

A Prague Spring

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Four members of the South West of Scotland Rock Garden Group decided to attend the first International Rock Garden Conference in Beroun. Allan and I were relative newcomers to the SRGC so we thought that it would be an informative break. A very interesting time was had by all. The beautiful gardens of all the leading Czech alpine gardeners were visited, with plants for sale at them all.

Now this is my amusing follow up to the problems that this brought: Our friends bought about forty plants, while Allan and I bought sixty five. Others at the conference even went above a hundred plants. Now you have to bear in mind that these were specialist plants averaging about fifty pence each. Could *you* have resisted?

When you prepare a bucket of soil and grit for potting up your precious alpine, how many pots does it fill? Now reverse the process. Are you getting the picture of the amount of soil I am talking about in our pots? Before we get to that point though, the question arises of how we are going to transport them when soil-less. Let me tell you that Beroun had a complete sell-out of plastic boxes. The supermarket just had an empty shelf where the boxes had been but we found a shelf that had some plastic boxes with two dozen buns inside - and we bought one. The buns were offered to everyone at the next coffee break. We also needed kitchen roll, rubber bands and plastic bags.

So now we were all set. I removed the soil from the plants while Allan wrapped them in wet kitchen roll, put them in a plastic bag and then in the boxes. I was starting to struggle after twenty plants. What to do with the box full of soil? Julia Corden (she of Explorers Garden) was going to solve the problem by disposing of her soil in some empty planters outside the hotel. However, on returning from one of our many fascinating tours, a groan came up from Julia - the council had been that day and planted them up.

So Allan and I decided that our solution was over the wall. The wall in question was over the road from the hotel. On the other side of this wall were two yards of riverbank and then the river. Can you imagine the strange looks from the receptionist in the foyer? Seeing all her guests with boxes full of soil. I can tell you that the Seven Hills of Rome were nothing compared to our mounds on the river bank.

It all worked rather well, as we had very few losses. We had a wonderful break in the Czech Republic and made some very good friends at the same time.

Anyone tempted by or wondering about going to the 2013 Prague Conference should book now – you will not regret a moment. Bohemia's woods and fields await you - with rock gardens!

