



THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY  
ULSTER GROUP



Newsletter No. 14, August 2015

Back Cover



Above : *Clematis x cartmanii* Joe  
Garden

Front Cover – *Iris pumilo*, Hugh McAlister,  
Ulster Show 2015

**Contents:-**

**Editorial**

**History: Early Beginnings of our Group**

Stories behind some of our Cups and Trophies

**The Carol McCutcheon Cup** – by Susan Tindall

**The Frank Walsh Cup** – by Anne Walsh

**Helleborus x hybridus and its wilder relatives** – by David Ledsham

**Mementoes of Garden Visits**

**Obituaries**

**Alpine Cuttings** - or News Items

**Book Reviews**

**Information:-**

**Programme 2015 -2016**



From the website – some plants at the Ulster Group Show



## Editorial 2015

During this past year your editor has had her wings (or should I say foot) well and truly clipped so travel to far off fields has had to be postponed. It has however made me appreciate good health and recognise the problems disability brings and also the pleasures to be found nearer home.

Our past President had to retire last year for health reasons, Harold McBride very kindly and ably stepping into that role and I am glad to report that Bob can still enjoy his garden although travel is more restricted. Once again I wish good health to everyone and please take care not to trip or fall!

I would like to pay tribute to all our members, both past and present, who have shown such generosity to the Ulster Group over the years. Whether in giving time to serve on committees, opening their gardens, making tea, helping at meetings and shows etc – in so many ways everyone has helped to keep the Ulster Group alive. We now live in a very digital age and perhaps to survive, patterns will have to change. However social contact is important and the tours so smoothly organised by Cilla are very much appreciated in bringing together both older and more recent members when we have time to chat. While I have been documenting past history it is important to look to the future and good to be able to report some contact with a younger generation. Life is so busy for young people today that all societies are having recruiting difficulties but a love of alpines, plants and gardening can give lifelong pleasure.

This ‘summer’ has been a long cold wet season so far with only a few bright moments but we have had some good news locally to brighten the days. Our Show Secretary, Pat Crossley has announced her engagement to Gordon Gray, a photographic judge at the Show. Congratulations and we wish them good health and every happiness in their future together.

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## Continued History of the Ulster AGS Group – People and Trophies

While the earlier history of our Ulster Group was documented in early AGS Bulletins, strangely enough the more recent history can only be gleaned from the local group’s minute book and members’ memories.

It is amazing how little local AGS committee meetings have changed over the last fifty years with the same subjects being discussed – meetings, speakers, venues, tours, constitution, shows etc. – and I found it frustrating that the final outcomes were not often documented.

I found virtually no mention of our 30 years of ‘Troubles’ save one record of an English speaker who in 1974 preferred not to come to Northern Ireland ‘at the present time’. It is interesting that at the 2nd International Rock Garden Conferences in 1951 E.B.Anderson quoted another great gardener (also with an Irish connection) Sir Frederick Moore - ‘Plants have no politics’. So whether there were any difficulties due to the unrest the subject was never discussed - perhaps unfortunately for future historians.

Meetings took place at St. John’s Parish, Malone until the 1980’s when in 1983 a move was made to the Extra Mural Department at QUB and the main Show moved to Greenmount. Two names that come to the fore around this time are Dr Molly Sanderson and Mrs Nan Toner. Mrs Toner introduced the mini or members’ show, and the first annual luncheon took place in 1984 when a rose bowl was presented to the Dublin Group. A Jubilee Show took place in 1989 and from this period names appear within my memory and many are still with us so I feel should not be relegated to history just yet.

So far I have only been able to get tantalising glimpses of the people behind many of the names in that earlier period. A silver cup belonging to a Mrs Hill was given to the group in 1978 by Miss Elisabeth Hill and engraved, on Mrs Toner’s suggestion, the ‘Betty Hill Trophy’.

Many of us will remember that great department store, Anderson and McAuleys, which had a connection with Mrs Phebe Anderson, who, I presume, gave the cup with her name. I was astonished to find in Ann’s excellent account on her father, a reference to a visit to the garden of Major Garrett, so perhaps Ann will be able to fill in some gaps there next time.

Helen Dales' daughter, Dr Joan Bruce, was able to tell me some of the details of her mother's life. Helen qualified in Botany from Edinburgh and moved to Belfast in the 1920s to work in the seed department of the Ministry of Agriculture, then in Eglantine Avenue. A keen member of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club, she met her husband there but after his death she went back to work in QUB. As well as joining the AGS she was a keen artist, exhibiting at the Ulster Art Academy and the minutes record a presentation to her in appreciation of selling her paintings of Alpine Plants for Group funds. One of her paintings, a lovely primula, is annually presented at the Members' Show, our treasurer, Mrs Nancy Derby, being the worthy winner this year. Her daughter's one regret is that the family don't have more of her paintings.

As a result of my failure to find more information on some of the earlier cups this issue gives details of more recent ones – The Carol McCutcheon and the Frank Walsh cups – and next issue will see more details of awards such as the John McWhirter.

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Cassiope 'Stormbird'

The Ulster Group lost a much loved and valuable member with the early illness and death of Carol and it is very fitting that her friend, Susan Tindall, gives an appreciation of her this year, as Susan won her cup awarded to the best pan of Ericaceae.

## The Carol McCutcheon Cup – by Susan Tindall

Carol and I met at an Alpine Garden Society meeting about 30 years ago. In those days the meetings were held in one of the old lecture theatres in the main building at Queens University Belfast and we instantly became very good friends, both having an interest and love of plants.

Her garden in Killinchy, which she designed, created the right conditions for the plants she grew there. Not only did she design the garden, she built it herself, placing stones to the best effect to complement the plants she wanted to grow in her scree garden, herbaceous garden and the woodland area.



Carol had been to Art College in Belfast, and her artistic talent showed in everything she did, being a very creative lady. She was also quite a shy person, and, while on a one to one basis she had no problem talking about the plants she loved, always eager to give information to anyone who ever asked her how to prepare plants for the show benches, she could not stand up and give a talk however much she wanted to.

Her artistic abilities came to the fore when she presented a plant for the AGS show benches. Carol was a Farrer/Forrest Medallist, only taking plants to the show which she knew would win prizes. She very rarely took more than six plants, each one grown to perfection and all good enough to win a first prize. I do remember her winning a Forrest Medal at one of the at SRGC Discussion weekends with *Gentiana depressa*, an autumn flowering Gentian. That same gentian was grown from a cutting given to her by a gentleman at an earlier SRGC weekend. She had taken it back to Ireland, bulked it up and within three years won the Medal with it - well deserved as it not the easiest of gentian to grow. She was indeed a very talented plants-woman.

This year the winning plant was *Cassiope 'Stormbird'* - a Mike and Polly Stone cultivar which Susan keeps in a tunnel in standard ericaceous compost and is never allowed to dry out.

Most of us will remember Frank Walsh and this year his daughter Anne kindly donated a cup in his memory and also gave us a memory of her father.

### **The Frank Walsh Cup** – by Anne Walsh

I was delighted to present the Frank Walsh Cup to the AGS (Ulster Group) in memory of my dad. A keen gardener all of his life, Dad gained a great deal of pleasure from belonging to the AGS. A true plantsman, he loved nothing more than spending hours in the garden caring for his plants. Before he retired, Dad's first stop on returning home was into the garden and then into the greenhouse.

My dad could grow just about anything from tomatoes to a fig tree. He loved nurturing his plants from seed and caring for them. Dad was especially good at growing *Meconopsis* - his lovely 'Blue Poppies' and I remember a 'Fried Egg Plant' with white petals and yellow stamens. His other love was *Pleiones* with which he had great success. I know the effort and hard work that Dad put into preparing plants to enter into AGS shows. Then he had the joy of winning many medals and cups over the years.



Dad inherited his skills and love of gardening from his father and grandfather. He joined the AGS as a very young man. He talked about Phoebe Anderson and Dr Molly Saunders. I remember as a child going with him to visit the gardens of Major Garrett and Miss Lonsdale. I have the pleasure of knowing Dr Susan Montgomery, a member for many years. In later years, my late mum, Maureen, and I often attended garden visits with Dad.

Dad never missed attending the monthly AGS meetings and he often grew plants to sell there. He was very dedicated and eventually became a Vice-President. Dad enjoyed talking to other plantsmen and plantswomen. He was keen to share his knowledge and to give plants to others to encourage their love of gardening. Dad made many good friendships over the

years with other members of the AGS.

I have continued to keep the link with the AGS and I felt honoured when I was asked to present the Frank Walsh Cup to a deserving winner.

It seemed appropriate that Don Peace who came over from England to direct our Show should be the first winner of the Frank Walsh Cup (Class 13 – best pan of bulbous plants) with *Fritillaria Alfredae Glaucoviridis*

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Many thanks to David as I like to include some information on plants as well as local news and of course our web site also does 'Plant of the Month'. I am sure David's article and photos on hellebores will be of interest to all – it has certainly increased my knowledge on the subject.

### **Helleborus x hybridus and its wilder relatives** – by David Ledsham

In my experience some of the many attractive Hellebore species may be easily overlooked in the garden when they are interplanted among their much showier hybrid cousin. These are the plants we know today as *Helleborus x hybridus*, the Lenten Rose

Maybe this is because, unlike the hybrids, the flowers of many of these species are relatively quite small and perhaps a little bit too demure. However, a closer inspection is highly recommended and this will reveal some very fine flowers, often of great intricacy and beauty. It will also reveal the ways in which qualities such as these have been absorbed into the constitution of *H. x hybridus* and thereafter amplified by means of patient breeding and selection.

In this article I intend to present a short survey of the particular group of species which have been primarily involved in establishing the Lenten Rose as a very popular part of the late winter garden. These are the so-called 'acaulescent' species. ('acaulescent' is simply a term used to define that particular group of Hellebores which have leafless stems other than sporting a 'ruff' of leaf bracts which surround the flowers) – and they turn out to be quite a complicated bunch! It can be truthfully said that the ordering and naming of the acaulescent species is very much a work in progress. Will McLewin, who is one of the most respected authorities on Hellebores admits that the taxonomy within this group presents one or two difficulties, and my guess is that there will always remain room for debate



between the 'lumpers' and the 'splitters'. Suffice it to say that, at this point in time, a definitive classification is not to be had. Luckily the plants know nothing of this hullabaloo and just get on with the business of growing. Perhaps I should mention a further quality found in a number of species which has yet to be fully integrated into many commercial strains. Species such as *H.torquatus* and *H.multifidis* ssp *hercegovinus* can attain real garden presence on the basis of their foliage alone. Their foliage usually disappears of its own volition but when it re-appears shortly after flowering it will keep on earning its living long after the flowers have disappeared. If you love Hellebores, check out the species - you may be pleasantly surprised !

## The acaulescent species

### **Helleborus atrorubens**

This species is to be found in the North West of the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Slovenia and parts of Croatia. As with many of the species in this group it grows in open meadows in full sun, although it is ultimately shaded out by the surrounding vegetation. The flower colour can vary tremendously from shades of green to a deep reddish purple which sometimes can appear almost black. In some cases the internal colouring of the sepals can seep through to the back and this may account for the external veining in some of the hybrid strains. Stem lengthening can be quite dramatic in this species. (to 20-30cm.)



### **Helleborus odorus**

Said by Elizabeth Strangman to smell of 'cheap soap'. The flowers may range from apple green to a luminous yellow as it is tracked across the Balkans (see also *H.cyclophyllus*) This is one of the several species which have contributed the greens and yellows that are to be found in *H. x hybridus*. It is a plant which thrives or survives best on open grassy slopes or on the edges of Pinewoods on a limey soil, entirely disappearing beneath the bracken and nettles in summer.



### **Helleborus purpurescens**

A species which is found growing in parts of the Carpathian Mountain Range. It will often flower when it is only just above the soil surface, which is a pity because the colouring of the sepals is its main glory. In the best forms the flower is a pale grey-blue. It is described elsewhere as celadon or as a 'dusty plum' - but any combination of descriptors does not do this species full justice.



### **Helleborus cyclophyllus**

*H.cyclophyllus* is thought to be very closely related to *H.odorus*. Some authorities would state that it is simply a lowland extension of the range of this latter species into Greece, Albania and Montenegro. It is said to be a plant which requires a certain amount of winter protection but I've never found this to be necessary.



### **Helleborus torquatus**

This plant is found growing on the scrub covered hillsides of Montenegro, Croatia, and Bosnia. Some of its forms are very dark and the emerging leaves can appear almost purple/black. The flowers are rather small when compared with those of *H. x hybridus*. They have been variously described as 'violet/purple with a grape like bloom' or 'green veined with purple' However none of these descriptions manages to capture all the floral qualities which this plant possesses. Elizabeth Strangman introduced double forms of this species into cultivation. She named them 'Dido' and 'Aeneas' and they have made a lasting impact on many subsequent breeding programmes.



### **Helleborus multifidus**

Another green flowered species which can tolerate shallow limey soils and will occasionally be found growing out of crevices in exposed limestone. It is currently split into three sub species

*H.multifidus* ssp *hercegovinus* is particularly treasured for its remarkable foliage rather than for its flowers. The leaves repeatedly sub-divide as the plant matures, eventually resulting in a mass of 'feathery' foliage. It intergrades with *H.torquatus* wherever the two species grow in close proximity.



### **Helleborus dumetorum**

This species is quite different in character to the other members of the acaulescent section. It is often described, quite accurately, as both modest and dainty. It is a relatively small and compact species with very little stem extension and its flowers tend to nestle amongst its thin, delicate foliage. It is a true woodlander and has completely disappeared underground by June/July. But despite its delicate appearance it is quite able to withstand the rigours of a Hungarian winter



### **Helleborus orientalis**

This is a species from Romania and parts of the Caucasus. It is the species which has probably made the biggest contribution to the development of most hybrid strains. It is particularly responsible for developing the larger flower. Unfortunately it is also responsible for the coarse leathery evergreen leaf which many gardeners like to remove. There are currently three acknowledged subspecies.

*H.orientalis* sp *orientalis* (below) has a predominantly white or green flower. The subspecies *abchasicus* is largely pink, whereas *H.orientalis* ssp. *guttatus* (above) has white flowers flecked with red. Unlike most of the other species *H.orientalis* prefers deep soils.



### **Helleborus x hybridus**

We are currently benefiting from the efforts of a relatively small number of breeders and selectors who were busy developing the first strains of *Helleborus x hybridus* almost a century ago. In doing so they employed most of the species illustrated here in this article. It is truly fascinating to see how the genes of these plants have been juggled either by intent or by accident to give us the cultivars we see today. In particular it was the patient work of Helen Ballard, Elizabeth Strangman, Eric Smith, and the late Jim Archibald which set the standard that still serves as a point of departure for many subsequent hybridists. It used to be the case that every 'special' plant was named, leading to much the same confusion that we have today with Galanthus. This practice is not so common today, except in areas of high volume commercial production. The present tendency is to attempt to set up stable seed strains, described plainly as 'dark red unspotted', 'primrose spotted', or as 'single green veined' - very down to earth. Surplus seed from this work is readily obtained from a number of sources, including Phedar, Ashwood, and Farmyard Nurseries and at very reasonable prices. Growing hellebores of any kind is highly recommended. It's not difficult, and a deeper understanding of these beautiful plants is guaranteed! Here is a small selection :-



#### **References**

- HELLEBORES Brian Mathew A.G.S. 1989
- The Gardeners Guide to Hellebores Graham Rice & Elizabeth Strangman David & Charles 1993 (2005) - and see [www.hellebore.com](http://www.hellebore.com)
- Hellebores - a Comprehensive Guide Burrell & Tyler Timber Press 2006



## Mementoes of Garden Visits

Over the past year the Ulster Group and friends had once again the pleasure of visiting gardens, both those of members and those further afield throughout the seasons and enjoying the company of fellow members. Here are some short accounts of those visits to remind us all.

### Snowdrop Day 2015

Both the season and weather can make a snowdrop day an unpredictable event but fortunately all worked out well this year as we ventured further afield. On St Valentine's day the weather was kind being both dry and sunny making the journey to Limavady a pleasure.

As the Show Bench testifies, the McDowells and the Toners can teach us all about growing alpinas and in addition they are also keen galanthophiles. Kay and Sam welcomed everyone with coffee and then out to inspect Kay's collection of rare snowdrops which she has been gradually increasing over recent years. In their well planned garden, plants were clearly labelled for those of us less knowledgeable. While not a galanthophile I enjoy snowdrops that have a special memory for me and was pleased to see *G. 'Diggory'* an almost seersucker-like flower named in memory of the son of Rosie Steele, in whose company we had many happy holidays, and *G. 'Sophie North'*, again named after a little girl killed in the Dunblane shooting. Against a background of the white bark of birch trees which was very effective at this time of the year, colour was provided with other flowers including iris, crocus and daphne.

The plan was to have our picnic lunch at the Toners but Rosalind made it a picnic to remember. She invited us all in to beautifully set tables and a choice of delicious home made soups, all sounding so good it was difficult to make a choice. We had to drag ourselves away from the conversation round the



tables but were well rewarded outside with Gordon's well grown plants. As well as some choice snowdrops and hellebores everyone admired the beautiful *Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* – Chilean blue crocus – growing in the alpine house, not an easy plant to grow.

Having for many years enjoyed the snowdrops at Margaret, June and Bob's gardens this was our first snowdrop day in Limavady. It introduced many of us to the lovely countryside in that area and the kind hospitality of our hosts was much appreciated by all.

### Wicklow 2015

While Heather plans to show us pictures of the Wicklow trip and other garden visits at our luncheon in January, this is a brief reminder to give a flavour of an enjoyable few days.

Early May saw 37 members and friends of the Ulster A.G.S. Group set off on a Monday morning for a 3 day visit to gardens in Wicklow and Dublin. After a very comfortable coach ride south we arrived at Mount Usher in time for lunch and a short visit to the garden. It was hard to rush the tempting food served in the restaurant – especially the rich duck paté – but there are more than 4,000 varieties of rare trees and shrubs growing by the river Vartry so only time for a quick taster.

**Mount Usher** dates back to 1868 and its natural style is due to the influence of





William Robinson, one of the most famous of Irish gardeners. The last private owner, Madeleine Jay, decided to manage the gardens organically and that has continued under Avoca, the new owners. We had to tear ourselves away from glades of colourful rhododendrons surrounded by trees with interesting features as our guide awaited us at the next garden.

**Kilmacurragh**, once a monastic site, is another large estate garden dating back to



the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It came into the possession of the Acton family - the whole history reflecting the history of Ireland – and it was their close friendship with the Moores of Glasnevin fame that led to its interesting collection of trees. The mild climate, high rainfall and deep acidic soil allowed certain plants to flourish better there than in Glasnevin. The Acton family were sadly depleted by the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and the garden officially became part of the National Botanic Gardens of Ireland in 1996. Since 2006 under the guidance of Seamus O'Brien it is gradually being restored and new introductions made. Different areas are devoted to plants from the Himalayas, China and South America while Monkey Puzzle trees – *Araucaria araucana* - from one of the earliest plantings are still visible on the horizon. Our guide led us up the avenue carpeted with the crimson petals of *Rhododendron 'Altaclerense'*, past the ruin of the old Queen Anne house and we explored a tour of the world in plants.

Both Mount Usher and Kilmacurragh are large estates overflowing with history and plant collections and we had only time for a glimpse of all that past magnificence before making our way to the hotel.

The Glenview Hotel in the Glen of the Downs proved the ideal place to relax and recover after a busy day with comfortable rooms, appetizing meals – all set in beautiful surroundings.

The weather forecast for Tuesday sounded promising and after a full Irish breakfast all were punctually on the bus for a completely different type of garden visit. Our first stop was at June Blake's Garden and Nursery. June's innovative ideas in both garden design and building proved intriguing to both gardener and architect alike. At the time of our visit tulips played a dominant role in the garden blending a mixture of orange, red and purple hues in sympathy with other architectural plants such as *Angelica 'Ebony'*, *Tulipa 'Abu Hassan'* and *T. couleur cardinal* were two I especially liked. We continued to June's



brother Jimi's garden at Hunting Brook set in the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains. In spite of the forecast the day proved very cold and grey and we were glad to be welcomed in the timber house to a lunch of hot soup and really good homemade cakes. Not only is this a unique garden but Jimi also runs workshops in gardening, health and well-being and this is evident throughout – even the loo was packed with such an array of interesting books – no wonder the queue was long! The unusual collection of plants was admired and most of our intrepid group made their way down to the Shady Gorge, across the Hunting Brook and back via the Ring Fort and Bronze Age stone. Our driver, Richard, carefully negotiated our way out and after our exertions we were glad to relax on the bus and enjoy a surprise tour through the Wicklow Gap with a stop for tea or coffee at Glendalough before returning to the hotel.



### The AGS at Kilmacurragh

For a group of alpine gardeners the best day was kept to the last and even the weather became sunny and warm. We arrived on time at Frank Lavery's Dublin garden, my first visit there, and this was a treat beyond all expectations. Here was a demonstration of how many features found in large gardens can be successfully packed into a small space. Pigeons fluttered overhead into a dovecot surrounded by *Clematis 'Avalanche'* while carp swam around the house under Japanese style bridges and ponds edged with choice alpine plants grown in tufa type rock. All was shown by Frank in his inimitable way as he warmly and generously led us through both his garden and home with its eclectic art collection. This garden was packed with ideas for us all to take away, especially his creation of tiny woodland areas yet full of shade loving alpine plants and I noted two dwarf conifers – *Abies koreana* 'Icebreaker' and *Pinus abies* 'Little Gem'.



Lunch was a short distance away in a thatched roof hostelry from where we were able to walk to our last garden visit of the trip.



At both Dublin and Ulster Shows over the years Billy Moore has been one of our finest exhibitors so it is always a privilege to visit his garden. The crevice garden created by Zdeněk Zvolánek incorporating 12 inches of granite sand proved a great talking point as Billy related its successes with the occasional drawback. I was both envious and impressed with the *Androsace bulleyana*, an alpine I have seen growing in the wild and failed to grow at home, but the two experts, Billy and Harold McBride, so nonchalantly show it in their gardens. Of course there were beautiful alpine plants but I also noted unusual shrubs including *Anisodonta el royo*, *Ribes spinosa* and a lovely *Paeonia obovata alba*. Ann and Billy kindly entertained us

all to wine and canapes along with some of the Dublin members and we all enjoyed a relaxing afternoon in the sunshine.

There was one more important stop on our way home and that was to Mt. Venus nursery. A busy Oliver Schurmann was kept even busier with last minute frantic shopping for yet more plants.

Everyone arrived safely home after three very happy days with each day having a very different character. Thanks to Cilla everything went very smoothly and she is to be congratulated and appreciated for all her hard work. We can look forward to Heather's illustrated account of our adventures on the large screen after the lunch in January.

### August Visit to Omagh and Donegal

While some members paid a visit to Donal McBride's garden in Omagh last year it is some time since we went as a group and the garden continues to mature very gracefully. Not only has Donal some choice plants but the garden is full of interesting artefacts adding an element of fun. Donal, his wife Mary and family members entertained us all to morning coffee where the tempting and expertly



home baked scones and cakes were very much appreciated – more than a match for any TV bake-off.

The next two gardens between Lifford and Derry were part of the Donegal Garden Trail and had more of an historical interest – the first having a family connection to William Robinson. We had lunch at Dunmore House where Lady McFarland related that her aunt, a Miss Scott, had been a keen member of the Ulster AGS in the fifties and sixties – she remembers being sent out to weed by Miss Scott! It is worth looking up the long and fascinating history of Dunmore House on the net as it would take a book to do it justice. The weather was considerate, only raining during lunch or while travelling and, thanks again to Cilla, we all had an enjoyable day.

### Northumberland and Harlow Carr

While not an AGS tour many Ulster members chose to visit the gardens of Northumberland this year including your editor. The gardens are all well worth visiting and it is also worth visiting the RHS Harlow Carr Garden at Harrogate. In the very large Alpine House there the plants are beautifully displayed – it really has the ‘wow’ factor as I noticed most visitors’ mouths opening on entering - while it is surrounded by troughs, crevice gardens and alpine walls. A notice mentioned the Yorkshire AGS and it is evident there is a strong expert alpine influence at work.



### Obituaries

Once again it is my duty to report the deaths of members, and it is especially sad this year as we have lost two members who so recently played a very active part in the local group.

I am sure, like me, there are many members who, as they walk around their gardens, will be reminded of both Alfie and Hugh by the many plants and flowers given by both men with that great generosity of spirit which they both possessed – they were both true gentlemen.

**Alfred Robbins** Last autumn friends and members gathered to pay their last respects to Alfie who only a few years before had been Chairman of our group. Committee members will remember his common sense and dry wit at meetings and we all experienced his kindness in opening up his home and garden – especially one cold day when Zdeněk built a crevice bed there ably assisted by Alfie. He was one of those people you could depend on and who in his own quiet way contributed a lot to the running of our group.



**Hugh McAlister** At the end of July this year friends again from both north and south said farewell to one of our dearest members. Like Alfie, Hugh had served as Chairman several years earlier and right to the end played an active role on the Show sub-committee. He was a keen plantsman and enjoyed showing his plants at both Ulster and Dublin Shows, and was especially good at sharing his knowledge. Hugh was one of those people who always brightened your day and you always felt better for his company. I remember him bursting into song at the luncheon in memory of John McWhirter with ‘the Mountains of Mourne’ - his



beautiful home being under their shadow – and I will think of him when I see a ‘Happy Plant’.

To both Rena and Mary we send our sincere sympathy on their deep loss but we know that both Alfie and Hugh will always be remembered with great affection and memories of happy times spent together.

We also remember two great women members who in their time were very active in the Ulster Group.

**Marion Bill** I remember Marion with great fondness as she was Honorary Secretary just before me and helped me a lot in that role. She was always keen to help the group in any way she could, even when less physically able, bringing her sound Scottish wisdom to solve all problems. It was a delight to visit her garden in Parkgate, beautifully laid out with interesting plants and of course sampling her delicious homebakes. During her lifetime Marion played an active role on many committees and there was a large attendance of friends at her funeral. She always talked of her family with great affection and our sympathy goes to Moyna and Alistair on the loss of their mother.

**Denise Moffatt** I also noted the death of Mrs Denise Moffatt, prevented in recent years from attending meetings due to ill health, but who in the past was a very active member on committee, acting as Honorary Secretary just before Marion. Denise had been a school doctor and sometimes appeared as a formidable lady who stood no nonsense but who in fact had a great sense of humour and gave the Society great service over many years. Our sympathy goes to her family.

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### Alpine Cuttings or ‘News Out and About’

**Belfast Spring Show** For a second year we manned a stand at Belfast Spring Show and I am sorry (due to child safety regulations) I can’t include a lovely picture of children – eyes wide open- watching attentively as David Ledsham potted up hellebore seedlings for them. We must remember to get parents’ permission in future as the stand is popular especially with children and we need more experts there to answer all the gardening questions!

**Dublin Visit** A large number of Dublin AGS members made their way north to visit both William and Hilary McKelvey’s garden in Bessbrook and Harold and Gwen McBride’s garden in Lisburn. It was a lovely day and there were plenty of experts there to appreciate the alpinists’ gardens.



**TV Greatest Gardens** Congratulations to William and Hilary whose garden also featured on the TV Greatest Gardens. It was a well deserved honour to be invited to take part and I would have just liked to have seen more of their garden and plants on the show.

### Greenmount Horticulture Awards Ceremony

Liam, as Chairman of the Ulster Group, was invited to attend the Cafre Horticulture Award Ceremony 2015 at Greenmount. It was a very impressive display of the skills taught there, from table and hall settings to the gardens. We were especially pleased to see their top student, Jonathan Blackburn, win the AGS Prize for Plantsmanship and wish him every success in the future.



**The John McWhirter Travel Award** This has been awarded to Gary Mentanko, who is a student and guide at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.



**Ballycraigy Primary School** Our President, Mr Harold McBride, was pleased

to present at the Ulster Show an Alpine Planter arranged by Susan Tindall to the children and their teacher from Ballycraigy Primary School in recognition of their work in making a garden at the school. We hope that for some of them this will be the start of a lifelong interest in plants.



### Roof Garden

It is lovely to see younger people taking an interest in gardening as noted in Greenmount, Ballycraigy School or Cork and I was pleased when Agnes and John Peacocke sent me via iPhone photos of their daughter's shed roof garden. This is its first year but it looks excellent and we look forward to a progress report and perhaps their daughter will be able to teach us all something at a future meeting.



**Show News** The beautiful displays at both the Dublin and Ulster Shows never fail to amaze me and this year was no exception. I only wish we had more visitors to appreciate all the hard work and expertise behind it so make a note for next year. It will be more important than ever to support our newly engaged Show Secretary as she will have more duties in the coming year.

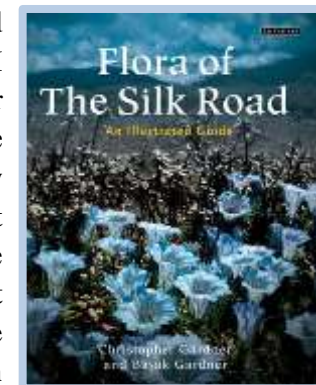
**Newsletter** Some of our members have had to retire due to health and other problems and we would thank them for their support in the past and send them our best wishes. We don't like to lose touch completely and as this Newsletter reflects local news please don't hesitate to ask for extra copies to give to friends unable to attend any more.

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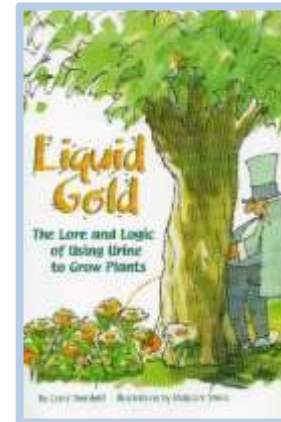
## Book Reviews

**Flora of the Silk Road** by Christopher and Başak Gardner

Having travelled on Greentours trips with Başak and Chris Gardner along small sections of the Silk Route, I intended to give a comprehensive review of their beautiful book 'Flora of the Silk Road' and encourage you to buy it. Alas it is already out of print and only obtainable at great price. No wonder with brilliant reviews from experts like Roy Lancaster in 'The Garden' and Tim Ingram in the 'Alpine Gardener' that all copies were rapidly snapped up. I believe there may be plans for a further edition and, if so, put in an early order as this is a superb book.



**Liquid Gold** by Carol Steinfeld



Our Hon. Treasurer was very keen that I review 'Liquid Gold' by Carol Steinfeld and while the concept is original, I thought it might pose a few practical problems in our present day society unless a suitable system was set up. 'Liquid Gold' is produced by all of us, usually a sterile product, and I can see the Green Lobby utilising it in the future but in wet Ireland I have a few reservations. Perhaps from a financial background our treasurer is thinking of saving pennies and going with the flow – but I would like to hear some other opinions.

**One Man's Garden** by Henry Mitchell

The third book is 'One Man's Garden' by Henry Mitchell which I am reading on Kindle. Henry Mitchell was the gardening correspondent for the Washington Post until his death in 1993. It is a collection of his newspaper columns over a year and is intended for an



American audience which sometimes causes confusion over the names of plants. However I have found his reflections on gardens and gardening to be refreshing and *very* amusing. His main enjoyments in life were gardening, dogs and a good red wine— not a bad recipe.

## Information

**Venue** St.Bride's Hall, Derryvolgie Avenue, Belfast - 2.30 p.m.

**Dues** - Local current subscription rates are £9.00 single, £14.00 family, due at the A.G.M. or before the end of the current year. Cheques should be made out to 'Alpine Garden Society Ulster Group'.

**\*\*Please give or send subscriptions this year to the Hon. Secretary, Mrs Cilla Dodd, who will update the records before forwarding the money to the treasurer, Mrs. Nancy Derby.**

This subscription is for the local Group only and subscriptions to The Alpine Garden Society must be sent direct. A limit of one year's grace is given.

With the increasing cost of postage it is helpful to have as many email addresses as possible and this year, to update our records and have accurate information, we ask everyone to fill in the membership forms. It is hoped in the future by either emailing or texting to be able to keep members in touch with both events and unexpected news . If you are not receiving emails, please send one to the secretary ( [secretary@alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk](mailto:secretary@alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk) ) so that she is sure of having the correct email address or let her know your preference for keeping informed.

## Web

Programmes and Newsletters can all be found on the website where 'Plant of the Month' is archived since 2006 - Contributions are always needed, so if you have a plant and a picture - in the garden or in the wild, please send it in. The website is visited from all over the world, so you can be assured of an appreciative audience. To visit the site, go to [www.alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk](http://www.alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk)

## Programme 2015 - 2016

Heather has once again arranged a wide and varied programme but would always welcome suggestions and ideas for the following year.

### 2015

**September 19<sup>th</sup>** **Ulster Group A.G.M.**; Members Plant Sale.  
**Practical Demonstrations**

**October 17<sup>th</sup>** **Dr. Molly Sanderson Memorial Lecture**  
**Harold McBride**, Lisburn  
**"Four Decades of Growing Alpines"**

**November 7<sup>th</sup>** **Jim Jermyn**, Edinburgh, Scotland.  
**"A Look at Some of Japan's Finest Alpine and Woodland Plants"**

**November 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>** **Termonfeckin Weekend – Dublin Group**

**December 12<sup>th</sup>** **Keith Ferguson**, Glencoe, Longhope, Gloucestershire.  
**"Rocky Mountain Flowers"**

### 2016

**January 16<sup>th</sup>** **Luncheon**, Dunsilly Hotel, Antrim  
**"Informal Presentations – Remembering our Garden Trips"**

**February 20<sup>th</sup>** **Colin Crosbie**, Curator, RHS Wisley  
**"Shady Characters"**

**March 19<sup>th</sup>** **Members' Show**  
**June Blake**, Blessington, Wicklow  
**"All Gardening is Landscape Painting"**

**April 9<sup>th</sup>** **AGS Ulster Group Show, Greenmount**

**April 23<sup>rd</sup>** **AGS Dublin Group Show, Cabinteely, Dublin 18**