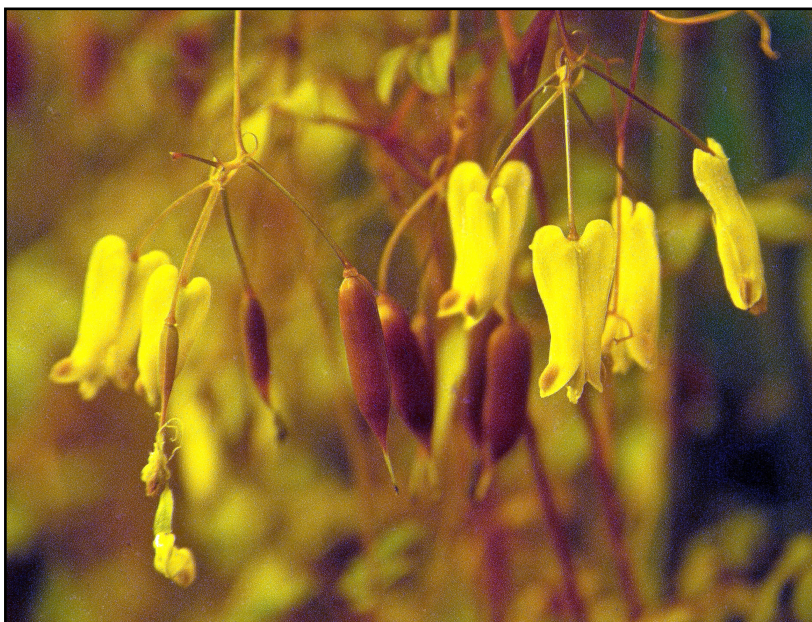


A JEWEL FOR THE AUTUMN

Pauline Cooper

Enjoy the autumn garden. Big and bold daisy flowers - asters and leucanthemella - shine out, with bright red and pale pink hesperantha as their base. The miscanthus are flowering and their stems and leaves are turning shades of orange, creating a firework display which will last well in to winter.

But it is a plant with a much more modest flower which delights me most at this time of the year: *Dactylicapnos ventii*, a dainty climber whose clusters of dicentra-like, yellow locket flowers are suspended from fragile stems. The stems and foliage have a lovely copper tint. The flowers are almost identical to *D. scandens* or *D. macrocapnos*, but with a delightful difference: the seed pods are red, and both flower and seed pod appear together. When the seed pod splits, black seeds encased in white pith are revealed.



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Dactylicapnos ventii

I acquired this plant in 2010 from Ron Davies, the gardener at Winderwath in Cumbria. It was labelled as *Dicentra lichiangensis*, and I was told that it was an annual. Eager to have more, when it set seed that autumn I saved some to sow the following spring. When the original plant came up again in the spring I wondered if this was a fluke, or whether my plant was a perennial rather than an annual.



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D. ventii seedpods

After writing about *D. ventii* in an article for The Hardy Plant, the journal of the HPS, I was contacted by Bob Armstrong, an HPS member in Lincolnshire. He too had this plant and, like me, had found it to be perennial. On a visit to Crûg Farm Nursery in North Wales, he was surprised to see the same plant named as *D. ventii*. He asked Bleddyn Wynn-Jones about it and was told that although both plants look very similar, in fact *D. lichiangensis* is an annual and *D. ventii* is perennial.

My poor plant has therefore suffered two name changes, from *Dicentra* to *Dactylicapnos*, and *lichiangensis* to *ventii*. I now have two healthy plants to enjoy; one climbs gently through *Chaenomeles japonica* 'Nicoline' and another through *Vitis vinifera* 'Purpurea'. Both reach over 10ft, and are happy in part shade. They are so delicate that in no way do they overwhelm their hosts. The RHS Plant Finder

lists Crûg Farm Nursery as the only supplier. It is high time I gathered more seed and shared this lovely plant with Hardy Planters!

Republished in memory of Pauline Cooper, who sadly passed away in January 2018. Pauline gave her time generously in support of the HPS in her role as Seed Distribution Coordinator. She is greatly missed by those who knew her, and her contribution will not be forgotten.

∞ *First published in the Shropshire Group Newsletter, Spring 2017* ∞