



Newsletter

Issue 26

biblicalgardenelgin.co.uk

March 2025

Charity No. Sco 35997

Hello again to all Friends of The Biblical Garden. It has felt like a long cold winter, but spring is here, the days are lengthening, the birds are singing, plants are coming to life and when the sun shines there is some warmth in it.

This year, due to financial cutbacks, there is only 1 horticulture class running, with 11 students. In the past there were 2 classes. This change is having knock on effects for The Garden, with the staff having to prioritise which jobs are done. They are very aware that they are not able to maintain the usual high standards in The Garden, but I think you will agree that it is still looking good. The Friends have discussed what we can do to help and you will see below some extra weeding sessions are being held.

Dates for your diary



Our short **Easter service** will be held on **Sunday April 20th** at 6.30 a.m. in The Garden. We are delighted to have Rev. Sonia Palmer leading the service once more. There will be tea/coffee in the classroom afterwards. Everybody is very welcome regardless of beliefs. If you've not been before, do come and experience the lovely peace and calm at that time in the morning.



We are holding an **extra weeding session** at The Garden on **Tuesday 15th April** starting at 6p.m. to make sure everywhere is neat and tidy for the service.

Scotland's
GARDENS
Scheme
OPEN FOR CHARITY

Last year The Friends held a successful **Scotland's Gardens Scheme open day**, raising money for charity. We will open again this year on **Saturday 3rd May from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.** Entry will be by donation and all money raised will be sent to the Scheme for the charities they support, namely the Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland, Perennial and Maggie's. There will be plant sales, light refreshments, a fun trail for youngsters etc. It would be good to see you there.

The **AGM** of The Friends will be held on **Tuesday 27th May at 6.30 p.m.** in the classroom at The Garden. Please note the slightly earlier than usual time. Please do come along and hear about what is happening, what is being planned etc. There will be no pressure to join the Committee or to take on a role – but of course if you would like to become more involved you will be very welcome!



May is also the time when **subs** are due. You can pay at the AGM or use the form at the back of the newsletter or pay by bank transfer. Details on the form.



Our **summer weeding evenings** will start earlier than usual on Tuesday **10th June, meeting every Tuesday until the end of August.** We start at 6 p.m. and stop for tea/coffee at 8pm, but you can turn up and leave whenever it suits and you do not have to commit to being there every week. These evenings are enjoyable social events and everybody is welcome. No previous gardening experience is needed and tools are provided. You don't even need to work in The Garden! For instance the volunteer who made the tea/coffee for many years has retired and we used to have a volunteer who maintained he was no good at gardening but he went round the volunteers each week chatting with them and encouraging them.



For all events, further details and up to date information can be found on the Facebook Page of The Friends

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1AP86iPxSA>

Garden news

Those of you who have visited The Garden recently will have noticed some changes. For instance, a hole has been cut in the hedge behind the rock garden, giving another access point to the area of garden that is still being developed. It is cordoned off at the moment as steps are being built there to accommodate the difference in levels but the first layer of stone has been laid and the level has been set for the 2nd layer.



This opening gives a view right down the length of the area to the herbaceous border, also helped by the fact that 2 juniper trees have been removed.



On the other side of the rock garden, the woodwork of the stable has been removed as it was rotten and a potential health and safety

hazard. Discussions are under way as to how this area will be developed.



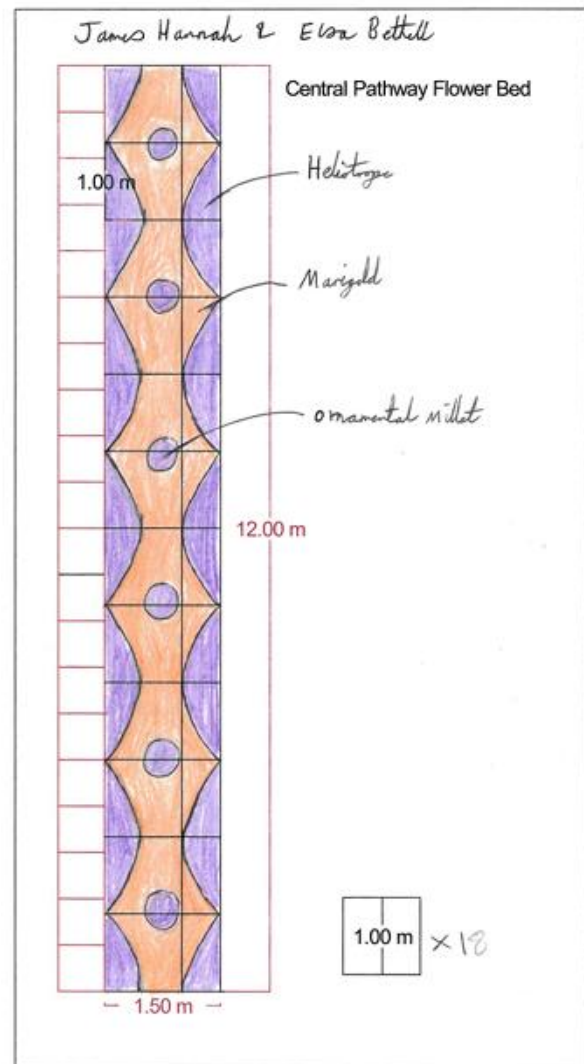
In the last newsletter, Nick gave a challenge – how many **paving slabs** are there in the area of the main flower beds? The answer is 1114 slabs covering an area of 401m². The slabs were originally laid by a group of Skillseekers (i.e. people who took part in a government scheme to provide vocational training in the 1990s)



This photo is of the Skillseekers. The trophy that is being held is a rose Bowl awarded for the most outstanding new Horticulture Feature in Scotland for 1996.

Each year, as part of their course work, the students plan a design for the **summer bedding scheme** of the central beds. They work in pairs and as well as coming up with an idea for a design, they need to list what plants they would use, how many plants are needed, cost etc. The finished designs are looked at by the committee of The Friends and a winning design is chosen. This year, congratulations go to Elsa Bethell and James

Hannah. Their design is below, using heliotrope, marigold and ornamental millet.



We look forward to seeing the end result in the summer. Meantime plug plants for the scheme have arrived at The Garden.



Many bags of compost have also been bought for the plugs to be potted on!

Those of you who read the Northern Scot would have seen an article about the planting of the **King's Oak** in the Biblical Garden. Here, Nick Chambers, our chairperson explains:

The planting of the King's Oak in the Biblical Gardens

The Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III took place at Westminster Abbey on Saturday 6th May 2023, to honour this, each County in the United Kingdom was presented a special plaque to go along side a locally sourced tree.

In Moray, the Lord- Lieutenant, Major General Seymour Monro selected The Biblical Gardens to be the place for this commemorative tree to be planted.

As Chairman of the Friends of the Biblical Garden, Nick Chambers welcomed this news, saying "On behalf of our volunteers, students and visitors, I can say that we are truly honoured to be chosen as the site for this special Coronation tree"

Moray's special tree is a sapling grown from an acorn from a 750 year oak tree on the Darnaway Estate. John Stuart, The Earl of Moray, explained: "The Darnaway oak was considered to be the oldest and largest oak tree in Scotland with a trunk diameter of 310cms. It was perhaps 750 years old and possibly much older. Very tragically the tree suddenly collapsed in May 2003, which was a great shock to everyone. Luckily, however, we had already cultivated a few acorns from the tree and are delighted to present the largest sapling to the Biblical Gardens to commemorate the Coronation."

On the 17th December 2024, we were presented with the oak sapling and the plaque. In attendance was the Lord- Lieutenant of Moray, Major General Seymour Monro, Councillor John Cowe, the Civic Leader and John Stuart, The Earl of Moray.

As good horticulturists, we had prepared a planting site prior to the ceremony, a central position within the lower half of the biblical Gardens where it will take pride of place and create a magnificent feature for decades to come.

For the planting, the Lord-Lieutenant made use of a spade used by Her late Majesty The Queen when she planted a tree outside the Moray Council HQ during her visit to Moray in 1961. A very auspicious occasion for everyone there.

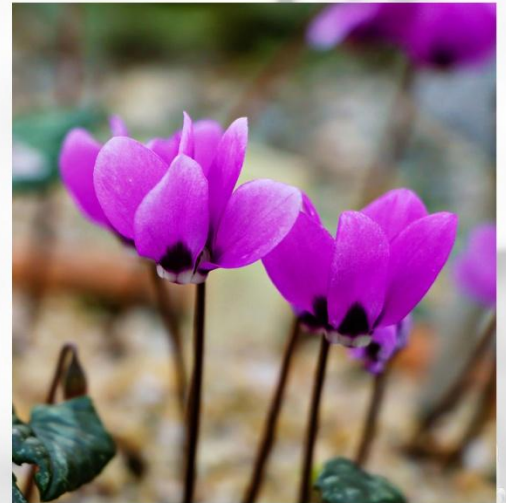
The tree and the special plaque can be seen in the Biblical Gardens, we are very proud to have this tree under our care.

Nick Chambers





Cyclamen persicum



Davie's Column

We're told spring is officially here; the garden may oppose that statement, some saying a few spring-type plants were growing and flowering in January/February, which here in Moray is not unusual. A friend from up in Wester Ross would say,

"You folk that garden down there in the Banana Belt dinnae ken whit winter is?!"

Here, I am going to write about the value of cyclamen in Biblical lands. I have already mentioned cyclamen found growing during the autumn; Issue 15, November 2019. The weather conditions found in and around the Bible lands are extremely diverse, ranging from hot deserts to snow-capped mountains and everything in between. Within these two extremes you will find cyclamen growing and we gardeners can grow most of them. I can well remember my father back in the 1950s planting the corms of the florist cyclamen once they had finished flowering inside on the windowsill; by the way, these were a form also known as *Cyclamen persicum*. It is native to rocky hillsides, shrubland, and woodland up to 1,200 m (3,900 ft) above sea level, from south-central Turkey to Lebanon-Syria and the Palestine region. It can even be found growing in masonry. There is another, known as the Lebanon cyclamen, which grows in more specific areas and is found in a similar environment to the previous *C. persicum*. It blooms between November and May in open woodland which is subject to/influenced by the Mediterranean sea breezes at a height similar to the Cairngorms. Their heart-shaped leaves are topped by a great array of flower colours. Going back to my father's planting, well, unfortunately, they didn't grow and the corms shrivelled or rotted even though they were influenced by the Clyde air flow?! I have tried to grow these corms outside under the protection of a cold frame but alas the frame must have been too cold?! However, there is a hybrid of the Lebanon cyclamen, *C. Libanoticum*, hybridised with *C. pseudibericum*; also known as the false Iberian cyclamen, and this goes under the name of *Cyclamen pseudlibanoticum*, so it is a cross between the Iberian Peninsula which is at the extreme west end of the Mediterranean and Lebanon at the other end of the Med but still is a house plant. One of the parents *C. pseudibericum* is marginally hardier coming from the Turkish Taurus mountains where the seeds of the plants we grow here in the Biblical Garden hail from and after ten years I would say they are short-term perennials. Even in the Alpine house they have not fared any better. Perhaps you have caught a glimpse of them on the top of the Rock Garden, they have purple-blue flowers with a dark purple blotch on the nose of the flower on a short 5cm stem arising from darkish heart-shaped leaves with light silver veining.

Confused yet?! I am and as I walk around Maggie's and my garden I become more confused. You plant them in one position where they grow and flower and set their seed which matures in a coiled clock spring arrangement until ready for distribution either by ants or other critters that want to feast on the sweet surface gel substance and deposit the seed out of my sight and, as usually happens, leave them to germinate and grow happily and so the cycle continues! I germinated fresh seed of *C. persicum*, from central Turkey and distributed the plantlets around our garden in the most likely growing conditions. All the plantlets perished. I was philosophical about the losses, but, lo and behold, on Sunday when I was taking photos of our various flowering cyclamen, what did I find but *C. persicum* growing in a single species trough; which was planted with a *Sedum farinosum* ex Madeira?!



Florist cyclamen *Cyclamen persicum*



Maturing seed coiling into the clock spring

APPLICATION FORM TO RENEW / BECOME A FRIEND

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS and return with your cheque in a stamped envelope to:

Friends of The Biblical Garden,

c/o Chairperson, UHI Moray,

Moray Street, Elgin, Moray, IV30 UJ

Please make all **cheques** payable to FRIENDS OF THE BIBLICAL GARDEN

By completing the information below you are agreeing for the Friends of The Biblical Garden to contact you with information relating to the Friends of The Biblical Garden. Our preference is to contact you by email, unless you indicate otherwise.

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel No. (inc. code)

Email address

Please indicate which type of membership you wish:

Yearly: £5 per member Yearly: £10 family Lifetime: £50 per member

Please indicate below what you would like to do in association with the Friends of The Biblical Garden:

Help in the Garden / Assist with fundraising/ Member only

GIFT AID

I wish my donation to be treated as a GIFT AID donation and declare that I pay an amount of Income Tax (or Capital Gains Tax) equal to the Tax the recipient Charity may reclaim on my donation, in other words 25p for every £1 given.

I further declare that in the event of my making a donation to the Friends of The Biblical Garden (Charity No. SC035997) on some future occasion it may also be treated as GIFT AID

Signature

To pay subs by **bank transfer**:

Account Name Friends of The Biblical Garden

Sort Code 83-20-06

Account Number 00647467

For a bit of fun, here is a Wordsearch. The answers are all plants that were in flower in The Garden on 23rd March 2025. (Answers at bottom of page)

a	h	e	l	l	e	b	o	r	e	r	s
h	b	s	u	h	t	n	a	y	l	o	p
t	h	u	n	c	n	d	i	s	b	c	u
n	a	g	g	d	a	l	l	i	c	s	r
i	o	f	w	m	h	a	j	e	l	a	g
c	h	i	o	n	o	d	o	x	a	r	e
a	n	f	r	i	t	i	l	l	a	r	y
y	h	l	t	u	v	i	u	n	m	u	s
h	y	s	a	n	e	m	o	n	e	t	n
t	n	o	i	v	i	o	l	e	t	t	a
n	a	r	i	r	a	c	s	u	m	v	p
o	p	s	p	l	i	d	o	f	f	a	d

Feedback, ideas for future articles always welcome.

m.jsharp@btopenworld.com

daviesharp@btopenworld.com

phone 01343 843111

anemone	chionodoxa	daffodil	fritillary
hellebore	hyacinth	lungwort	muscari
pansy	polyanthus	primula	scilla
	spurge	violet	