

Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

le Ruairidh MacIlleathain

A special programme, in the form of a “letter”, designed for Gaelic learners who already have some knowledge of the language. A short vocabulary and comments on points of grammar and figures of speech are included with the text. If you have comments, Ruairidh can be contacted at rodny.macleon@bbc.co.uk. This is Litir 551. Note that there is also a simplified version called An Litir Bheag which is likewise available on the BBC website. Litir Bheag 247 corresponds to Litir 551.

Tha mi a’ dol a thoirt facal ùr dhuibh. *Barbrag*. Uill, tha mi an dùil gu bheil e ùr don chuid as motha agaibh. Dè th’ ann am barbrag? ’S e lus a th’ ann – lus dùthchasach air a bheil *barberry* ann am Beurla. Tha luchd-saidheans eòlach air mar *Berberis vulgaris*.

Chan eil an t-ainm *barbrag* ag innse dhuinn mòran mun lus fhèin. Ach tha dà ainm Ghàidhlig eile air a shon a tha a’ dèanamh nàdar de thuairisgeul air – *am preas deilgneach* agus *preas nan geur-dhearc*. Tuigidh sibh gu bheil an lus deilgneach, no droighneach. Agus tuigidh sibh nach eil blas milis air a chuid dhearcan.

Carson a tha m’ inntinn air a’ bharbraig an-diugh? Uill, tha a chionn ’s gun robh mi a’ coimhead airson ainm Gàidhlig air lus de sheòrsa eile – am *Mahonia*. Cha do lorg mi a leithid – ach tha *Mahonia* agus *Berberis* dlùth-chàirdeach do chèile. Tha iad anns an aon teaghlach – na *Berberidaceae*.

Tha *Berberis* de sheòrsa eile a’ fàs anns an leas agam. Tha, agus dà sheòrsa de *Mahonia*. Tha *Mahonia aquifolium* agam – lus brèagha leis an ainm Bheurla *Oregon Grape*. Tha e dùthchasach do thaobh an iar Ameireagaidh a Tuath. Agus tha *Mahonia napaulensis* agam – lus làidir le duilleagan car coltach ri duilleagan cuilinn, air am bi ditheanan buidhe a’ nochdadh – gu snog – ann am meadhan a’ gheamhraidh.

Ach carson a tha *Mahonia napaulensis* air m’ inntinn? Uill, a chionn ’s gum faca mi e o chionn ghoirid a’ fàs – gu nàdarrach ann an coille – anns an dùthaich dham buin e. Ma tha sibh tuigseach mu ainmean lusan, tuigidh sibh gum buin *Mahonia napaulensis* do Neapal. Bha mi anns a’ Hiomaileatha. Agus tha an lus sin a’ fàs anns na coilltean Hiomaileathach mar phreas no eadhon mar chraobh bheag.

Chan eil ainm Gàidhlig agam air a shon ach, mar a bhiodh dùil, tha ainm Neapalach ann – *mandre chutro*. Agus thathar ga chleachdadh anns an dòigh seo gu traidiseanta: bithear a’ faighinn sùgh bhon rùsg, bithear ga ghoil agus, nuair a tha e fuar, bithear ga chur air sùil duine a tha feumach air. Tha e na leigheas airson **neul-sùla**, rud ris an canar ann am Beurla “cataract” – *neul-sùla*. Chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh co-dhiù tha e ag obair mar leigheas gus nach eil.

Chan eil fios agam cò a’ chiad duine a thug *Mahonia napaulensis* a-mach à Neapal gu ruige dùthchannan an taoibh an iar, ach tha deagh theans gur e Albannach a bh’ ann. **Tha e iongantach na bh’ ann de dh’ Albannaich a chruinnich lusan thall thairis anns an ochdamh is naoidheamh linn deug.** Tha mi cinnteach gun cuala sibh

mu Dhaibhidh Dùbhghlas à Siorrachd Pheairt a thug ainm do *Ghiuthas an Dùbhghlasaich* no an *Douglas Fir*.

Ach bha gu leòr eile ann à Alba a rinn an dearbh sheòrsa rud thall thairis – daoine mar Sheòras Forrest ann an Sìonaidh, Daibhidh Lyall ann an Ameireagaidh a Tuath agus Sealán Nuadh, agus Raibeart Fortune ann an Sìonaidh agus Iapan; 's e Fortune a thug *Mahonia japonica* a Bhreatainn.

Am measg an luchd-cruinneachaidh bha co-dhiù dithis aig an robh Gàidhlig. Bheir sinn sùil air beatha fear aca an ath-sheachdain.

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Faclan na Litreach: barbrag: *barberry*; luchd-saidheans: *scientists*; deilgneach, droighneach: *thorny*; leas: *garden*; Hiomaileatha, Hiomaileathach: *Himalaya, Himalayan*; sampail: *samples*; Sealán Nuadh: *New Zealand*.

Abairtean na Litreach: a tha a' dèanamh nàdar de thuirisgeul air: *that make a sort of description of it*; preas nan geur-dhearc: *(lit) bush of the sharp-tasting fruit*; cha do lorg mi a leithid: *I didn't find the like*; dlùth-chàirdeach do chèile: *closely related to each other*; dùthchasach do thaobh an iar Ameireagaidh a Tuath: *native to the western side of N. America*; car coltach ri duilleagan cuilinn: *a little like holly leaves*; ditheanan buidhe: *yellow flowers*; meadhan a' gheamhraidh: *the middle of winter*; gu nàdarrach ann an coille: *naturally in a forest*; anns an dùthaich dham buin e: *in the country to which it belongs*; mar phreas no eadhon mar chraobh bheag: *as a bush or even as a small tree*; bithear a' faighinn sùgh bhon rùsg: *juice is obtained from the bark*; bithear ga ghoil: *it is boiled*; bithear ga chur air sùil duine a tha feumach air: *it is put on the eye of a person who needs it*; chan urrainn dhomh a ràdh: *I can't say*; co-dhiù tha e ag obair mar leigheas gus nach eil: *whether or not it is effective (works) as a cure*; gu ruige dùthchannan an taoibh an iar: *to the countries of the west*; tha mi cinnteach gun cuala sibh mu Dhaibhidh Dùbhghlas à Siorrachd Pheairt: *I'm certain you [have] heard of David Douglas from Perthshire*; a rinn an dearbh sheòrsa rud thall thairis: *who did the same sort of thing overseas*; ann an Sìonaidh agus Iapan: *in China and Japan*; bha co-dhiù dithis: *there were at least two people*.

Puing-chànain na Litreach: neul-sùla: *cataract (of the eye)*. Neul has a variety of meanings – you will probably be familiar with it representing a 'cloud'; it can also stand for a 'cloudy film' or 'mistiness'. It is related to the Latin word nebula. Neultach is an adjective meaning 'cloudy, misty' (and 'dark'), neulmhor means 'cloudy' or 'cloud-bearing' and neultachd means 'cloudiness', 'mistiness' or 'gloominess'. Neulaich is a verb meaning to 'obscure, darken, cover as with a cloud'. I hope you can see what a neat and meaningful expression neul-sùla is - literally 'clouding of (the) eye'.

Gnathas-cainnt na Litreach: Tha e iongantach na bh' ann de dh' Albannaich: *it's amazing how many Scots there were*.

Tha "Litir do Luchd-ionnsachaidh" air a maoinachadh le MG ALBA