

POLLINIA



Cymbidium 'Tiger Tail'



NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH ORCHID SOCIETY

Cumann Magairlíní na hÉireann

Volume 13, Issue 4

An Samhradh

July 2015



THE IRISH ORCHID SOCIETY

Chairperson: Brendan Sayers
 Treasurer : Mary Bradshaw
 Secretary: Deirdre McGrane
 Editor: Laurence T. May
 Committee:

Marina Andreeva
 Lisa Coffey
 Aleksandra Kucharczyk
 Laurence T. May

POLLINIA

(pol-LIN-ee-uh)

A **pollinium**, (plural, **pollinia**) is the specific, pollen-bearing structure of Asclepiadaceae and Orchidaceae which is extracted by pollinators from a flower and transported for pollination to another flower.

It is a mass of pollen grains fused by means of their wavy texture or fine threads. It originate from a single anther. This mass sticks together and during pollination is transported as a single unit.

Pollinia contain the male reproductive cells.



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IOS MEMBERSHIP

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

(renewable in June of each year)

- ☐ Adult Single €20.00
- ☐ Family €30.00
- ☐ OAP/Student* €15.00

(*Confirmation of student status required)

Please make cheques or PO payable to:

The Irish Orchid Society

Applications, notices, and any other society communications should be made to the Secretary:

Deirdre McGrane, Secretary
Irish Orchid Society
c/o National Botanic Gardens
Glasnevin, Dublin 9, Ireland

EDITORIAL INFORMATION

The Editorial Staff reserve the right to edit and/or amend articles submitted to the Newsletter.

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Contributions of articles, pictures or comments should be sent by email to: editor@pollinia.org or by post to:

Laurence T. May,
 Bellarush, Castlebaldwin,
 Co. Sligo,
 Ireland

Cumann Magairlíne
 na hÉireann



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Please visit the IOS website for Calendar changes, if any, and new entries.



JUNE SOLSTICE - Sunday



FIELD TRIP TO BULL ISLAND: We experience and study some of our most showy native orchids. Monday, 6 July at 6.30pm



NO MEETING
August Bank Holiday



NO MEETING

Members are reminded to please send their renewal subscriptions for 2015-2016 to the Secretary by 30 June.

August Bank Holiday Monday August 3
Equinox Wednesday September 23
October Bank Holiday Monday October 26

RHS HAMPTON COURT PALACE FLOWER SHOW
30 Jun - 5 Jul 2015
Hampton Court Palace
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Greater London

BRITISH ORCHID GROWERS ASSOCIATION SUMMER ORCHID FAIR
Saturday/Sunday August 22-23
Cole Court - Twickenham & District Masonic Centre, 150 London Road,
Twickenham TW1 1HD
10am-4:30pm Saturday; 10am-4pm Sunday, admission £2

ORCHID SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN OSGB OPEN AUTUMN SHOW
Saturday November 7
Wraybury Village Hall, The Green, TW19 5NA 11.00am - 4.00pm
7.30am exhibitors, 10.30am visitors

MINUTES OF THE A.G.M. OF THE IRISH ORCHID SOCIETY

Monday 8th June 2015

Total Attendance 14. Meeting began at 8.05 pm

Apologies

Marie Hourigan and Larry May

Minutes of the A.G.M. 2014 were read by members present.

Matters Arising from the 2014 minutes. None.

Minutes were proposed by Brendan Sayers and seconded by Scott MacNaughton.

Chairperson's Address

As the society did not have a Chairperson Mary Bradshaw gave a review of the I.O.S. year.

2014

July 3rd Trip to Bull Island led by Brendan Sayers.

July 7th Trip to Mullaghmore. Many non-members joined the exploration.

September 1st Tour of the NBG Orchid House by Marie Hourigan.

October 6th "Irish Orchids, Past, Present and Future" by Dr. Declan Doogue.
(Threats to our National plants and habitats) (Dublin Naturalist's Field Club)

November 3rd Deborah Lambkin. Official Orchid Artist Kew Gardens gave an interesting review of her methods, techniques and the requirements of her job.

December 1st Christmas party, good fun, eating too much.

2015

February 2nd Re-potting demonstration for members. Excellent as always. Twelve people attended.

February 14th Re-potting demonstration for the public. Eighteen people attended. There was good interest from the public. Marie Hourigan has a list for a 2016 event if Brendan Sayers decides to give another demonstration.

March 2nd Shane Kerr spoke about Pleiones and their cultivation. His sales were contributed to the society.

April 8th-12th European Orchid Conference. Five members attended.

April 25th-26th Orchid Fair at Glasnevin. Ray Creek Orchids and Burnham Nurseries provided the plants. The exchange rate made the prices very high. Thanks to all members who took their place on the I.O.S. table and showed their plants. Some new members joined and there was some subscription renewal. The raffle made €217.00.

May 5th Maryanne Harris from Dublin City Council gave a talk on "Orchid Diversity in Dublin City Parks" Good slides. Refer to A.O.B.

June 8th Annual General Meeting

Brendan Sayers thanked the committee for organising these events and for all their hard work.



Treasurer's Report

The treasurer, Mary Bradshaw gave a synopsis of the year's financial statement.

Financial Statement 2014/2015

Income		Expenditure	
Subscriptions	670.00	Pollinia	775.00
Life Membership	0	Website costs	193.09
Raffles	699.00	Prizes for raffles	255.98
Sales of Bark	134.00	Engraving	60.00
Pleione Bulbs	40.00	Orchid Flasks	56.25
Potting Demonstration	255.00	Stamps	256.00
		Orchid Soc GB sub	27.35
		Bank Fees	15.54
		Speaker 1-Doogue	50.00
		Speaker 2-Lambkin	75.00
		Speaker 3-Harris	12.00
		Orchid Bark	30.00
Total	1,798.00	Total	1,806.43
Deficit:	-8.43		

Cash in Bank, in two accounts, 6,303.46

Mary pointed out that in future the number of copies of **Pollinia** would be cut to 100 from 125 due to declining membership.

Engraving on the perpetual Silver tray has been brought up to date. The Orchid flasks will be raffled in September. Olwyn Lanigan suggested that the financial statements for the present and previous year should be on the same page.

The treasurer's report was proposed by Olwyn Lanigan and seconded by Úna Breathnach.

Election of Committee Members

Present Committee

Chairperson:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Mary Bradshaw
Secretary:	Vacant
Editor:	Laurence T. May

Committee:

Úna Breathnach, Marina Andreeva, Lisa Coffey, Deirdre Mc Grane, Laurence T. May.

Úna Breathnach is stepping down from the committee after three years. Mary Bradshaw thanked Úna for organising the Raffle every month. Marina Andreeva has received a placement in Wisley RHS Gardens in the UK. Brendan Sayers

congratulated Marina and explained the prestigious nature of such an achievement. The I.O.S. are indeed very proud to have a member accepted on such a course. Marina will keep the committee up to date with her work.

Deirdre McGrane nominated Brendan Sayers as Chairperson of the Society. Brendan accepted and the nomination was seconded by Scott MacNaughton.

Brendan Sayers nominated Alexandra Kucharezyk as a Committee member. This was seconded by Marina Andreeva. Brendan also nominated Deirdre McGrane to the position of secretary. This was seconded by Mary Bradshaw.

The New Committee for 2015/2016.

Chairperson:	Brendan Sayers
Treasurer:	Mary Bradshaw
Secretary:	Deirdre McGrane
Editor:	Laurence T. May
Committee:	
	Lisa Coffey
	Alexandra Kucharezyk
	Marina Andreeva
	Laurence T. May

A.O.B.

Maryanne Harris (Dublin City Council) spoke to Mary Bradshaw about an upcoming surveying project on plants growing on the Bull Island. Faith Wilson will talk to the I.O.S. about the plants and how they will be surveyed. Volunteers will be grouped in twos and they will be taught how to use GPS. Three trips to the Bull Island over one year will be required. People interested were asked to contact Mary Bradshaw.

There was confusion about the date of the July trip to Bull Island. Lisa Coffey will check this and inform as many members as possible. [See website]

Lisa told the meeting that the number of visits to the website were greatly up on last year's numbers. Brendan Sayers asked if the society should consider opening Facebook and Twitter accounts. It was stated that this would be time consuming. Lisa Coffey offered to set up these accounts if there was anyone willing to look after them.

Olwyn asked if the car park could be opened for I.O.S. meetings. Brendan explained that due to staff numbers this was not feasible.

Tom Doran thanked , on behalf of the I.O.S. the director of the National Botanic Gardens for the use of the facilities over the year and hoped that the good relations between the I.O.S. and the N.B.G. would continue.

Brendan Sayers thanked Larry May for the Trojan work he does in editing **Pollinia**.



Larry has suggested some changes to the format of **Pollinia**, shape, size and number of issues. This would have to be discussed with the Committee and the members.

Clear figures would be needed for cost implications. Brendan suggested that more information on the monthly meetings be inserted in **Pollinia**.

Lisa Coffey will make out a template for members to fill in on the plants they bring to the meetings.

Tom Doran brought a very healthy, de-flasked, Phalaenopsis which he grew in a sealed plastic bag. Well done, Tom.

At the end of the meeting we had a slide show of images taken by Mary and Bob Bradshaw at The European Orchid Conference.

The meeting concluded at 9pm.

ÚNA BREATHNACH



EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of **Pollinia** marks the 32nd issue I have created and edited (with the help of Microsoft Publisher,) then sent to the printer. I don't count the hours involved because I like doing it. I'm in my mid 70s; it keeps me busy and using my faculties. I think I have built an interesting, informative and attractive publication, built on the efforts of publishers before me and my own design sense. Apologies for the typos that slipped by me.

In many respects, though, I have the same problems that previous publishers had. We all want more input from the readers, the members. I really do not know what the majority think of the publication. Over the years I have had several very much appreciated 'Thank you' notes — one member sent a note last week writing '...the magazine is always a joy to behold....Congratulations on the high standards you've brought it to.'

Yet I have heard that some members want to "to make **Pollinia** more of our own," by which remark I think they do not want articles about anything other than orchids in Ireland. That, for me, would be both interesting and repetitive.

In order to add content to an issue of 32 pages, I first use any and all items on the Society and Irish orchids written and sent to me by members or the Secretary. This includes the quarterly Calendar and any notes from meetings. Second, I ask Marie Hourigan to submit an article on what orchid is in flower in the National Botanic Gardens. Third, I ask Stuart Dunlop and Zoë Devlin, our regular columnists, for a contribution.

After reviewing everything, I then research for articles of interest about Orchids anywhere, including book reviews of interest, and I try to include one scientific article in each issue. Next would be items about plants in general and biodiversity in Ireland.

The current issue features articles and photographs on the Dublin Orchid Fair and a report on our Annual General Meeting.

I. O. S. member Peter Stiller sent me a good story of his trip to Thailand.

Do you, dear reader, have something to contribute?

In the past year the number of members has decreased to where it is not economical to have four issues printed and mailed. Each printed issue and postage costs approximately €4 per member.

There would be some savings from postage costs by using email distribution in PDF or other format. Not all members have computer access or want to receive email issues. They prefer hard copy for easy future reference.

As mentioned at the AGM, I have suggested that if we want to continue with **Pollinia**, the number of issues could be changed to two per year. That alone would cut costs by approximately 50%. I would like to change the format to a slightly different size, add a few more pages, change the font sizes a bit, and other cosmetics. Nothing really radical. In quarters without **Pollinia**, there could be a simple mailing by the Secretary of event reminders and news.

Additional ways to augment publishing costs would be to accept and solicit advertising. The current advertisement is included *gratis*. Perhaps the Committee could find patrons or sponsors, as some Societies have managed. I'm sure there are many suggestions out there, and solutions.

Ideally, the Society needs new members. Perhaps advertising in garden and plant magazines and websites could bring additional members.

The Committee will discuss these changes and welcome the Members contributions. Please send them.

LAURENCE T. MAY





THE A. G. M.

Can you imagine a group of avid orchid enthusiasts meeting for their AGM. Where you may ask? Why in the secure theatre of the National Botanic Gardens no less.

The meeting got underway under the skillful guidance of Mary Bradshaw when suddenly all was in darkness. Brendan, knowing this building inside and out, quickly rushed to the rescue but not even his magical fingers could produce a flicker never mind a beam.

But wait; all was not lost – doors were opened and propped with chairs – late evening sunlight streamed in followed quickly by the chill evening air of our Irish summer.

Mary Bradshaw continued valiantly until Lo!, the meeting was suddenly transformed as the alchemy of technology restored light. Members were mollified by the showing of scenes from the recent European Orchid show.

The meeting was not so much as the ‘Meeting on the Turret Stairs’ as ‘Goodbye from the Postern Gate’ and the key rapidly turned. Ah! Where are thou Romeo?

H. J. BECKETT



WINTER IS COMING!

While our plants no doubt enjoy being outdoors in our all-too-brief Irish summer, be sure to bring them indoors before the first cold weather arrives.

IRISH ORCHID SOCIETY
www.irishorchidsociety.org

POLLINIA and *Magairlí*
www.pollinia.org

CYMBIDIUM 'TIGER TAIL'

In the July 2013 Issue of *Pollinia* (Volume 11, No. 4) the results of the I.O.S. show, held at the Dublin Orchid Fair 2013 were published. Best Cymbidium, Best Hybrid and Best in Show went to Cymbidium 'Tiger Tail' grown by Brendan Sayers. Needless to say, I am now delighted to repeat this trio of awards in 2015 and thought it proper to introduce this stunning, miniature Cymbidium in full.

Cymbidium 'Tiger Tail' was registered in 1960 by Stewarts Orchids Inc. and resulted from crossing the tidy flowered *Cymbidium tigrinum* with an old hybrid *Cymbidium Alexanderi*.

Cymbidium tigrinum, with greenish-yellow flowers and a white, red spotted lip hails from high altitude habitats in the Chinese Himalaya, Burma and the Indian state of Assam and hence is a cool to cold growing species.

Cymbidium Alexanderi, now known to have an earlier hybrid name of *C. Armainvillense* is the resultant hybrid of *Cymbidium eburneum* and *C. lowianum*.

These are also Indo-Asian species but from lower altitudes and more substantial stature compared to *C. tigrinum*.

The result of their marriage is clearly seen in the accompanying photograph (See Front Cover.) As the grex 'Tiger Tail' shows a lot of variability, there are a number of named clones. 'India', 'Canary' and 'May Day' are all yellow flowered selections, the latter received a Highly Commended Certificate from the American Orchid Society.

I grow both my Cymbidium 'Tiger Tail' side by side. They spend from late May to late September/October outdoors and the remainder of the year in a glazed, well lit corridor, warm by day, cool by night.

For the growing season of 2014 plants were fed with Osmo, a seaweed based liquid feed of the type manufactured specifically for tomatoes. As the plants are growing in 50/50 sphagnum/perlite they are fed often, almost at every watering.

It was therefore interesting to have one plant with five flower spikes and the other without a single spike!

We now await the results of the 2015 growing season and hope 'Tiger Tail' make a return showing.

BRENDAN SAYERS

Chairperson
Irish Orchid Society



DUBLIN ORCHID FAIR 2015

During the weekend of April 25th and 26th many beauties of the extensive orchid family were shown in the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin. There also was the possibility of buying many plants in full bloom as well as small seedlings ready to plant. Among the more popular species for homes there was a large choice of plants: *Phalaenopsis* with different spots, stripes, dots or of pure colour; *Dendrobium* with pastel colours or with flash as the one named 'Stardust Firebird'; *Cambria* 'Bartley Schwartz' – beautiful combination of red-wine and white colours.

There were also some less known plants like the beautiful *Cymbidium* 'Honey' of deep yellow colour or some interesting spotty ones like 'San Francisco' and 'Vogel's Magic'; *Paphiopedilum carlesworthii* x ('Californian Queen' x 'Incredible') or elegant *Paphiopedilum maudiae*; mix of *Masdevalia* hybrids from warm yellow, orange, red to purple colour and *Vanda* with big spotty flowers with different shades of purple and pink like 'Gordon Dillon', 'Sunta's Delight' or 'Thailand Delight'.

My attention was drawn to one fragrant orchid – the hybrid *Acacallis cyanera* x *Zygopetalum* 'Barbel Hohn' – a delicate combination of pastel colours – pink, purple and white. Other interesting plants were *Dienia ophrydis* 'Frisky' with many tiny flowers and for very attentive persons a tiny, purple beauty, *Lepanthopsis astrophora* 'Stalky'.

Also, several members of the Irish Orchid Society presented some of their orchid collections; to name just a few of them: *Cypripedium* 'Kentucky,' *Sarco Fitzhart* (*hartmannii* x *fitzgeraldii*), *Slc. Roblar* and *Epidendrum radicans*.

ALEKSANDRA KUCHARCZYK

Photos by Aleksandra Kucharczyk

In 2010, Professor Rapee Sagarik, an ornamental plant advisor of the Department of Agriculture, foresaw particular benefit for being the host of the conference. The Department of Agriculture then submitted a project to the Thailand Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperations and Asia Pacific Orchid Committee. The committee has recognized the potential of Orchid Thailand and therefore agreed that Thailand will host the 12th Asia Pacific Orchid Conference (APOC) on the upcoming March 19th to 27th, 2016



HOW RARE MAY AN ORCHID BE?

Candidacy for the rarest orchid depends on what criteria are used. In the UK the ephemeral Ghost orchid (*Epipogium aphyllum*) was unseen for so many years that it was classified as extirpated (locally extinct) in 2005, and then found growing in Herefordshire in 2009. One Lady's Slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*) gets police protection when it is flowering as it is believed to be the last wild plant of its kind in the UK; other Lady's Slipper orchids in the UK are the result of re-introduction. Although both Ghost orchids and Lady's Slipper orchids are rare in the UK they can be seen growing in greater numbers in other European countries. In fact standing in some Alpine meadows in Switzerland you might see so many that you would consider Lady's Slipper orchids locally abundant. In this case rarity is dependent on location.

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature Red List provides information on the conservation status of many species. However orchids are underrepresented on the Red List. While 100% of mammal and bird species have been Red Listed only 2% of orchid species have been Red Listed.

Hassan Rankou, based at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, is working on getting more orchids assessed to IUCN standards in order to support global orchid conservation efforts with awareness of which species are most at risk, and their relevant taxonomic and geographical details. While the IUCN Red List represents an international standard of the assessment of rarity it cannot specify which is the rarest orchid in the world.

As with most areas of knowledge it is things that occupy the liminal space

between known and unknown that indicate both the extent of knowledge, and how much more there is to be known.

This was demonstrated for me by an orchid in the Madagascan rainforest. Hiking a forest trail an eagle-eyed member of the group spotted a flower on the forest floor. We do know it is from the genus *Didymoplexis*.

Three species of *Didymoplexis* are



known to occur in the Afro-Madagascan region: *D. africana*, *D. verrucosa* and *D. madagascariensis*. Supplementing the five known herbarium specimens of *D. madagascariensis* are field photographs. Key identifying features of *D. madagascariensis* are in the plant's flowers. But the type specimen of *D. madagascariensis* is a fruiting, not flowering plant. So evidence with which to identify species of *Didymoplexis* in Madagascar is limited. Some



Didymoplexis sightings in Madagascar have even been ascribed to *D. madagascariensis* on the basis that other species in the

Didymoplexis genus were not known at that time in Madagascar.

This means that the Didymoplexis genus in Madagascar is so little known in scientific terms that it is technically difficult to be sure what species you have seen.

If I return to Madagascar, and use the GPS co-ordinates from my group's 2013 sighting to go right back to the exact location where we saw a Didymoplexis there might be nothing to see. As a holomycotrophic plant that does not rely on photosynthesis for energy they are only visible during their fleeting flowering and fruiting season.

For me this Didymoplexis is probably the rarest orchid that I will ever see.

SUZANNE MASTERS



Didymoplex verrucosa

Swiss Orchid Foundation at the Herbarium Jany Renz

RECENTLY IN FLOWER IN THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS

Dendrochilum arachnites 'yellow'

Common Name The Spider Dendrochilum [refers to the flowers shape]

Synonyms *Acoridium arachnites* (Rchb. f.) Rolfe 1904; *Platyclinis arachnites* Rolfe 1904

First described in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* weekly (1882) I. 256 as a 'curious botanical species with bulbs like little gherkins ultimately furrowed, and exceeding an inch in length'. It then goes on to describe the flower, leaves and structure of the plant. According to the Chronicle it was first introduced by Mr. Stuart Low from the Philippine Islands. Heinrich Gustav Reichenbach (Rchb. f. for short) describes the plant he has as a 'nice living plant at hand, but I am afraid the novelty will create no sensation in the horticultural world'.

Found only in The Philippines at elevations of 600 to 2300 meters often in bright light as a small sized, warm to cool growing epiphyte with 2" [5 cm] between each, rambling, wrinkled, ovoid pseudobulb carrying a lanceolate (ribbon like) distinctly three veined leaf. Blooms are yellowish approximately 2 cm in size with a soft/faint smell.

There can be up to thirty arching inflorescence per plant, born at the apex of the pseudobulb.

This orchid can be grown in a cool or intermediate glasshouse with medium to bright light, but no direct sunlight. *D. arachnites* will grow fast and take up little space. It can tolerate temperature changes

Pot with fine bark and perlite or sphagnum moss. Plant prefers dry periods so once a week watering is probably sufficient, leaving it to dry between watering and to avoid water logging. Reduce watering during the winter months. Feed regularly during the growing season.

The genus *Dendrochillum* was first described by Carl Blume in 1825. *Dendrochillum* is one of the largest genera with approximately 270 species described, of which under thirty are available in nurseries so maybe Reichenbach was right all those years ago!!! Nevertheless *D. arachnites* will give copious blooms for the dedicated grower.



MARIE HOURIGAN

Overheard at the Dublin Orchid Fair:

"Feed? We do not feed orchids; we provide nutrients that are utilized to manufacture food."





Dendrochilum arachnites

Insert close-up



Epidendrum radicans



Cambria 'Bartley Schwartz'



Acacallis cyanera x zygopetalum



Dienia ophrydis





Cymbium 'San Francisco'



Dendrobium 'Stardust'



Cymbium 'Vogel's Magic'

Photos courtesy of Aleksandra Kucharczyk



Paphiopedilum haynaldianum var alba x self

Best Paphiopedilum, Best Species

Paphiopedilum haynaldianum var.
alba x self grown by Mark Garvey.

Best Miniature went to *Dendrobium equitans* also grown by Mark Garvey

Best Hybrid, Best in Show and Best Cymbidium went to Cymbidium 'Tiger Tail' grown by Brendan Sayers [See page 10]

Best Hardy Orchid went to Cypripedium 'Kentucky' grown by Hylda Beckett



Dendrobium equitans



Cypripedium 'Kentucky'



SEARCH FOR ORCHIDS IN THE NATIONAL PARKS OF NORTHERN THAILAND

Dear Orchid friends,

In March of this year my wife and I flew a second time via Bangkok to Chiang Mai to meet Peter Williams and the other party members to start the trek to the national parks on Northern Island.

The reason for visiting the parks for the second time is very simply because one feels better when one knows what is going on. This year eighteen people from USA, England, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Germany came together on 10th of March to follow Peter's guided tour.

Three nine-seat minibuses were available to transport the members for the whole time of 16 days. I am sure that members from the I. O. S. who have made such a tour before know that it is no holiday due to the early starts in the morning and late returns in the afternoon.

The first day was taken to acclimatize which was very important and we visited the largest temple in Thailand called Wat Phra That Doi Suthep on the top of a mountain near Chiang Mai. Very many local people but also visitors from the rest of the world were inside this area.

In the afternoon the first highlight was the visit of the plant (orchid) market, of course to look for the orchids beginning with the Paphios, Cattlaya and Dendrobium hybrids and also flasks were on offer. But the word CITES stopped all request to buy.

The next day was to climb to top of the highest mountain of Thailand Doi Inthanon 2565 meters above sea-level but obviously using our minibuses. At the top it was only +9°C but super sunshine was waiting for us.

There were white coloured *Coelogyne nitida* on many bushes blooming also in the earth. Driving back we visited the garden for cold countries. Fantastic opium poppies, grew around. A short stop on the road down to look for *Dendrobium infundibulum* in the elephant grass.

The following day we left Chiang Mai and travelled north and visited in the morning the Botanical Garden of Queen Sirikit. In the greenhouses you could see plants from all over world and of course in the orchid house Vandas in different colours, Paphios, Dendrobium but also hybrids. There was a gift shop where one could buy clothing (t-shirts, perfume, tea, honey and also orchids and orchid flasks)

On the way to our resort in the mountains we stopped at a butterfly and orchid restaurant full of blooming plants. The following two days were spent jungle trekking with orchid search as our target. This meant getting up early, breakfast and

then take off to the National park, permit and paying at the entrance, talking to the park rangers and then using small roads with many bends and a lot of signals with the motor horn to warn others cars in advance. Final point was a place where the buses could park and then out of the buses and in single file into the forest to discover the orchids blooming in the branches of big trees, (*Vanda coerulescens*, different *Dendrobium* in various shades of yellow, both large and small in size.)

Some of our members had not seen orchids in the forest before. The temperature was nearly +30°C with only little shade. Each person received two bottles of water before starting. Rule number one: Peter checked each member to avoid any water problems later. But I can say that no one was seriously affected during the whole time.

One day we visited a local orchid farm which could reach only with difficulties because the little track brought our town buses into danger to pass some bad surfaces.

Mother and father grow orchids which their daughter sells in Bangkok. But some of the orchids will never bloom in Bangkok. It is just too hot in south. It was a pity that they did not speak English only Thai and no names were on the pots. However we enjoyed the meeting with these old people. The lady was very astonished to meet me again and her ire disappeared nearly 100%.

Last year Peter sent me an orchid list from a Thai nursery near Chiang Mai for ordering. There was enough time to get the Thai Export CITES and of course the German import CITES for presenting after our arrival at Frankfurt airport customs.

Also an English member did the same and we both showed Mr. Jo our documents during our visit at his nursery. The day before we flew back he brought us the big package to our hotel at Chiang Mai. If you fly with Thai Airways, as I did, no charges for overweight have to be paid.

In the meantime some of my ordered plants p.e. botanic *Paphios* (*niveum*, *taianum*, *godefroye*, *bellatulum*, *charlesworthii*) are blooming.

On another day we started for a further park together with a local guide for some hours up and down under the trees which were full of *Dendrobium* in yellow and pink colours, Peter's Thai wife and I took many orchids which had fallen down back into branch forks, so we both did a good deed for the day. Back to the entrance we saw local people sitting in a pool with hot water but the water smelled of sulphur. They invited us to do the same but without success.

Our next destination was the town of Loei in the north east of Thailand. On the way we visited Lapang with its famous old Buddhist temple. This district was a major stronghold of Communist insurgents after the second world war. It took time to fight against these people and in 1982 the Thai government forces brought this area under its control. In the visitor building of the park information many artefacts and a short film about the battles in the rocks showed us how heavy the fighting had been.



Only one blooming *Dendrobium* was to be seen but a lot of non-blooming orchids between the rocks like *Ludisia*, *Otochilus*, *Spathoglottis*, and *Coelogynes*.

In the town of Loei we could see in a large lake with some very big fish called giant catfish. Many people feed the fish but they do not eat them. Around the lake many little restaurants tempted us for Thai food at cheap prices. My wife and I have eaten only Thai food during for the whole trip without any problems.

Next day we visited another National park 1400 meter in altitude. What a surprise on our arrival it being only +17°C. It was a shock and a good business for a little shop selling t-shirts. We started with a guide from the ranger station into the orchid garden. There were blooming orchids everywhere. *Dendrobium unicum* in red colour but also wild elephants and tigers live there. We saw on the ground only what the elephants had eaten.

After our stay at Loei we went over to the Rainforest Resort and on the next morning visited a small farm where some of the locals grow Shitake mushrooms. Before we stopped at the Chateau de Loei Winery we saw big branches full of orchids on sale near a Hindu temple

Back in Chiang Mai the last full day of the tour was a relaxing day. In the morning we started to an elephant camp and saw many elephants during a show, including riding on an oxcart and of course on an elephant ride through a river in the nearby jungle. The day ended with a long bamboo raft down the river. After our arrival in hotel Mr. Jo brought us our orchids which had been ordered together with the Thai Health Document and left us with more money than when he arrived. Peter gave us a list with all the names of orchids we had seen on the tour, altogether 51 plants in flower. Thailand is a country full of orchids not only in the forests but also by the road, and in places in the towns.

My wife and I also enjoyed this second trip with Peter Williams and his Thai wife. The tour was perfectly organized. The three Thai drivers made a lot of jokes but in their language. Some were translated by Peter for us so that we could understand them.

Dear Irish members: if you would like more details it is not a problem for me to send you full information about this tour by post. An English friend has improved my English for your better understanding

Greetings from the Continent

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THE GARDENS OF THEIR DREAMS

Wishful thinking is entwined with gardening. We plant, we dream, we fantasize about flowers, and we see behind them the people who once gave them to us or first showed us their beauty, and then others to whom we showed them and gave them lovingly all over again. Reality then intervenes, a drought, insects, or an intruding wild pig. Gardeners are great killers in pursuit of their dreams. Vita Sackville-West, the genius of Sissinghurst Castle, used to say that her gardening was rivaled only by infant mortality in the Middle Ages. Still we dream on, propelling our gardens and their art into the next season and the next transformation, with visions of our own fresh melons or white-scented flowers on a capricious *Cardiocrinum* from the Himalayas.

Garden designers are still taught to draw and, all too often nowadays, to plan “sustainably.” They ought to be taught to read more widely. The more we read, the more we see beyond mere “plant material” or “native wildflower areas.” Literature enriches a gardener’s fancy, as Sissinghurst’s garden itself exemplifies, growing from its creator’s romantic love of poetry, French high culture, and Iran (“Persia”) as much as from manure and careful mulching. More poetry and mythology have been spun around flowers than around anything else except women.

The books under review testify to this fantasizing, without always addressing it directly. Several of them exemplify it by being beautifully produced, as if a book on flowers and gardens has to be especially seductive in a way that a book on, say, horses or dogs does not. Carolyn Fry’s **The Plant Hunters** even contains page-sized envelopes that open to present us with individual prints and reproductions. Public librarians will fear for the shelf life of these eminently removable extras.

In the best of the group, Martyn Rix acutely observes that “though we have fewer botanists, we have more botanical artists than ever before.” These artists are today’s close observers of flowers and fruits, now that “plant scientists” have moved inward to study cells and genes.

Most plant scientists are ignorant about gardening. Artists do more for susceptible gardeners’ fantasies. Electronic reproduction is reaching ever higher standards and before long, we will be able to gaze in the winter months on our own images of the world’s finest flower paintings without



too much loss of their depth and texture. Botanical artists often aim to be exact, scientific, and even analytic, but as Rix's book shows, they too are caught up by the beauty of what they "record."

Poetry, above all, enhances our ideas of flowers. For its recent fine exhibitions linked to Emily Dickinson or Claude Monet, the New York Botanical Garden has been showing apt poetry on placards along the garden's walks. Visitors could read Mallarmé or Dickinson herself while seeing the flowers that they loved. The garden's latest exhibition, called "Groundbreakers: Great American Gardens and the Women Who Designed Them," is displaying poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950) as an accompaniment to the age of the landscape architect Beatrix Farrand and others.

The young Millay was described by an early critic as "a frivolous young woman, with a brand-new pair of dancing slippers and a mouth like a valentine." She put both to good use, and after a highly bohemian life acquired a blueberry farm in the Berkshire hills. There she wrote poems about nature and gardens, more suitable for the New York Botanical Garden's exhibition. In 1922, she evokes a woman, surely herself, as seen by a neighbor:

*Her lawn looks like a meadow,
And if she mows the place
She leaves the clover standing
And the Queen Anne's Lace!*

Meadow gardening is nowadays the height of wishful fashion.

Surprisingly, the poetry of flowers is often patchy and ill-informed. None of the ancient Greek poets mentions the



Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1914

brilliant wild tulips that run like red rivers through parts of the Greek landscape. Chinese poets focus on a narrow canon of flowers, soaked in symbolism and hidden meanings. They say nothing about the heavenly wild flora, the superb shrubs and mountain flowers that have transformed Western gardens since their collection and introduction by Europeans. John Milton's poetry describes bunches of flowers that would never flower during one and the same season. No gardener, especially in Britain this year, would agree that April is "the cruellest month" and in no gardens or landscapes known to me does April breed "lilacs out of the dead land," least of all on the American East Coast within range of the young T.S. Eliot.

The exceptions prove the rule. Sappho had an engagingly sharp eye for the flowers of her native Lesbos, including milk-white pansies. Theocritus' poems, some three hundred years later, include

particular flowers from his second home, Cos, and also from Sicily or southern Italy that he probably therefore visited. Shakespeare of course observed and included many flowers, and D.H. Lawrence was also unusually alert, not just to dark blue Bavarian gentians but to the dark trunks of almond trees, which he acutely observed during his time in Taormina, Sicily, and rendered in poetry there. William Cowper could garden well, but among living poets, only James Fenton has had a garden that challenged expert gardeners with its assemblages of snowdrops and highly unusual plants.

In **The Mythology of Plants**, Annette Giesecke engages charmingly with a supreme source of fantasy, the “botanical lore” from ancient Greece and Rome. Her originality is to conclude her book with a selection of the plants and flowers mentioned in Ovid’s now fashionable long poem, the *Metamorphoses*. She even assembles “Ovid’s garden” by picking out flowers from the stories of transformation that are scattered throughout its wearying text. I much doubt if Ovid was ever himself a gardener, not even in his place of exile, wretched Tomi on the northern Black Sea coast. His “garden” comes to him secondhand, through his Greek sources. Giesecke could have said more about them, especially about the Hellenistic epigrams that mark a new phase, from about 200 BC onward, in the literary appreciation of flowers and their metapoetic possibilities.

Ovid’s flora is steeped in fantasy. A constant source for it is the profusion of Greek myths in which sad lovers are transformed into flowers. According to the Homeric hymn in her honor, the goddess Aphrodite threatened the direst penalties to the mortal Anchises after she

had just seduced him in bed, if he ever indulged in “kiss and tell.” In the Greek world, disappointed lovers discreetly became flowers and kept perpetual silence. Nowadays, they become aggrieved participants in tabloid journalism or reality TV shows. “Apollo hunted Daphne so,/Only that she might laurel grow,” as Andrew Marvell mused to his coy mistress. Those in antiquity who knew their myths and Greek poetry could see scores of unhappy love affairs in gardens and in nature all around them.

These myths of “transformation” pose problems for earnest modern definitions of a “myth” as a tale applied to an item of social significance. The myths simply attached themselves to items of beauty. Behind those scarlet anemones, from Cyprus to Sicily, there was the blood of the dying young Adonis, gored while hunting. The petals of the hyacinth commemorated Apollo’s dead heartthrob, Hyakinthos. These names pose a complex problem that Giesecke does not address. She assumes the identification of this hyacinth with *Hyacinthus orientalis*, but I find the assumption difficult, because at most, only the Greek ypsilon, first letter of Hyakinthos’s name, is visible to the eye observing its flowers. An alternative candidate, *Scilla bifolia*, seems to me and many others to be the better fit, especially for the wondrous carpet of crocus and hyacinth that grew beneath the goddess Hera when she had heavenly sex with Zeus on Mount Ida. *Scilla bifolia* and crocuses can still be seen in profusion on modern Ida.

However, by the later fourth century BC the “hyacinth” flower was said to be marked with two letters, “ai, ai,” the Greek for “alas.” It then became connected in poetry with the dead hero Ajax (Aias, in Greek). Despite such



claims, neither the hyacinth nor the scilla has such markings. Likelier candidates are the wild larkspur, *Delphinium ajacis* no less, or the wild gladiolus, *Gladiolus italicus*. In Ovid's poem one and the same flower is linked to Hyakinthos and Ajax. Reality has been left far behind and it is misleading for Giesecke, here as elsewhere, to pick on a flower in Ovid and write it up as a flower that we still know in nature. Ovid's "garden" is highly literary.

Giesecke strays between mythology and lore without always observing the boundary fence between the two. As she observes, the ancients ascribed all manner of properties to plants, as readers of Pliny's **Natural History** know. An oil made from narcissi was considered to dissolve tumors in the womb. The rind of the red pomegranate was said to be a contraceptive. None of this lore is mythology. I also doubt if mythology was uppermost in the minds of most of the garden owners in Pompeii with whom she begins. She is eloquent about the garden at the House of the Marine Venus in Pompeii, whose wall painting, I might add, was sited to be viewed against the backdrop of the sea and whose naked goddess had the up-to-date hairstyle of a fashionable Roman woman in the age of Nero.

I am less bowled over by its modern appearance than Giesecke is. Like the little back gardens of modern Brooklyn or London's Fulham, Pompeii's "town gardens" were often too eclectic in too small a space, a jumble of "features" and allusive bricolage. The houses' wall paintings indeed show Greek myths, and occasionally the paintings of gardens show maenads. When they prefer to show a profusion of flowers, they are exactly observed, without myth.

They also show birds. Modern gardens have abandoned the charms of aviaries, although rare birds were an important feature for the supreme garden planner of the 1920s and 1930s, the "quiet American," Lawrence Johnston. At his second home near Menton on the French Riviera, Johnston set a big aviary at the top of his terraced garden where it ran up the hill into informality. It was full of sound, color, and beauty. In this age of environmental correctness, the modern restoration of the garden has not reintroduced the aviary and its caged birds. Multicolored parrots used to fly in the sunlight above Johnston's deep purple periwinkle.

Literary gardens are the subject of **Pleasures of the Garden**, the agreeable anthology by Christina Hardyment, which she says she compiled "in a garden studying books about gardens." She divides her choices by four themes: love, garden design, practical topics, and "solace for body and soul." Her time span stretches from ancient Egypt to the 1920s and includes many favorites. Under love, she excludes sex, even sex on the woodpile with the gamekeeper Mellors and Lady Chatterley in the flowery clearing around his cottage. Under "practical gardening" she includes meticulous notes from Thomas Jefferson's diary for the first three months of 1767 when he was only twenty-three years old. "April 4 planted suckers of roses, seeds of althaea & prince's feather."

Under the same heading, she includes the once-popular American garden writer Samuel Reynolds Hole, asking people "What is a garden for?" A schoolboy said, "Strawberries," his younger sister, "Croquet," and his elder sister, "Garden-

parties.” The “brother from Oxford made a prompt declaration in favour of Lawn Tennis and Cigarettes.” Updating Dean Hole’s research, I asked an undergraduate in the Oxford College garden that I run. “Kissing,” he replied, and went back to do so on the lawn.

Hardyment has omitted writers of gardening columns, making her collection much less interesting and memorable. Surely they are “literary” often enough. Vita Sackville-West, writing in her weekly column on deadheading roses in June, is far better than anything here on “solace for body and soul.” When the British expert Arthur Hellyer explained how to prune cobnuts and filberts, he addressed the practicalities with an exactly observed clarity that Hardyment’s quotes from **Gerard’s Herbal** lack. She represents Hellyer only indirectly, through a line drawing from one of his books showing how to strip turf. Helen Dillon, the modern doyenne of Irish flower gardeners, is much more robust about “design” (“Bugger plans,” she once concluded) than the smug waffle quote here from Joseph Addison.

Hardyment excerpts Jane Austen very well to show us, from a letter of February 1807, that she too was susceptible to wishful thinking about garden plants: “I could not do without a syringa, for the sake of Cowper’s line.” The poet William Cowper had written of “syringa ivory pure.” Ivory-white syringas, or lilacs, are not readily found nowadays, as opposed to ones that are a hard plain white. In a fine scene in *Mansfield Park*, Fanny Price speaks up to the heartless Mr. Rushworth on behalf of some old avenues by quoting a line of Cowper: “Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited.”



*A Passiflora engraved after the original by Georg Dionysius Ehret, 1773; from Martyn Rix's **The Golden Age of Botanical Art***

Austen knew this gardener-poet’s work very well.

Hardyment is sparing with the category of people talking about their own or other people’s gardens. It is a rich one in English fiction, even for authors who are not gardeners themselves. It can express social competition in the pages of Austen or Thomas Peacock or Elizabeth Bowen. It can express moods and unnerving fantasy, in Tennyson’s “Maud” or, above all, in Lewis Carroll’s **Through the Looking-Glass**. Unlike her husband Leonard, Virginia Woolf was a hopeless gardener. However, her short story “Kew Gardens” is a modernist classic, beginning with flowers that are perhaps irises, but hard for me, and no doubt her, to identify.



Has literary wishful thinking ever beset the practical people on whom good gardens depend? Hardyment includes one entry by a working man, Thomas Jones. This Irish bricklayer wrote a self-explanatory poem in 1745, "On a Fine Crop of Peas Being Spoiled by a Storm." "Ambition's pride had spurred me on," its spokesman says, "All gardn'rs to excel." In her excellent study **The Gardens of the British Working Class**, Margaret Willes leaves us in no doubt about the role of competition within the proletariat. Lancashire weavers competed in their spare time to grow prize pinks and carnations. Chrysanthemums, dahlias, and sweet peas were prime items of working-class rivalry, intensifying with the spread of flower shows from the 1830s onward. In York, in 1869, a floral contest was introduced for *Window Gardening for the Working Classes*, but the exhibitors had to prove they were "Bona-Fide members of the working class." Willes remarks drily, "How this was achieved is not recorded."

Among the utility and the rivalry, fantasy was still to be found. Some of it filtered down from upper-class patrons and gardens, some from penny magazines. The Ancient Society of York Florists held a working window box contest, but its aim since its foundation, it declared, was "happiness." Hardyment could have included its show programs in her category of "solace for body and soul." The great rosarian Dean Hole even reported that once a bedspread was found to be missing from a working couple's home in Nottinghamshire. His informant thought it had been pawned, but the wife explained that it was being used to keep frost out of their greenhouse. "And please, ma'am, we don't want it, and we're quite hot in bed."

Willes well cites a great survival, the diaries of Charles Snow, a stonemason who worked in the 1880s in Headington Quarry near Oxford. They list his earnings, up to £1 16s, or about \$2.70 nowadays, for a week's work in Oxford colleges. Quite often, they laid him off work for a while. Nonetheless, he lists his daily expenses on his garden, on tulip bulbs and hyacinths, on gladioli, sweet peas, and fuchsias. Not all of it was for resale. He grew flowers, surely, because he loved them too.

Out in wild nature, Carolyn Fry follows **The Plant Hunters** and their adventures as "botanical explorers." She writes as a journalist and her book could be subtitled "The View from Kew," her main source of information being Kew Gardens. Much of its second half is dictated by Kew's initiatives, culminating in its Millennium Seed Bank, which aims to save seed from a quarter of the world's flora by 2020. Her story gives less space to fantasy and imagination, but they prove to be hyperactive here too. It is Hardyment, not Fry, who cites the most evocative such international "explorer," the inimitable Reginald Farrer.

Farrer's books on his travels in the Dolomites, Japan, and mountains on the borders of China and Tibet are classics twice over. He was a remarkably complex man, who converted to Buddhism in Ceylon in 1907 and was prone to extreme flights of literary fantasy, only partly explained by his Oxford education, where he took a lowly Third Class degree in Greats at Balliol College. His personal story has been excellently told by Nicola Shulman in **A Rage for Rock Gardening**, but his writings are still unsurpassed.¹ The two volumes of his **English Rock Garden**

describe, often in exactly observed detail, hundreds of alpine plants that are unknown nowadays to gardeners.² Moderns quote them only for their vivid likes and dislikes and their soaring fantasy, but these traits are not the whole story.

At random, I pick out Farrer on a rare rock plant, *Phyteuma comosum*. Only he has ever observed the variations in its pale bluish and purple coloring, comparing the best varieties to

so transparent an amethystine blue... that they seem like carved jewels from long ago of Tang or Sung, phials wrought by great artists to hold the wine of ghostly ancestors, or the sacred tears of the Emperor for Tai-Chen the Beautiful.

Farrer is also alone in observing the “immense fund of vitality stored in that stout fleshy root-stock.” Correctly, he describes it as “one of the easiest of all alpiners.” It is also only he who records in the 1910s its profusion in “the stark iron walls behind the Hotel Faloria at Cortina” up in the Dolomites or “the great-grandfather of tufts, in an impregnable cliff by the bridge going down to Storo in the Val di Ledro.” Like no other collector’s, his mind was an inspiring plant map, one that the ecological mappers at Kew should exploit for their “distribution histories.” He inspired me as a schoolboy to grow a *Phyteuma* until eventually it was eaten by a lowland English slug.

Unlike his fellow collectors, Farrer had an eye and pen profoundly enhanced by fantasy. He overwrites. He expatiates for pages on the beauty of this primula or the deariness of that mountain face, adding classical or Orientalist allusions.

However, the heart of it all is unforgettable. In 1921 he published **The Rainbow Bridge**, his account of traveling in 1914–1915 among the gaunt Da Tung alps in China’s Kansu province near Tibet. He notes repeatedly the traces of Meconopsis, the Blue Poppy of the Himalayas, but then he encounters the smaller, pale lavender-purple one in profusion all over the hills. He calls it the “Harebell Poppy,” while knowing it as *Meconopsis quintuplinervia*:

It was everywhere, flickering and dancing in millions upon millions of pale purple butterflies.... I wandered spellbound over those unharvested lawns.

His companion was plain, blunt Bill, a keen photographer. What, Farrer wondered, was he thinking? “At last he turned to me, and in the awe-stricken whisper of one overwhelmed by a divine presence, he said: ‘Doesn’t it make your very soul ache?’”

For three more pages, Farrer makes his readers ache while he expatiates on his Harebell Poppy, its “multitude and beauty unbelievable.” Typically, he even found and recorded a pure white variety, “exactly what the Snowdrop ought to be, and isn’t.” He concludes with a peroration, also typical of him, on the vanities of wars and men’s ambitions as opposed to the enduring beauty of a flower that “blooms and is dead by dusk.” “Man creates the storms in his teacup, and dies of them,” but these flowers remain “impregnable,” he believes, “as far beyond reach of man’s destructiveness as is man’s own self.” He never thought that man would become these mountain plants’ great enemy by warming and drying out their



environment or blasting ever more of their rock faces to make flooring for apartment buildings.

While pale purple poppies were inspiring Farrer near Tibet, bright red poppies were gaining a new dimension many miles further west. In 1917, just after the year of Farrer's book, Edmund Blunden wrote in Flanders, with so much blood in mind,

*Such a gay carpet! poppies by the million;
Such damask! Such vermilion!
But if you ask me, mate, the choice of colour
Is scarcely right; this red should have been duller.*

Farrer, the supreme fantasist, is much the sharpest observer of flowers. His Meconopsis moment still haunts me as an evocation of what there is to see in the world if only one has the nerve, the time, and the organization to go and look at it.

Like the seed banks, he too changes life. When he died in the Chinese mountains three years after writing up his Meconopsis, his bearers sent his diaries home. As Shulman poignantly described, his mother took her scissors and cut up each of them into little pieces.

Martyn Rix is himself an outstanding field botanist, an expert on the family of fritillary butterflies, and an intrepid traveler and botanical group leader in Turkey and China. He is also editor of the famous *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, which has appeared continuously since February 1787. Nonetheless, he is sensitive to Farrer and his eye and includes his fine sketch of the rock daphne, *Daphne petraea*, observed in the Tyrol. This plant is the variety that Farrer uses in his text to describe the best habitat of that "amethystine" rock daphne. He is as exact a botanical artist as he is in one aspect of his prose.

Rix's superb book is extremely handsome. It is a mine of concise observation, resting on his rare expertise. Many of his chosen artists came from backgrounds in medicine or practical trades. He is admirably clear that the greatest specialist is still Pierre-Joseph Redouté, "the son of a painter and decorator" in the Ardennes. He was patronized by Napoleon's Josephine and remains the king of botanical art for his famous paintings of bulbous plants (enhanced by the technique of stipple) and roses. Rix observes so well that "in a moment of serendipity, six great botanical illustrators found themselves working together towards the end of the eighteenth century." They included Redouté and his brother and their very important mentor, Gerard van Spaendonck. At the same time, natural historians "were undertaking exciting expeditions, and the specimens of plants, rocks, and animals they collected came flooding into the Paris Museum." Under the conservation protocol of Kew and many other modern botanical gardens, there could be no such "flood" nowadays.

We live in a great age of botanical illustrators, as Rix admirably documents, but they are not working on new specimens shipped directly in from the wild. Rix considers that "there have probably been more beautifully illustrated botanical monographs

published in South Africa in recent years, than in all the rest of the world.” One of the best shows the lovely dioramas, Venus’s Fishing Rods for wishful thinkers, against the penciled setting of their habitat, the Drakensberg Mountains. In South Africa “there are small populations of very rare species that may become extinct.” A painting in the field may be their “lasting monument.”

Farrer’s world of romance and observation has gained a new dimension. He too painted plants, and in his wake, gardeners still cultivate some of his introductions, keeping them safe beyond the killing fields of their homelands. “Mortal dooms and dynasties are brief things,” he wrote, “but beauty is indestructible, if its tabernacle be only in a petal that is shed tomorrow.” Those petals now live on safely in the art of many floral groups, patronized by botanical gardens in the Bronx or Brooklyn, Australia, London, or South America.

ROBIN LANE FOX
The New York Review of Books

1. *A Rage for Rock Gardening: The Story of Reginald Farrer, Gardener, Writer and Plant Collector* (Short Books, 2002)

2. *The English Rock-Garden, two volumes* (London: T.C. and E.C. Jack

Groundbreakers: Great American Gardens and the Women Who Designed Them

an exhibition at the New York Botanical Garden, May 17–September 7, 2014

The Mythology of Plants: Botanical Lore from Ancient Greece and Rome

by Annette Giesecke Getty, 144 pp., \$25.00

Pleasures of the Garden: A Literary Anthology

edited by Christina Hardyment

British Library, 224 pp., \$30.00 (distributed by University of Chicago Press)

The Gardens of the British Working Class

by Margaret Willes

Yale University Press, 413 pp., \$40.00

The Plant Hunters: The Adventures of the World’s Greatest Botanical Explorers

by Carolyn Fry

University of Chicago Press, 63 pp., \$30.00

The Golden Age of Botanical Art

by Martyn Rix

University of Chicago Press, 256 pp., \$35.00



PLANTS FEEL INSECTS GNAWING

Scientists claim plants can feel themselves being eaten alive – and some can even tell what type of creature is attacking them.

The discovery was made after tests on the Arabidopsis plant found it can distinguish between insects eating it based on the way they chew and drool.

Researchers at the University of Missouri exposed a group of Arabidopsis, which is part of the cabbage family, to cabbage butterfly caterpillars and beet army worms.

Plants attempt to defend themselves using different methods, such as giving off spicy flavours and rancid smells. These defences are expressed in their genes.

Based on the gene analysis, the scientists found that the plant can sense when a caterpillar is drooling and provides a different defence mechanism, than if it sensed a butterfly.

There were also different genetic responses to each worm, showing that the plant knew what was eating it. ■

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Vulpes vulpes - Irish fox

Rear Cover: *Vulpes vulpes*. The common fox. Award-winning photo by Ian Hull [<https://www.flickr.com/photos/99514906@N07/>]

The red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is an easily recognisable Irish mammal, being very dog-like (to which it is related), with a slender muzzle and long, horizontally-held bushy tail. It is a highly adaptable, unspecialised, versatile species that is found in a wide range of habitats, including urban areas. It is primarily nocturnal and crepuscular (active at dusk and dawn). There are eleven species of the genus *Vulpes*, which are thought to have split from the other wolf-like canids in the Miocene (12 million years ago). The red fox has probably been a distinct species for the last five million years. It is the largest and most widespread member of its genus and has the widest geographical distribution of any present day carnivore, present in most of North America, Europe and Australia.

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