INTRODUCTION

This issue of *Sibbaldia* includes a Guest Essay for the first time, a feature that I hope will become a regular thought-provoking, possibly controversial, item. Each will be written by a leading figure in the botanic garden community who will be specially invited by the Editor. Also new for this issue is the inclusion of illustrations throughout rather than grouped together in the centre pages. Inevitably this increases production costs but I think all will agree that it is well worth it.

The breadth of subject matter covered in the ten articles presented in this issue illustrates very well the diversity of botanic garden horticulture and therefore both the complexity of this field of horticulture and also of the need for a dedicated journal. With these thoughts in mind, and along with *Sibbaldia*'s somewhat vague sounding subtitle ('an occasional series of horticultural notes from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh'), from issue No. 4, the subtitle will be 'the journal of botanic garden horticulture'. Having discussed this idea with a range of colleagues both at Edinburgh and further afield the feeling was that this was justified and that it would not conflict with the aims of other journals. In this context I was particularly encouraged by an e-mail I received from Bert van der Wollenberg who is based at Utrecht University Botanic Gardens, in which he said:

> *'I strongly feel that this journal which is not matched by any other topical magazine on the science of horticulture, is extremely worthwhile to the botanic garden community.'*

This issue starts with the Guest Essay described above. In it Timothy Walker argues for the need for obsessive, passionate horticulturists and goes on to make a case for the value of horticultural skills in conservation. Paulina Hechenleitner's paper follows on perfectly as she describes the way in which the Arboretum of the Universidad Austral de Chile is contributing to conservation through the improvement of horticultural standards and the linking of *in situ* with *ex situ* conservation. In the second half of her paper she describes six lesser known Chilean endemics and discusses their conservation status.

Climate change is an issue that is being discussed by scientists and politician's alike. It is generally accepted that tree ferns grow well on the mild, wet west coast of Scotland but do not survive on the cold, dry east coast. However, a group have now survived for seven years in a courtyard at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) and Alasdair Wardlaw, a well-known fern enthusiast, used them for an experiment to compare the temperature within their apical meristems with that of the outdoor air in an attempt to understand their cold temperature survival.

Andrea Fowler, RBGE's orchid grower, describes the history of four of our longest surviving orchid accessions and goes on to stress the value of accurate record keeping. Logan Botanic Garden is one of Edinburgh's three regional gardens and Curator Barry Unwin describes a recent highly successful development and some of the species it contains – the Australasian Woodland. Peter Gosling and colleagues describe the

germination of *Prumnopitys andina*, a well known conifer from Chile. Despite its familiarity in cultivation it is not easy to germinate and the paper is a model of its type, linking horticulture with science and conservation.

Pests and diseases have not yet featured strongly in *Sibbaldia* and so it is a pleasure to introduce Stephan Helfer's paper in which, as a pathologist at Edinburgh, he draws on the many samples of 'P's &D's' sent in by the public. Pat Clifford is a senior horticulturist at Edinburgh and here he describes the cultivation of the charismatic aquatic *Victoria amazonica*. The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation has been described in the two previous issues of *Sibbaldia* but here Natacha Frachon and colleagues describe a very practical, hands-on approach to Target 8 in which botanic gardens in Britain are being urged to cultivate one or two locally occurring, but nationally threatened, species. The plan is that, if each botanic garden in Britain were to 'adopt' one or two species each then we would easily reach the target of trying to hold 60% of threatened species in accessible *ex situ* collections. To close this issue Michael Bordelon and John Kress from the Department of Botany at the Smithsonian Institute describe the cultivation of tropical gingers in a North American temperate climate.

The editors would like to thank Rachel O'Connor for her help in preparing the texts for this issue. And finally, many congratulations to Kate Hughes, *Sibbaldia*'s Assistant Editor and her husband Nye, on the birth of their first child Gwilym.

David Rae
Director of Horticulture and Editor