

Two Years in Scottish Gardens



Emma Tennant
2023.

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TWO YEARS IN SCOTTISH GARDENS
2023 · 2024

All paintings are for sale on receipt of this catalogue

please contact Katie Pertwee

katie@katiepertwee.com

07939 155 277

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E.T.

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Preface

THE FIRST TIME I MET EMMA TENNANT, WE BONDED OVER OUR shared love of reading – and writing – obituaries. We decried the boring ones, those that list endless accomplishments, and agreed that the finest focus on carefully extracting the very soul of their subject.

Emma had just published her latest obituary in the *Daily Telegraph*, a glorious account of the man who was Tommy Neillans, a head gardener of the old-school kind, who had worked for many years at Glen, the estate near Peebles where her husband grew up in southern Scotland. Only once was he seen not wearing his tweed coat, collar and tie, when he happened to be digging hard on the hottest day of the hottest year for a decade. With or without formal attire, Emma wrote, Mr Neillans cast his magic over Glen's Victorian terraces, with their topiary, herbaceous borders and formal beds planted with pansy 'Pickering Blue', keeping the house filled year-round with flowers and soft fruit from the greenhouse, while honing his propagating skills till he was able to 'put roots on a telegraph pole'. You can just see him, hard at it.

I was struck, looking through this catalogue, just how much Emma's paintings, and the layout of these pages, resemble the best obituary. Not as a chronicle of a life that has ended (absolutely not that), but in the way she tells the story of *Two Years in Scottish Gardens*, teasing out the essentials of each season and colouring them with historical detail about where the plants came from, who brought them to Scotland and who lovingly cared for them once they got there – extracting the gardens' very souls.

Like all her catalogues, this one follows the seasons, starting with a delicate watercolour of apricot and nectarine blossom in spring. Apricots originated in China and still grow wild in the mountains near Beijing. Both twigs came from the greenhouse at Tinnisburn Plants near Canonbie, run by Emma's friend Helen Knowles. Helen rescued

a discarded nectarine stone that had germinated, and coaxed it into a strong young plant with 'bright pink flowers and delicious fruit'. The Holy Rose, *Rosa sancta*, is to be found growing in the courtyards of religious sanctuaries in Ethiopia, where it may have been introduced by St Frumentius who was born in Syria in the fourth century AD and converted the Ethiopians to Christianity. Emma saw it in her daughter Isabel's garden, and painted a twig from a young plant Isabel gave her that now grows in her own garden.

Chanterelles are a favourite subject of Emma's. I have a small painting of her mushrooms by my bed. Among them nestles a fine orange chanterelle, that delicate offering of early autumn. It's the first thing I see when I wake up. The one Emma has painted here was a gift from a neighbour, a retired restaurateur and expert on edible fungi, which he generously shares after a successful foraging expedition.

The passing of the seasons connects us to the natural world, and helps us understand our response to time passing and to our own mortality. The two leeks Emma painted are from the kitchen garden at Edrom House, near Duns, which was created with such enthusiasm by her daughter Stella, who died in 2020.

Emma understands how essential hope is to gardening, to painting, to life. As Seamus Heaney once wrote: 'Hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good worth working for.' He could have been talking of Emma herself.

FIAMMETTA ROCCO



Two Years in Scottish Gardens

PAINTING WATERCOLOURS OF FLOWERS MIGHT SEEM TO BE A predictable occupation for an octogenarian, but I grow most of my subjects – flowers, fruit and vegetables – myself, and gardening, like farming, depends to a large extent on the weather, which is nothing if not unpredictable.

It is all very well to plan to paint, say a tree paeony in May. The buds appear in early spring and slowly swell, their progress watched every day. Then, just before they open, a late frost turns them to jelly. Or the flowers emerge successfully, but, as I prepare to ‘catch the moment’, an unseasonal gale blows the petals away, as happened this year. As Rabbie Burns says, ‘The best-laid schemes o’ Mice an’ Men, Gang aft a-gley ...’. Disappointments like this are soon forgotten when one’s plans do succeed.

The plant-hunter Frank Kingdon Ward said that in Britain we do not have a climate, only weather. But we do have seasons, and, as my brilliant aunt Anne Tree, a great gardener, pointed out in an essay, each one lasts just long enough.

For gardeners, each season has its characteristic plants, which also last just long enough. Snowdrops are thrilling in February and March, but who wants to pick a bunch in April? My mother used to say, rightly, that there is nothing sadder than a primrose in June. Some of my favourite subjects have a fleeting season, which is all part of their charm. Shakespeare, of course, put it better than anyone:

*At Christmas I no more desire a rose
Than wish a snow in May’s new-fangled mirth;
But like of each thing that in season grows.*

opposite: detail from *August Annuals* [no.25]

The beautiful yellow paeony from the Caucasus, *Paeonia mlokose-witschii* [no.12] for instance, is only in flower for a few days, and it is said that the individual blooms are at their best for about four hours. The plant-hunter Reginald Farrer advised that ‘This pleasant little assortment of syllables should be practised daily by all who wish to talk familiarly of a sovereign among paeonies’. Those who are daunted by the specific epithet call it Mollie the Witch.

Philadelphus is another genus with a short flowering season, though it can be prolonged by growing a number of different species. A new *Philadelphus* has recently been launched with an advertising campaign which tells us that it flowers from May until July. The result of ten years of skilled breeding, it has large double flowers which are a shapeless muddle of petals. I shall stick to my favourite species, *P. delavayi*, and its even more beautiful form, ‘Nymans Variety’ [no.21], even though it is an annual challenge to catch them at their best.

Scotland, which is generally wetter and colder than the rest of the British Isles, is nonetheless famous for its gardens. To a certain extent the long summer hours of daylight – the white nights or ‘simmer dim’ of June – make up for the short growing season of northern latitudes. Even in southern Scotland, the only month in which we never have a frost is July.

There are compensations. Annuals, which are soon over in the south, are slow to get going, but then last a long time in our cool climate. I can often pick a good bunch of sweet peas in October.

Some plants prefer Scotland, with its peaty soil and monsoon-like rain. *Meconopsis* [no.10], one of the most beautiful of all herbaceous genera, and primulas are easy in the north, but struggle further south.

The west coast benefits from the influence of the Gulf Stream. Lucky gardeners there can grow tender treasures like *Rhododendron maddenii* [no.15] in the open, where it makes a huge shrub, just as it would in Sikkim. I have to grow my plant in a pot in the greenhouse.

If Scottish gardens are world famous, so are Scottish gardeners. Sir Joseph Banks, the scientist who sailed round the world with Captain Cook on his first circumnavigation (1768–1771), and went on to become the *de facto* director of Kew for King George III, chose Scotsmen to lead the plant-hunting expeditions that he sent out to various parts of the world. Banks wrote a long letter to the Treasury in 1814 with his opinion that the best collectors were those trained at Kew, who had studied botany as well as gardening, and he preferred Scotsmen, because ‘so well does the serious mind of a Scotch education fit Scotsmen to the habits of industry, attention and frugality, that they rarely abandon them at any time of life, and I may say never when they are young’.

Scottish gardeners, well-trained by the old apprenticeship system, found jobs all over the world. I remember a conversation I had with a rich Argentine landowner in the 1960s. He said that all was thriving on his *estancia* near Buenos Aires, and that his domestic happiness would be complete if only he could find an English nanny, a French chef and a Scottish gardener.

In spite of the challenges, in Roxburghshire, I can grow plants from many parts of the world: *Alstroemeria* from Chile [no.19], *Philadelphus* from China [nos. 21 & 24], *Nemophila* from California [nos. 24 & 25], the Holy Rose from Ethiopia [no.14] and *Prunus tenella* [no.9] from the Balkans and war-torn Ukraine are just a few of the favourites that I have painted recently.

EMMA TENNANT

Catalogue Note

PAPER I use two types of paper; an off-white Nepalese paper and a naturally uneven Japanese paper that is made from the bark of *Broussonetia papyrifera*, the fibres of which give the paper an interesting texture. Both papers are absorbent, unlike conventional watercolour paper, which means that great depth of colour can be achieved when paint is applied with a wet brush. This technique can cause the paper to wrinkle.

FRAMES I use either antique frames or gilded frames made by my daughter Isabel Tennant, who studied at City & Guilds, London and is now a leading light in her specialist craft. The antique frames are usually veneered using either rosewood or bird's eye maple. Being old, they are sometimes imperfect but signs of past use add character and interest. Isabel's gilded frames use traditional techniques in a modern way and can age and shrink with time. Changes in environment may cause movement to the structure of the frame resulting in cracking on the surface of the gold, but this is not a cause for concern.

WORKS FOR SALE All works shown here are for sale on receipt of this catalogue. For sales enquiries please contact Katie Pertwee: 07939 155 277 or katie@katiepertwee.com

Acknowledgements

Philip Armitage, George and Fiona Birkbeck, John and Roselle Boyd Brent, Franco Cetolini, Phillida Gili, JAR and Pierre Jeannet, Helen Knowles, Rosy Marshall, Henry Martin, Lorne and Georgie Nelson, Anna Polwarth, Ian and Virginia Roy, Kim Roberts and Nick Deas, Sarah Wilson and Charlie Yorke.

I would also like to thank Dex Forster who looks after my garden so well, Ben Wood for his photographs for this catalogue, which is designed by Robert Dalrymple and printed by Tom Maes and Albe de Coker and to Henry Noltie for his invaluable editing skills, deep botanical knowledge and friendship. I am most grateful to Fiammetta Rocco for her perceptive preface, my husband Toby for his endless support, my son Eddie and daughter Isabel for their wise advice, and Isabel also for her gilding skills. As to Katie Pertwee, I could not do it without her. ET

1 • Apricot and Nectarine Blossom



The genus *Prunus*, which belongs to the rose family, *Rosaceae*, has given us some of our most delicious fruit: apricots, nectarines, peaches and plums.

The apricot, *Prunus armeniaca*, is thought to have originated in China, where it still grows wild in the mountains near Peking. Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), the father of binomial nomenclature, chose the specific epithet, which is a misnomer. Armenia was just one stop on the apricot's westward journey along the Silk Road.

My twig was flowering in the greenhouse at Tinnisburn Plants near Canonbie. The nectarine was there too. It has an interesting history. Helen Knowles, who runs the nursery, was spreading compost when she found a discarded stone which had germinated, and was growing strongly. Helen rescued the young plant which turned out to be a winner, with bright pink flowers and delicious fruit.

2 • Spring Flowers I



The native sweet violet, *Viola odorata*, is a favourite wild flower, much praised by poets for its modest beauty, delicious scent, and early flowering. At one time varieties with evocative names like The Czar and Princess of Wales were grown as cut flowers. In Devon and Cornwall they were used as a break crop between early potatoes and other *primeurs*. Then red spider mite struck, and decimated the violet fields.

Puschkinia scilloides commemorates the Russian Count Mussin-Puschkin (d. 1805) who collected it in the Caucasus. A form from the Lebanon is said to be more vigorous than those from Russia and Turkey.

The two Narcissus species are *N. fernandesii* var. *cordubensis*, which grows in the vicinity of Cordoba, and *N. bulbocodium* var. *conspicuus*, the hoop petticoat narcissus, another native of the Iberian peninsula.

Tecophilia cyanocrocus, the Chilean blue crocus, is not a crocus at all, though it looks rather like one. It belongs to the amaryllis family, like so many beautiful South American bulbs. *Tecophilia* grows in the Andes, not far from Santiago, where it was thought to be extinct due to over-grazing and over-collecting. Luckily it was kept going in cultivation, thanks to the incredibly skilled nurserymen and gardeners who have mastered the art of growing rare alpine treasures.

T. cyanocrocus has recently been rediscovered growing in the wild. The intense ultramarine of its flowers is as deep and pure a blue as a delphinium or a gentian: a colour as rare as the plant itself.

3 • Spring Flowers II

The chionodoxas are native to Turkey. The name comes from the Greek *chiono*, meaning snow, and *doxa*, glory. The 'glories of the snow' were named by the Swiss botanist Pierre Edmond Boissier (1810–1885). He chose well, as they flower very early, sometimes when the snow is still on the ground.

Leucojum vernum, the spring snowflake, also grows wild in southern and eastern Europe, and flowers at the same time as snowdrops.

Cyclamen repandum is a native of Italy, Corsica, Yugoslavia and some of the Greek islands. The specific epithet, meaning with slightly wavy margins, describes the leaves.

Helleborus niger, the Christmas rose, is more likely to be in flower at Easter than at Christmas, at least in my garden. The adjective *niger* refers to the roots, which are black.

John Nash (1893–1977), a self-taught artist, was a consummate draughtsman, a



fine painter in both oils and watercolour, and an accomplished printmaker. Nash was a keen gardener who described himself as an artist-plantsman. His drawings of plants are unsurpassed, and show his deep understanding of the ways in which they grow. He taught himself the difficult technique of wood engraving, in which the artist cuts his design on the end grain of a block of



very hard boxwood with a sharp graver. The technique was developed by the Geordie genius, Thomas Bewick (1753–1828), one of eight children of a Northumbrian farmer.

Wood engravings like the one shown here, depicting two Christmas Roses with their leaves in lively detail, in a print which measures only $4\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$ inches, show why Nash's illustrations have been described as

'one of the pinnacles of twentieth century wood engraving'.

I was lucky enough to know another great exponent of the art, the late Reynolds Stone (1909–1979), who was a great influence on me.

4 · Spring Bulbs – *Muscari, Puschkinia, Chionodoxas, Iris, Scilla and Trillium*

This grape hyacinth, *Muscari armeniacum*, had survived years of neglect in the derelict farmhouse garden that I rescued in the 1960s. *Muscari* is the Turkish name, recorded in 1583 by the great botanist Carolus Clusius (1526–1609) who first introduced the bulbs to Western Europe from Constantinople. It refers to the sweet, musk-like scent of the flowers.

The blue and white striped flower is *Puschkinia scilloides* from the Caucasus, Turkey and Iran south to Lebanon. The genus is named after the Russian Count Mussin-Puschkin (d. 1805) who collected plants in the Caucasus; *scilloides* means 'resembling a scilla'.

I think that the two *Chionodoxas* on either side of the iris are *C. sardensis* on the left and *C. siehei* on the right. Both come from Turkey. But, as Martyn Rix says, the nomenclature of the Turkish species is very confused, so I cannot be sure.

Iris bucharica is one of the bulbous members of the genus, which is divided into three sections: *Xiphium*, *Juno* and *Reticulata*. *I. bucharica* is a *Juno*, which, as the specific epithet indicates, comes from the region of Bukhara in Central Asia. It was introduced in 1902 by Sir Michael Foster (1836–1907). Foster was one of those Victorian polymaths to whom we owe so much. He was a distinguished doctor who was elected to the Royal Society in 1862, served as Professor of Physiology at Cambridge from 1883 to 1903, and was knighted in 1899. He was also the greatest iris expert of his day, growing about 200 different species in his garden near Cambridge, and making many crosses. As one would expect of a top



scientist, he recorded the results with great care. His hybrids gave rise to the modern bearded irises.

The little blue bulb is *Scilla sibirica*, which grows wild from Russia southwards

to Syria. The *Trillium* was flourishing in the garden at Edrom House near Berwick when my late daughter Stella bought it in the early 2000s. It must have survived since the days, many years ago, when the Misses

Logan Hume ran a well-known nursery there. I like to think that it is a white form of *Trillium sessile*, not least because the epithet is a homophone of Cecily, one of my grand-daughters.

5 · Two Auriculas

The green, black and white flower on the left is a variety called 'White Wings'. It was raised by a nursery in Surrey called The House of Douglas, which bred many good auriculas in the mid-twentieth century. They were watered with a teapot, so that no splashes spoil the farina, or powder, on the leaves and flowers.

The variety on the right is 'Lord Saye and Sele'. He and his wife acquired the auricula in the 1980s. It was bred by Allan Hawkes, who was well-known in the rarefied world of auricula growers. Hawkes's re-creation of the old-fashioned striped varieties, which had died out, was described by Allan Guest, in his book *The Auricula*, as 'a titanic achievement ... it is largely due to the efforts

of these two men [Allan Hawkes and Derek Parsons] that the choice of plants available to us today is so broad'.

The late Lord Saye and Sele, after whom the variety is named, became the 21st Baron Saye and Sele in 1968. With the ancient title came the equally ancient Broughton Castle near Banbury, which was showing its age. Luckily the new owner was a distinguished chartered surveyor, well able to repair the crumbling stonework and timbers ravaged by death-watch beetles, and to restore the garden. Lord Saye and Sele died earlier this year aged 103.

Both of these were grown by my neighbour Helen Knowles, who has a superb collection at her nursery, Tinnisburn Plants.



6 · Yellow Auricula

I do not know the name of this auricula, which was a present from a friend, Sarah Wilson. I label it 'Best Yellow'.

Sarah told me to ignore the books, which tell one to divide and re-pot auriculas in

July, but after a few years 'Best Yellow' outgrew its pot to the point where I had to follow conventional wisdom. The stiff habit of the specimen resembles the eighteenth-century paintings of similar varieties.



7 • Cowslip, Tulips, Radish and Pea

Cowslip is a pretty name for a charming flower, but the name has a surprising meaning. It comes from the Old English 'cuslyppe', meaning 'cu', a cow, and 'slyppe', a viscous or slimy substance, e.g. cow-slobber or cow-dung.

Cowslips are uncommon wildflowers in my part of the world, so I grow them in the garden. The red and white tulips are *Tulipa clusiana*, the lady tulip. It is a native of the Middle East, from Persia through to Kashmir, and is naturalised in other places, including Nepal, where I have seen it growing wild.

Tulipa clusiana is named after Carolus Clusius (1526–1609), the celebrated Flemish botanist and polymath. He was described by Dr William Stearn as a 'much-travelled, highly observant man who after many misfortunes ended his days happily as a professor at the newly-founded University of Leiden'.

Clusius trained as a doctor in Montpellier. In 1573 the Emperor Maximilian asked him to establish the Imperial Botanic Garden in Vienna. There he grew many of the plants, especially bulbs, that were arriving from Constantinople. Lilies, anemones, irises, fritillaries and above all tulips had been grown in Turkey for centuries. They transformed the gardens of Western Europe.

When Clusius moved to his last job, as Praefectus of the botanic garden in Leiden in Holland, he took with him his collection of tulips. He is regarded as the father of the Dutch bulb industry, which flourishes to this day.

Tulipa clusiana, most elegant of all, was a relatively late arrival. The Florentine grower Mattel Caccini sent bulbs to Clusius in 1607, just two years before he died.

The radish and the pea seedling were growing away happily in the kitchen garden while the cowslip and tulips were flowering in a border.



8 • *Magnolia* × *loebneri* cv. 'Leonard Messel'



Magnolia 'Leonard Messel' is believed to be a cross between two Japanese species; *M. kobus* and a pink form of *M. stellata*. It is named after Leonard Messel (1872–1953), who owned Nymans, the famous garden in Sussex which now belongs to the National Trust. He saved old-fashioned roses from extinction, and subscribed to the 1920s plant-hunting expeditions which introduced many new plants from China and the Himalayas.

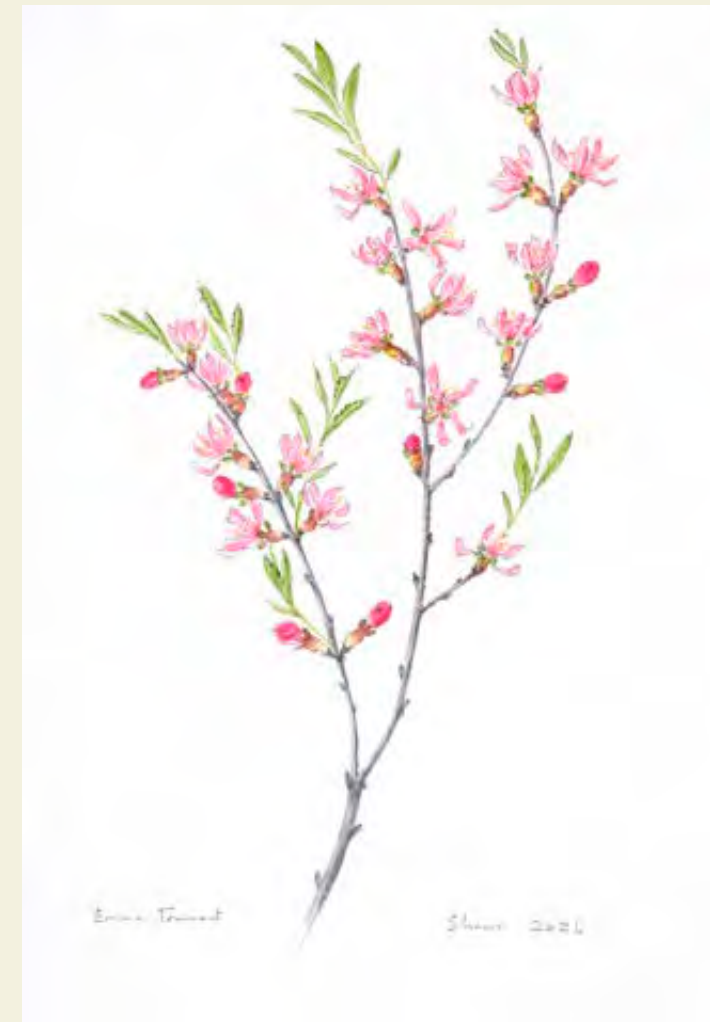
I painted a branch of *Magnolia* 'Leonard Messel' at Liddalbank, where my friends John and Roselle Boyd Brent grow a fine specimen. In 2024 it survived the late Liddesdale frosts, which often spoil early flowering varieties like this one.

9 • *Prunus tenella*, the Dwarf Russian Almond

Prunus tenella was listed by James Sutherland, the Intendant of the Edinburgh Physic Garden, in his *Hortus Medicus Edinburgensis* of 1683, and has been a popular garden plant ever since. According to the Rev. Thomas Martyn, who edited the ninth edition of Philip Miller's famous *Gardener's Dictionary* in 1805, 'the vast plains of the Volga being annually set on fire, it never rises to any height, but is low and shrubby, creeps very

much at the root, and impedes the plough'. Tough this lovely little shrub certainly is, being able to survive both fires and Russian winters. The specific epithet means tender or delicate, a misnomer if ever there was one.

I grow the form called 'Fire Hill', now thought to be synonymous with Lady Martineau's introduction from Romania, which received an RHS Award of Merit in 1929.



10 • *Meconopsis baileyi*

Colonel Frederick Bailey (1882–1967) was an Indian Army officer, explorer, spy and linguist who spoke Tibetan, among several other languages. In 1913 he was exploring in Tibet when he found a beautiful blue poppy and pressed it in his pocket book. When he returned to England he showed it to Sir David Prain, the Director of Kew, who named the flower *Meconopsis baileyi*.

The name had to be dropped when it transpired that an apparently identical species had been found, but not introduced, in China by the French missionary Père Armand David many years previously. His dried specimen had been given the specific

epithet *betonicifolia* by Adrien René Franchet (1834–1900), the botanist at the Paris Musée d'Histoire Naturelle. Recently the boffins have decided that *Meconopsis betonicifolia* and *M. baileyi* are two different species after all.

Bailey's blue poppy was eventually introduced in 1924, when it was found by the explorers Frank Kingdon Ward and Lord Cawdor on their expedition to Tibet in 1924. The plants grown from seed that they collected caused a sensation when they were shown in flower two years later.

Meconopsis baileyi does well in Scotland, as it likes a cold winter, a monsoon and acid soil.



The work of Elizabeth Blackadder (1931–2021) was a huge influence on me, though we never met. Dame Elizabeth was best known for her bold and beautiful oil paintings and watercolours, but she was also a very skilled printmaker. Her etching of a *Meconopsis* shows two flowers surrounded by bristly seed heads.



11 • Crab Apples in Flower and Fruit

Crab apples are not just beautiful when in flower in early summer, and again in autumn when laden with fruit. Gertrude Jekyll (1843–1932), most observant of writers, pointed out that ‘Old apple trees are specially noticeable for their beauty in winter, when their extremely graceful shape, less visible when in loveliness of spring bloom or in rich beauty of autumn fruit, is seen to fullest advantage’.

The true wild, or crab, apple, *Malus sylvestris* is common in England, Wales and Ireland, becoming rare in Scotland. The specimens that grow in southern Scotland, where I live, may be *M. sylvestris* or may be ones that have grown from the discarded core of an orchard variety. In that case they will have descended from *Malus sieversii*, which grows wild in the Tien Shan mountains on the Russia / China border.

My branch came from an old tree which was growing near our farm in Roxburghshire.



12 • *Paeonia mlokosewitschii*

This most beautiful paeony is named after Ludwig Franzevich Mlokosewitsch (1831–1909). He was born in Warsaw, which was then ruled by Russia.

Mlokosewitsch joined the Russian army as a young man and was posted to Lagodekhi in the Caucasus, where he laid out a regimental park and orchard. In 1861 he resigned from the army and set off on a journey to 'seek oblivion ... in the deserts of Persia'. There he found his true vocation, collecting plants and assembling a fine herbarium. But the expedition ended badly.

Our hero was arrested on trumped up charges of fomenting an uprising, his collections were confiscated (and then lost), and he was exiled to distant Voronezh province

for six years. Nothing daunted, he then returned to the Caucasus, where he spent the rest of his life, much of it as Inspector of Forests. Mlokosewitsch was an all-round naturalist who collected zoological, entomological and botanical specimens for Russian museums.

His paeony reached Western gardens via the botanical garden at Tiflis (Tbilisi) and is now a sought-after favourite. Graham Stuart Thomas described Mollie the Witch, as it is affectionately known, as 'one of the most wonderful flowers of the early year'.

I am lucky: Mollie loves my garden.

Paeonia mlokosewitschii, grown and photographed by ET.



13 · *Iris cycloglossa*

A fairly recent introduction from N.W. Afghanistan, *Iris cycloglossa* grows in places which are flooded in winter but dry in summer. The specific epithet comes from the Greek *kyklos*, a circle, and *glotta*, a tongue. It was chosen by the Norwegian botanist Per Wendelbo (1927–1981) who found this lovely species growing at an altitude of 4,700 to 5,500 feet. It belongs to the Juno section of the genus.



Iris cycloglossa in flower, grown and photographed by ET.



14 · *Rosa sancta*, the Holy Rose

Graham Stuart Thomas (1909–2003), the great rose expert, described the Holy Rose as 'interesting, but rather mysterious ... the little we know of its history is both curious and chequered'. It was first described in 1848 in Achille Richard's *Tentamen Florae Abyssinicae*, from specimens found in the Christian province of Tigre, growing in the courtyards of religious sanctuaries.

The Holy Rose is a hybrid between *Rosa*

phoenicia, a native of Syria (the Roman Phoenicia), as the specific epithet indicates, and *Rosa damascena*. It may have been introduced to Ethiopia by St Frumentius (c.300–360 AD), who was born in Syria and converted the Ethiopians to Christianity.

I first saw this fascinating rose in my daughter Isabel's garden. I painted a twig from a young plant that she gave me, which is now flourishing in my own garden.



15 · *Rhododendron maddenii*

Rhododendron maddenii was discovered, named and introduced by Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911). He found it on his momentous journey of botanical exploration to northeast India and the eastern Himalaya of 1847–1851. Hooker was the first botanist to visit Sikkim, and to discover its rich flora. His introductions, particularly of rhododendron species, transformed British gardens.

He found *Rhododendron maddenii* growing near the village of Choongtam, at an altitude of 6,000 feet, in thickets by the Lachen and Lachoong rivers. It was very rare there, being at the western end of its distribution.

Hooker described *R. maddenii* as a 'truly superb species', and named it after Major Edward Madden (1805–1856) of the Bengal Civil Service. In his famous book, *The Rhododendrons of the Sikkim Himalaya*, Hooker said that Madden was 'a good and accomplished botanist, to whose learned memoirs on the plants of the temperate and tropical zones of the North West Himalaya the reader may be referred for an excellent account of the vegetation of those regions'.



Rhododendron maddenii, grown and photographed by ET.



16 · *Lilium pumilum*

Lilium pumilum has a wide range in the wild, growing from Korea and Manchuria to Siberia, Mongolia and northern China.

The plant-hunter Reginald Farrer (1880–1920) saw it in Tibet. He wrote that 'Nothing could be simpler to manage or yield more brilliant results than *L. pumilum* as the Tibetans grow it, for they ram a handful of bulbs at haphazard into the hard mud of their flat roofs, and there above the eaves sprouts a living pyramid of fire from year to year'.

The specific epithet describes the bulbs, which are no bigger than a marble. It was chosen in 1812 by the Swiss botanist Augustin Pyramus de Candolle (1778–1841), who was professor of botany first at Montpellier, then at Geneva. He wrote many important books including the first seven volumes of the *Prodromus Systematis Naturalis Regni Vegetabilis* from 1824 to 1839, of which the remaining ten volumes were concluded in 1873 by his son Alphonse.

I grow *Lilium pumilum* in a pot in the cool greenhouse, where it flowers in May. The pheasant's eye narcissus were out at the same time, as were the primroses, in a nearby wood.



17 · *Lilium pardalinum*

The panther or leopard lily, *Lilium pardalinum*, is the easiest of the American lilies. It grows wild from Oregon down through the coast ranges of California almost as far as the Mexican border. The specific epithet, from the Latin name for a panther, describes

the spotted flowers. The late George Clive, who was a brilliant plantsman, gave me a few bulbs from his garden at Whitfield in Herefordshire. They have thriven for me, as they like a moist but well-drained soil.



18 · *Lilium regale*



The easiest and most beautiful of all the trumpet lilies, *Lilium regale* has the bonus of a delicious scent. It was found by E.H. 'Chinese' Wilson in 1903. All the many thousands of bulbs in cultivation are descended from his introduction.

Lilium regale has a limited distribution in the wild, growing only in the remote and semi-arid Min valley, western Szechwan, at

an altitude of 2,500 to 6,000 feet. As Wilson wrote, 'In summer the heat is terrific, in winter the cold is intense, and at all seasons these valleys are subject to sudden and violent windstorms against which neither man nor beast can make headway'.

The specific epithet, meaning royal, of outstanding merit, was chosen by Wilson, and could not be more appropriate.

19 • South American Bulbs

I painted the yellow form of the Peruvian lily, *Alstroemeria aurea* ssp. *lutea*, with the original orange species nearby. In spite of its English name, *Alstroemeria aurea* comes from Chile. The single pink flower on the left resembles *Alstroemeria ligtu*, though I bought it under the name '*A. pseudospathulata*', which I think itself may be pseudo as I cannot find any reference to a species of this name.

All alstroemerias have leaves with twisted stalks, so that what appears to be the top of the leaf is actually the underside. Botanists describe them as 'resupinate'. The flowers are

'zygomorphic', from the Greek *zygo*, a yoke, meaning that they are symmetrical in one plane only.

The little yellow bulb is *Rhodophiala montana*, from the Andes, and the pink one is *Habranthus robustus*, which grew on the estancia in northern Argentina where we lived for a year in the 1960s. After a heavy sub-tropical rainstorm, the flowers appeared by the thousand, then vanished as quickly as they had emerged.

All these plants belong to the family, *Amaryllidaceae*. See also front cover.



20 • Pea



This pea is called 'Green Shaft', my favourite variety of my favourite vegetable. Unfortunately it is not easy to grow at home, as a serious disease called *Ascochyta* blight has found its way to my garden, where it attacks the roots and stalks of the peas.

Peas, *Pisum sativum*, have been grown in Britain for centuries. They were originally eaten when they were ripe and hard. The custom of eating them when green was introduced from the Continent in Tudor times.

The name *Pisum* was used by Virgil and adopted by Linnaeus. *Sativus* means cultivated.



Peas picked at Edrom,
photographed by ET

21 • *Philadelphus*, *Rose* and *Asparagus*

I was given a tiny cutting of this *Philadelphus* by the late Brenda Johnson of Jedburgh. She was a very talented and generous gardener. The cutting had no name. I think it is *P. delavayi* 'Nymans Variety', one of the less well-known members of the genus.

The common *Philadelphus coronarius*, or mock orange, is a native of south eastern Europe and Asia Minor, and has been grown here since Tudor times. The Chinese species, like this one, were not introduced until the twentieth century.

Philadelphus delavayi 'Nymans Variety' was raised from seed collected by the great Scottish plant-hunter George Forrest (1873–1932) in western Yunnan. The contrast between the pure white flowers and the dark purple calyces is striking, and the scent is superb.

Rosa glauca grows wild in the mountains of southern Europe, from the Pyrenees to the Carpathians, and south to Albania. The grey leaves, purple shoots and bright pink flowers make it a favourite for flower arrangers.

The asparagus spears were grown by my late daughter Stella's gardener, Philip Armitage.



22 · *Ixia*

Ixias come from South Africa, and do well wherever they can enjoy a Mediterranean climate. The best I have ever seen were being sold in huge multi-coloured bunches by street vendors in Santiago, the capital of my favourite foreign country, Chile. Growing them in cold, wet Scotland, even in a greenhouse, is not easy.

'*Ixia*' was the Ancient Greek name for a gum-producing plant which was noted for the variability of its flower colour.



23 · *Gladiolus dalenii*
ssp. *garnierii*

Most *gladiolus* species come from Africa. They are smaller and more elegant than the giant hybrids beloved of Dame Edna Everage. The genus, which belongs to the iris family, was named by Linnaeus, using the Latin word *gladiolus*, a little sword.

I painted a form of *G. dalenii*, which grows throughout tropical Africa and in summer rainfall regions of South Africa. It is a very variable species: the flowers can be green, yellow, orange, red, pink or purple, or striped.

I wish I could obtain corms of some more of these interesting cormous perennial geophytes, as the Royal Horticultural Society dictionary describes them. They are not easily available.



24 · July Flowers – *Rhodanthe chlorocephala*, *Delphinium grandiflorum*, *Nemophila menziesii*, Sweet Pea, *Bupleurum griffithii* and *Philadelphus mexicanus* ‘Rose Syringa’

The pink daisy, *Rhodanthe chlorocephala*, is an everlasting flower from Western Australia. The dried flowers keep their colour for several years. Sir Joseph Paxton (1803–1865) valued the genus, which was then a new introduction, so much that he grew it in pots in the Chatsworth greenhouses. He said that the dried flowers provided ‘conspicuous gaiety during the whole winter’.

Delphinium grandiflorum comes from Siberia, not a place one usually associates with beautiful flowers, though when the snow melts, often as late as mid-June, the northern meadows explode into colour in a few days. *D. grandiflorum* arrived in Britain via the Botanic Garden in St Petersburg in the eighteenth century. The Swiss director of the Garden, Dr Johann Amman, who founded it in 1736, had previously worked for Sir Hans Sloane in London, and kept in touch with his many friends there.

Nemophila menziesii, a little blue treasure from California, is one of my favourite flowers, as is the old-fashioned sweet pea, ‘Painted Lady’. I grow both of them every year.

Bupleurum griffithii (of gardens) is another annual much-loved by flower arrangers, as its green and yellow flowers, which last well in water, are a perfect foil for brighter colours.

The twig at the top right-hand corner of the picture is *Philadelphus mexicanus* ‘Rose Syringa’. It is a variant of *P. mexicanus* which turned up in Irish gardens in the nineteenth century, and was probably introduced by Carl Theodor Hartweg, a German botanist who collected in Mexico for the Horticultural Society of London (1836–1837). My plant outgrew its allotted space in the cool greenhouse, so I cut it down and used the long, cane-like stems to stake other pot plants. I was unintentionally taking cuttings, some of which struck, so this tender *Philadelphus* is once again flourishing and producing deliciously scented flowers.



25 • August Annuals – Sweet Pea, Cornflower, Love-in-the-Mist, Nigella, Nemophila and two Chanterelles



In their natural habitats three of these annuals are cornfield weeds.

The pink and white sweet pea, *Lathyrus odoratus*, is 'Painted Lady', an old and sweetly scented variety which was growing in the Chelsea Physic Garden by 1737.

I painted a single flower of the Cornflower, *Centaurea cyanus*, in my garden. It is probably native to most of Europe and the Middle East, but is now very rare as a cornfield weed in Britain.

Blue love-in-the-mist, *Nigella damascena*, is a hardy winter annual from southern Europe, Turkey and North Africa. The variety usually grown in gardens, 'Miss Jekyll', is the result of many years' selection by the great gardener whose name it bears. The wild form, which is a cornfield weed, has smaller and paler flowers.

The purple species is *N. papillosa* (synonym *N. hispanica*) from Spain and Portugal. The name 'Nigella' has nothing to do with the Christian names Nigel or Nigella, but is the diminutive of the Latin *niger*, meaning black, and describes the seeds.

The sky blue *Nemophila*, *N. menziesii*, comes from California. It was introduced by the great Scottish explorer and plant-hunter, David Douglas (1799–1834) on his third and last expedition to the west coast of America, which lasted from 1829 until his tragic death in Hawaii in 1834. The specific epithet commemorates Archibald Menzies (1754–1842), another Scot, the naval surgeon and botanist who accompanied Captain George Vancouver on his voyage of Pacific exploration (1791–95).

The chanterelles were a present from our neighbour, Franco Cetolini. Franco is a retired restaurateur and an expert on edible fungi, which he generously shares with us after a successful foraging expedition.

26 & 27 · *Rosa moyesii* I and II



Rosa moyesii comes from the mountains of Szechwan in western China, where it was discovered by an English explorer, Edgar Pratt, in 1893, but was not introduced until a few years later, when E. H. 'Chinese' Wilson (1876–1930) found it again. He sent seeds home to the famous firm of nurserymen, Veitch of Exeter, for whom he was working as a plant collector.

The specific epithet commemorates an English priest, the Rev. James Moyes of the China Inland Mission, with whom Wilson was staying when he found the rose. *Rosa moyesii* is a very variable species, the flower colour varying from dark ruby red to a rather dull pink. Seedlings are appearing in my garden, and I am looking forward to seeing what the flowers are like.

I painted a flowering twig in my garden. The hips came from Kilmarnaig in Argyll.



28 · Red Currants

Red currants grow wild in Britain, but one can never pick their fruit. The birds always get there first. In the garden it is necessary to net them securely before the blackbirds see the shiny red berries.

As William Turner (c. 1509–1568), Dean of Bath and Wells and author of one of the earliest English language herbals, said in the 1568 edition of his herbal:

Ribes is a little bushe and hath leaves like a vine, And in the toppes of the bushe are red berries in clusters, In taste at the first something sour, But pleasant enough when they are fully ripe.

Turner, the 'father of English botany', was spot on. To enjoy red currants at their best, leave them until they change from scarlet to crimson, when they will be sweet enough to eat without sugar.

Good cooks love red currants in order to make jelly, summer pudding and other treats. They hardly ever appear in shops, and never when they are ripe. Every year I give baskets full to friends and neighbours, as my bushes, of the variety 'Laxton's No. 1', are very prolific.



29 · *Eucryphia glutinosa*



Eucryphia glutinosa is a native of Chile, where it is very rare. The Chilean botanist Claudio Gay (1800–1873) discovered it in about 1845, growing on the banks of the river Biobio. It was introduced in 1859 by Richard Pearce, who was collecting for the well-known firm of nurserymen, Veitch of Exeter.

As William Jackson Bean (1863–1947), one time curator of Kew, says, *Eucryphia glutinosa* is a 'plant of singular beauty with its large white flowers and conspicuous tufts

of stamens'. The leaves turn orange and red in autumn. It makes a small tree in gardens with a mild climate on the western seaboard of Britain. My twig came from Kilmaronaig in Argyll.

30 • Rose Hips, Nerines and Cyclamen

I grew up on the fifth edition of Bentham and Hooker's *Handbook of the British Flora* (1944), which was first published in 1858. It listed just five wild roses. Clapham, Tutin and Warburg, whose *Flora of the British Isles* came out in 1952, divided the genus into 14 species. In 1991 Clive Stacey, in his *New Flora of the British Isles* split it further into 17 species.

Several grow in Roxburghshire, where I live, and are difficult to tell apart. Confusion is confounded when they hybridise with each other.

I painted a tall, arching branch with strongly hooked prickles and glabrous hips, which tell us that it belongs to the *Rosa canina*, or dog rose group. The smaller zig-zag twig with hispid hips and straighter prickles belongs to the *Rosa villosa* group; its flowers would have been very deep pink.

Nerine bowdenii is a member of the amaryllis family from South Africa. It is named after Athelstan Bowden-Cornish, who introduced it to Britain in 1902. I grow it in the cold greenhouse, but have seen it flourishing in the open in Scotland, as for instance at the foot of the west-facing wall of the head gardener's house at Floors Castle near Kelso.

The little pink cyclamen is *C. neapolitanum* from the Mediterranean. In Greece it grows abundantly in olive groves. The flowers emerge within a day or so of the first autumn rains in September, and are soon followed by the leaves with their fascinating patterns in different shades of green.



31 • Autumn Leaves – Hornbeam, Bullace, Field Maple and Gentians

The hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*, grows wild in S.E. England, but the scattered specimens that one sees in Scotland have all been planted. *Carpinus* was the classical Latin name: the English name is said to be derived from the use of the wood for ox-yokes. It is nothing if not versatile, being good also for turnery, piano actions and floorboards. The catkins are conspicuous in a good fruiting year.

The Latin name of bullace, *Prunus × domestica* ssp. *institia*, shows that it is a subspecies of the plum. We planted a few in the hope of getting fruit to make delicious jam, but the late frosts of Liddesdale have thwarted our plan.

The field maple, *Acer campestre*, is one of my favourite small trees. It is shapely, with decorative winged fruit, described by the botanical term 'samara', and the leaves turn a lovely butter-yellow in autumn. The dictionary describes a samara as 'a dry indehiscent fruit, part of the wall of which forms a flattened wing'. Like the hornbeam, the field maple is common in south and east England, becoming rarer in the north. It makes a good, if unusual, hedge. There are a few specimens in Liddesdale, but I do not know who planted them, or when, or why.

The gentians, *Gentiana sino-ornata*, were flowering in my garden in September.



32 · *Gentiana sino-ornata* –
Two Forms

These autumn flowering cultivars of *Gentiana sino-ornata* are 'Alex Duguid' on the left and 'Devonhall' on the right. The deep ultramarine of the latter is close to the original species, which was discovered in western China in 1910 by George Forrest, the Scottish botanist, born in Falkirk (1873–1932). It has been described as one of the most exciting plant introductions of the twentieth century.

The almost turquoise blue of 'Alex Duguid' indicates that it is likely to have one of the paler species, such as *G. ternifolia* or *G. farreri*, in its ancestry.



33 · *Begonia grandis*
ssp. *evansiana*

There are about 900 species in the genus *Begonia*, growing all over the tropical and sub-tropical regions of the Americas and the Far East. The genus, and its family, *Begoniaceae*, was named by Carl Linnaeus, the eighteenth century Swedish physician who formalised binomial nomenclature, after Michel Begon (1638–1710), Governor of French Canada, and a patron of botany.

Begonia grandis ssp. *evansiana* grows wild from Malaysia to China and Japan. It spreads by means of axillary bulbils, which fall off and root in nooks and crannies in the cool greenhouse.

The late Michael Wickenden, who had a remarkable collection of plants at his nursery in Gatehouse of Fleet, was a good friend of mine. He gave me several interesting plants, including this one, in exchange for a painting. See also back cover.



34 · *Miniature Orange*



Citrus fruit, especially oranges and lemons, are associated by northern Europeans with the romance of the Mediterranean, the cradle of our civilisation. Some of the earliest greenhouses, like the one built by the first Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth in 1697, were called orangeries, and were designed to grow citrus fruit and so bring some

of the glamour of the south to our cold grey climate.

The oranges and lemons that we grow are complex hybrids derived from species that are native to southern China and Vietnam. My miniature specimen was lurking in a dark corner of a local garden centre. I rescued it for a knock-down price, and have enjoyed its flowers and fruit ever since.

35 · *Prunus avium* – *Autumn Leaf*

The gean, or wild cherry, grows all over Britain, and is common in the Scottish Borders, where I live. It is beautiful when in flower in early summer, and again in

autumn, when the leaves turn various shades of red, pink and yellow. The wood is beautiful too, and is used for cabinet making and parts of musical instruments.



36 · *Chimonanthus praecox*

The wintersweet, *Chimonanthus praecox*, was introduced from its native home, China, in 1766. The Chinese set great store by plants like this which flower on bare twigs in winter, symbolising perseverance, hope, and the impending arrival of spring.

As William Jackson Bean (1863–1947) says, 'This delightful old shrub ... has two strong claims to the notice of planters: it flowers in mid-winter ... and its blossoms diffuse around them one of the most pleasing of perfumes'.

My branch came from a huge old specimen at Kinmount, down by the Solway near Dumfries. It was flowering in early autumn, before the leaves fell. Why? Is climate change the explanation? My own specimen is now flowering in September. I wonder if this change of season is happening all over the country?



37 · Two Leeks

Leeks, the national emblem of the principality of Wales, are also very popular in Scotland, as they stand cold winter weather remarkably well. The Scottish variety 'Musselburgh', described in the Vilmorin brothers' classic of 1885, *The Vegetable Garden*, is still as popular as ever.

The Royal Horticultural Society dictionary describes the leek as 'a monocotyledonous biennial plant with long green leaves with white bases which form a tight cylinder'. It does not say that this tight cylinder is a delicious vegetable.

I painted two leeks from the kitchen garden at Edrom House, Duns, which were grown by Philip Armitage.

I love that the simple leek inspired JAR, the world renowned jeweller, as it does me. Stella often spoke of JAR with such respect and affection. They shared a great love of plants. Stella's favourite JAR piece was a pair of 'Weeping Willow' ear rings that she wore for the night of the Met Gala in 2013. They will shortly form part of the v&a's jewellery collection, having been donated by JAR 'In Memory of Stella'.



My late daughter Stella with her gardener Bert Kinghorn, at Edrom, 2018. Photograph by Martin Parr.



Herbert Read (1893–1968), the art historian, poet and philosopher, grew up on a farm in north Yorkshire. It is said that his childhood was ‘passed under the great wheel of the seasons, the lore of things that grow, the casual brutality of the things that kill, the everlasting joy of natural things’.

The Innocent Eye

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Anna Tennant