

# Hexham 2010



A thronging crowd of Primulas and Saxifrages, more than you could possibly imagine, competed for attention at this, the second joint SRGC AGS show of this year. Right from the start in the large 6 pan class, 14 of the 18 plants in the 3 entries was either a Saxifrage or a Primula. These two genera, and perhaps Hepatica [and more of these later], dominated the show, providing colour, competition and interest. The plumes and uniforms of the soldiers of the Roman legions who marched through the town and along Hadrian's Wall two millennia ago would have been hard pressed to put on such a dazzling show! There was wonderful colour everywhere and it was enhanced by the new lights in the hall – just like daylight! The hard work put in by Show Secretary Peter McGuire was rewarded with a hall full of treasures to delight exhibitors and visitors alike. So much to see; so much to talk about; so much to write about. I apologise in advance to the growers of the many excellent plants which I must inevitably miss out from this report. I was delighted to see SRGC President Liz and AGS President Val enjoying the day together and with fellow members. Most of us are enthusiastic members of both SRGC & AGS so we like to see our presidents get on well together. It bodes well for Alpines 2011 in Nottingham [14-17<sup>th</sup> April 2011]



**These pictures, taken during judging, show the magnificent entry at this year's show. Hexham is within a couple of hours' drive of a huge number of exhibitors. Show Secretary Peter is looking upwards offering a quiet thank you that his prayers for a good entry and good weather had been answered.....positively!**



Choosing a Best in Show is never easy. Alan Spenceley's fabulous *Trillium nivale* was the winner of the Forrest Medal. Among my favourites of the other great plants in the show were *Tecophilea cyanocrocus*, *Primula megasaefolia* & *Sebea thomasii*.

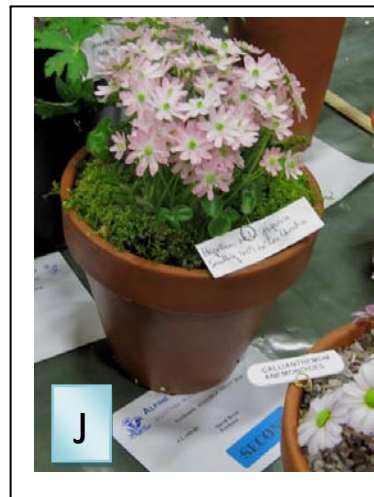
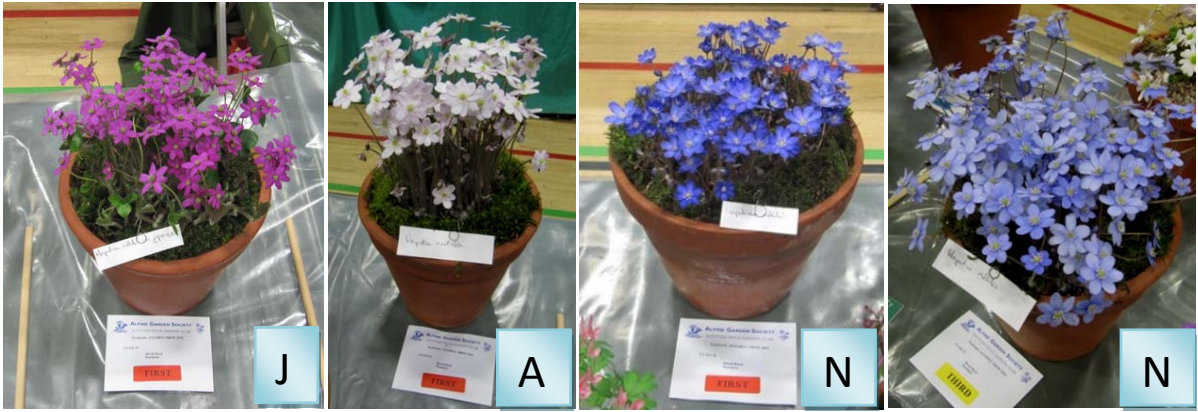
All these plants are in large 10 or 12 inch pots so you have some idea of their splendour. My compliments to the growers!

The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh had a great display superbly set off by their new backing photograph and a high mountain valley. We express our thanks to the Regius Keeper and to John, Elspeth and Struan for arranging the display. Note the distinct colour forms of *Frit. eduardii* on the centre, just behind *F. raddeana*



**Presidential Parade.** SRGC President Liz Mills with AGS President Val Lee. Past SRGC President Ian Christie with Val and Past President John Richards working at the show.





All the Hepaticas on this page were grown and shown by **David Boyd**. David is a great grower of cyclamen as well as Hepaticas. Here he has shown how, because of the wording of the show schedule plants of the same species or genus are eligible for several different classes from single pan to multiple pan eg 'grown from seed', 'Ranunculaceae', 'Native to a Continent' etc.

J = H. Japonica, A = H. acutiloba, N = H. nobilis

**Thank you, David, for providing so many beautiful plants.**



**Shrubs** are an essential part of a rock garden whether it be on a grand scale like the RBGE or just a trough. This *Pieris japonica* variegata shouted for attention at the end of its bench. I know some unenlightened people dismiss all variegated plants as wierdos [the plants not the folks] but I like the extra interest some variegated plants provide. This *Pieris* is enhanced by its variegation. Remember to cut off any green suckers if you grow it.

At the other end of the scale is *Daphne blagayana* 'Brenda Anderson', named for the Dundee SRGC member who introduced it from a mountain, named Durmitor, in Bosnia, southeast of Sarjevo. It is more compact and has more flowers in each terminal inflorescence. Robin White notes that because of the large number of flowers it may be more vulnerable to fungal attack in damp springs. It is a good plant for a trough.

I usually associate Brenda Anderson's name with South American plants. She and her husband travelled widely in the Chilean Andes. They had a wonderful garden at Balruddery near Dundee.



Ferns are wonderful plants for difficult places in the garden. There seems to be one for every location no matter whether it be dry or wet, warm or shady. Brian & Shelagh's wee smasher at the front is *Woodsia polystichoides*, which seems to come from Taiwan. It is really tiny and I suspect best suited to pot culture with some protection from searing winds.



**An oldie but a goodie.** Sedums are very much taken for granted in the rock garden but they are very useful plants. This plant of *S. Spathulifolium* 'Cap Blanca' from California was in fabulous nick and well deserved its first prize.



Anne Wright from York is a lady whom I have yet to meet. I admired her Narcissus entries and none more so than this great pan of seedlings of her own cross of *N. watieri* x *marvieri*. Both parents have similar 'rupicola' type flowers – just like the seedlings. I love the way they are ranged in colour from Mum's white to dad's rich yellow and in flower size and trumpet length. When would you 'clone them out'? Not too soon i fancy because I think Narcissi like company. The seed was sown in 2006!



Great 'bulbs'.

*Fritillaria caucasica*, *Narcissus cyclamineus*,  
*Crocus veluchensis*, *Scolioipus bigelowii*



**Section 2 3 pan Class**



**No words needed!**  
 Just gaze & wonder at this wee marvel from China. *Fritillaria davidii*. Pere David died in 1900



**Tommy Anderson** showed a nice pale form of *Crocus cvijicii* as part of his 3 pan entry for 'plants new or newly reintroduced into cultivation'. While the usual form is one of the most startling and vibrant of all yellow crocuses this pale sister appears beautifully tranquil. I hope it increases well and finds its way north to other enthusiasts. This snow melt plant is a native of the mountains of Serbia, Greece, Albania and Macedonia, even the dark yellow form is relatively scarce in cultivation. With the Balkan countries now much more peaceful and accessible than in recent times, we might find intermediate forms being introduced. This pale yellow form was collected by Henrik Zetterlund in 'Southern Yugoslavia'

## The fascinating world of rock plants.

The number of different plants and different types of plants from bulbs to cushions, Mediterranean to alpine and woodland to prairie that we grow and exhibit is incredible



*Berneuxia thibetica*, a Chinese member of the Diapensaceae is a woodland plant which likes open woodland like conditions in the UK. This very pale *N. cyclamineus* is actually a hybrid with *triandrus* but looks just like its mum in flower shape.

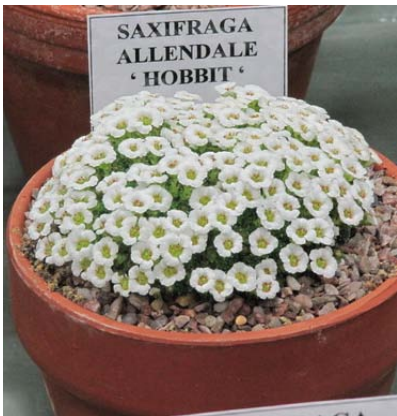
*Synthiris pinnatifida lanuginosa* when well flowered like this one catches the eye!

Margaret Pickering won the Gordon Harrison cup for Most 1<sup>st</sup> Prize Points in Section II. This is her *Corydalis solida*.

*Saxifraga 'Leonardo da Vinci'* is new to me. It is Czech hybrid raised by Karel Lang in 2006. It is related to other 'artist hybrids' 'Pablo Picasso', 'Paul Gauguin' & 'Rembrandt van Rijn'. Leo is an unusual salmon pink colour.

How about the fabulous *Corydalis popovii* from Jim Watson exhibited in Section III ? The standard of exhibits at Hexham is high!

*Viola trinervata* is a plant I would like to see growing in its habitat in Washington State and Oregon but I guess I haven't been there early enough. Known colloquially as 'Sagebrush violet' or 'Rainier violet', it grows in sagebrush flats and rocky hillsides. A bonny wee thing indeed!



## SAXIFRAGES

Saxifrages have long been favourites in the rock garden. They flower early in the year, need decent drainage and a bright position – not too much sun or they may scorch. The number of different stone breakers at Hexham was remarkable. It showed us how many new cultivars are coming in from the Czech Republic [ a benefit of EU membership perhaps or of easy air travel to Prague]. However what I want to emphasise is how many great hybrids bear the 'Allendale' name. These have all been raised and distributed by Ray Fairburn. Ray was at the show but since he has been ill did not exhibit this year. It must have been gratifying to see so many of his plants on the benches. Continue to get better Ray! I bet you still found the time and energy to make a few new hybrids tho'!

The saxifrages shown are :-

Allendale 'Hobbit'

Allendale 'Bravo'

Allendale 'Bambi'

Allendale 'Charm'

'Peter Burrow'

'Vearhi Hvezdaev'

And old favourite 'Winifred'

'A GREAT DAY OUT!', AS Wallace and Gromit would have said had they been there.



