

Tinnisburn Plants

Helen Knowles

Tinnisburn Plants is a family run nursery, located in Dumfries and Galloway approximately 20 miles north of Carlisle. The nursery is 600 ft above sea level. It specialises in unusual hardy alpines and perennials, particularly species from the Himalayas.

In her talk Helen recounted how her interest in plants developed and how the nursery came about. Her first slide was of a cat since animals had always been important to her and she had intended to be a vet. Instead she spent 4 years at Edinburgh University studying Animal Science. Plants had also always been part of her life. Her father grew cacti and whenever they moved the cacti moved with them in numerous boxes.



Thirty two years ago the family moved to what had been an old farmstead where there were a few raised beds used for growing herbaceous plants, a pond and some trees.

The exposed site had wonderful views of Blencathra and the Solway Firth.

A choice had to be made between having views or having a garden. Hedges were planted to protect plants from the wind so that now the garden looks like this in summer.



Trees have also been planted. In the garden there is a rockery, a bog garden and a woodland area.

Helen had always propagated plants; her first nursery was behind a shop in the local village of Rowanburn where she received a lot of encouragement and advice for the venture. Then twelve years ago she, with her husband's help, began working to redesign the nursery and to install polytunnels. Work continued whatever the weather.

The first nursery at Rowanburn



Work at Tinnisburn



The photograph below shows Tinnisburn as it mostly is today. The nursery is off the beaten track so there is not much passing trade.



To sell plants Helen started going to Farmers Markets and Plant Fairs.. She met Joyce Bird of Bridge End Nurseries, who suggested Helen took her plants to shows. She was given Jim Jermyn's phone number and so exhibited at Gardening Scotland. She won an RHS Gold Medal at the Malvern Spring Festival..

The next slides showed some of Helen's favourite plants the majority of which she propagates herself. They include *Aquilegia saximontana*, *Helleborus* hybrids,



Geranium sinensis 'Stephanie', *Thalictrum rocheburnianum*, which is bigger than *Thalictrum delaveyi*, and Asiatic primula, including *Primula* 'Inverewe', *Primula florindae*, and *Iris siberica*. 'Sparkling Rose'

The photo on the left is *Arasina procumbens*.



Primula florindae



Primula 'Inverewe'



Primula florindae
red form



Meconopsis seedlings are grown in an east facing greenhouse under a fine mist. They are transferred to 9 cm pots when large enough.



The plants are grown on in a north facing cold frame.

For plant fairs and shows they are packed on to trolleys.

The following figures explain why meconopsis are sold in 9cm pots.

2l = 24 per shelf

48 per trolley (2 shelves)

£15 x 48

= £720

1l = 55 per shelf

110 per trolley (2 shelves)

£8 x 110

= £880

9cm = 72 per shelf

360 per trolley (5 shelves)

£5 x 360

= £1,800

Using 9cm pots produces more income and also allows more plants to be sold.

The meconopsis sold by Tinnisburn plants include: *M. 'Keillour Violet'*,
M. baileyi 'Alba' *M baileyi* and *M. 'Lingholm'*.



Examples of the smaller species meconopsis sold include *M. punicea* and *M. rudis*



Helen ended her talk by introducing a new Meconopsis which could withstand all weather conditions. *Meconopsis 'Stainless Steel'*.



