

INTRODUCTION

An index to *Sibbaldia* Nos. 1–5, bound separately, has been printed and is being distributed at the same time as this issue. Since the launch of No. 1 in 2003 which included seven papers spread over 80 pages, *Sibbaldia* has come a long way, with No. 5 containing 15 papers spread over 168 pages. Nos. 1–5 include 49 papers in total and the journal has progressed from no colour illustrations in No. 1 to full colour throughout in No. 3 onwards. Other innovations have included the *Sibbaldia* Guest Essay (from No. 3) which features the views and thoughts of prominent botanic garden personalities and Botanic Garden Profile (from No. 5) which describes a particular botanic garden with a noteworthy anniversary, development or new design to highlight. No. 6 includes another innovation named ‘Student Project’. Many final year students in the few botanic gardens that run formal horticulture courses at graduate level produce work of an outstanding nature but it hardly ever gets published. The editors thought that *Sibbaldia* could help by highlighting one project in each issue.

In his *Sibbaldia* Guest Essay, the Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Professor Stephen Blackmore, has chosen to highlight the importance and value of all plants in botanic garden collections. Choosing to highlight the possible fate of plants that were originally introduced for specific research purposes only to be discarded later, Professor Blackmore argues for the safe retention of all botanic garden plants because of their increasing conservation value.

In June 2005 I had the pleasure of visiting the Balkan Botanic Garden at Kroussia Mountain near to Thessaloniki in Greece for a European Botanic Garden Consortium meeting. This is a new garden, having been founded in 2001, and I was very impressed by its conservation and education policies and the ways in which it had woven native plants into a modern garden that merged seamlessly into a protected area. Under the enthusiastic Directorship of Eleni Maloupa it is going from strength to strength in a country that has few other botanic gardens yet a rich, and in some cases very threatened, flora. It deserves to be better known and it was for these reasons that I selected it for ‘Botanic Garden Profile’ in this issue.

The new feature for issue No. 6 is the ‘Student Project’. As stated above, the purpose behind this feature is both to highlight some of the excellent work completed by graduate level botanic garden students and also to give them the opportunity to publish their work in a journal. The plan will be to only publish projects that are relevant to *Sibbaldia*’s interest area, in other words botanic garden horticulture, and some may well ask how this first entry (on the history of pineapple cultivation) managed to get included. The answer is two-fold. First, it was an excellent, well-researched project. The second part of the answer is based on a sentence on page three of the paper: “The race to raise the first pineapple fruit in Europe stimulated horticultural experiment and ingenuity”. Modern botanic garden horticulturists are aiming to experiment and be as ingenious as the growers in the past were, although some of the motivations and impulses are obviously different. Where fashion and social and political status were the great motivators in the

1600s so conservation and scientific research are amongst today's drivers for excellence in botanic garden horticulture.

Annette Patzelt and colleagues describe the very earliest conceptual days of the yet-to-be-built Oman Botanic Garden. This large, expensive and prestigious new botanic garden aims to be of the highest quality and will highlight the important and unique flora of Oman. The purpose of inviting Annette and her colleagues to write this paper was to make sure that the very earliest stages, both in terms of intellectual concept for the garden and in trying to cultivate the flora, most of which has never been cultivated before, are recorded for the benefit of the botanic garden community. The first part covering the vision, early plant collections and propagation are described in this issue and the design, construction, interpretation and planting will be described in part 2, to be included in *Sibbaldia* No. 7. Their progress from stunted, pest-ravaged miserable plants in tin cans under make-shift shading to over 50,000 wild origin plants in state-of-the-art nursery facilities in just three years is remarkable.

Carnivorous plants have long fascinated natural historians and horticulturists alike and in his account 'The *Sarracenia* pitcher plants and bog gardening' Larry Mellichamp gives us a detailed insight into the ecology, identification and cultivation of these fascinating plants. Dr Mellichamp is an acknowledged authority on the taxonomy, conservation and cultivation of sarracenias and it is a pleasure to be able to publish his paper in *Sibbaldia*. Peter Gosling and his colleagues at Alice Holt Forest Research Station are equally passionate about their subject matter, in this case conifers. Following their last submission in *Sibbaldia* (Gosling *et al.*, 2005), this time they have concentrated on the germination of an *Amentotaxus* hybrid.

Catalogues of plants from the living collections are produced by many botanic gardens, either on a regular or *ad hoc* basis. Despite the ability and ease of reference of making these available online, hard copy printed versions are still very useful for reference and archive purposes. David Rae argues that their value goes beyond this and that the very process of producing them forces gardens to 'clean up' their databases in terms of stocktaking and name checking – tasks that are all too easily neglected. The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) shares a common database for both the Herbarium and Living Collections. The major advantage is the common names file which ensures that if a name is changed in the Herbarium then it changes in the Living Collection too. However, when the Herbarium decided to change to the Angiosperm Phylogeny Group II (APG II) system of classification this necessitated changing family names on the labels of all the plants affected. Janette Latta explains the implications for labelling and how this mammoth task was accomplished for the four gardens and 41,000+ accessions that make up RBGE's Living Collection.

Based on his fascinating and well-received presentation at a recent PlantNetwork meeting (the Plant Collections Network of Britain and Ireland) on *Mosses, Ferns and Lichens in Gardens* held at Benmore Botanic Garden (18–20 September 2007; see <http://www.plantnetwork.org/proceeds/benmore07/summary.htm> for a direct link to the conference notes and presentations), Chris Ellis describes the role and value of

native lichens in botanic gardens. He further suggests a possible monitoring role for a geographically well spread out network of botanic gardens, such as PlantNetwork, and describes the possible value in terms of climate change evaluation. In the latest paper published on the subject of phenology at RBGE Geoffrey Harper and colleagues describe the weekly phenology project at RBGE and, in particular, ways of deciding when flowers are open. Under his guidance and enthusiasm various phenology projects are thriving at Edinburgh and the editors are delighted that their results are being published in *Sibbaldia*. Four papers have now been published adding considerable knowledge and value to this fascinating and relevant subject.

In 2007 the National Trust for Scotland held a conference on windbreaks and invited other west coast garden owners and managers to take part. Windbreaks are vital for the survival of Atlantic coast gardens and the general feeling amongst participants was that not enough attention had been paid in recent years to the management and regeneration of these essential garden components. Here, Ben Lyte and others note the main points of discussion from the conference.

Finally, Ahmed Al Farhan and colleagues from the King Saud University Botanic Garden in Saudi Arabia along with colleagues from the proposed King Abdullah International Gardens in Riyadh and RBGE outline the exciting developments in botanic gardens of the Arabian Peninsula. There is a long history of plant study and exploration in the region however, staff in the existing and proposed gardens are aiming to enhance the crucial role that they can play in the conservation of the flora. It is illustrative of the levels of botanical and horticultural activity in the area that this issue of *Sibbaldia* contains two papers on new botanic garden developments in this region.

I hope you find this issue of *Sibbaldia* useful and that the index to Nos. 1–5 is able to guide you to information that you are searching for.

REFERENCE

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