



I wrote about the centenary of the Wisley rock garden in the latest (May 2011) issue of the *International Rock Gardener*, so I thought I would start this new log with a recent picture of the rock garden in early May this year. The celebrations have, as you know, kept me very busy and disrupted the frequency of my Logs but it has all I think been worthwhile.

One thing we did was a series of guided tours, covering the rock garden, alpine houses, crevice garden and behind the scenes. We normally do one such tour each year but for our celebrations we did a series of nine tours. Some of these were for our own RHS members while for others we joined with the magazine "Women's Weekly" which also celebrates its centenary this year and so we offered some tours to their readers. While the dry Spring had given us problems as gardeners at least it meant that the weather was great for all the tours. We had fantastic feedback from those who attended so it made us all feel it worth the effort and time put into them.

Those of you who attended the International Conference will have seen the exhibit we did showing some of the history of the rock garden. Back at Wisley, this exhibit has been displayed in the Glasshouse Gallery throughout May (ending May 31st). To it we added an exhibit of about 20 photographs chosen to illustrate the vast range of differing types of alpines that we grow

today in the Alpine department. These were all my own images so it felt like having my own personal photographic exhibit! Here is a part of it:



Well, leaving behind our centenary celebrations, our plants have of course been moving on too so it's time to get back to recording our season and showing you some of what has been flowering while we have been distracted. The tufa walls have looked very good this year. We have several plants of *Physoplexis comosa* in the walls, both in full sun and in shade and they seem to do equally well in either. This one is on the sunny side:



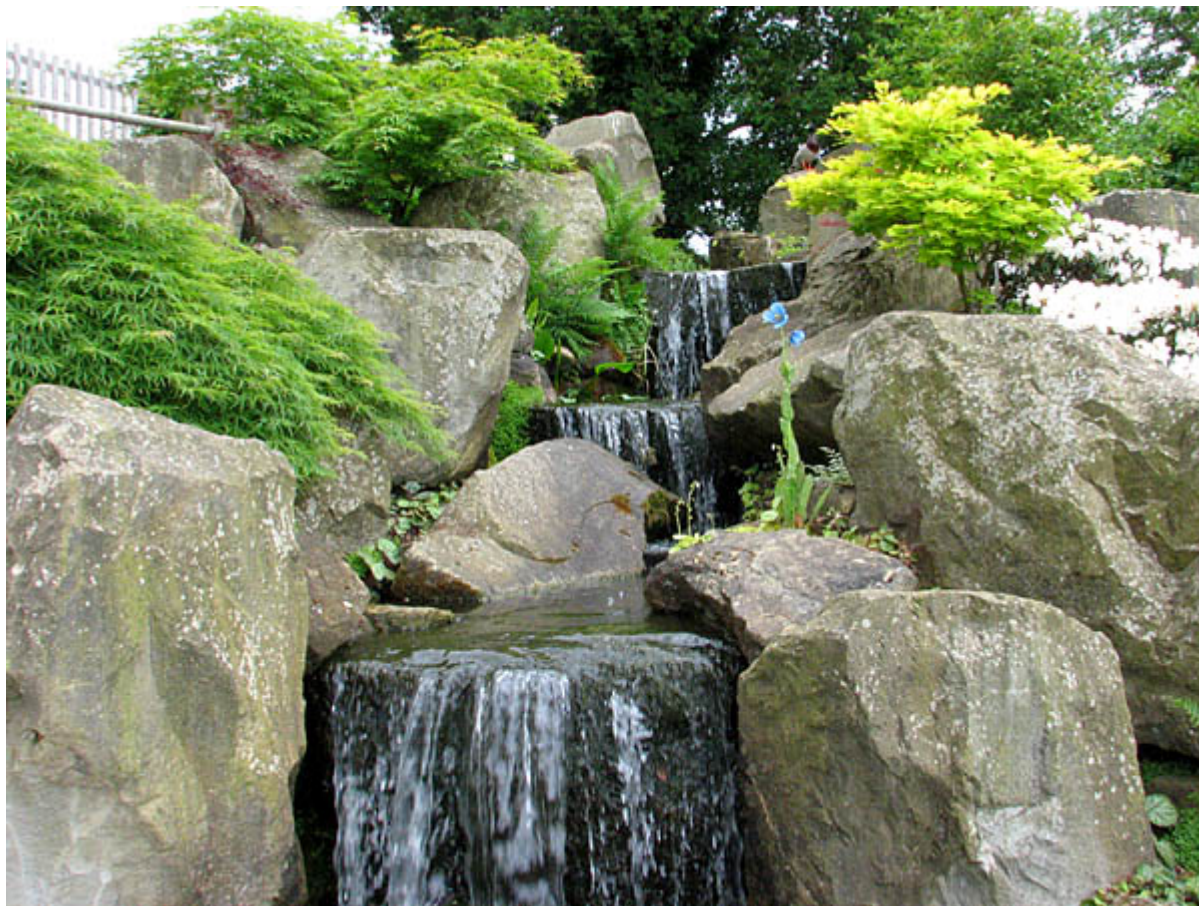
Also in the wall, *Aster alpinus* is a reliable splash of colour every year:



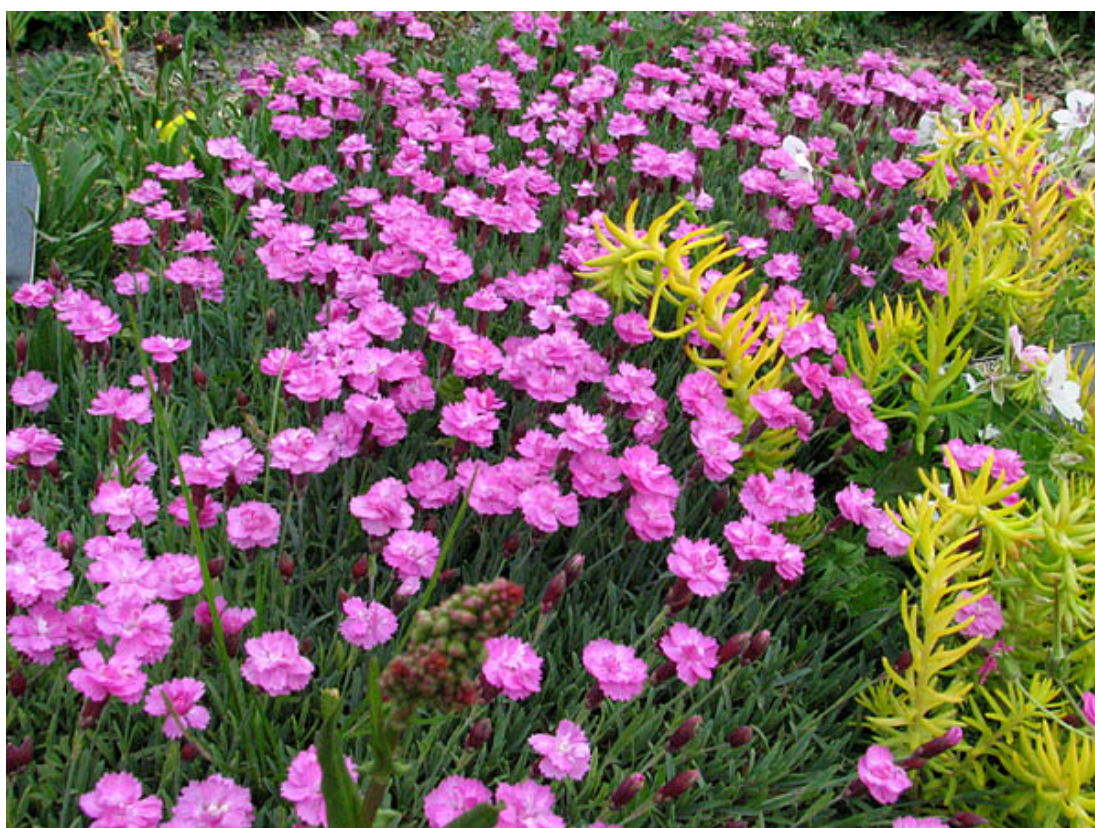
Opposite the sunny tufa wall is a raised bed and in here is *Stachys lavandulifolia*. I have always liked “hairy” plants and this plant from Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Transcaucasia is no exception:



The large waterfall at the top of the rock garden is always a popular stopping point for visitors. With the lovely blue *Meconopsis* 'Lingholm' flowering it looked even nicer than usual:



On the rock garden the *Dianthus* seem to have appreciated the dry, warm Spring and flowered particularly well. I liked this combination of *Dianthus* 'Pink Jewel' with the yellow leaves of *Sedum rupestre* 'Angelina':



In the sand beds, the hardy cacti I planted a few years ago continue to thrive, living up to their hardiness claim by surviving the last two very cold winters when they had at least minus ten centigrade. In fact the cold has made them flower better than ever. Remember these beds are covered in winter to keep them dry – the cacti would not survive otherwise.



Also in the sand beds, *Eriogonum compositum* var. *leianthum*:



The eriogonums or 'buckwheats' are a great group of plants for dry, well-drained areas and there is a large number to choose from. Their increasing popularity has led to the formation of the Eriogonum Society – see <http://www.eriogonum.org/> for details. Two other plants outside I want to share are firstly *Chloranthus fortunei*:



This is a woodland plant from China. The emerging foliage is dark purple/black later turning green but retaining almost black stems. The white flowers as shown are carried over a long period from April to June. At Wisley it is growing really well in a position much sunnier than one in which you might normally plant it. Secondly, not in any sense an alpine, but from our monocot borders comes one of my favourite irises, *Iris* 'Kent Beauty'. It's simply fabulous!



Moving indoors, I grew for the first time this year *Scorzonera suberosa* – though after reading the discussion about this in the forum at <http://www.srgc.org.uk/smf/index.php?topic=6359.0>, I am not sure of the identification. Whatever it is, what I like about it is the huge seed heads:



Flowering again this year is the lovely rosulate viola, *Viola congesta*:





This shows a close up of a flower. Note also the hairy edges to the leaves. This species grows pretty quickly – this plant is only 2 years old from seed.

To finish this time is a *Calochortus*. This genus as a whole did not appreciate the past winter (we grow them under cover but with no heat). However, some have survived and flowered. Flowering for the first time for us is this lovely red form of the otherwise very variable species *Calochortus venustus*:

