



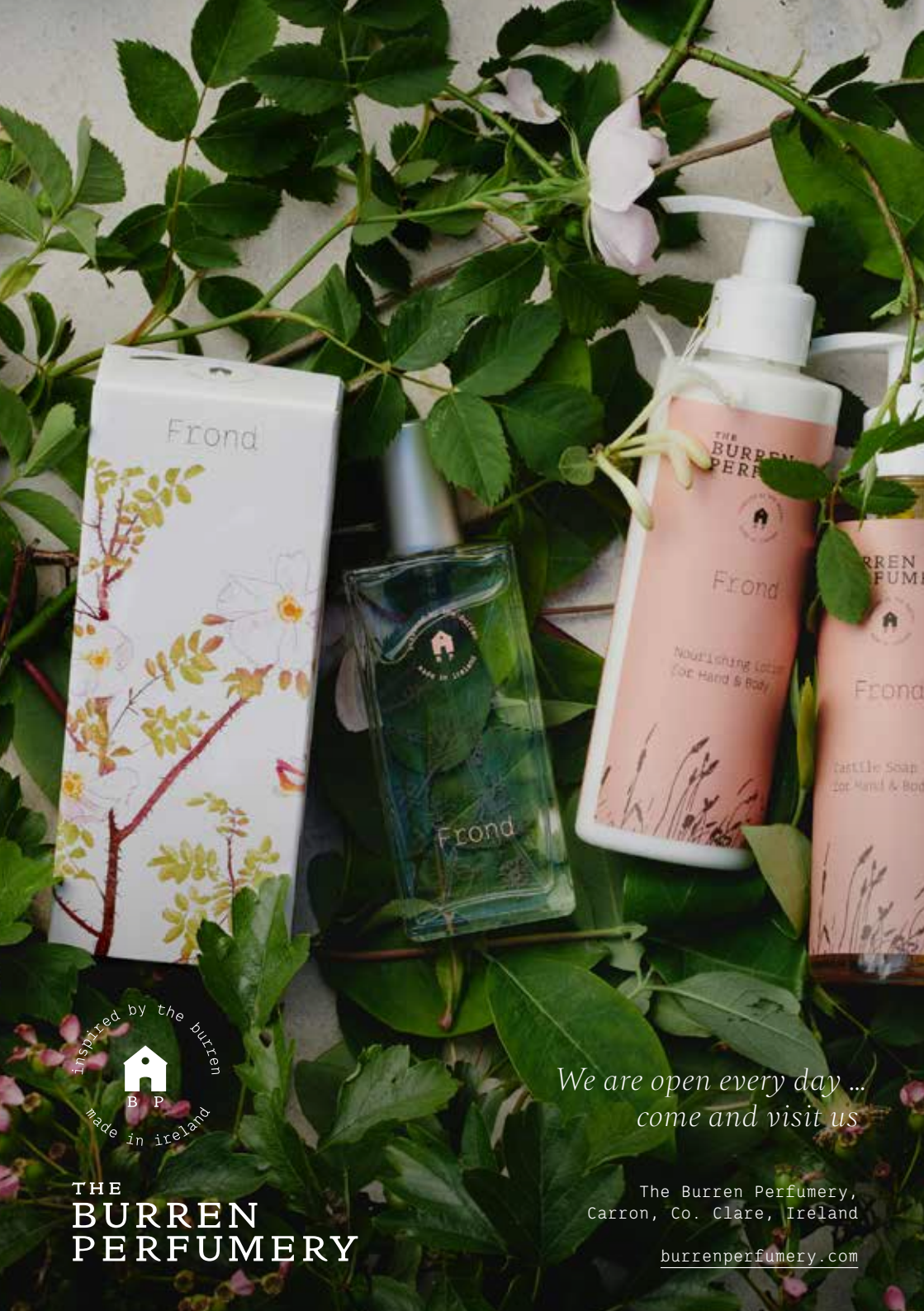
The Journal

Autumn 2022

Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland
Cumann Ríoga Gairneoireach na hÉireann



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Note From The Chair



Glowing autumn colours bring us to the end of the gardening year but as one draws to a close, another is in our sights as we buy bulbs and consider our many and varied plans for spring.

So too with the RHSI. 2022 has been busy with lots happening on all fronts – Zoom talks, regular bulletins, Partner garden visits and trips, RHSI Garden Show, Russborough and Laurelmere gardens and The Journal – all of which take a huge amount of time and energy to organise. We are a volunteer led society, our activities depend on the time and commitment of members to make them happen and it is an indication of the rude good health of the society that there is so much going on. Many thanks to all who have been involved in making so many things happen.

Brenda Branigan is stepping down as President of the RHSI. Brenda's hard work, loyalty and commitment to the health and welfare of the society has been unstinting and the RHSI would very likely not be around and growing as it is today without her support. Sincere thanks to Brenda for all she has



contributed. Many thanks also to Peter Harrison who has agreed to take on the role of President.

With our sights set on 2023 there is much to look forward to. The most significant change for the society is that, by the time you're reading this, we should be the proud owners of Bellefield House and gardens thanks to the astonishing generosity of Angela Jupe in bequeathing the property to the RHSI. We now have an accessible base in the midlands, a game changer as it gives us all-Ireland reach. There are exciting plans hatching and I look forward to meeting many of you at Bellefield in the coming months to enjoy and celebrate our wonderful new home.

In the meantime you have The Journal to enjoy and Peter Milligan and the team have once again produced a magazine full of interest and variety. Congratulations and many thanks to Peter and all involved for giving their time and talents to such a fine publication.

Happy Gardening.
Philip
Chair, RHSI



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A Note From The Editor



As autumn prepares to exit from the gardening stage, and winter lurks in the wings ready to make a grand entrance promising cold winds, frosts and perhaps a taste of snow, some gardeners start to think of a cosy fireside, a warming drink, and the joy to be had from perusing nursery catalogues or reading a favourite gardening book.

However, a walk outside on a fine winter's day can be rewarding as there is still colour to be found in many gardens both public and private. Look out for *Hamamelis virginiana*, *Jasminum nudiflorum*, and *Lonicera fragrantissima* to list but a few of the winter flowering shrubs. Our friends the snowdrop will provide interest from November onwards and see if you can find *Narcissus* 'Cedric Morris' – this small trumpet daffodil can be in flower for Christmas and is well worth seeking and purchasing.



Nicola (Garden Boss) and Editor

For this issue of the journal, we are continuing with our themes of sustainability, gardens, and gardeners and all our regular features. The front cover shows one of the autumn/winter flowering *Galanthus reginae-olgae* cultivars. This Joe Sharman selection was named 'Ruby's Green Dream' for the well-known galanthophile Ruby Baker. 'Ruby's Green Dream' is a virescent form and this external green colouring is unusual in *reginae-olgae*.

I must record my thanks to my wife Nicola for her great 'behind-the-scenes' work and as always, I am indebted to Orlaith, Peggy, Noreen, and Phil – the editorial team for their hard work and great support – and I am pleased to be able to say "welcome back" to Mary Hackett who has re-joined the team.

So, enjoy your gardens during the coming season – get out and see where a splash of colour will add some winter delight – and remember – spring is not far away.

Peter
Editor, RHSI, *The Journal*

Contents



- 6 Irish Gardeners Receive Prestigious RHS Awards in 2022
Peggy Masterson
- 8 Jan Ravensberg: The Man behind the Trees
Daphne Shackleton
- 13 Mount Stewart – gardening at the edge
Mike Buffin AOH
- 19 What is the National Biodiversity Data Centre
Kate Chandler
- 20 Daphne Shackleton: A Life in Gardening
Mary Hackett
- 26 Future Proofing Trinity College Botanic Garden
Professor Jennifer C. McElwain
- 31 Opportunities to Study Horticulture in Northern Ireland
David Dowd
- 34 An Irish Trillium
Billy Moore
- 38 Gardening for Gorillas
Stephen Butler
- 46 Fast Fashion
Aideen Higgins
- 48 Michael Wilkinson, Hough Garden, Ballinderry. Co. Tipperary
Mary Hackett
- 54 Box Blight
Ingrid Goodbody
- 60 The Walled Garden, Hillsborough Castle and Gardens
Peter Harris
- 64 Floral Art
Karen Robinson
- 69 Brassicas, Alliums and Perennial Fruit
Deborah Ballard
- 73 Tasks for Autumn
Deborah Ballard
- 75 Russborough Notes
Anne Camilla Voss
- 79 Partner Gardens
Noreen Keane
- 82 From the Editor's Garden
Peter Milligan
- 83 Laurelmere Cottage Garden Notes
Cherry Sleeman
- 86 In Appreciation
Mary Hackett
- 87 Book Review: Charles Frederick Ball – From Dublin's Botanic Gardens to the Killing Fields of Gallipoli
Peter Milligan
- 88 Book Review: Gardening for Gorillas
Mary Hackett



The Journal

Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland
Cumann Ríoga Gairneoireach na hÉireann

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Anne Camilla Voss volunteers at RHSI Russborough garden.

A photograph of two men, Matthew Jebb and Thomas Pakenham, standing side-by-side and smiling. They are both wearing dark suits, white shirts, and ties. Matthew Jebb, on the left, is wearing a light blue tie and a gold medal on his lapel. Thomas Pakenham, on the right, is wearing a dark blue tie with small white dots and a gold medal on his lapel. They are standing in front of a white decorative screen. The background is slightly blurred, showing an indoor setting with other people and plants.

Matthew Jebb and Thomas Pakenham
with their Veitch Memorial Medals

Irish Gardeners Receive Prestigious RHS Awards in 2022

Peggy Masterson

Five outstanding Irish gardeners were nominated by the RHS for their invaluable contributions to the world of horticulture in 2022. Over the years we have all benefited from their hard work and deep knowledge.

The RHS awarded its Veitch Memorial Medal to Thomas Pakenham founder of the Irish Tree Society and

acclaimed author for his outstanding contributions to horticulture. An 2022 Veitch Memorial Medal was also awarded to Dr Matthew Jebb, curator of the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin. The Veitch Memorial medal may be awarded annually to persons of any nationality who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of the science and practice of horticulture. It was unknown to the organisers of the awards that they are godfather and godson.

The 2022 Victoria Medal of Honour was awarded to Brian Duncan, the renowned daffodil breeder from Co. Tyrone. This is the RHS's highest award and is given to horticulturalists deserving special honour.

Paddy Mackie received the A J Waley medal for Rhododendrons, in recognition of the outstanding garden he and his wife Julie have created at Mahee Island on Strangford Lough, Co. Down.

Seamus O'Brien, head gardener of the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland at Kilmacurragh, Co. Wicklow, has been presented with the Loder Cup; this is the second time ever an Irish gardener has received this award. This cup has been awarded in recognition of his work in conserving the Rhododendrons in Kilmacurragh, and his willingness to share his knowledge through his books recording his travels and those of notable Irish plant hunters.

The RHSI offer congratulations to all five recipients of these prestigious awards. ■



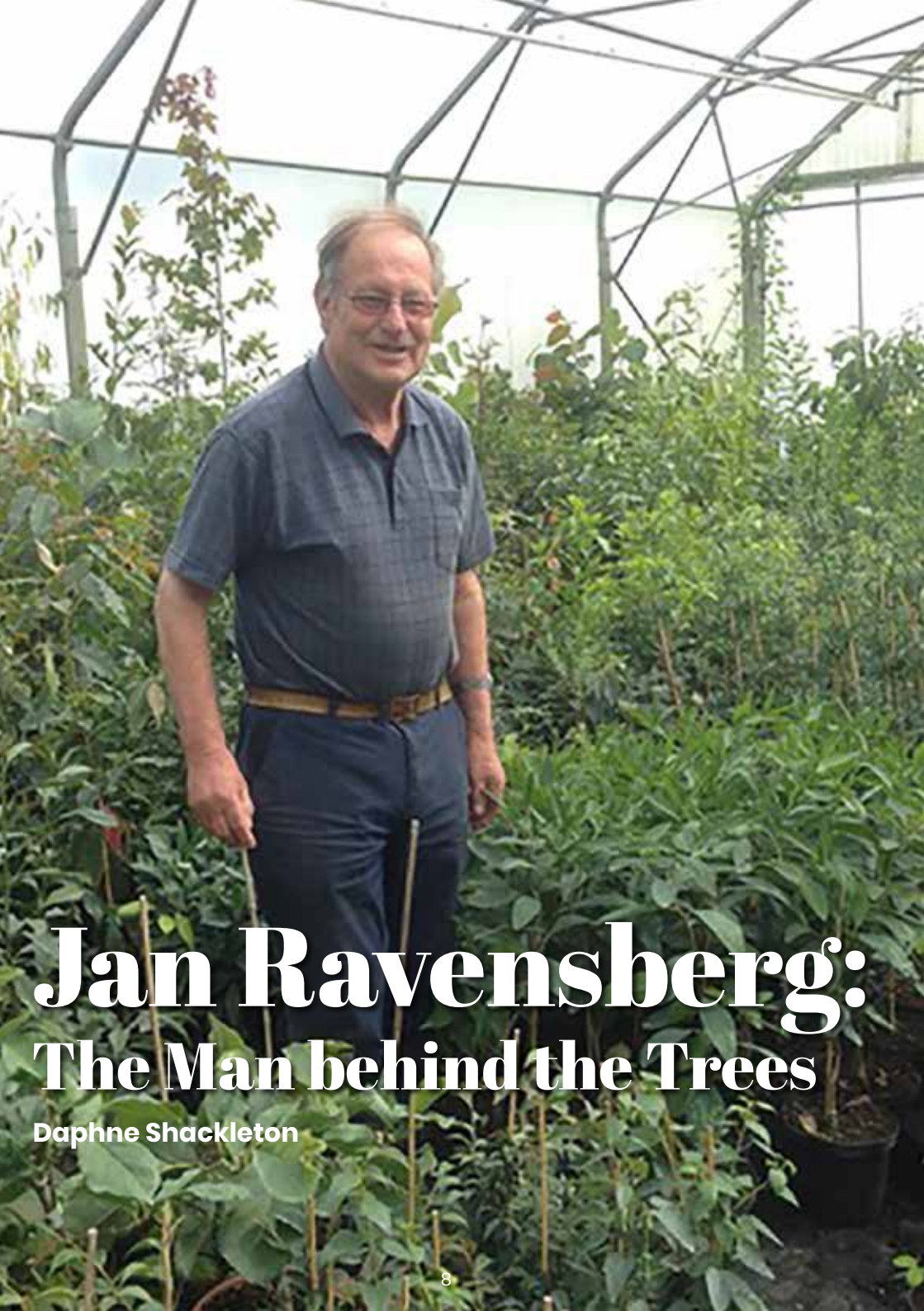
Brian Duncan receiving his VMH from RHS President Keith Weed



Paddy Mackie with the A J Waley Medal



Seamus O'Brien with the Loder Rhododendron Cup



Jan Ravensberg: The Man behind the Trees

Daphne Shackleton

If ever one has bought, been given, or even admired an interesting tree or shrub in Ireland then it has more than likely been through the horticultural hands of Jan Ravensberg. Nurseryman and highly skilled propagator, dendrologist and expert judge of a good tree or shrub, Jan Ravensberg and his wholesale nursery, Ravensberg Nurseries, near Clara, Co Offaly, celebrated 50 years in Ireland on 20th September 2022. His trees and shrubs can be found throughout the country in gardens and parks, arboretums and in all the great gardens of Ireland.

An immaculate wholesale nursery always stocked full of useful, rare and interesting trees and shrubs, grown to the highest standard, Ravensberg Nurseries are major suppliers of quality plants to Ireland's garden centres, garden designers and landscapers and in smaller numbers to other wholesale nurseries and to Holland. Difficult to make a living from only selling the rare and unusual, the nursery also grows lots of good old reliables like *Betula*, *Hydrangea*, *Cotoneaster*, *Elaeagnus* and many more. They do not cater for the all flowering, instant, impulse buying gardener.

Sixth generation of a long and distinguished line of Dutch nurserymen, which can be traced back to 1771, Jan Ravensberg began his life as a nurseryman very young. Leaving school at 13 years old when his nurseryman father had died aged only 56 years, he studied horticulture through evening classes while working in various nurseries, changing every few years to gain the widest practical experience. His mother had retained land at Boskoop, then as now, the centre of the world's

horticultural industry, and here Jan started his first nursery aged 17 years.

“Over the next 50 years the nursery at Ashmount House developed and expanded”

In 1972, Jan and his wife Siena and two small children, left the highly competitive horticultural scene at Boskoop for Ireland, to join others in setting up SAP Nurseries, initially 'in a potato field with a few sheds', near Carbury, Co Kildare. Three years later he moved on to set up his own business, purchasing land near Moyvalley, now the home of the wholesale nursery Rentes Ltd. Approached by the late Evelyn Goodbody, known to all in the Midlands as 'Tomato' Goodbody, to distinguish him from other members of that famous Quaker family, Jan took up his offer to purchase Ashmount House, Clara, Co Offaly in 1979. Here Evelyn Goodbody, with the land and some glasshouses, had originally grown tomatoes until oil prices escalated when he began to grow a limited range of trees and shrubs.

Over the next 50 years the nursery at Ashmount House developed and expanded with Jan being joined by his son Hans in the nursery, the 7th generation Ravensberg nurseryman,



and daughter Martina in the office. Nine large glass houses or tunnels cover over half a hectare with the same area and more outside for growing on plants.

While others prefer to buy in from Holland, in small pots packed on each trolley, uniquely Ravensberg plants are virtually all home grown, and therefore Irish grown. Jan personally propagates about 90% of the plants from his own stock and often from mother plants originally sourced from old Irish gardens. Nothing high tech (not even bottom heat) Jan learned quickly how to grow plants he was not familiar with in Holland, e.g. *Eucryphia*, *Crinodendron*.

He is responsible for the breeding of *Taxus* 'Summergold', *Crinodendron hookerianum* 'Alf Robins', *Crinodendron hookerianum* 'Ashmount' and *Ilex aquifolium* 'Ashmount'. Many of the plants he promotes, while not named, are of especially good form, like *Berberis*

temolaica with extra blue foliage. He recommends those grown on their own roots rather than grown as grafts.

Incidentally, he is optimistic about propagating ash from summer growth and is constantly on the lookout for ash die-back resistant stock.

Jan has been a highly regarded member of The International Dendrology Society for over 25 years, travelling with them twice a year and marvelling at trees in Chile, the Amazon, New Zealand and Tasmania, Taiwan, China as well as the Baltic States, Germany and Slovakia. Not interested in plant collecting he feels the most interesting plants have been found already and is more focused on collecting, propagating and promoting the best forms of trees and shrubs already found and growing in the gardens of Ireland and the United Kingdom.



Like all true plantsmen Jan has his own interesting collection of trees – he refuses to call it an arboretum – grown around the house and the grounds of the nursery. Started over 40 years ago it includes wonderful specimens of *Tetradium daniellii*, *Tilia americana* ‘Moltkei’, *Carrierea calycina*, *Zelkova carpinifolia*, *Sorbus aucuparia* subsp. *maderensis*, *Meliosma dilleniifolia* subsp. *cuneifolia* and *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* ‘Imbricata Pendula’ to name just a few.

The nursery is surrounded by 50 acres of commercial hardwood forestry, planted by him over 30 years ago and exceptionally well managed.

Jan, at 81 years, is most likely still to be found head down at his propagating bench overlooking the

nursery. His office in the house has a great reference collection of books, floras and monographs on all the major tree taxa. His collection of botanical art includes works by Raymond Piper, Lyn Stringer and Grania Langrishe. His wife Siena, who has been at Jan’s side during his long horticultural career, has her own show stopping collection of *Streptocarpus*, orchids and beautifully looked after house plants.

Like all great plantsmen he keeps saying he will retire but he probably never will... ■

Please note that Ravensberg’s Nursery is wholesale only and supply the best Garden Centres throughout Ireland. If you are looking for an interesting or specific tree or shrub, ask your Garden Centre to source it for you from them.

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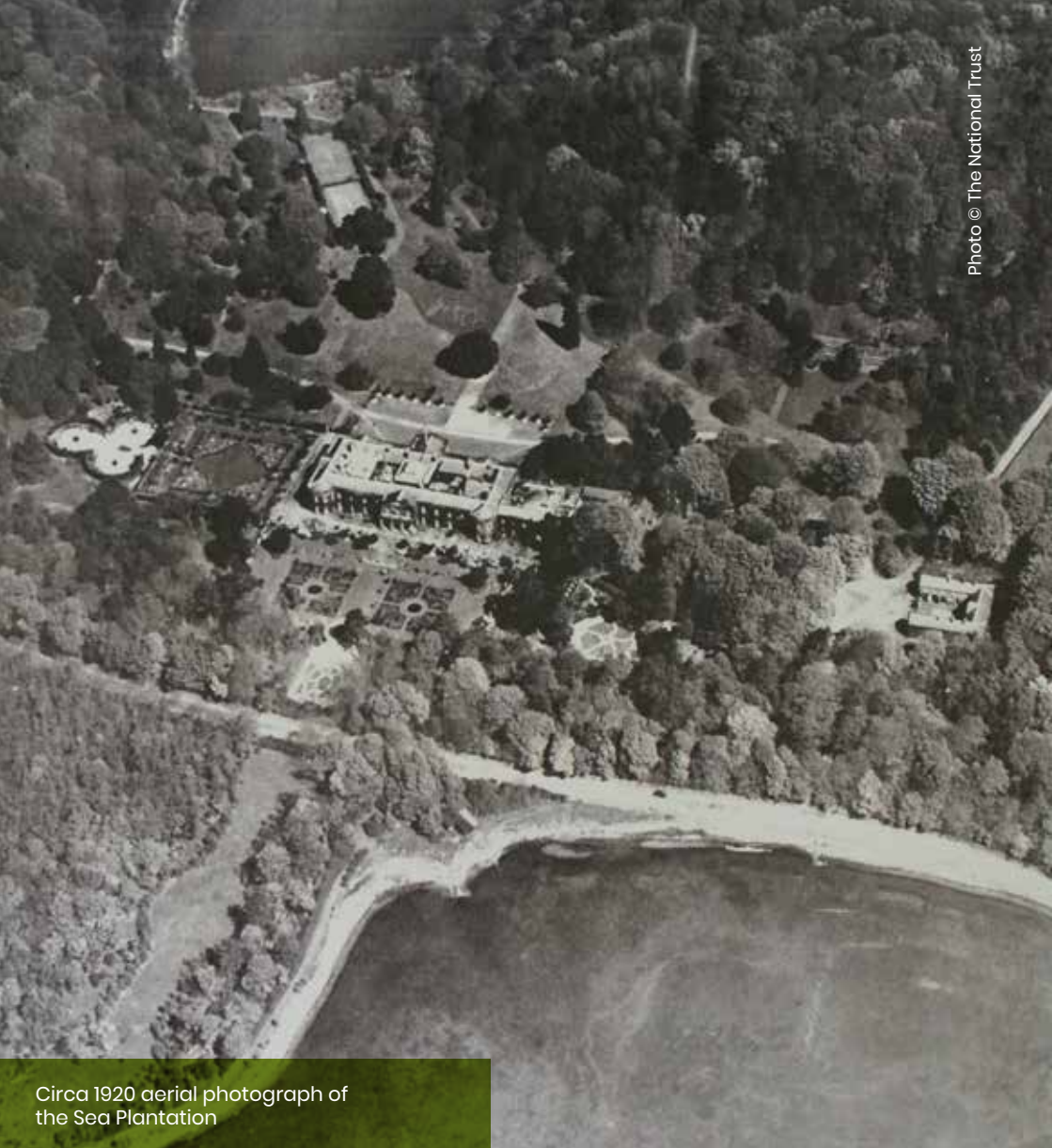
Photo © The National Trust

Spanish Garden looking towards the Italian Garden and the house

Mount Stewart – Gardening on the edge

**Mike Buffin AOH,
Head Gardener**

The garden at Mount Stewart nestles on the shore of Strangford Lough where the climate is mild, even by Northern Ireland standards. Climate change represents an exciting challenge regarding the potential for a new range of plants growing in the garden, its also presents a serious challenge for the future survival of our world-famous formal gardens. The garden today, retains much of the spirit of its creator, Edith, Lady Londonderry, who between 1921 and



Circa 1920 aerial photograph of the Sea Plantation

1958, created the formal gardens or garden rooms, while also embellishing large swathes of the 18 century pleasure grounds.

Edith's garden was created on the foundation of a garden that pre-dated her arrival by over 120 years, and she

utilised the existing garden landscape with great artistry. Edith created her Mediterranean Walled Garden complete with outdoor swimming pool and rotating summerhouse in the Sea Plantation area. This boundary area covers just over 10 acres in size and was created sometime between 1793

and 1803, for the purpose of moving the main Portaferry Road away from the house; storing drainage water from the garden, enabling it to be discharged into Strangford Lough at low tide, while also protecting the estate from blistering coastal winds that drive salt spray far into the garden.

“This could see the loss of large areas of the Sea Plantation’s shelter within a matter of months”

The Sea Plantation is one of the most important factors that create both the micro and nano-climates in the garden as it shelters the garden by slowing down and filtering out the damaging effects of strong coastal winds, which in turn increases the ambient temperature behind the windbreaks, while also increasing relative humidity. As sea level rise continues, the Sea Plantation will act as Mount Stewart’s canary, as at some point in the next 100 years, the Sea Plantation will be returned to the sea, and lost with it will be the shelter belts,

windbreaks and woodland gardens that protect larger areas of the garden close and beyond the house.

A significant issue as we record increasingly higher tide level, is that the Sea Plantation is more likely to be breached or over-topped, and such an incursion of sea water would be devastating to the existing tree cover in this area. If an over-topping event is extensive, and large volumes of sea water were to flood the area, this would be devastating for the garden, as the trees would decline rapidly. This could see the loss of large areas of the Sea Plantation’s shelter within a matter of months.

In preparation for such an event, additional trees have already been planted, but an area equivalent in size of the Sea Plantation is required to recreate the same level of protection. To ensure that the windbreaks are well established a number of new tree and shrub species have been planted in the garden, and we are currently modelling all of the tree planting as windbreaks to see where additional tree planting will be required.

Although this sounds devastating for the garden, it also represents a huge opportunity to experiment and introduce a range of plants to Mount Stewart that weren’t available to Edith or her predecessors. The garden has an international reputation for giant eucalypts, stately tree fern, tender rhododendrons, and conifers, to mention just a few. Over the next five years we will continue to focus our efforts on removing invasive species like the Chilean myrtle (*Myrtus luma*) that seeds prolifically along with the



The New Zealand Southern rata (*Metrosedrus umbellata*), has survived at Mount Stewart since the 1930, and flowers every year

New Zealand broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*). This will create space within our existing windbreaks for new trees that are quick growing to act a nurse species, providing protection for slower growing species. With anticipated higher tide levels the potential for localised flooding in the garden has increased. Many of the species we propose to use or introduce must therefor be adaptable to salt-spray and high water tables. Our focus this planting season will be to increase the woodland cover in key areas along Portaferry Road, including the Lily Wood, and including areas surrounding the house. A focus for this new planting will be tree and shrub species from coastal areas of the United States, New Zealand, Tasmania, South Africa, and Mediterranean regions of Europe including coastal areas of the UK.

**“Our aim is
to establish a
comprehensive
network of
wooded areas that
provide shelter
across the garden”**

While we will use many tried and tested species such as oak, sycamore and holly we will also experiment with

hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*), bull bay magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), swamp and pond cypress (*Taxodium distichum* and *Taxodium ascendens*), swamp bay (*Persea palustris*), swamp tupelo (*Nyssa biflora*), coastal live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*), southern red oak (*Quercus falcata*), Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), willow oak (*Quercus phellos*), swamp azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*), loblolly pine (*Pinus taeda*), pond pine (*Pinus serotina*), water tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*), swamp chestnut oak (*Quercus michauxii*).

We will also experiment with a number of southern hemisphere species in these locations such as the New Zealand Christmas Tree (*Metrosideros excelsa*, *M. kermadecensis*, *M. umbellatus*, *M. lucida*), we will also be planted eucalypts as trees and coppice, including black gum (*Eucalyptus ovata*), blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*), white top gum (*E. delegatensis subsp. tasmaniensis*), white kunzea (*Kunzea ambigua*), and autumn and common tea tree (*Leptospermum grandiflorum* and *L. scoparium*). These are just a few selections of the trees and shrubs we are intending to use.

We will also be working with other institutions from around the world to supply seed under international treaties, so they can support our work around climate adaptation planting. Our aim is to establish a comprehensive network of wooded areas that provide shelter across the garden in advance of the time when we will lose the Sea Plantation. ■

OPENING HOURS check www.dlrccoco.ie

Fernhill

Park & Gardens
Páirc Bhun na Coille

Fernhill Park & Gardens is a new public park within Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Co.

The park is a remarkable and unique place, laid out over 85 acres on the slopes of the Dublin mountains. The character of the place is rustic and wild, dotted with several ornamental areas.

There is a rich history of horticulture going back approximately 200 years. The ericaceous soil and the shelter belt established by the original owners in the early 1800's has created a special climate for growing plants. The park boasts a great collection of specimen trees and flowering shrubs from around the world.

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the park**

Fernhill
Park & Gardens



Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
County Council Comhairle Contae
Dhún Laoghaire-Ráth an Dúin

What is the National Biodiversity Data Centre?

Kate Chandler

**Communities & Engagement Pollinator Officer
at the National Biodiversity Data Centre**

It's hard to imagine Ireland without its rich variety of plants, animals, and insects. From the seas that shape our shores, to the mountains, forests, boglands and meadows that make up our unique landscape, we are surrounded by life in every form.

Unfortunately, Ireland's biodiversity is under threat. To protect it, we need to document what we have, understand how it is distributed, track how it changes over time, and communicate the importance of conserving biodiversity.

To help tackle these issues, the National Biodiversity Data Centre was established by the Heritage Council in 2007. Funded by the Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, it addresses these knowledge gaps by gathering data on biodiversity, making it more freely available, and building the scientific evidence needed to inform conservation projects.

One of the Data Centre's main projects is Biodiversity Maps. This online portal is as a hub for over 4 million records submitted by organisations and

individuals of more than 16,000 different species. It is a crucial tool that gives us a comprehensive picture of Ireland's biodiversity and can be used by anyone to submit and view records of a huge variety of life around Ireland.

The Data Centre also runs focused projects to track changes, such as the butterfly and bumblebee monitoring schemes, and the National Invasive Species Database. It is also responsible for the implementation of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, which was established in 2015 in response to data that showed a third of the country's wild bees are under threat.

By working in collaboration with partners and across borders, the Data Centre is building a comprehensive picture of biodiversity in Ireland and is informing public policy and decision-making through the many strands of its work. ■

If you want to find out more about the National Biodiversity Data Centre, or join the effort to save Ireland's biodiversity by getting involved in one of its projects, visit www.biodiversityireland.ie



Daphne Shackleton

A Life in Gardening

Mary Hackett

How does a botanist evolve into a gardener and an artist become a garden designer? Daphne Levinge Shackleton's path to pre-eminence in the restoration and reinterpretation of historic Irish gardens has had several distinct phases. From a childhood by Lough Ree in Co Westmeath, through management of the Shackleton Garden in Clonsilla, Co Dublin and her present commitment to responsible farming in Co Cavan, her life with plants has been a process of discovery.

Garden design and specifically the sourcing and placing of appropriate plants in historic gardens and estates is Daphne Shackleton's speciality. Her father-in-law David Shackleton's Garden Beech Park in Clonsilla was an early influence. "It was a magnificent plant collection. David had a terrific eye for the best form of any plant. There were amazing trees and shrubs, and the collection was particularly strong in perennials. There was an exceptional alpine collection too but that needed more specialised curation than we could give it." The measure of the Shackleton collection is evident in the visitors' book. Key international gardeners of the day including Graham Thomas, Beth Chatto, Christopher Lloyd, Penelope Hobhouse, Rosemary Verey are all there.

Quotes from Beech Park Visitors' Book

Graham Thomas *'Super in every way'* 1985 & *'A great refresher course'* 1991

Roy Lancaster *'Quite fantastic I will be back'* 1988

Beth Chatto *'Enchanted'* 1991

Daphne has clear criteria for the 'Real Gardens' she designs

'Real Gardens for Special Places' is Daphne's garden consultancy. Many of the gardens she has designed are indeed special. "I grew up in a country house in the Irish midlands. A significant part of my childhood was spent exploring old houses some with their walled gardens still productive and others long overgrown. I've been lucky to be employed as a consultant to people who have restored such gardens." Gardens to which Daphne has contributed include Drimbawn House, Tourmakeady, Co Mayo, Airfield House and Gardens in Dundrum, Dublin and Coolamber House, Lismacaffrey, Co Westmeath. "The Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme worked well but there wasn't a maintenance element, and restored gardens are not viable without a maintenance plan or very committed owner. Now I only work on projects where there is an ongoing management strategy. The client needs to have a good team in place, preferably a head gardener with a garden crew to implement an upkeep schedule."

The collection of plants Daphne managed in Beech Park was far wider than was in typical use at the



Drimbawn, Co Mayo,
Herbaceous Borders Summer

time. A judge at Bloom, the narrow plant palette still used by designers frustrates her. “At Bloom, the design element is strong, but the planting element is very ‘samey’ especially in the shrub and tree area. *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* and *Amelanchier* are excellent trees but there are wonderful alternatives and indeed these are often on display in the nursery section of Bloom. I’m sometimes also disappointed when planting has been restricted to or by the overuse of native

species only. Gardens are ornamental and have always used non-native species. I use our native oak certainly, but *Quercus palustris* and *Q. coccinea* are also excellent trees.

Daphne has clear criteria for the ‘Real Gardens’ she designs and plants. “A real garden is modest and uncomplicated. It evolves over time.” She champions simplicity in a garden, suggesting that nature can do much of the work. Productivity is a fundamental



The Garden at Hope House

in her garden design. Fruit, vegetables and flowers for cutting should be in most gardened spaces. "I was in Slovenia recently and I noticed that every house had a beautiful and productive vegetable garden. Everybody. I hope to see a similar trend developing here." She also has views on sustainability. "I dislike over-reliance on raised beds. The promotion of small, raised beds for vegetable growing is a form of greenwashing. If you want to sustainably feed a family through

the year, and it is possible, you need rows and rows of a wide range of vegetables and it would be wonderful if everyone had a polytunnel. The no-dig concept is not necessarily best everywhere either. It does not work for me on wet Cavan clay soil. If you want no-dig on a big scale, you need substantial quantities of compost which is not always available. Anyway I like digging on a still winters day especially!" Looking to the future, she wonders whether we will still be



DLS garden at Lakeview, Co Cavan



Ornamental Garden at Airfield Estate HR

planting and lifting tulips that are at their best for only one year and come with high airmiles?

As she has worked with so many spectacular sites, I asked Daphne about her favourite gardens. “Few gardens excite me anymore. I now get more pleasure from botanising than from garden visiting. This year on a spring trip to the Greek islands we saw sheets and sheets of wildflowers. Another place that excited me was the Akureyri Botanical Gardens in Iceland a few years ago. It was just wonderful. A burst of warmth follows the spring melt, and at the height of summer they have twenty plus hours of daylight. The range of perennials we saw in flower was exceptional. We saw so many poppy varieties, from little Icelandic poppies to towering *Meconopsis* all flowering together. I saw perennials there I had never seen in gardens before. Big back-of-border perennials. It was a revelation”.

Always sensitive to the importance of good environmental practice, Daphne observed both an improvement

in animal health and improving biodiversity on the Shackleton’s Cavan farm following organic certification in 1996. The farm has many semi-natural habitats including bogs, wetland, woodland, hedgerows, hay meadows and stonewalls. New habitats introduced by Daphne and Jonathan Shackleton include a mixed conifer and hardwood woodland, hedgerows and the ornamental garden which supports a varied bird population.

With so many interests to be juggled – Daphne is also an artist with plans for an exhibition somewhere in the future – it is unsurprising that the herbaceous borders at Lakeview are being allowed to revert or be removed. Daphne maintains the vegetable and cutting gardens. “If I were starting again, I think I might be a flower farmer,” Daphne says at one point in our conversation. From flower farming to designing a Victorian parterre, through public projects and private partnerships, Daphne Levinge Shackleton’s expertise and curiosity have enriched Irish horticulture for twenty years. There can only be more to come. ■



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Future Proofing Trinity College Botanic Garden

Professor Jennifer C. McElwain
Director, Trinity College Botanic Garden

The oldest college botanic garden in the world, Orto Botanico di Padua, is in Northern Italy, a short trip from Venice. It was established in 1545 and has been in continuous use over its long history as a place of learning both scientific and cultural since its inception. It is recognized today as a UNESCO world heritage site. Trinity College Botanic Garden, like Padua, is a college botanic garden of considerable antiquity that was established in 1687 as a place of excellence for the study and use of plants for medicinal purposes (a physic garden) on Trinity's main campus. The garden's historical path has not been as continuous, smooth,

nor perhaps as illustrious, as that of Padua as it has moved multiple times over the past 300 or so years, but today Trinity College Botanic Garden is an active research garden with quite a few horticultural gems occupying a multi-acre site at Darty on the Southside of Dublin.

The gardens contain an estimated 4000 plant species in its living collections, multiple arboreta, order beds, and glasshouses and a seed collection from over 60 native species within the National Threatened Plant Seedbank. Species of particular horticulture interest within the collections include *Mackaya bella* (Forest Bell Bush) named in honour of a former Curator of the gardens, James Townsend Mackay (from 1806 to 1862). This exceptionally rare and lovely shrub is a montane forest species native to South Africa. It grows best in dappled shade with glossy dark green evergreen leaves and stunning bell-like white to pale mauve flowers with dark pink veins that hint at the leafy evolutionary origin of petals. It will tolerate light frosts in Ireland. Another stunning specimen is *Magnolia grandiflora*, the Southern Magnolia. The family lineage of Magnolia trees dates back deep into the Cretaceous period over 95 million years ago when global climates were much warmer than today and the Earth was ice free. This tree will thrive in Irish gardens but needs some shelter. It is evergreen with enormous glossy leaves and unlike many other species of Magnolia produces huge sweetly scented saucer shaped flowers throughout the season. In an age of naturalistic planting schemes, we have *Sanguisorba officinalis* (great burnet) and *Betonica officinalis* (betony). Both

are un-showy rare native perennials that are pollinator friendly and provide a long season of interest in borders and meadow planting. We are also growing the exceptionally rare and critically endangered *Helianthemum nummularium* (common rock rose). Although common in Britain it is restricted in to a single site in Ireland, the reasons why remain a biogeographic mystery.

**“This network are
the custodians
of over 105,000
plant species
which represents
30% of the known
global plant
species inventory”**

TCBG is networked with 3758 Botanic Gardens through Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). Collectively this network are the custodians of over 105,000 plant species which represents 30% of the known global plant species inventory (Mounce et al., 2017). Approximately 1750 seed banks, many of which are housed within botanic gardens such as Trinity's contain over 6 million seeds from an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 species (Walters and Pence, 2019). There is no question therefore that Botanic Gardens both small and famous cooperatively



Mackaya bella

contribute to conservation endeavours to preserve and protect the world’s remarkable but threatened plant biodiversity. Every Botanic Garden has a role to play in the global effort because each garden holds a proportion of unique species and unique knowledge/ research capacity found in few others. TCBG for instance currently contains 165 unique seed accessions collected from 60 species (29 families) in the Irish flora including species that are classified as critically endangered, threatened and vulnerable to extinction.

Our strategy over the next decade is to increase our seed bank holdings

of rare native wild plants that are threatened by extinction and to highlight their plight and ecological and cultural importance through a series of short documentary films called ‘Five in 5’ <https://trinitybotanicgarden.ie/5-in-five/>. Another major aim is to set up a long-term ecological and environmental monitoring network at the gardens using trees as sensors of atmospheric pollution and as responders to climate change. This year is the inaugural year of this important long-term project. Twenty trees have been selected for their horticultural, scientific, and cultural value from our Arboreta; particulate matter pollution has been quantified



Magnolia grandiflora

on their leaf surfaces using scanning electron microscopy and each tree's physiology has been measured to monitor its drought tolerance and adaptedness. Our ambition is that this long-term project will enable researchers at Trinity to both test the effectiveness of environmental policy and to provide invaluable insights on species resilience to rising temperatures and increased frequency of extreme weather events that are predicted as part of Ireland's climate future. ■

Professor Jennifer C. McElwain
Director, Trinity College Botanic Garden
<https://trinitybotanicgarden.ie/>

Mounce R, Smith P, Brockington S. Ex situ conservation of plant diversity in the world's botanic gardens. *Nature Plants*. 2017 Oct;3(10):795-802.

Walters, C. and Pence, V.C., 2021. The unique role of seed banking and cryobiotechnologies in plant conservation. *Plants, People, Planet*, 3(1), pp.83-91.

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Opportunities to Study Horticulture in Northern Ireland

David Dowd, Senior Lecturer in Horticulture

If you are considering a career in horticulture or know someone who is, an understanding of both the career options and the course options available to you is essential.

Qualifications frequently change names and the wide range of qualifications currently available can make it hard to know which course is the best option to pursue. I always advise potential students to think about what their ideal horticulture

career would be and then try to select the most suitable course to get them there. The current skills shortage in the industry means there are a wide range of opportunities for school leavers and career changers to work in horticulture, an industry which employs people with a passion for science, art, technology, business (alone or in any combination) and an interest in plants. For many the opportunity to work some or all the time outdoors and close to nature is also appealing.

The main education providers in Northern Ireland are the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), based at Greenmount Campus, Antrim [1], along with some of the 6 Regional Colleges. All these providers offer qualifications from industry recognised awarding bodies such as City & Guilds, Edexcel (BTEC), National Open College Network, Royal Horticulture Society and Ulster University.

Qualifications are divided into different levels. In Northern Ireland school leavers and career changers can start at Level 2 and continue right up to Level 6 with the recent introduction of the Level 6 Top up BSc in Horticulture at CAFRE. It can be difficult to compare different qualifications, so it is a good idea to ask to see the course information and discuss the course with the provider. This will give you an understanding of the course contact time, delivery methodology and content, enabling you to see how qualifications compare between various awarding bodies.

As a rule of thumb, your entry level into a horticulture course in Northern Ireland is dependent your previous level of schooling. For a Level 2 course you need minimal GCSE qualifications such as English and Maths. Those who achieve at Level 2 and have a GCSE grade C in English and Maths (or the Essential Skills equivalents) can generally progress to Level 3. Direct entry to a Level 3 Diploma college-based course requires at least 4 GCSEs at Grade C including English and Maths. These courses train people to work in practical operative and supervisor roles respectively, such as gardeners, nursery

workers, landscapers, green keepers, crop growers, etc.

For entry to a Level 4 qualification (Foundation Degree) and above you need GCSEs (or equivalent) and UCAS points to meet the entry requirements. Horticultural qualifications at Level 3 may also be considered. Foundation and Honours Degree courses produce graduates able to work in more managerial and technical roles, both in vocational horticulture skills areas and the more generic areas linked to horticulture, such as science and research, horticultural business management, marketing, retail sales, journalism and many more. Courses tend to cover a broad range of production and landscape horticulture subjects rather than specializing on a particular area. This allows students to develop a range of skills and knowledge and become more informed of career options before specialising in a particular industry sector.

The time commitment involved in undertaking a course is an important consideration. Courses may be full-time, part-time or have an option for both modes of study. Full-time study offers the advantage of achieving the qualification more quickly. Part-time courses are popular with career changers who wish to stay in their current role until they qualify. Whether there are fees to pay for courses varies between providers and courses. For example, Level 2 and 3 courses at CAFRE are free but there are fees for Level 4 courses and above. Depending on your income and qualifications a range of supports to study may be available such as student loans, maintenance grants, childcare assistance, etc. In



Students visiting a Horticulture Research Centre in Belgium.

some colleges there may also be bursaries and scholarships available to students from industry and horticultural representative organisations.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are offered by some employers including some Local Councils and the National Trust. They are a good option for those who wish to start working in horticulture whilst gaining a recognised qualification. There are also work-based courses that release staff already working in the industry to study part-time for a qualification as part of their Continuous Professional Development.

Having a recognised qualification opens so many opportunities for interesting work, higher wages, travel, and career development that the time and effort taken to obtain them will be repaid many times over. Over the course of their career, a professional horticulturist needs to continuously

update their knowledge and skills, but their first qualification will be the solid foundation on which all their future knowledge will be built.

In conclusion, my advice is before embarking on a course of study fully explore the options and discuss your circumstances with education providers. Try to visit the provider to see the facilities they have for delivery as these can vary widely and undertake the highest level of qualification that you can provided it meets your needs and career aspirations. ■

[1] Greenmount Campus of the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) is responsible for the delivery of Horticulture and Floristry programmes to both new entrants and those already working in the industry. The Campus offers Horticulture courses at both Level 2, Level 3, Foundation Degree and Honours Degree on a full and part time basis. Further details are available at www.cafre.ac.uk



An Irish Trillium

Billy Moore

For me and for many others, trilliums are the aristocrats among woodland plants, and for its pure, quiet beauty, *T. grandiflorum* is probably the queen and should be in every garden. There are many other garden-worthy species and hybrids in the genus that are worth looking out for including the diminutive *T. rivale* which has white flowers often with pink markings which is dead easy, takes up little space and is a delight; I wouldn't be without it. But in this short piece I want to sing the praises of one of its cousins, the more flamboyant *T. chloropetalum*.



T. chloropetalum

The form of this plant most often seen has striking maroon or purplish red, scented flowers over green foliage with chocolate marbling. It is a very variable species in the wild and in cultivation; the flowers can vary from white through yellow, pink, liver brown, purplish red, to a rich purple and many shades in between. The marbling on the leaves can vary also, in some clones almost competing with the flower for attention.

**“It is fully hardy
and not too much
troubled by pests
and diseases”**

As well as the variation within the species it also hybridizes with *T. albidum*, another beauty, which can add to the confusion making identification difficult sometimes. It is a Californian native and thrives in a humus rich, reasonably free-draining soil in light shade. It can also be grown in a pot. It is fully hardy and not too much troubled by pests and diseases although it can be damaged by molluscs. It is rhizomatous and grows to about 60cm tall and in time makes a substantial clump. It is easily propagated by seed, although it's a slow process, taking five to seven years to flower, and by division of the rhizome. Plants are seldom seen in garden centres but are available by mail order. I grow seven or eight specimens in various parts of my garden, and I wouldn't be without them.

Apart from the form with maroon/purple flowers, plants with the other colours mentioned are seldom seen. Around the year 2000, I think, I was given a couple of seedlings of *T. chloropetalum* by that great Northern Irish gardener, Bob Gordon. Bob got his trilliums many years ago from the late Dr Keith Lamb and planted them in his woodland. Originally the plants were the standard colour but as they seeded around over the years colour variants appeared the first being a dingy white which had no appeal but, later, plants with greenish yellow flowers appeared. The seedlings that Bob gave me came from close to one of these plants. I planted them in the garden and in a few years, they flowered, all but one being the usual colour. That one, however, was a clear yellow and is a really beautiful plant and very unusual. By 2013 the plant had bulked up a bit and I decided to pot it up to bring to one of the AGS shows in

**“As a tribute to
my good friend
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2014. It was at its best for the Ulster Show that year where it was judged best plant in the Show. It was also assessed by the Joint Rock Committee (AGS, RHS and SRGC) which sat at the Show and which gave it an Award of Merit and invited me to name it. As a tribute to my good friend Bob, I chose to call it *Trillium chloropetalum* ‘Bob Gordon’ and it is now registered under that name with the RHS. Over the past few years, I have given bits to a number of good growers and it is my hope that in the not-too-distant future it will become available commercially. I attach a photo of it as well as one of a nice clump of one of the more normal forms which has given me great pleasure each spring over the past ten plus years. ■

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Slow foraging was great enrichment

Gardening for Gorillas

Stephen Butler
Curator of Horticulture (retired)
Dublin Zoo 1981–2018

Some of you may remember how Dublin Zoo used to look around 1980, very open, very little planting, and many ‘cages’ or ‘enclosures’ for the various animals – and usually little or no planting in the animal areas at all.

Walk around Dublin Zoo now, with double the acreage, and see far fewer pathways, almost no steps, mass planting in most areas, and many animal areas densely planted too. I was privileged to oversee the plant side of these changes over 37 years – I retired in 2018 – and often wondered whether it



The gorilla seemed to be waiting for the willow catkins to get big enough, while his mangabey neighbours attacked the *Gunnera manicata* buds, taking just the flowers. Who taught who?

would be worth recording the changes, something along the lines of 'I made a garden...'. There was always the thought though that whereas there may be a book inside everyone, sometimes it is best to leave it there! My mind was made up for me by a twist of fate. As a volunteer editor for a World Association of Zoos and Aquariums design organization called ZooLex, I was asked if I would be going to a zoo design conference in Poland back in 2017. I said it was unlikely, and was then asked 'if you do come, would you give a talk on the gorilla rainforest please'. That was different, and gave me 'leverage'! I went, I gave my 15 mins talk, and then a break for coffee...but I could not get there. A short queue of zoo directors, curators, and designers were lined up to shake me by the hand. They had all been at a zoo conference in Belfast the previous year, and had travelled down to see Dublin too. They all had the same impression of the zoo, the planting made it special, and they wanted to congratulate me – a humbling experience that stayed with me. Two also asked 'are there any books on horticulture in zoos'? That question was also frequently asked whenever I gave talks around Ireland.

So, once I retired, with a little more free-time, I started thinking – the first 6 months were spent sorting file after file of pictures – time well spent if a little tardy. The book would need to take the form of a brief chapter about myself and my horticulture experience before the zoo, and the zoo appearance when I took up the post in 1981. When giving talks I often say that when I arrived, I was young, energetic and good looking, while the zoo was old, run down and tired – now the roles are reversed! Then chapters about how the planting was

**“Networking
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decided on. Forget for the moment seasons of interest, flower colour, scent, and all the usual niceties of garden design, and think of one aspect first, second, and third. Will it poison the animals? Is the plant edible, not palatable (a good point to remember), or poisonous? Is it poisonous enough to make an animal sick – or will it kill them? Not a qualification I wanted to put on my CV, gorilla exterminator. Networking with many other zoos was incredibly useful here, and the zoo horticulture community has created a remarkable web-based plant listing, searchable by

animal or plant name, that is getting bigger daily, and is now the first port of call for any inquiry.

Then chapters about each area as we designed and built them, plenty of pictures of mud and mess at times, and a few odd items that only a zoo would do – who else would cut a full grown (but failing) tree down and replant it minus roots in concrete? That was to fix a feeding station – it looks as if the giraffes are feeding from the tree, well, sort of! Mind you the tree came into leaf despite no roots...

Chapters about soil compaction, a regular issue in many zoos, and how we had solved some of them, and a little bit about our weeding and mulching regimes, crucial to maintaining 70 acres with 5 gardeners. Ah, hold on, 2 lakes, kilometres of paths, and some animal areas might reduce that total acreage! Add in chapters about native flora and fauna, and include unusual weeds – such as cannabis...

The last and largest chapter is basically for any education team within a zoo – but hopefully it will be an interesting and informative read for anyone interested in plants. Did you know that bananas are cylindrical berries, while strawberries, blackberries and raspberries are not berries at all? Try and explain why many plants from dry climates, and some submerged water plants, have a similar method of carbon fixation where the stomata only open at night – though the reasons are different! Called Crassulacean Acid Metabolism as it was first observed in *Crassula* – and you can see hardy *Crassula sarcocaulis* along the African Savanna pathways.

“The day finally arrived to allow the gorillas access to their new habitat. This was planned a little ahead of the official opening – just to make sure they actually went out and explored. This was fortunate, as they showed very careful attention to moving past their door at first. Most interesting was the fact that the girls went out first. The big silverback male sat in the doorway, calling the girls back whenever they found any regular food (hidden earlier by the animal team) and gratefully taking it off them. A little bit like the good wife nipping up to the shops for the husband watching tv... Watching the gorillas pushing into the vegetation was an education in itself – for the gorillas and any observers. Remember, the gorillas had been used to a simple rough grass area plus a few turf weeds, and now they had this vast array of new plants. Will it hurt if they pushed through the plants? Are the plants edible? For the first few days, the gorillas even avoided the cardoon – *Cynara cardunculus*, jumping over it if it was in their path. On the very first day, one female gorilla targeted the purple willow *Salix purpurea*. Not surprising as they would have been given several different species of cut willow to browse for many years. But not *S. purpurea*. She pulled the plant up first. It was from cuttings we had raised in the nursery and nurtured. Groans came from the horticulture team. Laughs came from the animal team. She stripped the leaves off and pushed them into her mouth, instantly spitting them back out and throwing the plant stem down in disgust. Cheers from the horticulture team. Moans from the animal team. Then came the tentative question, 'Is it poisonous?'

Purple willow *Salix purpurea* was immediately targeted as it was recognised as willow, which is normally edible. *S. purpurea* was selected for planting as it is not eaten by rabbits, due to the higher salicylic acid content making it very bitter. The salicylic acid in willow is a well-known plant source of aspirin. Years ago, the doctrine of signatures used for medicinal guidance said that trembling willow leaves were good for a trembling fever, and they were. No doubt, each gorilla and mangabey had to discover that this species is not nice to eat, and some plants were lost. But out of the 100 or so planted, enough have grown to 3m bushes to give a good shrubby look to some areas. After a few years, once large enough, *S. purpurea* started flowering, giving masses of catkins along the thin twigs, typical of a willow. Both the gorillas and the mangabey were seen one spring in the middle of the bushes, pulling the shoots down, stripping off growth, and letting go. Only with binoculars could anyone see what they were doing. Very carefully, the catkins – only the catkins, were being removed, no young leaves or bark and immediately popped into waiting mouths. Individual technique varied, maybe one catkin at a time, maybe a few. The gorillas were even seen with green chins from the pollen. Obviously proving a tasty and totally unexpected mouthful. The question remains, why? Is the catkin a temporary growth that the willow does not bother forming the bitter salicylic acid within? Is the nectar sweet enough to hide the bitter flavour? Most likely to keep the nectar sweet for pollinators, the bitter salicylic acid is not produced in the catkin. Once flowering stops, the willow is left alone again, until next year, apart from incidental damage from playing and climbing. ”

One challenge encountered watching this interaction was the reaction from one of the gorillas. Whenever some of the horticulture team came around with a camera and binoculars to see what was being eaten, the gorilla immediately stopped doing whatever it was engaged in, looked up, watched, and shadowed the photographer all around the moat, always looking directly at the photographer. But only when the photographer was wearing the zoo uniform or was alone. If they went around with a group of visitors, they were not noticed so easily. The best pictures were taken while taking guided tours around. Indeed, the observer does sometimes change the observed. ■

**One challenge
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the reaction from
one of the gorillas**

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"Surely we have a responsibility to leave for future generations a planet that is healthy and habitable by all species." David Attenborough.

Fast Fashion

Aideen Higgins at Murphy & Wood Garden Centre

We are very fortunate to have access to so many gardening events, shows, magazines and articles. It's a thriving industry full of great, experienced people willing to share their knowledge

It is wonderful to have easy access to information about new ideas, new products, new varieties, and methods of gardening. It inspires and motivates us to get outside and improve our environment, and personally I love the life long learning. Each season has its own interest and there's always something to do or change.

However, with this comes a recurring issue. An article/show comes out

referring to a specific plant or product and nothing will do us except to have that particular plant variety or, that brand of product. Of course, they all look/sound fabulous, but do we need that plant? Will it suit the style of garden we have? Is there that much difference between the varieties/brands and have I something similar? We get so excited to see the new purple Agapanthus or this year's colour combinations.

Mostly, these products will have some improvement, e.g., blight resistant Buxus, thornless Blackberry, natural slug killer. But it's up to us to filter the information and make informed choices, so as not to get caught up in unnecessary wasteful consumerism. ■

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Michael Wilkinson

Hough's Garden, Ballinderry, Co Tipperary

Mary Hackett

When, like Michael Wilkinson, your childhood stomping ground was the gorgeous garden of Tyrrelstown House in north Co Dublin, you know a few things about big, country gardens. Michael built his Tipperary home on a two-and-a-half-acre field in 2007. Developing a large-scale garden from scratch takes time, money, and physical strength. The time Michael can give his garden is limited by his other commitments. A hip replacement in early 2019 necessitated a review of his most ambitious gardening projects. Now Michael is balancing ambition and realism in plotting the direction in which his garden will develop.

'Hough's Garden' is situated in woodland near Ballinderry on the shores of Lough Derg. Its setting is both a challenge and its greatest asset. "I

have an extraordinary range of wildlife in this garden", Michael tells me as we watch a fox saunter across his lawn. "Red squirrels come to my bird feeders every day and the garden is full of birdsong". He is not so enthusiastic about sharing his space with deer. We look at his orchard where fallow deer have decimated the fruit trees. "Pests", Michael says, a view shared by many rural gardeners. Keeping deer out of the garden is a constant concern. "As well as maintaining fences, it's a matter of good practice and discipline", he explains. "Gates must be kept closed. Deer in this area won't jump fences but they will find access through any chink in the defences". Michael has been defeated by the pine martens who have cleaned out his hen run twice. "I'm rethinking that space and forgetting about the hens", he says.



Red Squirrel at bird feeder



Hot border with Dahlias

When planting his borders Michael had the space to think big and bright. Extensive lawns and woodland compliment vibrant planting and the clarity of light that comes from being so close to a large body of water helps knit Michael's ideas together. When I visited Ballinderry in late July 2022, the 'hot' south facing border was blazing with purples and reds. *Hydrangea* 'Annabelle' is used as an accent. While the deep red dahlia 'Arabian Night' is doing all a dahlia should, Michael's dahlias in general have disappointed this year. "Perhaps because I don't lift them", he muses. *Delphinium* 'Clifford Sky' was found on Finlay Colley's Rare Plants stall at a Bellefield sale years ago. *Cotinus* 'Grace' is rampaging towards the back of the border. "To be savaged someday soon", promises Michael. *Paeony* 'Bowl of Beauty' is the spring accent in this bed and performs well on slightly limey soil.

Briars and ivy are the bane of country gardens. "While I want a reasonably formal garden, I'm not fixated on tidiness", Michael says." With limited time and intermittent assistance, Michael has decided to maintain some areas more thoroughly than others. "To manage the gravel area in front of the house where *Centranthus* (more commonly called valerian) was spectacular a week or so ago, I spend four days in the winter weeding on my hands and knees to prevent the briars and weeds taking over. I have a lot of galanthus under the trees in the new wood and that area is to be strimmed. But in general, I'm working with nature rather than against her. I like trees and I've been surprised by how well magnolias grow here. When I am satisfied that the deer are excluded, I will plant a range of magnolia in the informal lawn to the back of the house".



Delphinium 'Clifford Sky'



Centranthus



Golden Marjoram and
Catmint 'Six Hill's Giant'

Many of the new magnolia trees will have been grown from layered cuttings taken by Michael from established plants. "I am also going to try 'plant rooting balls' to see if this is quicker than layering."

Among the key influences Michael Wilkinson's style were the walled garden at Gurthallougha House (A site from this property is where Hough's Garden is now) where Michael and his wife lived from 1980. Extensive garden visits and reading were a pleasure. At Hough's Garden, Michael has used beech hedges to create an enclosed space within which colour curated planting was intended. But with time Michael has found that he is comfortable with a more relaxed palette. "One of my best garden combinations", he says, pointing out front of border planting. "Catmint with golden marjoram. At its peak it really looks fabulous. Of course, some control is needed. The marjoram will seed everywhere if it is not cut back".

Looking to the future, Michael is thinking about plants that will bulk up and fill the borders. "I'm less uptight about controlling the colour combinations and working more towards well filled beds". Columns of variegated holly are year-round accents. Michael points out a local plant *Anthemis* 'Grallagh Gold' which was first identified in the townland of Grallagh near Bansha, Co Tipperary. *Hedychium* 'Helen Dillon' was a purchase from Crùg Nurseries. But Michael is less and less convinced that exotics are good in Irish gardens, feeling that in his midland garden at least the summers are just not warm enough for optimal performance.

Recognising that he is a little less energetic than he might have been ten years ago and that there are other calls on both his time and his income, Michael Wilkinson's pragmatic aim is to simplify his garden so that he and his family can continue to enjoy it. RHSI gardeners both urban and rural will empathise with his approach. ■



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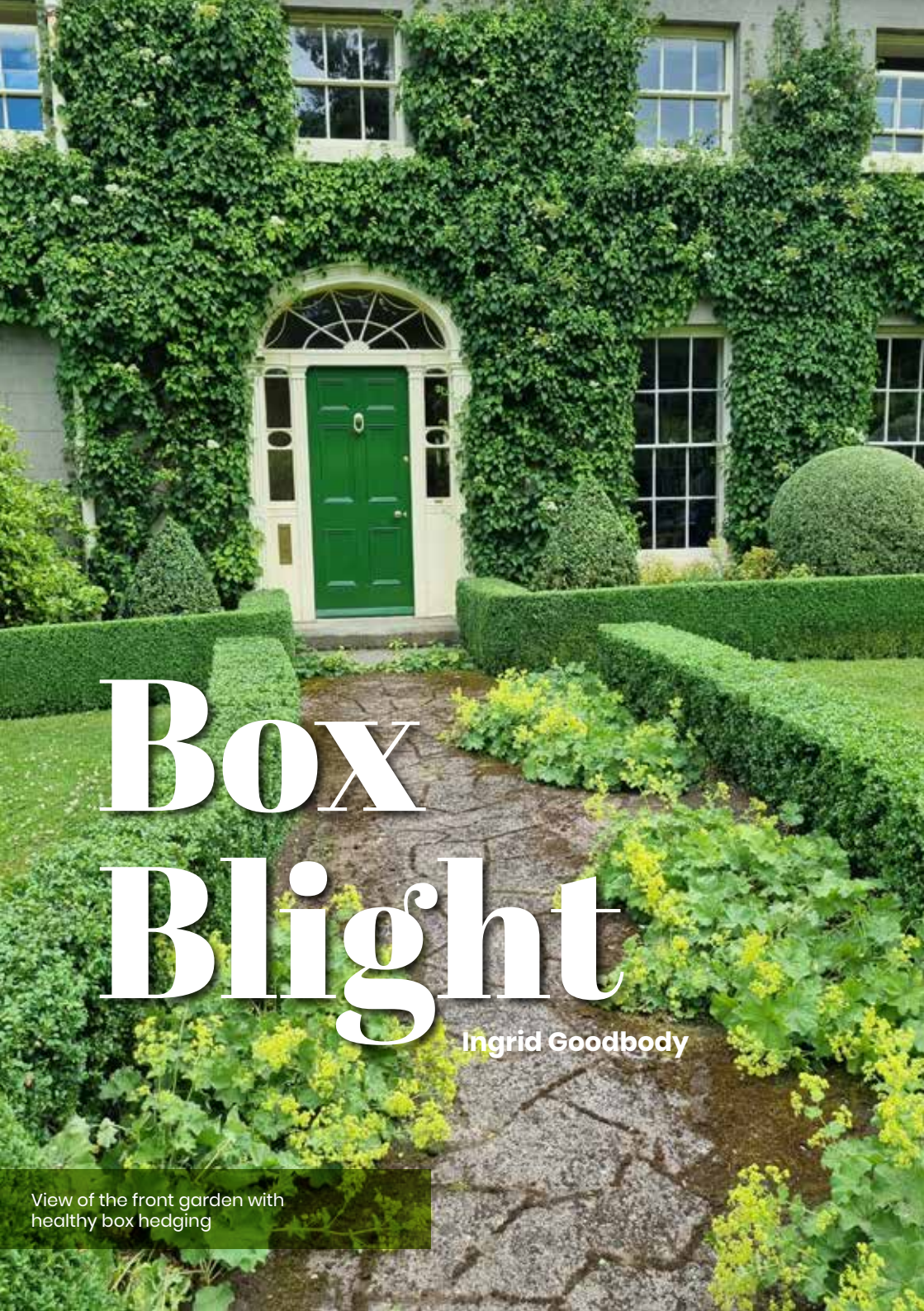
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Box Blight

Ingrid Goodbody

View of the front garden with
healthy box hedging

I live in a Georgian House in Old Connaught, near Bray. I have a garden circa one acre and a walled front garden with a pedestrian entrance. When we moved to this house in 1988 with our young family, I became interested in box hedging and planned out the front garden. I propagated all the plants from a box bush I rescued from a house in Shankill which was demolished in the early 1990s to make way for the M11. Over the next 20 years I propagated more than 130m of box and planted the front garden first

I became inspired with the success of the box hedging and expanded into the back garden. I was aware of box blight but naively thought that as I had never used imported plants in the hedging, that my hedges were not vulnerable. Also, to my shame, I never fed the plants, and assumed my homemade compost was enough.

I have been careful to have the box cut by professionals and up to last December, 2021 all was well.

Just before Christmas, I noticed a large area of discoloured leaves on the top of the hedging leading up to the back door.

I immediately examined the rest of the box hedging and noticed some discolouration in other areas but it looked more like rust. I contacted the gardening advisory section available to RHS members, in Wisley, and asked for help. It was not an option to send diseased leaves and branches to the UK, but I sent photographs. One of the scientists replied very quickly to say it looked like box blight, probably *Volutella buxi* which is the less serious box blight



View of first damaged leaves
in December 2021

and has been present in the UK and Ireland for many years. This fungus spreads in wet humid conditions and indeed we did have an exceptionally warm late autumn in 2021. Pinkish spores appear on the underside of the leaves, and are carried in water splashes to new sites. Fallen leaves carry the disease over the winter and new spores are produced in the spring. *Volutella* enters the plant through clipping cuts and other forms of damage to the leaves and stems.

The other box blight *Cylindrocladium buxicola* is more serious and has been present in the UK and Ireland since the

mid-1990s. The leaves develop dark brown spots which enlarge to affect leaf tissues. Patches of greyish fungal growth appear on the underside of the leaves and spores are soon released to spread infection. Black streaks appear on the stems. The spores are capable of penetrating the leaf surface, so wounding via pruning cuts is not necessary for infection to occur. The infected leaves easily fall off the plant and the stems are typically left bare. *Cylindrocladium* requires moist conditions to thrive, so the spores die in dry conditions. Live spores have been found in decomposing leaves after one year, so it is important to remove any debris, burn if possible, and never put clippings on the compost heap.

From looking at the original photographs, the scientists thought there might be some evidence of caterpillars of the moth *Cydalima perspectalis*. It was thought by enlarging my photos, that there might be evidence of chewed leaves. I could find no caterpillars and was most distressed at this point having watched Monty Don in the gardens of the Adriatic, where the wonderful ancient parterres of box have been totally devastated by the caterpillars defoliating the plants.

I was advised that the way to deal with this disease is to remove the box hedging and replant with something else. However, I found it difficult to even think of destroying twenty years of work so I decided to try to manage the disease.

It is difficult to completely eliminate box blight, but it is possible to reduce the impact of the disease with good management.

“It is difficult to completely eliminate box blight, but it is possible to reduce the impact of the disease with good management”

The priority is to remove as much inoculum (infected material which could be carrying spores) from the hedge as possible.

My most infected hedge was removed and as I cannot burn material, it was sent off to the council green waste facility Green King on the way to Gorey, where the temperatures are extremely hot, and will kill off any spores.

The rest of the hedging was cut by 1/3, to healthy tissue, by professional topiary cutters, with sharp sterilised clippers. This removes the inoculum, and also creates a more open structure. All the cuttings were removed from the



View of first damaged leaves
in December 2021

centre of the hedge which was now very bare, and from underneath as well. This was a monumental job and very hard on my hands and arms. It was advised to sterilise clippers and secateurs between use on healthy and diseased areas. This should be carried out in dry conditions. Clothes should be washed immediately.

It is advised to reduce humidity in box hedging by removing overhanging vegetation, and not applying overhead watering.

I used TopBuxus health mix which is a foliar feed and can be used frequently during the year March to December

I used TopBuxus XenTari as a foliar spray against the Box moth caterpillar. It is indicated three times a year to coincide with the moth laying the eggs and the eggs hatching. It is a biological insecticide and contains a natural potent strain of *Bacillus thuringiensis* which controls the caterpillars. It is not harmful to humans, wildlife or beneficial insects such as bees for pollination, or

insect predators. I also got Pheromone traps for the moths which are indicated in May, and end of July.

The cut box hedging has recovered amazingly well and all the cut bare stems in the middle have healthy new growth. I have found no moths in the Pheromone traps. I have found no caterpillars so far.

But ... after the extremely wet weather we had at the end of the dry spell from July to August 2022, I have noticed some discoloured leaves again now in mid-September, which is discouraging.

I have been advised not to have the hedge cut again until the Spring by the RHS gardening advice section to give the recent regrowth time to mature.

I have been actively looking for alternatives to *Buxus sempervirens* but have found nothing which can compare. I have another box hedge of a different species, which has a more open growing habit, and can be moved to the front garden if necessary if my management of the present box does not work. I know there is a section in Wisley where there are trials on alternatives to box, and I hope to go over there myself in the Spring.

I hope this has been of some use to those of you who are quaking in your boots at the prospect of your beautiful box hedges and topiaries succumbing to diseases of box. Box blight can be managed fairly successfully but is it worth the scratches, effort time and expense?

The jury is out!!! ■



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The Walled Garden, Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

Peter Harris, Keeper of the Walled Garden

In March of this year, I had the honour of assuming the role of 'Keeper of the Walled Garden' at Hillsborough Castle and Gardens. A role that requires me, along with my team, to tend and maintain an enclosed area just shy of four acres. This area is a mix of ornamental and productive use with the aim of providing visitors with an opportunity to see what can be grown in our local environment and hopefully learn from interaction with the walled garden team, any tips and tricks we use in the practice of good crop husbandry.

On the ornamental side we have six long borders following a central axis, leading to a dipping pond, with mainly herbaceous planting with spring, summer and autumn interest.

On the productive side we have a range of fruit and vegetable comprising a number of heritage varieties.

In this introductory article I will focus on providing a short history of the walled garden and outline our approach to organic and sustainable gardening.

A potted horticultural history of Hillsborough Castle Walled Garden:

- The walled garden is depicted on a map of c.1788 in the shape that it retains to this day. It was built by the Hill family to provide produce throughout the year for the family. It had paths running east to west intersected by paths running north to south giving 16 plots for productive cultivation.
- 1835 – OS map shows a simplified internal path system giving larger plots.
- Mid- 19th century – First depiction of the ‘Shell House’ on the OS map. Originally labelled as the ‘Gate Lodge’, it is a much-loved feature today.
- Late 19th century/20th Century – During the time of 6th and 7th Marquis of Downshire, Head Gardener, Thomas Bradshaw grew apples, pears, cherries, plums, peaches, nectarines, apricots, currants, damsons, melons, raspberries and strawberries. He was a skilled gardener and exhibited his produce at RHS shows in London.
- 1922 – Property sold to Ministry of Works and renamed Government House. Walled garden turned over to commercial interest.
- 1972 – Government House becomes the official residence of the Secretaries of State, now known as Hillsborough Castle. Head Gardener retires. The Walled Garden is mothballed.
- 1999 – Mo Mowlem sees potential in the walled garden and is keen it is put to some use. It is let out to Action Mental Health.
- 2007 – 2012 – The Garden Show of Ireland hosted annually. Minimal cultivation between shows. The area was an expanse of grass with a few mature trees, a dipping pool and sheep grazing it.
- 2014 – Historic Royals palaces takes over the demesne.
- 2017 – Redevelopment of the walled garden begins, the garden was completely redeveloped, with only the mature espalier apple trees remaining. The layout of the garden was designed similar to the original layout; however, a few modern twists were added.
- 2019 – The garden opens officially to the public.



Looking west 2017



Looking south 2022

Within the walled garden we follow a range of principles to reduce our environmental impact.

We garden organically using a no-dig approach in all areas of the walled garden. This means no pesticides, insecticides or artificial fertilisers are used. This can cause a few headaches and sore backs but other horticultural methods are practised and we are often seen experimenting with alternative methods of organic pest control.

Sustainability is also an important principle and is a key strategy across the Historic Royal Palaces group. We employ several methods to ensure we garden sustainably including:

- Composting – All green waste is composted along with a good mix of brown waste from chipping done on site and cardboard from the café. This is then added to our walled garden beds when ready to give a lovely rich soil to grow in. An additional benefit from composting is the effluent that is stored in an



Looking west 2017 – Entrance to the garden from visitor centre

underground tank. Diluted this can be used as a natural plant feed.

- Recycling – Pots are reused within are propagation unit and only recyclable pots used for any plant sales.
- Water capture – Rain water is stored in large tanks that is captured from our large machinery shed.

If you have the time to visit Hillsborough Castle and Gardens please stop and have a chat with any of the gardeners. We like to share our successes and failures and are always open to advice from like-minded people. ■

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Floral Art

Karen Robinson

Hello to all our floral art enthusiasts.

Hope you all had a lovely Summer, and what a hot one it turned out to be. The flowers in my garden were parched along with myself and then we got heavy rain that flattened them all! But we are busy now planting bulbs for next Spring.

Bloom 2022

Bloom was a fantastic event with well over 50 Floral Art entries. Congratulations to Sutton Floral Art Group for staging the AOIFA entry this year, all their hard work paid off as they took home the Gold award!

Please see a small selection of photos of some of the prize-winning

entries; with some from our members, so well done to all. I hope you enjoy them, and hopefully you got to see them 'live' at Bloom.

AOIFA also staged a wonderful Flower Festival in early July in the three churches in Naas town which was a huge success.

Hope to see a lot of our members at the AOIFA Nationals in Galway Bay Hotel weekend of 7th to 9th October 2022.

Enjoy the changing colours of Autumn and hope many of you can join us online for our Christmas demonstration. Dates and details on the weekly update from RHSI office. ■

Best regards,
Karen Robinson



AOIFA Gold Exhibit - Sutton Floral Art Group



'Unbridled Joy' (Petite Exhibit) -
Gold Award to Anne Clifford



'This Radiant Season' -
Silver Award to Caroline Stewart



'Phenomenal Forms' -
Silver Gilt Award to Harumi Langford



'Phenomenal Forms' -
Bronze Award to Christopher White



'Unbridled Joy' -
Silver Gilt Award to Marie O'Leary



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Brassicas, Alliums and Perennial Fruit and Vegetables

Deborah Ballard

It's autumn, and we have nothing to look forward to but dismal brassicas. Some people like them, but I never have, although now I'm losing my sense of smell, a consequence of ageing, I mind them less.

Purple sprouting broccoli is delicious, and you may be able to buy young plants from garden centres, although they should have been sown in April – June. My *bête noire*, Brussels sprouts,



Crambe maritima

should have been sown at the same time, as these are slow-growing vegetables. I now find I like Brussels sprouts cooked with strips of rashers or chestnuts. Cabbage I now enjoy, especially red cabbage, cooked with apple and shallots, and green cabbage cooked with caraway.

All brassicas need ‘cabbage collars’ against the horrible cabbage root fly, whose maggots eat the roots; I find carpet underlay the best and you can cut out big pieces. Also, they need netting (Bionet is good) as soon as they’re transplanted from the seed-bed, against the white butterfly caterpillars, which can strip leaves of brassicas overnight. Plant nasturtiums near the brassica bed, as it can be a sacrificial plant, luring the root flies and white butterflies, but still net – and inspect your brassicas for eggs. Our pigeons are uncivilised and don’t know about brassicas, but keep the nets on over winter, if yours aren’t.

It’s not too late (early September) to sow cabbages in pots or modules in a greenhouse or poly tunnel, to be planted as soon as the delicious summer vegetables come out. And it’s the same for sorrel and spinach (Palco Fl is very good) and cold-hardy lettuce, like Winter Density. Tuscan black kale is an upright plant which doesn’t take up much room, but Red Russian kale takes up a bit more. They are both very hardy, and can be planted outside, as the Scots well know.

Late October or November is a good time to plant garlic in the vegetable plot, as it needs about 10 weeks of sharp cold to form cloves. I plant shallots at the same time, although people say

you should plant them on the shortest day and harvest them on the longest day, but I need the allium bed for other vegetables, like Florence fennel, so I harvest them in early June. It’s worth planting a few hard-neck garlic; they don’t keep as well, but the young leaves and flowers (‘scapes’) are delicious and mild in an omelette or frittata.

“One-year-old crowns tend to settle in faster, but I’m very greedy, and planted two-year-old crowns”

Autumn is a good time to plant perennial fruit and vegetables, while the weather is still mild. Asparagus can be got as one-year-old or two-year-old ‘crowns’. What you do is dig in loads of manure and compost, and then dig down about a foot, make a little 3” ridge along the row, and spread the roots of the crown over the ridge, 18” apart, with 2 ½-3’ between the rows. Then back-fill, in stages, and you’re away in a hack. One-year-old crowns tend to settle in faster, but I’m very greedy, and planted two-year-old crowns. Then you have only to wait for two more years; you can have a little taste (one spear from each plant), but you must let the crowns establish well. Once your asparagus bed is established, you can cut for two months; but then stop. Put posts in the

ground round the bed, and support the top-growth with several rows of string. Cover the bed with 2" of manure or compost in winter, after you've cut the ferny top-growth back.

“Strawberries need a spell of cold weather to initiate bud and flower formation”

I'm a big fan of seakale. I planted 'thongs' (root cuttings) given to me by a friend – much easier than sowing seeds, which you have to 'chip'. It's, surprisingly, a rather greedy plant; heaven knows why, as it grows on sandy seashores. In late autumn, strip off the leaves and pile manure or garden compost round the crowns, but not touching them. In late January, up-end a black bucket over the crowns (I use heavy horse-buckets, as winter gales don't shift them). By March you will be eating delicious, 8", tender, blanched leaves in butter. Check regularly for slugs, which love the conditions under the bucket. Only cover every other seakale plant, as it's a strain on them being forced every year, and they won't last. Beds of seakale and asparagus, properly looked after, will last for nearly twenty years.

Purple sprouting broccoli is equally delicious, though not a perennial – in the Hungry Gap (March to May) we eat like princes, and then the wonderful summer vegetables come in – delicious peas, broad and French beans,

courgettes and tomatoes, although as our poly tunnel has mesh sides, they don't ripen until the end of July, even though I plant them out at the beginning of May. Sungold Fl, an early, orange cherry tomato, is my favourite – when I'm in the poly tunnel, I eat them like sweets. But I was smug in the hot summer of 2018, as most vegetables stop growing at 35°C, and it seldom went over 33°C.

Strawberries need a spell of cold weather to initiate bud and flower formation, but you can bring them into a greenhouse or poly tunnel in late January/early February for an extra early crop. It's most convenient to bring them in in largish pots, but because our soil is so dry and sandy, I plant them in a bed. We grow Cambridge Favourite, which last for about six years, but home-grown Elsanta are also good, a revelation compared with shop-bought. Strawberries produce most in their second year, so plant runners in September to make a new bed, digging in plenty of manure or compost.

Plant raspberries when the weather is still mild, as late as November. They need humus-rich soil, so prepare the bed well with compost or manure. We are lazy, so we plant autumn raspberries, which don't need supports and fruit in their first year ('primocanes'). Cut them back in February, but don't cut them all the canes back, as you will get a summer crop as well. They are terrible spreaders, so it's best to plant them near grass, so you can mow off the 'spawn'.

It's also a good time to plant rhubarb, until mid-November, and fruit trees, and you can do this until mid-December. ■

Tasks For Autumn & Winter

Deborah Ballard

Plan your vegetable rotation for next year

Whether you have space for three beds (potatoes, legumes and brassicas, in that order) or four (include alliums and roots) or six beds (include courgettes, squash, chard, spinach, and perhaps a separate root or allium bed) plan your rotation and order seeds in mid-winter.

Plant perennial vegetables and fruit

Late October and November are good for planting garlic and shallots and over-wintering onions. Raspberries and strawberries can be planted in September, and bring strawberries into the greenhouse or poly tunnel in early February for an extra early crop. Fruit trees can be planted as late as mid-December, but not in frosty or very wet weather.

Weed and cover your vegetable beds

Dig out dandelions and weed your vegetable beds, then cover them with a 2" layer of compost or manure, or, alternatively, green manure. You need to plan ahead with green manures, as you need to dig them in to rot down

before you're ready to sow or plant your crops. Alternatively, cut them back and add to the compost heap, then only the roots need to rot down.

Sow tomato, chillis and peppers in late January

This is best done on a heated propagator, as they are rather slow-growing; pot them on before they get spindly, as light levels are low at this time of year. Hold off with climbing beans and squashes and courgettes, as your windowsills will be a jungle, and the beans will be spindly.

And enjoy your little bulbs and blossom...

Netted iris are always the first, followed by winter aconites and snowdrops, then cheerful Tete à Tete daffodils, Pulmonaria and Brunnera. Netted iris leaves grow more as the flowers fade, so the best place for these is the middle of the border, as they can look very untidy, especially as they can flop. Plums come into bloom first, in March, followed by cherries and then apples, in May. A late frost can reduce Magnolia flowers to brown rags, but they will come back. ■

National Botanic Gardens of Ireland Glasnevin and Kilmacurragh



The National Botanic Gardens of Ireland are an oasis of calm and beauty, and entry is free. A premier scientific institution, the Gardens contain important collections of plant species and cultivars from all over the world. The National Botanic Gardens in Dublin are located in Glasnevin, just three kilometres from Dublin City Centre, and are famous for the exquisitely restored historic glasshouses. The National Botanic Gardens in Wicklow are located in Kilmacurragh, where the milder climate, higher rainfall, and deeper, acidic soils of this historic Wicklow garden provide a counterpoint to the collections at Glasnevin. The two Gardens have been closely associated since 1854. The National Botanic Gardens are open every day in both Glasnevin and Kilmacurragh, and are free to enter and explore.

Guided tours are provided daily at Glasnevin and seasonally at Kilmacurragh.

Christmas at Glasnevin includes the Christmas Eco Craft Market on 10th and 11th December and Flower Arranging Evening on Wednesday 14th December.



For more information see
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Russborough Notes

Anne Camilla Voss

The months and weeks up to the RHSI Garden Show are always a mad rush to produce quality plants for sale and spruce up the garden in its best finery for the day. This year the show was in May, which can be a bit challenging in terms of garden colour but although the weather gods weren't with us, we still had a great day and enjoyed the compliments from the visitors. At the moment we are busy planning and buying bulbs for next year's show to make sure the garden is the splendid showcase it deserves to be.

The warm spring and hot summer this year means we have a bumper crop of melons, soft fruit and vegetables. We're still picking raspberries and



Produce for sale

blackberries well into October and at the gate we have blackberry/apple and raspberry jam for sale. Visitor numbers may be down but as long as we have jam, we make money.

In late September we had a visit from the volunteers at Laurelmere. They helped us lift and divide some of our plants, who sorely needed it, and as a thank you, they took lots of new plants with them back to Marley Park where I know the plants will thrive.

In the beginning of October, we picked a lot of the apples for FoodCloud, a charity that collects fresh surplus food directly from retailers and food producers, and then redistribute that food to various charities in Ireland. I feel very proud knowing our apples will reach people who for one reason or another rely on charity for food and we helped provide that. Luckily there are still lots of apples left for not only the volunteers and visitors to the



Apples for restaurant

garden, but also for the restaurant at Russborough House, who've picked up a crate or two. Besides apples, the RHSI has made an arrangement with LoveFood, who runs the restaurant, to supply herbs and edible flowers. I hope the visitors at the restaurant enjoyed the food the chefs made from our offerings, and I'm proud to know that once again, the garden has supplied food for the house, like it was meant to when it was built. Long may we continue to do so. ■





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PARTNER GARDEN

Dawros Gallery & Garden

Noreen Keane

We are delighted to welcome a Wild Atlantic Way garden to our portfolio of Partner Gardens. Dawros Gallery & Garden is on the Beara peninsula in Co Kerry and set in native woodland along the Dromoughty River waterfall.

The contemporary house has replaced the ruin of an old stone cottage, and its four acre garden gradually blends out into surrounding countryside and more rugged Beara landscape. Close to the house the modern hard landscaping of patio and pool is softened by the use of tall perennial plants such as *Eupatorium*, *Verbena bonariensis* and a variety of grasses – producing a “Piet Oudolf inspired” effect.

Below this more cultivated area of the garden is an apple orchard of native Irish varieties. Stretching out further are native boglands and ponds, with board walks for crossing over wet areas, and a birch wood. Spring bulbs are spread throughout the woodland areas and garden as are many fascinating pieces of sculpture in natural mediums of wood, willow and stone.

Meanwhile in the Gallery there are exhibits of garden-inspired paintings and jewellery – also created by the garden owner and artist Charlotte Verbeek.



Address: Dawros Gallery & Garden,
Dromoughty Falls,
Dawros, Kenmare, Co Kerry. V93 X0Y3

Landline: 064 6642145

Mobile: 087 687 5461

Email: charlotteverbeek@me.com

Web: charlotteverbeek.com

Visits by appointment by email only.

Vehicle access limited to cars only due to very narrow access bridge.

Free entry to RHSI members on presentation of current membership card.



PARTNER GARDEN

Springhill

We have great pleasure in welcoming Springhill as the fifty third and most recent member of our Partner Garden group. Situated in Woodlands, on a hillside above the River Suir, Springhill is less than 10km from Waterford City. The present owners purchased twenty nine acres in 1987 and commenced the garden the following year. The site was moderately exposed, and learning from the well known Inverewe Garden in the Scottish Highlands, they planted native forest trees and hedging as a shelter belt for future wind sensitive tree planting such as acers. They now garden six acres of mildly acidic clay soil. This is quite manicured close to their house with box hedging, a Liscannor paved area, a pond with *Primula japonica* and hostas, and a maze. Moving further away from the house the garden becomes increasingly Robinsonian in style with a large and eclectic collection of trees planted at various stages over the past 35 years – but always guarding the wonderful vistas. Among the more mature trees there is a *Magnolia campbellii* 'Betty Jessel' reaching forty feet and the stunningly different *Chionanthus retusus* at twenty five. Another feature of this garden is its marvellous variety of wildlife – from the Great Spotted Woodpecker to red squirrels, otters, pine martens, foxes, mink, and every imaginable herbivore!



Address: Springhill, Woodlands, Faithlegge, Co Waterford. X91 E7W6.

Landline: 051 874 503

Mobile: 087 2737 165.

Email: Robin.Kane60@gmail.com

Visits by appointment only, using landline or mobile.

Free entry to RHSI members on presentation of current membership card.



PARTNER GARDEN

Tourin House & Gardens

We are very pleased to welcome a new Partner Garden in the Blackwater Valley, Co Waterford. Tourin House & Gardens is home to the Jameson family of Irish Whiskey fame, and the present ninth generation owners are all passionate gardeners. Whilst the original Tourin Castle dates back to 1560, the present day Tourin House was built in 1840 and its gardens were enlarged and redesigned. Since then, successive generations of the Musgrave and Jameson families have added to its glory.

The 15-acre gardens are made up of formal, walled and woodland gardens. In front of the house a small gate leads from the carriage sweep, to a pond set in a large area of lawn. The rest of the garden is reached via a Broad Walk, once lined by cedars and clipped yews. Now few remain, but many later plantings of rare and beautiful trees are set back from the path such as *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis* and *Rhododendron macrocarpum*. This wide formal path leads on to a winding woodland path through the Pleasure Grounds. There are many Southern Hemisphere, and other unusual trees thriving in this sheltered semi-maritime setting close to the tidal river. Thence to the walled garden full of ornamental and productive plants including a collection of over



100 bearded irises. And finally, to an extensive nearby area of newly planted native woodland which already is home to Tourin's champion London Plane.

Address: Tourin House & Gardens
Tourin, Cappoquin,
Co Waterford, P51 YY1K

Landline: 058 54405

Mobile: 086 811 3841

Email: kristinjameson4@gmail.com

Web: tourin.ie

Visits by appointment.

Half price entry to RHSI members on presentation of current membership card.

FROM THE EDITOR'S GARDEN

Colchicum 'Felbrigg'

The colchicum family is welcomed in many gardens as it brings a touch of much needed colour at the very end of summer and into the early autumn.

A reasonable number of cultivars can be found in most garden centres and bulb catalogues but a little searching in the catalogues of specialist bulb nurseries or online, will lead the interested gardener to some 'rarer' and 'choice' selections.

Colchicum 'Felbrigg', definitely a 'choice' cultivar, came to the National



Photo Dr Nicola Milligan

Colchicum 'Felbrigg'

Collection of colchicums at Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk, from the famous garden of E. A. Bowles at Myddleton House. Originally referred to as C. 'Myddleton' it was renamed C. 'Felbrigg' by Christopher Grey-Wilson after receiving a Preliminary Commendation from the RHS in 2010.

*A very Merry Christmas
to our customers and
we look forward to
doing business with you
in 2023!*



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Dublin*

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Laurelmere Cottage Garden Notes

Cherry Sleeman

What a wonderful year we have had, marked by the absolute dedication of our 20 volunteers. At least 15 attend each Monday. They are the backbone of the garden and have taken us through a really dry summer with watering teams attending the garden every other day to water and care, especially for the extensive new planting.

Even so their dedication was stretched when the concerts in Marlay Park inhibited access and led to inventive skirting under gates and bringing the lawn mower across the stream to cut the grass.



Aster - Laurelmere Cottage Garden

Our other group of heroes are those who donated beautiful and interesting plants to the garden. Thank you Russborough garden team, Nicole for shrubs and roses, Jackie for sharing half of her garden and Peter for Acers, Hostas, Crocosmias and the RHSI rose 'Cream Cracker'. Thank you too to our own generous volunteers.

The development of a new beds has been exciting, with the White Garden at the end of the West border, the new lazy bed yielding spuds as taught and instructed by Liz Barker and the planting of the shade area at the back of the East border.

Plants of note are the blue *Salvia patens* raised from seed by Andrew Boyle, joined by two *Salvia guarantica* 'Black and Blue' and *Acnistus australis*



Plants must be watered

(syn. *Lochroma australe*) also donated by Andrew.

We hope to recommence our monthly short gardening talk and Monday lunches in the near future.

We are hopeful that funding may be found for a seat and for a raised bed for our less bendy garden volunteers. ■

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In Appreciation

Mary Hackett

Dr Mary Toomey PhD, botanist, educator, and a proud member of Sri Lanka's Tamil community died in Dublin on 26 May 2022.

Mary Toomey will be remembered with great affection by the Foxrock and District Garden Club of which she was a founding member and chair for thirteen years. When I interviewed her for the RHSI Journal in May 2018, she was a challenging, straight-talking interviewee, articulate about politics, education, ecology, and human rights. As we spoke the issue of racial discrimination in Ireland and her own identity as part of a racial and ethnic minority was very much to the forefront of her mind. Teaching was an enduring passion, and she was most fulfilled when she was passing on her vast knowledge of horticulture. An international expert on clematis and author of several books on the subject, Mary edited the journal of the British Clematis Society for many years and lectured widely on clematis, gardens, and gardening. A Japanese clematis cultivar 'Dr Mary' is named in her honour.

Mary Toomey sparked with ideas. While getting the Foxrock club off to a flying start, she used her formidable contact book to bring international speakers including such as the late Geoff Hamilton, Roy Lancaster, and



Dr Mary Toomey PhD

Anna Pavord to Dublin. In later years her thoughtful and informed approach to sustainability was a direct reflection of her commitment to pure science. 'Mediocre was not part of Mary's DNA', said a friend of hers recently.

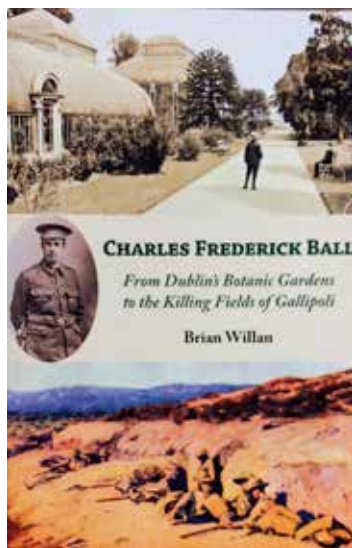
An energetic talker, a voracious reader, insatiably curious and inherently dignified, Mary Toomey's many friends, colleagues and collaborators will miss and remember her. ■

Book Review

Peter Milligan

Charles Frederick Ball
From Dublin's Botanic Gardens to the
Killing Fields of Gallipoli

Brian Willan
The Liffey Press Ltd., Dublin
Softback, pp. 1-188
ISBN: 078-1-7397892-0-6



Many gardeners will be aware of the beautiful *Escallonia* 'C. F. Ball' but few will be aware of the life of the man after whom the plant was named.

This book lifts the veil on Charles Frederick (Fred) Ball providing a thoughtful and insightful description of the life of a man tipped for greatness from an early age.

It appears that Fred Ball was well-liked by his fellow workers and held in great esteem by his employers. It was this high regard of both his character and his work ethic that led to an appointment at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin and, shortly after that initial appointment, to the position of Assistant Keeper at Glasnevin.

Fred Ball worked hard at Glasnevin and, in addition, joined a number of societies, gave talks, took on the editorship of a journal, and corresponded with many prominent private and public gardens establishing a network for the sharing of plant material.

Well respected in his field – it was widely believed that he would succeed Frederick Moore as Keeper of the gardens – with a wide network of friends and colleagues in the world of horticulture who held him in the highest regard – his life could have been one of triumph and distinction.

Sadly, all of this came to an end with C. F. Ball's death in the ill-fated first world war campaign at Gallipoli. The closing sentence of this wonderful book sums up what might have been "one can only wonder about the life that lay before him had it not ended so tragically".

This book is a must-read for anyone interested in one of Ireland's great horticulturalists. ■

Book Review

Mary Hackett

Gardening for Gorillas

Stephen Butler

Orla Kelly Publishing

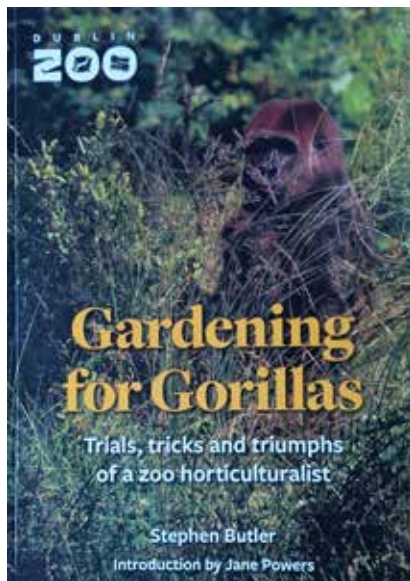
2022, Softback, 369 pages

€35, ISBN: 978-1-914225-94-9

Stephen Butler recently retired from his post of head gardener and curator of horticulture at Dublin Zoo. During his thirty-seven years in the Phoenix Park, approaches to animal welfare and husbandry changed and the Zoo re-thought how public and animals should view each other. This led to reconsideration of landscaping. The subsequent reimagining of habitat planting and general landscaping at the Zoo is a source of pleasure to many visitors.

For the Zoo to function, the comfort of wild animals must be paramount while large numbers of visitors must also be accommodated. The selection and maintenance of planting to achieve both ends were Stephen's achievement. 'Gardening for Gorillas' explains how projects big and small were tackled with international support. His discussion of why plants thrived or failed will be of value to landscaper colleagues.

Stephen's anecdotes lighten the text and make it an excellent read. Builders, engineers, flamingos, gorillas the animal teams and the Zoo's gardening team all contribute to the story. There is an interesting chapter on soil and the



significance of compaction caused by animals of various sizes moving around enclosures. Urban tree soil, a mix of round stones developed by the Dutch as a mesh covering, is now widely used in the Zoo to keep animal areas in good condition. Weed control, issues with mulch in which Zoo bedding is incorporated and the horrors of invasive plants are also considered.

Not every gardener must accommodate tigers, meerkats, and giraffes. This book is an insight into Stephen Butler's special world. ■

The book is available at Dublin Zoo or directly from gardeningforgorillas@gmail.com



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Ardgillan Castle Gardens & Demesne,
Balbriggan, Co Dublin

Exit 5 or 6 – off M1

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