



THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY  
ULSTER GROUP



**Newsletter No.4    August 2005**

Cover Photograph ; Galanthus 'Wendy's gold', in Bob Gordon's garden



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## Newsletter No.4

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### Information:-



## Editorial

This fourth Newsletter is being put together in the month of May, after all our lectures and before the Scottish and summer garden visits. We had an excellent series of lectures with record attendances, no doubt enhanced by our new digital projector and p.a. system purchased by the grant from "Awards For All". It was also good to welcome many new members. I hope they will soon feel at home with us and enjoy playing an active part in the group.

Congratulations must go to one of our members, David Lapsley, who entered the A.G.S. Photographic Competition with outstanding success, taking prizes in several categories. Perhaps this will encourage all our members to take that first step in showing both photographs and plants. Advice and help will be there just for the asking and, as show entries are down, we really need everyone to participate and enjoy the fun of it.

Trillium Grandiflorum, seen opposite, won Jim Price a Farrer Medal at the Dublin show – congratulations, Jim, and also to Carol for her Paeonia cambessedessii at the Ulster Show.

It is also great to welcome Bob Gordon as one of our vice-presidents, someone who always has the best interests of the group at heart and is always ready to help and advise.

Once again I am delighted to say that we have had some wonderful contributions to the Newsletter which I am sure you will enjoy reading as much as I have. Thanks to all who contributed and please keep coming with suggestions.

#### Deaths.

On a sadder note, this year saw the deaths of some of our most faithful members. For more than fifteen years Norman Crossley was joint Show Secretary with his wife, Pat, until ill health forced him to stop. He faced his illness with great courage and was an inspiration to all.

The death of Lady Barbara Bates came as a shock to all, one of our members who was always willing to help, she was even planning an article for this newsletter. Adeline Coleman also died very suddenly and we are left with lovely memories of her enjoying our winter garden visits.

Don Caldwell was another member who, after a period of illness, died this year. To all their relatives and friends we send our sincere sympathy.

## Contributions.

### Some Memories of a Botanical Childhood

Margaret Kennedy

I think that it is always interesting to ponder what it is that triggers unlikely interests in young people, interests which can last a lifetime. As a child, my great passion was for native British Orchids. In my case, it was not at all surprising that I had a keen interest in natural history. My grandfather had been a leading light in the Belfast Naturalist Field Club, I myself had been brought up in its Junior ranks, and my mother was a keen member of the Alpine Garden Society. I must have had genes for natural history with a good dollop of nurturing.

I am probably the only second generation member of the AGS in the Northern group. My mother, badly smitten by what my father ruefully called “the Disease”, took me, as a young child, on various AGS outings. I remember visiting Leepers’ place in Tyrone when it was open to the society and being enchanted by the little paths winding through the rock garden there. Then there was the woodland garden at E.T.Green’s in Antrim, full of the ferny, fairy places which children love. The plants which impressed me most at this time were Phlox Douglasii spilling over rocks and the creamy white flowers of Cytisus praecox. Then there was Mrs. McConnells’s nursery at Carryduff where my mother indulged in the lovely primulas that were on sale. Alas the nursery is no more, Auriculas and candelabras have been replaced by roads and houses.

At this time, AGS shows were held in Glengall Street, in what was to become the hallowed and much bombed headquarters of the Unionist party. I found these displays of frothy, waxy, exotic, colourful plants quite amazing. The secretary was one Miss Lonsdale whose fame is still remembered today largely because she ruled the Society with a rod of iron and was extremely fussy about who was to be allowed to join. She would have made our present office bearers look like pussycats.

Had Miss Lonsdale been alive today, she would not have considered us very genteel, and probably scruffy to boot. For the lady alpine gardeners of the day, hats were *de rigueur*, and gloves were certainly not of the gardening type. In fact, even on outings, the hostess would be dispensing tea, from elegant tea urns, wearing equally elegant hats in their own home! As a child I simply could not understand this sartorial quirk. The AGS may have dispensed with hats and gloves but today would provide a much better line in biscuits and cakes.

At an early age I made a collection of British orchids which would not have earned any approval in today’s P.C. world. My collection of pressed specimens were then deemed worthy of display in the Belfast Naturalists’ Field Club, junior Division, when the British Association came to Belfast in the 1950’s. A smallish, precise military-looking man, accompanied by his wife came and spent some time examining my pressed specimens and expressed interest and approval. He said that he and his wife were off to Burma to look for plants and asked if I would like him to send me an orchid. I was quite touched by this, because young and inexperienced as I was, I knew that there was some significance in the sending of orchids to ladies by gentlemen, especially from Burma, I thought. My mother, when I told her, pointed out the importance of this encounter, because the admirer of my collection was none other than Captain Frank Kingdon-Ward.



Following this encounter, I eagerly awaited the arrival of the promised orchid, wondering if it would be in a pot, if it would be terrestrial or epiphytic, Cypripedium or Dendrobium. What **did** arrive soon after was not an orchid but a signed copy of one of his books, “About this Earth” – not about plants, but about geomorphology. The orchid arrived a year or so later, not potted but pressed, in an air mail letter, which described his formidable trek into northern Burma. My unnamed specimen was one of the 60 orchids which he found growing on trees between 3000 and 6000 feet. I still have it together with the letters.

With all this early encouragement, my career **had** to be in biology, but that is another story.

Margaret Kennedy.

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## Pleione “Vesuvius”

George Gordon

The genus *Pleione* is a member of that great Family *Orchidaceae*, members of which have colonized nearly all the habitats on earth from tropical rain forests to alpine meadows. There are only 16-20 species, but many more artificial hybrids. They are deciduous pseudobulbs – the easiest way to lose them is to treat them as true bulbs. In the wild they are epiphytic woodland plants, growing on mossy branches of trees and cliffs up to 4,000m from northern India through south China to Taiwan.



Over the years I have tried many different composts, and I suppose they are not fussy as long as they are very free draining. I find that Cambark (which is available through the Ulster Group of the Alpine Garden Society) is ideal, and the composted bark at B&Q might be equally good, although I have not tried it as yet. I mix it with one third perlite or vermiculite. Perceived wisdom at the time I first cultivated *Pleione* was to use a half pot. Don't believe a word of it in the case of “Vesuvius”. It has an extensive root system that will easily fill a full pot.

To begin the year in late January (any time up to March would do), I take the pots I have kept in the garage from the previous November to tidy the pseudobulbs up. This is the period when they are deciduous and benefit from a dry dormant period. They have stayed out all summer in a shady part of the garden, where they receive little in the way of care except for an occasional feed. I gently tease them out of the compost, cutting the old roots off whilst being careful not to damage the flower bud (which is very obvious at this stage). *Pleione* will flower before the leaves, or indeed the roots come into growth. You will find that the old pseudobulbs have died and can be removed. In good cultivation at least one, perhaps two new pseudobulbs have been formed – also small bulbils which can be grown on or given to friends, and this is the time to sort out the flowering size pseudobulbs. With the new pot to ensure good drainage I put an inch or so of rock wool (which I got in Haldane and Fisher) in the bottom. Anything else that would stop the compost coming through the drainage holes would be equally good. Fill the pot with new compost to within a few inches of the top, and firm the pseudobulbs on the surface leaving the diameter of the bulb all round (the flowers are large and look better with a little space all around). I use sphagnum moss to top dress, but any moss would do. The smaller pseudobulbs and bulbils (if you are not giving them away) can be grown on and it is not necessary to use a full pot for these.

The laborious part is now over. I keep the pots in the house where they are not watered, only sprayed to keep the moss damp. You will be surprised how much water sphagnum will absorb. Within four to six weeks the flowers will open, and can be appreciated on the windowsill. I cut the dead flowers off, and at this stage the leaves will come into growth, and the roots start to work their way down into the compost. You can now begin to water and feed with dilute tomato feed or similar. I put the pots outside about the middle of May when the danger of frost is over.

Over the summer the odd feed is appropriate, and “weekly and weakly” is the counsel of perfection. I often forget and have not noticed any great ill effects. Pests and diseases are few in my experience. Mice will have a nibble, but *Pleione* are not to their taste and no serious damage is done.

I obtained my pseudobulbs through the generosity of members of the Ulster Group, and bulbils and plants regularly appear on the plant stall.

NB The pot illustrated was for show purposes. Once I got it home I transferred them back into a full sized pot!!

## Czech Workshops

The following articles are reflections by our three members who very kindly hosted the workshops on Czech Crevice Gardens given by Zdeněk Zvolánek, an expert in the art of creating crevice gardens.



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### “JCBs at June’s”

**June Dougherty**

As a result of the holiday last year, Zdeněk our guide, known to us as ZZ, visited Northern Ireland at the invitation of the Alpine Society. ZZ generously offered to create a rock garden when he visited ‘Glenone’. ZZ set to work on Friday preparing the garden canvas.

The next day the stones, carboniferous limestone, were delivered and the art work began to take shape. Lots of large machinery appeared on the scene on Monday, along with fourteen eager members of the society who attended a workshop led by ZZ. The workshop was caught on film by Mrs Joan McCaughey. The assistance of Gordon Toner and Gerard Coleman was appreciated as they rolled up their sleeves and set to work.



By Wednesday the picture was complete - a marvellous rockery created by "The man who paints with stones".

### “Blue-Stack Shale at Moss Road”

**Alfred Robbins**

On the first morning of our A.G.S. trip to the Czech Republic I saw a number of crevice gardens and many more variations as our tour progressed. I was hooked and later, when Margaret Glynn suggested our tour guide, Zdeněk, might build one for me as one of his workshops, I was over the moon.

Panic set in to find suitable rock. After visiting many quarries in Donegal I found a small one in Convoy town, near Raphoe, where they let my wife and me plunder about and pick our own pieces. The pricing was unique – the office girl looked in both vans, estimated the weight, and charged € 25 per ton.



I have spent the last few weeks in December poring over books, looking for plants suitable for our wet winters and fickle summers. I am champing at the bit for spring to arrive to start planting my unique feature. During my many chinwags with Zdeněk, he revealed that there is a special technique in constructing these features. If any member is hoping to build one please ask and I will pass on his system for success.

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### “Troughs at Teal Rocks”

**David Lapsley**

Having seen Zdeněk Zvolánek’s constructions during our group tour of Prague in May 2004, there was much interest in his visit to Ulster later that year. He represents a movement common among Czech Alpine gardeners, which seeks to grow Alpine plants out of doors in crevices created from large loads of karst and other limestone rocks.

These become mini Dolomites which are often the main features of the garden. We were intrigued by the examples beautifully crafted by Zdeněk in the gardens of June Dougherty and Rena and Alfred Robbins. Our garden was to be the setting for the same skills in miniaturised form for troughs.

Four empty troughs, two made from hyper-tufa, and two from coated fish boxes, were available for the demonstration. First a piece of fine polythene netting was cut to size, and fitted on the base to cover the drainage holes. Next, to our

astonishment, Zdeněk placed a cement building block set on its long side and a building brick set on its short side on the floor of the trough. He then pressed a mix of equal parts of coarse sand and finely riddled top soil in around them to about five eighths of the trough's capacity. Into this he arranged his rocks, limestone for three troughs, and weathered local sandstone for the fourth, on their narrowest edge and running in parallel strands. At its highest point the stonework rose as much as twelve inches above the rim of the trough creating many cracks and crevices but also leaving room for planting here and there at the edges of the trough. The final phase of preparing each trough was to add a good percentage of coarse grit to the compost, which was then well pressed into every available remaining space.

The plants were very carefully placed to make use of the trough's variety of micro-climates – full sun, shade, protection from prevailing winds. Some of the plants were hardy and common, like *semper-vivums*, but others included drabas, androsaces, mini penstemons, townsendias, etc. We have been able to monitor the two troughs which have remained with us. To our delight and surprise the losses sustained during the winter amounted to one plant, an astragalus, with *Helichrysum milfordia* struggling but still bravely holding on to life. We have observed that drainage has depended largely on rain being rapidly run off down the tracks and channels afforded by the arrangement of the rocks.

There are two observations at this early stage. First, I have still some reservations about the compost, for which our climate may require more grit in the basic mix. Second, there must still be an important role for the varied replication of Alpine landscapes, to include peaks and slopes and meadows within the boundaries of a trough. The Czech approach however has been a welcome addition to the many



possibilities of Alpine gardening from which much can be learned to our advantage....

### **Miniature conifers for the alpine raised bed, trough and sink.** **Hugh McAlister**

( I felt it would be a shame to shorten this article in any way as it really forms a reference work on the subject and we look forward to a further article on pines in Newsletter No.5. Editor)

A few well-grown “dwarf” conifers will enhance any collection of alpine plants whether grown in raised beds, troughs or even in pots in an alpine house. “Dwarf” conifers come in many shapes and they give character to a flat area as well as providing colour throughout the year - ranging from the various shades of green through silver, yellow and darker shades of red and purple in the winter months. They do provide colour when few alpine flowers are in bloom.

Dwarf conifers have become increasingly popular plants in most small gardens and, especially, alpine gardens. We now come to the important question- when is dwarf really dwarf? G.F. Evans, in a very good article on dwarf conifers, penned in the A.G.S. Bulletin, Vol. 52 No. 4 December 1984, stated that “there are no such things as dwarf conifers only slow growing ones”.. While to a large extent this is true, there many exceptions to the rule. The big problem, today, is that many plants, and conifers in particular, are sold by garden centres and market stalls under the label “dwarf”. They are mass- produced for an undiscerning public who buy them for their small gardens and find, after a few years, that they outgrow their position and have to be removed. They are also relatively cheap and easily available. I, myself, have a so-called dwarf pine bought some twelve years ago which is now approaching 3metres high by 2metres across.

If one desires a conifer which will remain a “true dwarf” then he or she must be prepared to seek out a specialist grower and pay a considerable price for a rather small specimen. Many people, when purchasing dwarf conifers expect a large specimen for a few pounds. They are very surprised, disappointed and often very annoyed when they receive a plant which is tiny. True dwarfs are often dreadfully slow to grow and, in this age of “instant garden”, people are unwilling to pay the price for a true dwarf conifer or indeed, wait until it becomes a reasonable size.

Alpine gardeners on the other hand, are more interested in “true dwarfs” which will not be out of place in a trough, sink or small raised bed. Those members of the A.G.S. Ulster Group who were fortunate to make the trip to the Czech Republic in 2004 were, I think, surprised but pleased by how Czech alpine gardeners included so many dwarf conifers, and in such variety, in troughs and rock gardens. I propose to substitute the term miniature for the term “dwarf” and describe a number of examples which should remain under 60cms high and 60cms wide in ten years and which are suitable for troughs and raised beds and are very unlikely to outgrow their situation. Czech gardeners are prepared to grow larger dwarf conifers and keep them in check by both foliage and root pruning. However, the plants named and described below should only need a minimum of foliage pruning to keep them neat and tidy. As there are many miniature dwarf conifers I propose to name and describe a sample across the species which should be relatively easily obtained.

#### ABIES: SILVER FIR

##### ABIES BALSAMEA HUDSONIA

This is a rare dwarf plant with dark green leaves which have a distinct parting of the branches. This is a well-behaved cushion-shaped plant wider than high.

##### ABIES BALSAMEA “PICCOLO”

This is an attractive ball-shaped miniature, again with small dark leaves, densely packed branches and reddish brown buds in winter. This conifer is ideal for raised beds and troughs.

##### ABIES KOREANA

The Korean fir is, in its own right, an outstanding species of great ornamental value in the garden. There are many excellent, slow-growing specimens but, in recent years, several miniature selections have been produced in Germany. They tend to have densely packed branches with the needle tips around the terminal buds exposing their undersides.

Anyone collecting true miniatures should look out for  
A.K. SILBER PEARL (Silver Pearl)  
SILBERZWERG (Silver Dwarf) and  
SILBER KUGEL (Silver Globe)

#### CEDRUS-CEDAR

##### CEDRUS DEODARA “PYGMY

This is a beautiful little plant and is one of the rarest of miniature conifers. It grows into a small globular bush with silvery blue needles.

##### CHAMAECYPARIS LAWSONIANA

C.L. “GREEN GLOBE” was discovered as a seedling in New Zealand and is a true miniature. It very slowly makes a dense cushion of rich green which people seem to love to stroke. This is a perfect plant for raised beds, sinks or troughs.

##### CHAMAECYPARIS OBTUSA – HINOKI CYPRESS

There are many valuable specimens in this group but I will only mention a few really delightful little plants. All those named are excellent conifers for the rock garden, trough or small raised bed.

##### CHAMAECYPARIS OBTUSA “BAMBI”

Cushion shaped plant which will be in the order of 12cms x9cms in ten years.

##### C.O. CAESPITOSA

One of the smallest of all conifers ideal for even the smallest trough.

##### C.O. ELF

Originated in New York and has bright green foliage on a cushion-shaped plant.

##### C.O. FLABELLIFORMIS

Small slow growing conifer ideal for troughs and rock gardens.

##### C.O. GOLDEN SPRITE

Very attractive small cushion of golden recurved sprays. It will never outgrow its situation in a sink or trough.

#### C.O.INTERMEDIA

Introduced by Red Lodge Nursery in 1939. Excellent miniature conifer which in 10 years will be 10cms high by 15cms across.

#### C.D. JUNIPEROIDES

Is another small, spreading plant with recurved sprays of mid-green foliage. It is ideal for troughs and raised beds.

There are many other Juniper obtusa cultivars suited to planting in troughs and sinks.

#### CHAMAECYPARIS PISIFERA

There are, again, many plants in this section ideal for the small garden or trough.

#### CHAMAECYPARIS PISIFERA NANA

This plant and several of its variants are very suited to planting in troughs. The best known are C.P. NANA itself, C.P.NANA AUREO VARIEGATA, a real beauty, and C.P.GOLD DUST and C.P. SILVER LODGE. All of these, providing you get the true plants, in 30 years are unlikely to become higher than 30cms (12ins.) or wider than 60cms (24ins.)

#### CRYPTOMERIA JAPONICA (Japanese Cedar)

C.J. TENZAN-SUGI is perhaps the smallest Cryptomeria which makes a tight ball of congested deep green leaves, bronzing in winter. It is excellent for troughs and miniature gardens.

#### C.J.VILMORINIANA and C.J. VILMORIN GOLD

are two very attractive dwarfs but the latter is susceptible to scorching in an open situation.

#### JUNIPERUS

Junipers are among the most valuable and versatile groups of conifers for garden use. There are several excellent miniature junipers for the small garden or container.

#### JUNIPERUS COMMUNIS COMPRESSA

This is possibly the most popular dwarf conifer used for miniature gardens and troughs. It is a flame shaped little plant with ascending branches. It has small mid-

green leaves. It sometimes suffers from die-back in extreme weather conditions and may suffer from red spider mite damage.

#### J.C. "BERKSHIRE"

This is a true miniature named after the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts, U.S.A. It forms a dense bun-shaped mound, green with delightful silvery highlights at all seasons. Unfortunately it can also suffer die-back which should be cut out, if possible.

#### LARIX

All the larches are beautiful trees and, along with *GINKGO*, *METASEQUOIA* and *TAXODIUM* are among the few groups of deciduous conifers.

There are some very garden worthy dwarfs in both the LARIX DECIDUA and LARIX KAEMPFFERI groups but two are worth mentioning in the latter group. *LARIX KAEMPFFERI NANA MAKES* a dense twiggy bush with its skeleton of branches in winter which become clothed with soft blue leaves in spring and summer. *L.K. "VARLEY"* is similar to NANA but slower growing and much more congested – a joy to behold in spring.

#### PICEA - SPRUCE

##### PICEA ABIES ACROCONA "PUSCH"

This is a very distinctive miniature resulting from a witches broom which arose on *PICEA ABIES "ACROCONA"*. It cones very freely with masses of tiny red cones on the branch tips in spring. It is unlikely to exceed a height or width of 60cms (24ins) in ten years. It is grafted.

##### PICEA ABIES GREGORIANA

This is a very slow growing miniature that makes a small hummock of fine green needles, with congested foliage. This plant and the so-called Hedgehog Spruce, *PICEA ABIES ECHINIFORMIS* are ideal conifers for miniature gardens and troughs or sinks. They should have an organic soil and never be allowed to dry out.

##### PICEA ABIES "LITTLE GEM"

This is a real beauty discovered as a witches broom on *PICEA ABIES NIDIFORMIS* in 1958 at Grootendorst Nursery, Holland. Both are excellent conifers but LITTLE GEM is a very good alpine garden plant for raised bed or trough.

#### PICEA GLAUCA - WHITE SPRUCE

The White Spruce is a very handsome tree in its own right and from it has come many fine cultivars, some very suited to the alpine garden.

PICEA GLAUCA VAR. ALBERTA GLOBE was found as a witches broom in Holland. It has been produced widely and is found in alpine gardens around the world. Other situations have produced several valuable miniatures, e.g. PICEA GLAUCA CECILIA, PICEA GLAUCA "BLUE PLANET" and an excellent cultivar, PICEA GLAUCA VAR. ALBERTIANA TINY.

#### PICEA MARIANA NANA

A very attractive blue/grey spruce which makes a low cushion and after 30 yrs. will not be more than 30cms (12ins) high, and 60cms (24ins) in width. It is ideal for troughs.

There are many other excellent spruces which may safely be recommended for the alpine garden but it should be noted that all are susceptible to red spider mite damage during dry summer weather.

#### SCIADOPITYS VERTICILLATA-UMBRELLA PINE

The Japanese Umbrella Pine is now native only to Southern Japan but, as fossils have illustrated it was once widespread in the Northern Hemisphere. It is, itself, a very attractive tree and in recent years several slow-growing cultivars have been discovered.

#### SCIADOPITYS VERTICILLATA PYGMY

The only miniature version is a low growing bushy little plant with a growth rate of 3 to 4cms per year.

#### TAXUS BACCATA – YEW

The yews have many beautiful slow-growing trees but few are suitable for the very small rock garden or trough though they can be pruned easily to suit a special situation.

#### TAXUS BACCATA "ALDENHAM GOLD"

This is a very slow growing plant, a small mound in its early years but becoming more conical with age. The foliage is very attractive with green branches and tips of yellow and gold.

#### T.B."NUTANS"

This is a tiny upright growing yew with very dark green leaves. It is suitable for a trough or sink.

#### THUJA-ARBORVITAE

The Thujas have produced some very fine slow-growing and dwarf specimens for the larger rock garden and border.

#### THUJA ORIENTALIS.

"Gold Pygmy" is a golden form much smaller than "T.O. AUREA NANA", probably one of the most popular garden conifers grown through the world. At ten years a plant might be 40cms high by 30cms wide. It does need shelter from cold winds and strong sunshine which may cause scorching of the foliage.

THUJA PLICATA ROGERSII this is a small pillar- shaped bush with a conical top, foliage yellow tipped with orange gold. This is a very desirable conifer for the rock garden or trough.

#### TSUGA CANADENSIS – CANADIAN HEMLOCK

The hemlocks have given us a lot of miniatures which are used in rock gardens, raised beds and troughs. "ABBOT'S PYGMY", "BETTY ROSE", "WATNONG STAR", "JERVIS", "MINUTA", "PALOMINO", "PINCUSHION", "RUGGS WASHINGTON DWARF", "STEWARTS GEM" and "VERKADE PETITE" are all very reliable miniatures assuming globe shapes guaranteed to reach about 35 – 40cms in height and 35 – 40cms in 10-15 years. There are also some larger dwarf forms which are useful as specimens for hanging down walls and spreading over large rocks.

In conclusion, as you have seen, there are many miniature conifers for the alpine garden and also for containers. It is best, if possible, to buy plants from a specialist nursery and to make sure that you purchase the "true" plant on its own roots. Pines were not discussed in this article because their great variety and numbers warrant a separate discussion.

## Information about us

The Ulster Group is affiliated to the Alpine Garden Society, which was founded in 1929, and has grown to become one of the largest specialist garden societies in the world, with its aim to promote an interest in alpine plants in cultivation and in their wild habitats.

The parent Society provides advice, insurance and show help to local groups as well as its excellent bulletins, holidays, seed exchange, conferences etc. and local groups need its overall cover. With the recent changes to the constitution, in future at least 75% of local group members will have to belong to the A.G.S. for the Group to remain under its auspices, *new members now being asked to join within eighteen months*. However we all need to meet locally and hence the Ulster Group.

### Venue

At present meetings are held on Saturdays in the Lecture Theatre, Main Building, Stranmillis University College, Belfast, where there are good parking facilities. The lectures begin at 2.30 p.m. from September until March, exact dates given on the fixtures card.

### Organisation

The Ulster Group is run by a small committee composed of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Programme Secretary, Treasurer, Show Secretary, and five committee members including the past Chairman. The Chairman and the committee members serve for two years, with two members being elected each year, and further members can be co-opted if necessary. All must belong to the A.G.S. The committee meets three times a year and tries to ensure the smooth running of the Group. An effort is made to try to let all our members serve on the committee so that they are familiar with all aspects of our activities and with the revised constitution there is a time limit on all posts.

As well as the committee we need helpers for everything from making tea, selling plants, tidying, opening gardens, etc. so I appeal to everyone to help in any way you can. And our sincere thanks to all our helpers, without you there would be no group!

### Group Finances

The Group finances are in the capable hands of the Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Margaret Glynn, who with the help of an expert accountant's advice, keeps us in the black! The income comes from subscriptions, plant sales, raffles etc; while expenses

include lecture room hire, speakers expenses and fees, capital expenditure etc. The income and expenditure accounts are presented at the AGM.

### **Group Subscriptions**

Local current subscriptions rates are £8.00 single, £10.00 family ( a slight increase again to keep up with rising costs.). **To help our treasurer, please put your subscription into the envelope provided with your name, title, address. postal code, and telephone number and email (if wished), clearly written on the outside.** Give this or post it to Mrs. Margaret Glynn, Hon. Treasurer either at the A.G.M. or before the end of the current year. A limit of one year's grace is given. This subscription is for the local Group only and subscriptions to The Alpine Garden Society must be sent direct.

Visitors are welcome to our lectures for the small fee of £1.00 but feel free to invite anyone who might be interested in joining, especially to the Society Lecture which is open and free to all.

### Lectures

Details of the lectures are given in each year's fixtures card and the following is a little background information.

### A.G.M. and Plant Sale

The AGM is the work meeting of the year when the Reports and Accounts for the year are presented and the Officers and Committee are elected or re-elected. Any changes or future proposals are also discussed.

After the business is finished there is an extra special plant sale( please do bring some) as this is our first meeting after the summer break and a short lecture is also included to add interest to the meeting.

### **Dr. Molly Sanderson Memorial Lecture.**

**Dr. Mary Elizabeth (Molly) Sanderson** 1913-1995, was President of the Ulster Group A.G.S. from 1985 to 1995. To ensure that the Ulster members would continue to have a high standard of lecturers, she left a bequest to the Group for a lecture in her memory, the speakers always being of the highest calibre.

### Plant Stall

Before and after each meeting there is a plant stall, where everyone can buy plants and bring plants to sell. At present Pat and George Gordon have worked tirelessly to run an excellent stall and as this is a major source of income we need everyone to contribute. If you can help in any way it will be appreciated especially at Show

time and Pat and George will be only too pleased to help and advise on suitable plants both to bring or buy. At Christmas this stall takes the form of a Christmas Fayre.

### **Badges**

To make it easier to get to know each other name badges are given to all new members, *should be worn by all*, and can be replaced for a small fee. These are made by our Programme Secretary, Heather Smith who also provides the very professional title and plant name slides.

### **Termonfeckin**

For some years now the Dublin Group of the A.G.S. have organised a weekend in November in An Grianan, Termonfeckin near Drogheda. The house was originally a Bishop's Palace, now converted into a Horticulture College and run by the Irish Countrywoman's Association. Booking forms and programmes are available at our Autumn meetings.



## **Shows**

We have two local shows run by our tireless Show Secretary, Mrs. Pat Crossley, and her committee, all only too pleased to give more information, and our main show alternates in dates with the Dublin group to vary the plants seen. There has been a fall in the beginners section so **now** is the time to plant bulbs, buy plants etc. for showing.

### ***Members' Show***

For some twenty years March is the month when a "Members' Show" has been held – a schedule drawn up to encompass classes suitable from beginners to the more experienced.

The Members' Show is open to ALL Ulster Group members and was conceived to encourage the first time exhibitor, who would hopefully become addicted.

### ***The Alpine Garden Society – Ulster Show***

This important annual event is just one of twenty five such shows held throughout Great Britain and Ireland. It is organised by the Show Secretary under the direction of the current Director of Shows at Pershore and held in the beautiful surroundings of the Greenmount Campus – well worth a visit on its own.

The Show is the Ulster Group's shop window when the general public can see and enjoy many alpine gems and perhaps become more involved.

It should be emphasised that all exhibitors at A.G.S. Shows must be FULL members of the Society, not just the Ulster Group.

The future of the Ulster Show depends on new exhibitors coming forward and also new members helping the team effort. So please support our hard working Show Secretary and the show committee in her request to "Keep on Growing and Showing Alpines".

### **Garden Visits and Outings**

Firstly, thanks to all our members who so kindly open their gardens to us in both winter and summer months, one of our most successful being this past year's "snowdrop and hellebore" day. These visits always prove popular and most enjoyable and we appreciate all the work, gardening skills and hospitality that this entails.

A longer garden visit has been organised each year by Mrs. Margaret Glynn, this year being a weekend to gardens in Scotland

## Website

During the past year, we have been developing and expanding our website, and have acquired a new web address – [www.alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk](http://www.alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk) The website gives our annual programme and also that of the Dublin Group, together with pictures from the local shows and links to other alpine gardening sites. There is continuing interest with a 'Plant of the Month' page, contributed by different members, and this is a part of the plan to make the site bigger and more comprehensive and up-to-date while firmly keeping it of local Ulster interest. To be successful this will mean a lot of you guiding the web subgroup as to what you want, and contributing regularly with your local expertise or interests (please volunteer). There is a facility for any member to publish a page or pages with their own interests in the 'Members' Area' We are very aware of security and will not publish any home addresses or email addresses without specific permission.

The Farrer Medal winner at Greenmount this year, *Paeonia cambessedessii*, is just one of the pictures to be found on the website.



### *The Gardener's Hymn (Requested by Mr John McWhirter)*

All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.  
But what is never mentioned, though gardeners know it's true  
Is when He made the good things, He made the baddies too.

All things spray and swatable, disasters great and small,  
All things paraquatable, the Lord God made them all.  
The greenfly on the roses, the maggots in the peas,  
Manure that fills our noses, He gave us all of these.

The mildew on the goosygogs, the clubroot in the greens,  
The slugs that eat the lettuce and chew the aubergines,  
The drought that kills the fuchsias, the frost that nips the buds,  
The rain that drowns the seedlings, the blight that hits the spuds.

The midges and mosquitoes, the nettles and the weeds,  
The pigeons in the greenstuff, the sparrows on the seeds,  
The fly that gets the carrots, the wasp that eats the plums,  
How black the gardener's outlook though green may be his thumbs.

But still we gardeners labour, amidst the veg and flowers,  
And pray what hits our neighbours will somehow bypass ours.  
All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small,  
All things wise and wonderful, the Lord God made them all.