided shelter and also added to the atmosphere. *Cornus capitata* was much admired covered as it was with its tiny green flowers surrounded by showy yellowish white bracts. An *Olearia chatamatica* also attracted a lot of attention. The herbaceous borders are spacious as such borders should be, and

while some of the early summer flowers were over there was much promise of splendours to come.

Making a statement in a raised bed was an eye-catching planting of *Acanthus syriacus* obviously enjoying the extra drainage. *Salvia discolor* with its deep black flowers was thriving in the conservatory much to Philip's satisfaction. In the courtyard garden many people were taken with a mature specimen of *Hydrangea seemanii* from Mexico adorning one wall. Although less hardy than the more commonly grown climbing Hydrangea, *H. petiolaris* this plant would be an excellent and neater alternative for a sheltered wall.

Apart from *Hieracium lanatum* which had self-seeded very attractively in another of the garden 'rooms' there were few alpines to be seen but in spring there are lots of bulbous plants including Trilliums and Cyclamen which would qualify.

The kitchen garden was wonderful, beautifully tended and full of mouthwatering vegetables and fruit. Philip is particularly proud of an old cultivar of broad bean with highly decorative purple flowers which was grown from seed obtained from the Henry Doubleday Association. Large quantities of garden compost are made in beautifully designed and constructed compost bins which are located behind the swimming pool. No doubt this compost contributes significantly to the healthy appearance of all the plants both culinary and ornamental.

The garden covers one and a half acres and obviously requires a huge effort to maintain. Philip and Bridget do a lot of the work and find little time to relax on the many comfortable benches scattered throughout the garden. They are generous in their acknowledgement of the input made by that well known plantsman **Paul Cox** who has been contributing for around twenty five years and who was present on the day to talk to the visitors.

After a rather unpromising morning the weather was kind to us and helped our enjoyment of an interesting and stimulating afternoon in a unique Dublin garden. Our sincere thanks to Philip and Bridget for inviting us to "the house of Jacob", as Philip put it, and for the warm welcome they provided.

Billy Moore.

Fixtures

Thursday 21st September, 8.00 p.m. John Grimshaw – ‘African Plants for our Gardens’, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. John Grimshaw is a gardening botanist who has a particular interest in the African flora. He is Gardens Manager at Colesbourne Park, Gloucestershire, and is currently writing a book on recently introduced trees. He also runs Griffin Press Publishing Ltd.

Saturday 7th October, 10.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. Autumn Show and Workshop - National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin – schedule enclosed.

Wednesday 25th October, 8.00 p.m. Keith Lever, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. Keith is known to those who went to North Wales. Proprietor and propagator at Aberconwy Nursery he makes the growing of difficult plants look easy! Joint with RHSI.

Thursday 9th November, 8.00 p.m. Rosemary Cox - ‘Alpines through an Artist's Eye’, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. Rosemary studied the ecology of plants in their native habitats on expeditions with students and is now an accomplished botanical artist. Joint with IGPS

Friday 17th to Sunday 19th November. Alpine Weekend. Harold McBride, Wol Staines and Henrik Zetterlund will be our speakers at Termonfeckin this year. Booking Form and Programme enclosed.

Monday, 11 December, 8.00 p.m. – ‘A Christmas Miscellany’ with George Sevastopulo followed by seasonal refreshments. Christ Church, Sandymount.

Officers and Committee

Chairman & Show Secretary:	Val Keegan
Hon. Secretary:	Joan Carvill
Hon. Treasurer:	Mary Glennon
Fixtures Secretary:	Martin Walsh

Committee:	Jamie Chambers
	Arthur Dagge
	Michael Higgins
	AnneMarie Keoghan



This newsletter is edited by Billy Moore who can be contacted at 32, Braemor Park, Dublin 14. Email: billymoor@gmail.com