HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY
Gardening with hardy perennials

Shade
MONTHLY

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHADE AND WOODLAND PLANTS GROUP May 2019

Plant of the Month: *Cardamine heptaphylla* 'Big White'

Joe Sime

I like cardamines and cannot resist buying and planting any new ones that I see. This has led to some disappointments. I could never get *C. diphylla* to thrive, having tried the basic form, 'Echo Cutleaf' and 'American Sweetheart' in the past. It has also led to some problems. I bought and planted *C. bulbifera* in spite of the clear warning given to me by the seller. It is a redefinition of the term 'Thug'. It spreads by rhizomes and by bulbils produced in the leaf axils. I have tried to confine it to one particular area of the garden, but the bulbils have obviously managed to spread themselves around in the dead leaves used for leaf mould and I now have little colonies trying to establish themselves around the place. Luckily they are easy to spot and pull up. There are easier ways to get pink flowers!

However 'Big White' is neither a disappointment nor a thug. It is large for a cardamine, growing to about 40 cms tall and as much across. The leaves are large with, as the name suggests, seven toothed leaflets. In spring it produces good heads of pure white flowers. It should produce the long seed pods typical of the brassica family but mine has not. It is dormant by mid summer leaving room for later things around it. The basic species comes from meadows and woodland in central and southern Europe. It is said to prefer alkaline soils and a fairly open site, but manages with the acid side of neutral and an overhead oak tree here. It makes a good addition to the spring display in the woodland garden.

Shades of Dracula

Colin Crews

I bought my first plant of *Scopolia carniolica* over five years ago and knowing it to be dormant in summer and likely to be dug up accidentally or planted over I placed it in a slightly moist shady corner of the garden between a statue of the goddess Aurora and an equally curvy ironwork clematis frame. Today in late winter fat crocus bud shaped spires of green emerge through clouds of thick moss across a backdrop of an old stone wall and various ferns.

The effect is perfectly gothic with the emerging flowers looking like lanterns in a Transylvanian castle. Scopolia are members of the Solanaceae found in Europe and in Asia. Many fit well into shade and woodland gardens, and their names (deadly nightshade, mandrake, henbane, scopolia etc.) and toxic alkaloid constituents add to their gothic quality. The *Scopolia* genus contains only the European plant *S. carniolica* and *S. japonica* which is found in Japan and Korea.

Scopolia carniolica is a hardy herbaceous perennial found mainly in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Caucasus with small pockets in other parts of the continent. Its natural environment is one of damp shaded forests. Many stems with attractive furled leaves emerge from slowly creeping rhizomes in late winter or very early spring and reach a height of about 60 cm. The green leaves have a metallic tinge and are flushed with purple.

The young leaves encase naked buds of tubular flowers that are sometimes described as brown but usually have the purple colour of aubergines (another Solanaceous plant). The leaves of the emerging bud begin to open when the stem reaches a height of about 10 cm, and a view from above will reveal flowers that are at first held vertically but when released hang down on long stems, resembling fuchsia buds. They soon open to a slightly flared bell shape. The best flowers have a rather glossy appearance and are tinged yellow on the inside.

S. carniolica 'Zwanenburg' is a vigorous form in which the brownish-purple flowers are more flared. The plants grow to about 30 cm in height and the rhizome has a growth rate of about 1 m in length after 3 years with a shorter lateral spread. The leaves are typically in pairs, with one large leaf about 10 cm in length and the other sometimes only half this size

A line of vertical stems reveals the path of the slowly creeping rhizome.

A form native to Slovenia named *S. carniolica* var. *brevifolia* has flowers of a dull greenish yellow. It was discovered by Franc Hladnik, Director of Ljubljana Botanic gardens and is frequently called *S. carniolica* f. *hladnikiana.* This plant differs significantly from the type in stature, the emerging leaf stems being shorter and plump, and it emerges and flowers about two weeks later than its purple relative.

Daily inspection of the leaf buds of *S. carniolica* var. *brevifolia* in late winter will be rewarded with the attractive sight of the bright yellow young flowers clustered together within a basket of leaves, looking like chicks in a nest. More of the young flower is visible than in the purple form at this stage and it is for me the most attractive period of the plant's life cycle. Both yellow and purple forms of scopolia have a green calyx that better complements the yellow flowers.

As scopolia matures the foliage becomes much more dense and the flowers although not completely obscured are hidden to a considerable degree. The flowers are followed by green berries contained in an inflated calyx.

Few other species of *Scopolia* are described in the horticultural literature. The Plant List assembled by Kew and Missouri Botanical Garden (http://www.theplantlist.org/) lists 22 species of the genus *Scopolia* but accepts only *S. carniolica*. Other scopolias have been accepted tentatively by The Plant Finder: *S. anomala, S. carniolica* var. *carniolica, S. carniolica podolica, S. japonica, S. physaloides* and *S. stramonifolia* (or *stramoniifolia*) but these are hardly established in horticulture.

Scopolias are easy to grow in woodland or reasonable garden soils in part shade. They are best propagated by divisions of the root made as new growth begins in late winter but can be grown from seed which occasionally appears in seed exchanges. Germination takes two years and growth is slow. The rhizomes spread slowly and are in no way invasive. *Scopolia* associates well with other plants that flower in late winter, particularly the green-purple flowered and similarly gothic looking *Helleborus multifidus* and *Helleborus torquatus* but also *Asarum* and *Pulmonaria*.

Scopolia are members of a group called the ‘hyoscyaminous plants’, the cultivated genera of which also include *Anisodus, Hyoscyamus, Physochlaina* and *Przewalskia*. These are species more closely associated with warmer sunnier climates than *Scopolia*. The name is derived from the tropane alkaloids hyoscyamine (atropine) and scopolamine which have very valuable medicinal uses but render all parts of the plants highly toxic.

Gardens open for charity

Fossgyl

533 Huntington Rd, York YO32 9PY

A long, narrow 1 acre garden stretching to the river Foss, much of it developed in a nearly 90 year old orchard which has been interplanted with a wide range of species, as well as a flower-rich meadow and an area of recently re-planted wet woodland near the river and round a large pond.

Malus hupehensis and *Tulipa sprengeri* should be in full flower in May along with many other trees and shade-tolerant plants.

There is an experimental peat-free ‘peat’ garden. The garden contains over 1200 plant species, including about a sixth of the native British flora.

Open Sunday 12 May (11:00-17:00) and again on Sunday 14 July (13:00-17:00); at other times by arrangement (alastairfitter@btinternet.com).

The garden is open as part of a scheme to support The Yorkshire Arboretum; a £5 donation to the arboretum is requested.

Paddock Cottage

4 Sudnicton Croft, Westow, North Yorks YO60 7NB

A small cottage garden with attractive mixed borders and a wide range of plants in both sunny and shaded areas. Expect to see hellebores, meconopsis, iris and lilies. There are raised vegetable plots, a small glasshouse and a fishpond

Open 10am-4pm Sunday 19th May only, with a £5 donation to the Yorkshire Arboretum.

Available Seed

If you would like some of the seed offered below 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.

Ampelopsis megalophylla

Arisaema ciliatum

Cardiocrinum cordatum TCM-12-969

Cardiocrinum giganteum var. yunnanense

Hydrangea aspera subsp. villosa

Hydrangea heteromalla var. *xanthoneura* 'Wilsonii'

Hydrangea paniculata ex 'Brussels Lace'

Hydrangea scandens subsp*. chinensis* f*. macrosepalum*

Kirengeshoma palmata

Rhododendron yakusianum

Senecio tangutica

Aquilegia canadensis

Meconopsis paniculata

Aquilegia longissima

Rosa moyesii

Euonymus myrianthus

Name this Plant

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‘ Plants 14--30 cm tall, glabrous. Stems simple or distally branched. Basal leaf petiole 5--12 cm; leaf blade 1--3-ternate, 8--25 cm; leaflets peltate, petiolule 15--25 mm, leaflet blade ovate, broadly so, broadly elliptic, or orbicular, 2--4 × 1.5--4 cm, herbaceous, apex obtuse to rounded, 3-lobed; lobes toothed at margin; veins flat on both surfaces. Cauline leaves 1--3. Inflorescence monochasial. Pedicel filiform, 3--20 mm. Sepals early deciduous, white, ovate, ca. 3 mm. Stamens 4--6 mm; filament base filiform, apex oblanceolate, broader than anther; anther elliptic, ca. 0.6 mm. Carpels 5--12(--16). Achene stipe slender, ca. 1.5 mm; body falcate, ca. 4.5 mm; veins ca. 8, weak. Fl. May—Jul.
Forests, scrub, damp rocky ledges; 600--1900 m. Guizhou, Hubei, Liaoning, Shanxi, Sichuan, Yunnan, Zhejiang.’

The solution to last month's puzzle was *Waldsteinia ternata*. This is a small relative of the strawberry which provides good ground cover in shade. With a little more light it also produces good yellow flowers. An easy little plant for a wilder area of your shade garden.

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SHADE MONTHLY is compiled by Joe Sime
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