

International Rock Gardener

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Planthunter John Watson and his botanist wife, Anita Flores Watson, live in Chile. These are two very busy people, who spend much time travelling to study plants and then writing about them. What then, do such plantspeople grow in their own garden? You may be surprised to see a number of plants which are familiar to many gardeners and arranged to be a pleasant place in which to relax, rather than a staid “museum” of only rare and odd specimens as may have been feared from two who spend so much time classifying plants! The humour and vivacity of the pair comes through in their comfortable and unpretentious surroundings.

The garden of J. Ian Young (and your editor, Margaret) is richly prized as an oasis of peace and beauty - but that is not to say there has not been a great deal of physical effort involved in its making - this is well displayed in the large number of troughs that decorate the terrace and J.I.Y. describes his preferred method of landscaping and planting up these various containers. Finally this month there is the description of a new *Galanthus* hybrid, G. ‘Dryad Venus’.

Cover photo: Saxifrages in flower in trough with concrete “rocks” – photo J. Ian Young.

PLANTING UP YOUR TROUGHS: photos and text J. Ian Young



The joy of troughs!

Planting a trough or other container is great fun; it is your chance to design a garden in miniature, not a miniature garden which is something else entirely. I like to think I am creating a small section of a landscape lifted from nature into my garden.

Before we embark on the creative side we have to address the practical issues of drainage and compost.

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COMPOST

The plants that we grow as 'Alpines' come from many countries and very different growing conditions. It is remarkable that so many can be grown in very similar conditions in our gardens. The main point about any growing medium or compost is the drainage. Water should be able to pass freely through the compost which should then remain moist but not water-logged. Air is also an important requirement at the roots of plants, without it, they, like us, will die.

A simple compost that will suit nearly all alpines is a 50/50 mix of a John Innes compost plus 3 to 6mm sharp grit. There is no difference between a J. I. No. 1, 2, or 3 compost, except for the amount of chemical fertiliser added; the higher the number, the more fertiliser; after six weeks of use they should all be more or less identical as the fertiliser is used up by this time. The plants can be roughly divided into coming from three types of habitat; High Alpine or Scree, Meadow and Woodland, all will do well in the 50/50 compost. If you wish, the scree plants could stand more grit, up to 75 percent, but as this is a much more sharply drained ("leaner") mixture, it will require more frequent watering. Many specialists prefer this mix for cushion plants. Similarly you may wish to add extra peat or leafmould to the basic 50/50 mix for woodland plants. This has the effect of holding on to moisture for longer and suits plants usually found growing in cool moist conditions. In recent years I have been using a potting medium of nothing but a sharp sand with great effect.



Whatever mix you use, the most important factor is that the plants have a steady supply of moisture when in growth and do not become bone dry, even when resting. You have to learn by your own experience (that is; your own mistakes) how often you need to water your plants. Feeding your alpines as they are growing is also important. Even in extreme conditions, alpine plants receive nutrients and minerals while growing. On mountain screes the minerals come from the breaking down of

the rocks, nitrogen is produced in lightning storms and these are often stored up in snow and ice to be released in the spring thaw, just when the alpines are coming into growth. The best way to imitate this is by using some of the many liquid feeds available, on a regular basis. 'Little and often' is always better than one big feed once in a blue moon; just think how you would like to be fed. The same rules apply to garden soils: if you have a

light, sandy soil then add 5 to 10cms of 3 to 6mm grit and dig this in to the top 15cms of the bed and you have an ideal medium to receive your alpines. If you have a heavy clay soil, you will need a lot more grit and a soil conditioner such as peat or leafmould until you get a freely draining mix. Once your plants are in place, a top dressing of 3 to 6 mm grit should be added; this not only looks good but helps the drainage around the small plants.

Troughs come in many sizes – this one houses a mountain but is the size of a dinner plate!



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DRAINAGE

It is essential to have drainage holes in the base to allow surplus water to drain out of the trough. You will have to cover these drainage holes with something that will allow the water to escape but keep the compost in. I find that some small plastic mesh, available at most garden centres, is ideal; cut it into squares a bit larger than the drainage holes and place it over the hole.

I also sometimes cut a strip of cloth from an old towel, or some capillary watering mat, about 2 to 3cms wide by 15 cms long and push it through each drainage hole so that half the length is inside and half outside the trough. I then put the plastic mesh over the hole and the strip of cloth pinning it in place with a small nail. This strip of cloth then acts like a wick helping to remove surplus moisture from the trough whether your trough is placed directly on the ground or raised up on blocks.

Adding gravel or crocks as a drainage layer in the bottom third of the trough has long been advised but it does not do what you might expect. Rather than allowing water to drain away the moisture stays in the layer of potting mix above the crocks meaning the neck of the plant can remain excessively wet for longer.

I do not use these crocks - if your compost is well drained as described above the drainage is all through the mixture so there is no need to take up space in a shallow trough for a drainage layer when that extra bit of compost would be of more benefit to the plants. You can put a small handful of gravel over the mesh if you prefer.

If you live in a hot dry climate you may even want to place a layer of some good garden compost or some rotted turf in the bottom third of the trough to act as a reservoir for moisture to prevent the trough from drying out too quickly.



Left: How many people fill a trough – Right: How one **should** fill a trough



Flat planting is rather boring.

ADDING COMPOST

The next stage is to add your compost. First rule, if you think the trough will be too heavy once it is planted, is to place it in situ before you start to fill it up. Troughs look best raised up on a few bricks or blocks but make sure that the bricks are not going to be directly under the drainage holes as this will defeat the object and stop the moisture escaping.

I always find that people rarely add sufficient compost, they usually fill it to about 2 to 3cms from the top of the sides. You should

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mound it up high so that you cannot get any more to stay in. Remember you are creating this landscape from scratch, and you want an interesting effect as well as a suitable environment to grow mountain plants, so to make a mountain, mound your potting mix up high. Many lament the fact that their garden is flat and uninteresting; now is the chance to create your ideal garden.

ROCKS

There is a huge range of rocks that you can use to create your landscape. I would suggest that you use large pieces of rock as these will produce the most dramatic effect and create a good environment for the plants.

Most garden centres now stock a selection of rocks for sale from limestone to granite. Remember if you are collecting the rocks from nature you should do this within the laws of your country and also think of the natural environment and do not take them from the wild and beautiful places that could be damaged. I get rock from a local quarry and can select the sizes and shapes for myself.

Add the rocks to your mound of compost and roughly position them to a pleasing shape that will also provide planting opportunities.

You may have to remove some compost to bed some of the larger rocks down; sometimes the rock goes to the bottom of the trough.

Once your main rocks are in place you may have to add some smaller pieces to help retain the compost in the raised up areas. I like to use long thin bits of rock the bottom half of which is pushed into the compost to hold it in place. Sometimes I mix a small amount of cement mortar to hold these small rocks firm.



Trough with one large stone – then with that stone broken up.



High landscaping brings many advantages - firstly it adds around 50 percent more volume to the planting medium which holds more nutrients and moisture. This height also adds aspects so you have North, South, East and West sides. A flat planted trough, like a solar panel, absorbs maximum heat from the sun resulting in maximum evaporation of moisture; with the piled up version the sun cannot hit the entire surface at the same time so the evaporation rate is greatly reduced. Plants that like hot and dry conditions can be planted near the top while those that require cooler moist

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conditions are placed near the rim on the shady side. I like to take time and rarely plant up a trough immediately I finish the landscaping, preferring to ensure that the rock work looks effective in itself – the plants can then be added to further enhance and complete the picture.

Concrete blocks or other old concrete - often referred to these days as “urbanite” - can also be broken up to use instead of natural stone. The plants are just as happy when this material is used in a trough or crevice garden.



Trough with urbanite landscaping, ready for planting, then with plants and labels, to be photographed for later ID.

Taking your time at this stage is important; if your trough looks good before you start to plant it up then it will look great with some plants in. Now fill all the pockets and crevices with compost.

Also I want to encourage you to be imaginative and recycle materials such as broken concrete paving slabs and blocks even old roofing slates are excellent for creating a crevice type trough and they can look good too.

Again the object is to create height. Excellent planting sites for small alpines can be created using a few bits of broken paving slab which will soon weather to look like stone.

Old roofing slates stood on edge to create a series of crevices provide well drained sites suitable for saxifrages and other small cushion-forming plants.

Old tree stumps and weathered bits of wood can be used to make an interesting trough for small woodland plants, ferns and grasses.

By creating this extra height you have also increased the volume of compost that the trough can hold and so make more nutrient and moisture available to the plants.

PLANTS

Adding the plants is the last bit and it is much better to use small rooted cuttings or seedlings as these are easier to fit into the small planting spaces.

Small plants also establish quicker and grow into the overall shape of your trough and rocks, giving a more natural effect.

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If I do use larger, nursery bought plants, I always wash as much of the compost from their roots as I can before planting them. This may seem to be extreme but they will establish much better this way. Sometimes it is necessary to add a plant with a bigger root system as you are placing the rocks.

It is always a good idea to photograph the labels of the plants on the trough before you finish- especially if, like me, you do not like to see the finished trough full of labels.

TOP DRESSING

Once you have finished planting up your trough it is time to top dress it with gravel just like in a scree. It is best if you can get gravel that is made from the same type of rocks that you have used for the trough or at least a close approximation. It also looks more natural if the gravel is not uniform in size and shape but has a mixture of sizes. I often break up the same type of rocks that I have used with a big hammer to produce the small quantity of gravel required to finish off a trough.



WATERING

Always the last stage is to water the trough thoroughly to settle the compost and top dressing and ensure that the plant roots are in good contact with the compost.

AFTER CARE

As long as you start out with a good compost mixture your trough should look good for several years. I always top dress our troughs in February with a dusting of a good balanced fertiliser mix that where possible also has added trace elements such as Vitax Q4 or a growmore NPK 7-7-7 is also fine. It is extremely important to water this in as soon as you apply it as it will burn any foliage that it comes into contact with. This application of fertiliser gives the plants a boost as Spring arrives and guarantees healthy plants and a good flowering.



CONCLUSION

There are many ways to plant up a trough, my message is be bold, use your imagination and get your trough looking good before you put any plants in. The above planting methods apply equally to real and synthetic stone troughs.

I will finish off with a selection of troughs.

I hope they will encourage you all to go out and have a go.

J.I.Y.

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Left: Granite trough planted with sempervivum and sedum around a "mountain"

Below: Small trough newly planted using slate



Group of troughs landscaped using broken concrete / urbanite.

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Left: Concrete trough with natural stone
Below: Concrete trough with tufa-marl
"mountain" in full bud with *Erinus alpinus*



Right: Natural stone landscaping with
"hill" and sand.

Below: Tiny tuf-marl trough, newly
planted.



Newly planted trough
landscaped with
sandstone – the
possibilities are
endless.

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Granite trough landscaped with slate – an early shot and later, well-clothed with plants.



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Saxifrages make great trough plants – these below are planted in urbanite and are flowering well. The second trough uses thin concrete slices and has matured well, now it houses many self-sown orchids, too.



A view of a larger “trough” – in fact a raised bed made of concrete slabs bolted together – again orchids are self-sowing amongst the *Petrophytum* and *Phlox*.

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Something blue.....



Above left: *Edraianthus* across a raised bed/large trough and right: a *Primula marginata* trough.



Ramonda trough with broken concrete slabs to raise height.

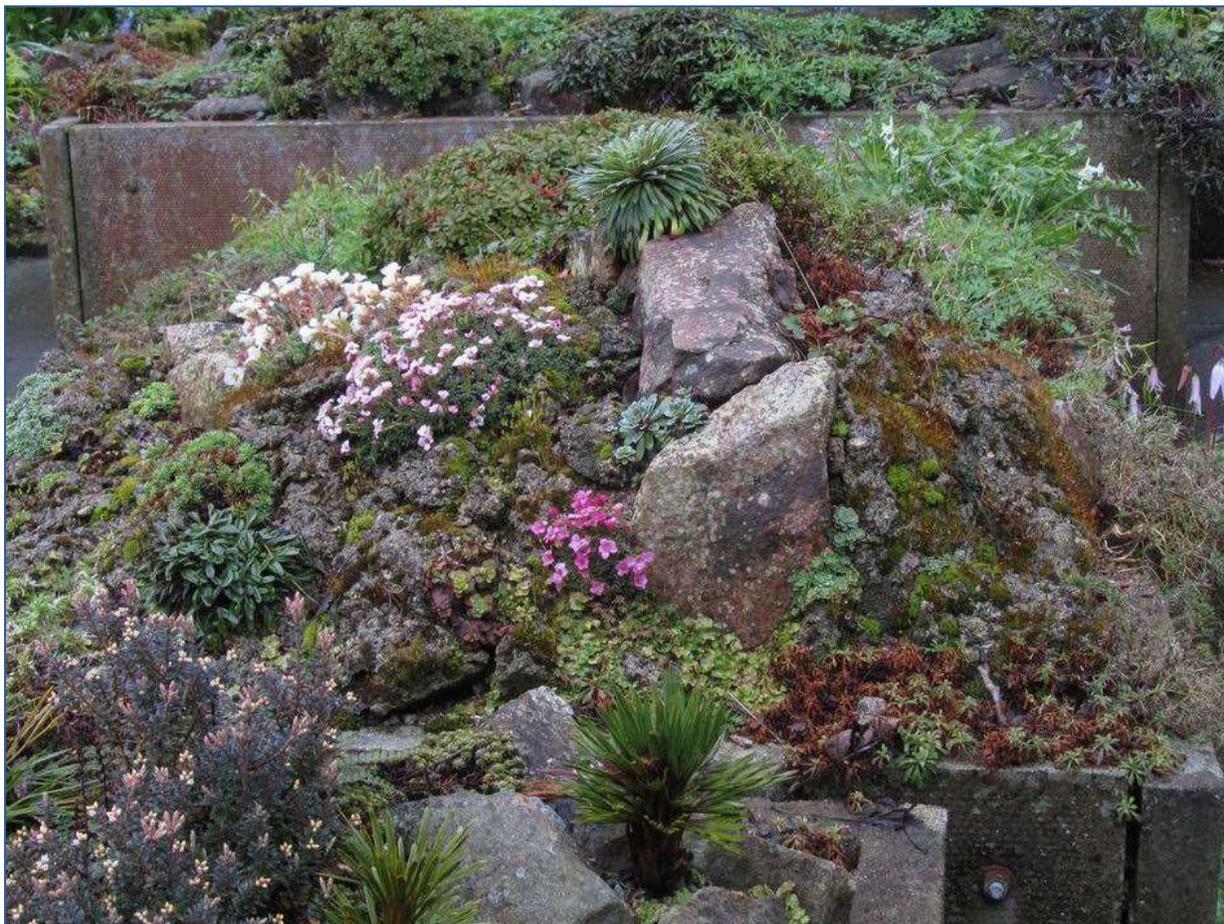
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Slab bed being reworked with real stone and urbanite



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The slab trough with planting establishing well.



Trough in icy snow

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Never underestimate the joy of troughs!

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OUR CHILEAN GARDEN OF VILLA MERLYN: Text and photos, John and Anita Watson

In the beginning

First of all, where exactly are we on the map? The small town of Los Andes, near to where we live, is situated on parallel 32°50'S. This is roughly equivalent to Morocco or Tunisia in the Northern Hemisphere, but conditions are less extreme here thanks to the moderating effects of the cold Humboldt Current off the Pacific and cooler air flowing down from the nearby high Andes. In consequence we have a relatively agreeable low rainfall mediterranean climate, if pretty fiercely hot in high summer.



Actually, our home is in the small, widespread and mainly agricultural community of Calle Larga, shortly to the south of Los Andes. Santiago, the capital, lies no more than a convenient 50 miles (80 km) further south still by motorway and is sunk in a smog basin. So it's our infinite relief to be cut off from that by an east-west spur inclining down from the main Andean range. This spur forms one side of the valley of the Aconcagua river, which courses down, often as cascades, from the mountain of that name, the highest in the Southern Hemisphere. On clear days its peak is just visible from the far end of our garden. The river itself passes along one side of Los Andes, feeding a widespread network of artificial rustic canals, one of which supplies our garden with indispensable water for the irrigation supply canal and numerous channels branching from it. At just over 800 m above sea level, we sit at the base of the main Andean foothills, with mountainous uplands visible on all four sides, the others being the two lateral dividing spurs containing the river and the coastal range to the west, which the river cuts through further downstream on its way to the Pacific Ocean.

When we came to live in Chile in 1997 we knew what we wanted. As much peace and quiet as possible; a large garden; a house with room for all the rubbish we'd shipped out from England in the container and more we would certainly accumulate over time; sheds for the likewise transported garden paraphernalia; and convenient accessibility to Santiago without being resident in or near that 'Big Smoke'. The first idea was open mediterranean woodland on a mild slope of the coastal range, preferably with a stream running down through it. But for family reasons and security during our long absences we had to settle for the flat immediate environs of Los Andes. We were taken by the agent to a dizzy selection of properties for sale.

Just as we were beginning to despair - with the vessel bearing our bulging container due to dock in less than a month at Valparaiso, and with nowhere to put its contents, we were shown this, our present and permanent roost. Although not ideal - what ever is? - it came closest to what we were seeking. One of just a small local handful of variably sized dwellings in relative isolation, it's set in a long, narrow, rectangular plot completely open to orchard farmland on one side and almost so on the other long side with a high adobe front wall giving us privacy from our minor country road and a degree of security. The single story mixed adobe, brick and wood habitation, situated almost at the front and right against one side, is a reflection of the plot itself, long and narrow, with heaps of room for our junk at the rear. For both house and garden, one long side looks out to the east, offering dramatic views of the Andes, while the other faces west, to the coastal range and spectacular sunsets. The narrow north front receives the midday sun.

We came here to garden in central Chile for our own pleasure with a double dream. On one hand, our seaborne container held no small number of favourite bulbs and other dwarf to medium plants. These had either been brought from, or recently bought in England, and were able to withstand the longish sea journey: bearded irises, for example. We were sure most or all of them would be unique in this part of the world, and would delight local visitors once established along with a parallel notion for a subtropical garden.

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A recent bird's eye view of our plot, Villa Merlyn, Calle Larga, Los Andes, Chile - from Google Earth.



Welcome to our humble abode – as it was in October 2004. The house is near the road, the garden stretches behind, with open views all around (photo Anita)

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Our garden in August 2017 from over the adjacent farmer's wall. A towering corkscrew willow behind, with *Prunus cerasifera* var. *pissardii* and *Malus x purpurea* 'Lemoinei' (L) in blossom.



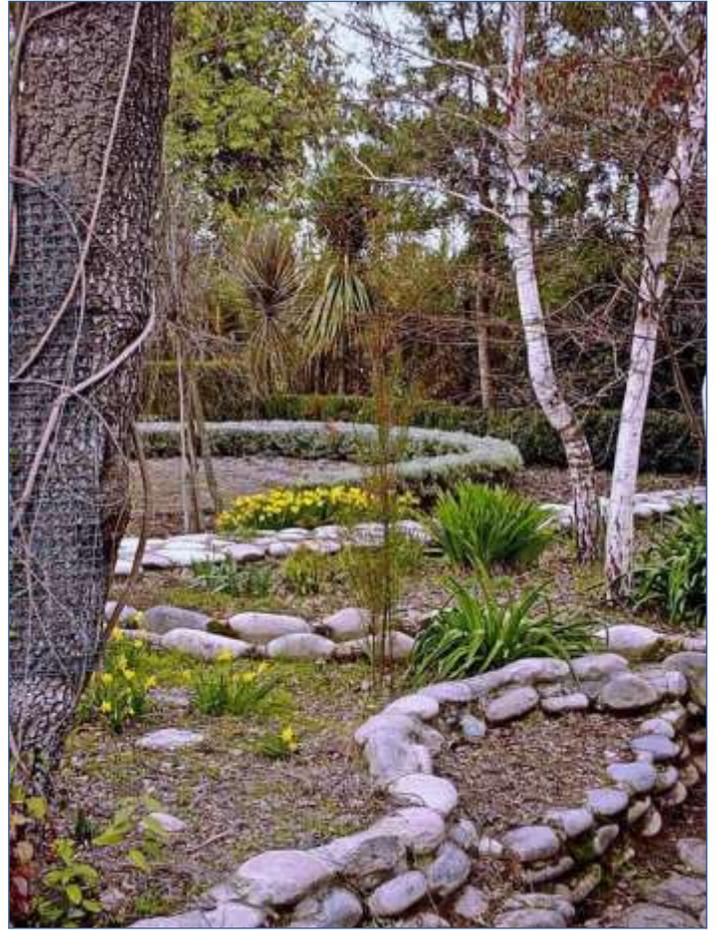
August 2008 Our plot is long and narrow. Arriving in 1997 we inherited a recently planted walnut grove with 40 trees and just a few ornamentals near the house. (photo Anita)



October 2004 We opted to keep 30 walnuts and got them grafted with a good variety. Next we had a curved pergola made, stretching across and dividing the trees from our planned garden area. This makes a fine home for climbing roses. (photo Anita)

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Left below: August 2007 A recently laid cobble path and an already well-established clump of Narcissus 'Tete-a-Tete' (photo Anita)



Right, above: August 2008 The garden slopes gently towards the house from the back where our irrigation canal supply passes. We re-routed and rebuilt the canal with large water-worn cobbles. (photos Anita)



June 2006
Originally we had intended to keep the main walnut sector free of other plants - but we ended up planting ornamentals along, under and between their rows! Yet more cobbles were used.

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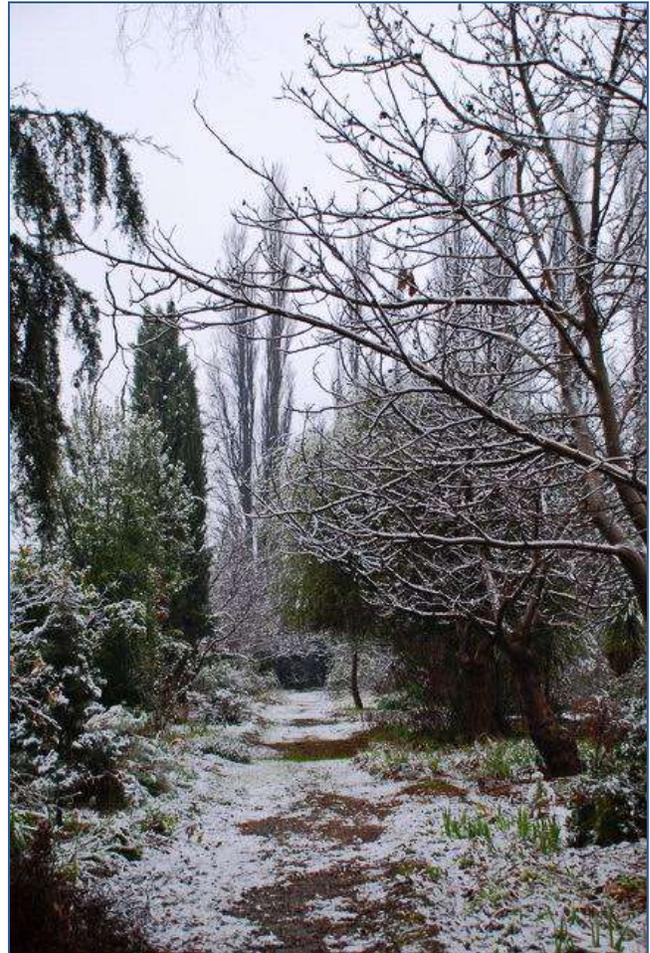
August 2008 We love pergolas and have four in total. They give height, colour and structure to a garden. Best of all, their denizens climb above the weeds! (photo Anita)

August 2017 Now for the serious chainsaw stuff. When the construction ends, the maintenance begins. Removing a large willow branch that was dangerously overhanging our neighbour's fire logs!

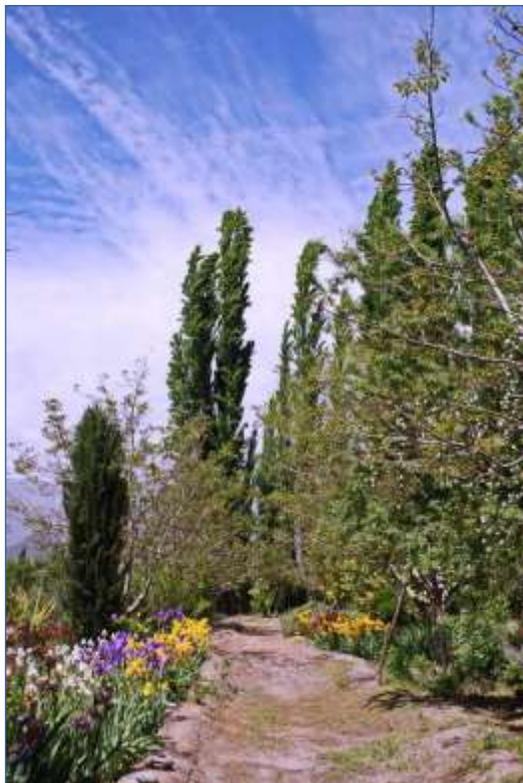
October 2010
Putting the
outside wall to
good use to be
clothed by an
eye-catching wall
to wall covering
in the form of
*Macfadyena
unguis-cati* (syn.
*Dolichandra
unguis-cati*)



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Left: November 2011 *Lonicera periclymenum* on another sector of the front wall, cascading down an orange tree to the street side. Right: July 2017 Our garden is ordinary, long and large – too large really. It experiences a range of climate from deepest mid-winter below zero, as here, to broiling high summer in the upper 30 °C.



Far left:
September 2013 The same vista in early spring. One of our few dwarfs, *Ipheion uniflorum* 'Rolf Fiedler' lines the path. It arose, 'phoenix-like' from scraps which passed through a fine sieve.

Left: October 2010 A third shot of the same view, this is in summer. Looking towards the back. The wide gangway is a circuit for tractor fumigation of the walnut trees. Also useful for weedkiller control!

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Will they or won't they?

Generally speaking, once we'd planned and developed the 'grand design', and settled on areas where ornamentals were to be planted, or had set up container facilities for rarer, smaller stuff in need of TLC, our initial 'importations' lived up to our expectations in all respects. Those still with us (happily the large majority) continue to do so. As for my subtropical dream, it turned into a climatic nightmare! We discovered the hard way that we're living down in a shallow but treacherous frost pocket. During severely cold spells under clear skies the heavier biting night air of winter descends from the snowy peaks of the high Andes just to our east and accumulates in our local depression. By contrast, it continues on down past Los Andes along the course of the main river valley, warming as it goes. Consequently our minimum temperatures are significantly lower, quite commonly to -5°C , and rarely even down as far as -8°C . Furthermore, the frost can set in during the whole night, for as long as eight hours or so, making it yet more lethal for tender plants. Rarely, we even get snow in addition.

If our winter chill denies us subtropicals, what about our summer temperatures? Well, those are no less challenging, being not infrequently in the baking mid to upper 30s centigrade day after day. So in theory northern temperate stuff is off the menu too. For example, we love mountain ash, and have brought those up from the cooler south of Chile and given them a whirl, but they won't be doing with us. Monkey puzzle, *Araucaria*, that renowned symbol of Chile, fries alive to a crisp brown. Another no go. But happily the very garden itself supplies a surprisingly wide range of conditions, and we feel our way by trial and error - win some, lose some. A plant that has failed miserably at various attempts in different spots will suddenly succeed dramatically somewhere or other, often for no obvious reason. Or something that never seemed possible on paper will grow almost anywhere without turning a hair. Thus we've gradually managed to establish a wide range, from cool northern woodlanders such as primulas and hellebores below willows and birches, to cannas, desert cacti and *Yucca aloifolia*, the murderous 'Spanish dagger' (a name shared with similar *Y. gloriosa*).

Taking shape

But to begin at the beginning. What sort of grounds did we inherit on completion of the contract? As noted, the plot is long and narrow - what was referred to as high aspect ratio for aircraft wings in my younger days of model making. In fact an aspect ratio of a little more than 3:1 given its 153 yards length by 34-35 wide (= 140 x 32 m). My parents called our house in England 'Merlyn', so Anita and I settled on 'Villa Merlyn' because we liked the name, which maintained continuity together with the addition of a touch of Spanish lingo. Seen from above on Google Earth our 'V.M.' rectangle stands out for its rather informal and tightly disposed collection of mature trees. These contrast absolutely with the surrounding much larger, neat, geometrical agricultural fields and orchards with their dead-straight, even lines of trees, vines and other crops. But just looking down at all the scattered individual surrounding private properties or estates with their almost non-existent gardens to mere patios, makes you realise it's actually ginormous for what it is. No wonder the previous ageing owners couldn't cope! (Even though younger than I now am - ha ha!)

Small but beautifully formed - a special place in our hearts

Finally, to inform whoever reading this is specifically interested in plants which fall under the vague descriptive umbrella of 'alpine' plants, I come to our dwarfs, other 'shorties' and their non-existent rock garden; why the last died the natural death before it was even started; and what alternative arrangements evolved for the prostrate and short non-tender plants that mean so much to us. At the end of the day we were woken abruptly from our original dream. Various cumulative effects militated against the option of alpine gardening for us. Compared with most aspects of gardening, rock structures and collections of small, choice plants require far more and regular attention and succumb readily to neglect. In the early days we were frequently out in the field for long periods in the southern spring and summer and then back in England for months during the northern equivalent. Absences of

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half the year were not uncommon. Unfortunately too, care of finicky, demanding mountain plants is not something that can be passed to your average Chilean agricultural worker, such as we had to rely on when not in residence.

Consequently, we were obliged to trim the wings of our soaring ambitions back drastically to what is practicably possible for us. That meant a combination of plants in the dormant stage whilst we were away, essentially bulbs, corms and tubers such as species tulips, narcissi, sternbergias, grass-leaved nerines, ornithogalums, (friendly!) oxalis, *Freesia laxa*, *Biarum davisii*, *Alstroemeria pulchra* and *Ipheion uniflorum*. Several *Zephyranthes* species also flower late and have flourished, unaffected by our enforced neglect. Dwarf bearded irises are also at rest for much of the main growing season. Another broad and tolerant group is the woodlanders, exemplified by Pacific irises, violets, cyclamen and *Bletilla*. A very few vulnerable specials in pots can be placed for regular 'locum' watering: campanulas, *Aquilegia flabellata*, *Fuchsia procumbens*. The collection is completed by an assortment of fifteen or so fully exposed 'toughies', unaffected by the absence of our TLC. An analysis of the 71 concerned gives: 37 geophytes (any with underground storage organs), 31 herbs & shrublets and 3 succulents.

All have been acquired over time from the variety of sources already noted, with more than half having arrived from England, North America or Argentina directly via ourselves or others. After a little diligent searching, about 16 of our 71 can be purchased as Chilean nursery 'fodder'. Of course there have been a few failures, it hardly needs to be added, but the only one that really sticks in the craw is the inability of any crocus in any form to succeed in Chile. We've tried without joy on various occasions as both seed and corms, and have never seen a solitary crocus anywhere in Chile or Argentina during all our travels over the years either. Maybe for some reason they're genetically incapable of adapting to the six month seasonal difference between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

As a result of all these exigencies and limitations, instead of being concentrated in one or two particular areas, possibly including frames or an alpine house, our low, neat stuff is scattered around the entire outside area according to the needs of the plants and how they fit into the overall scheme. Certain tendencies are evident. By far the greatest concentration is situated around and near the house, not least small choice species and anything in pots requiring regular attention. The adjacent front of the garden is also largely our woodland section. Most other plants in this category occupy the front of borders, particularly the two long side strips at the rear.

This selection of outdoor, year-round dwarf or compact species and cultivars is encapsulated by a picture gallery of a number of them, plus the following list of those yet to be recorded as photos: *Babiana stricta*, *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*, *Campanula portenschlagiana*, *C. poscharskyana*, *Helianthemum nummularium*, *Iris reticulata*, *Nerine masonorum*, *Sedum sexangulare*, *Sternbergia clusiana* & *Zephyranthes citrina*. The total of what passes for this small alpine collection is completed by those stalwarts of British suburban low front walls, *Aubrieta* and *Aurinia* (ex *Alyssum*). That other unrefined suburbanite, *Cerastium tomentosum*, aka 'snow in summer' has been photographed though. It romps about in its usual familiar non-stop fashion, forming silvery carpets over and around equally competitive ground cover such as ivy, and we let them fight it out among themselves. We lost our choicest *aubrieta* by accident, when swamped by a creeping oxalis weed and pulled out unknowingly along with the pest. More can easily be raised from seed however.

We shall continue to augment little by little as opportunity and suitable plants offer themselves. For instance, on our latest return flight from Heathrow we carried back small packets containing three or four each of *Anemone blanda* and *Tulipa tarda*, both established earlier, but then lost through being swamped by 'bullies'; also 'first timers' *Galanthus woronowii* and *Iris* 'Kathleen Hodgkin', the latter to be potted up alongside our few *Iris* 'Harmony' survivors, which are being nursed back from another severe dose of veggie-bullying.

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August 2017 Our mobile lifestyle doesn't permit a rock garden, alpine house or frames – just a few pots scattered around for desiderata. But to see the Andes from our home is some compensation.



November 2016 Along with *Lonicera sempervirens* and *Campsis radicans*, *Clematis jackmanii* 'Superba' shares *Pandorea's* house trellis duty.

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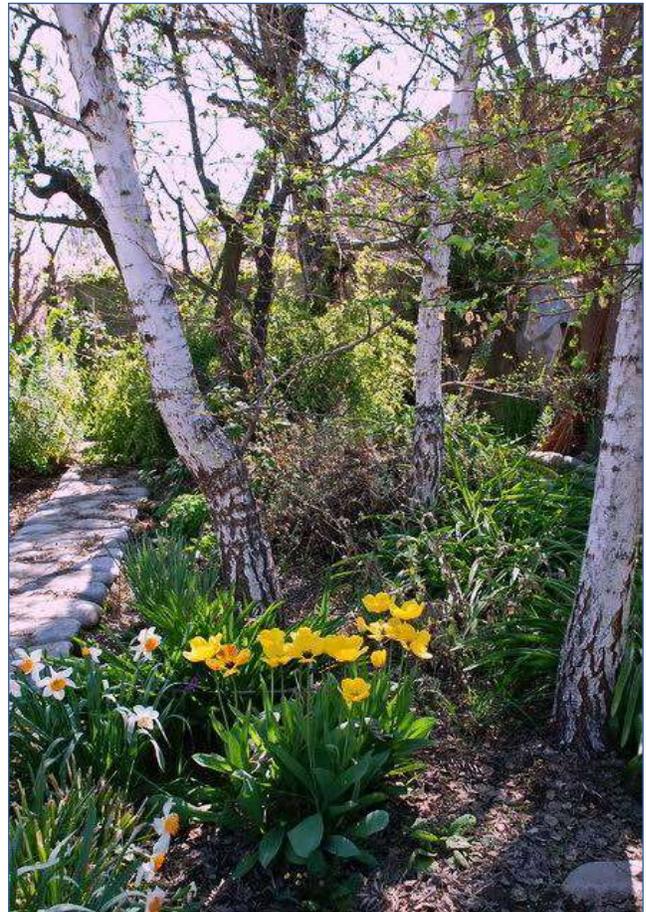
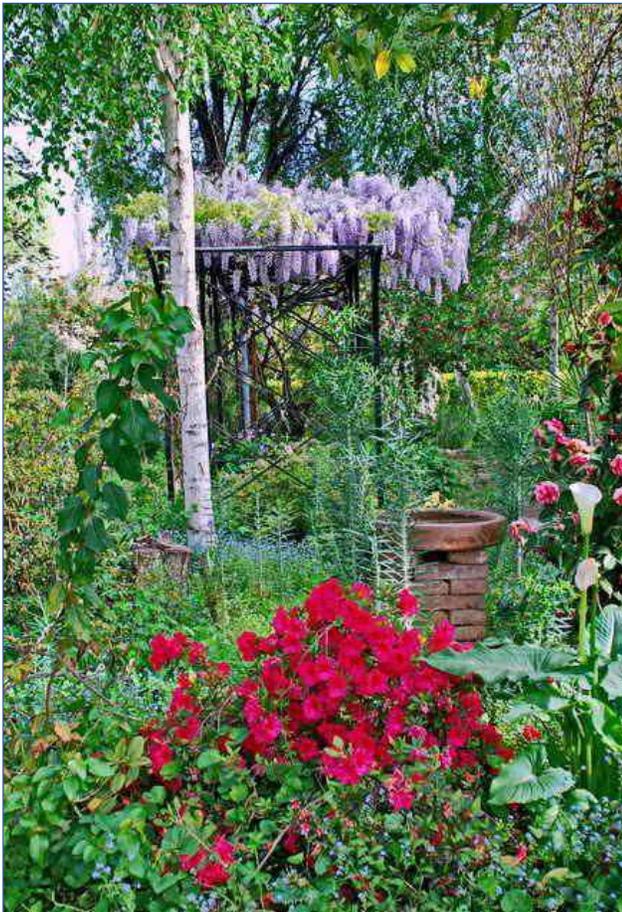


November 2015 The front of our patio trellis is very decently clothed for much of the year by *Pandorea jasiminoides*.

---International Rock Gardener---



Left: August 2011 Narcissi are the most successful, prolific and free-flowering of spring bulbs with us. Here are groups of two cultivars, with yellow Narcissus 'Jetfire' to the fore. Right: September 2010 Anything the Japanese do, we can try to imitate. An ornamental 'footbridge' across our lower irrigation canal supply – plus Spanish Bluebells. The neighbour's orchard is behind.



Left: October 2015 Orange trees by the house provide welcome cool shade in spring and summer for temperate woodlanders. Our *Wisteria* trellis in full cry. Right: September 2010 At Home - Bringing a little more British springtime to our supposedly mediterranean-climate garden. The Birch trees are a surprise.

---International Rock Gardener---



October 2010 Under and beyond a grafted walnut – conventional Iris and summer Rose beds.



From left to right, above: December 2007 A summery corner, with *Phlomis*, *Berberis*, *Oxalis* and *Clematis flammea* in fluffy seed. January 2016 That we have so few outdoor exotics, by British standards, is due to being in a frost pocket. It is frustrating though. At least we have a few year-round outdoor Cannas – on a dull day! June 2006 But here's the real pride and joy of our exotica, reach-for-the-sky *Dahlia imperialis*, the giant of the genus, doing its thing for the one year it wasn't clobbered by the frosts. (photos Anita)

---International Rock Gardener---



June 2006
Dahlia imperialis – the panicle with the large flowers beginning to open.

Below left:
August 2011
Landscapers here urge planting of native species. We prefer 'foreign' unfamiliar, but *Tropaeolum x tenuirostre* brought itself in with some leaf mould. It now blankets its spot.



June 2006 *Iris unguicularis*, a narrow and short leaved form. As a symbol of the end of one season and the start of the next it is a good beginning to the sequence.

In the next section, the photos will appear in seasonal order, starting with what could either be regarded as the end of one or the beginning of the next. N. B. # indicates plants which are always/only grown by us in containers.



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June 2006 *Narcissus romieuxii* – perfectly hardy with us but would be swamped, lost or neglected if planted out with us. (photo Anita)



Above left: July 2017 *Euonymus fortunei* 'Emerald'n'Gold' Our only qualification as a woody dwarf evergreen – although we do have a *Pinus mugo* about 1.65m (5.5ft) high.



Left: July 2008 *Viola odorata* A welcome self-supporting background in many places. The leaves also feed our Southern Fritillary Butterfly caterpillars. (photo Anita)

Right: August 2017 *Allium triquetrum* – rampant but pretty, A perfect complement for our clumps of British and Spanish Bluebells.

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August 2007 Iris 'Harmony' - a paradigm of dwarfs in our open garden, swamped by 'bullying vegetation' since the photo - with a few only just rescued in time.

August 2008 *Lachenalia aloides*. It lives outside in its container but we dare not risk it in the open garden or without temporary cover during frosty spells. (photos Anita)



August 2008 *Cyclamen coum* - not reduced but just hanging on. *C. hederifolium* is our greatest success of eight species. *Cyclamen coum* var. *album*, below: Sadly this was as far



as it got before being overrun by the madding crowd of invading neighbours while we were away.

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Left: August 2006 *Muscari botryoides* was a persistent weed on our Petts Wood rock garden in England but with plenty of garden space to spread its wings for us here in Chile.

Right: August 2008 *Cyclamen pseudibericum* just about holds its own in our woodland. Note gourmandising of viola leaves by fritillary caterpillars. (photos Anita)



August 2011 *Narcissus canaliculatus*. Except for *N. bulbocodium* types, all our daffs, little and big, hold their own and more, in the open garden.

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August 2017
Narcissus 'Tete-a-Tete' - the most prolific of all its genus for us, forming two long borders and several clumps - all from one original bulb!



Above left: # August 2004 *Fritillaria uva-vulpis* reproduces madly as 'rice bulbs' but only rarely flowers as in this photo. Right: September 2008 *Oxalis obtusa*. We have *Oxalis* for all seasons - desperate weeds - garden staples - choice desiderata - you name it! We wouldn't risk this South African in the open or unprotected. (photos Anita)

---International Rock Gardener---



September 2013 *Ipheion uniflorum* 'Rolf Fiedler' – a splash of reflected sky- this is joyfully ineradicable to date. We have eleven widely scattered lots as a few to massed colonies - only one of which we planted!



linifolia, another of those first loves. It's not in the least intimidated by the more muscular occupants of our open garden.



Far left:
#September
2008 *Tulipa humilis* 'Little Beauty'.
Species tulips were among my first loves and remain so. They do pretty well with us here. This is a dainty favourite, not for the hurly-burly of the open ground.

Left:
September
2017 *Tulipa*

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Left to right above: September 2006 Dwarf bearded *Iris* In 1997 while packing in the UK for our move to Chile, I bought a cheap 'lucky dip' brown paper bag of three un-named 'mini' *Iris* rhizomes to take with is. This is one of them.

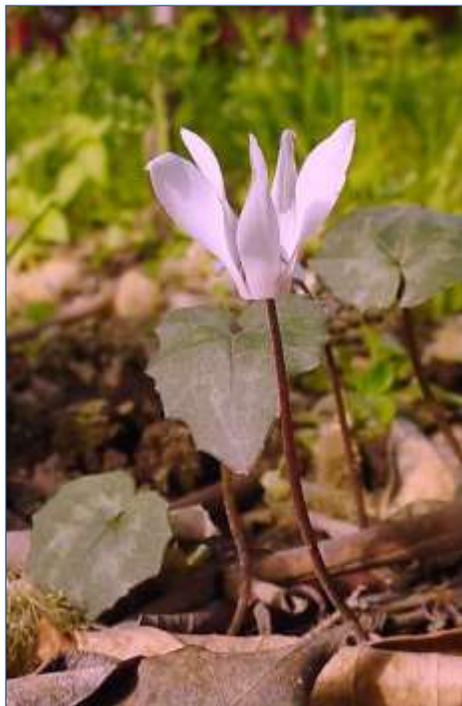
September 2008 *Iris* 'Little Grannie Smith' – another of the trio of un-named cheapos from the 'two-a-penny' general store, which I have since managed to identify.

September 2008 *Iris* 'Blue Pygmy' – one we picked up here in Chile, along with an equally small yellow. Fortunately I already knew its name.



October 2017 Dwarf bearded *Iris* - the third of our surprise cheapo package from 1997. It remains unidentified to date. September 2008 *Iris* 'Tinkerbell' I managed to find a name for this parting gift of 1997 from my lifelong best friend. In the past he'd received a number of quality large *Iris germanica* hybrids from me. (photos Anita)

---International Rock Gardener---



September 2006 *Cyclamen creticum* – another we hang onto by the skin of our teeth. Although happy in the open here, it has since been transferred to a container for safety.)



September 2008 *Anemone blanda*. Another subsequent sad loss to over-running by surrounding over-exuberant vegetation.



September 2007 *Tulipa vvededyenskyi*. This spectacular species we brought with us is the only one we have tough enough for the open ground. (photos Anita)

---International Rock Gardener---



Left to right above: September 2013 Iris Pacific Coast seedling- when she stayed with us, our dear fellow viola fanatic friend, the late Kim Blaxland, thought our 'woodland' section would suit these irises. September 2013 Iris Pacific Coast seedling – so Kim sent us seed from which we raised, inter alia, the six portrayed here. What a gift! September 2017 Iris Pacific Coast seedling, the third of Kim's here. Every one a winner.



Left to right above: October 2010 Iris Pacific Coast seedling - As this paler hybrid shows, the colours, shades and patterns are wonderfully variable and all so captivating.

Apart from ubiquitous *Iris douglasii*, in Britain I only knew and treasured *Iris innominata aurea*, similar to this one. Kim's were a revelation. October 2010 Iris Pacific Coast seedling . Kim's penultimate here – delicate and perfect among forget-me-nots, (as if we could!) #October 2006 Iris Pacific Coast seedling The last here - and one of the most dramatic of Kim's Specials. We don't remember seeing it for a while - cross fingers it's okay. (photos Anita).

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This last section of plants in our Chilean garden includes plants collected by ourselves. These are marked (C).



October 2017 *Ornithogalum umbellatum*. We grow it in a big container and also use it for bordering, as with *Zephyranthes candida*. So many Stars of Bethlehem – surely a confusion for the Wise Men!

September 2017 *Viola sororia*. Another seed gift from Kim, this time of our mutual subject of fanatical study. It is certainly making itself at home.



Viola sororia - the caterpillar of the lowland viola fritillary is probably responsible for the perforated leaves. *V. tricolor* and *V. odorata* also play host to this welcome resident of our garden.



September 2013 *Yramea cytheris* sunning itself on our drive, here a female in egg-laying mode. The lowland temperate South American Fritillary caterpillars feed exclusively on violas here.

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October 2017 *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* is the size antithesis of the orange-flowered *G. robusta*, which is the tall guardian of the entrance to our home.



October 2017
Cerastium tomentosum. 'Snow in summer' it might be but except for this year and one other, it's all the snow we get at any time of year.
October 2017
Aquilegia flabellata nana seedling. We bought this and a pink form a good while back and have kept the blue going well from subsequent seed but the pink gave up the ghost.

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Left: # *Sempervivum arachnoideum* in early season growth, before the development of its 'web' and reddish coloration. Note essential blue, crumbled anti-gastropod pellet defence in the centre.

Right: October 2017 *Deutzia gracilis* 'Nikko'- a genuine dwarf that would grace any large rock garden. Ours just survived a period of accidental drought last summer but is now recovering.



October 2017 *Fuchsia procumbens* - the first flowering of a recent gift from a doctor friend, a keen amateur gardener.

Our thriving newbie in its hanging basket mode, unshaken by the sub-zeros of winter.



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October 2017 The diminutive *Cymbalaria muralis* – along with *Allium triquetrum*, one of our uninvited yet welcome residents to make itself (thoroughly) at home.



Left to right above: October 2010 *Bleitilla striata* – a pleasant surprise to find in a small Santiago nursery. Its decent clump is getting over-run, so it's in urgent need of rescuing.

Sprekelia formosissima. The stylish Aztec lily is as vigorous for us as our daffs. Surely we can say at last, here's one that doesn't tolerate wintery UK outdoors conditions! *Dianthus plumarius*. As a child, South America meant jungles, vivid blue butterflies, anteaters, jaguars and condors. Never did I dream to find such an average plant of our English garden here. *Drosantheum floribundum*. *Drosantheums* in variety adapt well to our garden without special care. Here is the dwarfest doing its thing out onto a wide pathway.

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November 2007 *Geranium sanguineum* – an earlyish acquisition of ours in Chile.

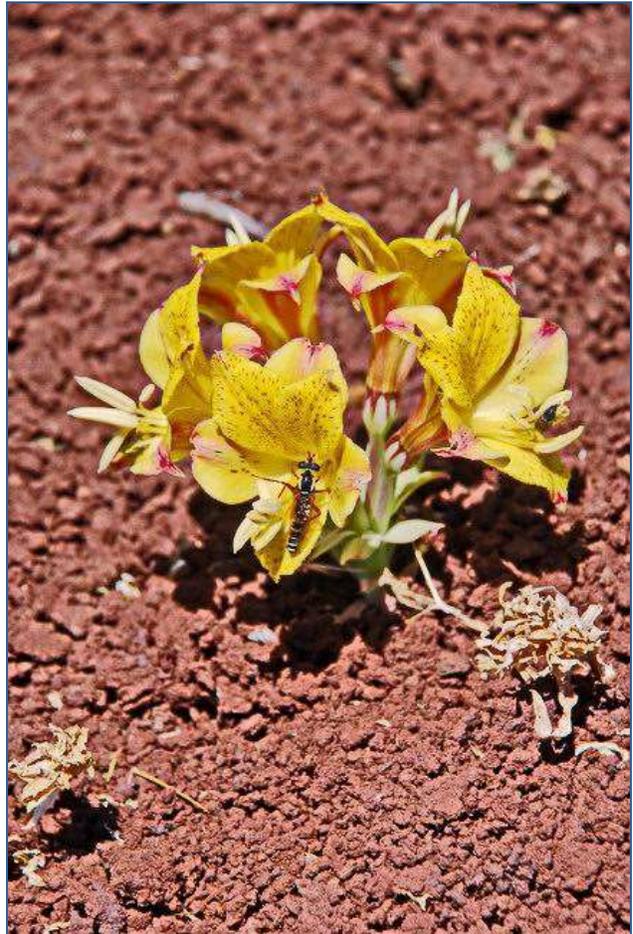


(C)# November 2008 *Habranthus magnoi* – one of the incidental fruits of our 2007 viola hunt in NW Argentina. It hasn't flowered since and may not still be with us.



(C) December 2002 *Alstroemeria pulchra* subsp. *pulchra*. This short common Chilean wildflower was raised from seed and flourishes around the trunk of our huge Black Oak. (photos Anita).

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Left: (C)# December 2015 *Alstroemeria piperata* sp. nova (in press) Now, this really is something else! A lovely short to dwarf undescribed species we found just off the pass to Santiago, 'Up the road'. Right: December 2015 *Alstroemeria piperata* sp. nova (in press) – in the wild, nearby, at what will be its type site. We're calling it ***piperata***, meaning pepper, for the red speckling on all six tepals.



December 2007
Zephyranthes rosea –
is perfectly hardy with
us and one of our
compact summer
gems. (photo Anita)

---International Rock Gardener---



Left to right above: (C)# January 2010 *Hieronymiella clidanthoides*. Another of our 2007 NW Argentina scoops. An Amaryllidaceous genus of eight species, all but one endemic to Argentina. This is the most 'feminine' of them. January 2012 *Ceratostigma willmottiana*. 'True blue' is a rare colour both for Chilean wildflowers and in our garden, so having both familiar late-flowering *Ceratostigmas* is particularly welcome. January 2012 *Zephyranthes candida* is our most vigorous and numerous flowering bulb. It forms a border to a path from one end of the walnut grove to the other. February 2012 *Amaryllis belladonna*. Part of the continuous pathside line of *Zephyranthes candida* as interspaced by occasional clumps of *Amaryllis belladonna*. Like most of our bulbs, it started from just one.



(C)# February 2012 *Ennealophus fimbriatus*. Persistent, increasing and free-flowering, this Irid is by far the most successful of our incidental collections made during our 2007 viola hunt.

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March 2016 *Nerine filifolia* was gifted to us by Alberto Castillo, the Argentinian Bulb Specialist, well-known to a number of British Gardeners (not least from his membership of the SRGC Forum).



April 2011 *Biarum davisii* – a convention of hooded monks (hopefully nothing sinister). They appear at the side of our main pebble entrance drive and never fail to astonish and enchant visitors.

---International Rock Gardener---



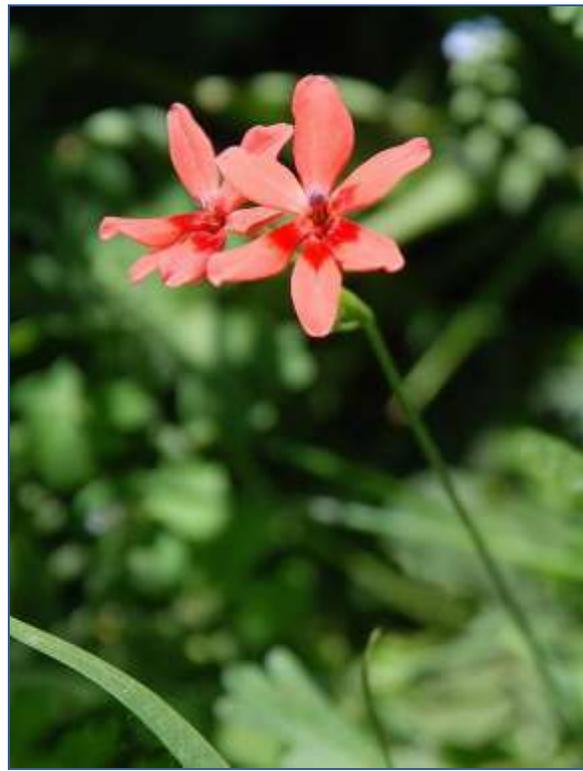
April 2011 *Biarum davisii* This endearing little eccentric is a floral dwarf in the 'Snow White' tradition, if ever there was. Roots of casually seeded Cosmos much reduced it but it is recovering well.



(C)# May 2014 *Oxalis perdicaria* 'Freckles' – a brown-mottled leaf form we collected in Coquimbo Region. 'La Flor de Mayo' symbolises the end of the flowering season in central and nearer northern Chile.

---International Rock Gardener---

To finish this round-up of plants in our garden, here are a few from November 2017: *Plectranthus amboinicus* - alas, too tender for our garden unless protected. *Freesia* (syn *Lapeirousia*) *laxa*, a welcome resident that seeds itself around freely near the house plus a closer, bees-eye encounter with *Freesia laxa* - it is as hardy as you like with us.



Recently we had friends from Germany visiting for a couple of days, and drove them to the nearest Pacific coast during that time. We stopped at a few smallish towns on the way round, and as we were walking along the pavement in one, passed an extensive but very narrow street-front garden. It had ornamental grasses, *Agapanthus* and other semi-formal decoratives. But what caught our 'alpine' attention was a most attractive neat, low, silver-hairy mat-forming labiate we'd love to own ourselves. It had elongated 'pagoda-like' inflorescences from which lengthy narrow lips of clear blue extended at right angles. The whole effect was like a glorified, exotic *Ajuga*. The town and its situation are very mild and frost-free, so with reluctance we resisted the temptation to bring a small piece back, taking only the photo above. Putting a name to it proved quite a test, but was finally cracked by the Internet method described above. It's *Plectranthus amboinicus*, and is indeed tender, alas.



Come what may

As for the future, when not too buried in some writing project I shall try to keep on going outside as often as possible to do a little weeding until my back calls it a day every time. But that can be no more than a drop in the ocean, and most will still have to depend on Anita spraying weedkiller when, where and as she can, plus impressive weekly help from Benjamin. Otherwise the weeds, especially grasses, would still have bigger and even better field days at our expense. Above all, we prefer not even to think about life without Benjamin, should that happen! But never mind. We love our

home and garden and wouldn't want to live anywhere else no matter what the problems here. Also, as already noted, a garden is never finished. Watch this space.

J. and A.F.W.

---International Rock Gardener---

Description of new galanthus hybrid *Galanthus*: 'Dryad Venus' by Anne Wright



DESCRIPTION

Flowering height 150 - 200mm. Leaves, plicate, spreading, approximately 70mm x 17mm at flowering time. Scapes upright. Ovary cylindrical, length:width approximately 8:5. Flower shape pyramidal. Flower length including ovary 22mm. Pedicel 90% the length of the relatively short, straight spathe.

The outer segments are usually flattened and flared outwards at the edges, giving a frilled appearance, and are approximately 14mm long by 14mm wide, white with an emerald green, inverted heart mark at the apex, sometimes bleeding back towards the base. This mark continues as green striations all the way to the base on the underside of the outer segments. 'Claw' 3mm.

The inner segments are also slightly flared at the margins, with a deep, narrow sinus. The inner segment

mark is a deeper green X, the underside of the outer segments being almost entirely green, other than a white margin. The flower is scented.



After 9 years development work, and trialling, I am excited to introduce the second variety to be released from our [Dryad Nursery](#) inverse poculiform snowdrop breeding programme. This seedling is a favourite with all who have seen it and has generated a number of light-hearted comments for its "curvaceous, shapely flowers with a flirty frill" around the outer segments on mature flowers. The mark on the outer segments is shaped like an inverted heart. The inner segments are not willingly revealed, but the inner mark is a deeper green 'X' or kiss.

With such a "ravishing, sensuous shape" and markings it seemed the only fitting namesake for this snowdrop was Venus, as the Goddess of Love and Beauty.

It is a mid-height snowdrop growing to about 20cm high under glass, probably shorter in the open. At flowering time the plicate leaves are short and display the flowers well. It has an upright habit, and the spathe is erect. To add to all this, not only is it scented, but it probably carries yellow genes having 'Wendy's Gold' and 'Corrin' as parents, so will be useful in breeding programmes for yellow poculiforms.

A. W.