

APPENDIX

Irish gardens described by E. Hyams (4).

Annes Grove, Co. Cork
Ardsallagh, Co. Tipperary
Birr Castle, Co. Offaly
Castlewellan, Co. Down
Fota, Co. Cork
Glasnevin, Co. Dublin
Glenveagh Castle, Co. Donegal

Ilnacullin, Co. Cork
Mount Congreve, Co. Waterford
Mount Stewart, Co. Down
Mount Usher, Co. Wicklow
Powerscourt, Co. Wicklow
Rossdohan, Co. Kerry
Rowallane, Co. Down

ALPINES WORTH GROWING

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When asked to speak on alpines worth growing, one is immediately in a dilemma, so numerous are the plants worth growing in the rock garden. One can only make a selection—and a selection must be largely subjective. There are some huge genera: gentians, saxifrages and primulas, to mention only three, which have contributed so many lovely species to our gardens that each genus alone could fill the 45 minutes allotted to this talk.

So here is my selection. I have avoided, on the one hand, those rather rampant but worthy plants represented by, for example, aubrietia, arabis and cerastium (though there are a few aristocrats amongst these) and on the other, those choice but exacting plants that demand culture in an alpine house, like the high alpine androsaces and dionysias. I love them all, but I have to come down to earth, and I have endeavoured to choose from those that I consider choice enough for the keen plantsman, but not too difficult to grow and propagate. Above all, they are plants that I have been able to grow and enjoy in the open garden.

Some of the earliest spring bulbs are happily placed in the rock garden. One of the first to flower, in February, is *Narcissus cyclamineus*, and a long lasting flower it is too. I find it does poorly in alkaline soil, but flourishes and seeds itself in peaty soil, as does the delightful hoop petticoat daffodil (*N. bulbocodium*). The hardy cyclamen, too, brings colour to the rock garden early, and again later. The earliest is *Cyclamen coum* in a variety of shades. I must digress here to show you how it has naturalised in a County Wicklow garden, to give a pink haze through the lawns. *C. repandum* does so well with me that I have taken it out of the rock garden and naturalised it under beech trees. The secret, I think, is to plant the corms deeply.

From North America come several lovely trilliums, especially *Trillium grandiflorum*, robust enough for the open ground, but the tiny *T. nivale* I grow in a stone trough. Also American are most of the delightful dog's tooth violets, or trout lilies. One of the most satisfactory is *Erythronium* 'White Beauty'. Still on the bulbs and tubers we can touch on the fritillaries. Some are difficult, but the Snake's Head (*Fritillaria meleagris*) and *F. pyrenaica* are very willing to flourish and increase. The dark colouring of the latter gives rise to the unkind name 'Mother Ugly', but the whole poise of the plant is attractive and the interior of the flower is a lovely shining olive green.

The genus *Primula* is one of the largest and most important in our gardens. I do not intend to discuss the larger candelabra types nor the small cushion species, but *P. rosea* can be mentioned for its earliness and colourful show in any damp corner. Among the European alpine types one of the favourites is *P. marginata*, a variable plant but always free flowering, and attractive in foliage, having powdered edges to the toothed leaves. A fine form or hybrid is *P.* 'Linda Pope'.

Anemones, too, are a big group. The furry flowers and silken seed heads of the pulsatillas give double value in the garden. Not so easy, though, is the so-called blue buttercup, *Anemone obtusiloba* var. *patula*. We are in the thick of the important families in the garden now. Of the pinks I have only time to mention *Dianthus* 'Mars'—dwarf, compact, and long flowering.

Crucifers, too, give us many good rock garden plants, such as *Aethionema grandiflorum* and the more familiar *A. × warleyense* [syn. *A.* 'Warley Rose']. Drabas give us a few garden worthy plants, such as *Draba rigida* [syn. *D. bryoides*], with green cushions and golden flowers. We are told that *Morisia monanthos* [syn. *M. hypogaea*] has the curious habit of burying its own seedpods, but my plants never set seed. Perhaps cross-pollination of different clones is necessary. No matter, though, as it is so easy to propagate by root cuttings.

To many, gentians are the alpine plants. Fortunately, *Gentiana acaulis* does flower well with me. How does one keep *G. verna* in good condition indefinitely? After about three seasons of flowering my plants deteriorate, but by sowing fresh seed in the autumn, germination is prolific the following spring. There are many other good gentians, easy and not so easy. I mention just one more, *G. loderi*, flowering in late summer. It has never set seed with me and I take cuttings in spring after the fashion of chrysanthemums.

A bulb that is a great value over a long period in late summer is *Rhodohypoxis*, but especially good is the red cultivar 'Albrighton'. The only trouble is mice during winter.

From numerous sedums I pick only one, *Sedum spathulifolium*, well-behaved and attractive, especially 'Purpureum', the wine

coloured leaves being dusted with white, the more so in 'Cape Blanco', also known as 'Capablanca'. [This is probably *S. spathulifolium* subsp. *pruinatum*, (Bot. Ed.)] Saxifrages are as important as gentians and primulas, but despite this I mention only two: *Saxifraga longifolia* 'Tumbling Waters', which has decorative rosettes and spires of snowy flowers. *S. grisebachii* depends on the red-coloured stems and calices to set off its small pink flowers.

Daphnes do well on my limy soil, including the sweetly scented *Daphne cneorum* and the more compact *D. arbuscula*. *Polygala chamaebuxus* is a small shrublet, variable in colour, valued for flowering over a long period, even into winter. While on the subject of dwarf shrubs for the rock garden we can glance at *Cytisus* × *kewensis*, one of the best of the dwarf brooms. Owing to lime in the soil I cannot grow dwarf rhododendrons or other acid requiring plants without making a special bed. In this way I grow *Cassiope mertensiana* var. *gracilis* and *Kalmiopsis leachiana*, so like a dwarf rhododendron or kalmia. *Lithodora diffusa* 'Grace Ward' is grown flowing down the side of such a special bed. Elsewhere in the garden I console myself with the equally blue, but lime tolerant, *Moltkia petraea*.

Ramondas do well in our moist climate, even if planted on the flat. *Ramonda myconi* is quoted for propagation by leaf cuttings, but this would seem scarcely necessary with *R. nathaliae*, so prolific is it by offsets. Quite different conditions: gritty soil and full sun, suit the alpine woodruff, *Asperula gussonei*: [syn. *A. suberosa*], with clouds of pink flowers over silvery foilage.

Columbines and campanulas are two familiar genera that contribute to the rock garden. Unlike so many of its larger relatives, the dwarf *Aquilegia discolor* breeds true. Some of the campanulas are a bit rampant, but *Campanula elatines* var. *garganica* in all its forms, though easy, is well behaved. The cultivar 'Erinus' is familiar, but less well known is the form of Irish origin called 'W. H. Paine', with a white eye to the flower. Violas, too, contribute some choice species to the alpine garden, such as *Viola tricolor* subsp. *subalpina* [syn. *V. saxatilis*]. *V. elatior* is quite different in habit, stiffly upright and with lilac flowers. Though *V. hederacea* is slightly tender, I admit it to the rock garden as the dark blue and white flowers go on and on into late autumn.

It is sometimes thought that a rock garden lacks colour in late summer and autumn, but there are many flowers for this season. I have not mentioned the gentians of the *sino-ornata* group. With them we may plant several *Cyananthus* species. *Cyananthus microphyllus* forms a ring of blue periwinkle-like flowers in August. Several good geraniums flower late, like *G. dalmaticum*. Roscoejas are so late in coming up that they may be thought dead, but their orchid-like flowers appear safely in July, yellow in *R. cauleoides*, purple in *R. humeana*.

Though tall for all but the outskirts of the rock garden, I could not omit the meconopsis, especially the famous blue kinds, such as *Meconopsis* × *sheldonii* 'Slieve Donard'.

Finally, though I have concentrated on easy-going plants, I cannot resist mentioning two that I have struggled with. The first is *Campanula zoysii*, with its extraordinary flowers crimped at the mouth, which have been described as tiny blue torpedoes. Though reputed to be a martyr to slugs this was not the trouble in this case. Instead, the plant flowered itself to death. The plant I conclude with is another oddity, *Calceolaria darwinii*. The strange flowers are borne on stems only an inch or so high. I am constantly on the brink of losing it, as plants are apt to wither off for no apparent reason. I wonder if it is a virus, for this calceolaria is a favoured food of the greenfly.

PROPAGATION OF CHOICE ALPINES

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Anglia Alpines

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Anglia Alpines is a wholesale alpine nursery. The ultimate aim of any propagation enterprise is to produce a plant that is saleable at the right time. When wholesaling to retail customers this generally means a good potful in flower. In order to achieve this, potting and propagation must occur at the appropriate time, this being dictated by the sales period.

The natural conditions in which mother plants produce cuttings may not fit this desired production timing, but manipulation of the mother plant by altering its environment, and pruning as well, can be used to achieve this goal.

Another method is to take cuttings when optimum conditions prevail and, by manipulating the rooting environment, ensuring that the plant is ready for potting when required. For example, with *Helianthemum* spp., semi-ripe cuttings taken in September will root in a cold frame and be ready for potting in April. For later potting in May or June, softwood cuttings from forced mother plants can be rooted under glass with bottom heat.

In the commercial propagation environment the methods used are not necessarily the only ones possible, but are ones which give the greatest multiplication rate, or are most suited to a particular production cycle—the most cost-effective in each circumstance.

If you study a treatise on the propagation of alpines, there are as many different methods as there are plants grown, but for