

# Hardy Plant Society Project Report

Project title: Touring Scandinavian Gardens

Project report by: Jennifer Wright

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Grant awarded in (mm/yyyy): 03/2022

Completion date (dd/mm/yyyy): 19/06/2022

## Aims/Objectives:

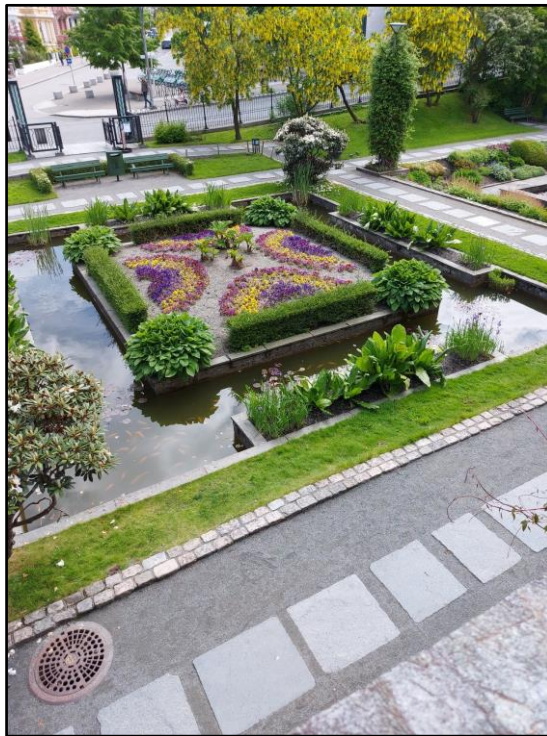
- To improve knowledge on plant adaptations in extreme climates and environments, especially alpiners.
- To develop knowledge on native Norwegian flora and fauna with a focus on historically useful plants.
- To experience horticultural techniques which may differ from United Kingdom practices by volunteering within the Arctic-Alpine Botanic Garden and the University of Bergen gardens.
- To strengthen contacts and gain new ones by working directly with horticulturists in Norway acting as an ambassador for the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew.
- Observe local plant diversity and document changes in habit, shape, growth patterns and flowering times in plants in each area.

## Description of activity:



*1 Made it to Bergen? ©Jennifer Wright*

After arriving to Bergen Airport on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June I spent the rest of the day resting. Then on Sunday I travelled into the city centre and found the Museum Garden surrounding the Natural History Museum. This garden is one of three gardens maintained by the University of Bergen and was the original site of the botanic garden until space became too small, and the Botanical Garden was moved to Milde next to the Arboretum. The Museum Garden is laid out in a formal style and is home to a rock garden, kitchen garden and a collection of wild seed collected plants from all over Norway.



2 The Museum Garden in Bergen city centre. ©Jennifer Wright

I was originally due to start volunteering within the Botanical Garden and the Arboretum on the Monday but due to a public holiday where most of the team was off it was decided that it was better for me to come along and start working on Tuesday. Therefore, on Monday I spent the day wandering around the Botanical Garden at Milde. The Botanical Garden has an excellent rock garden, Japanese garden, lake and collection of kitchen and poison plants. It was particularly useful to go around by myself for the day as I was able to really take in what plants were there and appreciate the landscape as a whole.



3 The boardwalk in the Japanese garden and *Enkianthus campanulatus*. ©Jennifer Wright

For the rest of the week, I was working between the Arboretum and the Botanical Garden. I spent two days working with the team within the Arboretum between the rosarium and their *Rhododendron* species collection which I was very lucky to see as it was only just still flowering. While working with the *Rhododendrons* two native plants were pointed out to me: *Cornus suecica* and *Lysimachia europaea*. These plant species are growing all over the peninsula and can be found throughout central western Norway. The other two days I was working with the team at the Botanical Garden where I helped them

weed *Equisetum arvense* out from the Japanese garden. I also helped to weed their rock garden collection.



4 *Cornus suecica* and *Lysimachia europaea* and part of the *Rhododendron* collection. ©Jennifer Wright

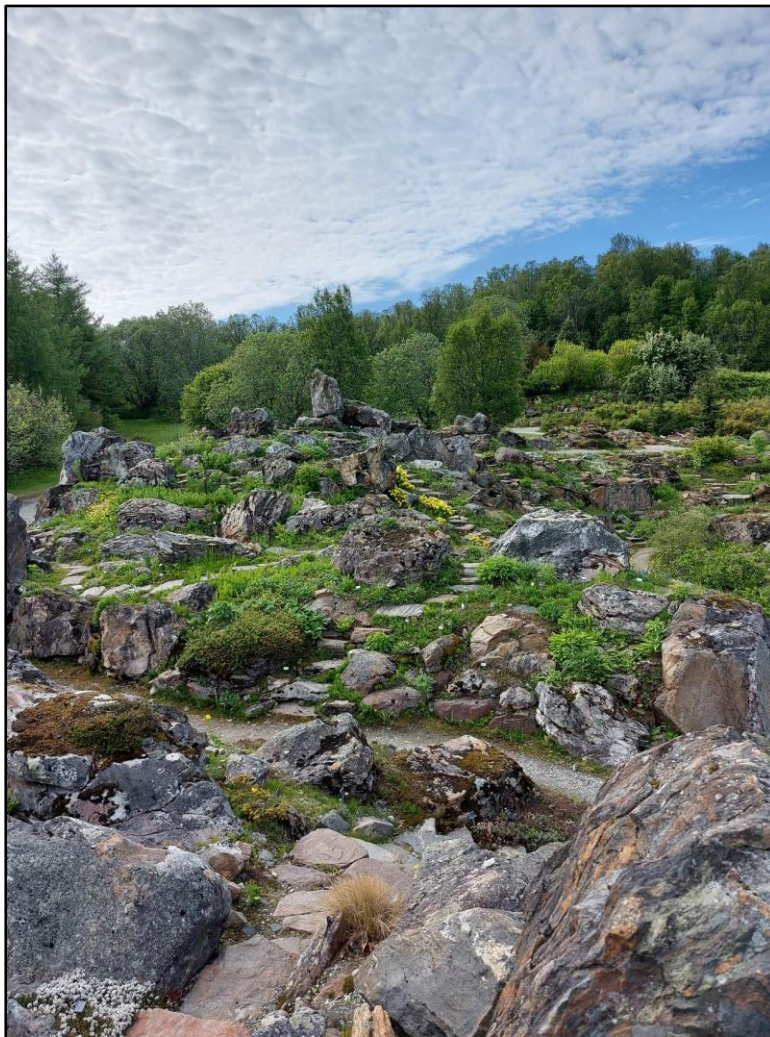


5 Flying to Tromsø, the temperature dropped from 23°C in Bergen to 10°C in Tromsø. ©Jennifer Wright

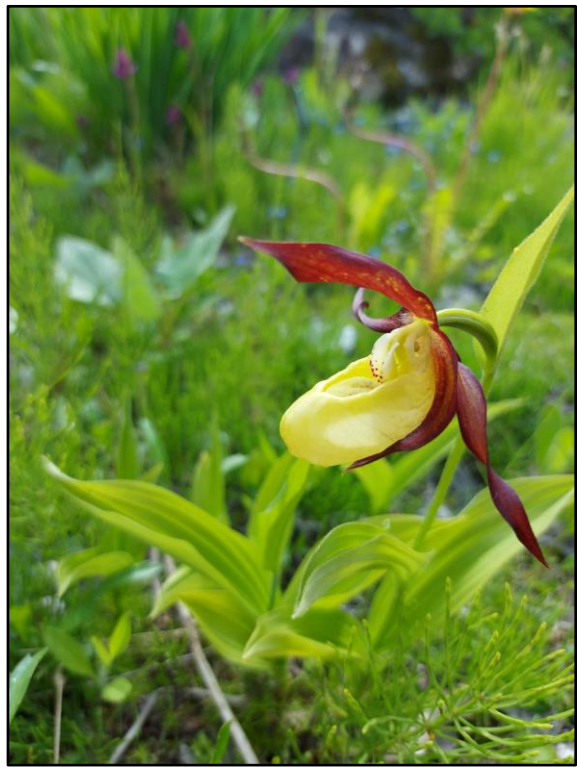
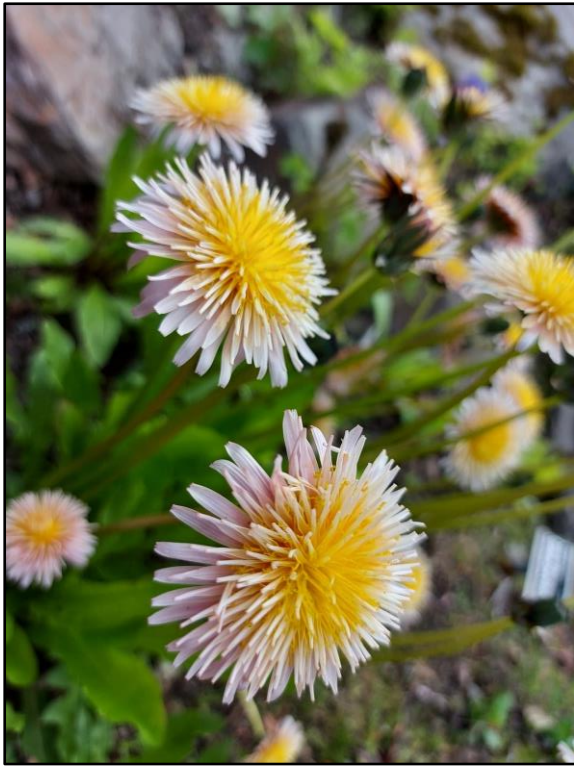
Leaving Bergen, I flew to Tromsø on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June and had a rest day the following day. From Monday through to Friday that week I worked with the team at the Arctic-Alpine Botanic Garden helping to pull out *Equisetum arvense* from the collections. This garden is home to alpine plants from around the world which happily grow on the rocky slopes of the garden, some plants coming from as far away as Patagonia. The team there have a June campaign pulling out all *Equisetum* from the garden as it takes over dramatically very quickly and will grow over the small alpine collections. I was mainly working with other interns there, but the staff were extremely helpful showed me many interesting plant species. As part of a project they are undertaking, I helped to create a bed of *Meconopsis* species by digging over and removing rocks in the soil, adding new soil/compost, and then planting the *Meconopsis*. From Tromsø, I travelled to Oslo and then onwards home.



6 Before and after creating the Meconopsis bed. ©Jennifer Wright



7 The rocky landscape on the Arctic-Alpine Botanic Garden. ©Jennifer Wright



8 *Taraxacum psuedoroseum* and *Cypripedium calceolus*. ©Jennifer Wright



9 *Calceolaria uniflora* and *Myosotis retrorsa*. ©Jennifer Wright

## Outcome/Results

There were two main outcomes from my week in Bergen. The first was that it was very obvious that the landscape and the gardens were all approximately one month behind on development when compared to London despite the hot temperature all week of 23°C. Many of the plants in Bergen were familiar species or genus which I have come across frequently before. The second outcome was that I found that the way the arboretum is managed much more visually pleasing and full of wildlife than some of those you can see here in the U.K. The arboretum is a native forest with only some areas specifically planted and maintained with native species allowed to mingle in with the collections. It was originally a commercial forest plantation of Western Hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) which has slowly been removed and native forest allowed to take its place. I found this style of arboretum much more sympathetic to the overall landscape of western Norway.

From a climate perspective Tromsø was quite different and felt a little weird. It was as though Tromsø was around two months behind on the development of leaf on trees but on par with herbaceous ground cover development. The leaves on the trees were all very new and still had the lustre of early spring colour but were in full leaf already whereas the herbaceous ground cover of ferns and equisetum had rocketed ahead. I mentioned this to the team in the garden and I was told this was because spring is very rapid there and happens within two weeks, plants move fast and put on as much growth as possible within a truly short timeframe. If I had come 3 weeks earlier, no trees would have had leaf. Interestingly, the tree line ends as 400m above sea level in Tromsø and the overall height of the trees compared with those growing in London is incredibly low with the main tree species being *Betula pubescens* and never growing above 10m. Due to the extremes of temperature and the relatively low tree line the gardens here can grow alpine species from Patagonia and New Zealand very successfully. Interestingly, many alpine species are planted on North facing slopes with the gardens, this is because the snow begins to fall in September and then insulates the slope for the rest of the winter whereas on the South facing slopes the snow will melt and then freeze to ice which does the plants more damage. On one trip with the interns from the garden we travelled to the Blue Lake near Sør-Lenangen, and I spotted *Betula nana* which I have only ever spotted growing in the highlands of Scotland. This trip was so much fun, and I would love to go back as I am sure there is lots I missed.



10 The blue lake and *Betula nana*. ©Jennifer Wright

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to say a massive thank you to the following people and organisations for helping me throughout this project.

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