

ISU and it's „Fifth International Perennial Plant Conference“

The first reservations arrived before even the programme was published, that's how popular the 'international winterdays' event in Grünberg has become. Once again the conference centre was bursting at the seams and Director Matthias Hub, and MC, Georg Uebelhart were able to welcome over 80 participants from 9 different nations.

Who are these people who are willing to make the long trip from USA or Norway to visit an intensive 3-day seminar?

The answer is that the magnetism of these people themselves actually makes the conference, year for year, such a success. In Grünberg, speakers and visitors alike are experts in their own fields. Here you can meet fascinating characters with ideas and visions, who are willing to leave the well-trodden paths and try out new directions. Whatever their varied backgrounds, the shared enthusiasm for plants unites these people and opens their eyes and ears for the lives and works of their companions.

Growing Scottish Garden Plants ...

Susan Band from Scotland has visited the Grünberg conference several times. In her nursery in the heart of Scotland, Susan produces mainly bulbs and alpines. However, the cool damp climate also provides a habitat for plants which are more difficult to cultivate, such as Meconopsis, Trillium and Corydalis. Susan took us on a trip across Scotland, from the west to the east coast and gave us an insight into the amazing diversity of plants which grow in this relatively small country. Whether Meconopsis and Primulas from the cool Himalayas or Eucalyptus and the tropical Cordyline, in bonny Scotland apparently everything is possible.

A Passion for Stonecrops ...

Mr. Sedum, alias Ray Stephenson, 'self-taught' botanist and owner of the 'National Sedum Collection' of Great Britain has an immense knowledge of Sedum (resp. Rosularia, Hylotelephium, or Phedimus or even Gormanina ... since not everything that looks like Sedum actually is Sedum). In recent years, DNA analysis and unsuccessful attempts at cross-breeding have produced substantial relevant evidence and many Sedums will have to be renamed (a process which is already underway).

Ray Stephenson and his wife Joyce are indeed what you would call Sedum hunters. Ray has a skill for nosing out Sedum. From San Francisco along the west coast to the north of America, in Greece, Albania and Turkey, Ray has tracked down all known kinds of Sedum and is still discovering new ones.

Gardening with Perennial Herbs and how to harvest and use them ...

It is seldom that botanical lectures manage to make your mouth water, or are so wonderfully practical.

Tammy Hartung from Colorado is a modern 'medicine woman'. In addition to growing and marketing herbs on her Desert Canyon Farm in Colorado, Tammy also devotes much of her time to investigating the different uses of herbs, whether medicinal, sedative or stimulative. It was fascinating to discover how simple it can be to produce tinctures for headaches or eczema, or conjure up deliciously scented oils and creams for use in the bathtub or as cosmetics. Just try making your own herbal tea or vinegar, or adding some freshly picked herbs to give home baked bread that special note.

High and dry ... + Perils and Pleasures of Plant Collecting on four Continents ...

Panayoti Kelaidis is Curator of the Botanic Gardens in Denver, Colorado. He acquired his extensive botanical knowledge by studying various comprehensive collections and participating in numerous excursions on four continents.

Panayoti Kelaidis held two lectures, both inspiring with their beautiful images and also bringing to our attention, the enthusiasm and personal dedication of plant collectors, who invest considerable amounts of time and money and do not shy from extreme physical effort to achieve their aims.

Many of the items discovered and collected by Panayoti Kalaidis in Central Asia or in the Drakensberg in South Africa have proved to be hardy species and can well be grown in the gardens of Denver. These newcomers are now influencing the perennial nursery market in USA, contributing to the increasing diversity of garden plants.

Plant Hunting in the Himalayas ... + Primula, Meconopsis and Gentiana from the Himalayas

Another long distance traveller with a plant mission is Ron Macbeath from Scotland. He has been to the Himalayas 26 times and is determined to return in spite of rain and wet clothes always being on the agenda (well, he is a Scot). Definitely, botanical excursions are not just a walk in the park.

With his spectacular images of Meconopsis, Ron enthralled his audience time and again. Seeing all these fascinating varieties of Gentiana and Primula makes each of us want to grow these wonderful plants, in spite of knowing that most of them are either impossible or extremely difficult to cultivate, a great pity indeed.

For many years, Ron Macbeath was Head of the alpine section of the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh before, at an 'advanced' age (my apologies to Ron), fulfilling his dream of owning his own business, Lamberton Nurseries.

Plants for green Roofs ...

'Green roofs' have existed for over 1000 years. Plants on roofs have (literally) masses of energy potential, whether to provide warmth in winter, coolness in summer, or optical enhancement the whole year round. Unfortunately, the selection of green roof plants in many places is often, disappointingly, limited to Sedum and some few grasses, despite a large number of potentially suitable plants.

Ed Snodgrass grew up on a traditional farm in Maryland but after an interim period employed as a social worker, he made the far-reaching decision in 1992 to start afresh in the nursery business. Today, Emory Knoll Farm is one of the leading producers of green roof plants in USA. Numerous surveys are underway to promote and encourage the future development of green roof covers. In addition, a broad spectrum of plants is being tested for their suitability in this area. The result is an increasing number of attractive solutions for living ecosystems.

Organiser and MC, Georg Uebelhart of Jelitto Perennial Seeds will also be planner of the next event. The "Sixth International Perennial Plant Conference" in the Bildungsstätte Gartenbau (Grünberg/Hessen/ will take place from 15th – 17th February, 2013.

Further information and pictures can be found at

The Internationale Staudenunion (ISU) is a unique organisation of nursery people from around the world with the purpose of promoting contact between producers and users of perennials. The ISU has close connections with the PPA (Perennial Plant Association) which is an affiliation of perennial plant experts in USA. The aspiring aim of the ISU is an internationally recognised uniform nomenclature of perennials for the horticultural sector.

Every 2 years botanical excursions and congresses are organised, held at changing venues in Europe. The next ISU congress will take place in Holland (17th – 21st August, 2012).
Doris Pöppel, 3rd March, 2012