

Plant of the month

Scilla peruviana

This beautiful, bulbous, perennial plant has a clump-forming habit and strappy semi-evergreen foliage. Stout budded stems emerge from the centre of the foliage, developing up to 100 small star-shaped flowers of rich purple-blue, which open from the edges of the cluster inwards during late spring and early summer. These bulbs thrive in a sunny, free-draining position and will tolerate temperatures between minus 5-10C when kept on the dry side. They are perfect for rockeries, beds, borders or even patio containers, as well as a wonderful addition for any sunny area, and will continue to produce more blooms each year as the clump increases.

Available from Trebah Garden's plant sales area (01326 252200) from £5.99 each.



PHOTO: CHARLES FRANCIS

Visit a garden

June is the perfect month to visit a Cornish garden – and many which are open for the National Garden Scheme this month offer the all-important cream tea and home-made cakes. Gardens open for the first time in 2010 are Arundell, a cottage garden with a Mediterranean courtyard on the windswept north coast at Crantock; and the Mill House at Pendoggett, near St Kew, a rural garden with open spaces, formal areas, mature trees and soft fruit. Last year, £47,000 was raised for the NGS at Cornish gardens - up 18 per cent on 2008, despite the recession. Nationally, the NGS is donating £2.5m to gardening and cancer charities this year. *For more details, see the NGS yellow leaflet – available from many gardens – or visit www.ngs.org.uk*



Rhododendron glory

Trewithen Gardens scooped a grand total of 33 prizes at the RHS National Rhododendron Show - including the McLaren Challenge Cup for Trewithen's *Rhododendron arboreum* subsp. *delavayi* var. *delavayi*, a trophy first awarded in 1932 to Trewithen's then owner, George Johnstone. Head gardener Gary Long said: "It's the first time Trewithen has entered the show for at least 50 years, and to have received so many awards is brilliant. The competition was world class, and to follow George Johnstone to success was the icing on the cake."



PlantNetwork

Members of national plant collections group PlantNetwork attended a workshop at the pioneering micropropagation laboratory at Duchy College Rosewarne, where they were able to learn vital techniques to help save species threatened with serious disease. The workshop was led by micropropagation specialist Ros Smith, and everyone in the group was able to have a go at starting the process of propagation, using specimens from their own gardens and from plants available on site. Twenty-five Cornish gardens have so far made use of the laboratory to save rare plants at risk from *phytophthora ramorum* or *phytophthora kernoviae*. Over 500 hybrids and species have undergone micropropagation, and have been returned to clean areas in various stages of growth.

Rare white bluebells

For the second year running, rare white bluebells were found in the Lost Gardens of Heligan's ancient woodlands last month. The albino blooms lack the pigment that gives bluebells their traditional colour, and occur only once in every 10,000, according to leading botanists. Although white versions of the modern Spanish bluebell are relatively common, Heligan's 'whitebells' are of the much rarer native British type, and are not guaranteed to return each year. The main group were located close to the charcoal kilns, with single stems growing sporadically among native bluebells.

