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# The Mysterious Joint Committee

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**I**F you've ever assisted at setting up shows, you will no doubt at one time or another have heard a harassed Show Secretary say something like 'You can't have that room, I need it for the joint committee'. You will further have wondered what this joint committee is and why it seems to deserve such consideration. At the risk of adding to your confusion, the word 'joint' no longer appears in its official title, which is now 'The Rock Garden Plant Committee'. This committee is one of the Standing and Joint Committees of the Royal Horticultural Society. The reason for the 'joint' in its appellation is that the appropriate specialist societies also take part in the work of this R.H.S. Committee.

These Committees are appointed annually by the Council of the R.H.S., and the one we are concerned with consists of a Chairman, several Vice-Chairmen and ten members each from the Royal Horticultural Society, the Alpine Garden Society and the Scottish Rock Garden Club. The list of members for each year is given in the Club Yearbook. In the past all R.H.S. Committees met in London, but as early as 1955 the Rock Garden Plant Committee held some of its meetings in Scotland each year. It is now extending its activities to other venues in England. Present practice is to hold three meetings a year in Scotland in association with S.R.G.C. shows. My function is to act as Committee Secretary for meetings held at these shows.

Broadly speaking, the objects of the Committees are to encourage the introduction of new species and the production of improved cultivars, to collect and disseminate information, and to recommend awards to plants of merit. The Rock Garden Plant Committee can consider for award all rock garden and alpine house plants, whether they be grown for flower, foliage or fruit. Irises, narcissi, tulips and rhododendrons are excepted from consideration, although the Committee can deal with **dwarf** members of these genera on dates when the appropriate specialist groups are not meeting.

The awards which the Committee can recommend fall into two broad categories, awards to plants and awards to growers. There are three awards to plants which can be made. In ascending order of merit these are Certificate of Preliminary Commendation, Award of Merit and First Class Certificate.

**CERTIFICATE OF PRELIMINARY COMMENDATION.** This was instituted in 1931, and it is intended for new plants of promise, whether a