



NEW ZEALAND ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY

# Newsletter

NZ Alpine Garden Society Inc.  
PO Box 2984  
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Email: [info@nzags.com](mailto:info@nzags.com)



[New Zealand Alpine Garden Society Group](#)



[nzalpinegarden](#)

## Calendar of Events

**7th July** Mandeville Street  
Bonsai demonstration and  
plant swap

**1st August 8pm**  
AGM

**September 21-22**  
Spring Show and Botanical  
Expo- Lincoln Events Centre

**11-13 October**  
Trillium Weekend  
Geraldine  
More info-contact Daryl Rowan  
[d4rowans@outlook.com](mailto:d4rowans@outlook.com)

**31 October - 3rd November**  
Hurunui Garden Tour

**Late November/  
Early December**  
Day trip to somewhere- more  
information in coming days.

## Meeting Information

The Zoom link will open at  
**7.30pm.**

Some meetings will be  
recorded so let us know if you  
are interested in a particular  
topic or if you missed the  
meeting.

To join the Zoom Meeting  
[https://us06web.zoom.us/  
j/87408735664?  
pwd=xpFBJbvfmTboglkX7nsa  
SnxoRj3txR.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87408735664?pwd=xpFBJbvfmTboglkX7nsaSnxoRj3txR.1)

Meeting ID: 874 0873 5664  
Passcode: 105365

**This information is valid for  
the whole 2024 year.**

## Notice of Meetings

Meetings all at Philatelic Centre 67 Mandeville Street  
Riccarton Christchurch unless otherwise stated.  
The door opens at 7.30pm. Plant sales and library from  
7.30pm. The meeting starts at 8pm.  
Entry \$2 includes a lucky number

## Guest speakers

### June 6th 8pm Dave Kelly

Variable flowering in the Mt Hutt area of Chionochloa, Celmisia,  
Aciphylla and Leucogenes

#### Supper

*Carol Halstead 022 439 4376 and Donna Wilcox 021 565 033*

### July 7th 11am (Sunday) at Mandeville Street

Talk on bonsai and our popular Bring a plant to swap.

**Bring your own lunch- dessert /tea/coffee supplied.**

### August 8pm Annual General Meeting

Hamish Brown and Ann Cartman will demonstrate preparing plants  
for shows. So not to be missed!!

#### Supper

*Wendy Wallace 027 841 2051 and Judith Stephens 021 172 1516*

## Introducing our June speaker.....

**Dave Kelly**-We are very fortunate to have Emeritus Professor  
Dave Kelly talking to our group about his long term studies of the  
alpine plants at Mt Hutt. Dave has visited Mt Hutt every summer  
since 1988, counting and measuring alpine plants and their  
flowering. He's used this information to understand what causes  
mast-flowering in some species. This leads to some surprising  
findings about how global warming will alter flowering patterns.  
Dave always provides an interesting and visually entertaining talk.  
This will be a great opportunity for us to learn about what drives  
flowering in some of NZ's iconic alpine plant species.

## **President's Pen**   *Pauline Murphy*

Winter has arrived in Christchurch, not my favourite season, except for it's time to dig up and split plants to sell and tidy pots ready for competitive displaying, at the Spring Show – September 21 and 22. And to move plants around in the garden!

In June we have Emeritus Professor Dave Kelly as our speaker, this follows a very informative talk on NZ Celmisia by Jane Godsen. We are lucky to have such knowledgeable people willing to give their time to us.

On July 7th our Sunday daytime meeting – bonsai talk, plant swap, shared lunch.

August is AGM – I ask anyone considering what they can contribute to the society to talk to anyone of the current (or past) council members, we really do rely on everyone doing a little bit to keep the society active and thriving. Ann and Hamish will also give a rundown of displaying for the show and answer any queries you may have.

Wanting some winter fireside reading? The library is stocked full of interesting books. Robert is always looking for new and relevant titles. The Bulletin is due out soon so also good to read in the comfort of your warm living room mid-winter!!

Facebook pictures from the Northern Hemisphere members as they head into spring are inspiring! Keep them coming!

Thank you to Judith Stephens for volunteering to arrange our alpine field trips. Is there a Society member who could assist Judith in this role? No prior experience needed! Talk to Pauline or Judith if you think you could help.

Pauline

## **Council Meetings update**   *Jenny Ladley*

\*The new constitution will be presented to attendees at the August AGM for consideration, in line with the regulations and rules of the new Incorporated Societies Act.

\*The Little Big Tree Company has agreed to support our monthly meeting raffles with two plants each meeting. This is greatly appreciated and there will be interesting plants on the raffle table from TLBTC.

\*Plans are underway for the mid-winter day meeting on the 7th of July.

\*Fundraising effort selling the special bulbs: this was a great success and the society has raised approximately \$1500. Thanks to everyone for helping organise the sale of the bulbs. We look forward to seeing the flowering bulbs at the Spring Show in September.

## **New Members**

Welcome to our new members:

Christchurch - Kathy Trethowan, Neil Lauson

Nelson - Annie Murrell

Greytown - Sija Spaak

Hamilton - Ces Bartz

Dunedin – Robyn Abernethy, Sue Bound,

James Cordery, Sandra Dalziel,

John Fitzgerald, Lori Hill, Mark Joel, David

Lyttle, Mick & Sue McKenzie,

Margaret Murrell, Shirley Smillie,

Elizabeth Whitcombe, Laurie & Rosemary

White.

## **Show Committee**

Ann Cartman

Adrian Bliss

Robert Duns

Tina Bunce

[annandjoe@xtra.co.nz](mailto:annandjoe@xtra.co.nz)

[ianandadrianbliss@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ianandadrianbliss@xtra.co.nz)

[robert@nzags.com](mailto:robert@nzags.com)

[tina@nzags.com](mailto:tina@nzags.com)

# Show and Botanical Expo update

## Children's section

The Show Committee see an opportunity to grow this section over the next few years to encourage more participation from younger families.

We would like a volunteer to organise the Children's section at the show. Ideas to promote some ideas such as colouring-in pictures such as a mountain scene, mini-gardens, sand-saucers, or whatever would appeal to children.

Schools in the Selwyn district could be approached first.

If you think this is something you could do please get in touch with a member of the Show Committee (p2)

## NZAGS plant sales

We are again having a sales table for members' plants to sell at the show. Over many years this has been very popular as often hard-to-find plants pop up.

So when you are dividing up plants or collecting seed do put them into clean pots, tend to them over winter and bring them along to the show in September.

It is that time when we can walk around our gardens and see what needs dividing up, repotting and giving away. Put a few in pots, label them well and set them aside to settle into their new pots ready for bringing to the Show in September.

When winter comes many plants hibernate until warmer weather. This is a great time to split up hostas, irises, astilbes and all those other perennials. Wait till the leaves completely die down but you can still see the crown. A spade or sharp knife make the job easier.

After digging the plant look for:

- **offsets** (young plants growing by the parent plant- hostas, lamb's ear, agapanthus)
- **surface roots** (new plants come from roots like violets, ajuga)
- **taproots** (the largest, central root, can be split down the length of the root, as long as it has side shoots, eyes like euphorbia, dicentra)
- **Underground running roots** (dig a bit deeper and you will find young plants developing further away from the parent. Cut off and include some roots. Geraniums, anemone are examples)



*Breaking up hosta*



*Breaking up hellebores*

Water the existing plant well.

Using a spade and/or garden fork, dig six to eight inches outside of the crown of the plant. Depending on the species, the root system may extend eight to 18 inches deep. Starting from one side and working your way around, dig beneath the roots. then ease the clump out of the ground.

Divide the plants into several sections by cutting down with a spade or sharp knife through the roots.

Replant one section in the ground and transfer the others into pots to give away.

Tuck away somewhere sheltered, water well and wait till they start regrowing.



*Ajuga from surface roots*

## April Speaker Report

Kate Pearce

### FOOTSTEPS OF THE GREAT PLANT EXPLORERS

Dr Paul Maurice has travelled extensively in the Yunnan and Sichuan areas in China, often at altitudes over 4000 metres in the mountain ranges.

**Arthur Bulley** formed Bees Nursery in 1898 and towards the end of 1930 it was the final years of professional plant collectors.

**George Forrest** (1873-1932) was a hardy Scotsman plant collecting in the Yunnan province, but during one of his missions, seventeen of his helpers were massacred. He was fortunate to be spared the same fate. George brought back over 300 new species of Rhododendrons, many primulas, discovering in total over 1200 new species like *Roscoea cautleyoides* and *Taxillus delavayi*.

**Pere Delavay** was a Jesuit Missionary based in north-west Yunnan for over ten years and during that time brought out over 2000 species like *Primula poissonii*, *Geranium delavayi* and *Gaultheria hookeri*.

**Joseph Hooker's** father was a director of Kew Gardens, so his incentive to explore the Chinese regions was immense.

**Robert Fortune**, from Edinburgh, was responsible for the discovery of jasmines, viburnums and dicentras.

**Frank Kingdon-Ward** (1885-1958) was a teacher in Shanghai and was responsible for finding *Meconopsis baileyi*, *Rhododendron vernicosum* and *Rhododendron wardii*.

**Pierre d'Incarville** (1706-1757), French Jesuit and amateur botanist, introduced many species to Europe.

**Ernest 'Chinese' Wilson** (1876-1930) was a botany teacher at Kew Gardens and collect 305 species of seed and was responsible for the introduction of kiwifruit into Britain.

**Augustine Henry** (1857-1930) collected 15,000 dried specimens and gave them to Kew for their collection.

On Paul's travels he was shown areas of *Stellera chamaejasme* var *chrysantha*. It usually has white or pale pink flowers but one variety with gold flowers has been found. *Meconopsis forrestii* has a wide spread coverage and along with *Meconopsis zhongdianensis*.

Paul also came across 5 different species in a small area of *Cypripedium tibeticum*, *C.plectrochilum*, *C.flavum* and *C. guttatum* having striking pink stripes. Gardeners of today have much to thank these hardy, adventurous plant-hunters and also Paul Maurice for travelling to these amazing areas to see these gorgeous specimens – your photography was outstanding Paul and thank you for coming to share your experiences.



*Meconopsis baileyi*  
Photo: North American  
Rock Garden Society



*Cypripedium tibeticum*  
Photo: [www.phytisia-orchids.com](http://www.phytisia-orchids.com)



*Cypripedium flavum*  
Photo: [www.phytisia-orchids.com](http://www.phytisia-orchids.com)



*Cypripedium guttatum*  
Photo: USDA Forest Service

## May Speaker Report

Kate Pearce

### CELMISIA'S OF NEW ZEALAND

Jane Gosden gave an in-depth talk on her travels around the New Zealand habitats for our *Celmisia*'s. Twenty-five trips over five months from 2022 to the present day.

New Zealand has sixty named species, twelve other named species and six named subspecies. Jane mentioned her recently published book on the habitats and identification of these mountain daises.

While out in the field, Jane gave us a list of ways to help with identifying the third largest alpine genus in New Zealand by the leaf - if it had a stalk or not, whether the shape of the leaf was obovate or heart-shaped, leaf tip, leaf margins, leaf hairs, hair type and colour. Other features to help were the flower heads, flower bracts, phyllaries, 'hairs' and seeds.

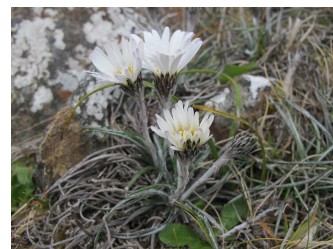
The South Island areas of Westland and Canterbury has many species but it is the top of the South Island where many of the unique species are found.

*Celmisia gracilentia* is widespread throughout NZ. *Celmisia incana* has amazing foliage and generally found in central North Island. An area in Mount Gibbs, situated behind Takaka has fifteen species, where *Celmisia rupestris* is widely found. Mount Stokes has four species, *Celmisia machmahonii* var *macmahonii* was difficult to locate and required lots of bush-bashing! Mount Altmarloch in Blenheim has six species and one is named after it. Mount Burns has twenty species in one area, so a delightful area to study. *Celmisia macmahonii* var *hadfieldii* flower buds are very tasty and goats love them !

Thank you Jane for bringing us up to speed on our mountain daisy species – now we will be better equipped to identify this unique genus. Your photographs were wonderful.



*Celmisia incana*  
Photo: NZ Plant Conservation Network



*Celmisia gracilentia*  
Photo: NZ Plant Conservation Network

## Joy's Journal

Joy Stack

Unfortunately Joy is unable to write a journal for this issue. We wish her all the best and hope to read her most interesting articles again in the not too distant future.

In the meantime it would be great to have a volunteer to write a similar diary of what they have been doing in their gardens and what they plan to do.

We have a lot of a new members who would love to learn some tips and hints from our knowledgeable and experienced members.

## Spring Show and Botanical Expo

21-22 September 2024

Lincoln Events Centre  
15 Meijer Drive  
Lincoln

Put the date in your diary.....

Offer to help the Show Committee- Stewarding, helping set up and take down tables

Bring along plants to for the Sales Table

Think about entering plants in the competitions.

But most importantly GET INVOLVED. Talk to the Show Committee.

# Monthly Meeting Show Bench Results

April 4 2024 Judge: Mary Duncan	
<b>OPEN EXOTIC- UNDER 15CM</b>	
1. <i>Crocus batanicus</i>	Ann & Joe Cartman
2. <i>Argyroderma testiculare</i>	Gabor Csontos
3. <i>Cyclamen cyprium</i>	Ann & Joe Cartman
<b>OPEN -EXOTIC- OVER 15CM</b>	
1. <i>Haemanthus coccinea</i>	Gabor Csontos
2. <i>Lewisia 'Coral Sunset'</i>	Esme Alpe
3. <i>Cyclamen hederifolium</i>	Ann & Joe Cartman
<b>OPEN - NATIVE</b>	
<b>OPEN- CUT BLOOM</b>	
1. <i>Crocus mathewii</i>	Ann & Joe Cartman
2. <i>Nerine sarniensis</i>	Ann & Joe Cartman
3. <i>Lapageria rosea alba</i>	Ann & Joe Cartman
<b>OPEN - 3 OF 3</b>	
1. Lynne Reyn	
2. Lynne Reyn	
3. Jennifer Barrer	
<b>NOVICE - CUT BLOOM</b>	
1. Maureen Day	
<b>NOVICE- 3 OF 3</b>	
1. Sue Petersen	
2. Maureen Day	
3. Maureen Day	
<b>PREMIER PLANT</b>	
3 of 3 OPEN <i>Tricyrtus Astrantia sp Lathyrus sp</i>	Lynne Reyn
<b>PREMIER BULB</b>	
<i>Crocus mathewii</i>	Ann & Joe Cartman



*Crocus mathewii*



*Tricyrtus Astrantia sp  
Lathyrus sp*

Photos Dennis Chang

May 2 2024 Judge: Kate Pearce	
<b>OPEN- EXOTIC- UNDER 15CM</b>	
1. <i>Coelogyne fimbriata</i>	Gabor Csontos
2. <i>Lachenalia pusilla</i>	Gabor Csontos
3. <i>Argyroderma sp.</i>	Gabor Csontos
<b>OPEN- EXOTIC- OVER 15CM</b>	
1. <i>Narcissus viridiflorus</i>	Chris Garland
2. <i>Cyclamen hederifolium</i>	Adrian Bliss
<b>OPEN- NATIVE</b>	
1. <i>Celmisia spedeuii x densiflora</i>	Hamish & Mika Brown
2. <i>Myosotis retrorsa</i>	Hamish & Mika Brown
<b>OPEN- CUT BLOOM</b>	
1. <i>Gentiana sp.</i>	Wendy Wallace
2. <i>Galanthus elwesii hiemalis</i>	Adrian Bliss
3. <i>Galanthus sp.</i>	Helen Taylor
<b>OPEN - 3 OF 3</b>	
1. <i>Lewisia, Aster, Schizostylus</i>	Wendy Wallace
<b>NOVICE- EXOTIC -OVER 15CM</b>	
1. <i>Promenaea 'Bushfire Rage'</i>	Matt Walters
<b>NOVICE - EXOTIC -UNDER 15CM</b>	
1. <i>Nerine sp.</i>	Jane Griffen
<b>NOVICE CUT BLOOM</b>	
1. <i>Lapageria 'Picotee'</i>	'Hayseed'
2. <i>Nerine sp.</i>	Maureen Day
3. <i>Chrysanthemum sp.</i>	Maureen Day
<b>NOVICE 3 OF 3</b>	
1. <i>Nerine, Dianthus, Ribes</i>	Maureen Day
2. <i>Primula, Cyclamen, Brachyscome</i>	Maureen Day
<b>PREMIER PLANT</b>	
<i>Celmisia spedeuii x densiflora</i>	Hamish & Mika Brown
<b>PREMIER BULB</b>	
<i>Narcissus viridiflorus</i>	Chris Garland



*Celmisia spedeuii x  
densiflora*



*Nerine sp*  
*Promenaea  
'Bushfire  
Rage'*

## General Notices

### Timetable for seed donation and distribution for 2024

These dates are approximate only.

30th April: last day for seed donations

June: post/email seed lists to NZ members

30th June: last day for seed requests

31st July: all seed should have been sent out

August: all seed orders completed

**We are always looking for volunteers to learn how to prepare seed for distribution.**

**If you are able to help with packeting then please contact Hilary**

**email: [seeddirector@nzags.com](mailto:seeddirector@nzags.com)**

### Nametags

If you need a name-tag for the monthly meetings please email [tina@nzags.com](mailto:tina@nzags.com)

Also if you change your address, phone number, email etc please let Tina know at the above email address.

### Bonsai demonstration at our July meeting

Tony Bywater, a stalwart of the Christchurch Bonsai Society, will talk about his nearly 50 years of doing, teaching and encouraging many people in the ancient art of Bonsai.

Come along and hear Tony demonstrate the way to train and develop beautiful trees from young seedlings .

Bring your lunch and prepare to be enthused.



### Council and Support Team 2024

#### NZAGS Council email addresses:

Pauline Murphy - [pauline@nzags.com](mailto:pauline@nzags.com)  
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[judith@nzags.com](mailto:judith@nzags.com) - Newsletter

The next newsletter will be sent out by email on July 20th. Please have any contributions to Judith by the 10th July. Thanks. Any notices will be approved by the Council prior to publication.

## Find of the day at Glenthorne Station

Joe Cartman

Among plants in a retired paddock, on a recent N.Z.A.G.S. outing to Glenthorne Station, there were numerous plants of *Gaultheria macrostigma* and a smaller number of *G. depressa* var *novae-zealandiae* growing together in short turf.

A different *Gaultheria* was spotted nearby covered with masses of striking red fruit.

The red-fruited plant was 20 cm or so high, much taller than the two species present. It was obviously a hybrid with obvious *G. macrostigma* as one parent and presumably *G. depressa* var *novae-zealandiae* as the other. Both of these presumed parents are tiny creeping plants, only a few cm high, which made it difficult to explain the much larger size of the hybrid plant.

The answer was found by Gabor later in the day in the form of several plants of *Gaultheria antipoda*. This is a much larger plant to 1.5m or so tall.

The hybrid's parents are clearly *G. antipoda* x *G. macrostigma*. Interestingly the same hybrid is present on Banks Peninsula, even though *G. macrostigma* has not been recorded there. The Banks Peninsula plant has darker red fruit than the Glenthorne plant. Seed will be listed on the society seed exchange; what the offspring (if any) will look like is anyone's guess.



*G. macrostigma* x *G. antipoda*  
Photo- Pauline Murphy



The hybrid fruit



*Stellera chamaejasme* var  
*chrysantha*- pink form

## Obituaries

16 March 2024

Arthur Tocher- Arthur was Peg's #1592 loyal and supportive husband. My earliest memory was always being greeted by Peg and Arthur on the door of our meetings. Peg was known for her sense of humour and willingness to share her knowledge. As others have said 'She called a spade a spade!'

Arthur was always there right beside her, taking care of her.

Collecting and growing from seed were legend and their generosity in sharing plants was renowned.

Peg and Arthur are both sadly missed at meetings.

I love the challenge of growing unusual plants and was fortunate to acquire several bulbs of *Narcissus viridiflorus* in 2015.

After reading of its requirements of 'Summer dry – Winter wet' my pot has lived under my sunny verandah for the summer, replicating their native habitat of Southern Spain – Northern Africa. In autumn it is brought out for autumn rain or a good soaking with the hose to initiate growth.

It seems like in no time the first buds are appearing. This year has been the best flowering I have had, probably a combination of fertiliser and repotting. I notice this morning that there are still more flowers coming through.

The perfume from the flowers is quite overpowering.

It is left outside for the winter. The leaves seem to stay green for a very long time even when it is on its summer rest under the verandah.

There are a few hybrids using *N. viridiflorus* as a parent that are very nice.

Contributed by Chris Garland.



*Narcissus viridiflorus*  
Photo Dennis Chang

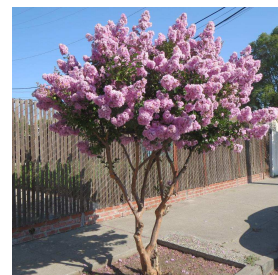
## Favourite plants

**Gabor Csontos** is a member of the NZAGS Council. He has an amazing collection of very interesting plants. You will see many of them featuring on the Monthly meeting show bench.

Here are my six favourite plants:

I am a strange person when it comes to plants. I like anything unusual. It can be the shape of the flower or leaf, the colour or the fragrance (often the smell :))

*Lagerstroemia* 'Souvenir de Hubert': The first time I saw a Crepe Myrtle, I was working in a nursery in Oregon. I found it very interesting that it flowers in autumn. It is a great tree for a small garden. This variety has pale mauve flowers, but you can get them now in any colour. It has also great autumn colours of yellow, orange and red. I have wondered why the Christchurch City Council are not using it as a street tree where there is no space for big trees.



*Lagerstroemia* 'Souvenir de Hubert'

*Mammillaria theresae*: This is, maybe, my favourite cactus. It is a small-growing, clumping cactus with pink flowers. Most *Mammillaria* have tiny flowers but this one has huge ones compared to the size of the plant. I am always very excited to see it flowering.



*Mammillaria theresae*

*Clematis* 'Bill MacKenzie': It is a bright yellow clematis. Do I need to say anything else! Vigorous growing and the fluffy seed heads look attractive too. It is self-seeding in my garden but not weedy.

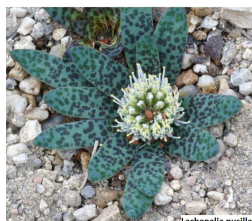


*Clematis* 'Bill MacKenzie'



*Hoodia gordonii*

*Hoodia gordonii*: Very unusual, cactus-like succulent from the very dry parts of Southern Africa. A few years ago I visited a commercial cactus grower and I spotted this plant in their rubbish bin. I asked them if I could try to rescue it. They wished me good luck because half of the plant was rotted. I cut it back to the healthy part, let it dry and stuck it into a pot of very well draining potting-mix. I didn't water it for nearly a year. When I saw the first signs of new growth I started to give it a little bit of water. It is now healthy and has flowered in the last two years. The flowers are brownish-grey colour and smell like rotting meat. Better to keep it outside when in flower.



*Lachenalia pusilla*:

*Lachenalia pusilla*: I love *Lachenalia*. *L. pusilla* is one of the very small ones and looks more like a *Massonia*. The small, short leaves lie flat on the ground in a star shape and the tiny white flowers sit in the middle. The scent of the flowers resembles coconut.



*Dracaena cinnabari*

*Pelargonium cotyledonis*: It is a succulent *Pelargonium* endemic to the island of St. Helena. I love it for its vibrant green leaves, which will turn red before they drop and the small pure white flowers.

+1 for my wish list:



*Pelargonium cotyledonis*:  
Photo courtesy  
Coromandel Cacti Ltd

*Dracaena cinnabari*: I admire this plant for its very weird shape. The old trees look like giant umbrellas and when the bark is cut, it bleeds a red sap. Its common name is 'Dragonblood tree'. It grows only on the island of Socotra which is a hotspot for crazy-looking plants. I am not sure if it is here in New Zealand, and even if it is here, I am not sure if I will live long enough to see the amaz-

Continued on page 10 with Dave Toolles contribution.....

**Dave Toole** is a very well-known NZAGS member. He lives in Invercargill and has spent a lot of time wandering around New Zealand botanising.

My six favourite plants, (I could have easily picked 600 !), are as follows based on a mixture of my following criteria ....

Wow factor ..a plant that hits you squarely in the eye with its beauty ....

Personal connections with others and the memories of past and present ....

Ease of cultivation .....

A plant that I have successfully raised then flowered from seed because even at 68 years of age and with many moons of experience in horticulture I still have failures ....

So here goes ..

**Dracophyllum menziesii** a NZ shrub is from the southern coastal to alpine regions of the South Island and Stewart Island growing up to about 1 metre in height. I'm not sure whether I will be around to see it flowering as my small plant has been slow growing for a number of years however after being transplanted earlier this season away from an encroaching *Aciphylla* into a sand bed it has responded in kind. Collected as a seedling on one of the last trips into the mountains with our oldest daughter before she left to reside permanently in the UK.



*Dracophyllum menziesii*

**Mertensia virginica** is a native from Canada and eastern United States that emerges from basal resting growth in spring, and quickly grows up to 60cm in height with foliage that is initially purple which soon turns green. The flowers are pink in bud but open to blue bell-shaped blooms. Grown in partial shade in moist, well-drained rich humus flowering will last for about 3 weeks before the plants go dormant in midsummer. My main plant is still in a large pot, a stock plant passed onto me by those kind folk, Pete and Louise at Hokonui Alpines.



*Mertensia virginica*

**Paeonia mlokosewitschii** purchased from Jenny Senior at a NZ Trillium Group weekend many moons ago in Canterbury. A super plant that has all the characteristics of 'Molly The Witch' but with a pink edge to the huge lemon yellow blooms. Yummy.



**Physoplexis comosa** also known as 'Devils Claw' is one of the most beautiful alpines with growth up to 10cm and unusual bottle-shaped, lilac flowers with tapered, dark purple petal tips. Located in limestone crevices of the European Alps I have two different leaf forms, one I raised from seed and the other ex-Merv Holland distributed by another generous couple Hamish and Mika Brown. Both do well, (not the Browns !), in a sand-bed wedged between rocks. Definitely a wow plant.



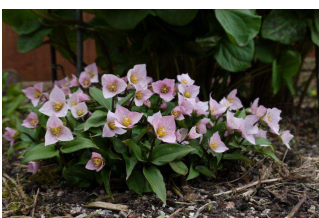
*Physoplexis comosa*

**Thalictrum diffusiflorum** is a stunning plant 'from Tibet with fine fern-like foliage', (say that quickly a few times!), up to about 45cm in height with good sized lilac blooms. My observation is that seed appears to be non-viable. However, I sow (including seedhead chaff) regardless and this has been successful, (Message to self ... might need to go to Specsavers !).



*Thalictrum diffusiflorum*

**Trillium rivale** or if you want to be picky **Pseudotrillium rivale** is a native of Oregon and California. Trilliums are the 'crème de la crème' of woodland



*Trillium rivale*

plants and, yes, while I grow a number of the big blousy Western species/hybrids, as well as the Eastern ones, space is an issue in our small garden, so it is this small species that tugs at my heart for its diversity of forms we have here in NZ, ease of cultivation and ability to increase by rhizome activity with most self-seeding. Cheers Dave.

## Rock Gardening Book Review

Daryl Rowan

'Rock Gardening - Reimagining a Classic Style' by Joseph Tychonievich (Timber Press, 295 pp.) Available from [www.fishpond.co.nz](http://www.fishpond.co.nz) \$56.32 and other sources.

Rock gardening books are, in general, an unhappy lot. Too often the perspective is expressly British repeating the same old mantras with an emphatic insistence on the 'natural' placement of rocks. How such placement is to be achieved without clear guidance, and within a typical suburban section, is not clear. Such books then conclude with a long list of plants that are unobtainable and unsuited to my climate and topographic conditions.

Encountered in our town library, "Rock Gardening - Reimagining a Classic Style" by Joseph Tychonievich (Timber Press, 295pp) proves it is possible to get a rock gardening book about right and provide an excellent introduction to rock gardening in a variety of styles considering both local geology and climate. The text is both general and in parts detailed and can be read in a more relaxed manner than some of its more serious-minded rock garden companions. It is both coffee-table and informative, bordering on magazine style. Abundant photographs generally please the eye so you can happily browse and pick up tidbits when bored by the TV.

The book consists of three major sections: Gardens, Techniques and Plants that together provide an overview of rock gardening styles and practise. 'Gardens' are exemplified by ten diverse rock gardens visited by the author, five in the United Kingdom and five from across North America. Extreme examples would be the wild stonework of the historic Aysgarth Edwardian Rock Garden in North Yorkshire and prize-winning troughs from a rooftop garden in New York. These gardens provide the focus for a more personal discussion of the effects of climate, local geology and personal choices and circumstances on the gardeners' design and planting choices. The author clearly admires the inventiveness of gardeners who adjust techniques to suit their climate and local conditions. 'Techniques' as you would expect starts with 'Styles and Construction', moves quickly though a discussion of soil, containers, climate and ends with a very brief section on plant propagation. Underpinning this section are the options available to North American gardeners to call in a professional to place your rocks and of buying in your plants – Oh well.

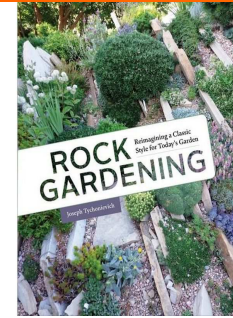
The 'Plants' section covers members of twenty classic alpine plant 'families' chosen by the author. As you cannot cover everything in a short readable book you should advocate for plants that you like and will reasonably grow for you. This is what the author does. The author gardens in Michigan, USA, consequently personal favourites like polygala and penstemon get equal billing with gentians, saxifraga and campanula. Cacti get a special billing as non-traditional inhabitants of the rock garden. Being cold hardy North American natives they, like other alpiners, require excellent drainage, have excellent form and flowers, and are good alternatives for gardeners in warmer climates.

The author gives a very personal perspective on the gardens and plants he describes. This does not overly intrude and is usually interesting and helpful. A key aspect of the book, a North American perspective, is the dependence of both rock garden construction and plants that will grow on your local climate. Creating special microclimates for special plants can only take you so far. While climate change and the future availability of irrigation water are raised as concerns, we are spared any preachy stuff about gardening to save the planet.

The photos are of varying quality. Although made more interesting by the interpretive captions (e.g. p.74 '*Primula sieboldii* thriving in full sun before going dormant for the summer'), some readers may find the shadows and poor depth of field in some photos irritating.

For the experienced rock gardener, the full book title 'Rock Gardening - Reimagining a Classic Style' captures nicely the book and how it complements, for example, the more specialist 'The Crevice Garden' (Seth and Spriggs, 2022), or other more personal discussions of the rock garden and its plants such as 'Alpine Gardening' (Roy Elliott, 1963).

As an introductory guide and short overview of international rock gardening I was pleased and impressed by this book.



***This book is now in the NZAGS library. Ask Robert if you want to borrow it.***