

The Diana Aitchison Fund

This fund provides grants and bursaries to support young people who want to pursue a career in horticulture, and especially to further their knowledge of alpine and rock garden plants, and their cultivation. The fund was established thanks to a very generous sum of money made available from the estate of the late Diana Aitchison, a keen gardener and plantswoman who set up and ran her own nursery at Spindleston, near Belford, Northumberland. The fund is managed by the Scottish Rock Garden Club. Details of how to apply for grants are on the club website.

Among the reports that recipients have submitted over the years, the following one will be of particular interest to readers for its combination of practical, botanical and regional enthusiasms. Emmi Klarer was funded to work with Julia Corden at the Pitlochry Explorers Garden in 2012. Here is her diary ...

Plants, People and Pitlochry Emmi Klarer

5th June. For my first day in the Explorers Garden, one of the volunteers took me around and gave some history and other knowledge about the garden and Scotland in general. I learnt about the danger posed against the UK's native Red Squirrels, which are abundant along with Grey Squirrels in my home state of Wisconsin. One of my tasks during my stay here will be to weed out Willow Herb, which also comes from America. There are several types that occur here, including one that is not invasive, but today I am focusing on Rose-bay Willow Herb.

Rose-bay Willowherb, or *Epilobium angustifolium*, is a tall rhizomatous perennial with alternate lanceolate leaves with strong veins. The plant is dark green for the most part, with some hints of red and blue-green on the leaves. Flowers are a bright pink and clustered in a terminal raceme, with pink hued sepals. Petals are rounded and uneven in size. Flowering span is from June to September but we prefer to not let the plant get to the flowering stage in the garden. This willow herb, along with the other invasive species, often grows in clearings, footpaths, waste ground, and water banks – nearly anywhere it can. It is found in most of Europe, Asia and North America.

6th June. Being this time of year, I'm spending most of my first week learning all the weeds that are shooting up. This year seems to be particularly bad in terms of weed production, but that also means the other plants are doing well, too. It's really quite amazing how just a few weeks ago none of these weeds could be seen. That's not to say they didn't exist - they were only underground. Today's weed is Ragwort, or *Senecio jacobaea*. Technically it is a wild flower of the Asteraceae (daisy)

family native to northern Eurasia, but here it is a weed. Ragwort is a biennial plant with straight erect stems with little or no hair and pinnately lobed leaves. It has hermaphrodite flower heads that are in clusters with bright yellow florets, but we try not to let the plant reach its flowering stage between June and November. While ragwort provides shelter and food for over 70 insect species, it also contains many alkaloids that make it poisonous to other animals. Most animals, like horses and sheep, do not eat ragwort when it is alive as it has a bitter taste but when dead and dried it loses its bitterness. This can be a problem when dried ragwort is in hay or grass that these animals eat because it is still poisonous, but sheep and goats have a reduced level of liver damage when compared to horses and pigs.



Senecio jacobaea

7th June. I have a fascination with plants that lack chlorophyll or have dark coloured leaves. Many cultivars of Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum*) fall into this category. The Explorers Garden has at least one *palmatum*, but my photo was taken at Drummond Castle where there is an abundance of these deciduous trees. They are often small, even being called shrubs, reaching around ten metres which makes the trees ideal understory plants in woodland areas. The leaves are four to twelve centimetres wide and palmately lobed with five, seven, or nine pointed lobes. The flowers are collectively in small cymes, the individual flowers with five red-purple sepals and five white hued petals. The fruit is a pair of winged samaras, requiring stratification for germination. The root system is compact, non invasive, and prefers well drained soils that are not over fertilized.



Acer palmatum at Drummond Castle

8th June. Today I learned about a new weed that could easily be mistaken for an intentionally planted flower. The native perennial's common name is Creeping Buttercup, or rather *Ranunculus repens*. In the Buttercup family, it has leafy, rooting runners that choke out surrounding

plants. Its distinctive feature is a stalked middle lobe on the basal leaves. The plant boasts small (about 3 cm) yellow flowers with five petals and hairy sepals that are out between May and August. It grows in a wide range of woodlands, meadows, farmland, footpaths, and wastelands which also contribute to its survival. This species of buttercup is distributed across Europe, Asia, and North Africa – nearly all over the globe.

11th June. Continuing my weed education, today's plant is what my Julia (Corden) calls Poppers. Poppers are what I found to be called Hairy Bittercress, or *Cardamine hirsuta*. This is an annual plant with erect stems branching at the base, with the potential of reaching thirty cm in height. Luckily it has a single taproot, which makes it easy to pull, but it still spreads like wildfire because of its fruit. The fruit is a siliqua (dehiscent) which pops open releasing far too many seeds to count that can spread as far as three metres from the parent. Leaves consist of two to four pairs of round leaflets arranged alternately along a central leaf stem. The small flowers, occurring in clusters on the terminal flowering stems with four petals and hairy petioles, make what can be a tiny but widespread plant barely visible.



Alchemilla mollis under rhododendron

12th June. Lady's Mantle, genus *Alchemilla*, is part of the Rose family. The main characteristics include palmately lobed, toothed, and hairy leaves that hold water droplets. Clusters of tiny, yellow-green or chartreuse flowers with green sepals and no petals appear in the late spring and summer, making this plant a subtle complement and good ground cover for gardens. It is an herbaceous perennial with about

300 species within the genus, the majority being native to cool temperate and subarctic regions of Europe and Asia. A few species are native to the mountains of Africa, North America, and South America. Most are clump-forming or mounded with basal leaves coming up from woody rhizomes.

13th June. Today I think it's about time I feature the famous and beautiful *Meconopsis* 'Lingholm', our Himalayan Blue Poppy. The flower petals are a deep blue, unlike the mauve and purple shades seen in George Sherriff's *Meconopsis*. The best Lingholms have four petals that overlap one another. The protruding ovary, style and stigma are surrounded by golden stamens. The fruit is an oblong-elliptical capsule that, at maturity, is about four cm long, covered in bristles, and full of plump seeds in appearance. While this poppy is a true perennial,



Meconopsis 'Lingholm'



Lewisia at the Explorers Garden

individual plants may be relatively short-lived (2-3 years) and others relatively long-lived. Julia tells customers to not let the plant flower the first year and to prune it, as the flowers the following year will be well worth the wait of looking at only large, elliptical hairy leaves.

14th June. Today was my first day of planting! First job was to clean off the dirt of the *Lewisia* plugs because they were to be planted in the sandy crevice gardens. This is essential so the plants would root in the sand and thrive. The plugs I planted were cotyledon hybrids but we sell both hybrids and 'Little Plum' at the kiosk and theatre.

Lewias are herbaceous perennials native to western North America. They form low, fleshy rosettes of deep green leaves, bearing relatively large flowers in the late spring and early summer and often repeat flowering in autumn. The 'Little Plum' variety has flowers that range in colour from cotton candy pink to deep salmon. Cotyledon hybrids have flowers of white, yellow, pink, salmon, rose, orange, red, and magenta. All lewisias grow best in rock garden settings with excellent drainage as the lower leaves rot easily when wet. Once established, lewisias can be drought tolerant and spread 20 cm.

15th June. Some of my favourite plants in bloom at the moment are the aquilegias. Those in the garden are *Aquilegia* Songbirds (*Aquilegia hybrida*, family Ranunculaceae) that come in a wide range of colours from blues and purples to whites, yellows, and pinks – my favourite being the deep rose with inner yellow petals. The *Aquilegia* genus consists of about 60 to 70 species of perennials that are found in meadows, woodlands, and high altitudes in the northern hemisphere. The genus name derives from the Latin for eagle owing to the shape of the flower petals, which are said to resemble an eagle's claw. This shape also gives them the common name Granny's Bonnet. Flowers bloom in the spring and summer. Leaves are divided or lobed, but can also be heart shaped, arising from the base



Aquilegia 'Songbird' series



Cytisus scoparius

the shrub is much like the brush of a broom - dead branches held on and intertwined with new ones creating a busy and tangled appearance. However, when maintained, Broom can make a lovely roadside view or accompaniment in a garden.

19th June. Continuing my affection for plants with dark coloured foliage, today I focus on *Sambucus nigra*. Commonly known as Black Beauty or Elderberry, this deciduous tree also combines my love of plants

Sambucus nigra



of the plant and alternately up the stem. The fruit is usually a follicle (dehiscent). Members of the Ranunculaceae family contain protoanemonin, toxic to humans and animals.

18th June. Anywhere I go in Scotland, whether it be by bus, car or train, I see a shrub people call Broom. This, or *Cytisus scoparius*, is scattered along roads and railways and tucked into fields and mountainsides, showcasing bunches of tiny yellow flowers and green leaves. Up close, however, one can see why the plant's common name is Broom. This perennial shrub flowers between May and June in clearings, along roads, and non-calcareous soils in western, southern and central Europe. Looking beyond the flowers, the inner part of

and food. The fruit is a dark purple to black berry produced in drooping clusters in late autumn. The berries can be eaten when fully ripe but are mildly poisonous in their unripe state (as are all green parts of the plant). Elder berries are used in cooking to make jam, jellies, chutneys, pies, and are infused in drinks. The hermaphrodite flowers in large corymbs bloom in midsummer, the individual flowers being white with five petals, can also be eaten fried, in soups, or infused in drinks. Leaves are opposite, pinnate with five to seven

leaflets, and serrated. The bark is light grey when young but changes to a coarse, dark grey with furrows when older. It can grow up to ten metres high, but usually only reaches four to six metres and grows in a variety of wet and dry fertile soils with sun.

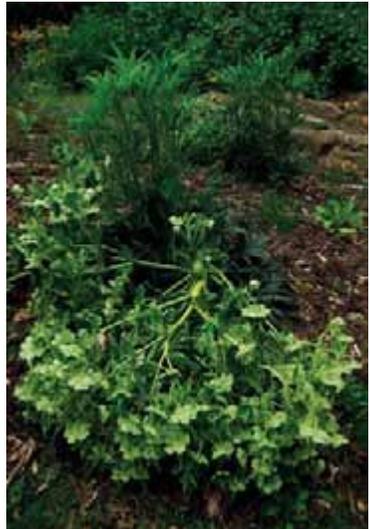
20th June. Today we had a customer who saw a flower she wanted to buy in the garden, but wasn't sure of the name. I was able to deduce that what she was talking about was *Primula flaccida*. While this was exciting for me, we didn't have any to sell. *Primula flaccida* is a short-lived, deciduous perennial with downy, serrated, green leaves that can reach twenty cm in length. Flowers are fragrant, purple to blue, bell shaped, and dense in conical spikes that fully bloom late in the summer season. It is often found in rocky pastures and open forests in the Himalayas of Szechwan and Yunnan.



Primula flaccida

21st June. One of the genera found in the New Zealand section of the garden is Leucogenes, otherwise known as New Zealand Edelweiss. Leucogenes species are perennial herbs in the Asteraceae (daisy) family, with leaves densely covered in silky hairs. Flowers are in clusters of 8 to 15 that bloom in summer, surrounded by woolly bracts.

One of my absolute favourite plants is quite similar to Leucogenes and although they are not planted in the garden they are sold at the kiosk. *Leontopodium alpinum*, or Edelweiss, has leaves and flowers covered with white hairs, giving the plant a woolly appearance. These hairs have a purpose - the plant prefers rocky limestone areas at 2000 to 2900 metres in altitude - they protect the plant from cold, aridity, and ultraviolet radiation. Flowers bloom between July



Helleborus foetidus

and September, consisting of 5-6 small yellow flower heads surrounded by woolly bracts in a star formation.

22nd June. Last week I had the good fortune to visit a nursery and see how to collect seeds and grow plants and plugs for gardens and the like. Today I got to collect seeds myself, which was a nice change. The seeds I collected were from Stinking or Bear's Foot Hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*). Hellebores are a member of the Ranunculaceae family and are native to the mountainous regions of central and southern Europe, Greece, and Asia Minor. They are herbaceous perennial plants often found wild in many parts of England, especially in limestone soil. They have thick, succulent stems and glossy evergreen leaves. Flowering is in spring, with drooping, yellow to green (often with a purple edge) flowers with five petal-like sepals. The flowers contain nectarines which make them attractive to bees and other insects. All parts of the plant are poisonous because of glycoside.

25th June. Plants that are everywhere and difficult to miss, especially when in bloom, are rhododendrons. The genus *Rhododendron* contains over 1000 species of woody plants, most of which have showy flowers. Azaleas make up two subgenera and are quite common in gardens. One we have is *Rhododendron arborescens*, also known as Sweet Azalea after the flower's sweet aroma. They range in colour from white to pink with red stamens, blooming in late spring and summer. The flowers can also contain substances poisonous to wild animals and humans. Leaves may be deep red to purple in the fall, but are a glossy green otherwise. It is usually found growing near moist areas or streams and is indigenous to the United States.

Digitalis purpurea



26th June. A beautiful plant in the garden that can sometimes be a weed is the Foxglove, or *Digitalis purpurea*. Foxglove is an herbaceous biennial plant with spirally arranged hairy leaves, native to most of Europe. Flowering stems develop in the second year of growth with terminal flowers in a cluster, blooming early summer. Each flower is tubular and pendant, usually in shades of purple but sometimes in pinks, yellows, and white. The fruit is a capsule. Extract from this plant contains cardiac glycosides which aid treatment of

heart conditions. However, too much of this can be dangerous.

27th June. Another primula that is just as popular but is completely different in physical appearance from *Primula flaccida* or *P. waltonii* is *Primula vialii*. It is a deciduous perennial with hairy leaves appearing in May and conical shaped heads with hundreds of tiny flowers of red calyces and blue to violet corollas



Primula vialii

flowering in mid-summer. One of the Scottish plant hunters, George Forrest, introduced them to Scotland in 1906 (from Northwest Yunnan and Southeast Tibet) and believed the primula to be a new discovery, consequently giving them the scientific name of *Primula littoniana*. It proved not to be new and its title was later changed back to the original, *Primula vialii*.

28th June. Many plants grown in gardens and sold in places like Explorers Garden are in the genus *Dianthus* (family Caryophyllaceae). There are about 300 species of flowering plants alone in this genus. Most are native to Europe and Asia, but some are also native to North Africa and arctic North America. Most are perennial herbs, but some are annual and biennial. Leaves are opposite, simple, and often linear. Flowers have five petals, usually with a frilled margin, and are mostly pale to dark pink. The ever popular carnation is included in this genus, which flowers from June to August.

29th June. The plant that forms the emblem of Scotland, as well as many garden entrances, is known as the Scots Thistle, or Cotton Thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*). Part of the Daisy family, this biennial thistle has purple-pink (sometimes white), solitary and terminal flower heads that are surrounded by spiny bracts and flower July through September. Its spiny leaves have shallow lobes with short stalks on the lower part of the plant. The Scots Thistle resides in roadsides, waste grounds and fields in most of Europe and where introduced in North America. Interestingly, the thistle may have been introduced to the British Isles rather than being native but nevertheless is scattered here. It may be used in homeopathy for heart and circulatory problems.

2nd July. It was a rainy day in Edinburgh today, so I warmed myself

Dianthus 'La Bourboule Albus'



up with a hot mug of peppermint tea and decided to find out a little more about this plant. There are many types of peppermint but this one is a variation called *Mentha citrata*, commonly known as Eau de Cologne Mint. Generally speaking it is a hairless variety of peppermint with a fine perfume. All peppermints are perennials with erect stems and opposite, narrow, serrated leaves. Flowers are stalked with pinkish corollas, blooming July to September in Europe, America and the British Isles on damp ground and waste land. Oils, tannins and flavonoids are used medicinally for digestive disorders, flatulence and nausea (often in the form of tea via steeping the leaves).

3rd July. It's my second day at the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh and today I was reacquainted with a primitive plant that is a weed in the glasshouses here. Horsetail (genus *Equisetum*) has jointed ribbed vegetative stems with funnel-shaped sheaths and long, dense whorls of branches that are hollow and ridged. The vegetative stems are green for photosynthesis but the cone-bearing stems that appear beforehand are the brown reproductive stage of life. Spores ripen between March and April. Horsetails contain flavones-glycosides, silicic acid, and saponins that make it useful in treating kidney and bladder disorders.

4th July. Andromedas, or *Pieris* (family Ericaceae), are currently in beautiful flower. Also commonly known as Fetterbush, Andromeda is a genus of seven shrub species native to the mountainous regions of eastern and southern Asia, eastern North America and Cuba. Their leaves are broad and spirally arranged, sometimes mistaken for being in whorls. The leaves are leathery in texture, and brightly coloured when young. The flowers are bell shaped, white or pink, and arranged in racemes. Their fruit is a woody capsule that splits into five sections with numerous seeds inside.

5th July. *Bergenia* is a genus of ten species of flowering plants in the Saxifragaceae family that are just starting to flower in the Explorers Garden. Native to Asia, especially the Himalayan region, the plants are a perfect fit for this garden. They are evergreen perennial plants with spirally arranged leaves that are leathery, heart shaped, and often with wavy edges. In cooler climates the leaves turn from a glossy green in the summer to red or bronze in the fall. The flowers are often bright pink, but range from reds to purples and even white, and are produced in a cyme.

6th July. A group of plants in the garden that just went out of flower is the trilliums. *Trillium* is a genus of about 40 to 50 species of perennials native to temperate regions of North America and Asia. I often wish we had a sign next to these beautiful plants to tell visitors that picking a trillium injures it by preventing the bracts from producing food for the next year; when people pick them it ends poorly for the garden and the visitor. Trilliums have an organ that attracts ants, who pollinate them. Ants

take seeds from the decaying ovary to their nest where the seeds then germinate.

9th July. Forget-me-not is another plant that is sometimes a weed, sometimes not. Today where I was working along the banks in the Himalayan valley part of the garden, it was a weed. *Myosotis sylvatica*, commonly known as Wood Forget-me-not, is a part of the Boraginaceae family with lanceolate, hairy leaves. It flowers between May and July with soft blue corollas. It is fairly widespread, except in northern regions, and naturalizes easily into gardens, meadows, and woodlands, creating the potential for this plant to become a weed.



Club Moss ready for weeding

10th July. One job that I always come back to because I can only stand it for an hour or so, is picking the single stalks of club moss out of the peat garden. Club mosses belong to the class Lycopodiopsida, commonly called Fern Allies. The group traditionally included fir mosses, quillworts and spike mosses but this is now debatable. Club mosses are thought to be structurally similar to the earliest vascular plants with small, scale-like leaves, homosporous spores, (usually) dichotomous branching stems, and simple in form. Interesting fact: dried spores of the common club moss created a powder called lycopodium that was used in Victorian theatre to produce flame effects with little heat.

11th July. I finally went to Pitlochry's Highland Night where nearly every song sung mentioned the plant that adorns the hills of Scotland, known as heather. *Calluna vulgaris* is a shrub in the heather family with branching stems and un-stalked evergreen leaves. The flowers that bloom between July and November appear in clusters along one side of a stem in dense racemes with pink sepals. Heather can grow in poor soils, moors, pinewoods, and dunes in Europe, Western Siberia, and North America. The flowers have antiseptic, diuretic and sedative properties and are subsequently used in tea, honey, and as a dye.

12th July. Probably the most massive plant I've seen in the Explorers Garden or other gardens, excluding trees, is *Rheum palmatum*. This rhubarb plant is a perennial that can grow three metres in height and



Rheum palmatum



Camellia sinensis

two metres wide. Its hermaphrodite flowers bloom in June and July, and are pollinated by wind. The seeds ripen July to September, but the leaf stem is prized by many people. Raw or cooked, the stems have superior rhubarb flavour and are tender in texture. Both the stems and roots have a history of herbal and medicinal use, mainly as digestive aids. The roots have also been used for external burns on the body.

13th July. As it's my birthday and I'm in the United Kingdom, I'm going to feature one of my own and the country's favourite drinks that comes from a plant, *Camellia sinensis*, commonly known as tea. White, green, oolong, pu-erh, and black tea are all harvested from this same species but are processed differently. It is native to China and South or Southeast Asia but is cultivated across the globe in tropical and subtropical regions. Tea is an evergreen shrub with a strong taproot and yellow or white flowers that have 7 to 8 petals, blooming between March and May. It is a hermaphrodite plant pollinated by bees. Leaves of different ages produce different tea qualities. Usually the bud and first two or three leaves are hand-harvested for processing every week or two.

16th July. Last weekend I went to Glasgow and visited two gardens, the People's Palace Winter Gardens and Glasgow Botanic, so this week I feature plants I saw there. At the Botanic, one of the glasshouses had an extensive collection of begonias. The genus *Begonia* lies in the family Begoniaceae and contains about 1000 species from the tropics and subtropics. Begonias usually have four coloured petals and sepals in two pairs of different sizes, as well as three wings on the ovaries of female

Begonia 'Magic Coffee'



flowers. Begonias are cultivated for pot plants indoors or for gardens so the varieties and hybrids are nearly endless. Most varieties are in one of three groups: fibrous-rooted, rhizomatous, or tuberous-rooted. The one shown, Magic Coffee, is rhizomatous. Its sterile flowers bloom white or off-white in late winter and early spring, repeatedly. It is an herbaceous plant grown for its dark black to burgundy foliage and

can be propagated by dividing the root ball, rhizomes, or from leaf cuttings.

17th July. Another plant is from the greenhouse – *Pistia stratiotes* or Water Lettuce. Water Lettuce is a perennial free-floating aquatic weed with thick soft leaves that have no stems and form a rosette. Floating on the surface of the water, the plant's roots hang submerged beneath the leaves. Its dioecious flowers are hidden in the middle of the plant and turn into small green berries after fertilization but it also reproduces by asexual reproduction (stolons connecting mother and daughter plants). The plant's growth habit causes it to be considered a weed; its dense mats cover rivers, dams and irrigation canals and may restrict water flow, decrease biodiversity and serve as a breeding ground for mosquitoes. The plant is not a complete nuisance, however, as the Tikunas Indians crush the leaves, mix with salt and use the mixture for wart removal on the body.



Pistia stratiotes

18th July. Some of the most beautiful plants to my eyes form in extreme or strained conditions, including rock plants. *Oscularia deltoides* is a trailing succulent perennial with characteristically three-angled grey to green leaves that are tinged with red in the dry season. Its scented flowers are bright pink, blooming in early summer and autumn but only opening in the afternoons. The white stamens are in a cone in the centre of the flower. Its fruit is also sensitive to external conditions, repeatedly opening when wet and closing when dry.



Oscularia deltoides
Houttuynia cordata

19th July. From the vegetable garden comes *Houttuynia cordata*, an herbaceous perennial plant with adventitious roots and trailing stems. The leaves are alternately arranged, broad and heart shaped. The flowers are green-yellow with white bracts on a terminal spike and bloom in the summer season. *H. cordata* is





Papaver commutatum
Cardiocrinum giganteum



grown as a leaf vegetable, largely in Vietnam, and is often eaten raw. The leaf plays the role as a garnish, as a herb such as basil or mint would, and has what some people call a fishy taste.

20th July. One of my favourite plants from the vegetable garden – *Eruca sativa*, or rocket. Members of the Brassicaceae (cabbage) family, all rocket species have a pungent, peppery flavour in the leaf that increases with age. It is an annual plant with pinnately lobed leaves, native to Central and Southern Europe but also naturalized in Northern America. The flowers are typical of the cabbage family; arranged in a corymb, white petals with purple veins and yellow stamens. Its fruit is a silique that contains several edible seeds.

23rd July. Finally the Himalayan lilies are in bloom! Both the beautiful flowers and seed pods are a main attraction at the Explorers Garden. *Cardiocrinum giganteum* of the Liliaceae family is a large bulbous perennial that reaches two metres in height, sometimes more. The flowers are arranged in a terminal raceme and are fragrant, trumpet shaped, and white with purple marks. The hermaphrodite flowers bloom around August, are pollinated by insects, and the seeds ripen in September. The plant dies after it flowers. The broad leaves have been used as a cooling agent for wounds and bruises. The roots have been made into pastes to aid in bone therapy.

24th July. Today I went on a trip to Blair Castle and the famous Hercules Garden. While the orchard trees were looking sort of sad with no fruit, the

Ladybird Poppies in the herbaceous borders were looking brilliant. *Papaver commutatum* (part of the Papaveraceae family) is an upright annual with simple, oblong lobed leaves. Its solitary flowers have four bright crimson petals, each with a black spot at the base. Flowers bloom from June to August. This poppy grows best in full sun, in well drained, deep and fertile soil; this makes sense since the plant is endemic to Turkey and parts of Iran.

25th July. As I was cutting out rhododendrons today, I found myself wishing my encounter with Brambles was with their fruit on a buttered piece of toast rather than with their thorns in my arms. A member of the rose family, *Rubus fruticosus* is a spiny shrub with lobed leaves and prickly stalks. Its flowers bloom May through October and appear in clusters at the ends of side branches with five sepals, many stamens and white or pink petals. The fruit is clusters of juicy drupes that are black when ripe and contain tannins, acids, and vitamin C, often eaten raw or in drinks and desserts. Brambles grow in woodland areas and hedgerows in most of Europe, Asia and North Africa.

26th July. I only have a short time left in Scotland and I already miss the land, the people, everything. Scotland is special in so many ways, but since I'm writing about plants I'll focus on the Grand Fir found in Argyll that is the tallest tree in the U.K. *Abies grandis* is native to the Pacific Northwest of North America, but was first described by Scottish plant hunter David Douglas in 1831. Grand Firs are large evergreen coniferous trees that may reach heights from 40 to 80 metres. The needles are glossy green on top with two white stomata on the underside and a slightly notched tip. They are arranged spirally on the shoot. Cones are 6 to 12 cm long with 100 to 150 scales and hidden bracts. Seeds have wings and are released when the cones hit maturity at around six months after pollination.

27th July. The Scots Pine is one of the only coniferous trees native to Scotland, along with Common Juniper. *Pinus Sylvestris* (Pinaceae family) is an evergreen coniferous tree that can grow up to 35 metres in height, sometimes more in particularly well suited sites. The bark is dark grey to brown, scaly on the lower trunk and thin, flaky and orange on the upper trunk and newer growth. Needles are glaucous and blue-green in colour, becoming darker green in the winter. Seed cones are globular at pollination and become ovoid to conic in the second year at maturity. Cone scales are pyramidal with a small prick on the umbo. Seeds are dark black with wings that are released nearly two years after pollination.

I am particularly grateful to the Aitchison Fund for this wonderful opportunity and I hope that my account has given my Scottish friends a North-American perspective while giving my North-American friends a perspective on Scotland.