



# THE CALEDONIAN GARDENER 2020

Journal of the Royal Caledonian  
Horticultural Society



# THE CALEDONIAN GARDENER 2020

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# Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society

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## Foreword

This past year has been a very important one for The Caley with the official opening by our Patron, Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal, of our new home at Saughton Park. Over the last winter and spring volunteers, ably led by Jasmine Cann and organised by Pam Whittle, made considerable progress in planting areas within the park. We look forward to re-establishing the Caley's roots at Saughton working in partnership with the Friends of Saughton Park and the City of Edinburgh Council.



*Past and current presidents with our royal patron at Saughton.*  
© K. Allison.

The Caley's flagship educational programme Grow and Learn currently has a record number of 46 groups and 434 people participating from Stornoway to Stranraer. We are grateful for financial support from the RS Macdonald Trust. In late 2018 we heard that we were successful in our application to Scottish Natural Heritage to help deliver a Grow and Learn in Nature programme based at Saughton during 2019. A key challenge will be securing funding to maintain the success and momentum of these important programmes.

The Caley's calendar of events included the Children's Flower Show in the John Hope Gateway at the Botanic followed by a very successful Spring Show held for the first time in a marquee at Saughton. A slightly changed format of summer garden visits and walks looking at native flora and the Caley Summer Gardens Tour to Hampshire were enjoyed by all who participated. Our involvement at Gardening Scotland was again an opportunity to engage with our members and more widely with visitors to the show through our very popular Gardening Advice Stall manned by Caley experts. In September we had a stand at the Dundee Flower Show which generated considerable interest in the work of the Caley, particularly the produce from our allotment. The Caley's awards ceremony recognises the significant contribution to Scottish Horticulture of a number of exceptional individuals across the length and breadth of the country. This year we introduced a Lifetime Achievement Award and it is fitting that the Caley is able to recognise all the award winners' efforts at so many different levels throughout Scotland.

All these activities and events would not be possible without the help, support and time that so many members so willingly give to support the Caley. Thank you all.

*David Knott, President*



*Summer colour in the restored park. All photos © RCHS.*

## Moving forward at Saughton Park

Pam Whittle

The restoration of the park continued to dominate 2019 but there were some significant highlights during the year. As the contract to deliver the restoration project was in two parts, the first to be finished was the gardens. In February, the walled garden area was still closed but some of the Caley crew continued to work on planting the outdoor Winter Border to ensure year-round interest, including planting snowdrops which we hope will establish and allow the garden to take an active part in Scotland's snowdrop festival. In the meantime the public were increasingly anxious to see what was happening and we were delighted to be able to arrange for the park to be open for The Caley Spring Bulb Show, when people flocked to the park and were thrilled by what they saw.

### Medicinal plants

The park was closed again shortly after the show to enable more finishing touches by the contractors but the Physic Garden team of The Friends of Saughton Park began working within the walled garden on their area. This development, which replaced the old sensory garden, has a total of seventeen beds. Each bed has an assigned caretaker, plus buddies, with each bed focusing on a specific condition or part of the body rather than a plant family. As the group is responsible for resourcing and maintaining the plants it has given them a chance to learn about the plants, what thrives, what grows well together, the potential benefits of individual plants.





*The RHS A spring show in Duthie Park. © Alan Findlay.*

## Davidson daffodils in 2019

Pam Whittle

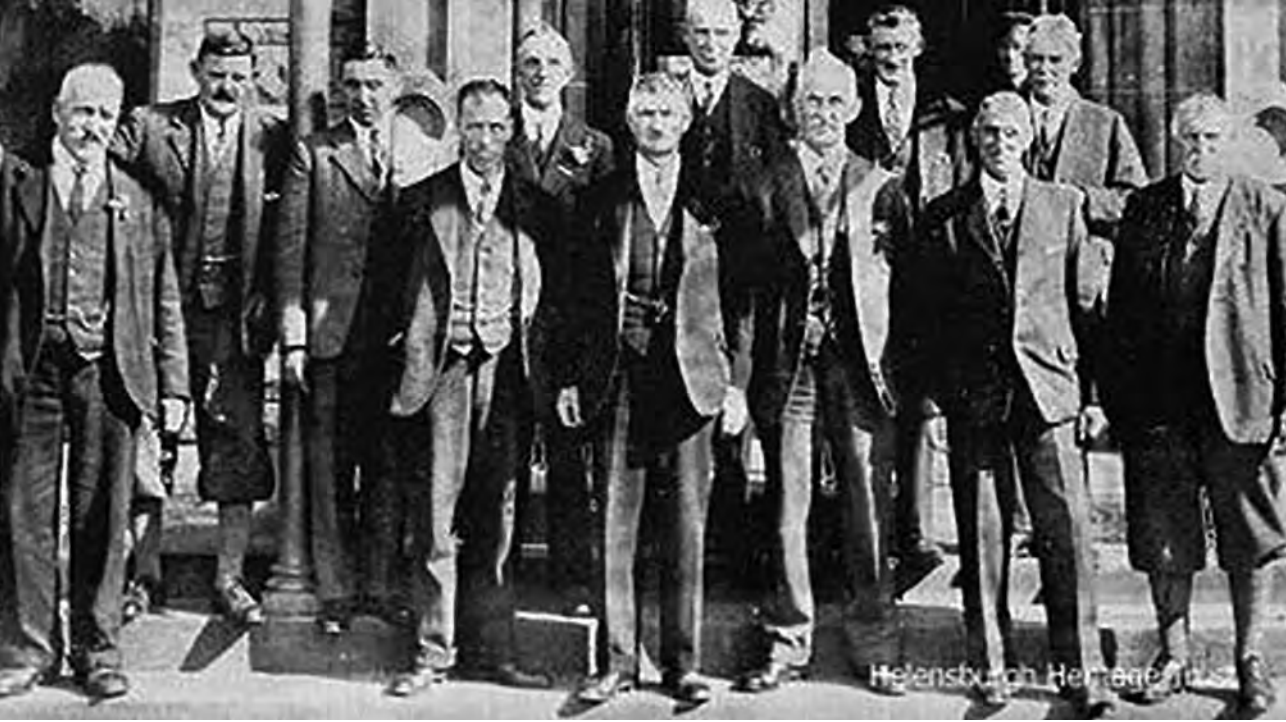
Since 2009 Scottish daffodil enthusiasts have been able to win points by entering daffodils at five participating shows, with their best placed (first, second or third) entry of Division One (trumpet), Division Two (large cupped), Division Three (small cupped), and Division Four (Double) being awarded points at each show. You do not have to enter all five shows, but it all helps towards the final total, as entering a show, even if none of your blooms are placed gives you a point.

The first show is Aberdeen, then the Caley in Edinburgh, followed by Dundee then moving north to Keith and finally Banff. Banff was the home show of the late Jim Davidson who did so much to encourage the growing and showing of daffodils both in Scotland and internationally. The Jim Davidson trophy is

awarded to the grower with most points from all five shows.

The entries at the first show in Aberdeen held in the Victorian Corridor in Duthie Park's David Welch Winter Garden benefitted from the mild winter. In contrast to many other shows Aberdeen continue to have a strong floral art section. The best bloom in show at Aberdeen was 'Pacific Rim' (a division two bloom).

Preparations for the Caley show which moved from the Fletcher Hall at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh to Saughton Park were a challenge due to delays in completion of the restoration project, but the weather was kind and the use of a marquee was appreciated by the blooms that liked the cooler conditions. This was the first smaller show focusing on



*Officials and judges at the August 1933 show. All photos © Helensburgh & Gareloch HS.*

## Helensburgh and Gareloch Horticultural Society

Veronica Davis

The existing minutes of Helensburgh and Gareloch Horticultural Society date from 1926; those prior to that date have been lost. However, there is documentary evidence that flower shows were held in Helensburgh as early as 1850, making it one of the oldest horticultural societies in Scotland.

### Early years 1850–1880

Two silver medals, now in Helensburgh Library, dated 1850 and 1851, were presented to the Society to mark the centenary celebrations. The Glasgow Herald of 6th September 1850 has a full report of the 'annual competition' held by Helensburgh Horticultural Society (Gareloch is absent in this first reference) in the new School Room, Clyde Street. The report remarks on the 'excellence and extent' of the exhibits in relation to 'former years' suggesting that a flower show was already established. According to the Herald, 'the establishment

of this Society was to improve floral horticulture in the district and to reward members who communicate useful information on these subjects'. The long prize list had separate classes for professional and amateur gardeners with the professionals outnumbering the amateurs by three to one. The report has an archaic ring to it. Professional gardeners were named but with no title and always in conjunction with their employer who is referred to as Esquire and followed by the name of the estate or garden. The day's proceedings finished in a convivial fashion when 'the judges along with a few other gentlemen and upwards of twenty members partook of a substantial dinner in the Glasgow Tavern'.

Searches of the Glasgow Herald from 1845–49 have not revealed anything further on Helensburgh, although there are reports of flower shows being held in other communities





*Amisfield from the air. All photos © Amisfield Trust.*

## Amisfield Walled Garden: a historic garden brought back to life for community benefit

Kate Rycroft

Tucked away in dense woodland on the outskirts of Haddington in East Lothian lies an imposing 18th century walled garden that has been restored from an overgrown wilderness into a vibrant and welcoming community garden.

The project to renovate Amisfield Walled Garden has been led entirely by the local community. Over the past 12 years, a group of energetic and dedicated individuals has taken on the task of setting up a charity, obtaining a long term lease and planning the development of the project. The dual aim was to create a garden with year round interest for the enjoyment of visitors, as well as providing a facility that would allow for volunteer gardeners of all ages and abilities to learn a wide range of horticultural skills.

### Heritage

Amisfield Walled Garden was built between 1782 and 1788 by Francis Wemyss Charteris, who later became the 7th Earl of Wemyss. The garden was originally part of the policies of Amisfield House, a Palladian mansion that was designed by Sir Isaac Ware in 1755 and was sadly demolished in 1928. At eight acres in size, the garden is one of the largest walled kitchen gardens in Scotland. Enclosed by 16 foot high stone walls, and with an ornamental circular pavilion in each corner, the garden was built to impress visitors to the estate as well as delivering a steady supply of fresh fruit and vegetables to the house.

Like many such gardens, the cost of upkeep led to a steady decline from its heyday in the 1800s to a state of dilapidation and neglect in the



*The society's patron discussing Grow & Learn with the organiser. © Katy Allison.*

## The Caley's Grow and Learn Award

### Jean Gavin & Shona Nelson

Grow and Learn is the Caley's flagship learning opportunity, recognising individual progress and achievement in horticulture. Our awards are inclusive, individualised and offer life skills based education for all. We aim to address a large gap in provision in the world of horticulture by offering an alternative learning opportunity for those who find mainstream learning challenging.

With projects from as far afield as Stornoway to Stranraer, this year we have had a record number of 49 groups and 448 people participate in the award.

#### Grow and Learn award ceremonies

An important aspect of Grow and Learn is celebrating individual achievement on completion of awards. In total this year, we have attended 21 awards ceremonies the length and breadth of Scotland with a total of 174 learners completing their awards. Having professional

horticulturalists present awards to learners is significant and of great value, a once in a lifetime moment for many. This recognition can often encourage people to develop their skills further by continuing to learn and discover more about the world of plants and the many benefits gardening brings to us all.



*Carole Baxter with participants at Banff Wheelbarrow & Eden project. Aberdeenshire. © RCHS Grow & Learn.*



# The 3growbags: a bit of botany, blogging and plenty of banter!

Elaine Fraser-Gausden

The 3growbags are three sisters who were born and brought up in West Sussex rather a long time ago(!) and now write a successful light-hearted gardening blog together. While Laura and Elaine garden in the south of England, as well as in Western Normandy, Caroline has lived in Scotland for over 40 years, now living in East Lothian and building a house in the Highlands.

In 2016, Caroline's background in journalism and communications led her to persuade her somewhat tech-averse sisters to start a blog about their extensive and diverse gardening experiences. Elaine writes fortnightly tips, and the shared blog-posts have plenty of sisterly teasing and banter among the more serious reading matter. While she is not as knowledgeable as her sisters about plants and horticulture, Caroline's input has been critical with regard to IT and social media and the Growbags now have a steadily-increasing following on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A new venture is the addition of a little online 'shop'.

Branching out into giving lectures has brought a whole new set of challenges for them! It was eventually decided that Caroline would talk about the process itself of writing the blog, whereas the other two would give some of their 'back-story' - Laura would talk about the ten year botanical project she undertook in Madeira while she was a college lecturer in ecology, and Elaine would take the audience on a journey through her creation of a big garden in France from scratch. Lots of frenetic planning followed, as well as plenty of hilarious difficulties, of course! The talks so far have had a very good response, and the warm reception from an evening with the Caley audience was hugely encouraging. A number of other requests from societies and clubs have followed.

The 3Growbags have loved the whole experience of combining their passion for gardening with the communication tools of the 21st century, revelling in the contact with each other and learning (in a rather laboured fashion, sometimes!) modern IT skills. Now enthusiastic members of the Garden Media Guild, they intend to keep charging forward into new ventures - but not forgetting to laugh a lot along the way.

*Elaine Fraser-Gausden, Laura Warren  
& Caroline Rham*  
Website: [www.the3growbags.com](http://www.the3growbags.com)







*Flowers blend with foliage in summer. All photos © Andrew Hogarth.*

## Hardy perennials in East Lothian

Andrew Hogarth

We started planting hardy perennials on a large scale in many of our public parks and other open spaces in 2000. The thinking has been to give the public attractive floral displays that are both significantly cheaper and more environmentally friendly than seasonal bedding. In a few places we have been able to increase the size of beds i.e. more plants but still have a reduced environmental impact as perennials do not need to be brought on in greenhouses with the need for compost, heat and watering as well as extra labour. We have located relatively large beds for maximum impact at key sites such as gateways to towns and villages. This type of planting is along lines pioneered by the late Alan Bloom in his well-known island beds of herbaceous plants which moved away from the traditional herbaceous border with its emphasis on staking to support often rather tall plants. Island beds show off

the plants from all directions and allow for more variety in height with key plants standing out and thought given to structure and foliage as well as the floral interest.

### Practicalities

Many of our rose and shrub beds were tired and needed reworking while roses in particular can be disappointing when not in flower and some cultivars are too prone to disease. Our move into perennials was helped by the presence of Macplants on our doorstep one of the largest growers of a very wide range of hardy plants in the country.

The plans for each bed have to take into account soil conditions, drainage patterns, how exposed it is, whether there are sightlines to be maintained for traffic on adjacent roads, how much human - and dog - pressure affect



*Staging. All photos Paul McLeod and S. da Prato.*

## Veg on show

Fiona Shenfield

Every year in September the Scottish Branch of the National Vegetable Society hold their annual branch championships. The show moves around the country; in 2019 the Championships were hosted by Dalkeith Horticultural Society at the new Dalkeith School Community Campus. The competition show schedule details all the potential classes to enter, along with the rules, times etc. This year there were a total of 21 classes. Most were for a single type of vegetable, each with a specified quantity required for each exhibit, but there are also some classes for collections of vegetables and these provide some of the most eye-catching exhibits in the show. This year there were 117 exhibits entered which made quite a spectacle.

There was a high quality of vegetable exhibits on show with the Best in Show exhibit being won by top grower, Alistair Gray, from Brechin with a set of blanch leeks variety 'Pendle Improved'. Alistair Gray also won a trophy for a lovely set of well ripened 'Kelsae' onions in the Large Exhibition Onion class over 21" round.







*Robins can become hand tame through feeding. © Jimmy Maxwell.*

## Birds and gardens in Scotland

Stan da Prato

Most of us look at garden birds almost daily even if only casually while doing other things while increasing numbers of gardeners now make some provision for wildlife. Around 80% of the population live in towns where around one quarter of the land is used for gardens. UK gardens cover a greater area than all national and RSPB Nature Reserves combined.

### Scottish gardens

Britain has been described as a nation of gardeners and Scotland has been very much part of this. Early gardens were utilitarian to provide food, herbs or medicinal plants. Gardens gradually became a means for the better off to demonstrate their power and success. Styles were copied from Continental Europe and emphasised man's domination and reordering of nature. The range of plants used was limited and designs relied heavily on evergreens clipped into shape; topiary was very popular. Birds were often seen as pests apart from a few ornamental types such as doves or exotics such as peacocks.

Scotland's native flora is not large due to glaciation, geography and climate. Partly due to the introduction of plants from abroad, including many by Scottish collectors, more natural styles of garden evolved. These are still characteristic of many of the best known gardens in Scotland, particularly on the west coast, where the climate allows a wide range of plants from temperate zones to flourish. However plantings have largely been of non-native species and their cultivars e.g. rhododendrons. These well-known Scottish gardens are not typical of the much smaller gardens most Scots have by their houses. Traditionally these would have an ornamental area with a lawn at the front and vegetables and perhaps some fruit at the back. Most Scots live in towns in the central belt. The plants that grew well when these towns were expanding were those that withstood a degree of smoke pollution thus the shrubberies of laurel bushes. Until recently the amount of sulphur in the air kept urban roses free from black spot disease. Not all Scots have a garden





*Aviemore. All photos © Bill Tait.*

## War memorials and gardens competitions in Scotland

Bill Tait

There are branches of the Royal British Legion Scotland throughout the country which cater for ex-service personnel, both able bodied and those who are infirm. In addition to the social side of things, a most important feature is the local war memorial where on Remembrance Sunday respects are paid to the fallen with the laying of wreaths.

### Background

One day, over 35 years ago, two Legion officials, David Lawson and John Pollington, were enjoying a walk round The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh during their lunch break when they met me. The conversation evolved to the state of the war memorials and gardens in Scotland and I suggested that as Beautiful Scotland in Bloom had become established a few years earlier then perhaps the Legion might consider holding a competition which could

improve standards. The officials said that they would bring up the proposal at their next Council meeting. After a few months, they returned to say that a pilot competition would be held and assessed. It turned out to be a success. At first, there were two sections for Large Communities Memorials with gardens and Small Communities Memorials with gardens. A cluster of the larger communities were superior to others and as a result the top section was deemed to be Champion of Champions. These included Hawick, Kelso, Inverness, Forres and Keith with other areas being added over time. Now there are seven trophies to be won. The Premier is the Champion of Champions followed by Large Community Memorial with a garden, Large Community Memorial without a garden, Small Community Memorial with a garden and Small Community Memorial without a garden. In



*Eastwood Health Centre. © Alan Peebles.*

## Unlocking the potential of NHS greenspace for health and wellbeing, biodiversity and climate change

**Alan Macpherson**

NHS Scotland has over 164,000 staff and its estate is one of the biggest estate portfolios in Europe, with over 1,500 buildings including around 200 hospitals and assets worth over £7.2 billion. These public assets include a variety of greenspace areas adjacent to hospitals and health centres, ranging in size from small courtyards and gardens to more extensive parklands, woodlands and grasslands - much of which has been gifted or left to the NHS in legacies for the benefit of staff and patients.

Historically, outdoor spaces and natural features around hospitals were very much part of the healing environment. Gardens, terraces, orchards, allotments, meadows and even hospital farms and ponds were all

common place. However, with the passing of time and the advent of new facilities and advances in medicine, the benefits of spending time in the natural environment have become largely overlooked. Over time, this has led to a gradual reduction in the use of hospital grounds and has diminished the budgets available for their maintenance. As a consequence, much of this extensive greenspace resource has become increasingly neglected, fallen into disuse or sold off, and with less and less provision for greenspace incorporated into the building of new health care facilities.

Now in the 21st century, outdoor spaces within which hospitals and health centres are located are often underused, uninspiring, and





*All photos © Louis Wall.*

## Dumfries Station Garden

John MacLennan

Any traveller arriving at Dumfries railway station is greeted with a riot of colour thanks to the input from the South West Railway Adopters Gardening Group (SWRAGG), guided by its founder, Louis Wall. Many of Louis' ideas came from the experience he gained in the 1970s while undertaking his training at Probus, Cornwall's County Demonstration Garden at Trewithen, and his skills were recognised with the title of Gardener of the Year at Gardening Scotland 2018. Louis has always been happy to share his expertise with others by explaining the merits of particular plant choices and how to develop an effective plant design for a particular location - be it a windswept seaside station or a historic location associated with Robert Burns. He has given presentations at national conferences on how to adopt a station and make a garden. SWRAGG has been recognised through numerous awards such as in 2016, Best Community Initiative, Streets Ahead, in 2018 It's Your Station (Silver, Dumfries), as well as in 2019, in their first year of entering, noted as Outstanding in Keep Scotland Beautiful's Its Your Neighbourhood campaign. It must be noted that the work of the South West Railway Adopters Gardening Group is not just seen at Dumfries but at over twenty other stations including Stranraer, Ayr, Largs and Gretna.

At Dumfries there are many horticultural features within the station complex. One good example is how the group embraces 'Incredible Edibles' where the passing public are encouraged to pick their own fresh vegetables from a wide choice of herbs and leaf vegetables. Soft fruit bushes like blackcurrants and blueberries are ideal for snacking while waiting for the train to work. An interesting idea is the use of silk flowers in the hanging baskets. The health and safety implications of heavy hanging baskets, especially when being watered, had been highlighted to the group and so the use of such baskets was discouraged by the railway authorities. The answer was numerous lightweight baskets filled with carefully sourced silk flowers and foliage which now decorate the station. Sustainability and biodiversity feature within several of the plantings with the choice of bee and butterfly friendly herbaceous perennials such as those with blue, purple or yellow flowers. There are attractive pieces of artwork within the station such as the murals by Jo McSkimming, a local artist, one showing The Flying Scotsman, and another the Flora and Fauna of Dumfriesshire. Other artwork brings back memories of railway station scenes from yesteryear.





*Six of the best: all McNaughton gentians. © S da Prato.*

## Ian's legacy of gentians

### Beryl McNaughton

Ian McNaughton's article in *The Caledonian Gardener* of 2002, where he described his aims in working with autumn-flowering gentians, presents an interesting background to his legacy of gentians we now grow in 2019. Over many years Ian produced thousands of plants from which he selected a very small number that he believed were good enough.

Time will tell how good they are but one of the very best is his selection chosen to commemorate the bicentenary of The Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, appropriately named 'The Caley'. This plant was ideal for the anniversary by flowering at the beginning of October when the Caley's winter programme of lectures starts. It is vigorous, multi-flowered with large, open and upright flowers, finely marked and considered by Ian — and many other growers — as his very best.



*Ian with his gentians. Photos © Beryl McNaughton.*



*Roucan Loch. All photos © Ruth Jardine.*

## Roucan Loch

Mark Jardine

Funerals are exceptionally sensitive times for the family and friends of the deceased. In this country interment in the ground has been traditional with the ceremony based on religious belief. In most Christian cemeteries, the majority of graves will be found facing west to east (head to feet). Early Christians believed this allowed the dead to be facing Christ on the day of Resurrection. This has been changing. Cremation has become the preferred method of disposal in Britain. Approximately 75% of all recorded deaths are now followed by cremation. All Christian denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church, now allow cremation. Cremation is also acceptable to Sikhs, Hindus, Parsees and Buddhists but it is forbidden by Orthodox Religions, Jews and Muslims. Note that cremation is not recent; in Celtic times funeral pyres were often used.

Cost is one factor as generally the cost of burial is much higher than the fee charged for cremation. However, there are others, including a decline in religion and concerns about the availability of land for cemeteries. The management of old cemeteries can be an

issue. Many are the responsibility of cash strapped local authorities. Some have been allowed to become nature reserves. The older sections often date back to Victorian times. They may contain the oldest trees in the locality, and provide habitats for mammals, wild flowers, insects, bats and birds.

### Nature

The value of nature in the grieving process is very important. The feeling that remains should be returned to the earth is still significant for many people. Even after cremation, families often ask for the ashes to be scattered in a garden setting, while some take them to a place of significance for the deceased such as an island or mountain - or even a football ground!

Instead of focusing on the sadness of death, there has been a move towards funerals that are a celebration of life. Although cremation reduces the need for ever more land it does raise other environmental issues over the process which obviously involves incineration. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 has





*This set of palms from Thailand received the Mary Mendum Medal. Photos © the artists and C. Davies.*

## Botanical Images Scotia 2019

### Coral Prosser

BISCOT once again staged another excellent exhibition of botanical art at Gardening Scotland in 2019. The phrase ‘small but beautifully formed’ springs to mind and is a true description of this annual miracle. Once again, the international contingent was strong. Two of the artists were from Italy, one from Switzerland and one from Thailand. The other contestants were from the U.K. The quality of the exhibit was outstanding and this was borne out by the number of high awards given by the judges. Nine artists took part. Four Gold, one Silver-gilt, three Silver and one Bronze awards were presented. One artist won the Mary Mendum Medal. There was very strong competition from at least two other artists for the honour.

The range of subjects was diverse, from tropical palms to native lichen species, and proved to be an educational as well as an

aesthetic and visual treat for those who have an interest in both art and botanical subjects.

Alongside the BISCOT exhibition a further display of botanical paintings was shown. These paintings were the first selected works which will eventually form the R.G.B.E. Florilegium. This new project for R.B.G.E. is a long-awaited event and will consist of contemporary botanical studies. The collection will be an ongoing labour into the future but the initial main body of works will be completed to coincide with the 350th anniversary of the R.B.G.E. in 2020, and will be shown to the public at the James Hope Gateway in the autumn of that year. Many artists have signed up to create a work for the florilegium. The works produced will undergo a strict selection procedure. It is envisaged that it will be oversubscribed so there will be an





*The Caley sponsors the Best New Plant award at Gardening Scotland this year won by *Rehmannia 'Polina'* exhibited by Holmes Farm Plants. © C. Davies.*

## Highlights of 2019

### The editors

Winter 2018–19 was unusually dry, especially in January, when some very cold nights were recorded. February then saw very mild conditions; spring was very changeable but generally early for many growers. Summer weather in 2019, in contrast to the previous year, was one of the wettest on record in Scotland. By autumn sunny dry spells alternated with wetter windier spells. As usual there were differences between parts of the country. Atypically the west had below average autumn rainfall at times whereas the east had more wet spells than usual linked to bouts of easterly winds.

Although the Caley Spring Flower Show has moved to Saughton Park elsewhere in Edinburgh, the children's bulb competition is still held in the John Hope Gateway of the Royal Botanic Garden at a slightly earlier date to avoid school holidays. Leading up to these

shows George Anderson's practical advice through the growing season was followed by many on the Caley website.

Gardening Scotland was held in distinctly mixed weather. As usual the Caley contributed many of the volunteer stewards and other helpers as well as answering hundreds of questions over the three days of the show. The Caley again put on an information stand at the Dundee Flower & Food Festival in September.

Twenty five members enjoyed a six day summer tour of gardens in Hampshire. A series of garden visits started on 12th May when Anna Buxton opened her Edinburgh garden for the afternoon. On three days in June, Pam & Richard Whittle opened their garden in Romanno Bridge. Later in June Stan da Prato led an evening walk looking at wildflowers on the East Lothian coast, then a



## Scottish Horticultural Medal



**Michael Innes** was brought up in Banffshire where his parents ran a small market garden. After a degree in Geography he was an assistant gardener on the Isle of Eigg then an under-gardener on Skibo Estate. From

there he went to Kew for their Diploma course which he completed in 1982. He became assistant to Eric Robson, Head of Gardens at the NTS. After three years he took over a small and very run down market garden in Fife with the idea of establishing a plant nursery. However he was then asked by Dobbies and the NTS to take charge of the construction of their joint garden at The Glasgow Garden Festival, which opened in May 1988. Realising that his main interests lay in designing and creating gardens he established St Marys Horticultural Services later in 1988. Since then he has worn three hats - as a garden designer, a garden constructor with a small landscaping team and a consultant for several large Scottish gardens. Work has taken Michael from local jobs in Fife to grand gardens in Switzerland and the Cote d'Azur. The majority of his work has been on Scottish

country house gardens. The best known is probably Dumfries House where he worked for several years on the design and restoration of the formal gardens, woodland garden, arboretum and walled garden. Other outstanding work includes Attadale, Wester Ross, Ethie Castle, Angus, Kemback House, Fife, Craigfoodie, Fife and the walled garden at Culloden House by Inverness. Several years ago he downsized and now he designs and oversees projects for private clients whilst also supervising and working in one private garden in Fife. He is currently advising on a variety of projects including the Japanese garden restoration at Cowden Castle, a large Argyll coastal estate, Novar in Ross-shire and several Angus gardens. His garden at St Marys opens under Scotland's gardens scheme and has featured in a number of publications.

## Dr Andrew Duncan Medal

**Fiona Thackeray** graduated from the University of Glasgow with a degree in Psychology. She has been involved in Turtle conservation in Greece, dog fostering, and is a prize-winning author. Her contri-





## Book Reviews

**Plastic-free Gardening: A guide to reducing the plastic in your gardening life.** Fiona Thackeray. 2019. ISBN 9781916491908. Trellis Scotland, Unit 8, 28 Glasgow Road, Perth PH2 0NX. [www.trellisscotland.org.uk](http://www.trellisscotland.org.uk). £11.99.



In a simple and straightforward manner this book guides the reader through the complexities of the plastics used in gardening and when or why they can become a problem. One of the benefits of this book is the clarity with which Fiona outlines the alternatives with checklists of 'Avoid' and 'Try'. None of the suggestions are too radical nor do they require vast expense thus the book offers a realistic blueprint tempered with a message of optimism. For example do remember that our wellington boots should be made of latex rubber rather than PVC because the former can be degraded overtime by soil bacteria, while in place of using lightweight PVC outdoor garments why not wear waxed cotton jackets. One of the perennial garden

hazards is the hose, often left in a tangle or not coiled up. As Fiona stresses that cheaper vinyl or PVC hoses are more prone to crack, and so she advocates buying latex rubber hoses, and instead of using plastic connections to the water supply use brass fittings.

Throughout the book are simple hints worth trying. Have you thought of watering your seedlings with diluted chamomile tea to prevent damping off? Or making your own plant pots from used paper? Details of the Horticultural Trades Association recycling scheme for used pots are given as well as numerous alternatives from coir pots to how to use large tin cans, a practice common in the 1950–60s.

Using her experience as Head of Operations at Trellis, Scotland's therapeutic gardening charity, and information gleaned from colleagues, Fiona has written an excellent reference book which is easy to understand and gives the reader numerous low cost, and DIY ideas. Finally, while most book covers contain plastic, this one is plastic free!

*John MacLennan*



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