



# Snail Mail

This autumn we can't complain we didn't have colour in our garden. Due to the early frost many of the plants, particularly the ones in which the foliage turns red, presented themselves in their full fall glory. In my case the *euonomous alatus* was as red (it turned even more red than shown in the picture) as I remember from our time in Michigan, USA. We also had the good (dry) weather to enjoy the scenery. Soon with the predicted gales, there won't be a leaf left so we have to make the most of it.



It's time to get our bulbs into the ground and in a very timely way we had the good advice of Nial Watson, from Killinchy, Co. Down give a wonderful talk with slide show at our November meeting. What he doesn't know about daffodils is not worth knowing. Nial and his wife are daffodil breeders and export top quality daffodils around the world. I was amazed how labour-intensive this work is. A few of our members will be 'showing' some of Nial's daffodils next Spring as he brought along some to sell and our enthusiastic members snapped them up. Quite a few of our members complained of having an unusually high number of 'just leaves and no flowers' on our daffodils this year. To the question of 'why' this occurs, Nial had this to say: " Could be one of two things. A) the narcissus fly which leaves eggs on damaged or CUT leaves in which case the sap attracts these pests. The grubs get into the bulb during winter and eat the middle out of it. The rather thin leaves we then have in the spring are the leaves from the new little bulbs rather than the main one. B) Not enough fertilizing of our plants. Both A and B can apply in my case as I (naturally) couldn't wait for leaves to die down so I cut them. Nial fertilizes his daffodils once a year in March with potato fertilizer (5-10-20). He also says if you feed later in the year, avoid anything with nitrogen as that will promote leaf growth rather than help the bulb.

That's it then –no reason why we all can't have award-winning daffodils — is there??



## MONTHLY MEETINGS

- VENUE;** Salthill House, Mountcharles
- TIME:** 8 p.m. Plant sale and chit chat.  
8:30 (PROMPT) Program begins,
- Dec. 6 Christmas Social
- Jan. 11 Clive Evans will give a talk on 'Trees in Donegal'.
- Feb. 7 AGM 2011

## NEWS FROM AROUND OUR GARDENS

**Joan Donleavy writes:** For the first time since the house was built 21 years ago, a pair of swallows nested under the eaves. Being a romantic, I like to think it was the same pair that spent four nights in my garage two summers ago, huddled together on an upturned grass rake (some of you may remember the photo in our newsletter). Also, I found four Broadleaved Helliborines (form of wild orchid) where there were only two last year, but alas no sign of the Bird's Nest Orchid which appeared for the first time last spring. Perhaps a casualty of the severe winter. Towards the end of the summer several extremely green jagged circles appeared in the 'lawn' - fungus fairy/pixie/elf rings—caused, I am reliably informed, by the fungus Mycelium being present in the grass.



(I don't know Joan—looks very much like a horticultural graffiti artist gone mad, or else a man trying 'manly' to fertilize your lawn;. ed.)

Finally, Lucy the cat was very interested in something on the driveway one afternoon. The paw, rather hesitantly, kept reaching out and patting at the something. It turned out to be a caterpillar of the Elephant Moth which kept extending its 'trunk' and trying to scare off the predator with its enormous 'eyes'. Certainly the biggest caterpillar I've ever seen.



### **Joan Evans has this to say:**

Beech trees are beautiful at this time of year, in fact they are beautiful at any time of year. Even after last night's storm there are still lots of lovely copper leaves on ours. A word of caution however ...a friend of ours bought a standard beech tree the other day, which she was going to plant on a wind swept cliff edge near the mouth of Killybegs harbour. A Beech tree has shallow roots and is very liable to be uprooted even in mild storms so it didn't seem the right home for it !. It needs calm conditions to grow, prosper, and develop into a balanced tree. After some discussion our friend has given us the tree to be planted in a quiet sheltered spot beside a river in the Blue Stacks. In Spring I will buy her a white cherry tree which I think wont grow too large and will adapt much better to windy conditions, also giving her blossom in the spring and wonderful colour in the autumn.

More about trees ..... My dear lovely husband is going to talk to us about trees at our January meeting. He will talk to us about Trees in the Garden and the Woods . So hope you will all be there.

### **Tips for winter.**

- Plant garlic in autumn or early winter, i.e. now.
- Mulch Agapanthus and other less hardy plants with leaves.
- Cover tender plants with netting.
- Use all fallen leaves to mulch beds or make leaf mould.
- Stand pots up on "feet" to avoid water logging
- Lift and divide large rhubarb crowns to increase stock.
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### **This from Maureen Cannon**

The small tree I love most has to be the Liquid Amber! It is compact, has a good shape with very pretty leaves. The leaves start to change colour as early as August and continue right through to late November. The variety of colours is incredible, from pale citrus, yellow, orange and red to deep purple. I would suggest that this tree should be planted where it can be seen from all sides. I have one at the front of the house and one at the back near the kitchen window. If you are looking for a tree to feast your eyes on ... this should be it!



FOR US GRANNIES: Don't act so shocked— demographically speaking we are in the majority in the DGS, or, let's put it another way. If **our** kids would **have had** kids at the age **we** had them - there would be a LOT more of us in this count. At any rate I read an interesting article recently. In it there was a picture of a granny (mommy's don't have time for this) with her granddaughters who were stringing up necklaces made out of seeds. They used apple, pear, sunflower, cucumber seeds as well as beech nuts, acorns and shells and pieces of straw for spacing. Great idea and something the children will treasure (for a while anyway). I am always looking for ways to spend indoor time with



my granddaughter when she is here which doesn't involve the computer, Nintendo or television. I once brought home from Costa Rica a coffee bean necklace which was interspersed with beads. Same idea! It's decorative and it smells divinely of coffee. Whenever the coffee smell dissipates, I just put it into a jar with some coffee to bring the smell back — did I mention I was addicted to coffee!!!

### IN BRIEF;

.....as you may already know, several members of our committee have 'given notice'. Among them are *John Sneddon* who feels that three years at the helm is long enough but would be quite willing to stand for treasurer. Good thing because *Charlie Garratt*, our present treasurer is also giving up his post. He will however (Praise be — Hallelujah) continue to keep up our website. It's wonderful and I hope you all use it regularly. *Marianne Mueller* our able secretary is sadly leaving us to return to Switzerland next summer so will also not stand again. As you can imagine, the committee always can use volunteers so don't be shy about coming forward if you feel you would like to take something on. Fresh ideas, fresh enthusiasm and a different slant to things is always invigorating.

.....I am toying around with the idea of another DGS 2011 calendar for us. It is not certain yet but am working on it. I did NOT get a flood of calls from people who would like to have their gardens in our calendar. I think people might be hesitant and think their gardens wouldn't be right or look good. What I say to that is, don't look at the whole of your garden, look at any small portion of it or even one plant that you particularly like — that sometimes is enough to make a great picture.

### A CAUTIONARY TALE

This has only indirectly something to do with gardening. I am talking about our Sacroiliac Joint or s.i. joint to the initiated. Most gardeners, I would even go so far as to say that ALL of us gardeners experience back pain of varying degree at varying times. Little do they suspect it could be the s.i.!! This is a very important structure in our bodies. It is what connects your spine to your hips and we all know the hips are connected to the legs and the spine is connected to the head—all of it could be connected to the liver and spleen and gall bladder - you never know. Back to the s.i. - mine is creaking (literally) and hurting and just a general pain in the..... s.i. So my advice to you is to pamper it like crazy - start young and be good to it. Forget face lifts, liposuction, haircolour, hair implants, nail varnish and all that flimflam, pampering the s.i. is much more important. The key to a good s.i. is building up your core strength. You can test where you are with your core by seriously holding in tummy for a count of 60 while breathing and talking at same time. There are loads of little exercises one can do to help and I am doing them all. So how is my s.i. joint coming along you ask. Weeeelllll, getting there I think but in the meantime I have just heard of a cure whereby you have to go to the bit of the Amazon Rain Forest which is left where you can find little purple berries which you have to pick at full moon and then crush and rub all over your body ... might have to look into that.