

Early Bulb Display 2010

I want to first express my thanks to **Ron McBeath** and **Robert Rolfe** for agreeing at short notice to give the morning and afternoon lectures. Ron talked on South African and South American Plants while Robert chose Iris and crocus. Both talks were excellent as you can know they would be from such excellent Speakers. SRGC members were enthused, entertained and encouraged all at the



same time. Our club has lots of great members and it is marvellous when they give their support when needed. Enthusiasts are members of both the SRGC and the AGS and personally I often regard the two as family members with a healthy amount of rivalry between them. I well remember a conversation I had with the late SRGC Honorary Member [and former AGS president] Kath Dryden when we concluded that each being paid up members of both [Kath insisted upon calling both 'societies'] we were both

equal members of the two. In our specialised world of rock gardening we are lucky that we have two great 'clubs' in the UK. Look a bit further and you will soon want to join NARGS in the USA and Canada. Anyone reading these reports is encouraged to join as many clubs and societies for rock



gardeners as they can afford as all need to keep up their membership. Naturally I, being a Scot, am proud to be a member and former president of the SRGC but when I go to Chelsea, I delight in the exhibits of my other clubs and societies – AGS, RHS, Hardy Plant, NTS etc. I even feel part of the nursery stands whose plants I buy! In the world of plants there is room for everyone. Next spring sees the **2011 International Conference** in Nottingham from Thursday

14th to Sunday April, 2011. This is an occasion for mixing with old and new friends: a once in ten year chance to attend such a gathering. Robert Rolfe is one of the speakers scheduled for 2010.

The plants below were those submitted to the **RHS Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee** for consideration for awards. Any gardener can submit plants to the committee, whose members will examine and discuss their merits. Our committee is one of the few RHS committees which meets outside London.



Despite this being the 'coldest winter since 1962' or whenever, there were lots of plants and lots of enthusiasts in the Victoria Hall in Dunblane for the 2010 event. Some plants were familiar, so we can conclude that they will flower on time whatever the weather. Snowdrops and crocuses seem to fall into this category.

Whereas others, like Irises and Narcissus, were fewer in number so we can suppose that something about the late cold and snow delayed them. One thing which was obvious to me is that because we had many bright sunny days, despite the cold foliage on dwarf narcissus was shorter than in a dull season. This year the flowers on *N. romieuxii* not only made it above the leaves, they made it to the show!



There were fewer Irises like Katharine Hodgkin, though one grower managed to produce a fine set of *Iris reticulata* forms.



Two other irises attracted a lot of attention because of their beauty and rarity.

From the RBG came *Iris histrio* ssp. *histrio*. This is a plant which many think they have, or had, or might have had. The true version is quite rare and exquisite.



The other is a Juno Iris from Uzbekistan, *iris nicolai*, was grown I think by John Lee and is equally entrancing. John likes a challenge!



Ian Young, Ian Christie and Elspeth Mackintosh carrying plants from the Joint Rock Meeting back to the display.

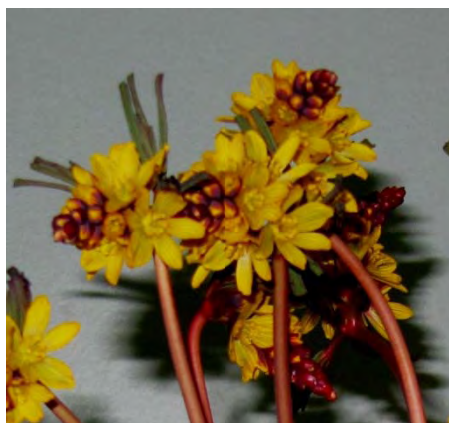
The highlight of their day is being carried through the streets of Dunblane like Madonnas in a Spanish church parade.

Narcissus romieuxii is usually finished flowering or at least past looking its best by the time of the Display but this year it was in fine fettle. The smallest *Narcissus* I know is *N. hedraeanthus* [left below]. The single bulb in the single pot emphasises the diminutive size of the species. I lost mine in the very cold winter of about 10 years ago when I made the mistake of watering it and other *Narcissus* during an uncharacteristically dry winter sunny period. *Narcissi* don't like to have their roots frozen!





Gymnospermum albertii from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzistan, & Tajikistan is a member of the Berberis family. It flowers reliably in mid February and is a wonderful wee thing for the alpine house. I love its red stems and glaucous leaves.



Primroses are not out yet in the garden but at garden centres there are trays of hybrids for sale. It is nice to see the variation possible in just a few shades of primrose yellow!



There is plenty time to get your plants ready for the next show!



***Galanthus elwesii monostictus* 'Alexander the Great' in Sandy Leven's display**



Also in the display was the poculiform *Galanthus nivalis* 'Wedding Dress'. A floriferous selection this stays relatively short, ensuring a good solid white clump.



Reginald Farrer likened Crocuses to fairies in the rock garden



Crocus etruscus



Crocus korolkowii JC.1796



Crocus gargaricus in front



Crocus korolkowii 'Kiss of Spring'

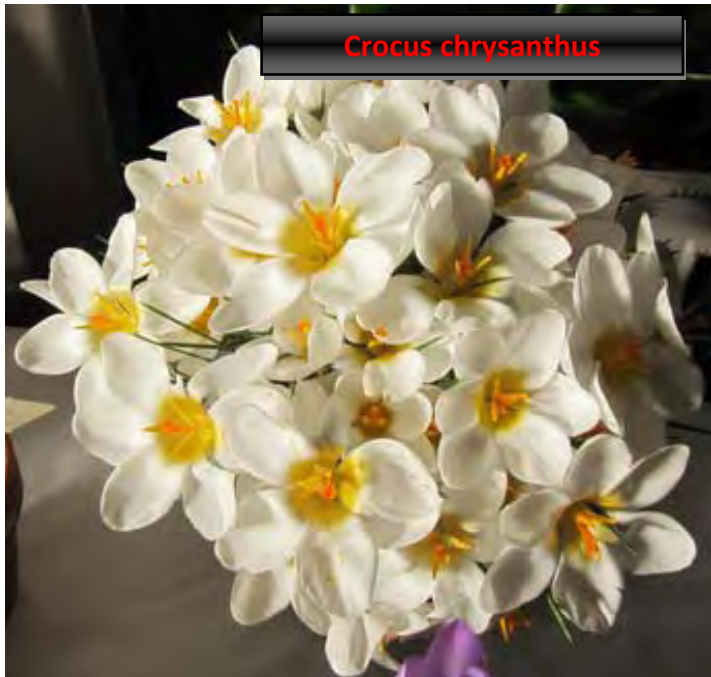


Crocus korolkowii 'Spring Charm'



Crocus korolkowii

The range of crocus colours, shades & combinations is incredible!



Crocus chrysanthus

One of Jean Wyllie's seed grown C. chrysanthus albus [below] with a yellow seedling alongside.



A view of some of the crocuses on the bench and below

Crocus imperati,

Crocus paschei

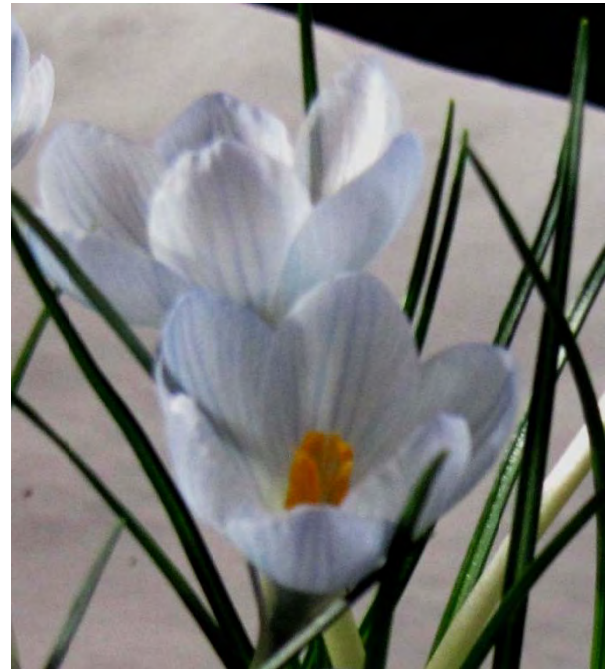
Crocus etruscus?





3rd *Crocus baytopiorum*

The BROOKFIELD PRIZE for Best Crocus grown from seed, inaugurated by Keith Brookfield from Australia



Rarely seen because again it flowers very early is the spectacular *Crocus baytopiorum* whose flowers are an impossibly pale blue



2nd *Crocus gargaricus* from Gothenburg seed



1st *Crocus paschei* from Gothenburg seed

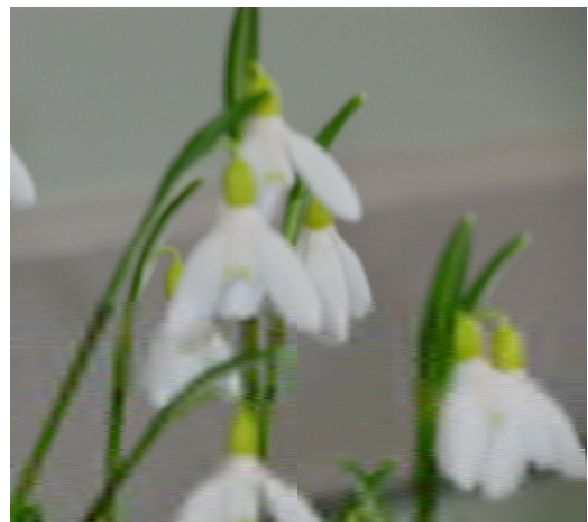
All 3 prizes were won by our Crocus Queen Jean Wyllie



Ian Christie's pan of Galanthus 'Lady Dalhousie' was recommended for an Award of Merit. It is one of the 'Castle group' of Snowdrops and like the others in the group is a cross between *G. nivalis* and *G. plicatus*. Another selection which he gave me is below. All have fabulous leaves.



New to me and many others is this wonderful yellow form of Galanthus woronowii 'Elisabeth Harrison' which was recommended for a PC by the Joint Rock Committee.



Spring is a great time to be a gardener. When enthusiasts join together the best thing is to be a rock gardener. Thanks to Anne and her team who toiled tirelessly in the kitchen keeping us fed and watered. Thank you SRGC members, and to paraphrase BA - - the world's friendliest gardeners! **If you're not a member you can join online!**

