

Foreword

'A year like no other' is an oft-used but no less true phrase describing 2020. While we would have wished the situation to be very different, there was one change to the publication of *Sibbaldia* which has been beneficial: this volume is the first for which we have published single papers 'early online'. All are now available to read and download here: <https://journals.rbge.org.uk> This means that authors do not have to wait for following submissions to publish their work, and readers benefit from a regular stream of articles. However, we still have the printed volume for those who prefer to read a paper copy.

The *Sibbaldia* & PlantNetwork Conference was due to take place at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in late April 2020. The postponement of the event, though unavoidable, was sad nonetheless; the organisers were looking forward to welcoming over 200 delegates to the Garden. However, a successful online conference took place on 28–30 October with most of the original speakers. They gave fantastic presentations covering the themes of conservation, cultivation, curation, education, plant health and heritage. Even the physical distance necessitated by the virtual format could not repress the obvious enjoyment of the 250-plus delegates at sharing the experience and information. A selection of the presentations and proceedings will be published in a special anniversary volume later in 2021.

This volume contains some articles which have been in gestation for many months and are about work which is the product of many years of diligent cultivation and record-keeping. There are two student projects: Isabel Cayon-Fernandez tested the efficacy of non-synthetic rooting hormones.

Her research identified that lentil and willow extracts are, in some cases, more effective at stimulating roots in cuttings. Huge potential environmental and economic benefits come with this information. Connor Smith looked at the subject of deaccessioning in his dissertation. He sought to shed light on the many reasons why plants might need to be deaccessioned, how this differs from natural wastage through senescence and other causes of loss, and, importantly, the procedures gardens go through to ensure that deaccessioning is done to benefit the collection as whole.

The year 2020 was the International Year of Plant Health, and Katherine Hayden joined me in producing volume 18 of *Sibbaldia*, which was dedicated to the subject. More submissions arrived within the year itself and so this volume is very much an extension of our acknowledgement that plant health is a huge subject for horticulturists and garden managers. Sharing information on good practice should never stop. Two contributions from the prolific team at Auckland Botanic Garden are published here. Stanley & Dymond provide practical guidance on implementing biosecurity measures in a botanic garden nursery. Such measures ensure that collection of wild specimens and reintroduction of species can carry on without the risk of introducing pathogens to either environment. Bodley & Stanley conducted research with practical outcomes to address the disruptive blight of camellia petals. The large camellia collection at Auckland is the ideal resource to carry out this kind of research and they publish a list of cultivars which have so far shown resistance to the disease.

Potatoes are famous for their susceptibility to what is commonly called 'blight'. *Phytophora infestans* is an oospore and notoriously destructive of crops. There are environmental and economic incentives to breed for resistance, and Sánchez-Ganfornina *et al.* explore the re-creation of a cultivar thought to be resistant. They highlight the value of retaining wild relatives and historic cultivars as a source of beneficial characteristics for breeding programmes.

The National Botanic Garden of Wales has gone from strength to strength in recent years, and is a beautiful and vibrant garden engaged in groundbreaking research. Will Ritchie describes its origins and journey in the Botanic Garden Profile as the garden celebrated its 20th year in 2020.

Sibbaldia is delighted to publish its first submission from Russia. Goncharova *et al.* describe the layout and collections in the two gardens comprising the Polar-Alpine Botanical Garden-Institute (PABGI). PABGI is one of three botanic gardens within the Arctic Circle, where plants experience extreme climatic conditions, and the garden provides a fascinating resource where Goncharova and her colleagues are recording plant reactions to these extremes.

While conditions at RBGE seem mild in comparison to those at PABGI, it is still the case that the climate is changing and research carried out at RBGE and elsewhere supports this (Martin, 2014; Smart & Elliott, 2015). Annual rainfall levels are rising, and the ground and drainage systems at times struggle to accommodate the volume of water. Kelly *et al.* describe the problem and how the raingarden was created to ameliorate it. It is a piece of landscape design from which both human and wildlife visitors to the Edinburgh Garden benefit.

Maurice Mason made his post-war plant collections from landscapes which in some

cases may be unrecognisable if he were to see them now. McNally describes how a firm friendship and desire to share plants led to an unprecedented diversity of collections at Glasnevin, many of which are still thriving due to McNally and his colleagues' efforts to care for them long after the collections from which they came had been dismantled.

One of the aims of *Sibbaldia* is to publish practical horticultural techniques so that botanic and other garden horticulturists can benefit from each other's experience. Here Nederlof & Degenaar describe the work of propagating the tropical water plant *Typhonodorum lindleyanum*. This species will ultimately be used to create an authentic environment evoking the landscape of Madagascar for animals at Rotterdam Zoo to live in. The speed of growth of these large plants in high temperatures is remarkable, and the authors have plans for further work on this species.

Volume 20 is already in process with some excellent papers from the Conference. Papers from authors new to *Sibbaldia* and gardens we have not heard from before are already in for volume 21 too, so look forward to many more articles soon. Please continue to share your enthusiasm for the journal with your colleagues and networks. Our aim is to capture the horticultural knowledge which has not been written about before, and once a submission passes review, the production team support authors through the publication process. Perhaps one positive from the truly difficult years of 2020 and 2021 is that there has, on occasion, been the opportunity to try new activities. If you have work that you think merits sharing, please get in touch by emailing sibbaldia@rbge.org.uk

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References

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