

International Rock Gardener



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Великолепный октябрь!* 2012



This is one time of the year in the Northern Hemisphere when we might actually *stop* discussing the weather – if only *just* long enough to discuss the degree of autumn colour being displayed in nature and in our gardens.

Of course, the climatic conditions will impact on the level of fiery colours that we might expect to experience, but it is nice to have a small break in our usual topic of conversation as we hope to revel in the annual pageant of autumnal splendour. As ever, there is nothing new in this and so we revisit an SRGC Journal, [No.10 of April 1953](#), for a discourse on the subject presented by Major W.G.Knox Finlay of [Keillour Castle](#), Perthshire, who was first an SRGC Council member in 1950. This article is illustrated with photos from the SRGC Forum which is also the source for the photos to showcase some of the spring photos from the Forum's Southern Hemisphere members.

*Великолепный октябрь = Gorgeous October. Cover picture: Hover fly on *Codonopsis* flower, J.I.Y.



Autumn bounty Wim Boens [VRV-Belgium](#)

---Seasonal glories in the north---

Autumn Colour by **W. G. Knox Finlay** – a report of a lecture to the Perthshire SRGC Group, on 10th November 1952.

Major Knox Finlay began by stating that “Judging from the large attendance here tonight I take it that you are in agreement with me, that lecturing to a Rock Garden Club on autumn colour, is legitimate”.

The construction of a rock garden is an individual matter, dependent on the site and area available, but it is the correct placing of main features which must be most carefully considered to obtain the maximum colour effect. The background is of the utmost importance, as is also the establishment or use of existing feature trees and shrubs to break the full view and give promise by a glimpse or peep of something most exciting round the corner.

Having dealt with these essentials you must turn your attention to the grouping of smaller shrubs and plants. You can learn about this by trial and error. Do not be afraid to give them a wheelbarrow drive, if your first, second or even third fancy does not please you.

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We grow our alpines in rather open spaces of screes and peat walls which merge into the background of taller herbaceous plants, lilies, shrubs and trees. So there is no limit - I would like to repeat **No Limit** - to what may be termed a rock garden plant.



October view with *Acer* 'Ozakazuki' and Birch (*Betula pendula*) J.I.Y.

The majority of alpines flower in spring and early summer - the taller herbaceous plants are best in June, July and August - but what we try to do is to ensure that our garden is brilliant from September till the end of November, and it is about the plants, shrubs, etc., we have for this purpose, that I propose to talk to you tonight.



Gentiana sino-ornata Hans Höller



As regards the smaller plants, the Asiatic Gentians are of course the first choice. I will show you some photographs of some of them and their hybrids later. But the Ericas, such as the *E. vulgaris*

hybrids '[H. E. Beale](#)', 'Goldsworth Crimson' and so on are indispensable.

The autumn **Crocus** species and the Colchicum, of which '**Waterlily**' and 'Barr's hybrids' are the best we grow, give a good show and bloom right into November. ***Primula capitata* var. *crispata*** is at present most lovely; ***Schizostylis*** is also flowering but perhaps a little too late for

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our high situation. In September and early October the *Cyananthus lobatus*, *C. lobatus* Sherriff's variety, and *C. sherriffii*, *Codonopsis convolvulacae* and *vincaeflora* are still flowering, with *Sedum spectabile purpurea*, *Polygonum vacciniifolium* and many others. *Euphorbia polychroma* also colours up well with us.



Crocus speciosus, Poul Erik Eriksen, *Colchicum* 'Waterlily' and 'Alboplenum', Dimitry Zubov



Cyananthus lobatus, J.I.Y.



Schizostylis coccinea, Hans Joschko



Stokesia leavis cyanea, Darren Sleep



Codonopsis clematidea, Fermi de Sousa

Of the later herbaceous plants (leaving out Michaelmas daisies and any others that require staking and tying), the blue *Stokesia cyanea* and *Kirengeshoma palmata* with its yellow flowers and black stems are much admired.

Sedum, Trond Hoy; *Lobelia*, Graham Catlow; *Polygonum*, Darren Sleep; *Codonopsis*, J.I.Y.



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We always take the trouble of making one or two bold plantings of *Lobelia cardinalis* 'Queen Victoria' and 'Huntsman' in moist situations. They give us at least two months of continual colour. *Verbena bonariensis* is another worth-while plant for late in the season.



Kirengoshoma palmata, Natalia Zarucheykaya
Below left: *Primula capitata*, Trond Hoy

Autumn flowers, Tim Ingram

Below right: *Euphorbia polychroma*, Lori Skulski



Above right: *Caryopteris* and Bumble Bee, [Erika](#) in Szekszárd, Hungary

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Turning to shrubs, those which flower on the current year's growth are mostly late-flowering, with insignificant fruit and leaves which seldom change colour, for example *Caryopteris*, *Buddleia*, *Hydrangea paniculata*, *Ceanothus* 'Gloire de Versailles' and other hybrids. Polyantha Roses if pruned well after first flowering will go on flowering till November. But many shrubs which flower in spring give us colourful berries in the autumn, such as *Cotoneaster*, *Skimmia*, *Stranvaesia*, *Euonymus*, *Gaultheria* and of course *Berberis*. With these we also get marvellous foliage effects.

Right: Fall colour in the garden of Mark McDonough, Massachusetts, USA

It is these autumn tints which are generally meant when one talks of autumn colour. Much has been written recently as to the whys and wherefores of colouring, the accumulation of waste products, sugar and minerals in the leaf, the cessation of the production of chlorophyll, the change of temperature,



drought, soil conditions, and so on, but I think that we will all accept that the magnificent display of this season must be due to drought giving a check in growth. All over the countryside the Beeches, Oaks, Rowans, Geans (wild cherry) and Birches have been a wonderful sight. This check in growth can be brought about in other ways. Often we see a Rowan on the hill with scarlet foliage; on examination it is usually found that the stem has been "rung" by rabbits or that the tree is growing on a rock, while all its neighbours are green because they have escaped the rabbits or are growing in good conditions.



Itea (left), *Parrotia persica* (right). Below left, *Nyssa sylvatica* and below right, *Rhus copallinum*, [Kristl Walek](http://www.kristlwalek.com)



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But this does not always follow; there are reasons unknown to science why perhaps one branch of a tree, or one shrub in a group colours. I have never tried "ringing" shrubs or trees for the production of good colour, but it might be worth experimenting. I often notice that a recently transplanted shrub is much more brilliant than those of the same species which have not been moved. I think by cutting some of the main roots in July, one could produce the required check.

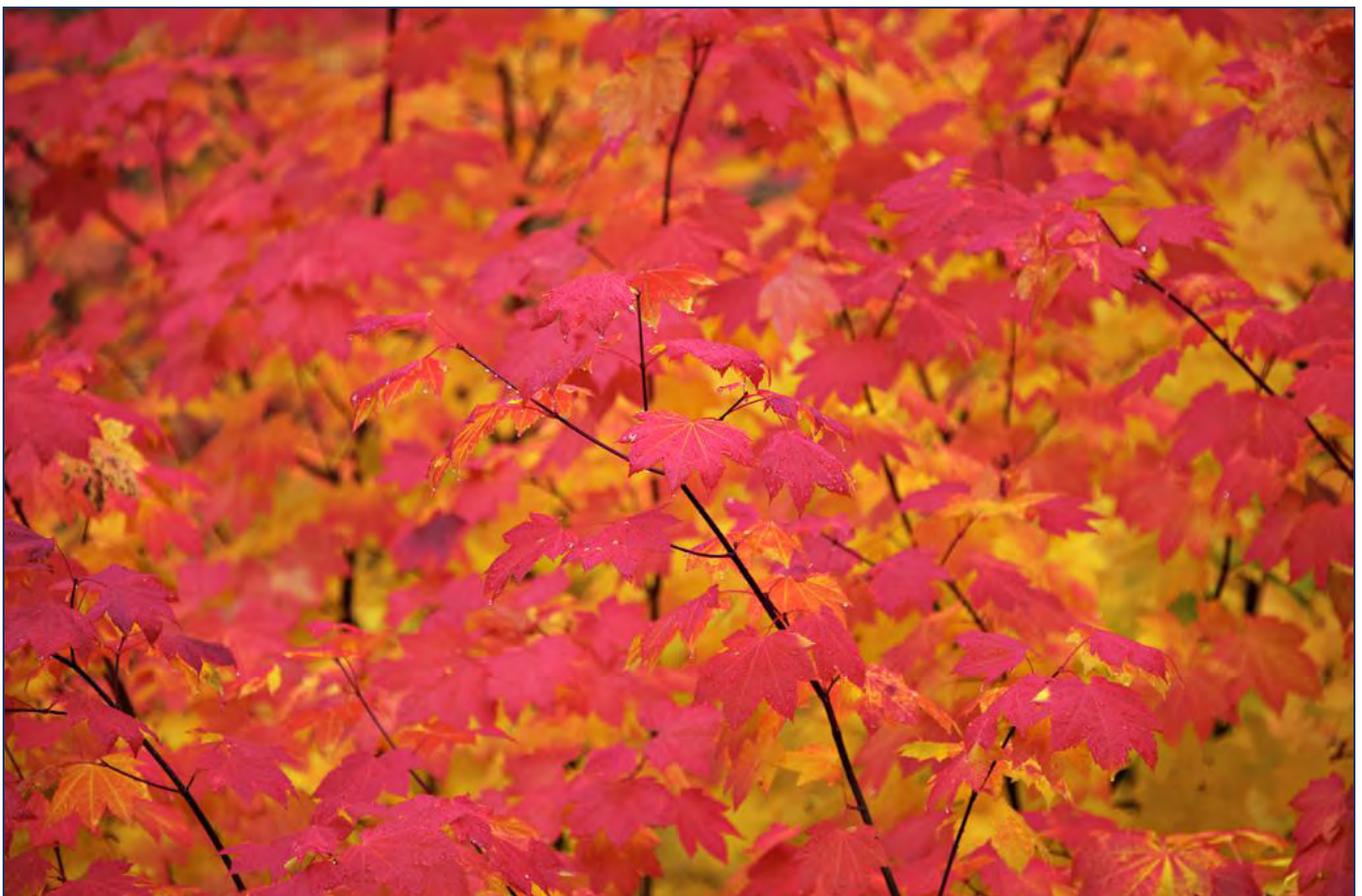
Our garden colour is usually at its peak about mid-October, but it begins in September with *Acer platanoides* and *Euonymus alatus*, bright pink and pale cream. *Acers ginnala* and *filicifolium*, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, etc., are first class, but quickly over, as is *Cotoneaster acutifolia* var. *villosa*, which is not enough grown. Unfortunately this year we had a gale at the wrong moment, at the end of September, so the early autumn tints were blown away. The *Acers*, *A. palmatum atropurpureum*, *A. dissectum*, Ozakazuki and *A. circinatum* were only beginning to colour at that time, so the gale did not affect them; by mid-October they were orange, scarlet and crimson, with the exception of ***Acer circinatum***, which resembled nothing less than the **Buchanan tartan** (below left).



Left:
Acer circinatum,
arrangement by
Dan Otis

Below: *Acer
circinatum*

photos by [Daniel Mosquin](#) of UBC



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Enkianthus, *Oxydendrons*, *Gaylussacias*, *Iteas*, *Photinias*, *Mespilus* and *Rhus* all played their part in the full October glory, while the *Berberis* with multi-coloured leaves were hanging with scarlet berries. Other good colourers are *Nyssa sylvatica*, *Acer griseum* and *Fothergillas*, but our plants of these are still too young to make a great show.



Enkianthus and autumn colour at [Mount Usher](#) in Co. Wicklow, photos Paddy Tobin.
Sternbergia sicula, F.Hadacek; *Sedum* and *Sempervivums*, Anne Karin Øen; *G.* 'Gunvor', Knud Lunde



Now in November, *Parrotia persica* growing up the house is perfect, the colours of a ripe peach. *Rhus sp.*, hard pruned in spring, varying from dark purple at the base of this year's growth to Post Office red and orange at the tips, is one of the more spectacular and satisfactory shrubs to grow, being a good purple red all summer and doing even more for us now. Today, going round the garden I have noticed *Eucryphia glutinosa* as brilliant, *Leucothoe catesbaei* sprays of lovely Fire Engine red, and *Gaultheria tetramera* with translucent blue berries, while in the peat walls the Shortias and Shizocodons, *Saxifraga fortunei* and *Galax aphylla* are a delight to the eye. There is in truth no end to what I think of as autumn colour and I see no reason why every garden should not be as bright as ours is, at the year's end.

W.G.K.F.



Saxifraga fortunei, in the garden of Trond Hoy



S. fortunei at Wisley, by Giles Reed

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Below: *Galax aphylla*, photos by John Weagle, Canada



(65 slides were shown of plants in the garden at Keillour at the meeting in 1952. Illustrations for this article came primarily from the Forum of the SRGC).

The following plants were discussed after the lecture :-

- Acer nikoense (rich red).
- Disanthus cercidifolia (claret colour).
- Euonymus europaeus (purplish red with pink berries).
- Ginkgo biloba (pale gold).
- Liquidambar styraciflua (purple red).
- Quercus coccinea (crimson).
- Quercus heterophylla (red).
- Rhododendrons, Azalea group (red and yellow).
- Rhus cotinoides (orange, scarlet, crimson).
- Ribes americanum (crimson and yellow).
- Vitis cignetiae (scarlet and blood red).

Ed.: Two articles of interest relating to Major Knox Finlay's piece: 'Notes from the Keillour Garden - January 1954' (Mrs) M.L.K. Finlay and 'The Cultivation of Primulas' W.G. Knox Finlay, both from [SRGC Journal 14, Vol. 4 pt.1, April 1954](#).

All issues of the SRGC Journal, from the first in 1937, to issue 113 of 'The Rock Garden' July 2004, are available to download from the [SRGC Website](#). There is also a full index, compiled by Glassford Sprunt. This is all part of the SRGC commitment to share information on rock garden and alpine plants. Further Journal issues will be added to the website in future.



Hamamelis cultivars in the Belgian garden of Freddy Vleugels

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--- Focus on fiery foliage ---

Now living in Nova Scotia, Kristl Walek is well known for her seed business, [Gardens North](#) and for her immensely popular threads in the [SRGC Forum](#), entitled "My Bit of Heaven".

To keep our autumn foliage theme going, here are a selection of photos from Kristl of *Viburnum alnifolium*.



Kristl wrote.. "for sheer variety in leaf coloration, the native *Viburnum alnifolium*, photographed in the wild, when I was still in Ontario, must take the prize."



It must be remembered that while in the northern hemisphere, the growing season is drawing to its close, folks in the southern hemisphere are enjoying the progress of their season through spring to summer.

"No man can taste the fruits of autumn while he is delighting his scent with the flowers of spring", so said Samuel Johnson: the internet has given a whole new twist to that!

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---Seasonal glories in the south---

Again from the pages of the SRGC Forum, here are some spring delights from forumists, Bill Dijk and Lesley Cox in New Zealand, Rogan Roth in South Africa and Fermiano de Sousa, Pat Toolan and Paul Tyerman in Australia.



Left: Camellias in the garden of Bill Dijk

Below: *Fritillaria imperialis* in the Lister Garden, Dunedin, photo Lesley Cox



Sanguinaria canadensis f. *multiplex* and *Alstroemeria pergrina alba* [Bill Dijk](#)



Xeronema callistemon, Monarch butterfly on milkweed, *Asclepias fruticosa* Bill Dijk

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Bill writes: “*Xeronema callistemon* aka ‘Poor Knights’ lily’ is a species of flowering plant which is endemic to the Poor Knights Island and Taranga Island in the north of New Zealand. This spectacular red flowering is an outstanding but little known plant, which was discovered on the Poor Knights Islands in 1924. It has handsome tussocks of bright green flax-like foliage from which spring the three feet flower spikes which terminate in great trusses of blossom. The flowers are made up of nectar-filled florets crowded on a horizontal stalk, almost in the manner of a bottle brush. This unique plant will always be a real showstopper in any garden.

The Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is a milkweed butterfly (subfamily Danainae), in the family Nymphalidae. While working in the nursery I managed to snap this beautiful monarch butterfly in the process of depositing its eggs on the swan plant or milkweed which is the main food for the beautiful monarch butterfly and hopefully will produce the caterpillar, pupa and eventually the monarch butterfly again.

This stunning *Hippeastrum cybister*, (below) one of my favourite *Hippeastrum* species, has narrow, orchid like petals, along with having one of the most artistic shaped flowers of all, and has, in some forms, stamens with long, swooping, green filaments and pistils with even longer, even more swooping, green styles.”



Below: *Iris cycloglossa* photo Bill Dijk



Rogan Roth, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, is a great lover and grower of bulbs but he has wider interests too: “I’ve always wanted to grow *Gentiana* spp., but they really hate my climate and don’t survive much beyond the seedling stage. However I do grow some African relatives of the gentian, *Sebaea* (...and some of them can be classed as alpinines too!) - here is a picture of a *Sebaea* species growing on the muddy banks of a mountain stream in the Drakensberg mountains.”

Left: *Sebaea* sp. Centre: *Gladiolus* sp. Right: *Cypella* sp. Photos [Rogan Roth](#)



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Lesley Cox from Dunedin, New Zealand, is about to move house so this season will be even busier than usual in the garden! One plant sure to be moved is *Daphne arbuscula*, below left, with *Carduncellus rhapsodicoides*, right, from the Atlas Mountains of Morocco.



Above left: *Narcissus bulbocodium obesus*

Right: *Gentiana acaulis* 'Blue Velvet'



Gentiana acaulis

Paeonia mlokosewitschii in the Dunedin Botanic Garden Photos L.Cox

Gentiana of many species, including *G. depressa*, and these forms of *G. acaulis*, thrive in Lesley's garden in New Zealand's South Island.

New Zealand gardeners affected by the earthquakes and aftershocks in the Christchurch area have additional growing problems to cope with that are happily rare for most of us. These Kiwis are made of tough stuff, however and they battle on and will be celebrating with another NZAGS Study Weekend in [February 2013](#), which the SRGC is pleased to support.

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Heinie from Cape Town, South Africa is a keen Clivia grower and has a general love for the Amaryllidaceae. His photos are of a South African plant, *Gladiolus alatus* (below left) growing wild near his home and *Crinum bulbispermum* (below right).



Across in Australia the SRGC has a strong group of members and many of these also support the Forum. Fermiano de Sousa is a plantaholic with a passion for seed growing who lives in Redesdale, Victoria.

Left: *Calochortus superbus*
Below: *Dianthus anatolicus*



Below: *Genista* 'Lydia' and two views across Fermi's garden.



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Australia is fortunate to enjoy many attractive public gardens, such as at [Buda](#), an historic garden and house in Castlemaine in Central Victoria. The [gardens and grounds at Buda](#) are significant as one of the most significant large nineteenth or early twentieth century suburban gardens surviving in Victoria.

Right: part of the Buda garden

Below : Australian native, [Telopea speciosissima \(Waratah\)](#) photos Fermi de Sousa.



Right: *Paeonia caucasica*

Pat Toolan, who is devoted to Iris and old roses, in about equal measure, gardens in Keyneton, South Australia. Pat's photos are of an *Iris paradoxa* form, grown from McMurtrie seed, and her garden, showing ... "the patch to the old bathhouse which now only houses the chook food."



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Right: one of Pat Toolan's own crosses, an Aril species cross PT0425

Below: a clump of *Iris trojana*



Paul Tyerman has a great interest in native plants as well as those from elsewhere in the world and has contributed some threads on [Australian Native Plants](#) at the [Australian National Botanic Garden in Canberra](#) to the forum as well as sharing pictures from his own garden with forumists.

Paul is another happy plantaholic who grows a wide range of plants in his small garden.

Below left: *Serapias lingua*, pink form



Right: *Astroloma foliosum* in the ANBG

"This tiny shrub (only a few inches tall, and about 35cm wide) is *Astroloma foliosum*. Each tricoloured flower is about 2.5cm long. I would imagine that these would work well if mass planted as a groundcover in ideal conditions.

Brachysema melanopetalum (*Gastrolobium melanopetalum*) is a little shrub with wonderful black flowers. I've attached a close-up of the flowers, as well as a more distance shot to show how they are amongst the leaves and stems etc. A lot of people don't notice it is in flower until I point it out. Being a lover of black flowers it is particularly appealing to me. I grow it in a tall pot to bring it up in height a bit, but I would imagine if left to grow by itself it would sprawl about a bit

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as it grew taller. Instead, I trim it back each year to keep it dense and compact. I think by now it has rooted down from the pot into the ground, which doesn't worry me in the slightest where it is positioned. As long as it is growing happily, that is what matters." P.T.



Above and right: *Brachysema melanopetalum*
Below: *Paeonia ostii*



We welcome your submissions for inclusion in the IRG. For instance: Have you a few good photos and some comments on your favourite plant? Have you seen some remarkable natural habitat you'd like to share with a wide readership? Why not get really involved in supporting the International Rock Gardener - send your ideas, contribution and photos to the IRG Editorial Team at editor@internationalrockgardener.net
We look forward to hearing from you!