



The Journal

Spring 2022

Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland
Cumann Ríoga Gairneoireach na hÉireann



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Note From The Chair



How good it is to see the seasons rolling over and spring arriving again. I find myself understanding more and more why our ancestors went to so much trouble marking seasonal changes. It even has a name, Phenology, and if memory serves me correctly, spring arrives at about 2 mph (that's 3.2 kph in 'new money') from south to north across Ireland giving a delightful image of leaves unfurling and petals opening in the sunshine at a gentle walking pace.

Changes too within the RHSI. A warm welcome to Peter Milligan who has taken over from Mary Hackett as editor of The Journal. Mary will continue to write for the magazine and the society is deeply grateful to her for the work she has put into developing this excellent publication.

Shirley Cullen has stepped back from coordinating the Partner Garden Scheme and leaves it flourishing with over fifty gardens participating- the scheme now being one of the star attractions of RHSI membership. We thank Shirley for the terrific care and attention she brought to the scheme

which Noreen Keane will now take on and continue to develop.

Many thanks also to Karen Robinson who has moved on from coordinating Floral Art. Karen brought huge talent and expertise to this area and even braved Zoom to give us some terrific demonstrations.

RHSI Garden Russborough has seen changes too as May Maguire steps back from her role as manager. Thankfully, May will stay involved as a volunteer, bringing huge skill and knowledge to the vegetable growing area of the garden. The society and garden volunteers deeply appreciate the time, energy and expertise which May brought to her role.

Finally, a new board member as Susan Loughnane has kindly agreed to join us. Susan is a long-standing RHSI member, well-known to many of you, and we are delighted that she is joining the board.

Happy Gardening to you all,
Philip,
Chair, RHSI.

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A Note From The Editor



Editor and his Head Gardener (Scarlett)

It was with considerable trepidation that I accepted the kind offer from Philip to take on the role of editor of *The Journal*. I am all too aware of the skill and knowledge that previous holders of this position have demonstrated and I realize that I have many 'hard acts' to follow.

I have a lifelong interest in gardening, but it was when my wife and I moved to our garden in the Mount Stewart estate in Co Down over twenty years ago that a passion for perennials was born. The contents of the garden reflects the interests of my wife Nicola and myself, with a range of hardy herbaceous perennials within which we have a number of collections. My wife has interests in crocus, epimediums, hellebores, and gingers to mention a few. I like agapanthus, crocosmia, galanthus, narcissus, nerines, and rogersias.

We also have a small orchard with a mix of apples for dessert and culinary use, and a potager – an overly fancy name for where we grow more fruit (top and bush), vegetables, and flowers. Beneath this, in the side garden, we are waging a war with encroaching *Rosa pimpinellifolia* from one side and *Cornus* from the other – the *Cornus* is winning at the moment. In addition, the estate was widely planted with Snowberry, which is now twenty feet closer to the house than when we moved in!

At the front of the house, we have some flower beds and a large lawn which is

surrounded by mature trees and shrubs that were in position when we arrived. Many of these are fine old specimens including some *Rhododendron* that came to the estate when Lady Edith, Marchioness of Londonderry, had supported some of Farrer's plant collecting expeditions.

This issue sees the introduction of some topics that we intend to repeat as 'themes' in future issues – these include articles on sustainability, Irish gardens and gardeners, etc.

I hope you will find something of interest in this issue of *The Journal* – there is an article on a spring favourite snowdrops, wonderful features on gardens and gardeners, useful information on encouraging and supporting pollinators in our gardens and much, much more.

I am grateful to the editorial team for the superb support that has enabled the production of this spring issue for 2022. I am indebted to the hard work and guidance of all of the team and in particular to the help from Peggy Masterson, Noreen Keane, Orlaith Murphy, and Phil Last – it is much appreciated.

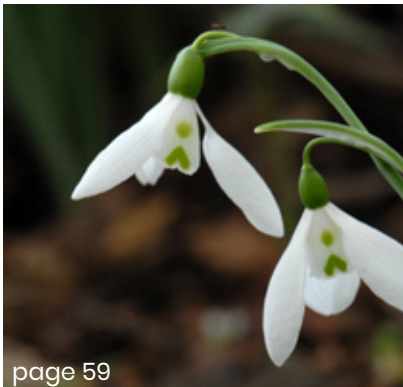
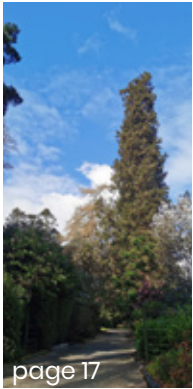
I will close by noting the prestigious awards made by the Royal Horticultural Society to five Irish gardeners – Peggy Masterson will be writing on the recipients and the awards in the autumn issue of the journal.

With my best wishes to you all,

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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Robert Walker grew up in Fernhill, Stepside.

Hostas and Early Candelabra Primula

Ardcarraig

By Mary Hackett



When Lorna McMahon closes the gate of Ardcarraig outside Galway city to the public on 1 June 2022 it will mark more than just the end of her public contribution to gardening in the west of Ireland. Over forty years, Lorna has seen decorative gardening in Connaught move out of the shadow of the Big House. All of us who travel the roads of the west know of the pride now taken by farmers, house owners, schools and small estates in their gardens and landscaping. Not a small part of this pride has come from knowing that one of their own, a neighbour, gardening the same peaty soil, challenged by the same high rainfall and destructive winds, is a gardener of international renown, a multiple prize winner in national competitions, a superb communicator on television and in print and an innovative interpreter of the horticultural possibilities of rock and hazel scrub.

“Hidden in the trees are nine ponds, two Japanese gardens, a bog garden, a fernery and much more”

Lough Corrib dominates the view from Lorna’s living room. Below the house, her garden tumbles down



The Bog Field, Top Area

a precipitate hillside. Hidden in the trees are nine ponds, two Japanese gardens, a bog garden, a fernery and much more. Forty years of ‘obsessive gardening’ have still left space for both granite outcrops and the natural underplanting of ferns and mosses. This is truly gardening within the landscape. It has been done piece by piece as time, opportunity and finances allowed.

Harry and Lorna McMahon bought their original house with one acre of land, as the planning regulations then required. The first significant step towards developing the present garden was buying the woodland behind and to the east of that house and then discovering, to Lorna’s delight, that there was a stream at the edge

“The woodland was a shelter”

of their new patch. The woodland was a shelter. “Gardening at the old house, I used to say I had two trees between us and the sea”, Lorna remembers. “The wind howled down the road in all seasons”. Hacking through brambles and hazel shrub, Lorna realised there had been fields on the hillside. She built steps using concrete bricks as risers and planted azaleas on both sides. A passion for Himalayan primulas led to an interest in Himalayan plants in general. *Meconopsis*, the Himalayan poppy enjoys the moist conditions in



Succession planting in Harry's Garden



The Heron Pool

this area. Among the specimen trees planted here in the early 1980s, *Sequoia sempervirens* also enjoys wet feet. *Drimys winteri* has clusters of fragrant creamy-white flowers in early summer, while the yellow-splashed leaves of *Aucuba japonica* 'Crotonifolia', the Japanese spotted laurel, provide colour year-round.

Lorna has always been intrigued by a challenge, but when a friend asked her to design a Japanese garden, she had to say that she knew very little about Japanese horticulture. A pile of coffee-table books with pictures were delivered to her door. "I had moss, water, granite stone, shelter, acid soil. I realised I could do anything I liked in the Japanese line". The simpler, more minimalistic planting fitted well with Lorna's design aesthetic. Her Japanese gardens were constructed through 1985/86 in the 'hill and pool' design, with rigorous

attention to structural elements and to control of colour. The snow-viewing lantern came from Thailand. Acers are an important part of this garden with *Acer shirasawanum* and *Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum' both in evidence. In accordance with Japanese practice, planting is planned so that the spring and autumn colours are particularly vivid.

In 1996 Harry McMahon died. As is tradition in the west of Ireland, neighbours called with food and gifts. "The Cunninghams from Dangan Nurseries brought two trees. Some weeks later I had five trees and thirty-something shrubs and no space to put any of them". Lorna purchased a final piece of land to add to her garden, an outcrop of rock Harry had particularly liked. This is 'Harry's Garden'. With two pools fed by the stream, the space is a mixture of habitats. Low, spreading

Japanese maples in the Dissectum Viride group rub shoulders with the evergreen *Lomatia ferruginea* and with Sorbus varieties 'Chinese Lace' and 'Joseph Rock'. *Nothofagus dombeyi* is sited close to its southern hemisphere cousin *N. menziesii*. *Eucryphia glutinosa*, a native of Chile, also thrives in these conditions. Harry McMahon took all the photographs at Ardcarraig. Lorna has kindly allowed us to use some of Harry's slides to illustrate this article.

Now in her eighties, Lorna McMahon is reimagining her garden to bring maintenance to a level she can manage. Removing access bridges could allow the bog garden to rewild. The moss garden and the fernery are easy to maintain. Two new bamboo gardens are similarly self-regulating. Covid-19 she sees as having been a positive for Ardcarraig. She was able to give the garden her undivided attention, to assess its future and her future in it. Like many, she acknowledges the enormous asset the garden was to her through the pandemic. In less dramatic times, she knows that gardening keeps her mobile, makes her careful on her feet and gives her focus. She aims to stay ahead of garden chores, conscious that because she is a little slower, she must be more thorough. "I'm aware that a fall or sickness might mean the garden could get away from me. I will be gardening for as long as I can do it".

No garden of this complexity, open to the public several days a year, can exist in a vacuum. Lorna joined the Galway Flower and Garden Club when she arrived in Galway over forty years ago. Since then, friends from the club have been soundboards, supporters, and volunteers at open

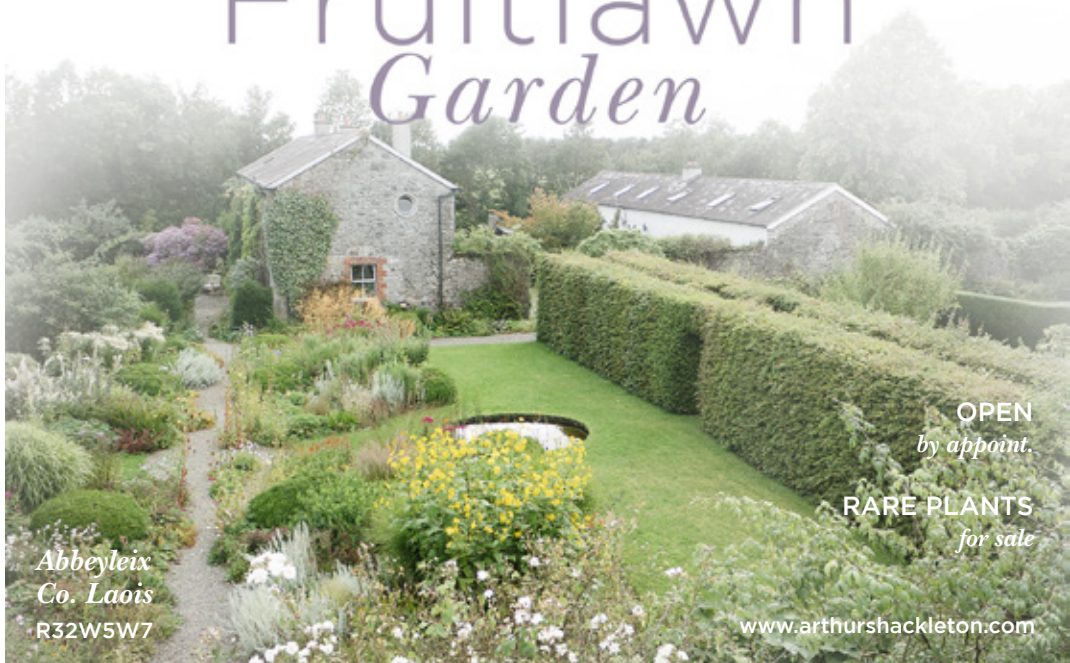


days. Teaching horticulture with UCH Galway psychiatric services, Lorna was very aware of the stigma attached to mental illness, particularly in the 1970/80s. Shortage of money for psychiatric projects was the incentive to open Ardcarraig garden to the public. The pandemic has brought Lorna's long association with Galway Mental Health Association to an end. "I accept the vanishing of the garden quite happily", Lorna told me. "I've had a lot of fun doing it, it has given pleasure to visitors and made money for the Mental Health Association. Now I'm going to allow it to go back to nature". ■

The RHSI Journal thanks Lorna McMahon for facilitating this interview. Ardcarraig Garden will close to the public on 1 June 2022.

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RHSI volunteers planting at
The Candle Trust Garden

Candle: A Garden that Makes a Difference

By David Bagnall

Recently the Candle Community Trust reached out to the RHSI for help in developing a therapeutic and sensory garden on lands that surrounds their building in Ballyfermot. The Trust is an NGO working with “at risk” young people in Ballyfermot and the surrounding areas. It provides a context for emotional, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual growth and development. Most of the young people who attend Candle have experienced marginalization and disadvantage in

many aspects of their lives. For many, Candle is a second chance in both their education and personal development.

Following a major refit and expansion of its building in 2018, the Trust sought to develop a sensory and therapeutic garden on land around the facility. Having commissioned a designer (Tim Austin) work proceeded throughout 2020 and 2021 to construct and plant the new garden.

“The garden is used for outdoor classes, group sessions, exercise and yoga classes and counselling”

The garden has been successful beyond everyone’s expectations. It has transformed a drab, and uninspiring green space into a vibrant, active garden. It is used on a daily basis and makes a significant contribution to the programmes run for the young people. The garden is used for outdoor classes, group sessions, exercise and yoga classes and counselling. The outdoor setting provides a relaxed environment helping traumatised young people de-stress. The benefits to the young people attending the Trust have been significant.



Hard at work

The design and construction of the garden was not covered by public funds and would not have been possible, in the first instance, without the generous support of John Corcoran and the Slaney Trust.

The Trust recently contacted the RHSI for help in improving and developing the garden. Following discussions with Orlaith, Colleen Prenderville and Philip Hollwey a ‘Meitheal’ has been arranged to augment the existing planting scheme. This is an exciting new approach for Candle and will help keep the garden fresh and relevant in the years to come. Input from organisations such as RHSI is important to the Trust, as gardens and outdoor spaces are not funded from the public purse. Having seen the benefits that the garden provides, maintaining the quality and presentation is now a priority. The Trust is hugely grateful to the RHSI for its help and expertise meeting these objectives and moving forward. ■



Calling All Gardening Clubs And Societies!

The past two years have been extraordinarily difficult for all of us in gardening clubs and societies around the country. A reasonable number of bigger groups stayed somewhat connected with their members via emails and Zoom, but a very large number of smaller clubs just didn't have the numbers or the technical expertise. We've all missed our monthly in-person meetings so much, and some clubs are now tentatively starting to meet up again- at last! We'll keep fingers crossed for lots of great garden visits during the Summer.

Because clubs weren't meeting, many naturally fell away from being RHSI Affiliated Members over the past 2 years. Is your club one of these? Currently we have only 21 clubs back on our books but we know there are at the very least 35 more of you out there!

A reminder of what a €60 annual Affiliated Club Membership offers:

1. Access to 15 excellent guest speakers (10 new in 2020 and 5 original) with 85 talks, full bio and contact information. Currently negotiable to be in person/ by Zoom. Additional speakers in 2023 once our membership numbers increase. A €50 RHSI annual subsidy is offered towards one speaker- almost covering your membership fee!
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premium currently for small clubs or clubs in difficulty.

3. The RHSI Journal twice yearly to share with your members.
4. The fortnightly eBulletin to be forwarded on to your own members as you wish. Your club members can view many of the Zoom lectures listed in the Bulletin **unless stipulated for individual RHSI members only.**

If you are revamping your club arrangements post pandemic, or perhaps changing secretaries, it is a great idea to have a generic address that will continue through changing committee members eg ballytowngardenclub@gmail.com. Just a suggestion!

For enquiries please contact:
Noreen Keane- rhsiacs@gmail.com or
Orlaith in the office- info@rhsi.ie
Club Membership payment to join or renew is by phone only, to Orlaith at **01 493 7154 / 083 825 0647**. Office hours: Mon- Thurs 8.30am- 12.30 pm.

And lastly...being a member of a gardening club is one of the most enjoyable and sociable ways of meeting new folk in your area- swapping plants and ideas, visiting gardens and attending meetings etc. If you are not already a member, do enquire if there is a club in your area, and sign up- you won't regret it!

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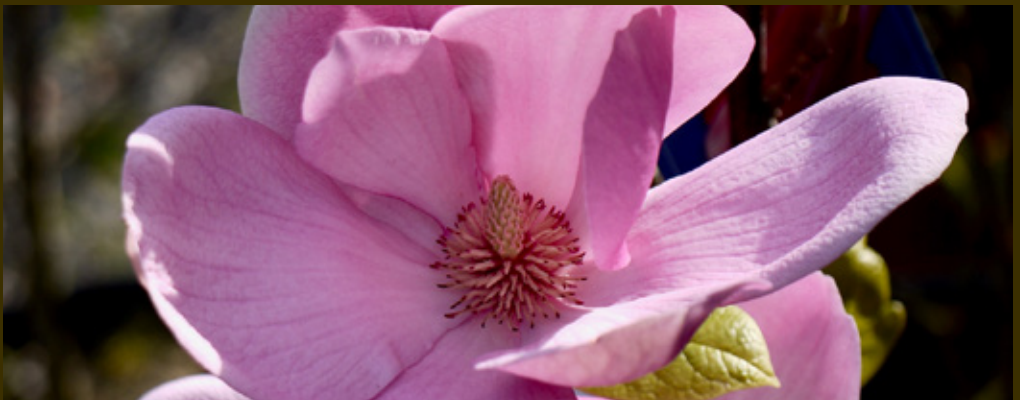
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Locked Down in Fernhill

By Robert Walker

At the corner on the avenue Time, like the Ancient Mariner, reaches out a bony finger to tug at my sleeve. A garden is like a diary which lies forever open whether you want to read in it or not. I walk through a landscape

which flickers with mementoes of people, places and events from the past. A beech tree I fell out of long ago, breaking my spectacles. Again. (O.K. Granny will fix with Elastoplast). An oak planted in memory of a fallen comrade.

The tree on the corner takes me back the greater part of half a century.

Many of the visitors that my parents welcomed to their home were gardening friends. Mr Doorenbos was the grand old man of Dutch horticulture and a founding member of the International Dendrology Society. I was impressed. He had come I think to give a talk, perhaps to the RHSI. I remember a large, kindly man. An easy house-guest,

“Plant gift giving among gardeners is an ancient tradition, and many plants arrived in Fernhill that way”

with a fund of gardening anecdotes for the dinner table. How he had crossed the Atlantic as a young man with a consignment of Rhododendron plants from Dutch nurseries for sale in the U.S. market. Outbreak of war delayed his return, and as he was in his 80s at the time of his visit here, he was referring to the 1914–1918 war. He marched me around the garden looking at everything and commenting knowledgeably.

Sometime after he had left, a lorry arrived with two specimens of Malus, compliments of Mr. D. A thank-you gift for the hospitality. They were large standard trees, 8–10 foot. Now, 45 years later, at the corner of the avenue one still survives. Purple leaves and dark flowers, growing into old age now.

A few years ago, I felt I should put a label on it in case of accidents. Was it just some random Malus? Had I even remembered the name correctly? Hillier [1] was no help. That meant Krüssmann’s Manual [2]. 3 Vols. Cost a fortune and weighs a ton, and consequently seldom used. Yes, there it was, Malus ‘Liset’, listed with several other Malus cultivars that Doorenbos had bred, raised, selected, named and introduced to the trade. A process that takes donkeys years. The best one, in his opinion, he had named ‘Liset’ after his wife. Not so random, then. And I hadn’t even been aware of her existence.

Plant gift giving among gardeners is an ancient tradition, and many plants arrived in Fernhill that way. Some survive, occasionally along with a memory of the donor. I am not saying that every tree and shrub has associations. But here and there on any walk, where others just see a plant, the gardener sees other stuff as well. A plumper version of the strictly visual. And I am not saying that, every time I pass the corner of the avenue, I remember everything about the old boy’s visit, just occasionally exchanging a wave with Mr. and Mrs. D. Me and my imaginary friends in lockdown.

It’s O.K. DLRCC, my landlord, has thoughtfully provided me with some real friends that I might meet when I am out and about. It could be Andy or Lorraine,



Fernhill Corner Tree



Fernhill Driveway

Eoin, Gerry or Brian, Ruairi, Gerard or Damien, or even Angus, Kieron or Dara. And if the car park is ever finished, I hope you can come and see how they are taking care for everything here.

How is your cocoon? I have to say it's nice to get a break from news of forests the size of Belgium going up in flames here or there. (If a forest burns and we don't see it on T.V., did it really happen?). I try to keep level by reading Michael Viney in the Irish Times every Saturday. ■

Robert Walker
Fernhill, May 19, 2020

Editor: It is sad to have to report that Robert passed away in December 2021.

[1] Hillier Manual of Trees and Shrubs, Roy Lancaster, RHS

[2] Manual of Cultivated Broad-Leaved Trees and Shrubs, Volumes 1 to 3, Gerd Krussmann, Timber press, 1984-86

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Silt settling pond at the edge of Killaun bog,
Scots pine advancing from the background

A new future for our cutaway raised bogs

By John Feehan



There is much discussion these days about the future of the raised bogs of the Midlands now that industrial exploitation of their remaining peat reserves has come to an end. At one time – no more than a lifetime ago – these were one of Ireland’s most distinctive and species-rich habitats, wildernesses where to quote Fr Moore, one of the many great botanists who studied them:

“When I wandered over the raised bogs of the midlands as a student

in the 1950s, I enjoyed an experience which it is impossible to have anymore – the experience of being isolated in a vast brown ocean of bog, extending to the horizon on all sides, where the only landmarks were church steeples. One always needed to carry a compass in these vast areas. This experience can no longer be enjoyed since all these larger bogs of up to 10km diameter have now been cut. At present we have no undrained raised bog left which is more than 300 ha in extent. (Fr J.J. Moore, 1982)”



Regenerating pine at Derrinlough, foreground shows the stump of one of the mighty Scots pine that were overwhelmed by the bog

The word ‘restoration’ features prominently in this discussion, as if the bogs can now be restored to their former living, biodiverse state by the simple process of ‘rewetting’. Only in a very few cases, however, will this be possible. As a result of the systematic drainage necessary before harvesting can commence, what ecologists refer to as the *acrotelm* – the zone of living surface layers where peat forms – disappears very early on, and hydrological and ecological conditions are rarely adequate for its subsequent re-establishment.

But this doesn’t mean that restoration of a different sort is not possible: restoration of a biodiversity-rich habitat in ecological equilibrium with a warming world. In one of his books Rene Dubos wrote that ‘Ecosystems ... undergo adaptive changes of a creative nature that transcend the mere correction of damage; the ultimate result is then the activation of certain potentialities

“A study carried out at Killaun Bog in Offaly during the last year or so recorded well over 200 species of flowering plants, nearly 70 of mosses and liverworts and over 60 lichen species”



Raised Bog



Closer view of the invading pines

of the ecosystem that had not been expressed before the disturbance ... We can improve on nature to the extent that we can identify these unexpressed potentialities and can make them come to life by modifying environments, thus increasing the diversity of the earth and making it a more desirable place for human life.' (René Dubos (1980), *The Wooing of Earth*).

Much of the area now covered by degraded raised bog will evolve over time to woodland, dominated by Scots pine where conditions are drier, and by willows and birch in wetter areas. A study carried out at Killaun Bog in Offaly during the last year or so recorded well over 200 species of flowering plants, nearly 70 of mosses and liverworts and over 60 lichen species; that as well as the 45 species of birds and the deer that are having to share this wild place with observant humans for the first time, there are 150 species

of moths and 16 of butterflies, and no fewer than 125 different species of spiders; and a more comprehensive study would undoubtedly have come up with a multiple of this. Some of the species recorded are considered to be rare: but this is as likely as not in many cases to be because ecologists have not devoted much attention to these 'degraded' habitats. However, the hope at places such as Killaun is not just that lots of inconspicuous species of bryophytes and small invertebrates will be recorded, but that species like the bittern and nightjar: charismatic species once widespread on the fringes of the bogs – will one day return. ■

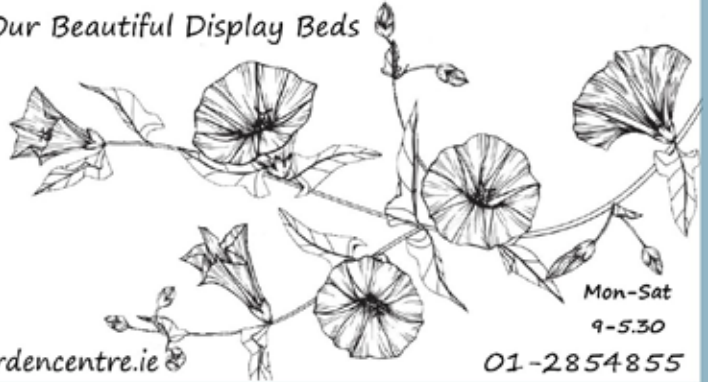
For more on the prospects for degraded bog it is worth reading *When the Nightjar returns ... The Natural History and Human Story of Killaun Bog*, which can be obtained from St Brendan's Community School in Birr for just €20.

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Sea Kale *Crambe maritima*

Vegetable Notes

Deborah Ballard

One of my favourite treats in March and April is sea kale (*Crambe maritima*). It's a very hardy, perennial vegetable, and rather a good-looking one, with its waxy, glaucous, lobed, ruffled leaves and clouds of pretty, honey-scented flowers in June – great for attracting pollinators. It's about 75cm tall, and a rather sprawling, spreading plant. If you keep removing spent leaves, it retains its looks – it can even be grown in a flower-bed, and very nice it looks. And

the entire plant is edible, although you will not want to eat the roots, if you want shoots the following spring.

It's a brassica, so it needs a deep, fertile, light, slightly alkaline soil, with quite a lot of manure or garden compost dug in; it also needs full sun (in our climate) and an open site. It tolerates partial shade, and quite poor soils, but you won't get such a good crop. Grow in a permanent bed, as the plant has a long tap-root – containers are not suitable. Lime in late winter if your soil is acid, and if your soil is heavy, dig in some grit. You don't need salty soil, despite the fact that it's a seaside plant and a halophyte; in fact you can grow it miles inland – it will be perfectly happy. It prefers a sheltered site, which is rather surprising for a coastal plant.

It can be grown from seed, sown in March or April; the seeds are corky and light, as they float off in the sea to spread the colony, so soak the seeds in fresh water before sowing. Alternatively, split the corky seeds. Autumn-sowing is also possible, as winter wet rots the outer coating more quickly.

It grows more quickly planted in pots from 6"/15cm 'thongs' (root-cuttings) taken in late winter, although I have always planted thongs I was given direct in July or August, and they seem to thrive. Make sure you know which is the top and bottom of the root, or they won't come up.

I have never found the caterpillars of cabbage white butterflies a problem, and don't net the plants, but flea beetle sometimes attacks, although they seem to prefer the more tender leaves of my other brassicas. It is also

vulnerable to clubroot, so don't grow this lovely vegetable if your soil is infected. Cut the plants right back in autumn, and mulch heavily with well-rotted compost or manure to protect the soil, not touching the crowns of the plants. Wood ash is a good fertiliser, giving lime and potassium to encourage growth, and can be applied in spring. In future years, mulch as before in autumn; don't step on the bed, or you may cause compaction, which sea kale doesn't like at all.

**“The Victorians,
who loved sea
kale, used short
terracotta
forcers, with lids,
to monitor the
progress of the
shoots”**

How to get those delicious, pale, forced shoots? The Victorians, who loved sea kale, used short terracotta forcers, with lids, to monitor the progress of the shoots; they also lifted the sea kale plant and put it somewhere warm. There's no necessity for all that faff! I invert a bucket over the purple crowns in late January, and cut the shoots in March, when they're about 8"/20cm long, but I



Sea Kale forcer

do keep a look out for slugs, which love the delicate shoots. I find horse-buckets the best, as nothing seems to shift them, not storms, nor pitch-invading cattle. You can also use ordinary black buckets with a rock or brick on top. Heap up manure round the buckets to keep the shoots warm. The plant will be ready for forcing when it's a year old, although preferably two years old. Once you've cut the shoots, remove the bucket, and allow the plant to build up its strength; also, don't force a plant two years in a row. They are best lightly steamed, with Hollandaise sauce or lemon.

Then admire your lovely plants, with their glaucous leaves, purplish new shoots and clouds of honey-scented flowers, until autumn turns the leaves and shoots to mush; then cut them right back, and mulch as before.

A word of warning: sea kale is a sprawly plant, and also a spreader; it will come up all over the bed, and possibly beyond. But you can always take more root-cuttings and expand your beds, or give them away to friends. ■

Tasks for Spring

Deborah Ballard

Pruning fruit

I know the weather's been frightful in February, but pruning fruit trees and soft-fruit bushes should be completed by now, before bud-burst (although soft-fruit bushes don't seem to care when you prune them).

Strawberries

Strawberries should have spent the winter outside, for optimum fruit production, but you can dig some up, pot them up, and take them into a polytunnel or greenhouse for an extra early crop – sometimes by the end of April – May, anyway.

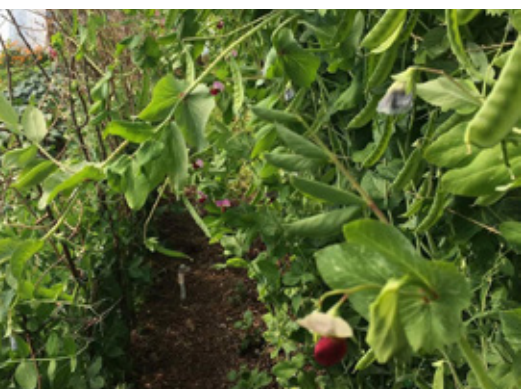
Overwintering brassicas

Check that stakes are firm on Brussels sprouts and purple-sprouting broccoli, and if pigeons have been making a nuisance of themselves, get nets over them double-quick.

Sowing

Tomatoes, sweet peppers, aubergines and chillies should have been sown at the end of January or early February for early crops, but now is not too late.

Hold off with tender crops like French and runner beans, winter squash and courgettes, as these are big plants, and it's far too cold as yet to plant them out, so they will reduce your sunny windows to a green, gloomy jungle. Mid-April is the earliest you should sow these. ■



The Forest Moon Nursery

Mary Hackett

Rory Newell had a Eureka moment on a Vietnamese hillside when he saw *Brassaiopsis mitis* layering itself. This deciduous tree with spiny trunk, and palmate, deeply cut leaves is typical of the kind of plant this propagator enjoys. Rory's ambition for his Forest Moon Nursery is to grow it into a niche supplier of the exotic and the singular. If it's a difficult plant he wants to grow it, if it's a rare plant, then that's when he is really interested. *Brassaiopsis*



Schefflera macrophyllum now *Heptapleurum macrophyllum* in situ, N. Vietnam

mitis qualifies as worthy of his attention on all counts.

Four years as chief propagator with the team at Blarney Castle was an eye opener for Rory. To get to know a plant intimately he must grow it. Having started with a broad interest in all plants, Rory was fortunate to be part of two Blarney Castle expeditions to Vietnam. Before going out, team

targets included *Aesculus wangii* and plants from the Araliaceae family which includes *Schefflera*, both evergreen and deciduous. They collected these and much more. With a personal preference for smaller herbaceous plants, the rare and unknown woodlanders, gingers, and epiphytes Rory saw in Vietnam were fascinating. For a propagator, it was enormously beneficial to see the plants in place. Which brings us back to

B. mitis and the realization that a plant traditionally propagated from seed could possibly be layered. Eureka!

The trips to northern Vietnam sponsored by Blarney Castle and Gardens were part of a conservation programme with the Vietnamese Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources and operated under the terms of the Nagoya protocol. The protocol provides for the fair sharing of any benefits that arise from the collection or use of resources. Both parties receive seeds for propagation and dried specimens for an herbarium. Adam Whitbourn from Blarney who led the expeditions noted how the Vietnamese wanted to understand and preserve their biodiversity but the area in which the expedition worked, part of Hoang Lien National Park, south of the Chinese border, is under threat from cardamon farming. Rory agrees that partnerships between botanical expeditions and institutions bring valuable insights and resources to both sides. His travelling days are far from over and he hopes to have opportunities to expand his plant knowledge as part of further ethically directed expeditions.

Gardening in the rain and wind of the west of Ireland is challenging. Deciding to move back to Galway and to grow only rare and difficult plants was a brave move. Rory hopes that exposure to social media and to the experience of pandemic gardening will help a new generation of plantaholics appreciate the unusual. In searching out market opportunities, he isn't limiting himself to outdoor gardening. The expanding house plant market is, he believes, something he might address.



Aesculus wangii conkers

As an example, he mentions how the *Schefflera* genus are the 'rage plant' of the moment both for indoor gardeners and for outdoor planting. As outstanding foliage plants, *Schefflera* adapt well to container culture. It is exactly niche opportunities such as this that Rory intends to identify.



Schefflera macrophyllum now *Heptapleurum macrophyllum* in situ, N. Vietnam

Forest Moon Nursery has a significant following on Instagram. Offering on-line classes in propagating techniques is a possibility for the future, as is developing a range of general gardening courses. From his new nursery on the Galway-Roscommon border the Newell family will, Rory hopes, build a sustainable specialised business. "It's all about time", he says. Time to build up stock for sale from the mother plants

presently in his tunnel. Time to grow a small range of rare trees and focus on species *Rhododendron*. Time to make the commercial connections that will bring his catalogue to the attention of botanical gardens and estate gardeners across Ireland and Europe. Sales of Rory Newell propagated stock in significant quantities is still some years away but, as we know, the best things are always worth waiting for. ■

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan

Kate Chandler

We need pollinators to grow many of the fruits and vegetables that make up a balanced diet. The wildflowers that provide colour and beauty in our landscape also need pollinators, as do many of your garden plants.

Most pollination in Ireland is carried out by bees, which feed their young exclusively on pollen. In Ireland, we have 100 different types of bees: the honeybee, 21 different bumblebees and 78 different solitary bees. They are helped by other insects like hoverflies, butterflies, and moths.

Unfortunately, pollinators are in trouble. One third of Irish bee species are threatened with extinction thanks to a drastic reduction in nesting habitat and the amount of food our landscape provides for them. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan aims to bring together gardeners, farmers, local authorities, schools, and businesses, to create an island where pollinators can survive and thrive.

The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan invites you to 'pledge your garden for pollinators' and add your garden to a growing map of places across the

island of Ireland that are managed as healthy pitstops for these important insects. By taking some simple actions, you can provide them with much-needed food and shelter, while creating a beautiful, colourful garden. Every space: big, small, or just a pot or window box, can make a difference.

**“One third of Irish
bee species are
threatened with
extinction”**

The following pages will show you some simple ways you can help pollinators in your garden throughout the year. We hope that you will be inspired to take some of these ideas and adapt them to your own space. From planting suggestions, to thinking about when and how often you mow the lawn, to eliminating the use of chemicals - there are plenty of ways you can join the effort to save Ireland's pollinators and have a beautiful garden at the same time.

Pledge your Garden for Pollinators

Our pollinating insects are in decline, with one-third of our 98 wild bee species at risk of extinction. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan aims to reverse these declines and make the island a place where pollinators can survive and thrive. By taking simple steps in your garden, you will help provide much-needed food and shelter for our pollinating insects, while creating a beautiful, colourful garden.



Pledge your garden for pollinators at www.pollinators.ie

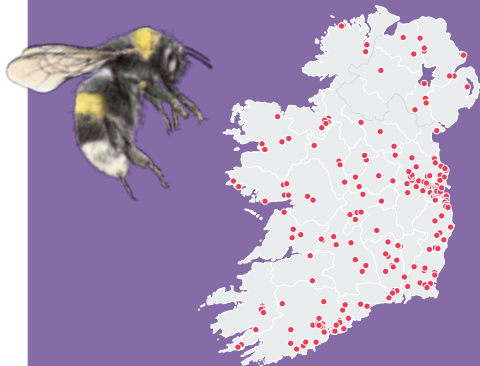
See pollinators.ie/gardens for lots of advice, videos, pollinator-friendly plant lists and to download our booklet: **Gardens: Actions to Help Pollinators.**



Here is just a small sample of common pollinators you may see in your garden if you reduce grass-cutting and provide pollinator-friendly plants. And remember, if you help pollinators, you are also helping all our biodiversity.

Put your garden on the Map!

The Pollinator Plan's online mapping system tracks actions for pollinators across the island. Please add your pollinator-friendly garden to our map at: pollinators.biodiversityireland.ie



The **Red-tailed bumblebee** is all black apart from its red tail. It is very common in gardens.



The **Early bumblebee** is Ireland's smallest bumblebee. It is excellent at pollinating fruit and vegetables, especially raspberries.



This **Marmalade hoverfly** is common in gardens. The adults feed on nectar, but the larvae feed on aphids, making this a very useful garden visitor!



Leaf-cutter Bees cut circles of leaves or petals to line their nest. We have five different types in Ireland. These are the bees most likely to use your garden bee box.



The **Grey mining bee** is black with two grey stripes. Like most of our 62 solitary bee species in Ireland, it nests by making tiny little burrows in bare soil.



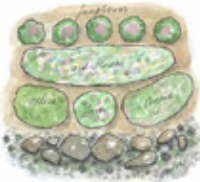
The **Garden Tiger moth** is just one of approx. 1,400 moth species in Ireland. Its larvae feed on Dandelion leaves.

Here are just some ideas for ways you can help pollinators each month:

January

Make a pollinator plan for your garden

Wild pollinators are hibernating now and don't need our help just yet, but you can use this time to get prepared. Look through all our tips, videos and plant lists at www.pollinators.ie, and draw up a 'pollinator plan' for your garden.



February

Create solitary bee nesting sites

Expose a south/east-facing bank by removing vegetation for mining bees. Or erect a small bee hotel for cavity-nesting bees. See '[Creating Wild Pollinator Nesting Habitat](http://www.pollinators.ie/gardens)' guide at pollinators.ie/gardens



March

Let Dandelions Bee

The humble *Dandelion* is a super food for pollinators. If you can avoid cutting your lawn while *Dandelions* are flowering in March and April, you will be helping to provide much-needed food for early pollinators.



April

Pots for Pollinators

Even if you only have a very small garden or none at all, you can still help. Plant a 'pot for pollinators' to flower on your patio, balcony or window sill throughout the season. See instruction guide at pollinators.ie/gardens



May

No Mow May

Could you leave your lawn mower in the garage during May? This will allow *Red* and *White Clover* to bloom in your lawn to feed the hungry bees.

(True bee-lovers cut their grass just once a month – at the end of June, July and August – to let wildflowers bloom all summer!)



June

Ask your garden centre for pollinator-friendly plants

Unfortunately *Daffodils*, *Tulips*, and traditional bedding plants, such as *Begonias* or *Petunias*, are of little value to pollinators. But there are lots of pollinator-friendly options to choose from.

See pollinators.ie/resources



July

Hanging baskets can be pollinator-friendly too

Considering a hanging basket? Make sure it contains *Bidens* or *Bacopa*, pollen-rich flowers that do well in containers.



August

Collect wildflower seeds

It is important to only plant local native wildflower seed of local provenance. August is a good time to collect seed locally from your favourite wildflowers. This can be grown on in pots and then added as plugs to your wildflower patch. See our guide '[Collecting and using pollinator-friendly Wildflower Seed](http://www.pollinators.ie/resources)' at pollinators.ie/resources



September

Cut long-flowering meadows now

If you have a long-flowering annual meadow area, it is very important to cut and 'lift' or remove clippings now. This helps to reduce fertility of the soil (wildflowers grow best in less fertile soils).



October

Plant a shrub, tree or native hedgerow

Add a pollinator-friendly shrub or tree to your garden that will flower and provide food for pollinators for years to come. There are lots of different types and sizes to choose from!



November

Plant bee-friendly bulbs

Plant pollinator-friendly bulbs such as *Crocus* or *Snowdrops* now, to flower next February/March. This will give early bumblebees a good start to the new year.



December

Take willow cuttings locally to plant in your garden

Willow can be grown easily from cuttings. (It's best to plant well away from house to avoid damaging pipework.) Don't forget you can also create pollinator-friendly gardens in your school, business, or housing estate. Winter is a good time to make plans.





A pollinator-friendly garden provides **FOOD** in the form of pollen-rich flowers, **SHELTER** for nesting, and **SAFETY** by eliminating chemicals. Try to make sure your garden has pollinator-friendly flowers in bloom from mid-February through to the end of October.



FOOD
Plant pollinator-friendly shrubs



BERBERIS



HEATHERS

FOOD
Add pollinator-friendly flowers such as *Bidens* or *Bacopa* to hanging baskets and window boxes.



FOOD
Plant big patches of each pollinator-friendly plant for better foraging efficiency.

FOOD
Plant pollinator-friendly containers. Choose pollinator-friendly bulbs, such as *Crocus*, which will flower in early spring.

FOOD
Allow *Ivy* and *Bramble* to grow in a corner of your garden as they provide important food sources in late summer and autumn for pollinators.



IVY



BRAMBLE

FOOD
Reduce mowing to allow wildflowers to bloom around your lawn in patches or strips (you don't have to buy wildflower seed! just stop mowing).

★ This is the most cost-effective way to help pollinators. The more of these flowers, the better:



DANDELION



DEAD NETTLE



SELFHEAL



BIRD'S-FOOT
TREFOIL



CLOVER



SHELTER
Areas of long grass for bumblebees to nest.

ator-
ubs.

FOOD

Native flowering hedgerows, such as *Hawthorn* or *Blackthorn* provide important food in spring.



FIRETHORN



MAHONIA



HAWTHORN



BLACKTHORN



APPLE



ROWAN



FOOD

Plant pollinator-friendly trees such as *apple trees*, or native trees such as *Wild Cherry* or *Rowan*.



SHELTER

Erect a small bee hotel for cavity-nesting solitary bees. You could also simply drill holes in walls or fencing.

SHELTER

Earth Banks bare soil/dry stone walls for nesting solitary bees.

Did you know only 10 species of Irish bees are likely to use a garden nest box, but we have 62 species of mining bees?

FOOD

Your fruit and veg. patch will benefit from pollinators and vice versa.

SAFETY

Avoid using harmful chemicals.

FOOD

Create a herb bed to benefit your cooking as well as the bees!



CHIVES



THYME



OREGANO



ROSEMARY

While reducing mowing and planting native trees and shrubs is always best for biodiversity, there are also lots of pollinator-friendly ornamental plants. Here is just a small selection:



SPRING



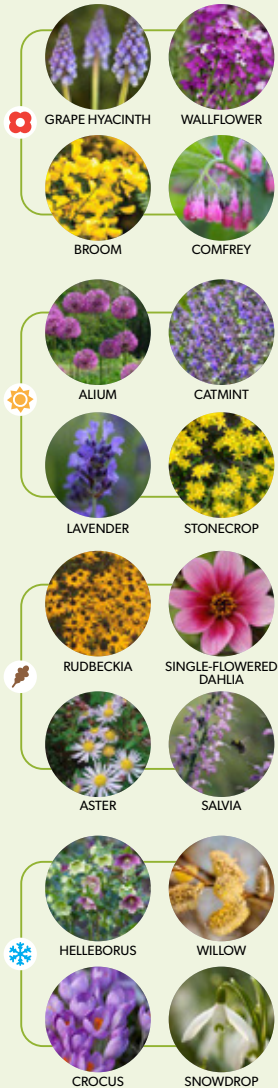
SUMMER



AUTUMN



WINTER



GRAPE HYACINTH



WALLFLOWER



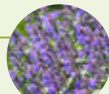
BROOM



COMFREY



ALIUUM



CATMINT



LAVENDER



STONECROP



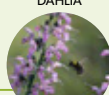
RUDBECKIA



SINGLE-FLOWERED DAHLIA



ASTER



SALVIA



HELLEBORUS



WILLOW



CROCUS



SNOWDROP

You can find lists of pollinator-friendly flowers, shrubs and trees at www.pollinators.ie



Community Gardening in Ireland

Dee Sewell



I first began working with community gardens in 2011 when I was invited by Kilkenny Education Training Board to run a gardening class in a small, rural development office garden, with an enormous polytunnel.

As soon as the group met it became apparent that this would be more than a series of simple workshops. A gathering of people had come together who were keen to transform the garden. They worked hard to create vegetable beds, flower borders and herb planters. They shared tea and cake, formed

friendships, and learned from one another. The weeks turned to months and as the food grew to harvest, they shared it all, swapping recipes and meals, celebrating the harvest festival and the pre-Christmas wreath making and flower arranging. The next year they did it again, changing and adapting, welcoming new members, firming up friendships.

That, in essence, is what community gardening can be about. It's as much about the social aspect as it is about gardening. Unlike allotments, where

where great gardeners go.

mulch.



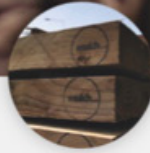
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St Francis Farm, 2018

individuals and families rent a small piece of land and do all the work, taking home the harvest, community gardening is about sharing. Some community gardens are open all year to the public, others have set opening times and days, some are behind closed doors in therapeutic settings. Some community gardens share the space with allotments, whilst others might be more about fruit growing with community orchards. Some gardens only grow flowers, others everything imaginable. Complete beginners and experienced growers are always welcome, allowing people to learn from one another, and there are jobs for all, some more strenuous than others, depending upon your preference.

The benefits of community gardens are many, as those first gardeners found out for themselves. They mentioned how successes and failures

“Complete beginners and experienced growers are always welcome, allowing people to learn from one another”

of growing food are normal, they had a better appreciation of how difficult it can be to grow food, how long it takes, that they were able to try out different



Ocean View Direct Provision
Centre Community Garden

flavours that were once popular but not now available in supermarkets. They were surprised that they felt more connected to their community, more likely to shop locally and learnt about the seasonality of food.

If your appetite has been whetted and you're thinking of joining a community garden, check out the map on www.cgireland.org to see if there's one close by to you. If not, and you'd like to start one, the following shares a few steps to help you get started:

Find some likeminded people, ask around, put up posters in local shops or

**“Join Community
Gardens Ireland
so that you can
connect with
more people, pick
up tips, advice and
help along
the way”**



social media. Think about what type of community garden you'd like and who will be using it.

Find the land. Have a chat with your local Tidy Towns group, county council community section, parish church or family resource centre.

Once you have the people and the land, the rest will follow. In no particular order, start a club, join your Public Participation Network (PPN), approach your local Education Training Board for horticulture tutor help, gather tools and equipment and start fundraising for materials. Join

Community Gardens Ireland so that you can connect with more people, pick up tips, advice and help along the way. ■

Dee Sewell is proprietor of Greenside Up, which promotes wellness, social inclusion & community development through social, community & therapeutic horticultural & environmental education. Based on the Carlow/Kilkenny border, Dee provides consultation, designs, talks, training, mentoring and talks about community gardening in Ireland. For more information see www.greensideup.ie



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Floral Art

Karen Robinson



Karen Robinson

Hello everyone, I hope you are all well and easing back into some sort of normality. It has been a long two years. Some Flower Clubs are holding demonstrations now, and finally we get back to see our friends in Flower Clubs across the country.

The Floral Artist of the Year (FAY) and inter-club heats were hosted by Conna and Dunboyne Flower and garden clubs back in October 2021. It was great to be back on the bench competing again. See the attached photographs of some of the exhibits that qualified for the Floral Artist of the Year and the Interclub qualifiers.

FAY qualifiers are: Kathleen Barrett, Eva Holmes, Sandra Jackson, Sharon O Sullivan, Harumi Langford, Karen Robinson, Lorraine O'Brien, Candy Holten and Adrienne Thompson.



Harumi Langford

Inter-club Qualifiers are: South Dublin Flower Club, Maynooth Flower & Garden Club, Clonakilty Flower Club, Cork flower Club and Kilkenny Flower Club. Congratulations to all and best of luck in the Finals.

The AOIFA National competitions including the Floral Artist of the Year and Inter-club finals will be held on the weekend of 6th to the 9th October 2022 in Galway. This promises to be a great week-end. More details at a later date.

To find out more about Floral Art Demonstrations near you, then log onto the AOIFA website.

Wishing you all a very Happy Easter. ■



Lorraine O'Brien



Maynooth Flower and Garden Club



South Dublin Flower and Garden Club

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Belvedere House Gardens & Park

Shirley Cullen



We are delighted to welcome a new garden to the Partner Garden Scheme. Belvedere House Gardens & Park is set in a magnificent 160 acre lakeside estate with a fully restored Georgian villa, Victorian Walled Garden and a naturalistic 18th century parkland punctuated with romantic follies including the largest in Ireland, the Jealous Wall.

The gardens are divided into two parts consisting of the walled garden and the arboretum surrounding the house. The most striking aspect of the walled garden is its unusual, narrow rectangular shape, which on entering, permits a panoramic view of its colourful interior and it still retains all the hallmarks of a 19th century pleasure garden. Outside the walled garden, there are 12 acres containing specimen



Belvedere House gardens

**“In early
springtime, the
walled garden
awakens from its
winter slumber
with white
blossom opening
from red buds
on the *Malus*
‘Evereste’”**

and ornamental trees with 10km of lakeshore and woodland walks.

In early springtime, the walled garden awakens from its winter slumber with white blossom opening from red buds on the *Malus* ‘Evereste’ and pure white single flowers of the *Prunus serrulata* ‘Tai-Haku’ punctuating the garden. The early spring bulbs of *Narcissus* ‘Tête-à-tête’, *Crocus tommasinianus*, *Galanthus nivalis* and *Helleborus orientalis* give way to the emerging Tulips, Alliums and layered combinations of herbaceous perennials. *Magnolia* cultivars and *Davidia involucrata* put on a beautiful display in late April/early May.

Please check the website for information regarding garden visits, café opening times and safety guidelines. ■



Border Phlox



Belvedere House

**Belvedere House Gardens & Park
Mullingar
County Westmeath N91 EF80
Landline for information:
+ 353 (0)44 933 8960
Email: info@belvedere-house.ie
Web: www.belvedere-house.ie**

**RHSI members get 50% reduced entry
on presentation of their current RHSI
membership card.**



RHSI Partner Garden Scheme

Benefits to Members

The RHSI Partner Garden Scheme consists of over 50 outstanding varying sized gardens throughout the island of Ireland with more gardens joining the Scheme each year. The Partner Garden owners generously offer RHSI members free entry or in a small number of gardens, 50% discount entry fee applies. **To gain entry to all Partner Gardens, members must present their current membership cards at the Entrance desk.**

Full priced entry fees to gardens, in general, can run anywhere from €6 – €14, therefore members visiting just a few Partner Gardens each year can cover the cost of their RHSI membership.

We encourage members to take advantage of this unique opportunity by

visiting these impressive gardens that display high horticultural standards in design, planting and maintenance. By availing of additional facilities (where provided) such as cafes, gift shops and plant sales, members will be supporting the amazing amenity that the Garden Owners have offered all RHSI members.

All the Partner Gardens are listed in alphabetical order on our website and by clicking the View link, members will be taken to the Gardens' own websites. The website contains a map of Ireland with each Partner Garden pinned with their name and contact details. Please check the gardens for opening dates, times and directions before setting off on your visit. There could be a small charge for tours or for special events in some gardens. ■



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The Value of Snowdrops

Paddy Tobin

It was flattering to receive an email earlier in the year requesting me “to write an article for the forthcoming RHSI spring issue of *The Journal*”. The plan I was told was “to have several articles relating to early / late spring flowers and two (obvious) choices were snowdrops and daffodils ... and you were the obvious choice as an author for an article on snowdrops.” Yes, I was flattered but I also smiled as I recognised that gentle coaxing

approach of an editor in search of material and as I have been in that position regularly, I could not refuse.

Writing about snowdrops is a daunting undertaking for to deal comprehensively with the range and selection of snowdrops being presently grown would be a task beyond even the most knowledgeable and diligent of enthusiasts. *Snowdrops, A Monograph*, by Davies, Grimshaw and Bishop, has been the most authoritative and reliable reference since its publication twenty years ago but an attempt to prepare an updated edition floundered under the frustrating tsunami of varieties newly named by amateur and professional growers alike. In these circumstances I think it wiser to simply offer some personal experience of the snowdrop world.

My own introduction to the world of snowdrops was by appointment. My wife, Mary, started collecting snowdrop in the 80s, at first with packages of dried bulbs from the local garden centre – the common snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis* – and afterwards by ordering a few new varieties each year from suppliers such as Avon Bulbs in the U.K. Selection and ordering followed on careful consideration and each new acquisition was well known ever before it arrived and was planted in the garden. All went swimmingly until a great friend, the late Bob Gordon who lived and gardened in Portglenone, Co. Antrim, realised Mary shared his interest in snowdrops and dispatched a shoebox full of new varieties for her. A visit to Bob shortly afterwards, and on with him to Margaret Glynn's garden in Ballymena, had us travelling home with an untold number of further new snowdrops such that

**“My wife, Mary,
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Galanthus Waverley Aristocrat

Mary felt somewhat overwhelmed by this phenomenal increase in numbers and told me that I was from then on “in charge of the snowdrops” – The Keeper of the Snowdrops by Appointment!

Though it wasn't a position I had sought, being perfectly happy with my status as the Undergardener – the keeper of the hedges and the edges, as one Dublin gardener described her husband to me - it has certainly been one I have enjoyed greatly and there is a certain sense that over the winter months and even into spring I exert an influence on the garden which is not

mine in other seasons. For a certain time of the year my status is elevated, if only by default, for the Head Gardener does not relish working in cold and wet conditions while I will gladly don several extra layers of warm clothing and oilskin over trousers and muck about quite happily. When the garden has only one gardener, I am the Head Gardener! Snowdrops bestow this status on me!

Winter gardening is, I believe, a much-undervalued activity and were it not for my interest in snowdrops many of those long drab winter days of retirement might be spent in the



Galanthus Ruby Baker



Galanthus Brenda Troyle



Galanthus Hill Poe

“As with many other plants in our gardens, the primrose or the daffodil for example, the first and the earliest are always especially appreciated”

armchair. Instead, I begin the autumn/winter tidying up of the garden as soon as the season and the plants permit in preparation for the first snowdrops which flower in the open garden at the end of October or early November. Ours is not a winter garden of sparkling frosts, standing grasses and attractive winter plant skeletons but rather one of mild and wet conditions where dead plants fall to a brown mush and where the brightness of snowdrops is especially welcome. *Galanthus* ‘Barnes’, an early flowering variety of *Galanthus elwesii* var *monostictus*, is generally first to perform here though the recently (2019) described *Galanthus bursanus*, from Turkey, seems likely to be the one to start the season here in future years. As with many other plants in our gardens, the primrose or the daffodil for example, the first and the earliest are always especially appreciated. ‘Barnes’ is closely followed by ‘Earliest of All’, ‘Colossus’, ‘Faringdon Double’, ‘Hoggets Narrow’, the perfectly named ‘Three Ships’ and that very special Irish snowdrop, ‘Castlegar’ which was



Galanthus reginae olgae
Rachel Mahaffy

noticed by the late Dr. Keith Lamb in the grounds of Lord and Lady Mahon at Castlegar, Co. Galway.

These connections in snowdrops, the background stories and the people with which they are connected, are especially dear to me and are what add value rather than price to snowdrops. One outstanding example is illustrated by the story of a particular form of the Greek species, *Galanthus reginae olgae*.

John Pentland Mahaffy, Oscar Wilde's "first and best teacher" was appointed Provost of Trinity College Dublin in 1914 at the rather advanced age of 75. (He famously commented on being informed that his predecessor was ill, "Nothing trivial, I hope!") However, aside from his academic achievements, and there were many, he was responsible for the introduction of a very interesting snowdrop. While he was travelling in Greece in 1886, he collected some bulbs on Mount Hymettus which he sent to Frederick William Burbidge who was Curator of the Botanic Gardens of Trinity College. Burbidge named them

Galanthus Rachelae for Mahaffy's eldest daughter, Rachel. A subsequent introduction was named *Galanthus Elsae* for another daughter.

This snowdrop was quite the sensation at the time and it, and other similar introductions – *G. octobrensis* and *G. praecox*, for example – were initially thought to be autumn-flowering variants of the common snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis*, though they all had a distinct line down the centre of each leaf, and were later recognised to be a new species, *Galanthus reginae olgae*, named to honour the Greek Queen Olga. Commenting on *Galanthus Rachelae*, the renowned gardener, snowdrop enthusiast, E. A. Bowles wrote, "The form known as *Rachelae* is the handsomest and most robust of these autumnal forms." (Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society, Vol XLIII, 1918 – 19). Elsewhere he commented on its flowering earlier than other forms and of regularly producing two scapes from bulbs – features present in the bulbs now grown under the name *Galanthus 'Rachel Mahaffy'*

A century later, following the death of that wonderful English snowdrop enthusiast, Primrose Warburg, those charged with the care of the snowdrop collection in her garden, South Hayes, found a clump of snowdrops labelled 'Galanthus Rachelae'! Matt Bishop rescued some bulbs and passed them on to Mark Browne, now living in Normandy, and Mark, knowing my interest in snowdrops of Irish origin passed some on to me and I am delighted to report that they have grown extraordinarily well for me – pot culture in the glasshouse as I have little success with *G. reginae olgae* in the open garden. John Grimshaw raised doubts about using the original name, *Galanthus 'Rachelae'* as he said this snowdrop had self-seeded generously in Primrose Warburg's garden so we could not assume that the bulbs we had to hand were truly the same as the original. I must admit to being a little disappointed as several snowdrops have retained their historic name despite some doubts that they are the same as those originally so named but I have to recognise his far greater experience and knowledge and with Mark Browne agreed that it would be sensible to name the plants we have in hand, *Galanthus 'Rachel Mahaffy'*.

Of course, *G. 'Rachel Mahaffy'* is only one of many snowdrops I grow that has valued connections of this nature which make them special to me. RHSI members, certainly those of my age group, will have fond memories of the late Miss Rita Rutherford, a stalwart member of the society for many years and I especially recall her dominant presence at the plant sales on the Taney Road. I once asked her what the note on the plant "Ex HD" meant and

had the curt reply that it assured me that it was a plant of the highest quality and guaranteed to grace any garden. The "Ex HD", I later learned, meant the plant had come from Helen Dillon! Some years ago, I spotted a snowdrop in Altamont Gardens in Co. Carlow labelled "ex Rita Rutherford", a very handsome snowdrop which caught my eye and I felt it was very desirable. I wrote to Miss Rutherford, was invited to visit and was very kindly given bulbs and was told of their story, restated within days in a letter, (10th October 2007)

“Both the woodland walk and the garden are perfect for strollers”

At the beginning of the war large 'Sales of Work' were held in the Mansion House Round Room and one of these in aid of Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Families Association (S.S.A.F.A.) was being held there...My mother had been asked to provide some plants, as had Lady Moore and they met on the steps of the Mansion House each laden with a basket of plants, to my mother's surprise Lady Moore asked my mother if she had the snowdrop which was in her basket, as she (Lady M.) thought it was worth growing and would do well in our garden. Mum was delighted and was given some bulbs (which were paid for when we all got to our stall!!)



Galanthus Straffan

They were planted in our garden at Elmfield away from the other snowdrops and did very well. When my sister and I had to sell Elmfield, I was lucky in finding this house which belonged to Capt. Ambrose Durston, full of all sorts of plants but in a sadly weedy condition, but I was full of energy and brought as much as I could from my old home, and all the Lady Moore snowdrops I planted under a big pear tree where they have been since 1967.

Very sadly, Miss Rutherford died shortly after writing this letter and those charged with her affairs, having read our correspondence, asked me to come and take the snowdrops as the house was to be sold and the snowdrops would no doubt be lost or certainly forgotten and neglected. Thankfully, they have grown well here and will ever be a reminder of great kindness and generosity as well as maintaining a connection with two wonderful

gardeners. Lady Moore's often quoted saying that the best way to keep a plant was to give it away has certainly been proven with her own snowdrop!

I have been long-winded, as I am inclined to be when I write, but feel it is important in the tide of commercialism that overruns today's snowdrop world to recall that snowdrops often have value far greater than price and that it will outlast those introduced purely for commercial reasons for those snowdrops with connections we hold dear will continue to be treasured by the lovers of snowdrops.

A selection of Irish snowdrops would be a good starting place for anybody who wished to put together a collection of significant snowdrops: *Galanthus* 'Straffan', possibly the greatest of our Irish snowdrops, will remind us of Straffan House in Co. Kildare, of the introduction from the Crimea by Major



Galanthus 'Jupe's Belle'

Eyre Massey and its care in the hands of Straffan's gardener, Frederick Bedford. *Galanthus* 'Hill Poe' came from the gardens of James Hill Poe at Riverston, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary around 1911 and continues to be the perfect gem of a snowdrop, hardly surpassed for its form and beauty. *Galanthus ikariae* 'Emerald Isle' with its gentle green wash on the outer segments was found by Megan Morris at Drew's Court in Co. Limerick. The origins of *Galanthus* 'Brenda Troyle' are obscure but few match its performance in the garden. The Shackleton Gardens at Clonsilla have been restored and I'm sure *Galanthus* 'David Shackleton' will be given pride of place there, a beautiful reminder of an outstanding Irish gardener. Primrose Hill, in Lucan, Co. Dublin, has been the source of some outstanding snowdrops – *Galanthus* 'Ruby Baker', named for a great English snowdrop enthusiast by Robin Hall, high among them but *Galanthus* 'Cicely Hall' is most fondly treasured and might well

be regarded and the very best of Irish snowdrops. *Galanthus* 'Skyward' and 'Green Lantern' are two treasures to remind us of the late Mrs. Corona North of Altamont Gardens in Co. Carlow and *Galanthus* 'Drummond's Giant' of the late Mrs. Stasia O'Neill who lived nearby in Ballon while *Galanthus* 'Greenfields' brings to mind the renowned garden and estate of W.B. Purefoy near Nenagh in Co. Tipperary. There are other Irish snowdrops which I haven't mentioned here – 'Kildare', 'Waverley Aristocrat' and 'Mary Hely-Hutchinson', for example, would be welcome additions to any snowdrop collection – but I cannot finish without a heartfelt mention of the late Angela Jupe who has made a significant contribution to Irish horticulture, to the RHSI and to promoting an interest in snowdrops, particularly snowdrops of Irish origin, and I hope that her *Galanthus* 'Jupe's Belle' will continue to be grown with fondness for many years to come. ■



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Ballynahinch Castle Garden

Mary Hackett

Many would agree with me that one of the most stunning sections on Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way is the magnificent drive through Connemara. With the Twelve Bens on one side and the maze of islands that make up Ceantar na nOileán on the other, Ballynahinch Castle Hotel is at the heart of this glorious region. High annual rainfall and Atlantic gales make gardening in this impressive place a real challenge. On



A view of the late summer garden

a snowy morning in March 2022 I talked to Cian Cunniffe, Estate Manager at the Castle, about how he and his team manage Ballynahinch Castle's walled garden.

For Rachel Lamb who designed the garden in 2017/18 with Cian's input, Ballynahinch was a project about reimagining rather than restoring a garden. The house had been through many iterations since 'Humanity Dick' Martin of Galway first made it his

**“Connemara
rock has an
almost wave-like
structure”**



home in the early nineteenth century. The garden which had supplied fruit, vegetables and flowers to the castle was neglected and overgrown. As there was no original design available, the team had carte blanche to do things differently. From the newly designed layout to the Tracey Emin bronze installation, they have done just that.

Remembering those early days, Cian emphasises how important it was to understand the soil he was dealing with.

Rock, soil, and water define this garden. Connemara rock has an almost wave-like structure. In the troughs between the waves the soil is deep, but drainage is an issue. Tonnes of mushroom compost and granulated seaweed were added to the peaty soil to improve structure and fertility. Giving water somewhere to go was vital to the garden. Old French drains were unearthed, expanded, and repaired. The garden walls were taken down and rebuilt. The beds were laid out and the fountain installed. In 2018



The Summer garden

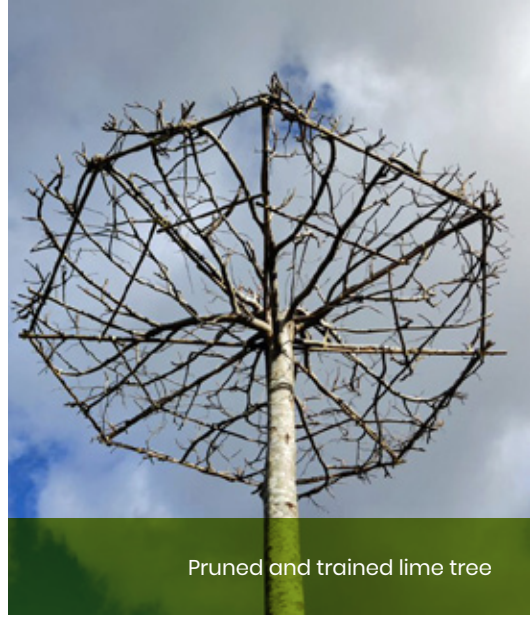
the replanting of the garden began. And here is Cian's second insight from the project. "Take it slowly", he says. Planting, settling, and maintaining a new garden is not done in a hurry.

“Ballynahinch’s walled garden in Spring 2022 will be a riot of tulips”

Rachel Lamb sourced wonderfully architectural trees for Ballynahinch, going to nurseries in Germany and Holland as well as finding plants in Annaveigh Nursery, Co Tipperary. I was fortunate to see the beehive

hornbeams, conical lime trees and the famous line of *Liquidambar styraciflua* before leaf-break obscured the skilled pruning and tying-in that give these specimens such character. In 2021, Covid regulations led to the opening of a café situated under a ceiling of roof-trained lime trees. The café will be there again in 2022. Take a close look at how those *Tilia cordata* have been managed as you enjoy your coffee. Fascinating.

Ballynahinch's walled garden in Spring 2022 will be a riot of tulips. The garden team have planted 110,000 bulbs in the estate over last two years. For April and May 2022, the long borders have been planted with a mixture of 'Queen of the Night', 'Carola' and 'Clearwater'. The selection of tulips changes every year with flower size, flowering season and colours chosen to extend the show for as long as possible. A feature of Ballynahinch's tulip extravaganza is the display of potted tulips on the entrance steps and in unexpected corners. Gardeners who believe that tulips are



Pruned and trained lime tree



A view of spring planting



The Ballynahinch walled garden in Spring

a one-year wonder will be interested to know that the pots are planted with a mixture of 2020 and 2021 bulbs. Fed with fish blood and bone in the beds after flowering, lifted, dried, potted up and fed again in late winter, the first of the 2020 bulbs were showing colour when I saw them in early March.

When the tulip beds have been cleared, dahlias, crocosmias and begonias create a blaze of summer colour. Nothing is held back here. The long beds in reds, oranges, and yellows might be overbearing, Cian admits, in a different setting but in Ballynahinch, softened by the hills and woods around

them, they are vibrant rather than loud. Herbaceous planting in supporting beds compliments the display. This is, at base, a hotel garden. The gardeners take great pleasure in seeing guests use it, sitting in the sun with a book and a glass of wine or enjoying one of the many weddings the venue hosts all year round.

Ballynahinch Castle is a destination hotel for overseas visitors and a multi-generational retreat for its many Irish guests. In less than five years skill, generous resources and careful planning has created a garden on the path to even better things. ■

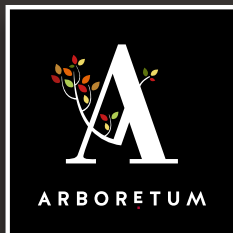


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Volunteers hard at work

Laurelmerre Cottage Garden Notes

Andrew Boyle

We are fortunate in the RHSI to have two gardens to care for, RHSI Russborough and Laurelmere in Marlay Park. A major difference between the two gardens is that the cultivated area in Laurelmere is completely open to mature woodland which is part of the holding, whilst RHSI Russborough has a high boundary wall surrounding it. For Laurelmere this means an extraordinarily heavy leaf fall in late autumn and early winter. Wherever there is the slightest depression or gully, there may be found an accumulation of muddy brown leaves adding to the seasonal untidiness. This winter has witnessed a strong drive to clear away fallen leaves and move them to a newly expanded leaf compound. In time, there will be a bounty of leaf-mould; initially there was fast decomposition which has now slowed with cooler temperatures.

Since the end of Lockdown last April, the increased numbers of volunteers have largely held firm. This has allowed the continued clearance of the undergrowth from the immediately surrounding woodland and the planting of this area with trees and shrubs. Native varieties of birch and wild cherry have been planted in small groves; the rowan trees await further clearing of woodland. Two *Prunus serrula* 'Tai-Haku' edge the cultivated area.

A success last year was the flowering of many *Salvia patens* towards the edge of the East border. These had been grown from seed by one of the volunteers. New seed was collected and germinated by another volunteer. The new plants will be added to those few remaining which were dug up and put in the tunnel to overwinter. Sadly, with



Tree planting at Laurelmere

further damage to the tunnel plastic, protection was lost for many plants. We plan to plant in a consolidated patch this year possibly interplanted with a contrasting colour. To this end a pack of 7,500 white antirrhinum were purchased and some have even been sown!

The result of last autumn's bulb planting is now beginning to show. The crescent of narcissi planted at the southern end of the garden which has become known as the 'Horizon Bed' is a qualified success. Unfortunately, one of the three varieties at the west end, seems to be later flowering than the others. Further narcissi will need to be planted at this location next autumn so that it will eventually rival the long-established massing of yellow daffodils further west. The controversial planting of the double white daffodil 'Ice King' in the northern end of the lawn can now be seen, but its continued presence remains the subject of discussion!

Finally, a start has been made on the hedge inside the boundary fence around the house with the planting of a row of ten bare rooted beech saplings. The hope is that this hedge might eventually replace much of the fence. ■

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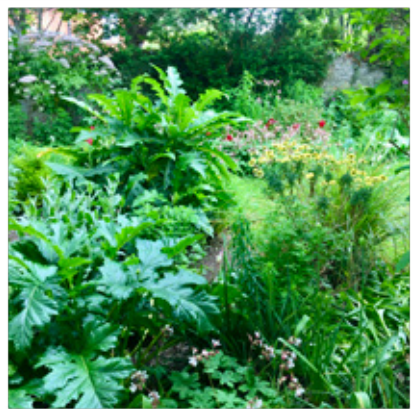
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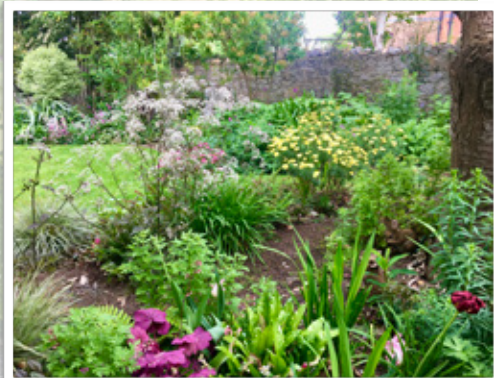


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Book Review

Peter Milligan

E. A. Bowles and his Garden at Myddleton House 1865–1954

Mea Allan

*Country and Gardeners Book Society,
Faber and Faber, 1973*



*E. A. Bowles & his Garden
at Myddelton House 1865-1954*
BY MEA ALLAN



This is a favourite text which has been read and re-read many times. Mea Allan's biography of Edward Augustus Bowles presents the life of someone who was planning a career in the church until family circumstances brought him back to the family home where he was to remain for the rest of his life. It could be said that the church's loss was horticulture's gain as Bowles was to spend his time at Myddleton House creating a garden that became famous very quickly and was visited by the leading gardeners of the day. Perhaps one could even say Bowles made the garden 'infamous' by the inclusion of his lunatics asylum where he grew all the plants that he found that he considered oddities. Bowles went on to become an expert on many plant families and published texts on Crocus and Narcissus – at one stage he was referred to as 'The Crocus King' and 'The Daffodil King'. Chapters cover his plant collecting trips with the likes of Reginald Farrer and he was to become a stalwart of the Royal Horticultural Society serving on numerous committees and becoming a member of the RHS Council – a position he was to hold for the remainder of his life. This is an excellent text which paints a sympathetic picture of a true gentleman and a real gardener. ■

Book Review

Peter Milligan

The Genus Agapanthus

Graham Duncan

Kew Publishing, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, 2021

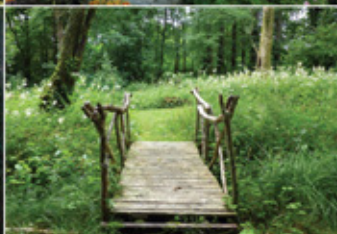


This is a heavy text in that it is one for the serious – perhaps even professional – gardener or the dedicated amateur with a deep interest in Agapanthus. Graham Duncan is a bulbous plant specialist at the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden in South Africa and his expertise and knowledge is reflected in every page of this text. A history of the family is followed by a wonderful, beautifully illustrated, section of fifty plus pages detailing readily available cultivars. This is followed by a chapter dealing with propagation and cultivation with a useful section on diseases and treatments. The book ends with chapters providing information on agapanthus biology and taxonomy. I suspect these latter chapters will be of interest to the professional horticulturist. The book is the latest in the Botanical monograph series published by Kew and is a worthy member of this family of texts. To close I found it interesting that some Agapanthus we were given by Alan Bloom (Bressingham Gardens, Diss, Norfolk) and still have growing in our garden – ‘Bressingham Blue’ and ‘Bressingham White’ - were thought worthy of inclusion in the book – a testament to Alan’s skill as a breeder of new cultivars. ■

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Russborough Notes

Anne Camilla Voss

Another gardening year is upon us. Previously we have worked every second week in January and February but we are still playing catch-up regarding garden chores so this year the garden team decided that we would work our regular schedule from January onwards. And there are plenty of jobs to keep us busy.

“The year so far has been a mixed bag in terms of weather”

In May, Russborough will play host to the Plant Fair, so volunteers are busy propagating plants by cuttings or divisions, that we think will flower in time for the fair. Most of our donations come from plant sale, so we will make sure to have a beautiful selection.

Placed around the garden we have several beautiful garden benches and they are a sure hit with our visitors but in recent years they have become home to moss and lichen so Conor and helpers have worked hard to sand them down and then treat them with a special oil.

The year so far has been a mixed bag in terms of weather. We managed to have our first al fresco lunch in January but then the inevitable rain and storms arrived and we have been dodging in and out of the propagation house and potting shed ever since. ■



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Garden Writers Old and New

Margery Fish

Peter Milligan

It is unfair to think of Margery Fish (1888–1969) as just a garden writer so I must apologize for the title. In reality Mrs Fish was a gardener, a garden writer, and the owner of a successful nursery based at her home at East Lambrook Manor in Somerset.

Margery Fish came to gardening late in life – beginning her garden work when she and her husband Walter moved to their then new home in Somerset in 1938. She states in her book *We Made a Garden* (Faber & Faber, 1984) that she had little or no experience in gardening prior to this move.

Following the death of her husband she seemed to come into her own and began developing the garden and to show what was to become her hallmark feature – the use of cottage garden flowers. In fact, she is credited as “one of the most important influences on English Cottage Gardening. It is mainly due to her enthusiasm and love of plants that the cottage gardening tradition has been kept alive” (www.greatbritishgardens.co.uk, April 2022).

In all, and to the best of my knowledge, she wrote eight books and the two I mention now are amongst my favourites. *A Flower for Every Day* (The Garden Book Club, 1965) is a delightful book in which Mrs Fish paints



a picture of the plants we could have in flower in our gardens on a month-by-month basis. This is a useful guide still, despite approaching sixty years of age. *Gardening on Clay & Lime* (David & Charles, 1970) – this copy published after her death in 1969 will be helpful today to those gardeners who struggle to deal

Margery Fish

GARDENING ON CLAY & LIME



with a heavy clay soil or are 'plagued' by lime. The first four chapters address issues associated with clay soils – how they can be improved, suitable plants, etc. – the next chapter looks at lime soils while the remainder of the text covers shrubs, colour in the garden, etc. all based around the issues of clay and lime.

I have enjoyed collecting and reading Mrs Fish's books and I hope you will do the same.

Her other works are: *An all the year Garden* (David & Charles, 1958), *Carefree Gardening* (The Garden Book Club, 1972), *Cottage Garden Flowers* (), *Gardening in the Shade* (David & Charles, 1972), *Ground Cover Plants* (David & Charles, 1970). ■

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Jessica Willows (Water Lily)



Fairway Spur (Giant Decorative)



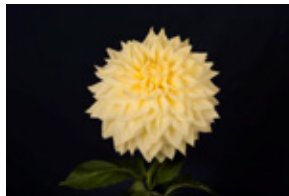
Cameo (Water Lily)



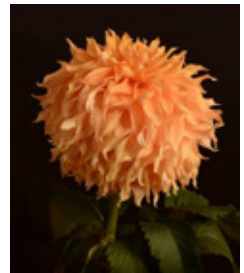
Bracken Ballerina (Water Lily)



Ann Breckenfelder (Collarette)



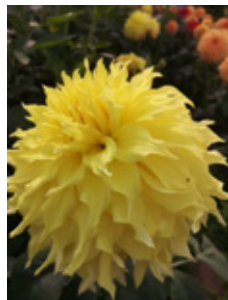
Alva's Supreme (Giant Decorative)



Aggie White (Giant Decorative)



John Markham (Pompon)



Louis White (Giant Decorative)

Website: <https://threegates.ie/>. The above pictures are samples of the several available varieties.

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