



THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY
ULSTER GROUP



Newsletter No. 6 August 2007

Cover Picture :

Anemone narcissiflora; Photo : David Lapsley



Newsletter No.6

Contents:-

Editorial

Contributions

Breeding Miniature Daffodils	: <i>Brian Duncan M.B.E.</i>
Erythronium helenae	: <i>George Gordon</i>
Cover photograph	: <i>Vickie Lapsley</i>
Czech Republic Revisited	: <i>Heather Smith</i>
Garden Visits	: <i>Hilary McKelvey</i>

Information

Editorial

Moving house is said to be one of the greater stresses in life and, while I originally set out to disprove this, I have now first hand experience of the frustrations and teething problems of a new house and making a new garden. So I feel I owe our members, especially the newer members, an apology as my job as secretary in this past year often had to take second place and there were a few omissions.

However there is always a bright side and I have been very touched by the generosity and kindness of members of the Ulster Group, especially when we were faced with an empty field for a garden. It's quite interesting to see that the plants and trees we were given seem to be growing much better than those bought, and hopefully in the many years to come, there will always be that happy association with friends in the Alpine Garden Society

- for a garden is much more than just plants – I hope it will be filled with many pleasant memories!

In reviewing the past year, it proved most successful with good attendances at all lectures and, above all, a friendly, happy atmosphere at everything. No doubt the highlight was Roy Lancaster's inspiring lecture, kindly given by him in memory of the late Dr. Molly Sanderson. The high number of people wishing to go on the summer tours bears testament to how good they are and, I believe, some thought this the best ever.

I am sure when you read the news for next year you will really look forward to hearing the lectures and it should prove to be an exciting year with some changes. I am deeply indebted to William McKelvey who takes over as Hon. Secretary, and we have a change of Chairman, Paddy Maguire taking over from Hugh. As usual I am appealing to all our members, especially some of our newer members, not to be shy about taking an active role because it makes it all more fun and there's plenty of people to support you. Unfortunately some of our long faithful members have had ill health in the past year and I do wish that over the coming months they all make a full recovery. It is sad to record the death of Betty Mitchell – I have memories of Betty telling me the names of many alpins in Switzerland - our sympathy goes to her family.

As I write this on the 29th June I recall some lines written by an American gardener, Henry Mitchell - "*As I write this, on June 29th, it's time for another storm to smash the garden to pieces, ---*", and after the driest April we now have the wettest June – so much for the weather forecasters!

Whatever the weather enjoy your gardening and if it's wet, take the time to read right through the Newsletter (to get **all** the news you have to read to the end). Enjoy the contributions kindly written by fellow members - indeed we are lucky to have members like Brian Duncan with knowledge second to none in the field of daffodils – so with my thanks to one and all.

" A man should never plant a garden larger than his wife can take care of."
T.H. Everett

Breeding Miniature Daffodils

Brian Duncan M.B.E.



For more than one hundred and fifty years enthusiasts have been hybridising daffodils so that we now have a large standard daffodils of great vigour and in an amazing array of colours and forms which were undreamed of in those early days. Alas, during all this time the emphasis was on 'bigger and better' and little attention was paid to raising new and more vigorous forms and colours in the miniature category.

Min seedling 3135 – Young Blood x *N. dubius*

Alec Gray

One notable exception, however, was Alec Gray (1895 - 1986) from Cornwall who raised many wonderful flowers that enthusiasts still enjoy growing and showing. Of approximately one hundred cultivars which he raised and named, such flowers as 'Camborne' 1W-W; 'Candlepower' 1W-W; 'Gipsy Queen' 1Y-Y; 'Sun Disc' 7Y-Y and 'Xit' 3W-W are classics. His renowned and ubiquitous 'Tete-a-Tete' 12Y-Y, now accounts for a greater quantity of daffodils in the commercial fields of Holland than any other single variety - almost 600 hectares. What a memorial to his wonderful work in breeding miniature daffodils - to raise a daffodil that is enjoyed by countless people throughout the temperate world.

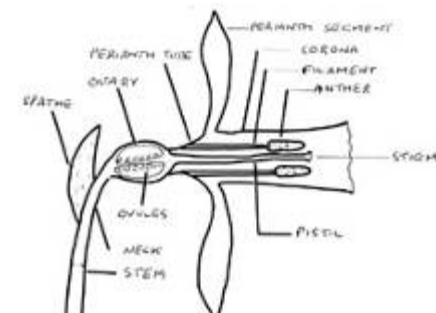
Scope

With so few active breeders in the past there is still great scope for raising new, reliably vigorous and exciting miniature daffodils in a wider range of colours and forms than currently exists. It is unlikely that this work will be undertaken by major commercial growers so it is left to enthusiastic amateurs and collectors to blaze the trail.

Pollination methods

The practical application of pollen from the anthers of one flower to the pistil of another is easy in most cases. This can be done by transferring the pollen by means of a small camel hair brush which should be sterilised in hypochlorite, alcohol or such sterilising agent, between crosses.

Alternatively, self locking surgical tweezers to remove the anthers and apply the pollen directly to the stigma may be used. To de-anther flowers, before the pollen sacs ripen and dehisce in an effort to avoid self pollination is a counsel of perfection. Likewise, covering of flowers after applying pollen is good advice, if control of the cross is essential. However, such activities are seldom carried out in practice as they are prohibitively time consuming, laborious and of doubtful benefit. There are few pollinating insects around during our early springs, but even if an imaginative fly does make a cross (that we may never think of) the result might be quite interesting!



Some miniature daffodils, especially *N. rupicola*, and others of the Apodanthi section, are difficult to pollinate because the stigma is so far inserted in the tube. Access is only achievable by carrying out a precise and minute surgical operation to split the tube in two and thus expose the stigma..

During this delicate operation pollen from some of the anthers, which are also enclosed in the tube, may be disturbed and find it's way onto the stigma, thus causing self pollination. Accordingly, when making crosses with such species it is better to use them as the male or pollen parent - and to apply their pollen to species or cultivars with more accessible stigmas. Incentives

The incentive to work with miniature (not >50mm diameter) and Intermediate (50 - 80mm diameter) sized daffodils is probably greater now

than ever before because they are so much more appropriate for smaller gardens and there seems to be ever increasing interest in such flowers. Accordingly I would encourage AGS members to have a go at hybridising these smaller daffodils which are dual purpose - for pot culture or for early garden display.



Sdg 3092 – *N. bulbocodium* x *N. hedraeanthus luteolentus*

An additional incentive is that the waiting period between planting seed and flowering time may be as little as 3 years, compared to 5 - 6 years for standard daffodils.

Restraints

It is important to understand that one of the restraints to breeding miniatures is that so many crosses are likely to lead to 'dead-ends'. When crossing a species (say *N. cyclamineus* from Section *Pseudonarcissus*) with another species (say *N. rupicola* from Section *Apodanthi*) very attractive and satisfying little miniature daffodils may result. Such flowers are almost certain to be sterile mules and cannot be used for further development or improvement.

However, unless one plans a long-term breeding programme or to create flowers which can become 'stepping-stones' for future improvement, this probably does not matter and many attractive, albeit sterile seedlings can be raised.

Rewards

AGS members will be aware of the great personal satisfaction and sense of achievement to be gained from raising a seedling which is distinctly beautiful, the envy of others and thought worthy of a name! The final accolade comes when friends and associates want to grow it and show it. Is not 'Camoro' 10W-W, (*N. cantabricus monophyllus* x *N. romieuxii*), raised

by Henry and Margaret Taylor, such a flower? Also, John Blanchard's beautiful little 'Crevette' 8W-O, raised from a standard daffodil 'Mahmoud' x *N. dubius* is in great demand.

Some suggested breeding stock

It is probably beyond the scope of this article to make comprehensive suggestions regarding appropriate crosses. Those interested will have their own aspirations and targets. However, it might be helpful to suggest that inter-crossing any of the following species can yield interesting results :- *N. asturiensis*; *N. minor*; *N. cyclamineus*; *N. rupicola*; *N. triandrus*; *N. watieri*; *N. dubius* and *N. jonquilla*

Add to this mix a few miniature hybrids, especially miniature trumpets such as N.' Camborne' 1W-W, N.'Candlepower' 1W-W, N. 'Gypsy Queen', N.'Small Talk' and N.' Little Beauty' and there will be ample scope for crosses which should yield satisfying and exciting results.

The essential working parts (stigma and anthers) are so exerted in most *N. bulbocodium*, *N. cantabricus*, *N. hedraeanthus* and *N. triandrus* species that these may be



Sdg 3027 – *N. cyclamineus* x N.'Camborne'

the easiest starting point. Some really beautiful intra-specific hybrids have been raised from these flowers, both in the wild and in enthusiasts gardens, and they glory in such names as:-

N. x susannae = (*N. cantabricus monophyllus* x *N. triandrus pallidulus*) *N. x cazorlanus* = (*N. hedraeanthus* x *N. triandrus pallidulus*)

These species *Narcissi* can also be crossed with standard daffodils to give a better chance of novel colours in Intermediate sized daffodils. Such daffodils may not be "alpine" in character but they are certainly very suitable for smaller gardens.

Cultivation

Most members of the AGS know more about saving and planting seed and growing bulbs in pots than I do. That being the case I will not dwell much on this aspect. Just suffice to say that a free draining gritty compost is essential.

Though they like much water during active growth, daffodils will not tolerate waterlogged conditions. Daffodils are not gross feeders but they appreciate liberal dressings of sulphate of potash early in their growth cycle.



Miniature *N. cyclamineus* seedlings

Planting seeds & early handling

I prefer to plant seeds in polystyrene fish boxes available from any Supermarket. They provide good insulation and are of a handy size to move around. I plant in rows about 2 inches apart in tracks made with a ruler in which the seeds are almost touching or spaced about 1/4 inch apart. They are then covered with a little sifted compost and about 3/4 inch of coarse grit. This seems to work and I have not tried the deeper planting sometimes

advocated. The seedlings remain in these boxes for 2 years (sometimes 3 years) before being potted on. Being in rows they are easily removed from the compost without damage. I use a flat paint scraper, rather than a curved trowel, for this purpose. The bulbs are instantly dipped in a fungicide before being potted. Bulbs with an *N. bulbocodium* heritage may be kept warm and dry until October before potting up and watered.

Conclusion

I appreciate that I have omitted much detail about hybridising and cultivation methods but space permits only a rapid overview. However, I hope I may have stimulated even one person to have a go at breeding miniature daffodils and I wish good luck and much enjoyment to those who may decide to have a try.

Finally I would make a plea that breeders resist the temptation to think that "all their geese are swans" - careful selection is important! Before a selected clone is considered for being dignified with a Registered name the raiser should have very good reasons and be sure that there are good reasons for doing so, that it is not just another 'look-alike', that it has some distinct and identifiable qualities such as improved colour, form, vigour, stem and pose or freedom of flowering. I am afraid that most breeders (myself included) love their 'daffodil children' too much and name too many.

----- oOo-----

Garden Snippets:-

Overheard on our bus trip to the Gardens of Cork

(1) After flowering, let daffodil leaves die back naturally – minimum 6 weeks, not tied in tight bundles as the sap has to get back down to the bulb – advice from our own daffodil expert, Brian Duncan.

“ When Wordsworth’s heart with pleasure filled at a crowd of golden daffodils, it’s a fair bet he didn’t see them two weeks later.” Geoff Hamilton

Erythronium helenae by George Gordon

Few plants give as much pleasure as *Erythroniums*. There are about 23 species in the Genus, and given that they grow in northern temperate regions from Europe across Asia to Japan, and coast to coast in North America there is a wide choice. Two in particular have settled down in our garden. *Erythronium californicum* "White Beauty" is vigorous and clumps up rapidly by division. *Erythronium revolutum* is equally pleasing, and has started to seed itself around, which in any other genus I would be thinking of thinning out a little.

But when my wife Pat and I look back, the first *Erythronium* that came our way was through AGS seed in 1990, which was not long after we had joined the Alpine Garden Society. Moreover it was random seed, and truth to tell we knew little about alpines at the time. Arriving late it was sown in a 50:50 mix of John Innes and grit at the end of February and germinated a year later at the start of February 1991. Three seeds germinated and we kept them in the same pot for a few years, before moving them on to a 15cm pot. It flowered for the first time in 1998 (it is not unusual for *Erythroniums* to flower from seed after five years, but *helenae* seems to be slower, or perhaps I was not giving it ideal conditions).

Erythronium helenae has a limited range in California and Oregon, where it is a woodland plant. So every year we re-pot in a woodland mix of equal parts composted bark, John Innes and multipurpose compost in September (when most of the other bulbs have been done). We keep the pot between the carport and a fence (with other shade lovers), which gives a measure of protection from winds and frost, but is still open to the rain. It does not get a lot of direct sunlight, as it faces north. In these conditions it has slowly increased (it does not have an extensive root system), and now occupies a 25cm plastic pot. I am always surprised how deep it prefers, but the elongated corms are only a few inches from the bottom. Every year it comes into growth in February and starts to flower from the middle of March to the start of April (which suits our Ulster and Dublin Shows). The flowers last a long time – three weeks – and the top flowers (which open

first) are still in good condition when the bottom ones open. Talking to Scottish friends it seems to be a more difficult plant there. Here in Bangor in Northern Ireland we are certainly milder near the sea, but over the years we have had temperatures down to ten degrees below freezing. Such conditions are of short duration however, and I doubt whether the pot has ever frozen down to the bottom.



It has proved a good show plant. In April 2006 *Erythronium helenae* managed to get the best plant in Show in Dublin, as well as best from North America. It sets seed readily which I have put back into seed exchanges in thanks for the person who originally donated it.

Cover Photograph – *Anemone narcissiflora* Vickie Lapsley

(Congratulations to David and to Liam who once again won prizes in the AGS Photographic Competition 2006 - any more budding photographers out there? Ed.)



The cover photograph of *Anemone narcissiflora* was taken on June 16th last year while David and I were on holiday in the Swiss Alps. It was growing on the narrow ridge which leads to the Oberberghn, above the Alpine garden at Schynige Platte in the Bernese Oberland. The scenery is breathtaking, with splendid views of the Brienzersee on one hand, and of the great massif of the Eiger and the Jungfrau on the other. The flora of the whole area is rich in variety at that time of the year. We saw *Dryas octopetala*, *Pulsatilla vernalis* and *P. alpina*, many varieties of Saxifraga, including sumptuous cushions of *S. oppositifolia*, *Gentiana verna* and *G. acaulis*,

Ranunculus of two or three species, *Soldanella montana*, as well as *Anemone narcissiflora* and *A. alpina*. Vast swathes of crocus were just past flowering, and here and there various orchids were coming into bud. We found the combination of lake, mountain, and flowers in profusion an unforgettable experience.

“You do not need to know anything about a plant to know that it is beautiful” *Montagu Don*

The Czech Republic Revisited.

Many of the Ulster Group Members enjoyed a wonderful trip to the Czech Republic in 2004 where we greatly admired the crevice gardens, packed with exquisite plants, and the beautifully presented Czech Rock Garden Show in Prague.

This year some of our members were privileged to repeat the visit with the added bonus of a conference, thoroughly enjoyed by all and here Heather gives an honest account in her usual forthright way. *Ed.*

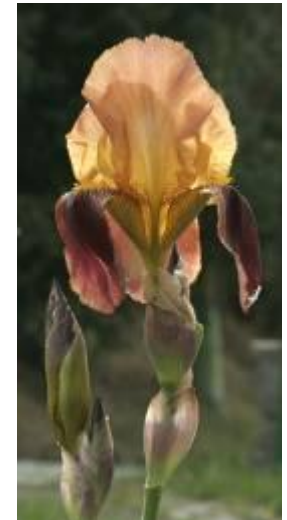
1st Czech International Rock Garden Conference May 2007 – followed by Garden Visits. Heather Smith

This was held in a new hotel called Hotel na Ostrově (Hotel on the Island) in the small town of Beroun, SW of Prague. A *slight problem* for many delegates was the inability *at first* of some airport taxi drivers to find the hotel, or even the town.

The organizers feared only 30 or 40 registrations, hoped for 120 but got 172. We all got badges with a number – 1,2,3 or 4.

The Conference lasted 4 days with 17 lectures followed by 5 days visiting 16 gardens and 1 museum..

There was a full programme of lectures, all in English, which included one day with 9 hours of lectures, *a long day but well worth the effort*. The lectures were excellent with superb slides/digital images and a handbook which included the slide lists. *Enthusiastic speakers packed in many lectures with many slides e.g.195 slides in 50 minutes*. We were taken all over the world and into many aspects of gardening with alpine plants. *Obviously some lectures over-ran and unfortunately some slides abandoned, but Robert*



Rolfe stunned us by delivering his lectures like a pneumatic drill – everyone so keen to get as much knowledge as possible from the experts!

The Conference time included a visit to the annual Rock Garden Show in Prague in which the plant sale was the usual magnet to delegates. In the crush, Vojtěch Holubek suggested forlornly “Perhaps you could go round the Show first?” Likely! The Show was packed with interesting plants laid out in the unique Czech manner.

The brilliant weather that had obtained hitherto naturally ended



Erigeron Sp. in Garden of Milan Odvárka

with the start of the post-conference garden visits. Thankfully, the worst we had was showery with the heavy rain falling at night. Now the numbers on the badges came into their own. Small gardens could not manage us all descending in a great mob, so we were divided into 4 buses. Mine was No 2



Cypripedium hyb. in Garden of Jiří Sládeček

but, in the event, we were allowed to put our names down for the bus we wanted (Buses 1 & 2 leaving earliest) although we tended to be leaving in the order we were ready, at about 8 a.m. The only non-garden visit was the Dvořák Memorial Museum; an interesting extra.

I had visited, with the Ulster Group AGS, many of the gardens before but they were well worth another look, though it was noticeable that there were fewer *Gentiana verna* plants and it was an earlier season, for the most part.

The gardens new to me were new

also to Zdeněk Zvolaněk (organizer, and guide of bus 2). I include pictures of some of these. Many of the garden owners had plant sales. “That’s my lot! Absolutely NO MORE PLANTS! I’m not even bringing my purse/wallet” meant nothing. Cries of “Bus No 1 (2,3 etc) was here first and grabbed all the best plants” were frequent. A leisurely enjoyment of the garden followed the usual frantic scrum. Gardens with no plant sale were a relief.



The men folk tended to be useful beasts of burden.

All in all a great conference, enjoyed by all. If this is a first effort we can look forward with confidence to future events here.

Cork & Limerick Garden Visit

Hilary McKelvey

On a beautiful warm and sunny Monday morning we set off early for the delights of the gardens of Cork & Limerick. We had five days of garden visits, with three gardens each day plus nurseries and owners plant stalls, even managing a short visit to Blarney Mills.

The gardens varied in size and style from the manicured perfection of Neil Williams garden to the bursting at the seams of Deborah Begley's, who can forget the magnificent Urns at Brian Cross and Anne Maloney's.



We were delighted to be our AGS friend Miriam's first visitors; such a beautiful garden should not be hid.



At Hester's we saw everything from alpines to a telegraph pole festooned in pink roses.



At Annesgrove we divided into two groups, the energetic going on a river walk and the rest a sedate walk in the walled garden.

It was a shame it rained at Blessington, but it didn't stop us from walking around this wonderful garden. Our thanks go to our hotel for its friendly staff and excellent food, and to Damien our very patient driver. Thanks also to Margaret and Kay for their excellent organising skills ensuring we all had a great time.



Garden Snippets:-

(2) To keep slugs off hostas:-

take 2 bulbs of garlic and boil in 2 pints of water for approximately 20 minutes, dilute 1 tablespoonful of this solution in 1 gallon of water and pour over hostas.

(I haven't tried this but why not ask the advice of our own hosta expert, Ian Scroggy at Bali-Hai Nursery, Carnlough)

(3) Books

I can thoroughly recommend two books I bought recently, both reviewed in "The Alpine Gardener" (which I also recommend!) and it is always nice to read a book when you have met the author.

" The Caucasus Flowers" by Vojtech Holubec & Pavel Krivka – expensive but well worth it for anyone interested in travel and flowers.

"Bulbous Plants of Turkey and Iran" a photographic guide by Peter Sheasby – we had the pleasure of the author's company on our recent trip to Turkey and, while extremely modest about it, he has a vast botanical knowledge which he willingly shares.

I believe that Zdeněk Zvolaněk and Janis Ruksans, both also known to many of us, have recently published books and I look forward to reading them – perhaps someone would review them for next year?

The Year Past and the Year to Come : Information about us

As most of our members know, the Ulster Group is affiliated to the Alpine Garden Society, founded in 1929, the international society for anyone interested in alpine plants, rock gardening and rock garden plants, hardy and half – hardy bulbs, hardy ferns, small shrubs - in fact any small hardy plants!

Meetings will be held this year as usual on Saturdays in the Lecture Theatre, Main Building, Stranmillis University College, Belfast. Lectures start at 2.30 p.m. from September until March, exact dates given on the fixtures card and also on the **website, www.alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk**

A.G.M., Lecture and Plant Sale September 15th

The year starts as usual with the AGM in September 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 can also be discussed.

Group Subscriptions : Local current subscription rates are £8.00 single, £10.00 family, due at the A.G.M. or before the end of the current year. To help our **treasurer, please put your subscription into the envelope provided with your name, title, address, postal code, telephone number and email (if wished), also add "A.G.S." if you are a member of the parent body, all clearly written on the outside or on a slip of paper. Give or post this to Mrs. Margaret Glynn, Hon. Treasurer.** 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.

After the business is finished there is a short lecture. Last year we enjoyed a photographic record of the summer trip to North Wales and Tatton Park, and this year we look forward to Mrs. Margaret Kennedy's Account of a visit to both Chilean and Argentinean **Patagonia.**

There is an extra special plant sale as this is our first meeting after the summer break - the plant stall heroically manned by two stalwarts, Pat and George Gordon, who, along with some faithful helpers, do this before and after meetings and at our Greenmount Show.

At every meeting everyone looks forward to a welcome cup of tea or coffee and a delicious traybake and, in spite of many restrictions (Health & Safety etc.), many of our ladies continue to provide just that. Many thanks to the members who do take responsibility for this and, once again, an appeal to everyone to help to keep the task as light as possible.

Dr. Molly Sanderson Memorial Lecture October 20th

Dr. Mary Elizabeth (Molly) Sanderson 1913-1995, was President of the Ulster Group A.G.S. from 1985 to 1995. The highlight of last year must surely have been this lecture when we had the pleasure of hearing Roy Lancaster, O.B.E., V.M.H., F.I.Hort. talking on "A

Plantsman's Garden" to a packed audience. He introduced us to many exciting new plants and his enthusiasm was infectious.

This year the lecture will be given by Captain Peter Erskine on "**Unfinished Business – 30 years on Greensand**" and I am sure that once again we will all come away enthused by his talk - so please come and bring friends.

November 10th

In last year's **November lecture** Rosemary Cox illustrated how an artist views plants. In complete contrast this time we have the practical "**Easy from Seed**" and it is always a pleasure to hear Margaret and Henry Taylor.

Termonfeckin November 17th –18th

The weekend conference in *An Grianan*, Termonfeckin, run by the Dublin Group, just gets better and better and, when the booking forms come out in September, you will have to book early as last year places were rapidly filled. It's a weekend packed with international speakers, excellent lectures, rare plant sales, good food and all in lovely surroundings.

December 8th

I feel we are exceptionally lucky to be having a lecture by Martin Walsh, one of the most talented young plant hunters and photographers today, but usually reticent about speaking. Our Programme Secretary, Heather Smith, must have worked hard but has succeeded in persuading him to share with us "**Plant-Hunting in Tibet: From Lhasa to the Gateway to Hell**"

We also have the Christmas Fayre when members skills in art and baking come to the fore and, as well as increasing funds, provide useful Christmas presents.

With regard to funds, the annual subscription comes nowhere near meeting our costs for lecture theatre, lecturers' expenses, publications, postage, etc., - so many thanks for your support with all our plant sales and efforts, **especially** to those who so regularly bring plants - please continue!

January 12th and February 2nd 2008

We start the New Year with two lectures to brighten the winter. As the parent A.G.S plan to run a tour to the **Maritime Alps** next summer, Tim

Roberts talk should be most appropriate. Vic Aspland is well known to the Ulster Group and his should be a more practical talk on "**The Brighter Side of Winter**"

February 16th

For the past two years we have had our Annual Luncheon in the lovely surroundings at the Lough Neagh Discovery Centre and last year were introduced by Prof. George Sevastopulo to a less well known area of Italy, "Bell' Abruzzo".

However the **Winter Garden Visits** always proved very popular and this year we will once again view snowdrops, hellebores and all the plants that cheer us in February, along with a light luncheon in a local hotel. Details and booking forms will be sent out nearer the time.

Shows

Make a note in your diary **now** for our own two shows on **March 15th** and **April 26th** and also the **Dublin** show on **April 5th**, as both groups are indebted to each other for their support. The Members Show gives an opportunity for newer members to have a practice run at showing plants and this year we have a "Home Grown" session during the show which often proves the most helpful lecture of all.

While the flower display was better than ever, attendance at our main show was disappointing - in spite of all Pat Crossley's pleas - which was a pity as, not only was the show excellent, but the Greenmount gardens were enchanting. This year there are plans afoot to combine with Greenmount for an "**Alpine Day**" but whatever happens, please make an effort to support it by **coming**, telling your local societies about it and bringing friends and family!

Garden Visits and Outings

Forty eight of our members have just returned from a very enjoyable and happy tour to the Gardens of Cork and Limerick, most successfully organised by Margaret Glynn assisted by Kay Dunlop. As Hilary McKelvey says in a brief summary, all the gardens were both lovely and interesting and getting to know fellow members better was a bonus.

Unfortunately I was unable to attend the garden visit to both Susan Tindall's and Joyce Millar's Nurseries due to a wedding in Scotland but I hope to redress that over the summer. I am often asked where alpines and similar plants can be bought in Northern Ireland and as a few of our members do have nurseries, do support them and tell friends – and conversely, any members with nurseries please let Ulster group members know. Again sincere thanks to members who open their gardens to visitors as we do appreciate the amount of work involved.

In August we hope to have a **Picnic Day** in aid of the **John McWhirter Travel Fund**, and this year should see finalisation of the setting up of this fund and its offer to appropriate candidates.

Alpine Garden Society

Once again a plea to all Ulster Group members who have not yet joined the AGS to seriously consider doing so this year as insurance for visits and meetings only covers full AGS members so you are on your own insurance. You must also be a full member to exhibit at the main show, serve on the committee, and join the AGS holidays. In addition you are missing the magazine "The Alpine Gardener" which last issue featured an article with some local interest by Harold McBride (most enjoyable) and is an excellent bedtime read – all good value for money!

Website www.alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk

Liam continues to keep the website going to a high standard and appreciates all contributions but is always looking for new contributors. So even if you are not very computer literate beg the help of younger family members to visit the site www.alpinegarden-ulster.org.uk and perhaps surprise them with your own article as Liam will be only too pleased to help you do this.



Quiz

Are the the Margarets admiring a plant or planning a contribution for next year?

I am sure there are many members who could write an article that would be of interest to all and, as this is your Newsletter, please overwhelm me next year with material, even criticisms are welcome!