



The Journal

Spring/Summer 2023

Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland
Cumann Ríoga Gairneoireach na hÉireann



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Note From The Chair



Spring is in full swing and there's new growth and activity all around us, what a wonderful time of year it is. Gustav Mahler summed it up neatly – *Spring won't let me stay in this house any longer! I must get out and breathe the air deeply again.*

There is lots of activity in the RHSI too and I'd like to wish a very warm welcome to all the new members who joined the society over the two open weekends in RHSI Bellefield in February. We had a thousand visitors enjoying snowdrops, garden tours, tea and chat, it was really wonderful to see so many familiar faces and to welcome many new faces to the opening celebration at our new home in the midlands. RHSI Bellefield is well and truly launched and we look forward to seeing many of you there over the coming months.

As part of your spring planning, don't forget the RHSI gardens at Laurelmere and Russborough and to visit as many of the 55 RHSI Partner Gardens as you can. We are very fortunate to have such wonderful gardens available to us and your support is greatly appreciated.

I know that the arrival of The Journal is always welcomed by members. Many thanks to Peter Milligan and the team for their hard work and commitment in producing another magazine for us.

Happy Gardening to you all.
Philip

RHSI Bellefield

• 2023 •

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A Note From The Editor



We are told that *"March comes in like a lamb and goes out like a lamb"*. Not so this year here in Co. Down – March came in and went out in a very definite 'lion mode' and the April weather was little better.

Notwithstanding the early poor weather, the snowdrops and early daffodils made a brave display and subsequently the tulips added to the increasing colour in the spring garden. As I write we are enjoying our collection of Erythronium species and cultivars and the emerging spikes of our Hostas indicate promise of yet more wonderful displays to come.

I hope you will enjoy the articles in this issue of the journal – we have great pieces on gardeners, gardens, and all our favourite regular contributions.

It is sad to have to record that we are losing Anne Camilla Voss as she is returning to Denmark. Camilla has been supportive of the journal and of our garden at Russborough where she has been a volunteer. I take this opportunity



Editor and Scarlett in the Potager

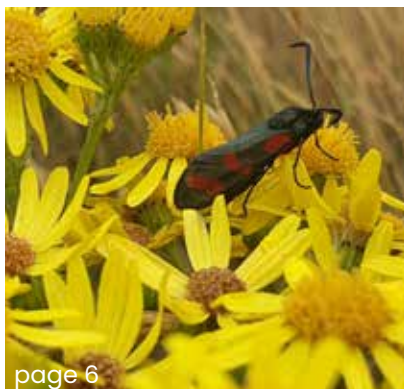
to thank Camilla for all of her hard work and to hope that she will write for the journal on gardens and gardening experiences in Denmark.

It goes without saying that Mary, Peggy, Noreen, Phil, and Orlaith provide superb support and my wife Nicola keeps me provided with her excellent photographs of the plants in our garden.

We always have too much work on hand – there is weeding, digging, planting out young broad beans, cauliflowers and cabbages, and so much more including sweet peas for summer cutting. I hope that you have your garden work well in hand.

Finally, consider a space where a new plant can be added for your summer or autumn displays – in any case – enjoy your gardens as spring blossoms into summer.

Peter
Editor, RHSI, *The Journal*



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The Journal

Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland
Cumann Ríoga Gairneoireach na hÉireann

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A close-up photograph of a burnet moth with a black body and red spots on its wings, perched on a bright yellow ragwort flower. The background is a soft-focus field of similar flowers.

Burnet moth on ragwort

Meadow makers and pollinators

Richard and Wendy Nairn

Running down to the woodland at the bottom of our farm in County Wicklow are several fields that, when we bought them, were grazed to a short sward by horses and sheep. We decided to leave one field ungrazed to see what flowered there and the result was spectacular. What emerged was a diverse flora with at least nine meadow grass species, speckled with the yellow flowers of bird's foot trefoil, blues forget-me-not, red clover and purple vetches. As

one of the driest, hottest summers on record took hold, butterflies danced over the grass and swallows, that had bred in the barn, gorged themselves on the clouds of insects above the field. We knew that this permanent pasture, which had not been ploughed in several generations, could be made even richer by introducing yellow rattle, a traditional hay meadow plant. When the hay was cut and cleared in late summer we scraped the surface of the ground in strips to open the sward and scattered seeds of this plant, hoping that it would do the trick.

By June the following year the meadow was in full flower. The grasses swayed in the summer breeze enlivened by masses of yellow rattle, plantains, vetches and clovers. There was a loud buzzing as millions of tiny creatures went about their daily business. Hundreds of bumblebees were feeding on the yellow flowers. Clouds of meadow brown butterflies rose from the ground as we walked through the sward with common blues and small coppers also feeding there. The insects were benefitting from an abundance of pollen and the diversity of food plants that succeed each other throughout the summer months. Apart from a few mown pathways we leave the meadow undisturbed until September, allowing these creatures to breed in peace, to hatch and distribute their eggs for the following year. The grasses and other flowering plants all set seed which blows around to maintain the sward for future seasons. When the hay is finally cut, we toss it several times to dry in the late summer sun, bale and remove it from the field to reduce soil fertility. The hay is used as mulch on our vegetable gardens.

A close-up photograph of a meadow brown butterfly with brown and orange wings, perched on a yellow rattle flower. The background shows green foliage.

Meadow brown butterfly on yellow rattle

A wide-angle photograph of a lush meadow in full bloom, filled with yellow and red flowers. In the background, there are green hills under a clear blue sky.

Meadow in flower



Ox-eye daisy and yellow rattle

To diversify the meadow even further we collected seeds of yarrow, devils-bit scabious, greater knapweed, red campion and ox-eye daisy from local wild areas and planted these up in seed trays. Over the winter they were plug-planted into the meadow, in bare areas that had been left under some of the hay bales. In the years that followed, the sward became even more diverse as the density of grasses decreased and other species benefitted. The meadow is not empty at night as we have recorded seven species of bats flying over it. Badger trails and diggings show that they too are foraging in the meadow. Spear thistles are not cut as their flowers are very attractive to bees, hoverflies, butterflies and the dayflying six-spot burnet moth.

Pollinators are primarily insects that feed on flowers and inadvertently carry the pollen from plant to plant. Without pollinators it would be impossible for farmers or gardeners to affordably produce many of the fruits and vegetables we need for a healthy diet. Pollinators are also necessary for a species-rich environment. One third of the 100 wild bee species in the island of Ireland are threatened with extinction. This is because the areas where they can nest and the amount of food that the Irish landscape provides for them have been drastically reduced. As well as the loss of rare species, the abundance of common pollinator bees in the countryside is on a steady downward trend due to the use of pesticides and loss of habitats.

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan was published in 2015 by the National Biodiversity Data Centre listing numerous actions to make Ireland

more pollinator-friendly. At ground level, this is a shared plan of action. Everyone from farmers to councils, local communities, businesses, schools, faith communities, gardeners and transport authorities have a role to play. A key focus of implementation has been the publication of a wide range of guidance and advice such as information leaflets, videos and posters to help explain the steps to making more pollinator-friendly habitats (see <https://pollinators.ie/>). By working together, participants can take simple steps to reverse pollinator losses and help restore populations to healthy levels. To date hundreds of local communities have taken genuine steps to make their local areas more attractive to pollinators.

In mid-summer our meadow is alive with bees, hoverflies, butterflies and other insects collecting pollen from the numerous flowering plants. The bumblebees make nests in the soil, collect pollen and have a worker caste. Solitary bees often make nests in bare ground or in the hollow stems of hogweed or other tall plants. The mechanisation of agriculture, loss of hay meadows, extensive use of pesticides and reductions in the density of the flowering plants as well as the removal of rough grassland where they nest and overwinter have all combined to cause serious declines in pollinator populations. Many species forage within a kilometre from the nest, so nearby areas must be both flower-rich and diverse to provide enough flowers to sustain the insects each year. To see some magnificent wildflower meadows, visit Castletown House, Celbridge, Co. Kildare (see <https://castletown.ie/>).



Burnet moth on plantain

Even small patches of native wildflowers in the corner of a garden can be valuable foraging areas for bees and other insects. If possible, don't buy commercial packets of wildflower seeds but collect your own seed from other local meadows. Studies have shown that the seeds in many wildflower seed mixes are imported from other countries, and are not native, despite what the packets might say. There is also a risk of accidentally bringing in invasive species. Our pollinators need the native wildflowers alongside which they have evolved. By simply reducing mowing to a single cut in late summer, valuable wildflowers like dandelions, buttercups, clovers and bird's-foot-trefoil appear naturally year after year at no cost. These common flowers provide the nutrients our insects need. Anyone with space to offer has a part to play. Meadows are a valuable contribution to conservation of Ireland's wildflowers and pollinating insects and a joy to experience. ■

Richard Nairn is an ecologist and writer who has published six books. Wendy Nairn is a lifelong organic gardener and member of RHSI.

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Auricula Walton

Photo © Sylvie Cotellet

Alpine Jewels in Galway Rain

Auricula thrive in Irish conditions

Mary Hackett

Ruffed and single, with the glowing colours of jewels and marked as intricately as any silk-weaver or goldsmith could have devised, modern auriculas have a fascinating pedigree. The Elizabethans prized the plant and swapped it between gardeners. Flemish weavers and Huguenot refugees fleeing religious persecution in France carried

favoured specimens with them into exile. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, auriculas had prize classes at Florists' Feasts, the precursors of the modern flower show. More recently the Guardian writer Ambra Edwards advises that auriculas will thrive in an urban back yard. Hang an auricula theatre on a north or north-east wall she says and



Photo © Barnhaven Primroses

Auricula Sirius



Photo © Sylvie Côtelle

Auricula Elsie-May



Photo © Sylvie Côtelle

Auricula William Gunn

enjoy these gorgeous flowers at eye level throughout April and into May.

There are about 500 species in the *Primula* genus, which includes primroses and cowslips, with a natural habitat that stretches from alpine meadows to swampy lowlands. Within the *Primula auricula* species, the brilliant colours of the Show Self and Fancy Show auriculas are offset by a pure white central eye, thick with powdery farina. Some specimens also have farina on their leaves, giving the plant a silver appearance. Border Group auriculas including Alpine auriculas also have rosettes of semi-evergreen foliage topped by upright stems with brightly coloured velvety flowers but do not develop farina and so, unlike the Selfs and Shows, do not require glasshouse protection.

Gardening in Woodstock west of Galway city, RHSI member Geraldine Colleran grows alpine auriculas, concentrating on border and double subspecies. "I got my first auricula in a plant sale in the late Angela Jupe's garden. We were admiring plants from

Susan Tindall's Timpany nurseries when Helen Dillon's arm came from behind us as she swooped to pick up a plant. Such was our respect for Helen's taste, the entire group around the stand stretched forward in unison and took a plant. That was my first burgundy auricula, a good colour for Galway. The alpine auriculas I grow stay out of doors year-round but need protection from strong wind and very heavy rain. They want an east or north facing orientation. Given suitable care, alpine auriculas thrive here in Galway".

The traditional staging of *Primula auricula*, has each plant in its own tiny pot lined out in an auricula theatre. In Woodstock, the auricula theatre is a simple construction that looks a little like a traditional kitchen dresser. Attached to an east-facing wall, its function is to protect the plants from excessive rain and wind. The orientation is chosen to avoid direct sunlight. As even the best wood rots in Galway damp, Geraldine commissioned her theatre from Recycled Plastic in Castlebar, a craftsman who works with recycled materials. When I saw

it in July 2022, the theatre held about seventy plants in fifty varieties. Each auricula plant is in a 7-to-9-centimetre terracotta pot. This helps to maintain a free-draining soil environment and optimal plant size. Part of the fun is the selection of the pots, with many holding memories of Geraldine's friends and family.

Geraldine's auricula year starts as the new foliage emerges in late February or early March. Early spring in the west is often windy and wet. Tucked away in their theatre, the auriculas are unbothered by wind or cold and they like the damp. As growth appears, Geraldine feeds the pots with half strength tomato feed once a week for four weeks to get them growing well. Any dead foliage is pulled off leaving just a green rosette. One or two rosettes will develop in each pot. Auriculas

flowers through April into early May. Flowerheads are clipped before seed can form but the flower stem is left to dry and drop off. On the east facing wall, the plants are shaded from summer sun. Watering is only done in hot spells and then very gingerly. Leaves yellow over the summer and are removed. The pots dry out between September and December.

Auriculas need annual repotting. Geraldine empties each pot, teases the rosettes apart and trims the roots to between 2.5 and 4 centimetres. The potting mix that works for her terracotta pots is eight parts John Innes No 2, one part compost and one part grit. The pots are topped with grit after planting. As auriculas are propagated by division, they always come true. All reasonably sized rosettes are repotted and labelled. The Galway Flower and Garden Club are

lucky recipients of Geraldine's excess stock.

As a beginner, Geraldine started with *Primula auricula* 'Mark', a rich burgundy. 'Sirius' and 'Elsie May' work well for her. 'Laurie', is a strong, clear purple with a white eye. Lime green double 'Lincoln Cuckoo' turned out to be as beautiful in flower as it was in the catalogue. She prefers species described as reliable but admits to being easily tempted by colours or colour combinations she hasn't had before. The grapefruit-coloured 'Twiggy' was a success last year. Geraldine got 'William Gunn', a chocolate brown velvet double, from a grower at Chelsea and carried true blue 'Walton' and deep purple 'Ted Roberts' home from another Chelsea end of show sale. 'Black Jack' with deep burgundy flowers and a white-rimmed yellow centre is a Galway favourite. Looking to other growers, the UK expert Mary Keen also recommends 'Sirius' which has an outer ring of apricot-brown and inner ring of crimson-mahogany. Other nurseries recommend 'Sandhills' which is a seedling of that same 'Sirius'. 'Old Irish Scented' was discovered in the gardens of Lissadell House in Sligo. Since Brexit, Barnhaven Nurseries in France have been a source of interesting varieties for Irish growers. Peninsula Primulas, in Newtownards is offering mail order service to customers at time of writing.

Geraldine Culleran's advice is clear. Forget anything you may have heard about auriculas being challenging to grow. With some care in selection and attention to their preferred conditions, these exceptional plants can add a completely new dimension to your gardening experience. ■



Auricula Twiggy

Photo © Sylvie Cotelle



Auricula theatre

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The Restoration of Doneraile Court

Christopher Moore

The 20th century decline of Doneraile Court and demesne was slow and inexorable. Equally, its rescue and revitalisation has spanned a fifty plus year period and happily it is now reaching completion. Between 1630–1969, thirteen generations of the St Leger family developed the house and landscape, creating a complex and multilayered ensemble. The last Lady Doneraile departed amidst an unhappy dispute between the estate trustees and a claimant to the Viscountcy. This claim was unsuccessful, and in 1969 the 400 acre demesne was sold to the Land Commission and transferred to the Department of Forestry and Fisheries to be subsequently opened as a much visited public park. The Court

(as the house is known) rapidly became derelict and in 1976 the Irish Georgian Society took a long lease and began an 18 year programme of restoration much of it carried out by volunteer labour funded by generous donations. Having saved the house, and with other projects demanding attention, in 1994 the house was transferred back to the State and placed in the care of the Office of Public Works. Major repairs continued but the house remained closed until in 2018 a substantial two-phase programme of refurbishment commenced which has recently been completed.

Doneraile Park attracts some 500,000 visitors each year, and the

house surrounded by the pleasure grounds, yards, haggard and walled gardens was the traditional focal point of the demesne. The Court dominates the main axial vista which slopes from the entrance, across the foaming River Awbeg and onwards up into the deer park. However, in 2018 the house was virtually a shell with only a handful of original furnishings, collected previously by the Irish Georgian Society and County Cork devotees, available for display. Nevertheless, the OPW decided to present the Court not as an exhibition centre but rather as a reinstated country house and collection, which along with attendant tea rooms would become the focal point of the demesne once again.



Doneraile Court

Four years later the 19 rooms on display are remarkably full. The collections policy determined that items of quality be acquired that were original to the house, from local 'big' houses, from the Southern region, and if exceptional, from Ireland in general. Cork items have found a particular relevance in the recreated spaces, and the enthusiastic participation of the Crawford Art Gallery in loaning pictures, and the Irish Georgian Society in loaning the Edmund Corrigan Collection of Cork portrait miniatures, has added depth to the displays. The State collections have produced remarkable treasures as have opportune purchases at recent auctions. However, the most significant aspect of assembling the rooms has been the enormous enthusiasm from the public to reinstate the house, resulting in gifts and loans which have been recorded on a Patrons and Donor board hanging in the stair hall. The

approach to the rooms has been as 'light touch' as possible. Organic paints have been used to reproduce historic schemes. Traditional country house rugs sit on scrubbed floors and the furniture is plain mahogany with cotton upholstery and cushions made of antique fabric.

The ground floor opened in 2019, while the refitting of the first floor was the project for 2021/22. Although furnished in a traditional country house manner, the former bedrooms focus on telling the story of the demesne visible outside the windows and that of the broader North Cork landscape. Thanks in particular to the researches of Michael O'Sullivan into the St Leger papers and the collections of Arthur Montgomery, the walls are hung with portraits of key 16th and 17th century Munster personalities, estate maps, late 19th century photographs of Doneraile

in its final heyday and documentation relating to St Leger building projects and estate affairs. Thus we can trace the development of the mid and late 17th century formal gardens and landscape allées and their partial replacement by the informal landscape of the later 18th and 19th centuries. Overlooking the pleasure gardens the boudoir is dedicated to the 4th Viscountess Doneraile, a passionate plantswoman who in the 1850s corresponded with and received plants from Sir William Hooker at Kew. Pages from a facsimile edition of Curtis's Botanical Magazine dedicated to Lady Doneraile are displayed and the walls are hung with illustrations from the publication including Himalayan rhododendrons she grew in the Wilderness outside the windows. Lady Doneraile's parterres and gravel walks have been recreated and the restoration of her conservatory is being developed at present.

The remarkable achievement of Doneraile Court having survived against the odds is highlighted by a small exhibition of 13 less fortunate and now lost Cork houses in three rooms dedicated to what was perhaps the biggest architectural and cultural loss for North Cork – Bowen's Court. Elizabeth Bowen stayed in Doneraile after her home was sold in 1959 and subsequently demolished, so there is a relevance in displaying her personal archive of photographs of life in Bowen's Court 1930–59 and her correspondence relating to the sale. The Office of Public Works took haunting photographs of the empty Bowen's Court in 1960 just before demolition. These are shown alongside salvage from the house and overlooked by portraits of 18th century Bowens that formerly hung in its front hall. ■



Doneraile Court and the gardens opened for the season on March 31st 2023 while the parkland is open throughout the year. For full information see their website doneraileestate.ie or enquire on 046 942 3175 / 087 349 7972.

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The Granville Garden and
Rhododendron Cornish Red



Hillsborough Castle and Gardens

Claire Woods

On the 9th April 2019 the gardens around Hillsborough Castle opened fully to the public for the first time in their 250 year history. This reawakening was after a period of major renovation and redevelopment by Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) that had taken five years. The estate covers about 98 acres and includes parterres and formal areas around the Castle, 18th century trees around the lawn, picturesque glens, a 19th century pinetum, lakes, meadows and a large walled garden in all 22 different character areas were identified. In the 1750s just 68 acres of land was enclosed around the new Georgian house built by Wills Hill, the first Marquess of Downshire, then in the 1820s the road which ran alongside



Northern Ireland centenary rose

the castle was moved and another 30 acres of garden added that include the South lawn, the Lost Garden and area of woodland known as Mercer's Hill. In 1925 the estate was sold to the British Government to be home of the now obsolete office of Governor of Northern Ireland, and later that of the Secretary of State. Since then both the castle and the gardens have been the site of many significant political negotiations throughout the peace process and today is also the home of the Royal family when they are in Northern Ireland.

There is too much to cover in one article so the focus will be on the 18th century garden. The earliest planting are the huge majestic *Quercus cerris* that frame the castle and delineate the west lawn; they are fabulous trees providing welcome shade in the summer. As with all the specimen trees the areas under the drip lines are now left uncut during the summer, this not only conserves moisture but also reduces compaction on the tree roots. Next to the house is the dining



Ossian in the grotto

room terrace, a formal garden which has had many guises over the years, planted with Victorian bedding, then used as a croquet lawn, and now kept as an area of lawn where a marquee can be erected for events or weddings. Recently planted *Taxus baccata* hedges enclose the west facing space making it ideal for summer evening events, or just to sit and soak in the sun's rays. Next to this is the Granville Garden, a rose and flower garden designed by Lady Granville in the 1940s when she lived in the Castle. The layout has not changed although the planting has been modified over the years, and in 2021 the rose bed in the centre was replanted with the Northern Ireland Centenary rose. To add scent to the garden *R. 'Phyllis Bide'*, *R. 'Lady of the Lake'* and *R. 'Felicite Perpetue'* were added and to extend the season in this garden 2023 will see *Tulipa 'Yokohama Orange'* and *Fritillaria imperialis 'Lutea'* add an early burst of colour. Plants are all fed and mulched using compost made on site, to keep the disease levels as low as possible any sign of black spot is quickly

removed and all dead leaves and prunings lifted immediately.

Providing a backdrop to the Granville garden is an enormous Rhododendron over 40 m across thought to be 'Cornish Red', it started as just one plant although has now self layered it is, a must see if you visit in early May.

The whole landscape at the entrance to the castle was redesigned to make it more accessible and formal, complimenting the symmetry of the Georgian square. However within the very formal structure of box hedges, *Prunus laurocerasus* Lollipops abundant herbaceous planting provides interest all year round and a perfect place for pollinators, from the early bulbs to the *Aster divaricatus* and *Verbena bonariensis* late in the season, it just buzzes, where it does no harm over wintering mature ivy that clothes many of the trees and boundary walls is left to provide food for wildlife.

As you move further from the house the gardens become more naturalistic the glen is a quiet tranquil space with a stream running through it which is bordered by a sinuous lawn kept striped to perfection in the summer, the steep banks are planted with Magnolias, Rhododendrons and Azaleas making it most colourful is Spring. Following the stream takes you under the branches of a mature camellia to a magical grotto where you will find a sculpture of Ossian and another secluded sitting area. Winding your way between the stones the glen opens out to reveal the pinetum a cathedral like stand of conifers planted in the 1870's as you make your way around the lake native planting is interspersed with



Spring in the Glen



Rhododendron irroratum



Bees in Granville garden



Quercus cerris on West lawn

commemorative ornamental trees two of the most beautiful are *Betula ermanii* planted by the late Queen and Duke of Edinburgh during a visit in June 1991.

The project and now the ongoing maintenance is underpinned by sustainability. One meadow is managed as a traditional hay meadow whilst the other using conservation grazing by rare-breed Irish Moiled cattle. The estate's hydro-electric plant fed from the lake was restored and now powers the café; the new car park sports a reinforced grass surface rather than the usual tarmac and a drainage-water recycling system flushes the visitor centre loos.

With plans to expand the plant collection, including sourcing the elusive *Narcissus* 'Hillsborough' the garden at Hillsborough will continue to develop in the future. ■



Moilie cattle in Gasworks meadow



Spring at Mount Stewart

Visit Mount Stewart this Spring where over 15,000 tulips have been planted throughout the formal gardens, replicating the design of Edith, Lady Londonderry's "Tulip Time" in the 1940s. Embrace the traditional pastime of hanami "flower viewing" with a stroll under the rainbow of blossom in the formal gardens & pleasure grounds.

nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/northern-ireland/mount-stewart

For everyone, for ever

Dorothy Smith Barry as a child running through the Parterre at Fota c 1900

Photo: Fota archives

Fota House and Gardens

Catherine Croakley

Many great women gardeners, untrained and without official appointments, are disappearing from memory. One of these is Mrs Dorothy Bell of Fota, Co. Cork.

At Fota, an ongoing dispute between The Honourable Dorothy Bell and her housekeeper, Mrs Kevin, concerned the quality of fruit used to make jam. Mrs Bell decided that the inferior produce was good enough, but Mrs Kevin believed that only the best fruit made the best preserves. Though described by one of her daughters as a kind person, no doubt Mrs Bell was frugal as many owners of the Big House had to be. She wanted to keep the best fruit and vegetables for the shops and markets to whom she sold her produce. In this situation of selecting produce, Mrs Bell prevailed and she spent hours sorting the fruit into separate

bundles. Always active and in a hurry (sometimes carrying a hard boiled egg in her pocket while she worked), she once produced a ton of plums in one season.

Dorothy Bell was passionate about two things – hunting and gardening. Her riding prowess (always side-saddle) saw her elected Master of the United Hunt. Her love of gardening was nurtured by her father, Arthur Hugh Smith Barry. He hired the best head gardeners to work on the estate. They came to Fota from Heligan, Tresco, Aldenham House (said to rival Kew Gardens in size and ambition), and Culford Hall in Sussex and Chilton Gardens in Wiltshire, to mention a few. Dorothy Bell also had a head gardener, Thomas Leggett (who came from Woodlawn House in Galway) but unlike her father, she was a hands-on gardener. Newspaper reports describe her on a ladder, trimming a tree, in her eighties. Of course, by then it was the 1970's and times had changed. Staff had dwindled and money was tight at Fota but Dorothy's drive to continue the work started by her great, great grandfather, James Hugh Smith Barry, was still strong. Fota was her home, unlike those forefathers who simply used it as their Irish residence for occasional visits.

Dorothy Elizabeth Smith Barry was born in 1894. Her father was Arthur Hugh Smith Barry, later Lord Barrymore. Her mother was Elizabeth Wadsworth, a wealthy American whose father, General James Wadsworth, fought at the Battle of Gettysburg in 1863. Her sister Cornelia also married an Irishman, the infamous John "Black Jack" Adair of Glenveagh Castle in Co. Donegal.



Photo: Fota archives

Fota Parterre, which Dorothy Bell replaced with a croquet lawn in the 1950's



Photo: Tatler magazine

Dorothy Smith Barry with her father, Lord Barrymore at the Chelsea Flower Show, 1917

Cornelia Adair was responsible for developing the castle gardens after the death of her husband in 1885.

When Lord Barrymore died in 1925, Dorothy was not able to inherit, due to the primogeniture law of the period, so



The Hydrangea Walk at Fota, 1921, from the Gardeners' Chronicle

Fota went to Lord Barrymore's brother James Hugh Smith Barry. When James died, his son Robert inherited the estate. He sold it to Dorothy Bell in 1937, and she and her husband, Major William Bertram Bell, moved from their home near Cirencester, along with their three daughters, to Fota House. During her time at Fota she welcomed visitors from all over the world.

According to a letter written by Mrs Bell in 1960, *"Nothing was planted after 1920 [at Fota] til we came back and started to plant again in 1937."* With her customary enthusiasm, she not only maintained the arboretum and gardens, but also set about adding to the already rich collection of trees and shrubs. A 1951 letter she received from the great American garden designer, Lanning Roper, praised Dorothy for Fota's *"wonderful collection and you are doing so much to bring it up to date with new planting. It is*

so exciting to see new planting and intelligent replacement." (At this time, Lanning Roper was working on Henry McIlhenny's garden at Glenveagh Castle.) But while she was adding to her own garden, she was always keen to share cuttings, seeds and plants with others who visited Fota, to the extent that specimens from Fota are now growing in other parts of Ireland, Europe, America, Australia and South Africa.

A keen correspondent, Dorothy's letters show the depth of her gardening knowledge and how freely she shared with major Botanic Gardens. In 1944, a letter from the renowned Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University relates to a rare species of *Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Contorta' (now 'Crispum'), growing at Fota. Dorothy's father had sent some cuttings there in 1907 but they failed. The arboretum now requested more cuttings of this "unusually rare specimen... when the



Dorothy Bell standing beside *Drymis latifolia* c. 1950

war is over." A 1948 handwritten note on this letter says *"Plant ready. How shall we send it?"* She also wrote at the bottom of this letter that *"Donard Nurseries report well of the grafts they received from the Fota tree."*

This meticulous note-keeping and attention to detail were some of the characteristics that made Dorothy Bell such a wonderful gardener. While it is not possible to mention all of her interesting interactions with the other major Botanic Gardens around the world, it is worth noting a few of the trees and shrubs of which she was most proud and which she shared, including two specimens of *Drimys winteri* 'Latifolia', one of which had an extra classification of 'Glaucua', according to Dorothy's notes, which state that "These two trees came to the late Lord Barrymore from Mr. Gerald Loder, later the first Lord Wakehurst, in 1903. The head gardener at Wakehurst states that they were chance seedlings found in a pan of South American seeds. They come true from seed." Mrs Bell also had a *Pieris formosa* var. *forrestii* which, despite being analysed at the Herbarium at Kew and named as above in 1963, she firmly believed to be a rare specimen whose *"flowers are very erect and of a specially pre opaque whiteness, showing no bloom,*



Major William Bertram Bell beside *Benthamia fragifolia* behind Fota House, 1955



Dorothy Bell showing members of the German Rhododendron Society around Fota 1963

even in bud." *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Spiralis' was another tree which she shared with the Longwood Arboretum in Pennsylvania among others.

In the 1970's after the death of Major Bell, Dorothy moved to the head gardener's house in the orchard at Fota. When she died in 1975, her daughter Rosemary sold the estate to University College Cork and the Smith Barry influence on Fota House, Arboretum and Gardens was no more. Mrs Bell would surely be delighted to know that visitors continue to be enchanted and inspired by a garden that is available to all today, under the careful nurturing of the O.P.W. and the Irish Heritage Trust. ■

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Crataegus crus-galli weeping branches

Garden Magic

Mary and Paddy Tobin
made a garden to share
with the world

Mary Hackett

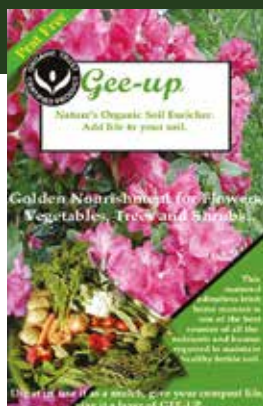
Mary and Paddy Tobin have gardened on the edge of Waterford city since the mid-1980s. Paddy is known widely as an outstanding blogger on garden topics. His photographs of his own and other gardens, the plants and plant combinations, the distant vistas and garden contexts, make that blog sing. Over a cup of coffee in GIY Waterford on a December morning, Paddy generously spoke to me about his gardening life.

With a big, rural space to work in, the Tobins' preferred gardening style is relaxed but managed, plant-focussed and fluid. Forty years ago, the garden was a field. As a primary school teacher with a growing family, Paddy makes no bones about having started the garden on a shoestring. Much of the original planting, including trees, was grown from seed. Swathes of *Lychnis chalcidonica* and *Meconopsis*

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Galanthus. Snowdrops and Cyclamen bed top of square lawn. View



Garden view High Grass. Bulbs in spring. Snowdrops, crocus, daffodils, camassias, orchids and wildflowers

betonicifolia, the blue poppy, spread wildly in his damp soil. *Rudbeckia fulgida* 'Goldstrum' was one of the original plants and some still survive. "The trees we planted have made good size and, of course, have changed the look of the garden. We have shade now and dry areas." As an example of the look he and Mary prefer, Paddy describes a big bed with 30 varieties of hydrangeas gathered over the years. They grow good varieties of established plants, going for the classic rather than for one-season fireworks and taking care that the result will please. Multiple images of the garden year-round can be seen on Paddy's blog.

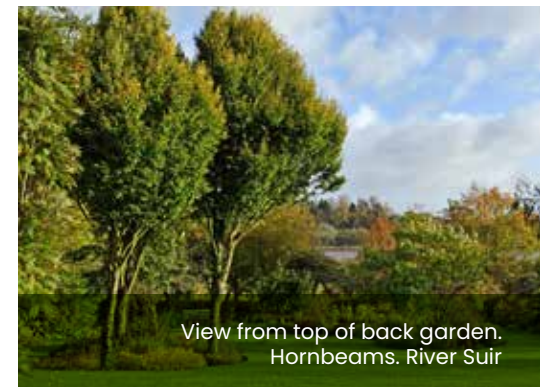
Paddy's sharp eye for shape and colour has been developed by a lifetime's interest in photography. Shooting a garden, a plant or a plant combination helps him focus and remember. That photographer's

eye helps shape the Tobins' garden. While Mary, Paddy claims, makes the decisions on summer and autumn planting, his own love is for late winter and spring flowers. "Snowdrops and cyclamen are favourites of mine. In terms of actual gardening, I do the hedges, cut the lawn, and mind the compost heaps. We can work through a whole day outside and barely see each other."

Books and garden visits have been important in finding direction. Helen Dillon's Ranelagh garden was regularly visited. "Helen puts plants together to best advantage. She can combine shapes and colours and has a great eye for the good, new plant and how best to use it." June Blake's eye for promising plants in appropriate combinations also gets a mention. "A garden is design, shape and then plants well used," Paddy says. In contrast to more

tightly designed gardens, he and Mary have visited Mildred Stokes' garden at Kilsheelan in Co. Tipperary many times and appreciate how Mildred uses traditional planting and low-key forms that particularly suit her rural setting. Like many gardeners, the Tobins have also looked overseas for inspiration. A particular pleasure was a trip to see the Garden of Ninfa built on the ruins of the medieval town of the same name, south of Rome. The New York Times described Ninfa as one of the most beautiful and romantic gardens in the world. It stays in Paddy's memory as a favourite space.

Dr Charles Nelson, former director of the NBG, author and broadcaster introduced Paddy and Mary to many new plants with an Irish connection. Dr Nelson's television show *A Gardening Obsession* is still, in Paddy's opinion, among the best gardening



View from top of back garden. Hornbeams. River Suir



Garden view Front Garden Square Lawn



Garden view Front Garden Circular Lawn



Watsonias, Crataegus crus-galli



High Grass. Bulbs in spring. Snowdrops, crocus, daffodils, camassias, orchids and wildflowers

programmes aired. Dr Nelson's work tracing historic connections in Irish plants and his involvement in the Irish Garden Plant Society (IGPS) fit with the Tobins' interests. Paddy tells me about a snowdrop that Lady Moore gave to Mrs. Rutherfoord at a sale of work at the Mansion House during WWII, later grown on by her daughter Miss Rita Rutherfoord and kindly passed on to him. It is, he tells me 'A plant above price, something to be treasured'. The note Miss Rutherfoord sent him about this snowdrop has been preserved. A real moment of Irish gardening history.

Maybe because of his interest in plants of Irish origin, Paddy has become fascinated by native orchids. Walks taken to photograph the flowers are often taken, he tells me, "in excellent company." This winter he is savouring Susan Sex and Brendan Sayers' book *Ireland's Wild Orchids* page by page. "Brendan's great writing, the intricacy of Susan's illustrations. It is just amazing."

Paddy and Mary Tobin do not open their garden to visitors but prefer its beauty to be seen through Paddy's camera lens. Posting recently, Paddy

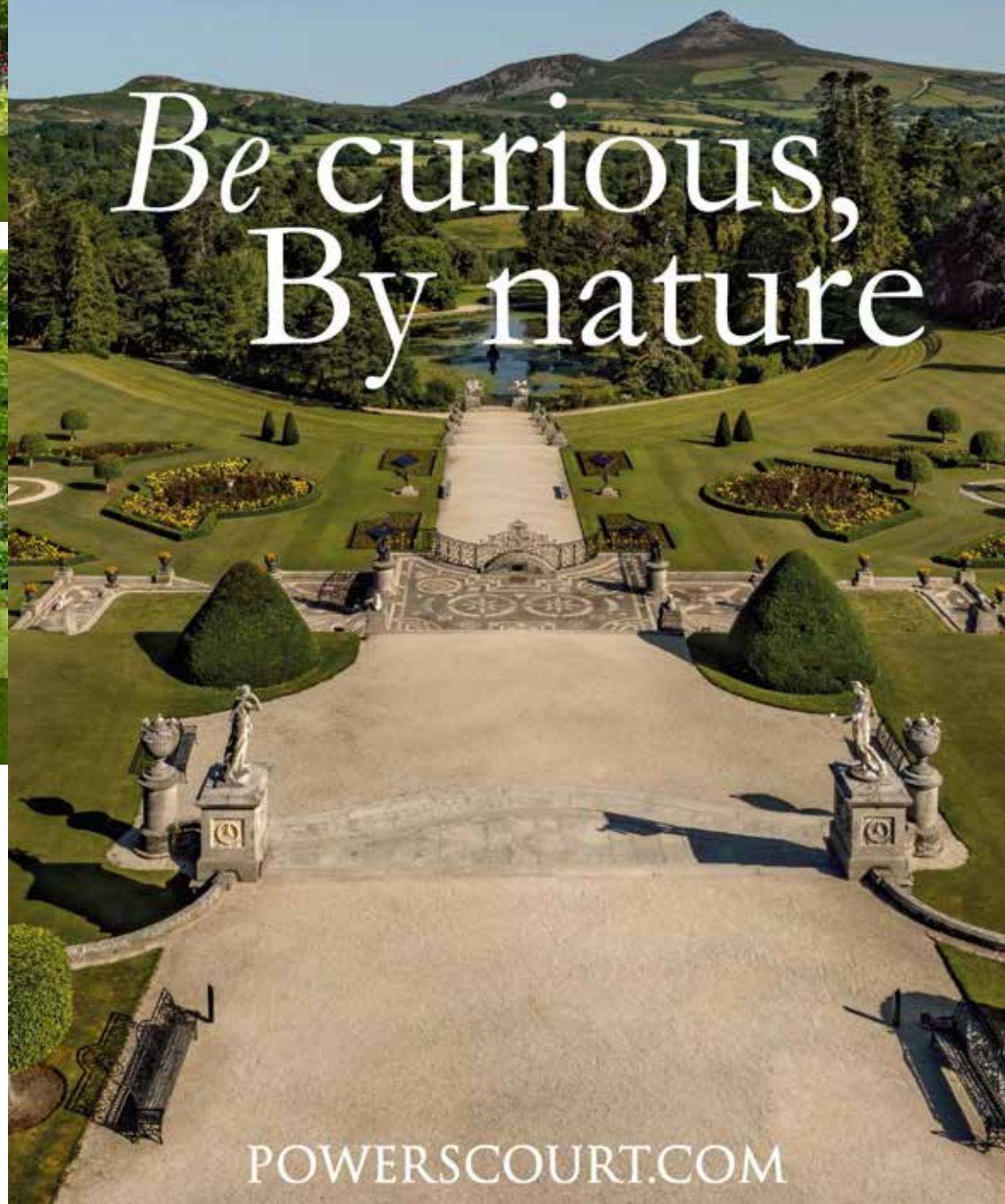
explained that in gardening 'the best we can make are moments, moments when we look and feel, "that's just lovely!" and there's a magic in such moments; we know that we and nature have worked together and created something beautiful – and we run off to get the camera before it's gone!' Have a look at some of these moments on his blog at anirishgardener.wordpress.com or follow Paddy on Facebook. Magic is made for sharing. ■



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Fiona's Gold

Fanaticism at Eskylane, Co. Antrim

William and Moyra
McCandless

When we first became interested in Snowdrops in 2013, we did not realise how fascinating they were and how fanatically involved we would become.

We started by planting *Galanthus nivalis*, the common snowdrop native to Europe, to create a drift along a woodland bank. This led to an interest in snowdrops with Irish connections and Susan Tindall of Timpany Nursery introduced us to *Galanthus* 'Ballynahinch', *G. Timpany Bold* and *G. 'Timpany Late'*. In due course we met Harold McBride, now well known for his Waverley Collection, who gave us *G. 'Antrym'*, *G. 'Waverley Little Egret'* and *G. 'Blaris'*. We have been fortunate to be given some snowdrops, and importantly information on their provenance, that we treasure including *G. 'Waverley Aristocrat'*, and *G. 'Rowallane'* - as the latter name suggests this snowdrop came from the National Trust Garden at Rowallane in Co. Down.

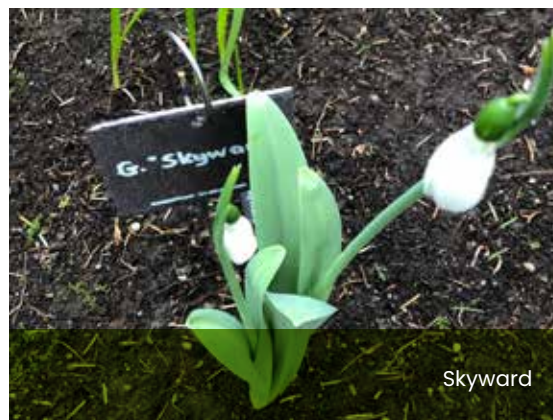
We learned about reliable nurseries in the U.K. who supplied quality bulbs and we bought the best from the tallest to the greenest to the smallest! We were looking for snowdrops which had distinct characteristics and were aesthetically pleasing. It is amazing how a plant, green, white, yellow and with a hint of orange pollen, can be so diverse!

Our snowdrops are 'housed' in two distinct areas. We purchased over thirty salt glazed troughs and planted them up with the very best named snowdrops of various origins.

The woodland area is quite different to the trough area. In parts *Galanthus*



G. Antrym



Skyward

nivalis has naturalised. Here, also, is a trail of Irish snowdrops from all over Ireland. They are planted in chronological order starting with *G. 'Straffan'* and include possibly the most comprehensive collection of Irish Cultivars in existence.

We have some favourites *Galanthus* 'Skyward', *G. 'Green Lantern'* and *G. 'Barnhill'* but they are all amazing. We are particularly drawn to the history and the people associated with each one.

It has been extremely interesting and joyful meeting people, fellow enthusiasts who have been helpful and as diverse as the snowdrops themselves. ■



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Impatiens or Busy Lizzy

Aideen Higgins

With each new year we get excited with all the possibilities for a new growing season. We can forget about the mistakes of last year and start again.

In the garden centre we meet all this excitement before the real growing season has begun.

Seeds, onion sets and seed potatoes arrive mid January, not soon enough for some. In February we get requests for bedding plants; summer bedding that is.

This year summer bedding plants were available on February 20th.

Here in Ireland the weather on the east coast is very different to the midlands or the west coast, but the same plants are available everywhere in the country at the same time. What we need to do is have a look at our local weather patterns and work accordingly.

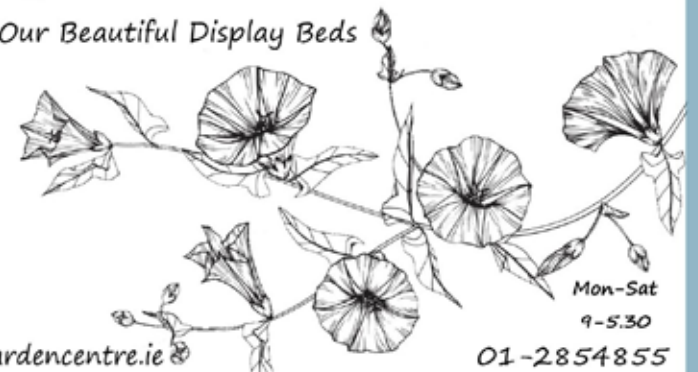
There's no rush, the plants will grow when the temperature is right. It's so tempting to plant the summer bedding early to get a head start but a late frost will send them backwards, so nothing is gained after all.

Enjoy each season as it comes and goes, and learn from last year's mistakes. ■

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Group by confluence of Zaskar and Indus River
between Leh and Ule. Ladakh July 2022



To The Deserts of Ladakh

A Mid-Summer Visit To North-West India

Seamus O'Brien FLS

Following such a long period of lockdowns and enforced staycation during the Covid-19 pandemic it was wonderful to be able to return yet again to India in July 2022. For over a decade my focus has been on the mountainous regions of north-east India; Sikkim, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and in more recent times, the frontier states of Nagaland and Manipur.

It was exciting then, to have the opportunity to visit an entirely new region; the union territory of Ladakh, in north-west India, which until recent years was part of Kashmir. Bordered by Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tibet, like other Indian frontier regions adjacent to China, Ladakh has a considerable army presence there to protect a much-disputed international boundary.

Unlike the monsoon-drenched Himalayan mountains of north-east India, Ladakh has an extreme climate as a result of its topography. This high-lying former kingdom lies sandwiched between two great mountain ranges, the Trans-Himalaya and the Karakoram, which causes a rain shadow, allowing scant precipitation through.

**“Our destination
was the ancient
city of Leh, the
state capital,
and for many
centuries the seat
of the Ladakhi
royal family”**

It is the glaciers (among the greatest in Asia) that cap these mountain peaks, that water the oases in the lower valleys, giving rise to a patchwork of lush green landscapes surrounded by barren deserts. Our flight from New Delhi brought us across these great glaciers. Flying towards the Indus River valley, ribbons of green on valley bottoms indicated highly cultivated oases. Our destination was the ancient city of Leh, the state capital, and for many centuries the seat of the Ladakhi royal family.



Aconitum nagarum Mount Japfu
Nagaland November 2019

Leh lies at a heady altitude of 3,500 m (11,500 feet) and without having had an opportunity to acclimatise we immediately felt the dizzying effects of this high-lying region. Looking out from Leh Palace the setting is incredibly similar to that of the Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet, a great dry plateau completely circled in the distance by stupendous snow-capped peaks. Leh lies close to the Indus River valley, an early cradle of civilisation, and was once centred on important trade routes between Kashmir, Tibet, India and China. Indigo, silk and cashmere wool brought great wealth to the city and this is reflected by the many great monasteries and palaces in the old city.

It's not surprising that given the region's extreme climate that just a single tree dominates the city



Clematis ladakhiana between Leh and Ule, Ladakh July 2022

landscape; *Populus nigra* 'Afghanica', which looks just like the European Lombardy poplar, *Populus nigra* 'Italica', with a tight pillar-like habit, but bearing rounded boles and silver stems and bark. Both poplars are a case of parallel cultivar evolution, and the Afghan poplar is planted in millions in well-watered oases across Ladakh.

Despite its proximity to Kashmir this is a Buddhist region, myriads of prayer flags and stupas amply declare this. Over the centuries Tibet exerted enormous influence across the region, something that's very much evident in the architecture of houses and how rural people dress. Equally the flora is one of the high plateaus with many of the alpenes of the higher passes also common in regions of south-east Tibet.

It was in the desert sands surrounding the enormous Shanti Stupa just outside of Leh that we had our first opportunity to botanise. The imposing white-washed stupa is visible from

several miles away and contrasted starkly against an intense ink-blue sky, a scene typical of areas bordering the Tibetan plateau where relative humidity is incredibly low.

**“Sun-baked and
incredibly dry,
along its valley
we found trees
of the handsome
Kashmir poplar,
Populus ciliata, in
fruit”**

In recent decades DNA and genetics has made profound changes in plant nomenclature, with taxa being thrown from one genus to another. Of late *Salvia* has accepted many additional species, including several species formerly placed in *Perovskia*. Beneath the stupa we were thrilled to find *Salvia abrotanoides* (syn. *Perovskia abrotanoides*) in bloom, a sub-shrub bearing terminal spikes covered with masses of violet-blue blossoms. Globe thistles (*Echinops*) are an herbaceous group confined to well-manured herbaceous borders in Ireland so it came as quite a surprise to meet the white-flowered *Echinops cornigerus* thriving in dry roadside sand and gravel. Exposed to prolonged drought and seasons of extreme heat and cold, plants like these offer enormous potential to European gardeners at a time of rapidly accelerating climate change.

Beyond Leh our route brought us through the Indus River valley, an enormous landscape reminiscent of the drier regions of the upper Yangtze and Mekong river valleys in north-west Yunnan, Western China. One of the great rivers of Asia, the Indus has given its name to India and its main religion, Hinduism. Sun-baked and incredibly dry, along its valley we found trees of the handsome Kashmir poplar, *Populus ciliata*, in fruit, bearing pendulous catkins covered in cottony tufts of silky hairs. At Ule Topko we stayed overnight in chalets on the river's edge. On the steep slopes below we found a medley of good garden plants, perhaps the best of which was *Rosa webbiana*, a common species in Ladakh where it grows even in desert situations. We had arrived at optimum flowering time



Pedicularis longiflora var. *tubiforme* Hemis Shukpachan village Ladakh July 2022

and 3 m tall bushes were absolutely smothered in rose-pink blossoms. Rare in gardens, this lovely species commemorates its discoverer, Captain William Spencer Webb (1784-1865), a soldier in the British East India Company who joined the Bengal Native Infantry in 1801. During his time in India he was a collector for the Wallich (East India Company) Herbarium, now housed at Kew. Most of his plant collecting was carried out in present day Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh in NW India and several plants bear his name, like *Lonicera webbiana* and *Rosa webbiana* for example. Captain Webb's rose was introduced to Kew from Ladakh in 1879 but has never really gained the attention it deserves. With climate change, *Rosa webbiana* holds great potential for our gardens, enduring extremes of heat and cold and growing in the most arid of places in Ladakh. It is one of the most abundant shrubs in this



Perovskia abrotanoides by Indus Ule
Ethnic Resort Ladakh July 2022



Rosa webbiana Walk towards
Tsermachan above Hemis Shukpachan
village Ladakh July 2022

region and certainly charmed our group throughout our travels.

With it grew a handsome scrambling clematis with purple-flushed, blue-green foliage. Above this were masses of pendant blossoms bearing thick orange peel-like sepals, brown in bud and opening deep yellow, followed by showy feathery fruits. It was discovered in the Nubra River valley near Leh by the 19th century botanist Thomas Thomson (1817-1878) while he served on the Kashmir Boundary Commission in 1848 and was described as a new species, *Clematis ladakhiana*, by the Kew-based Clematis expert, Christopher Grey-Wilson as recently as 1989.

By the river's racing waters we found bushes of *Colutea nepalensis*, the Nepalese bladder-senna, a 2 m tall shrub still bearing yellow pea-like blossoms and large bladder-like inflated seed pods. Caper bushes, *Capparis spinosa*, sprawled across rocks, basking in the baking heat and

bearing showy white blossoms and the fleshy fruits for which it is famed. One of the most handsome plants in this area was a silvery-grey wormwood, *Artemisia brevifolia*, which grew alongside silver-blue clumps of *Ephedra intermedia*, both giving a beautiful effect.

**“Within this
seemingly barren
terrain we
found dozens of
beautiful plants”**

Buckthorns are an important group of trees and shrubs found right across Asia, in autumn their fruits are juiced because of their high vitamin C content. We commonly found *Hippophae rhamnoides* subsp. *turkestanica* heavily in fruit and had buckthorn juice for breakfast the next day, which was surprisingly good!

That evening, as dusk was falling on the high screes above our chalet, we watched blue sheep walk their ways out across the screes, a clever move to protect themselves from visiting snow leopards. If the latter crosses the scree, the sheep hear the rubble move, and they can run for safety.

One of the most incredible places we visited was the Buddhist cave at Dakmar, a temple cave set high in the mountains above the Indus River. Here the enormity of the Ladakhi landscape came into play; vast valleys and peaks painted rose-purple and rust colours, giving rich colours to rock formations as a result of the exposure of iron-oxide pigments (Dakmar means 'red-rocks'). Within this seemingly barren terrain we found dozens of beautiful plants like the wonderfully woolly-leaved, purple-flowered *Nepeta floccosa* and the sweetly-scented *Aquilegia moorcroftiana*, named for an early explorer of the Ladakhi flora.

From Dakmar we descended to the little village of Hemis Shukpachan, set in a small oasis and surrounded by an amphitheatre of snow-capped peaks. A white-washed stupa marked the centre of the village and we stayed in a traditional homestead where we were looked after by three generations of the same family. Shukpa means juniper,



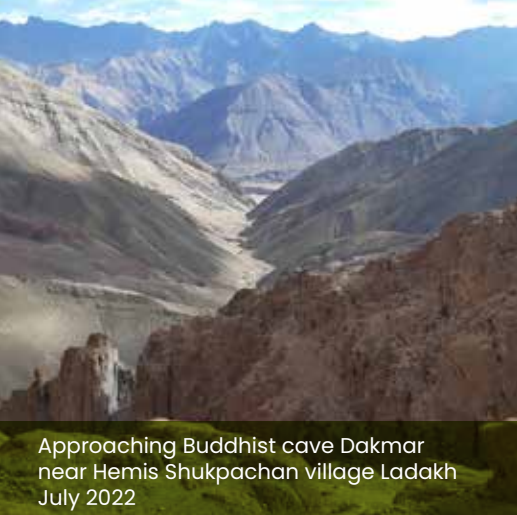
Thiksey Monastery Ladakh July 2022



Shanti Stupa near Leh, Lakakh, July 2022



Echinops cornigerus Rizong Monastery
Ladakh July 2022



Approaching Buddhist cave Dakmar
near Hemis Shukpachan village Ladakh
July 2022



Hemis Shukpachan village Ladakh
July 2022



Leh and Leh Palace Leh, Ladakh
July 2022

and Hemis Shukpachan is considered a holy place due to the presence of ancient trees of the Himalayan pencil juniper, *Juniperus semiglobosa*. One old veteran is thought to be over a thousand years old and is believed to have been planted by Buddhist monks. Behind the junipers we trampled our ways through meadows turned golden by the lovely lousewort, *Pedicularis longiflora* var. *tubiformis*, while high in the valleys above, the wildflower meadows were a riot of colour with gems like *Anemone rivularis*, *Geranium himalayense*, *Lancea tibetica*, *Euphrasia officinalis* and *Gentiana squarrosa*.

“At 5312 m (17,427 ft) we stood among a great tangle of prayer flags”

From there our route took us to the 15th century Thiksey monastery, the largest gompa in central Ladakh, an impressive pile famed for its resemblance to the Potala Palace in Lhasa. In the grounds of the monastery we found *Rosa* ‘Reine de l’Île Bourbon’, better known of course as Bourbon Queen, an incredibly good Bourbon rose, bred in France in 1834.

The highlight of the trip was a visit to the Warila, a major mountain pass where at 5312 m (17,427 ft) we stood



Warila Pass prayer flags Warila,
Ladakh July 2022

among a great tangle of prayer flags with the massive peaks of the Trans-Himalaya acting as a suitably dramatic backdrop. We climbed higher still, onto icy slopes, where panting, and deprived of oxygen, we managed to photograph curious alpine plants like the snowball-plant, *Saussurea inversa*, its foliage smothered in a sheen of fine hairs, hence the common name.

Below there other showy alpine plants abounded, the meadows, grazed by yaks and pashmina goats, were covered in swathes of blue gentians, *Gentiana nubigena*, pink louseworts *Pedicularis punctata*, while the nearby boulder scree was turned blue by the lovely blossoms of *Delphinium brunonianum*. Above the delphiniums, in sharp scree, were drifts of pink-flowered *Primula macrophylla*. It was strange to suddenly transition from desert to well-watered mountain slopes and the scene was reminiscent of the Himalaya. Edelweiss, always a dweller of high mountains, appeared in the

form of *Leontopodium ochroleucum*, the white, starry blossoms of *Cerastium cerastoides* sheeted entire mountain slopes, while the hooded lantern-like blooms of two alpine bladder campions, *Silene gonosperma* and *Silene himalayense*, danced on the breeze.

A convoy of Indian army trucks snaked its way up the pass as we departed for our next major mountain pass, the Chang La 5391 m (17,688 feet), before moving on and driving alongside the turbulent waters of the Shayok River (a major tributary of the Indus), eventually reaching the sacred waters of Pangong Tso, a huge lake straddling the Ladakh–Tibet border. It was on the edge of this great sheet of turquoise waters that we concluded our travels, staring across to the mountains of Tibet as groups of scarlet-robed Buddhist monks chanted and burned incense (*Artemisia brevifolia* gathered nearby). The Dali Lama was to arrive in Leh the following day, and excitement was building. ■

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The Palm House, Glasnevin



Teagasc College of Amenity Horticulture



Margie Philips

The College of Amenity Horticulture is located at the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, Dublin. The college offers students unique training opportunities. The goal is to train students for employment in the amenity horticulture industry. Currently, training is provided for 300 students between all the courses. There is a balance of both school leavers and mature participants among the students.

While on courses, students are trained in the theory and practice of horticulture and get an opportunity

to work practically alongside skilled horticulturalists as part of their training. Graduates of our courses contribute to many sectors of the horticulture industry, such as landscape design and construction, garden centres, parks, estate gardens, grounds maintenance and greenkeeping. All aspects of Horticulture are being studied in our programmes from Level 5 to Level 7.

It never ceases to amaze that so many varied career opportunities are offered by a humble garden. Over the years, Teagasc College of Amenity Horticulture has watched with great joy the career paths taken by the students. A career which offers such diversity. Here are some inspiring testimonials given by some past pupils.



1. Seamus O'Brien, Plant Hunter/ Author

Having completed my Leaving Certificate in 1989, I spent a year at Multyfarnham College, Co. Westmeath, where I completed a Certificate in Horticulture, which led to completing a Diploma in Amenity Horticulture at the National Botanic Gardens,

Glasnevin. From 1993 to 1997, I was Head Gardener at Glanleam, a subtropical garden on Valentia Island, Co. Kerry. Following that, I was Head Gardener at Beech Park (now the Shackleton Garden) at Clonsilla in Dublin. From there, I returned to the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin as a staff member, transferring in 2006 to Kilmacurragh, Glasnevin's country estate in Co. Wicklow, where since then, I've been Head Gardener. In 2006 I also completed the Kew International Diploma in Botanic Gardens Management.



2. Darach Lupton, Curator National Botanic Gardens

Completing my diploma in amenity horticulture at the Teagasc College in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, in 1998, I went to do a degree in botany at Trinity College, Dublin; following my degree I continued my studies, completing a PhD in 2007. Unable to stay away, I found myself back at the NBG, Glasnevin, where I worked as a botanist for 3-years. In

early 2011 I took a big leap and landed in the Sultanate of Oman; there, I could use my horticultural and botanical training to help lead the botany department at the nascent Oman Botanic Garden. After ten glorious years in Oman, I returned to Ireland, taking up the position of Curator of the NBG, Glasnevin – completing the circle, so to speak.



3. Nora Mulcahy, past student

I qualified as a Physiotherapist in 2007 and worked in the public and private sectors in Ireland and overseas. After completing a Social & Therapeutic Horticulture certificate, I was exposed to the concept of Nature Therapy. I gained a horticultural qualification with Teagasc to expand and deepen my interest in plants.

A lifelong meditator and clinical educator in methods such as mindfulness, breathwork and yoga, I travelled to the Amazon jungle to

explore the origins of the concept of Nature Therapy. I lived with indigenous communities and worked within a socially conscious permaculture organisation. I learned that medicinal plants, preserving biodiversity and respecting indigenous wisdom are at the heart of the concept of "Therapeutic" horticulture.

I continue to expand my horticultural interests and am inspired by what can be learned (and unlearned) from our plant allies, local ecology and ancestral educators.

Nora on bioconstruction on the permaculture course:
<https://youtu.be/XXjpKKKG-vo>

Contact Information

If you wish to pursue a horticulture career, why not come to the college's open days? These are advertised on the college website as well as Eventbrite, Facebook and Instagram.

Scan the QR code below to learn more about the courses.

'A Career in Horticulture is both rewarding and fulfilling.'





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Photo © Bord Bia

Bloom 2023 Coming soon: A great day out

Mary Hackett

The Bloom Festival will return to the walled garden in the Phoenix Park from the 1st to 5th June 2023, the Bank Holiday weekend.

Tickets are on sale through Ticketmaster. Full price adult ticket is €30 with a concession price ticket for students and seniors available at €25. Two children are admitted with every paying adult. RHSI members get a 10% discount by quoting the discount code (available from Orlaith in the RHSI office) when booking.

Show Gardens are the highlight of Bloom for most visitors. This year Jane McCorkell returns in partnership with Fingal County Council and a garden of woodland planting with an urban landscape incorporated at each side. Their garden is about enjoying the outdoor space, recognising the benefits




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Oliver Schurman, Bloom 2022



Crowd, Bloom 2022



Bloom 2022

to mind and body of spending time in nature. Much of the hard material is coming from Fingal County Council's stores, emphasising the importance of recycling and reusing.

Oliver and Liat Schurmann of Mount Venus Garden Centre are designing a large Garden of Discovery aimed at children under five for the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. Their design responds to parents' desire to have children spend time out in natural settings following the restrictions of Covid lockdowns.

To support a new generation of garden designers and horticulture professionals, Bord Bia launched the Cultivating Talent programme in 2023. The winner Joseph Eustace is a third-year student of Landscape Architecture in UCD. Joe was also joint winner of the 2022 Student and Graduate Design Competition run by the GLDA. The Cultivating Talent team are giving him financial support and one-to-one mentoring as he builds his first Bloom Show Garden. Joe's design shows the journey of life, with unpredictability at its core. Winding paths, multiple focal points and destination points within



Joe Eustace

the landscape suggest the struggle to find the correct next step, the secret being that there is none. One path in the garden even hits a wall.

The Nursery Village at Bloom is always a favourite with RHSI members. The village will be out of doors as it was last year giving plenty of room for exhibitors and buyers to circulate. The Plant Clinic and the Gardening Stage will also be at the Show's Entrance One. The Association of Irish Floral Artists exhibition will feature input by Wexford Flower and Garden Club.

The sustainability message is of course integral to the show and to underline this Bloom 2023 will have a

separate Sustainability Stage. An Taisce will give a pond demonstration. Crann and Seed Savers are expected. Previous shows have shown how popular this aspect of modern gardening is with visitors. Bloom 2023 is itself a sustainability-sensitive event with food waste being managed through Food Cloud or composting and the on-site generators switched this year from diesel to hydrogenated vegetable oil.

Bloom Show Gardens are very low waste. The garden elements are typically rented or borrowed. Commissioned pieces are repurposed with some gardens being recreated where a suitable site is available. In 2022 Bord Bia brought two of their Dream Gardens to life at the show. One of these was rebuilt for a charity in Sligo. The Enable Ireland garden from Bloom 2022 designed by Robert Moore and incorporating the Shepherds' Hut Studio went to a respite centre in Wicklow.

As always, you will find coverage of Bloom everywhere including on social

media, radio, and television. Super Gardens will be coming back to RTÉ One in April with the winning garden to be revealed on 1 June. In a synchronicity of dates that is certainly magical, that same winning garden will have been rebuilt at the Show which opens on 1 June. Amazing!!!

In 2022 some RHSI members mentioned traffic delays in the Phoenix Park when driving to Bloom. Bord Bia and the OPW are working to improve traffic circulation but remember that a shuttle bus runs from Heuston Station. The service will be even more frequent this year. For car drivers with a blue badge indicating impacted mobility, there are reserved parking spaces in the Park. Access to these by necessity is across grass and uneven ground.

With everything in readiness for a wonderful Show, book your tickets now, find a comfortable pair of shoes, arrive early to avoid the worst of the traffic and have a fantastic day out at Bloom 2023. ■

National Botanic Gardens of Ireland Glasnevin and Kilmacurragh



The National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, Glasnevin, 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 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 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.

Upcoming events at Glasnevin include Biodiversity Week talks and walks and Children's Drop-by Workshops.



For more information see www.botanicgardens.ie or our Facebook pages.
Phone: (01) 804 0319 Email: botanicgardens@opw.ie



Floral Art

Karen Robinson

Design 1

Plant Material
A Bunch of Irises
Some Moss

Mechanics

Low Bowl
Pin Holder
Anchor tape to secure pin holder
(optional)

Method

Place the pin holder in the bottom of the bowl. I used anchor tape to secure the pin holder, but not absolutely necessary if you don't have any. Position the Irises starting with the tallest and with those that are in a tight bud, working your way down arranging them at various heights, using your largest open flower at the bottom. You can use as little as 7 irises or more if you have a larger bowl. Make sure your design is balanced and flowers have space around them. Add water to the bowl. Place some moss around the base of the design to hide the pin holder (remember to top up the water each day).

Hello Everyone and I hope you are well. I am setting out below simple designs in which you can use Spring or Summer flowers

We are all looking forward to Bloom in the Park during the June Bank holiday and as usual there will be a Floral Art competition. Do check out the AOIFA website regularly to find out what's going on. (www.AOIFA.com)



Design 2

Plant Material

Tulips or Hellebore or Ranunculus
(depending on time of year and what
you have)

Pieces of bark of different heights,

Mechanics

Water Tubes

Glue Gun

Hessian rope or ribbon

Elastic bands to help hold pieces
together while you glue

Method

Starting from the center place a water
tube in between two pieces of bark
using the hot glue gun, continue adding
pieces of bark to create a circle shape
leaving spaces for the rest of the tubes.
Tie a piece of hessian rope or ribbon
to secure. (As I wanted to use the bark
pieces again and I was just making the
piece for the house I used elastic bands
to keep the bark and tubes together).
Add water to tubes and place the
flowers cutting them so they are at
different heights to draw the eye up,
down and around. Enjoy.



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Getting Things Moving in the Vegetable Garden

Deborah Ballard

Jobs for May and June

- Earth up potatoes
- Net soft fruit
- Check the centre of gooseberry bushes for the first signs of sawfly attack
- Harvest herbs like thyme before flowering, early in the morning after dew has dried; clip back after flowering
- Repeat-sow salads, annual herbs, carrots and peas
- Sow purple-sprouting broccoli, late leeks, winter cabbage and cauliflower to overwinter
- Turn the compost heap

Jobs for July and August

- Prune cherries and plums if necessary
- Thin apples after the 'June drop'
- Peg down strawberry runners to increase stock
- After midsummer, sow 'bolters' like coriander, chervil, cress, Swiss chard and short day spinach
- Take semi-ripe cuttings of shrubby herbs
- Prune blackcurrants while picking fruit, by cutting the oldest stems to the ground
- Sow parsley to overwinter

Try Something Different

Deborah Ballard

Although I do try the odd new fruit or vegetable from our GIY seedling-swaps, I constantly grow the same vegetables, ones that I've found do well in my garden and taste delicious. Other people try a new vegetable – or more than one – every year, fair play to them, and I think I should fight against this unnatural conservatism, and try something new.

I'm growing pretty **Japanese wineberry** (*Rubus phoenicolasius*) this year, with lovely red, bristly canes, emerald green leaves with white felted undersides, turning yellow in autumn, and long, bristly calyces which seem to protect the orangey-red fruit from birds. The fruit tastes raspberry-like with a hint of sherbet. It needs a sheltered, sunny site and well-drained, fertile soil. It fruits on second-year wood so it needs support, on strained wires between posts or against a warm wall (not too close). Cut back the stems after fruiting, and tie in the new shoots for next year's crop. Usefully, the harvest comes between those of summer and autumn raspberries; less usefully, the stems can grow to 2.5m, and it seeds about prolifically. And if you grow it as an arching shrub, it will spread by tip-rooting, like a bramble.

I planted a small **tayberry** (*Rubus fruticosus* x *idaeus*) last year, but unfortunately my gardener lost concentration and mowed it off. Deep purple when ripe, they are long berries with a sweet-sharp taste, better for cooking and jam; they freeze well. A thorny cross between a raspberry and a blackberry or loganberry, they are grown in a similar way to Japanese wineberries; there's a thornless cultivar, Buckingham. There are also primocane varieties like Medana, which crop on new canes, but the new growth, already coming up, will still have to be tied in. They like a moist but well-drained site in lighter soils, and full sun. A good cropper, but another liable to tip-rooting, and birds can be a pest.

I am surprised that so few people grow perennial **buckler-leaf (true French) sorrel**, which no French gardener would be without, as it comes up so early in the year. I love the lemony leaves in salads, and it's brilliant in sorrel and potato soup, melted in butter as a sauce for salmon or as a filling, with feta or goat's cheese, for omelettes. It's smaller and much milder than broad-leaved (garden) sorrel. I grow some in the polytunnel over winter for an even earlier crop, but it's hardy

and thrives outside in reasonably fertile, moisture-retentive soil, in sun or partial shade. Water in dry spells, and cut out any flowering stems, or it will seed everywhere.

A delicious root, which I'm growing again this year, is **scorzoneria**. Very easy, with yellow daisy flowers, it's related to salsify and is lovely steamed and then turned in butter. The only snag is that you might have to leave it in for two years to get sizeable roots.

“Oca is a nutritious little tuber like a lemony potato”

Chervil is a herb that thrives in winter, and one of the French *finest* herbes, with a mildly aniseedy taste. Gorgeous in salads, and very good with eggs, it loses its flavour with cooking, and seeds about mildly. **Lovage** (*Levisticum officinale*) which the Germans justly call 'soup-herb', is a tall perennial herb with a highly savoury, slightly celery-like, taste. It likes rich soil in sun or partial shade, and is a prolific self-seeder.

Quinoa (*Chenopodium quinoa*) is grown for its bland, but nutritious seeds, which are very high in protein. It's an annual, thriving in Irish summers. It's another whopper, rising to 2m tall; leaves turn purple and red as they age. It needs a sheltered, sunny site and

moist but well drained soil. Sow in April-May and harvest in September.

Oca is a nutritious little tuber like a lemony potato, particularly good with white fish; as there are oxalates in the skin, you may prefer to peel them. The tubers store well in sand in a cool shed. There is a snag: the plant doesn't form tubers until the days are shorter than nine hours, and the plant is frost-sensitive, so unless you live in a mild area, they should be grown in a polytunnel. It does well in poorer soils, and is grown like potatoes. **Yacon** is 2m tall; the tubers are juicy and taste of apples, celery and pear, and eaten raw or cooked.

Sweet potatoes thrive between 21-26°C, so are best grown in a polytunnel. They are grown from mail-order slips (shop-bought tubers are unlikely to do well). Put the slips in a jar of water to rehydrate them, and then pot up. Plant the slip deeply, to the base of the leaves, and keep in warm, humid conditions before planting out after frosts are past. Lift the tubers when the leaves have turned yellow and cure the skins in a warm, humid place for 10 days, after which they can be stored in a cool shed. Carolina Ruby and Beauregard are recommended.

When I was researching this article I realised that there's a reason why so many of these plants are not more widely grown – they need supports, or a polytunnel, can be invasive, and many of them are huge. No wonder we chose potatoes rather than the other Inca tubers! Still, all of them are worth a try. ■

Article originally published in the RHS Journal, April 2021



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Laurelmere Cottage Garden

Cherry Sleeman
Co-Ordinator Laurelmere Cottage Garden

The garden closed for a sleep in January to be awakened at month's end by enthusiastic volunteers and new members John, Declan and Anne and by our two Ukrainian friends.

All have worked hard with weeding, edging the beds, mulching, spreading compost and chicken pellets to get the soil in good order. We lost one large tree at the west end which was removed by DLR Co.Co staff. Another tree has dropped two large boughs.

The vegetable garden and troughs have been planted with spinach, onions, early potatoes and broad beans, all coming on nicely. The white garden continues to have additional plants added.

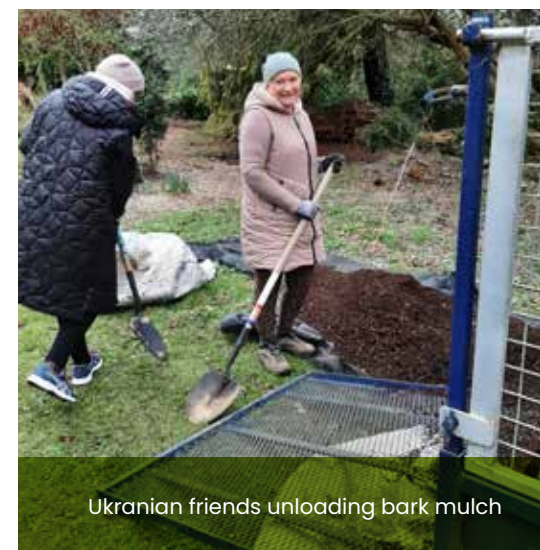
A mini pond, rockery, and succulents have been introduced to the front of the central bed hopefully to attract frogs and newts. The back part of this bed will follow Ukrainian colours with plantings of blue cornflowers, and sunflowers.

There was a major seed planting 'fest' in the past week so hopefully with good germination and minding we will have plants to sell and share. An interesting project led by Liz Barker and Cosmo Solly has seen the building of a fedge. This will be utilized for our waste branches and leaves creating a shelter for white bed planting and a haven in time for wildlife. Great effort was put into creating a plinth with levelling and clearing an area for a seat and dressing it with hardcore. A seat will be made available to us very kindly by DLR. Co.Co.

We're sorry to report that our master plantsman and dear friend Andrew



New pond and rockery planting



Ukrainian friends unloading bark mulch

Boyle remains in hospital, but he recently seems a little brighter. We send our best wishes to Andrew and Maeve and their family. ■

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RHSI PARTNER GARDENS SCHEME

Benefits to Members

Summer is now in our sights- the prime season for garden visiting with an ever -increasing number of public and private gardens to enjoy throughout the country. It is never too early to start some armchair research in the Partner Gardens section of the RHSI website! This scheme is now in its tenth year with 56 superb participating gardens throughout the island of Ireland. These gardens vary greatly in size and design, whether surrounding a very grand castle or a lovely rural cottage. What they all have in common is a high standard of design, planting and maintenance and the desire of their very generous owners to share their surroundings with other garden lovers. The scheme remains one of the most attractive features of RHSI membership with free or half price entry to these gardens offered by their owners. Thus, your annual RHSI subscription will quickly cover several garden visits each year. Many of the participating gardens offer additional features such as plant sales, cafes or gift shops and we strongly encourage you to support these where available as they in turn support the owners in the running of their gardens.

Full information is available on the Partner Garden section of the RHSI website including visiting times, addresses, postcodes, a map and a county-by-county listing. This makes planning ahead to visit several gardens in an area very easy. The View link with each garden brings you to their own website (where available).

It is essential to advance check the garden visiting arrangements and to have your current RHSI membership card with you to avail of free or reduced entry.



PARTNER GARDEN

Ballyedmond Castle Gardens

Noreen Keane

We are extremely pleased to welcome this eclectic and relatively unknown private garden to our Partner Garden Scheme. The Castle at Ballyedmond dates from the 1850s and was built to a design by famed architect Sir Charles Lanyon. While many of the mature trees were planted in the 1800s, most of the planting has taken place since Lord and Lady Ballyedmond purchased the estate in the early 1990s.

The collections include spring flowering rhododendrons, camellias and azaleas. Added to this are collections of shrubs, perennials and bulbs in various 'garden rooms' such as the Celtic Cross and Moonlight Gardens and the Rose Garden, Fruit Garden and Woodland Garden. There are also several acres of wildflower meadows. Plantings of Himalayan rhododendrons, South American Andean shrubs and Australasian plants have been built up in recent years- the gardens being situated on the shores of Carlingford Lough are favoured with a mild maritime climate.

The various fountains and statuary were partly inspired by Lord and Lady Ballyedmond's travels around classical Europe and further afield. There is also a range of ornamental greenhouses



including a peach house, palm house, propagation house and an orangery which has a large classical fountain garden adjacent to it.

The Castle itself is a private residence and is not open to visitors.

Ballyedmond Castle Gardens,

101, Killowen Road, Rostrevor, Co Down.
BT34 3AG

Contact: Jamie McCormack. (Head Gardener)

Mobile: 0044 7810 830507

Email:jamie.mccormack@mourneden.com

Visits: Strictly by appointment only. Guided tours may be provided by a garden team member for a minimum of 5 persons.

Gardens open from early March to late September.

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



PARTNER GARDEN

Dromana House & Gardens

Noreen Keane

Three miles south of Cappoquin, the river Blackwater cuts through a wooded valley, set above which is Dromana, one of Ireland's most spectacularly located properties which we have great pleasure in welcoming as an RHSI Partner Garden. Dromana's gardens and woodland, havens for natural regeneration, extend over 30 acres including many looped walks. Herbaceous borders in the garden provide a continual splash of colour throughout the summer months followed by the autumn with changing shades of shrubs and trees. Many of the 64,000 trees planted by the first Earl Grandison still stand almost 250 years later. The Bastion and Banqueting House are the main architectural features in the Pleasure Grounds which are reached by 3.5km of meandering paths through charming natural woodland interspersed with rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas, and other acid loving plants. The owners' own *Rhododendron* 'Dromana 800', is registered with the RHS and can be seen flowering in late May or early June. The name was chosen to celebrate 800 years of the family's occupation of the Dromana Estate. The house as well as the gardens are open to visitors during the appointed times.



Dromana House and Gardens

Cappoquin, Co Waterford.P51 X682.

Contact mob: 086 818 6305

Email: info@dromanahouse.com

Web: dromanahouse.com

Visits: June and July. Tues-Sun. 2-6pm
Heritage Week Aug 12th-20th 2023.
2-6pm.

All other times throughout the year by appointment only.
Half price entry to RHSI members to both house and gardens on presentation of current membership card.



PARTNER GARDEN

Glenarm Castle Walled Garden

Noreen Keane

Owned by the Earl and Countess of Antrim, and situated in the grounds of Glenarm Castle, the Walled Garden is one of the finest in Northern Ireland and we are delighted to welcome this prestigious garden to our Partner Garden Scheme. Dating from the early 19th century, in recent years it has been completely restored by the owners. It is now divided into several ornamental garden 'rooms' with a variety of features. There is a herb garden surrounded by a 200 year old circular yew hedge, a grassed area with cascade and fountain, a working kitchen garden and glass house dating back to the 1820s, and an apple orchard with a recently commissioned obelisk. One of the most exciting areas of the garden is the herbaceous border, alive with hot colours throughout the season. In 2007 a mount was created as part of the garden restoration. From the top of the mount there are wonderful views over the walled garden, the castle parkland and out to sea. Just recently, a woodland walk has been added to the garden visit - a scenic extension to the Walled Garden with a host of wildlife including red squirrels. Rhododendrons and camellias provide spring colour with a growing collection of acers providing a vibrant autumn. After your



garden visit you can enjoy several food outlets, and some small shops selling plants, giftware etc. on the estate.

Address: Glenarm Castle Walled Garden, 2, Castle Lane, Glenarm. Co. Antrim. BT44 0BQ

Landline: 0044 28 288 41203

Mobile: 0044 75 81145655

Web: glenarmcastle.com.

Visits: open from mid March. Full information on an excellent website.

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



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Russborough Notes

Anne Camilla Voss

Autumn made its usual entrance into the garden with splendid colour and breezy weather. We tried to find jobs that kept us warm and one such job was the reworking of the wildflower circle. In recent years the scutch grass has mounted a slow but steady invasion and it got to a point where the grass hindered the growth of the wildflowers. So it was decided that we would reduce the size of the wildflower bed, double-dig the area to remove as much scutch as possible and then dig a deep trench around the bed to act a demilitarized zone. The trench would be filled with stones and then gravel on top to serve as a walking path. It was a hard and dirty job but after several wheelbarrow loads of scutch roots, the new circle was covered with plastic and tucked into bed. Sadly the hawthorn tree in the



Russborough Christmas

middle had died so we will have to find another centerpiece in the new year.

At the end of December, we always celebrate our last working day by making Christmas wreaths under experienced guidance from Denise. No matter the experience level, everybody always goes home with something beautiful.



Wildflower circle

We have long talked about how much we need to have a good clear out and get rid of a lot of rubbish has gathered in nooks and crannies around the garden. In the beginning of February we rented a skip, which we proceeded to fill to the brim in just a few hours. We then sorted and organized the huge amount of plastic pots we have amassed over the years. The potting shed and propagation house looks clean and tidy now, ready for the intense next few months where we divide and prepare plants for sale at the garden show in May.

Preparation for the garden show also means we have a new toy. Weeding the paths has long been considered the most tedious job anyone could ever be saddled with, so we have decided to invest in a gas flame gun. This method is safer both for gardener and garden than harsh weed killers. When used correctly the flame gun kills the weeds by burning and thereby destroying the plant tissue. Some perennial weeds may need more than one application

but eventually the flame gun should take care of anything that dare grow in our paths.



New toy

City garden



Another project for 2023 is the redesign of a holding area into a city garden. New houses today may come with a small plot of land and it can be difficult to figure out how to turn this into a garden. We want the walled garden to not only reflect the past but also the future of gardening and a place where everyone can find inspiration and ideas so watch this space as the volunteers continue to work on this project.

A garden never (nor should it) stays the same. Nature abhors stagnation and thrives on change. We should try to do the same, so I'll be leaving the garden and the volunteers, to change my own life. After 19 years in Ireland and 5 years in Russborough walled garden, I'm moving back to Denmark, to go back to school and study horticulture. Working in the walled garden among

this kind, generous and inspiring group of people, has been my pleasure and privilege. ■



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Book Review

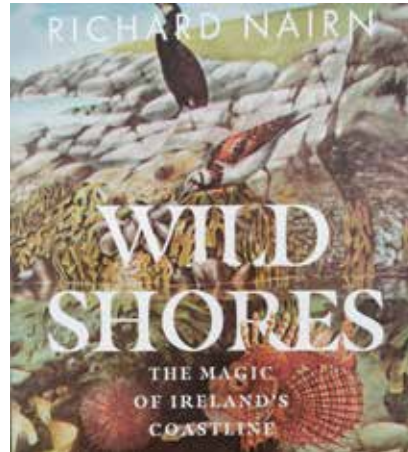
Orlaith Murphy

Wild Shores: The magic of Ireland's shoreline" by Richard Nairn is a travelogue with a unique mix of nature, history, science and personal reflection that captures the beauty and wonder of the coastline of Ireland.

Sadly, wild places in early 21st-century Ireland are becoming ever more elusive- pushed to the margins by pollution and modern farming and population growth. In this book the author takes us on a journey, following the coast in a clockwise direction, by boat, on foot and sometimes even by air in search of our remaining wild places.

A standout feature is Richard's deep appreciation for Ireland's natural beauty. However the book is not just about the sights, but also about the people, their customs and traditions, and their connection to the land and sea. Richard's writing style is engaging and informative, as he shares his personal experiences and observations about the places he visits. 'Wild Shores' is filled with vivid descriptions that showcase the country's breathtaking scenery, rich history, and diverse culture.

Incorporating stories of Robert Lloyd Praeger, the famous Irish naturalist, botanist, and writer, highlights the significance of Praeger's contribution to the genre of coastal exploration



and provides a historical context for Richard's book. It demonstrates how Richard's work builds upon the legacy of Praeger and other writers who have explored and documented Ireland's coastline.

Overall, "Wild Shores: The magic of Ireland's shoreline" by Richard Nairn is a book that I will treasure and refer to often on my own travels. Its rich descriptions of Ireland's coastline make it a valuable resource for anyone interested in exploring this magnificent part of the world. The book is a celebration of the country's natural beauty, history, and culture, and it will leave you with a deep appreciation for Ireland's coastline. Whether you are planning a trip around Ireland or simply looking to experience the country's beauty from the comfort of your own home, "Wild Shores" is a must-read. ■

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From the Editor's Garden Plan Ahead for Spring Colour

Peter and Nicola Milligan

When we are sitting in our summer gardens enjoying the range of colours and leaf forms provided by our annuals and herbaceous perennials it may seem odd to consider the forthcoming autumn or even the far off spring. And yet late summer and early autumn is a perfect time to select and plant some material to enliven the bleaker months that lie ahead.

We are all familiar with the wonderful range of snowdrops, crocus, daffodils, and tulips that will provide colour from November through to April but this colour can tend to 'drop off' in April. We have found that the genus *Erythronium* can fill this colour hungry gap in April with a wonderful range of plants.

The last time I checked there were twenty-nine species of *Erythronium* and this could have increased by now. However, unless you plan to build an extensive collection or to try to hold a National Collection of these plants, you will find that the well-known species of *E. dens-canis*, *E. californicum*, *E. revolutum*, and *E. tuolumense*, and their hybrids and cultivars, will provide an elegant sufficiency of colour for your garden in April.

As if that weren't enough, the foliage comes up in March and dies back in May, and several cultivars have glorious marbled foliage – some with burgundy marbling and others silvery white. We would be happy to have these plants even without flowers, but to then have

the large, elegant hanging flowers, which are imperious to weather, has made them irresistible to us since their discovery!

At any time, we will be growing somewhere between twenty and thirty *Erythronium*. These include some readily available cultivars and hybrids and some lesser known, or rarer, Irish forms.

It is difficult to remember what the first *Erythronium* to enter our garden was but we suspect it was the beautiful *E. 'Pagoda'*. This hybrid between *E. tuolumense* and (probably) *E. californicum* remains a firm favourite with gardeners as it produces its greenish yellow flowers with a pleasing regularity.

There are a number of yellows available (e.g., *E. 'Harvington Sunshine'*), whites (e.g., *E. californicum* 'Harvington Snowgoose' and *E. dens-canis* 'White Splendour'), pinks (e.g., *E. japonicum* and *E. revolutum* 'Knighthayes Pink') and purples (e.g., *E. dens-canis* 'Old Aberdeen' thought by some to have the deepest purple flowers).

If these plants mentioned and illustrated here are not enough for you there are many, many cultivars available. At one stage the Co. Down nursery of Gary Dunlop listed around 78 cultivars including many produced by Mr Dunlop's breeding programme.

Sadly, many of the Irish cultivars appear to be lost to cultivation in that they are not readily available in current nursery listings. These include *E. californicum* 'Brocklamont Inheritance' from Margaret Glynn's Garden in Co. Antrim, *E. 'Beech Park'* from the famous



E. 'Pagoda'



E. dens-canis 'Old Aberdeen'



E. 'Beech Park'

garden at Clonsilla, Dublin, and many others, e.g., *E. revolutum* 'Guincho Splendour' from the garden of that name in Co. Down.

So, while you enjoy the summer flowers do spare a thought for the coming days and look for some of these beautiful plants to enhance the glory of your spring garden. ■

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