

**Plant of the Month: *Meconopsis napaulensis* (hort.)**

*Joe Sime*



It has been a mild winter so far, and this particular *M. napaulensis* shines silver amongst the debris of my woodland garden (still too wet to tidy). It may all end in tears if there is a very hard late frost, but we can enjoy it for the moment.

*M. napaulensis* (hort.) covers a diverse range of plants. All are hybrids with several different monocarpic, rosette-forming species in their ancestry. Grey-Wilson suggests naming this complex as *M. x complexa*. The Plant Finder is still calling them '*M. napaulensis* mis-applied'. Whatever the name they are all monocarpic rosette formers taking from two to five years to flower. The leaves can vary in the degree of division, colour and density of hairs. Some form quite beautiful, felty, golden haired mounds up to a metre across or as in this case clumps of silver-grey, and are worth growing for the leaves alone. The flowering stems can be more than 2m in height and carry many flowers, which can be white, light yellow through to gold, pink or red.

They need a good woodland soil, moist in summer and not too wet in winter. As you can see they overwinter as mounds of foliage protecting a central bud. A hard winter will turn the foliage brown, but the bud survives as long as there is not a very hard, prolonged, late frost.

They are easy from seed which can usually be obtained from the distribution list, or better still very fresh from a friend. You should raise a few seedlings each year to develop a patch of plants of different ages as they are truly monocarpic and will die once they have flowered. Once you have a good population in flower select seed from the best forms and grow your own strain. For about one hour of work in total each year you can have a good display of these stunning plants.

## **Bulbs in the Wood**

*Joe Sime*

*I still only have three volunteers. If you have forgotten what this is about here is the relevant section from October's issue,*

'The idea is to devote the issue to woodland plants that come from bulbs, corms or tubers. I need at least 10 volunteers (20 would be better) who will write a short piece, with photos, on their chosen subject. The call for volunteers is so early so that you will have a chance to take photos at the best time of year for your chosen plant (some flower very late/early in the year).

To give you some inspiration here are a few of the genera that could provide subjects: galanthus, cardiocrinum, arisaema, arum, lilium, bulbous corydalis, nomocharis, erythronium etc, etc. Feel free to be specific (a single variety) or write about a group of related plants.

If you are willing to have a go, send me ([wasjsime@gmail.com](mailto:wasjsime@gmail.com)) your name and chosen subject by the end of December this year.'

*December has come and gone. If I do not have more volunteers by the end of March there will be no December issue this year.*



## **'Not Another Hydrangea': *Hydrangea arborescens* subsp. *discolor* 'Sterilis'**

Joe Sime



*H. arborescens* is a North American species with the useful habit of bearing flowers on the current season's wood, which means it is not severely damaged by late frosts and can be pruned hard each year without losing a season's flowers.

There are over 20 varieties in the Plant Finder, many the result of one of two lines of breeding. Firstly to produce huge domes of sterile florets (the first of these was 'Annabelle') and secondly to produce good pink flowers (the basic forms are white).

Some of these are nice enough plants but I think one of the best forms is still 'Sterilis'. This is a natural occurring variety of the subspecies with sterile, mop-head florets. They are not as big and blowsy as Annabelle and her daughters, but they do not flop, nor discolour in the rain. They are pure white without a hint of pink, so do not fade to a mucky grey as some of the earlier attempts at pink flowered forms. Instead, as the season progresses they produce green or cream tones.

It is as hard as nails, roots easily either by suckers or cuttings and flowers well even in quite deep shade. It is just an all round 'good doer'.



## Available Seed

If you would like some of the following seed and are a paid-up member of the Shade Group, send a S.A.E to S.J. Sime at Park Cottage, Penley, Wrexham, LL13 0LS. Please include your email address in case there is a query.

If you have seed to donate please send it to the same address.

*Actaea japonica* ex 'Chengdu'  
*Arisaema ciliata*  
*Arisaema consanguineum*  
*Cardiocrinum giganteum* var. *yunnanense*  
*Hydrangea heteromala* Bretschneideri Group  
*Hydrangea paniculata* ex 'Tender Rose'  
*Hydrangea paniculata* ex 'Praecox'  
*Kirengeshoma palmata*  
*Kirengeshoma palmata* Koreana Group  
*Pinellia tripartita*  
*Stewartia pseudocamellia* ex 'Ogisui'  
*Stewartia serrata*  
*Stewartia sinensis*  
*Tricyrtis hirta*

## Name this plant



The puzzle plant last month was *Jeffersonia dubia*. This is a lovely little member of the Berberis family from woodland in Japan. The only other species in the genus is *J. diphylla* from the woods of eastern north America. It comes into growth in the early spring, when the new foliage takes on a bronze colour. The flowers come as the leaves open and, if you are lucky are followed by little fat seed pods. I am not lucky but I know people who are... I think my problem is self-sterility. I need to place plants from different clones closer to each other.



*Jeffersonia dubia* young foliage

Division is possible, but in my experience the divided pieces tend to take a few years to settle in. Given this the best option may be to leave it to the professionals and just buy plants... they are not too expensive at £5 and £7. They are easy to grow in a decent woodland soil with good winter drainage.



## From the Committee

### Email AGM 2020

This year we are holding an Email AGM so it does not interfere with time on our Lecture Day on 16 May at Britannia Airport Hotel, Manchester. Our Secretary, Diana Garner, will be sending out a Notice of the Email AGM Agenda, with the Chairman's Report, Treasurer's Report and Accounts attached on 3 February 2020. Postal members will receive the same documentation.

To propose or second any of the committee members just email Diana, [montana@cholesbury.net](mailto:montana@cholesbury.net), by 3 March; also any matters you wish to raise under "Any Other Business" by the same date.

We are also looking for new Committee members so do consider volunteering when you receive the documentation.

### Membership news

*Wilma Keighley*

Once again, we have a healthy bank balance at year end and so will not be increasing the subscription rate. The sums accumulated over the past several years are being used to support our lecture day this year which is more expensive to run due to both venue and speakers. We hope to see a lot of you there.

Currently, we have 141 fully paid up members, with a 56 further members due to renew their subscription now. We thought you might be interested to see how the membership spreads across the UK.

See map: <https://batchgeo.com/map/e05c793c35fc4ad9b674d5d695b0e607>

This distribution is based on Postcode. In addition to UK, we have members in New Zealand, USA, Belgium, Switzerland and France. We will continue to try to move the AGM about the country to give as many people a chance to attend as we can but, inevitably, it will be difficult for some people ever to attend. Ideas of how we can better serve our remote members are always welcomed.

# Lecture Day 2020

**Saturday 16th May 2020  
at the Britannia Airport Hotel, Manchester**

In addition to our three excellent speakers there will be a rare and unusual Plant Auction, Members plants for sale, and stands from Crûg Farm Plants, Swines Meadow Farm Nursery and Woodlands Nursery, a raffle and homemade teas.

## **Christopher Bailes**

**'Always something to keep you amused'** – a brief history of shade planting and the story of developing his own new Devon garden.



Previously curator of both the **Chelsea Physic Garden** and RHS Rosemoor Garden, Chris is a member of the RHS Orchid Committee, President of the Devon Branch of Plant Heritage and the Alpine Garden Society, and a Trustee of the Fortescue Garden Trust which administers The Garden House in Devon.

## **Bleddyn Wynn-Jones** **'Discoveries and recent** **Introductions of Ruscus** **and Aspidistra'**



Sue and Bleddyn Wynn-Jones are the owners of Crûg Farm Plants where they specialise in introducing new and wondrous plants from their annual expeditions to remote corners of the globe.

## **Dan Hinkley**

### **'Minions of the Shade, Asia and Beyond'**

Dan is an American plantsman, garden writer, horticulturist and nurseryman. He is best known for establishing the garden and nursery at Heronswood and continues to travel extensively to discover new plants.



### **Ticket Price: £24.00 for members of the Shade and Woodland Plants**

**Group** To book for the day email Diana Garner on [montana@cholesbury.net](mailto:montana@cholesbury.net) or mail to Montana, Shire Lane, Cholesbury, Herts HP23 6NA giving your name, address, telephone number, email address, and HPS membership number. **If space available** non members may book **after 1 April** at **£34.00**.

Electronic transfer details are: Branch sort code: 40 32 02 Account no: 21574647 Account name: Shade and Woodland Plants Group Reference: Your HPS membership number and last name. Cheques payable to "HPS Shade and Woodland Plants Group" and sent to Diana Garner.

Find us on 

<https://www.facebook.com/HPS-Shade-Woodland-Group-849344638531856/>

*SHADE MONTHLY* is compiled by Joe Sime  
and this web-friendly version was produced by Tony Bays.