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SCOTLAND'S HERITAGE TREES - A NATIONAL TREASURE

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Scotland is blessed with a rich legacy of 'heritage trees'. These may be trees which are notable for their historical, cultural or botanical significance, or simply stand out as remarkable specimens. Often, they are veterans of considerable age and size; they are invariably full of character and impressive beauty, and many have historical associations and interesting stories to tell. These arboricultural treasures are living evidence of Scotland's great tradition of tree collectors, planters, foresters and arboriculturists. 'Heritage trees' are living milestones of our natural heritage, a valuable heirloom to be handed onto future generations.

What is a Heritage Tree?

There is no clearly accepted definition of what constitutes a 'heritage tree'. The term reflects an arbitrary and subjective classification without scientific or quantifiable basis. However, heritage trees normally satisfy one or more of the following criteria:

Ancient trees of great age for their species. Their ages may typically range from over 200 years in the case of relatively short-lived species such as birch to 1000 years or more for long lived species such as yew. What is relevant is exceptional age in relation to the particular species, rather than age in itself.

Ancient yew trees, which are well-known for their exceptional longevity and erratic growth rates can often be in excess of 1000 years old. The 'star' in this respect is the Fortingall Yew (Fig.1), which stands within its stone enclosure in the old kirkyard at the foot of Perthshire's beautiful Glen Lyon. This is reputed to be between 3000 and 5000 years old, and is arguably the oldest living organism in Europe. Legend has it that Pontius Pilate, who was born in Fortingall while his father was stationed there during the Roman occupation, played in its branches as a child.

Broadleaved trees usually live for shorter periods: 400 to 500 years is considered exceptional. Oak, lime, sweet chestnut and sycamore tend to be the species which are most likely to live to a ripe old age and many fine old specimens can be found in Scotland. The gnarled and grizzled veteran oaks at Cadzow, near Hamilton, possibly represent some of the oldest surviving broadleaved trees in Scotland (Fig.2). They are thought to have been planted by King David I (1124 - 1153), in the mid-twelfth century, when he used nearby Cadzow Castle as a hunting base.

Trees with important historical connections. Many trees are associated with important and colourful events in Scotland's past, while others have been planted to commemorate a particular occasion. These trees act as a living link with the nation's history. The 'Birnam Oak', and its connections with Shakespeare's tragic



Fig. 1 – The surviving remnants of the Fortingall Yew, enclosed within its stone prison to deter Victorian souvenir hunters, are thought to be up to 5000 years-old, making it arguably the oldest living organism in Europe.



hero Macbeth, is a well known example, as are the remaining ‘Five (of seven) Men of Moidart’ at Glenfinnan (Fig.3) and the James VI sycamore at Scone. The intriguing and colourful stories connected with these trees have been passed down over generations and have invariably been embellished in the telling. In most instances, it is difficult to either establish any firm historical record and/or separate fiction from fact. While some trees have a credible provenance, the majority do not. This aspect does not, however, detract from their place in popular culture.

Fig.2 – One of the Cadzow Oaks (*Quercus petraea*) at Chatelherault Country Park, on the outskirts of Hamilton. This tree is a survivor of a mediaeval deer park used by King David I. Despite its great age and hollowed trunk, the tree remains full of life.

Trees of exceptional size for their species. Scotland is home to many trees of exceptional size, including many British and European ‘Champion trees’. These trees are invariably impressive specimens which represent the ultimate in height and girth so far achieved for their species. Scotland’s mild, wet climate is particularly suited to the nineteenth century introductions from western North America and has produced an array of huge conifers. The UK’s tallest tree, a Douglas fir topping 62m (203ft) resides at Reelig Glen near Inverness, while the record for the largest girth 11m (36ft) is currently held by a giant redwood at Cluny Garden, Perthshire. Some exceptional outsize conifers can be found at Ardkinglas Woodland Garden, on the shores of Loch Fyne, including the impressive ‘Mightiest Conifer in Europe’ (Fig.4).

Original introductions. Scotland has fathered many famous tree and plant collectors who have been responsible for introducing a wide range of important tree species into Britain. Perth-born David Douglas is probably the most significant and well known in this respect, and some of his original introductions survive to this day. Such ‘original’ trees mark important steps in the development and enrichment of Scotland’s flora as we know it today, as well as commemorating the life and work of the intrepid explorers responsible for bringing them to these shores.

Trees with a uniquely Scottish connection. Scotland has made its own unique botanical contribution with trees which have originated here and have become



Fig.3 – ‘The Seven Men of Moidart’ is the local name given to the row of old beech trees which were planted to commemorate the seven companions who landed with Bonnie Prince Charlie when he raised the standard at nearby Glenfinnan. Storms and old age have, sadly, reduced their number to five.



Fig.4 – A monstrous silver fir (*Abies alba*) dominates the fine tree collection at Ardkinglas Woodland Garden, on the shores of Loch Fyne. Planted around 1750, this outlandish individual has been dubbed the ‘Mightiest Conifer in Europe’.

famous the world over. Examples include the Corstorphine Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus* Corstorphinense) the Camperdown Elm (*Ulmus Camperdownii*) and the fastigate Dawyck Beech (*Fagus sylvatica* Dawyck). The original progenitors survive to this day and are botanically significant as the authentic and true genotype.

Trees of unusual growth habit and outstanding appearance and character. Trees which display unusual and atypical growth habits create botanically interesting and visually impressive objects. These



Fig.5 – The Ormiston Yew, East Lothian, one of Scotland’s few ancient layering yews. John Knox is reputed to have preached his early sermons within the cathedral-like chamber formed by the arching limbs.

Fig. 6 – Queen Mary’s Thorn: an ancient hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) growing within the quadrangle of St Mary’s College, St Andrews. It was reputedly planted by Mary, Queen of Scots, in 1563 on one of her many visits to the town. Note the new, young ‘phoenix growth’ emerging from the decayed stump of the original tree.



unique wonders of the arboricultural world include the weeping larch (*Larix decidua*) at Kelburn, the ‘pedestal’ larch (also *L. decidua*) at Dunkeld House and the handful of Scotland’s great layering yews, such as that at Ormiston in East Lothian (Fig.5).

Named trees. Trees can be found throughout Scotland which are well known local features and appear as named trees on old maps. These are often associated with some historical event and, over time, have assumed a cherished place in local communities. Examples include the Capon Tree (*Quercus robur*) near Jedburgh and Queen Mary’s Thorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) at St Andrews University (Fig.6).

Avenues and groves. Occasionally, heritage trees occur in avenues and groves. In this instance it is the collective impact of the trees as a group which marks them out as being valuable in their own right, for example, the towering avenue of giant sequoias at Benmore Botanic Garden and the world-beating beech hedge at Meikleour, near Blairgowrie.

Where are Our Heritage Trees?

Heritage trees are located throughout the length and breadth of Scotland. They can crop-up in the most unlikely places though, in practice, the majority are found within private estates, gardens and tree collections. Scotland’s private estates have a long and illustrious history of tree collecting and planting, often stretching back for countless generations. Many important heritage trees are found within the private policies of such estates, most of which now open to the general public. Heritage trees also occur in public parks and open spaces, as well as land owned by organisations such as the Forestry Commission, The National Trust for Scotland and Historic Scotland. Trees within the ownership of these bodies are normally accessible to the general public. Noticeable concentrations can be found in Perthshire and parts of Argyll and the Central Belt.



Fig.7 – An old pollarded sycamore growing in a suburban garden on the outskirts of Edinburgh. Given adequate space, heritage trees such as this can be successfully retained within residential developments.

Occasionally, trees of note crop up in modest suburban gardens. A good example of this is the fine pollarded sycamore which takes pride of place in the rear garden of a house in Edinburgh, its multi-branched crown dominating the local landscape (Fig.7). This outstanding old specimen once formed part of the extensive policies of Barnton Estate on the north western edge of the city. As the surrounding land was developed for housing, the tree was thankfully spared the developer's axe and has been successfully incorporated into residential development.

Another fine example of trees providing a clue to the previous history of the site is embodied in a venerable sweet chestnut known as 'The King Tree', in the town of Denny, near Falkirk (Fig.8). This ancient specimen, one of the largest and oldest of its species known in Scotland, once adorned the grounds of 16th century Herbertshire Castle. The castle grounds were known to be extremely picturesque and were once used as a royal hunting station, an association that is probably remembered in the tree's regal nickname. Although the castle has long been demolished, the tree survives as



Fig.8 - The 'King Tree' at Denny, an ancient sweet chestnut which once adorned the grounds of Herbertshire Castle has now become the much loved resident of a council housing estate.

a living relic of a bygone era: despite deprivation, attributable to development, it has become something of a local landmark within its new suburban surroundings: its survival is probably due more to accident than design.

Record of Heritage Trees

Until recently, many of Scotland's great trees were overlooked and taken for granted. Little appeared to be known about them, let alone where they were or the condition they were in. Many were sorely neglected and at risk, while others were lost altogether through ignorance and vandalism. However, the tide is turning, and interest in these senior citizens of the tree world is increasing. While different individuals with an interest in old trees have been compiling and recording information on an *ad hoc* basis for many years, it was not until relatively recently that a concerted effort was made to seek out and catalogue Scotland's heritage tree resource.

Forestry Commission Scotland, through its Treefest 2002 campaign, commissioned me to create a database of Scotland's heritage trees. For the first time in many years this has brought together a range of information on Scotland's most remarkable and exceptional specimens, and provides a valuable snapshot in time of this resource. The public response to this project was very encouraging: many individuals contacted the Forestry Commission with details of trees which they believed were special. This unearthed some exceptional specimens previously unrecorded, including a number of champion trees. The project culminated in the production of an illustrated book 'Heritage Trees of Scotland', which presents portraits of 100 of our most exceptional and important trees. However, the record of our resource of heritage trees is by no means comprehensive or complete: the data currently available probably represent the tip of the iceberg. I'm sure that there are many more great trees still to be discovered, recognised and recorded.

Threats to Heritage Trees

Heritage trees, which have existed in harmony with their environment for centuries, are particularly vulnerable to changes primarily associated with the damaging impacts of human activity. An ancient tree which may have borne silent witness to significant events in Scotland's history can literally be destroyed in a matter of hours. Wonderful old trees continue to be lost every year. Ignorance is the greatest threat of all

Urban development - An ever-increasing demand for new housing, road construction and retail outlets together constitute possibly the greatest threat: they put the resource of trees under immense pressure. Trees can be lost completely or seriously damaged because of construction work unless special care is taken to safeguard them at the very outset. It is an essential prerequisite that heritage trees are identified at an early stage and afforded due recognition and protection in the planning process.

Vandalism - Trees suffer from wanton vandalism, for example fire raising,

bark damage and the removal of limbs especially where there is uncontrolled public access. This can result at least in cosmetic disfigurement and at worst irreparable injury and reduced life expectancy. The vulnerability of some of our important and ancient trees was recently brought to light in the case of the Strathleven House Oak. This fine veteran was only recently re-discovered, having been lost amidst a plantation of conifers for over 30 years. It turned out to be a tree of great significance and was one of the largest-girthed and oldest broadleaved trees in Scotland. However, without any proactive care or management, the mighty oak fell victim to vandals. A fire was set in the hollow interior of the trunk: it weakened the ancient structure until the entire tree collapsed (Fig.9). The burnt out shell now lies prostrate and lifeless - an ignominious end for one of Scotland's foremost heritage trees.

People pressure - The repeated trampling of feet on roots can, because of resulting soil compaction, bring root death and a general decline in tree health both above and below ground. Public access around well-visited trees needs to blend optimum public viewing, in a safe environment with minimal tree damage particularly in the long term. Serious damage can also be caused by uncontrolled trampling and grazing of livestock, also by repeated deep ploughing in the vicinity of tree roots – two of a range of pressures associated with intensive agricultural practices to which heritage trees in rural areas are increasingly subject.

Damaging tree maintenance - Much well-intended but very damaging work has been done to many heritage trees in the past, with the misguided hope of prolonging their lives: for example filling stem/trunk cavities with concrete, bracing limbs with chains and/or propping them with iron poles. Antiquated practices of this sort are now known to be very damaging while also detracting



Fig.9 – How the mighty fall. The burnt-out hulk of the Strathleven House Oak (*Quercus robur*) makes for a sorry sight - a victim of mindless vandalism. In the absence of protection and proper management, heritage trees continue to be vulnerable.

from the aesthetic value of heritage trees. Modern advances in tree care now permit more sensitive management practices which put tree health at the forefront

Pest and pathogens - The threat of epidemics of introduced pests and pathogens, is ever-present. The impact of Dutch elm disease is still being felt in Scotland and has resulted in the loss of many fine trees.

Climate change - Heritage trees, many of which have stood for centuries and, in some cases, millennia have been able to tolerate relatively large year-to-year fluctuations in the weather but may not have equal facility to tolerate smaller longterm climate change. Dramatic changes in temperature range and rainfall pattern may hasten the demise of some species, while favouring the growth of other, more exotic species.

Protection and Recognition

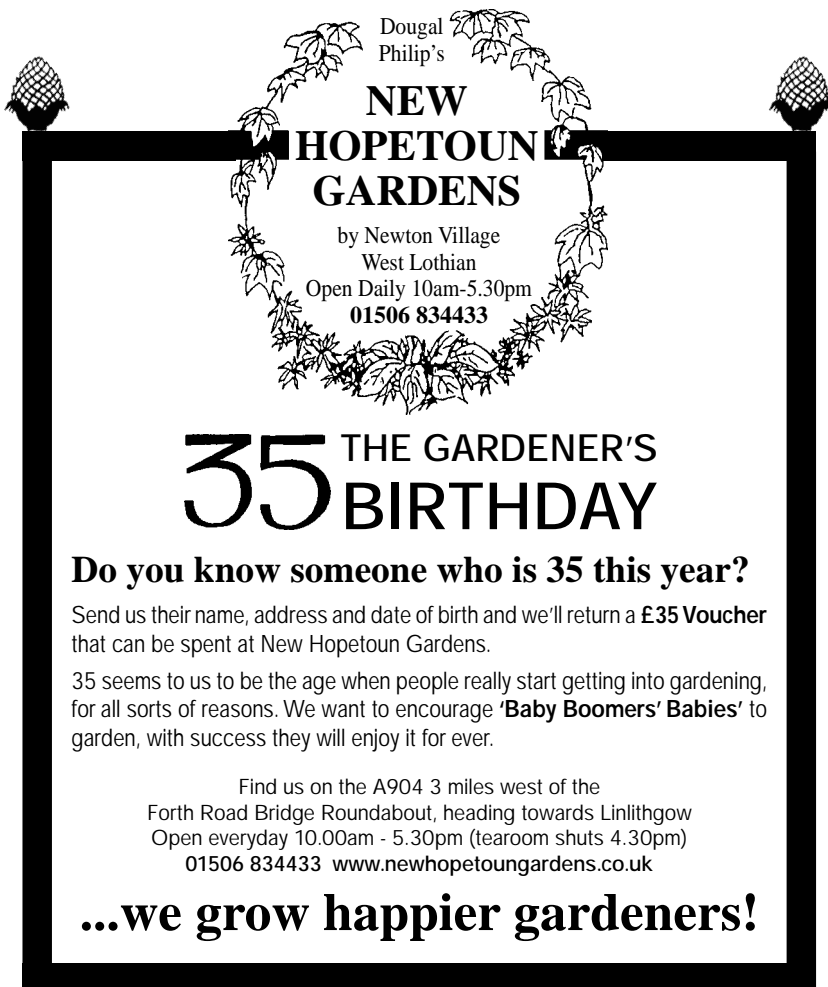
Heritage trees are priceless. They are unique and irreplaceable living organisms with a value which cannot meaningfully be measured in pounds sterling. Collectively, their value to botanical understanding, tree improvement, as landscape features and habitats for wildlife, history and culture is immense. Some are as important as our stately homes and castles, yet, remarkably, there is no special protection for trees of historic significance. Any protection that does exist, such as Tree Preservation Orders, is largely coincidental, and not by design. There is currently no system which provides owners with proper advice on the care and management of heritage trees, or any assistance in their sensitive and appropriate management. Scotland, with arguably the richest resource of heritage trees in Europe, has done little to record and safeguard this element of its living heritage.

It is only through the caring efforts of individuals, past and present, that we can enjoy these special trees today. While some may remain in benevolent ownership, it is not enough to assume that this will always be so. It takes only one person or incident in the life of a tree to destroy it. The Tree Council, which is made up of organisations concerned with tree planting, their care and conservation on a national basis is advocating a system that will safeguard heritage trees for future generations, as well as providing support and advice about their care. As the UK's leading tree campaigning partnership, the Tree Council promotes the concept of protected status for 'green monuments'. This principle is not as extraordinary as it may seem. The value of important trees is already recognised in other countries, such as the Czech Republic and Poland, where all heritage trees are listed on a database and accorded special legal protection and status. In addition, they are managed in a sympathetic and sensitive manner for the benefit of future generations; a small plaque located at the side of each tree identifies it as a tree of importance. It is now time for us to do the same here in Scotland, thus recognizing undisputed historical, cultural and ecological value of these most amazing living entities.

At the same time and bearing in mind that even heritage trees have finite lives we should ask ourselves if we are convinced that we have planted, in recent

years, a sufficient resource to ensure that some will survive as heritage trees for future generations?

Donald Rodger is an independent arboricultural consultant. He is a Chartered Forester, Chartered Biologist and a Fellow and Registered Consultant of the Arboricultural Association. Based in East Lothian, he works for a broad range of private and public sector clients throughout Scotland. He has a particular interest in heritage trees and is the co-author of two recent books on this subject: *'Heritage Trees of Scotland'* and *'The Heritage Trees of Britain and Northern Ireland'*.



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A FROSTY FRAGRANCE IN THE GARDEN

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As winter approaches there is often a feeling that this is a time to ignore the garden. It can be viewed as a quiet period, a time to relax in the house, to sow seed and simply anticipate the harbingers of spring. Well, I hope this article may serve as a gentle ‘wake-up call’ for gardeners in the chilly north of Britain. It aims to highlight just a few in a long list of attractive, fragrant winter-flowering shrubs that should be attracting their attention.

When studying at the Hertfordshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture in St. Albans, Herts. I recall a well-stocked area within the walled garden devoted to winter flowering trees and shrubs. A strong impression was made by a number of fragrant specimens within this collection. Many of the species were quite new to me, but I have to say that memories came flooding back of those dreaded ‘idents’ lined up, 1-20 in specimen jars many of them emitting a strong fragrance as we students agonised over their full Latin names.

Long before I attended college I had become used to an annual floral display on the Christmas dining table of *Iris unguicularis*, Winter Jasmine (Fig.1) (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), *Helleborus niger* and *Mahonia japonica*. The fragrance



Fig.1 – Winter Jasmine

emitted from the flowers of the latter shrub was both powerful and very pleasing. It is a vigorous, hardy shrub with fierce spiny foliage belonging, perhaps not surprisingly, to the family Berberidaceae. *Mahonia japonica*, although introduced to Europe in the late 1800's from Japanese gardens, is thought to be native of Taiwan and China. I would advise readers to provide ample space (at least 1m) for this evergreen shrub to spread, but to position it so that the lovely, lax yellow, drooping inflorescences can be easily reached to appreciate their fragrance. An underplanting of winter-flowering heathers makes a pleasing association.



Fig.2 – Witch Hazel *Hamamelis x intermedia* (previously *mollis*) ‘Pallida’

Where space provides, even in a small garden, at least one representative of the winter-flowering Witch Hazels (Fig.2), should be given pride of place. A few decades ago if asked which single specimen would be my first choice it would have been *Hamamelis mollis* ‘Pallida’ now thought to belong to the hybrid race, *H. x intermedia*. It was originally raised at Wisley shortly before 1932 and displays dense clusters of immense, sulphur-yellow flowers which still take a lot of beating. As with most members of this genus it has a most delicious fragrance and received an FCC in 1958 and the coveted AGM in 1960.

Last winter I visited the RHS Garden at Wisley and on arrival was confronted with a collection of exhibition vases containing the pick of their current flowering witch hazels. It was a difficult ‘call’ to choose the best, but I would add the following to my shopping list – they have wonderful fragrance and superbly coloured autumn foliage:

Hamamelis mollis 'Goldcrest'
H. x intermedia 'Arnold Promise'
H. x intermedia 'Diane' with red flowers
H. vernalis 'Sandra'

All of these recommendations can be obtained from a well-stocked garden centre or specialist shrub nursery.

When taking over the alpine plant nursery, Edrom Nurseries, my predecessor showed me an original specimen of *Viburnum farreri* given to the Misses Logan Homes as a cutting by Reginald Farrer himself. I have always been a little loathe to enthuse about this fragrant, winter-flowering shrub, principally because its hybrids have rather more to offer. *Viburnum x bodnantense* (Fig.3) is a hybrid between *V. farreri* and *V. grandiflorum*, raised at the famous garden, Bodnant in North Wales, around 1935. It forms a multi-stemmed shrub up to 3m (9.8ft) in height with flowers throughout the winter. The flowers are usually white, flushed pink and fairly frost resistant as well as being sweetly fragrant. There are three widely available cultivars that commend themselves:

Viburnum x bodnantense 'Charles Lamont'
V. x bodnantense 'Dawn'
V. x bodnantense 'Deben'

Each has its own merits but it is 'Dawn' which is the easiest to obtain from the horticultural trade and what an utterly reliable shrub it is.



Fig.3 – *Viburnum x bodnantense* 'Dawn'

There can be no doubt that we, who garden in Scotland, tend to have an advantage over our southern neighbours in that our soil ph is rarely alkaline and more normally acid to neutral. It seems that gardening on acid soils tend to produce the best results with winter-flowering shrubs. There are though, a number, most notably the shrubby honeysuckles (*Lonicera* spp.) that will thrive on shallow chalky soils.

When visiting gardening friends during the winter months one is rarely disappointed with a lack of colour in their gardens. But I have, on several occasions been taken aback by the strong fragrance supplied by Winter Box (*Sarcococca* spp.) partly because this evergreen shrub with hidden flowers creates an element of surprise. Winter Box likes, best of all, to be planted in shade with a relatively dry and sheltered spot proving ideal. It forms a low shrub with glossy evergreen foliage and clusters of small white flowers with a gripping fragrance. The element of surprise ‘works a treat’ and will cause your unprepared visitors to stop, gaze around, sometimes a little unwilling to admit defeat. You can then unveil your fragrant Christmas Box -

Sarcococca hookeri var. *digyna*, with pink anthers and black fruits, and its cultivar ‘Purple Stem’ are fine variants.

A number of visitors to Scotland’s Premier Gardening Show at Ingliston, Gardening Scotland, have enthused at the wide range of choice plants available from specialist nurseries. For many Scottish gardeners this is their only opportunity to have direct contact with some of the English-based nurseries and their seldom-seen trees and shrubs. It is with this in mind that I want to extol the virtues of a rarely-seen shrub, *Abeliophyllum distichum*. Fortunately we have the well-stocked Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh to serve as both an educational and motivational stimulus for keen plantsfolk: we take notes of desirable plants and then muse over sourcing them. This is a rare Korean native whose flowers resemble those of Forsythia: they belong to the same family Oleaceae. *Abeliophyllum* has fragrant pink flowers fading to white commencing from February and continuing into spring: it should be accorded a protected position in a Scottish garden to prevent (much as with camellias) a well-flowered specimen from being exposed to early morning sun. Protection is the watch word! It forms a mound-like shrub 1.5m (5ft) across and requires to be pruned. This can be achieved by cutting old flowering shoots back to a few buds.

Arguably the best all-round winter-flowering shrubs for a variety of soils, including alkaline substrates are the Himalayan Daphnes. These are undoubtedly the most strongly perfumed of any winter-blooming shrub. Most daphnes require a well-drained, yet moisture retentive, humus-rich soil. *Daphne bholua* from the Himalayas is surely one of the great delights of the genus and one of my favourites. Clusters of highly fragrant, pink blooms burst forth in late winter and look splendid when under planted with white-flowering *Erica carnea* cultivars including ‘Springwood White’. Most of the available forms of *D. bholua* are evergreen to

semi-evergreen but the best of all is *D. bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' which is deciduous and produces pink flowers from December through till March.

The semi-evergreen cultivar. *Daphne bholua* var. *glacialis* 'Gurkha' has a greater profusion of fragrant flowers than 'Jacqueline Postill' but, as with all these cultivars sheltered and protected positions must be sought in the cooler parts of Scotland as they may be killed when subject to temperatures below -5°C (23°F). A sensible option may be to position 'Gurkha' against a protected wall where it could join another two recommendations for our winter flowering shrubs.

To get the most from winter flowers we need to carefully consider their placement. Returning to my college days and the well-stocked winter garden, I can recall making my way across the borders to inspect a few shrubs trained on the high walls. One was completely new to me and really does need a warm, sunny spot for most of the year to flourish – Winter Sweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*.) Many flowering shrubs that we yearn to grow and flower refuse to do so because the flowering wood has not ripened sufficiently during the summer months. It was this factor, which came home to me strongly when visiting gardens during the winter in Michigan, U.S.A. Numbers of shrubs defy hard winters and grow and flower successfully which I would barely consider feasible, here in Berwickshire, including *Daphne genkwa*. It not only grew well, but also thrived. Much of this success is down to well-ripened wood.

A south-facing wall is the ideal location for Winter Sweet. In this position it may produce masses of waxy golden flowers with red centres. Try and plant this near to a door of your house so that its delicious fragrance can be appreciated. It will grow to about 3m (10ft) in height, it responds to fan-training and should be pruned immediately after flowering. A similar position should be given to the popular Majorcan clematis *Clematis cirrhosa* var. *balearica* (Fig.4). It does best when planted in full sun, preferably against south or west-facing walls where the stems can be fully ripened: it will also scramble up the bases of trees to about 3m (10ft) - this variety has deeply cut dark-green foliage turning bronze in the winter as well as producing yellowish-cream flowers which are red-spotted within. These flowers are sweetly fragrant: var. *balearica* thoroughly commends itself to the winter garden.

A more recently introduced seedling raised from seed collected in the Balearic Islands is *Clematis cirrhosa* 'Freckles' with large flowers, up to 10cm in diameter, creamy-pink in colour and heavily spotted with red-purple within. It received an Award of Merit in 1989 and is now widely available.

My final choice of shrub for its winter garden fragrance is a genus of plants little known for its winter-flowering qualities. The shrubby Honeysuckles include a number of species worthy of places in a winter garden. *Lonicera fragrantissima* and *L. standishii* are my choices: both were introduced from China around 1845 by the Scottish plantsman, Robert Fortune. They tend to be semi-evergreen and have been hybridised to produce excellent progeny, *L. x purpusii*. In 1962 Alf Arlford of Hillier Nurseries created an improvement within this cross, *L. x purpusii*



Fig.4 – *Clematis cirrhosa*

‘Winter Beauty’. It is a fully hardy, trouble-free shrub flowering from early December through to April with intensely fragrant blossom – it is the one to look out for. If allowed to, it may reach a height and spread of about 2-3m (6.5-10ft). I would strongly recommend pruning back about one third of the oldest stems immediately after flowering - to encourage new growth from the base and create a more compact habit. The sweetly-fragrant flowers are creamy-white with lovely golden anthers.

For readers who are seeking something even more special, look out for *Lonicera setifera* with its bristly stems and showy, daphne-like flowers, pink and wonderfully fragrant. This winter-flowering shrub was introduced by Kingdon Ward from the Himalayas in 1924.

These recommendations are, admittedly, my personal choice: the net could easily be widened to include yet more species and cultivars including, for example, the spring-flowering *Corylopsis* a member of the witch hazel family. But I hope that, from this modest selection, readers will gain confidence to add to their collection of shrubs and introduce an element of surprise thus creating a smile of recognition during the long and sometimes chilly days of winter.

The illustrations in this article were published with the permission of RBGE.

Jim Jermyn was for 20 years the proprietor of Scotland’s distinguished Edrom Nursery specialising in alpiners and woodland plants so building on his experiences in Germany, Italy and the U.K. While not acting as Show Manager of Gardening Scotland he lectures on gardening topics the world over.