



THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY
ULSTER GROUP



Newsletter No.3 August 2004



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Editorial

The 3rd Newsletter begins on a sad note in recording the death of Mrs. Nan Toner, our President since 1995. Nan will be remembered by us all as a lovely lady who had the best interest of the Ulster Group in her heart. The 2nd Newsletter featured her in a personal profile which, I am told, she kept on her bedside table. A tribute will be paid to her at the AGM. I know that she would have been pleased that Mr. John McWhirter has agreed to be our next President, a man who has done so much for the Ulster Group both in the past and present. John takes over when a lot of exciting things are happening in the Group

“Awards for All”, the Lottery Heritage Fund, has given the Ulster Group £3417 to buy a digital projector and a PA system with loop system for the benefit of our members whose hearing has deteriorated. These will help to keep the lectures up to the high standard we have all come to expect. It also gives our Group great encouragement to have recognition of the role it plays in the whole community of Ulster.

Some members were privileged to enjoy a visit to the Czech Republic this year organised under the capable leadership of Mrs. Margaret Glynn and highlights and some stimulating new ideas will be shown at the January meeting.

To celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the AGS our garden visit in May ended with a buffet luncheon, set in Margaret Kennedy’s beautiful garden. The sun shone and proceeds from the plant sale will go to the Pershore Garden Restoration Fund.

Several members of our Group also opened their Gardens and gave hospitality to a large visiting party from the Scottish Garden Rock Club, the weather again being perfect during their five day visit.

As I write this plans are being made for AGS publicity at Greenmount College’s own Show and we are also participating in a display in the Ulster Museum on the 3rd October. This is in conjunction with the Tate Gallery’s Exhibition, “Art of the Garden”, when we hope to introduce alpines to a wider audience. As alpine flowers will be in short supply by then, the digital projector should prove very useful.

To my surprise and delight more articles were offered this year than space allowed so two have been held over and will be printed next year and also hopefully go on our website, which is in the process of being revitalised.

With so much more interesting material I have kept the information section brief, so please do not hesitate to ask about any aspects of the Society.

With such a busy year in prospect and some wonderful speakers to look forward to, I wish all our members good health and strength to join in and continue to make our meetings a happy, interesting, and enjoyable experience.

Contributions.

Lilac time in Prague

by Joan Christie

Twenty four members of the Alpine Garden Society Ulster Group visited the Czech Republic in May. Our leader, Zdenek Zvolanek, led us at a smart pace on our first day so that we saw an alpine show, experienced Prague's very efficient public transport, had lunch on board a river cruiser, and after a climb up two hundred and ten steps enjoyed wonderful views over Prague, and marvelled at the stained glass windows in the splendid cathedral.

The Alpine Show was a real spectacle. Instead of arranging their show plants on tables for judging, the Czechs use an established garden. The plants are labelled with the number of the exhibitor and plunged into the soil. The result is stunning. The show plants mingle so well with



the permanent planting that you feel you are looking at a garden which has been the result of a lifetime's labour. Phlox Daisy Hill was for sale at the show and was purchased by some of the group. They felt that we should bring the wee soul back home.

In all we visited fourteen gardens, two nurseries and three Botanic Gardens. Often we came to a very modest dwelling and followed our leader, now known as Zed-Zed through a gate to the back of the house to be confronted with a work of art which made such an impact that we could only gasp.

The gardens were all rock and crevice, the materials having been transported many miles and the rocks arranged in such a way that we could scarcely believe that they had not been put there at the beginning of time. The construction was art enough but then added to that were the plants, creating a tapestry of blue, pink, yellow and white. Small conifers, sometimes Acers, dwarf Rhododendrons and Daphnes punctuated the scene and often pools added reflections. Sempervivums were in every crevice nestling tightly to the rocks.

It was obvious that Czech gardeners control their plants. The new growths of conifers are pinched off so that the Pinus, Abies and Chamaecyparissus stay small and compact. We were all fascinated by the witches brooms.

The plants which stood in my memory were the Daphnes, the tiny Aquilegias, the dwarf Iris, the small Penstemons, the Gentians and the Slipper Orchids. The more discerning members of our party admired rarer specimens such as *Corydalis atuntsuensis*, *Trollius pumilis*, *Campanula superba*, *Viola delphinantha*, *Globularia repens*, *Papaver degenii*, *Ramonda nathaliae* ssp. *verna*, and many more. Most of the gardeners were expert propagators and hybridisers and many had been to the mountains to collect plants. One whom we met specialised in Saxifrages and another in Dionysia.

We also appreciated the Botanic Gardens where it was interesting to see plants grouped according to their country of origin. The huge collection of Orchids at Brno entranced the group as did the Iris collection at Zahrzeda. Here we saw a large collection of Bonsai recently imported from the Far East – indeed many of the private gardeners had a passion for Bonsai!

Everywhere we went there were plants for sale and did our party buy? Oh yes! Eagle eyes pounced for the specialities which were pounced on eagerly. The plant

hunters of old had nothing on our lot, and I believe all the little treasures arrived home safely. I have no rock garden or scree but I was tempted to buy. I can feel a trough coming on. The troughs on display were planted to perfection. Having seen such excellence I am sure our party will be inspired to even greater efforts in their gardens.

Credit must go to our tour leader, Margaret Glynn, whose forethought and organising skill ensured that we had a wonderful trip. Humour and friendship prevailed and not even the early morning departures could dampen the enthusiasm.

Casting Seed on “Stony Ground” or even a Gritty Compost.

– **Harold McBride**

I have always regarded seed sowing as the most rewarding and interesting garden task, indeed even before I attended an Ulster Group meeting I had sent for an AGS Seed list and was already enthralled with the results from my sowing.

At my first AGS Show my entry was in the “grown from seed class”. If you manage to win a red ticket in this section you can feel quietly satisfied, as your home produced plant has shown your skill as a grower rather than the size of your garden budget.

It is also very satisfying to have lots of spare plants to ‘swap’ with your gardening friends or provide material for plant sales which are the life-blood of our group. When pricking out seedlings I always pot-up far in excess to my own needs – mainly because I just hate discarding healthy little plants that deserve a chance to someday bring pleasure to a fellow gardener.

First Steps:-

- 1 Send to AGS for seed list (notice appears in the ‘Alpine Gardener’)
- 2 Select a wide range of seeds from the thousands on offer.
- 3 On receipt of your seed write a label for each packet.
- 4 If for any reason sowing is delayed, keep the seed in a plastic container in your fridge.

- 5 Mix your compost which should consist of:-
{ 50% John Innes loam based SEED compost / 50% sharp 4/5 mm grit }
or
{50% well composted leaf mould (riddled) / 50% grit }
- 6 Sow seed thinly on surface of pot and cover with a 5mm grit
- 7 Water from the bottom and never allow the pot to dry out.
- 8 Place the seed pot in a well ventilated frame, it can be left uncovered from 1st May- 1st October, but provide light shade from hot summer sun.
- 9 Keep seed pans that have not germinated for a minimum of two years.
- 10 If sowing seed from your own garden sow when ripe – although it may not germinate until the following spring.
- 11 Give freshly pricked-out seedlings VIP attention i.e. adequate moisture, good ventilation, light shade until established. Watch out for slugs – one slug can devour a pot of seedlings in one night and aphids are often a problem.
- 12 Most pricked out seedlings when established (showing signs of growth) will benefit from regular feeding with a weak solution of liquid tomato fertiliser.
- 13 Choose quick germinating seed to begin with e.g. Androsace albana, carnea, cylindrica, halleri, hedraeantha, lactea, mathildae, rotundifolia etc. Other species include Aquilegia alpina, Campanula, Delphinium, Dianthus, Dodecatheon, Edrianthus, Gentiana septemfida, G.verna, Geranium, Helleborus, Incarvillea, Primula, Lewisia, Meconopsis, and Viola. Seed hand books can also be purchased to help you make your choice.
- 14 Contribute to seed- exchange – this gives you first choice of seed and an additional packet allowance.
- 15 The cost of AGS seed (£2.50) for 24 packets is only the cost of one plant from a nursery!
- 16 **GOOD SOWING.**

John McWhirter - Personal Profile

by Bob Gordon

John McWhirter joined the Alpine Garden Society in the mid 1970's, and has been an active and enthusiastic member of the Ulster Group ever since. His organisational flair and friendly personality made him an obvious successor to Mrs Marjorie Watts, when she decided to stand down as secretary in 1978.

John's main priorities upon assuming this role were two-fold. Firstly, to increase the Group's membership, but also and perhaps even more importantly, to bring a friendly and informal atmosphere to all the Group meetings and other activities. To this end, one of



of the most effective measures to be introduced by him was the wearing by members, of name badges.

Another area where his attention to detail would become very evident, was in the planning and preparation for visits to gardens. No matter where the garden to be visited was located, John always made it his business to make the trip himself beforehand, so that all the logistics involved, right down to the smallest details, were meticulously accounted for, thus ensuring that the outing went like clockwork.

After sixteen very successful years as Group Secretary, John decided, in 1994 to relinquish the position, although he had no intention yet, of being "put out to grass"!

His enthusiasm for the Society and gardening in general has not diminished in the least. He rarely misses a meeting or Show, and his generosity with his time, his knowledge and especially his plants, is well known and appreciated by his many friends in the gardening world. Indeed the esteem in which he is held was acknowledged by his peers, in November last year (2003) when members of the

Dublin Group and the Ulster Group met together for the annual Termonfeekin weekend. On the occasion all present joined in the celebration of his 90th birthday. As well as continuing to actively maintain his garden, other interests and challenges are enthusiastically embraced by this indefatigable nonagenarian. He has just had his computer upgraded for the third time and has taken to email like a natural. His zest for life, and forthcoming hip replacement should see him striding confidently on to his century. I am sure we would all wish it so.

On Watering

by John McWhirter

There are probably few members who have not heard or been given the advice "don't over-water", and good advice it is too, provided always that it is not interpreted to mean "don't water".

Once when being in the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh with Alf Evans a party of people came along with a query for Alf. He went over to them and in a short time returned with his eyes bugging out of his head. "Damn it" he said, "damn it, do you know, there are some people who would not let rain fall on anything", the result no doubt of their having been admonished on the dire consequences of over-watering. Now there is no doubt that many plants will be killed by continuous and gross over-watering; very few will relish it, but the vast majority of the plants we grow will tolerate a little now and again and come to no harm. I remember seeing in a friend's garden, a bucket three quarters full of soil with about half an inch of water on top of the soil. Through the soil a grape hyacinth was in full bloom and looking very healthy. In 1995 The Burren had abnormal rainfall and the level rose by some thirty feet; the town of Gort was cut off for several days, and large areas of The Burren were totally submerged for weeks. I was there a week or two after the floods had partially subsided and took photographs showing the white deposit on the hedges six or ten feet above road level. Above the white mark the leaves were green and healthy looking and the hedge did not die. There must have been thousands of small plants, with not only their roots, but their entire foliage submerged for weeks. It would not have been surprising if many of them had died, but as Dr. Charles Nelson told us in his lecture last October, the only casualties were the junipers and the gunneras. Now submerging plants is not a practice to be recommended, but it should tell us something.

I may have killed some plants by over-watering them, but I am not sure. What I am certain about is that I have killed dozens by letting them dry out. Most soils, and especially peat and peat based composts are notoriously difficult to wet once they have dried out. You can pour water on to them until it runs out through the drainage holes and you think you have watered them, but if you scratch the surface of the compost you find that only the top eight of an inch or so is wet, while below that, the compost round the roots is bone dry. If the plant dies, as it is liable to do, the most usual reason given is "I must have over-watered it", as if that was the only way to kill a plant. If a plant does get dried out, the pot needs to be set in a saucer of water, and removed, not in ten or fifteen minutes, but only when the top of the compost shows that it is wet.

A few years ago common advice about watering was "if in doubt, don't", but I think it was Kath Dryden who said that it was bad advice and that it should have been "if in doubt, do". As many of you know. Kath Dryden was Director of Shows for many years, and as she is now a renowned grower, she must have had some experience. So therefore, don't over-water, but whatever you do, never, never let your plants dry out, as I believe there are few quicker and surer ways to kill them.

Good growing.
John McWhirter

An Annual Alpine weekend at Termonfeckin Judith Hamilton

November, a dull and miserable month, nothing to look forward to but Christmas shopping and Christmas itself In true pantomime tradition "oh yes there is", Termonfeckin, a special date in November marked in the diaries of Alpine lovers year on year.

The weekend starts on a Friday with the arrival of guests at **An Grianan**, registration, followed by a delicious high tea. In the evening there is an informal slide show where guests portray and explain where they have been and places visited over the past year. This is a very enjoyable evening in a relaxed atmosphere.

Saturday, more guests arrive and following breakfast we were treated to a lecture "Alpines and extremes" by John Birks. The photographs of the rock formations,

scenery and plants were truly spectacular and one had the sense of being there with John.

In the afternoon we were delighted and very impressed with the lecture by Ian and Margaret Young, showing their slides and talking through their creation and work involved in their garden in Aberdeen. It gave us all food for thought when we saw how their foresight and application to hard landscaping create a wonderful environment for their wide selection of plants.

This year we had a special dinner to celebrate John Mc Whirter's 90th birthday, champagne flowed and kisses bestowed!.

Evening entertainment once again kicked off with George's quiz , "we do try". Followed by the plant auction ,with good prices, although auction fever does strike when a coveted plant or bulb is offered..

Sunday, this was a not to be missed lecture by Ian and Margaret, "The challenge of growing bulbs"- an informative and entertaining lecture, we will all be saving our polystyrene packing chips, a useful hint we learned for planting daffodils in pots or tubs.

Following a good Sunday lunch, sharp elbows and jingling coins are required for the plant sale. This event reduces adults to the equivalent of children in a sweet shop, despite all the plants we have there is always room for one more, or maybe two or....

Here the author was tempted by the fine weather to a walk along the beautiful nearby strand, but for those that stayed the pace, the reward was a journey through the Alpines of the Rocky Mountains with the Birks, whose presentation and slides are second to none – a really memorable lecture.

Time to go home. The weekend of the year - this is attributed to good lectures, meeting friends from both North and South and catching up with news and views and lots of expert advice. We must also thank Peggy for the crossword and all our friends from the South of Ireland for the weekend.

Date for next year - December.

Much ado about Hellebores

Margaret Glynn

This genus has been something of a passion with me for some time and, in trying to pin-point exactly when, I give credit to Elizabeth Strangman's Washfield Nursery which I visited in 1988. I learned so very much that day – about "hellebore" people like Helen Ballard, tips on cultivation, seed sowing, aftercare, plant associations, and on Elizabeth's advice, I bought 3 large plants -H.x hybridus "Queen of the Night", H.niger "Potter's Wheel", and an unnamed torquatus hybrid.

Back home, planted in a small area associated with ferns and some Galanthus nivalis, these plants brightened those dreary winter days and captivated this gardener once and for all.

O.K. Let's learn more about this section of the Ranunculaceae.



Brian Matthew's book on "Hellebores", published opportunely in 1989, first bewildered me but now has become a bible – and the quest for some of the 15 species and hybrids had begun!!

Hellebores are primarily European plants growing in Western Britain through Central and Southern Europe, the Iberian Peninsula into the Ukraine and Eastern Romania. Their range also extends eastwards along the Black Sea Coast of Turkey and into Russia. They grow in well-drained, humus-rich (ideally slightly alkaline) soil in sun or partial shade, in fairly inaccessible mountain regions and on woodland edges. The fact that we as cultivators tend to think of them as shade lovers is fair but many tolerate open sites, flowering well.

Cultivation is easy provided the plant is given a good start by adding lots of organic matter when planted. On our acidic conditions the annual top-dressing of a little lime + Vitax Q4 in February brings great rewards. Alternatively, a generous top dressing of spent mushroom compost in January after the leaves of the H.x hybridus ones have been cut back also keeps the plants healthy.

Propagation is by sowing seed when ripe in the usual manner or by careful division of the rhizome after flowering or in early Autumn. Some of the seed sowing experts in the Group have been known to flower hellebore seedlings in 2 years discovering that many come true. When propagating by division lift the entire plant, break up carefully and replant all vegetative crowns in rich soil mix or pot up in long toms for friends. As with seedlings it could take 2 years to flowering as they resent root disturbance.

Pests and diseases: do not become a big issue with hellebores when well grown, just watch for aphids which congregate on the undersides of leaves and inside flowers as they age and spray. Last year I used "Rose Clear 2" and it also helped to deter Black Spot (except on the green/yellow varieties). Black Death i.e. black marks between the veins of the leaves is probably a viral complaint and such plants might be better lifted and burned.....just in case.

Increasing one's collection Species hellebore "snippets" from known wild origin were supplied by Will McLewin Phedar Nursery (see Plant Finder) and as many of these as were available I did purchase from 1990-95. H.cyclophyllus grows surrounded by copious seedlings: H.purpurascens, H.torquatus, H.atrorubens, H.dumetorum, H.odorus, H. multifidus – all are represented here increasing slowly. H. thibetanus I loved and lost, also H.vesicarius and it is not my intention to try these two species again.

One I would never wish to be without is H.multifidus subsp. multifidus, because the green flowers and finely cut foliage are so very delicate and distinctive.

Up to date hybridisation is producing some very exciting plants; colour variations now include excellent yellows, apricot, picotee and anemone centred. Double flowers of white, pink, red, red-green backed, yellow and many spotted are also available. Ashwood Nursery is probably leading the field in introducing new variants and if you are lucky enough to visit that nursery in February, prepare to be charmed.

Plant associations Any plants that come into flower so very early in the year to jolt us out of our hibernation bring joyous feelings that Spring is almost here - and Spring is my favourite season. Over the years of planting hellebores here I look to providing good companions for them and am increasing a collection of snowdrops, leucojums, wood anemones, cyclamen, scillas, not so many hepaticas, primroses and latterly pulmonarias and omphalodes. Paint pictures in the garden with some of these and the associations never fail to amaze. Shrubs include dwarf willows, flowering currant, early honeysuckle, acers with good bark and witch-hazel. Even the winter foliage of ferns make interesting comparisons especially when frosted. I am inclined to dotting groups around this garden but Bob Gordon has recently planted a hellebore border in front of conifers and it provides a wonderful walk with the winter sunlight filtering through the trees.

In conclusion I would encourage anyone who has the opportunity to visit early Spring gardens to enjoy hellebores et. al. – do not miss out. You will come home uplifted and, should Jim Price arrange one of his plant stalls, you will also be minus a few £s.

Information

The Ulster Group is affiliated to the Alpine Garden Society, which was founded in 1929, celebrating its 75th Anniversary this year, 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 are 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 £7.00 single, £9.00 family (a slight increase due to a rise in cost of our venue). **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.

Meetings

Group Meetings Format

For new members meetings can appear very busy and bustling affairs so this is a short section to describe what happens at our average meeting.

While the lecture theatre is being set up from 2.00 p.m. to 2.30.p.m., members can buy plants at the plant stall or books at the book stall or generally chat.

The lecture usually lasts between an hour and an hour and a quarter, illustrated with slides, and usually four lectures in the year are given by invited speakers from outside the Province. There is a short time for questions, new members often asking the best questions. The Chairman then thanks the speaker and brings us back to earth with the Group notices.

We all next have a very welcome cup of tea and biscuits with more time to buy plants or books and exchange topics.

The following gives a little more general detail on some of our meetings throughout the year and for the exact dates and titles please refer to your fixtures card.

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 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.

The Society Lecture

To encourage an interest in alpine and rock plants and also to increase membership, the A.G.S. have recently undertaken to help sponsor each year a lecture which is free and open to anyone to attend. Members are asked to bring all their gardening friends along.

Combined R.H.S./A.G.S. Lecture

Once again we are also having a combined lecture with the Royal Horticultural Society which is free to members of either society, expenses being shared between the two groups.

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..

Book Stall

Operated by Professor Amyan Macfadyen, the bookstall has second-hand books and back issues of the AGS bulletins, Please give it every support, offers of books gratefully received, and help to carry the books would also be appreciated.

Tea

After every lecture there is a very welcome cup of tea or coffee, in the past organised by two self-sacrificing members. To ease this chore, in future this will be shared out, although still keeping a biscuit rota. As the social contact over a cuppa is important, I am sure everyone will be happy to help.

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 (N.B. this year December) in An Grianan, Termonfeckin near Drogheda (see Judith's article). 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 or enquiries to: Mrs. Joan Carvill, 2 Albert Tce., Crofton Road, Dun Laoghaire. Tel. 01 2809229, or M.0872077991.

Shows,

by Pat Crossley

This is a précis of a more detailed account of the Shows written by our Show Secretary, Mrs. Pat Crossley, in the first Newsletter, and she will always be pleased to give more information.

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 AGS Ulster Group members and was conceived to encourage the first time exhibitor, who would hopefully become addicted.

This is purely a local show and points awarded are not credited towards merit medals of the main AGS Show department.

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.

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".

Greenmount

The Annual Show has taken place in recent years at Greenmount College, Antrim, which provides the ideal environment. To encourage an interest in alpinism, the Ulster Group initiated a travel bursary which is awarded to horticultural students deemed worthy by the College. Members also subscribed to the alpine section in the very attractive walled garden.

Garden Visits and Outings

Firstly thanks to all our members who so kindly open their gardens to us in both winter and summer months. These visits always prove popular and most enjoyable and we appreciate all the work, gardening skills and hospitality that this entails. Details of each year's visits are circulated in the spring and we ask for a return slip to give our hosts some idea of numbers. China is available and help with tea or coffee.

A longer garden visit has been organised each year by Mrs. Margaret Glynn, (an account of this year's given earlier) all proving very popular and enjoyable thanks to Margaret.

Website

We plan to expand and develop our website – www.nireland.com/alpine – over the next year. At present it gives our annual programme and also that of the Dublin Group, together with pictures from the local show and links to other alpine gardening sites. Plans are still under discussion, but the aim is 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). We are very aware of security and will not publish any home addresses or email addresses without specific permission. We may in the course of this development acquire a new web address, but the site will also remain accessible through the existing address.