



The Scottish Rock Garden Club Forrest Medal Edinburgh 2013



Best Plant in the Show *Hepatica transsilvanica* 'Blue Jewel' shown by David Boyd

Did you ever see such a wonderful specimen of of *Hepatica* as this magnificent pan full of *Hepatica transsilvanica* 'Blue Jewel' ? Come to that, did you ever see such a magnificent pan of *Hepatica* at all?

Congratulations to David Boyd on scooping the Forrest at Edinburgh with his 'Blue Jewel'. There there was stiff competition from many other plants, as well as several others of his own *Hepaticas*. David decided to light up the show hall with several bright beacons of *Hepaticas* shown in huge pans, scattered around the hall. As you see we felt it best if he sat down for the photograph as the potful is very heavy. These were the biggest pans of the genus I have seen in our shows. Many of the plants had been grown from seed but 'Blue Jewel' is a clone available from several nurseries. I bet none of them has a pan as good as David's. It is described as a 'newer hybrid' with larger than usual flowers for the species.

The flowers are up to 3 cm in diameter, with a central yellow eye, encircled by numerous white stamens. The blue of the flower is rich and quite dark, looking pale on some flowers only because of reflected light. Close examination shows that there are lots of buds still to open. The leaves are just starting to unfurl and are covered with silver hairs. Growers note that in general, *Hepaticas* enjoy a wide range of garden conditions but favour alkaline conditions. Like others of its genus it is a woodland plant but does well in troughs and raised beds with some added humus to keep the soil moist but well draining.

As its name suggests *Hepatica transsilvanica* grows in Romania and Hungary. That is why I keep wanting to write the specific name with a 'Y' rather than a, 'I' after the double 'S'. I have little doubt that were Count Dracula on the prowl he would look favourably on someone who grows *H. transsilvanica*, even if a posy of flowers did not keep vampires at bay. I remember seeing *Hepatica nobilis* growing in Swedish woods near Henrik Zetterlund's home. These were small individual plants which rarely seemed to clump up. I would presume that this species is similar in the wild. Comparing wild plants with cultivated ones gives you an idea of the prowess of the grower. Well done David.

