

DISPORUM LONGISTYLUM 'NIGHT HERON'

Colin Crews

Disporum are shade-loving rhizomatous perennials related to *Polygonatum*, *Disporopsis* and *Uvularia*. They form clumps of generally tall stems with a terminal cluster of flowers that are usually white or yellow, sometimes with a green or purple tinge. The leaves are like those of a narrow hosta: veined and sometimes variegated.

D. longistylum is found in Nepal and east Asia. The form 'Night Heron' was introduced by Dan Hinkley, from seed collected in China. Its most distinctive features are its very dark stems and foliage. New stems emerge in spring looking like a thin bamboo and are olive green in colour, which darkens to a purple/brown before the small groups of drooping flowers emerge from green buds.

The flowers vary from a greenish-white to yellow, and are followed by greenish-black berries that blacken fully with age and persist, with the stems, late into winter (see below).



© Peganum

Dark-leaved *Disporum* 'Night Heron' produces clusters of pendant, green flowers



© Colin Crews

The plant prefers humus-rich soil in the usual free-draining moist site, in partial to fairly heavy shade with protection from heavy frost. 'Night Heron' is also suitable for growing in a container. Unrestricted, it can reach 2 metres in height under good conditions, although 1 - 1.5m is more common. The height, form and colour of its arching stems, and the contrasting flower colour, make this a very architectural and attractive addition to the shade garden.

~ First published in the Shade & Woodland Group Newsletter, April 2020 ~