

THE BULLETIN OF THE

HARDY PLANT

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SOCIETY

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AIMS OF THE SOCIETY

The aims of the Society are to further the culture and improvement of hardy herbaceous plants (excluding rock garden plants) and to stimulate interest in such plants both old and new.

MEMBERSHIP

The yearly subscription (which includes the Society's Bulletins as published) is 12s. 6d. per year, or £1 for joint membership of man and wife, U.S.A. \$2.00. Life membership is £15. Membership also includes free entry to any shows which the Society may hold.

AFTER a gap of some two years, we are pleased to be able to publish another BULLETIN. Thanks are due to Mr. P. R. S. Hunt for collecting some of the material herein, otherwise the issue in your hands would be a very slender one. We need authoritative articles, please, and the collection of material for publication is a service every member can do for the Society.

This is the season when gardeners are allowed to dream, and read and talk of their plants and it is always a source of amazement that gardening stories never assume the proportions of fishing stories!

Best wishes for a really happy Christmas and a contented festive season and a toast to the gardening successes of the past year and plans for the coming year.

All Good Wishes,

Kay N. Sanecki

Hon. Editor.

ON THE COVER

Photograph by *Amateur Gardening*

Dierama pulcherrimum has long narrow iris-like leaves and produces wands of arching stems with dangling lilac flowers late in the season. It is slightly tender in some localities. (See page 28).

WESTERN AMERICAN IRIS SPECIES

LE ROY DAVIDSON

It is an annual pleasure for a number of enthusiasts in the north western United States to make a journey out into the wilds of the Pacific Slope to study the wild irises growing there. Such a trek through the varied terrain, from the summits of the Cascades and Sierra Nevada westward to the Pacific shore, lends much knowledge as to why there are such great variations among these irises, and, through observing the soils, the conditions of moisture and temperature, and all the other things that we are told influence speciation, we come to better understand the plants themselves, as well as learn how to best succeed with them in our gardens.

This past season's trek was the most extensive and intensive organized so far, taking us, as it did, through no less than six California counties and three additional in Oregon, plus the distance back home, for some of us a distance extending nearly across the state of Oregon and half that of Washington. This is the strip of Pacific coast northward from San Francisco Bay to Coos Bay in Oregon, between the 38th and 44th degrees of parallel, an area cut into deep, canyons by swift rivers, their steep slopes clothed with the coniferous forests consisting of pines and firs, redwood groves along the low fog-belt, and, in the southernmost areas, Monterey cypresses and blue gum eucalyptus forming groves from their ancestors, originally planted by man, while the major deciduous trees are various oaks of many species. There are in addition several of the evergreen oaks and a number of other broadleaf evergreen species, both among the trees and the lower shrubs. The temperatures in the area vary of course through the year, from a frost-free strip along the immediate shore to areas of heavy frost and deep snowfall in winters and daily temperatures from moderate along shorelands to over 100 deg. F. in the interior valleys during the dry summer period. It is an area of moderately heavy rainfall, but the precipitation comes mainly during the six cooler months, as rain in the coastal warmer belt, and, of course, much of it as snow at greater altitudes.

It is in this situation that the western American species of beardless (Apogon) irises classified as *Californicae* have spread to cover the sunny openings in the forests, to provide some of the most beautiful of the wild flowers of late April and May. The designated meeting place for the trek was Ukiah, Mendocino county, California, and on this morning we gathered early to go eastward into high Lake county, then south west through Sonoma county, to the shorelands in Marin county, northward along the Pacific coast of Sonoma and Mendocino counties, then inland and northward through Humboldt county where we reached the coast again at Eureka, again northward along the Humboldt and Del Norte county coasts, and, upon reaching Crescent City, inland to Josephine county Oregon. The last day was spent exploring the coastward strip of Oregon, in Curry and Coos counties. In addition to many species of the *Californicae* Apogons, we encountered *Iris longipetala* of the Longipetalae Apogons, growing in quite a different kind of habitat; instead of the well-drained slopes, this species flourishes in the wet bottomlands of cattle pastures, particularly in Marin county, though further south it can be found on cooler slopes where it is able to succeed largely because of the summer fog-blanket of the San Francisco



Photo. B. O. Mulligan

Iris tenuissima in a garden at Kirkland, Washington. The plant was originally collected in northern California in 1955. This plant had fifteen flowers, each 3 in. across when this photograph was taken in May, 1959. The flowers are white, veined with purple.

Bay area. This species does not spread far beyond the bounds of this cooler summer condition, from Monterey north along the peninsular San Mateo county, San Francisco and Marin counties, into southernmost Sonoma county, and somewhat to the counties immediately to the east. A handsome plant, though not of much variation in the wild, it will grow from two feet to a half-foot taller, bears up to four, frequently more, wide-spreading ivory or whitish classically-formed iris blossoms at the top of each stem, the flowers etched sharply in an intricate pattern of blue-violet lines converging toward the center and marked with a brilliant golden blaze on the three lower segments (falls). Even in its native meadowlands it bakes quite dry in late summer, so much so that the foliage disappears, to begin growth anew with the first rains of autumn, and, in this habitat of little frost, it continues to grow during the wet winter months, to flower in April and May, the bold five-to-six-inch blossoms quite lovely atop the masses of stiff, rich, deep bluish-green foliage fans. Transplanted northward it is subject to winter damage if there is enough warmth to encourage growth too early or during intermittent winter temperature periods of freezing.

The first of the Californicae iris species was the yellow form of *I. macrosiphon*, along the roadsides of northwestern Lake county, in a nearly treeless, summer-hot-and-arid area. The usual form of this species is blue or purple, but here the pale yellows were to be found exclusively. Later and higher we found the purples and blues, and, in a most exciting merge-area, the resulting smoked, grayed

and bronzed forms, resulting from the occurrence of both the blue-purple and yellow pigments in the same blossom. Later we were to explore a great slope south of Ukiah populated with only the blue form, many of them exceedingly near to the illusive true-blue so much sought in flowers. A very neat narrow-leaved plant, it could not be coarse or untidy in the most discriminating garden surroundings; the fans of evergreen leaves are powdered with a heavy glaucous bloom which can be wiped off like the bloom of a plum. The name "*macrosiphon*" means long-tube, alluding to the perianth tube, that part of the blossom connecting the petal parts with the ovary below; consequently the plant has a shorter stem, the blossom being elevated above the foliage by its tube.

In an area near the Petrified Forest of Sonoma county we next saw the delicate pale yellow *Iris fernaldii* with light green foliage fans tinged red at their base, and growing under the big deciduous oaks of the hot dry valley, but which allowed the iris sufficient light for their success in that they did not come into leaf until they were well on the way to flowering. The slender stem of this species is stiffly erect from the base whereas many of its kin are lax, a fault in the garden, and each bears two nicely formed flowers within the reddish-bronze spathe at the top. All about the rather restricted range of this species are to be found its many hybrids with *macrosiphon*, the vast majority of them not as attractive as either species, and they are a mottled effect of lavender and yellow.

Iris douglasiana is the tall, branched species of the headlands immediately fronting the ocean, where it enjoys the comparative all-season warmth and is rather limited to south of the 44th parallel because it is damaged by freezing northward of this, and in the garden as well. In its log north-to-south distribution it has the opportunity to intermix with a number of other species, which may contribute to its own variability; it is known in a very wide range of colours, the usual ones along the California coast being blue-purples from light to very dark some in near-black tones. In several notable areas is to be found a wide range of colours, embracing white, light to medium yellows, rosey tints and some quite blue, and not a few in attractive blended tints. The evergreen foliage of this very robust species is wide and relatively coarse, more so than most of its allies, and is not well suited to any but the larger garden, but valuable for its many-flowered stems, it being the only branching species of Californicae. It is to be suspected that many actual hybrid areas are to be found along the merge-zone of this with other species, and we did find some that appeared to have been derived from it crossed with *Iris macrosiphon*, and among them some deep plum-coloured individuals on short, simple stems, and with short, deep green leaves. Ordinarily these hybrid areas hold much exciting anticipation because of the possibility of unusual individuals occurring therein; such was the case with the intra-species smoke-coloured macrosiphons, but not often are such combinations as unique nor as attractive. Nevertheless it is always interesting and educational to study such swarms, observing how the individuals differ, not only from both the parent-stocks, but also from one another, in those points botanists take as the separating criteria for identifying the species. We were later to find hybrids of several natures and were to select some few good ones for collecting. But quite within the limits of species ranges it is possible to find superior colonies and clones; such was the case in the next species encountered, away from the coast in an interior valley again.

Iris purdyi, locally called the redwood iris, because of its range being rather coincident with that of the Coast Redwood of Mendocino and Humboldt counties, is ordinarily thought to be a low growing and quite non-variable orchid pink or cream marked with rose-purple. The sunny opening between the groves of redwoods are numerous populated with these forms, but more open and higher areas have some variants, some of which at least might be resultant of ancient hybridization. One of the most spectacular finds on the trip was a wide-spreading colony of tall-growing plants, with tufts of wide foliage, and with large, wide-spreading, pale apricot-yellow flowers, lightly veined with violet or red-brown. The sheathing stem-leaves of this iris are short, stiff and bract-like, coloured a bright reddish tint. In flower form, this species is flattened in the manner of a both *Iris tenuissima* and *chrysophylla*, wherein the standards, rather than being erect in the conventional manner, flare outward in the manner of the falls, to form a perianth that is star-shaped, viewed from above. This giant form grew to a foot and a half tall and with a blossom that spread over six inches across. We also saw much of the conventional orchid-pink form of this species on the northward segment of the trip in Mendocino and Humboldt counties, far smaller, very dainty, forming dense clumps rather than tufts. As a garden plant, *Iris purdyi* in its many forms is an excellent and floriferous one.

The next subject of exploration and study was to be found in northernmost California, in the Smith River Canyon of Del Norte county, *Iris thompsonii*, which is disputable as a "good" species, much evidence having been presented to the effect that it actually is a vast hybrid swarm deriving from the purple form of *Iris innominata* and *Iris douglasiana*, and our observations of wide variation in the foliage, particularly, but in general in all parts, would not stand up to close inspection of this entity as a good species. In general, it might be described as a refined *I. douglasiana*, yet many individuals might well be taken for taller, and slightly coarser, *I. innominata*. As one progresses inland along the highway, the population begins to vary as the Oregon source of the north fork of this river is reached, many individuals being pale cream. It is here that one of the rare tri-hybrid situations among these irises is to be found; *Iris bracteata* has crossed the mountaintops above here to make its Californian appearance, and these, its children, below, have the blood therefore of three species.

Although this had been a late spring, and we had accordingly delayed our trip, we were fortunate finding *Iris bracteata* in good flower across the Siskiyou mountain barrier in Josephine county, Oregon. Here in the gravelly plains of the Illinois river basin, an area bitterly cold in winter, as bitterly hot and dry in summer, this endemic species is highly successful, one of the prominent plants to appear with the drought resistant undershrubs such as *Arctostophylos* under the yellow pines of the open forest, and the shining green tufts and clumps of yellowish green leaves are handsome indeed in this sere situation. This is the one species of this group of irises to be found only in yellow, and it is a lovely one, ordinarily veined on the falls with mahogany-red. The foliage is rather sparse as that of *I. purdyi*, its large forms, in tufts rather than in ordinary fans of many interfolded leaves, and each stem bears two large well-formed flowers, a very choice garden subject.

Curiously enough, the mountainside, right down to the valley floor, to the north of here are covered with another species and yet there is little evidence of

much extensive interbreeding. However the northernmost of the *bracteata* population is consistently smaller in stature and size of leaf and flower. The mountain-side species surrounding is *Iris chrysophylla*, found exclusively in Oregon and a bit into California north of the Siskiyou mountains. It is one of the long-tube species and may have little or no true stem, the tube serving the function of elevating the star-shaped blossom out above the slender, yellowish foliage. Pallid yellow or nearly white, the flower is veined lightly or heavily with reddish or purple lines. In one area we found all the flowers much more brightly coloured, and atop a stem of quite some length this late in the season. Ordinarily this is among the first of these irises to flower, at which time the stems may be an inch or even less in length. Like most of these allied species, it can vary, even to being coloured orchid; an unusual feature is the erect, elongated and ornamentally "feathered" trio of style-arms. This is a nice smaller species for the rock-garden and foreplanting to the shrubbery.

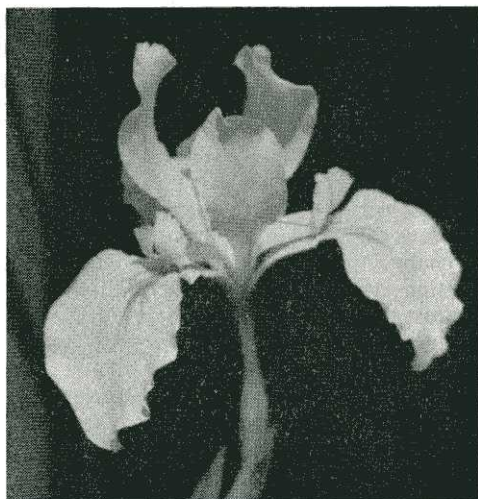
With this exploration completed, we returned to the coast and drove northward along a newly completed highway that was a joy to drive, but one that avoided all the better irises, and so we made some excursions inland into the reaches of *Iris innominata*. It is curious that this handsomest of iris species seldom grows within sight of the ocean, preferring the hot interior valleys of Curry county, Oregon. The southernmost forms in occurrence are purple in colour, and the northern ones yellow, or often in a mixed population. The most coveted colour forms are in the golden to orange colour range, and they are handsome, dainty things in the wild as well as in the garden, where they have in recent years become quite well-known, both in "pure" form as well as in hybrids, particularly with *Iris douglasiana*; this hybrid combination is to be found in the wild, and in other places than in the hybrid *thompsonii* area; where the yellow form of *innominata* has been the parent, the progeny run strongly to yellow flowers of good size, form and substance. In fact, some of the finest things we have found on these trips have probably been this hybrid combination, and a total of ten flowers per stem has been counted on some of the best ones. In addition lilac and amber branched hybrids occur also. In areas where purple *innominata* has been the parent, the majority of the hybrid progeny resembles the Smith River *I. thompsonii*, and yellow is not represented, there having been no yellow in the parent stock.

Among the more interesting hybrids to be seen, are those atop Langlois Hill in northernmost Curry county, where an isolated remnant of a once larger *Iris tenax* population has interbred with the coastal *Iris douglasiana*. Here the greatest amount of variability in stature was displayed, from branched, tall plants of over two feet down to four inch plants, leaves and foliage about equal, and with two inch flowers topping the grassy tufts. These miniature forms seemed all to have segregated in an eroded and weathered outcrop where they were tightly chinked in with club mosses and lichens, a situation I have not before nor since found any of these irises to choose.

Inland in the Willamette Valley some attention has been given to a "new" Iris growing thereabouts, particularly toward the village of Noti, and for which we have tentatively applied the name "*notiensis*." It has been described by a local biological authority as an ancient segregate from the hybrid combination of *Iris chrysophylla* with *Iris tenax*. It is in stature and season of blossom more like the former, though coloured as the latter, an orchid tint, and with erect

Photo. Jean Witt

Iris douglassiana grows from 1-1½ ft., and has beardless flowers rather large in proportion to the height of the plant. The foliage is stiff and dark green, tinged with dark red as it dies down in the autumn. There is a wide colour range but here is a white form collected in Oregon and photographed in a garden in Lake City, Washington



standards and flower form also of the latter. This was nearly past flowering as we visited, and would have long since been gone in a normal season, for the surrounding areas had come into full flower in our absence, the surrounding species being the northernmost member of Californicae, the valley-bound *Iris tenax*, found only occasionally toward the seacoast. Among hybrids of this extraction have been found a number of most unusual and worthwhile individuals for garden use, and no two such populations appear to produce similar ones, though all seem to be attractive in themselves.

The low, broad valley of the Wilamette River was now beautifully carpeted with *Iris tenax*; in colour this is ordinarily an orchid-pink but here in the southernmost reaches of its range, it is very much deeper toned, and rich blue-purple and red-purple are the rule. This is a most handsome and graceful plant, a very hardy and tolerant garden addition, and the one member of Californicae to be deciduous. The slender stems bear one or two flowers, but an established plant is profuse with such stems. This species occurs too as far north as the Nehalem River in southwestern Washington, in its orchid form, and in a small area in Washington County, Oregon, we have previously explored the area where its yellow-flowered form, once called *Iris gormanii* is found. Where this form has mixed with typical *Iris tenax* a profusion of beautiful pastel tints and blends, mostly adorned with a contrasting deeper pattern on the falls in addition to the traditional golden median blaze, and here we find in addition to white, cream and soft yellow, both plain and fancy, the deep raspberry and fuchsia shades and some that are as near to true pink as to be found in the Californicae Irises.

And so we return to carefully plant our collected prizes, and already with plans in our futures for another trip, one we hope that will include some of the other Californian species, those found on the slopes of the Sierras and in the mountains of northern California. It has been a strenuous but rewarding journey through the rainbow of Pacific Coast Irises.

COTTAGE GARDEN PERENNIALS

MARGERY FISH

It is very usual to hear the words "Cottage Garden" used in connection with certain plants. These old favourites have definite qualifications for this description, they must be tough and easy to please, but not by any means without garden merit. A great many of the plants that have lived so long in our cottage gardens came originally from the big houses, thrown out when fashion decreed a change to elaborate bedding, or "acquired" by gardeners in the form of cuttings or seed. It is a very good thing they were, for many a good plant would be lost to cultivation had it not been for the care of the cottagers. Plants in a cottage garden were safe; they would never be disturbed, or neglected, and I am sure they were happy with their fellows crowding round them.

Nurserymen used to find the old cottage gardens a wonderful source of supply for lost treasures. Soon after we went to Somerset and I was busy buying plants from Scott's Nursery in Merriott, Mr. Wallis the proprietor asked if I could help him. He had an enquiry for *Stachys lanata* and thought perhaps I might be able to find him a plant in one of the cottage gardens in the village. I did, and from that scrap many thousands of plants have been produced.

On another day he offered me *Stokesia cynea* as being an old-fashioned plant. I still have it, and appreciate its willingness to flower from July to October and its very good dark foliage in the winter. There are two improved forms being grown today, *Stokesia* 'Blue Moon' and *S.* 'Blue Star.'

This has happened in so many cases. The cottagers (and some of the rest of us) still grow *Campanula latiloba* in their gardens, but the better forms which appear in nurseryman's lists are *C. latiloba* 'Highcliffe.'

Another campanula, *C. glomerata*, the clustered bell-flower of cottage gardens, is an excellent plant for dry shade and for any part of the garden where its running ways can be tolerated. There are several improved forms which are worthy of a place in the border, *C. glomerata* 'Joan Elliott' is early and fairly dwarf, while *C. glomerata superba* grows to 2½ ft. No cottage garden was complete without doricum, leopard's bane, with its early golden daisies and good evergreen leaves. The improved forms being grown today are *Doronicum* 'Harpur Crewe' and the dwarf *D.* 'Miss Mason.'

Oxalis floribunda is one of the easiest plants to please. It will grow anywhere and all it asks for is the sun to shine. Its village name is shamrock and it is a useful plant for walls and odd corners.

Great strides have been made with erigerons in recent years but several of the cottage types are still seen sometimes, and they have a far longer season of blooming. *E. philadelphicus*, with its small hanging pink heads has an appealing beauty in a modest way, *E. speciosus* goes on flowering throughout the season, and *E. multiradiatus* does the same, with flowers of pink or mauve on long, lank arms, which need firm staking to be attractive.

Veronica longifolia was one of the old well-loved plants, in varying shades of blue, because it is an inveterate seeder and the seedlings vary in colour. *Polemonium caeruleum*, our old friend Jacob's ladder, also seeds itself, and it has been greatly improved for modern gardens. *P. richardsoni* is the nearest to the old plant, but with bigger flowers, and a better habit of flowering.

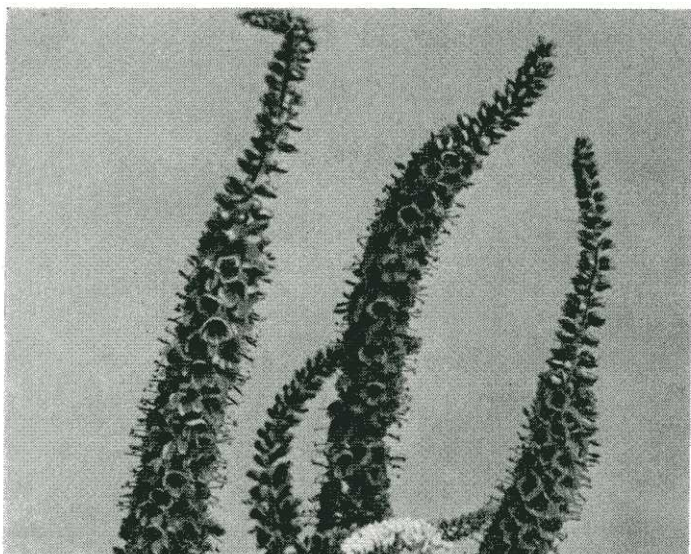


Photo. Amateur Gardening
Sometimes Veronica longifolia is confused with V. spicata but in winter it dies right down and has no growth as does spicata. The violet blue flowers are in season during the latter part of the summer and reach about three-and-a-half feet.

How seldom now is seen the old goldenrod, *Solidago caesia*, with its whippy black stems and encrusted yellow flowers, and yet it is a good plant, with neat dark foliage and no bad encroaching ways. The helianthus we grow today have big flowers and a sturdy habit, a vast improvement on the old plant, *Helianthus rigidus*, which used to be called *Harpalium rigidus*.

Aster tradescantii has come back to popularity, for modern gardeners appreciate its graceful arching stems, with myriads of hovering white flowers late in the year. *Aster* 'Photograph' is still being grown, and more people are now growing *Aster diffusus horizontalis*, with its tiny crimson centred lilac flowers and dark foliage on horizontal stems. Neither *Aster* 'Empress' or *A. pulchellum* have a great deal of colour but they fitted into the colourful medley of a cottage garden.

When I was moving *Chrysanthemum uliginosum* recently I realized why it had survived so long, though it is seldom seen except in village gardens. Its strong fleshy roots defy extinction and are adequate anchors for the five foot stems furnished with green-eyed white daisies. Cottage chrysanthemums were real perennials, and remained in their appointed garden places year after year, flowering in October and November. Interest in them is gaining ground and we grow today 'Anastasia' in mauvish pink and her bronze counterpart, 'Dr. Tom Parr' in rose madder and 'Rob Roy' in glowing crimson. The tall double pink 'Emporer of China,' has good autumn leaves, and 'Innocence,' a delicate single pink, flowers generously. The tall cottage chrysanthemums can be stragglers unless they are staked early or grown to peer through shrubs or tall perennials.

The cottage variety of *Sedum spectabile* was robust but merely the pale sad pink which has been improved in *S.* 'Brilliant,' 'Carmen' and 'Meteor,' and the



Photo. J. E. Downward

Double primroses have an old-fashioned charm that never fails to attract attention. A collection of these plants is well worth while.

Sedum telephium they grew was tall and thin with small flowers, not to be compared with *S. telephium* 'Autumn Joy' and 'Munstead Red.'

Omphalodes cappadocia and *O. verna* remain the same first-class shade plants and respond to an undisturbed life in the damp shade of a cottage garden. *Helleborus niger* used to be just a Christmas rose, with no fancy name to denote size, growth, time of flowering or pink shaded petals, but it was never disturbed and was as good as any we grow today. Solomon's seal, *Polygonatum multiflorum*, and lily-of-the-valley, crown imperials and *Dicentra spectabilis*, the graceful "lyre" plant or bleeding heart, are all typical cottage plants.

There were phloxes, with small flowers and hard colours, which were seldom divided, and red penstemon and heucheras. Astrantias are simple, retiring plants, but quite indestructible. One of my greatest treasures is an extra large form of *Astrantia major*, with long petals heavily etched with green. A friend in whose family it had been for years, gave it to me, but I have heard recently that a form not unlike it has been seen in cottage gardens in parts of Gloucestershire.

Cottage pinks had a fragrance and stamina not always found in modern pinks, but the flowers were often blowsy and untidy. Poor 'Mrs. Sinkins' has been largely superseded because of her regrettable habit of calyx splitting, and the old clove types, which had such a delicious perfume were not as shapely as modern pinks. There was a good scarlet, aptly called 'Rifleman,' and two delicious pale pink varieties, 'Reine Hortense,' in a delicate shade and 'Marie Antoinette' in a deeper colour. Laced pinks such as "William Brownhill" and 'Little Old Lady' are still cultivated, and such old plants as 'Caesar's Mantle' and 'Sops-in-Wine' still exist.

Double primroses, auriculas and laced polyanthus are cottage plants, and so are double perennial wallflowers and double sweet rocket. Cottage gardens have given us many of our most cherished plants, and though the gardens may go we are lucky still to have the plants.

GYPSOPHILA

— the outstanding variety —

BRISTOL FAIRY

G. W. HARRINGTON

GYPSOPHILA is universally used to provide a feathery and cloudy background with striking effect for most cut-flowers. It has become more popular in recent years with the advent of modern floral arrangements. It is also widely used in the perennial borders of home gardens taking its place among other herbaceous plants giving a lightening and graceful effect.

Gypsophila is indigenous to the Mediterranean region and to Asia. The name is derived from the Greek *gypson*—*philon* meaning chalk loving. Gypsophila is one of the Caryophyllaceae family and is thus related to carnations and the sweet William. Among the common names given to gypsophila is chalk plant and baby's breath.

Gypsophila Bristol Fairy is a distinct break away from the old double forms a really remarkable variety in form, colour and vigour and is without doubt the finest of the taller growing varieties yet introduced. This variety is usually listed as being around 3½ft. tall, but it can grow up to 5½ft. Bristol Fairy originated from the Bristol Nurseries, Bristol, Connecticut in the U.S.A. about the year 1925.

Contrary to popular belief, Bristol Fairy is quite hardy in our most severe winters. Nothing worse could be done than to cover crowns with straw as this will only harbour slugs. It is desirable not to cut the top growth down after flowering while any green leaf or stem remains. There are beds of Bristol Fairy still flowering that were planted thirty years ago.

Soil for gypsophila should be cultivated deeply to allow for the deep, rooting habit of the plant. There should be no need to manure provided that the soil is in good heart, indeed to grow these plants 'richly' induces rampant growth to the detriment of the bloom. As the name implies, lime is a necessity and should be applied to the soil if this is lacking where gypsophila is to be planted. Being double flowered, and thus sterile, propagation is effected vegetatively by grafting on to the roots of *Gypsophila paniculata* or by cuttings, grafting being the more preferable method. When grafted roots are being planted the point of graft should be slightly under the soil surface. Pests of gypsophila are fortunately not many. Thrips occur in some seasons and may be dealt with by D.D.T.

Slugs are undoubtedly the most serious pest, they raid in the night and disappear by day. They feed on the young buds of dormant plants before they can be seen by the naked eye, leaving no visible trace of damage. If an attack is extensive, the plants will fail to grow the following spring. The slug population should thus be kept down. An effective deterrent is to place a shovel full of old ashes on the crown and leave it on permanently, allowing the shoots to grow through the covering of ashes.

BUTTER AND CREAM

ALICE M. COATES

NEXT to pink forms of yellow flowers, I have a partiality for cream-coloured flowers—using the terms in its widest sense, to cover the shades ranging from butter or lemon-yellow to sulphur, primrose and ivory. These fulfil the same function as do white flowers, of lightening and enlivening the border, but without any risk of being discordant or harsh. White flowers, lovely in themselves, require to be placed with some care; they are best by themselves, with grey or dark foliage or with certain blues. Painters know how sparingly pure white must be used, if it is not to distract the eye and jar the harmony of the whole; but cream-coloured flowers can safely be planted anywhere, and in any quantity. I am not one of those who believe that flower-colours never clash, but cream can pacify the warfare of orange and magenta, and look equally well with either. Even in spring, when white and gold is the proper wear, and the most blatant dandelion or dornicum does not look out of place, I prefer the paler daffodils, the ivory wallflowers. Later on, when the golds turn to brass, the superior value of silver-gilt is even more apparent.

On examination, the unexpected fact emerges that cream-coloured flowers are remarkably few. Take for example the innumerable families of yellow-rayed composites—only a handful of them have produced lemon or cream forms. The pale varieties of *Anthemis tinctoria* are among the best, and are excellent for cutting. The belauded yellow achilleas do not please me, but I like the silver-leaved *Achillea taygetea*, which opens lemon and fades to ivory. There is a good lavender-cotton, *Santolina neapolitana citrina*, which even when kept hard pruned will cover itself in summer with tidy butter-balls; it makes a fine show at a distance, but close at hand the flowers have a slightly soiled appearance, suggestive of aged woollen underwear. Lemon forms occur among the newer solidagos, but lighter and more graceful in habit is the bigeneric hybrid, *Solidaster luteus* (*Solidago missouriensis* x *Aster ptarmacoides*), which can be relied upon to give a fine primrose-yellow display. But in the families of coreopsis, gaillardia, helenium, helianthus, heliopsis and rudbeckia I do not know of a single blonde; nor for that matter have I ever seen a cream-coloured dandelion, though I believe that many shades of this flower are cultivated in Japan.

Other families predominantly yellow have their rare but attractive cream representatives. Among the oenotheras there is a lovely pale variety of the biennial *O. odorata* that is well worth growing; the brassy hypericums are redeemed by the exquisite *H. olympicum citrinum*, and the lemon variety of *Alyssum saxatile* forms a much more pleasing contrast to its inevitable companions the purple and crimson aubretias, than the usual gold type. For a big mass of the desired colour, there is nothing to beat the tree-lupins, whose colours cover the whole range from milk through cream and butter to cheese; and the sulphur-coloured giant scabious, *Cephalaria tatarica*. But these are plants for the larger garden, where the silver-gilt *Cytisus praecox*, the paler forms of *Potentilla fruticosa* and the cream and apricot azaleas might also find a place. On a smaller scale, *Sisyrinchium striatum* can be relied upon for providing

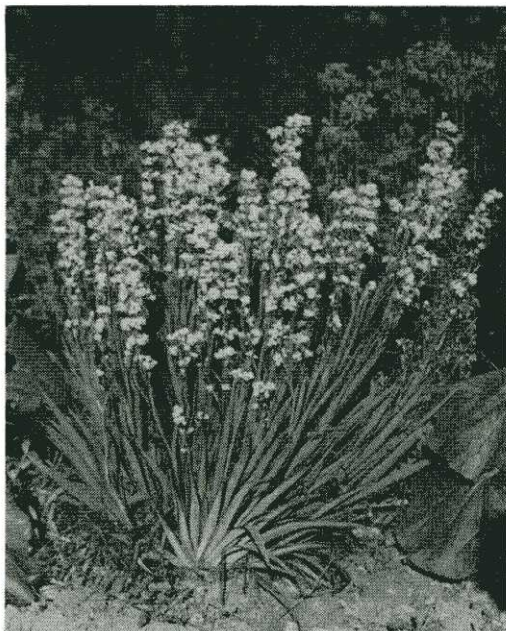


Photo. Amateur Gardening

Sisyrrinchium striatum is one of the hardy rush lilies, growing up to three feet and producing pale yellow flowers at mid-summer. They resent disturbance and flourish best when well established.

clumps of bloom over a long period, and there are rock-garden or front-of-the-border treasures such as *Anemone magellanica*. Cream and primrose forms are common among the narcissi, and fairly so among tulips, flag irises, gladioli and violas, but are rare among crocuses, and surprisingly infrequent among chrysanthemums, where they are particularly desirable, blending as they do as well with the pinks and purples as with the gold and bronze shades.

A few more names might be mentioned—the new kniphofia, Maid of Orleans; and the stiff little bells of *Digitalis lutea*—but on the whole the list is a short one, and what is more, the items on it are not easily obtained. Few nurserymen stock the pale forms; they seem convinced that all the public wants is ever brighter and more brazen yellows. Attempts to raise the desired varieties from seed are often disappointing; the seed is seldom offered, and the seedlings too often fail to come true. I suspect that the cream and lemon varieties tend to be less robust than their darker cousins and are relatively short-lived, which would account for their rarity. Their place may be taken to a certain extent by plants with cream-variegated foliage, which fulfil the same function of lightening dark places and pacifying warring elements—functions also performed, we are told, by the milk of human kindness. We could do with a great deal more of both.

LUPINS TO COLOUR FROM SEED

by

A. G. L. HELLYER

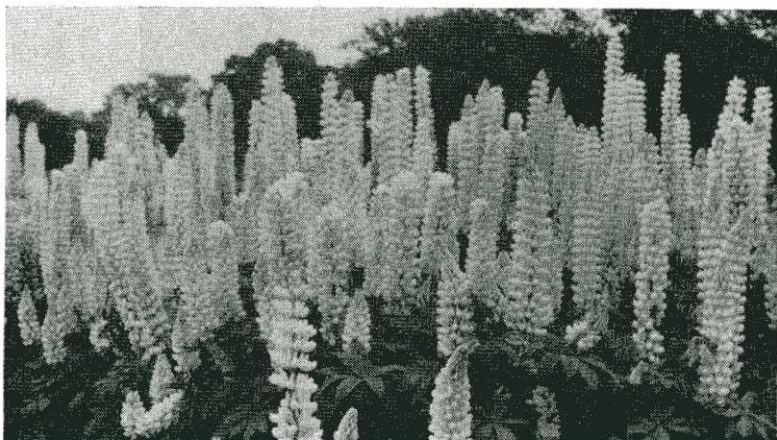


Photo. Amateur Gardening

Lupins on trial at Wisley, 1962. Above—Noble Maiden, a vigorous white variety which was Highly Commended.

ONE of the most interesting plant trials I have seen was that of lupins from seed grown this year in the R.H.S. gardens at Wisley. We have got so used to the easy generalization that with highly bred garden varieties of perennials if one wants uniformity one must propagate vegetatively that we tend to forget its basic falsity. There have always been important exceptions, with geums, for example which for fifty years and more have produced excellently uniform seed strains. Frank Reinalt proved it false for delphiniums when he began to produce his series of Pacific Giants to colour and now it had been proved false again by the best of these excellent lupins at Wisley.

I do not say that any one strain came 100 per cent true to colour and habit, but such strains as Elsoms' Yellow Shades, Chatelaine, Nobel Maiden and Chandelier came close enough to satisfy most garden requirements. Such varieties as occurred was actually rather pleasant and only occasionally did the odd "rogue" turn up which in practice would need to be pulled out or removed elsewhere to preserve uniformity.

Least variation of all occurred in Chatelaine, a beautiful pink and white strain fully up to the standard of good 'clones' raised from cuttings. The spikes were all full and well-formed and had the true Russell characteristic of spread standards giving the solid floral display that we are accustomed to expect from lupins today. Indeed it would be true to say that throughout this trial the Russell

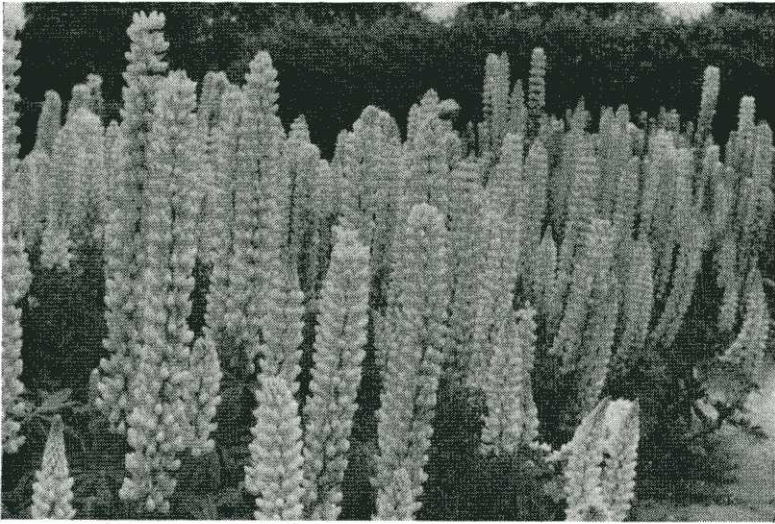


Photo. Amateur Gardening

A handsome yellow variety, Elsoms' Yellow Shades received the Award of Merit in the trial at Wisley.

element was very much in evidence and it was more in uniformity of colour or, with the mixtures, good grading of colour, than in quality of spike that one strain differed from another. This was noticeable, for example, in two mixtures bearing rather similar names. Russell Mixed, from Messrs Watkins and Simpson, had a much more complete range of lupin colours than Russell Hybrids Mixed Improved from Clause which had a preponderance of pink shades and was very short of blues and purples. Apart from this the Clause strain was very good, the individual spikes being actually a little larger than those of Watkins and Simpson's strain.

To return to the single colour selections, Elsoms' Yellow Shades was actually a good deal more uniform than its name would suggest. The colour varied from a good canary yellow to deep primrose and throughout the spikes were very large and uniform.

A rather wider range of yellow shades appeared in Chandelier and here there was the occasional pink or ivory flowered plant but the spikes were all of first class quality.

Nobel Maiden is white and at Wisley a few yellows appeared among it, but they could easily have been removed and would scarcely have been missed so vigorous were the plants. This was one of the tallest varieties in the trial.

My Castle has a wider colour band than any of the single colour selections I have mentioned but mainly in the deep reds with an occasional apricot. All the shades were wonderfully rich and the quality throughout so good that, had I been growing them in my own garden, there was not one I would have wanted to throw out.

In short here were lupins that could be raised cheaply from seed without the risk of increasing virus disease as can so readily be done with vegetatively propagated clones. They would meet most of the needs of the ordinary gardener except that there was, oddly, no single colour selection for blue or purple. Have we bred lupins so far away from the original that its colour can no longer be captured with ease?

The awards made by the R.H.S. judges were as follows:—

Awards of Merit to Elsoms' Yellow Shades (Elsoms'), Chatelaine (Sluis-Vis) and Russell Mixed (Watkins and Simpson).

Highly Commended to Nobel Maiden (Sluis-Vis), My Castle (Sluis-V) Chandelier (Sluis-Vis) and Russell Hybrids Mixed Improved (L. Clause).

HARDY PLANTS FOR SEASIDE DISTRICTS

by

CHRISTINE KELWAY

HAND in hand with increasing building development in coastal areas goes a growing interest in hardy plants suitable for seaside gardens, and since frost is not the bugbear within the sea's influence that it is inland, gardeners on the coast need not concern themselves as closely with the frost-hardiness of plants and would be able to include many a near-tender plant were it not for the damaging effect of sea-wind and salt-scorch. Where there is shelter from these there is little problem and there is practically no limit to what will grow successfully, but gales and salt are immensely destructive to unprotected plants.

Few plants really enjoy the buffeting of violent, salty wind straight off the sea, though fortunately for seaside gardeners there are some which endure this sort of torment better than others and even a few that appear to revel in such conditions.

For sandy, limy soils the huge dianthus family undoubtedly tops our list; border carnations and garden pinks of every description all relish the salty tang of sea breezes and their stiff grey foliage is unaffected by a drenching salt-bath. Thrifts or sea-pinks (*Armeria maritima*) are a common sight in summer when they have a long-flowering season on exposed headlands when their grassy tussocks are studded with pale pink flowers. These low-growing cushions make an ideal edging for a cottage path or for clothing a sea-facing wall and varieties in red, deep rose and white as well as the more common pink make a pretty patchwork quilt effect. For the front of the flower-border there are some with broader leaves and rounded heads on long stems.

In the same way that shrubs with grey or silver foliage are so successful by the sea because of the myriads of tiny hairs protecting their leaf surfaces, so we may confidently expect most perennial plants with similar leaves to do as well. Such beautiful foliage-plants as (*Cineraria maritima*) *Senecio cineraria*, *Centaurea gymnocarpa* and *Senecio leucostachys* may be reduced by frost to horrid black messes inland, but stand a remarkable amount of exposure on the coast and are

hardy enough for warmer coastal areas. The sea holly, *Eryngium maritimum*, was once a familiar denizen on sandy dunes, and cultivated forms of it and the globe thistle (Echinops) are excellent seaside plants, but for very exposed situations I prefer such dwarf varieties as *Eryngium* 'Blue Dwarf' and *Echinops* 'Veitch's Blue'. *Catananche caerulea* bears silvery scaly buds that open to exquisite mauve-blue flowers in June, and the dry papery flowers do well in trying conditions of drying winds. Among the achilleas, the grey-leaved *Achillea clypeolata* with flat yellow heads and the long-flowering *A.* 'Coronation Gold' are very good and though *A. cupaniana* may be too prolific a seeder for some tastes, its ferny grey foliage and white daisy flowers are very decorative hanging down a wall in company with the trailing *Convolvulus mauritanicus* whose pale blue saucers fading to mauve with age continue on into autumn.

Kniphofias (red hot pokers) flourish even on the inhospitable north-east coast and though they benefit from moisture at the roots during the flowering season they resent a soil that gets waterlogged. There is now such a wide range both in height and colour that they may be had in flower from April to October. Spring planting is best and once planted they like to be left alone. Irises are very successful by the sea because of the rigidity of their stems and leaves and are worth the risk of a June gale destroying their all too short season of bloom. The dwarf *Iris pumila*, in purple, blue or gold, stands a better chance and is very welcome in April and May.

To achieve a striking, sub-tropical note the New Zealand flax, *Phormium tenax*, may be planted, but not too near the house, as its leaves make a rattling sound that can be very disturbing in a gale. As well as those with sea-green or purple leaves there is a variegated form whose tall sword-like leaves are edged with yellow and the immense arching spikes of dull coppery-red flowers are borne in late summer. With similar foliage effect, yuccas make good accent plants either as a single incident on a lawn or at a corner or rising spear-like from dense ground-cover. One of the hardiest as well as one of the most beautiful is *Yucca filamentosa* which can be relied upon to throw up imposing spikes of creamy-white, bell-shaped flowers each summer. The yuccas are sun-lovers and never flowered better than during the long hot summer of 1959. *Crambe cordifolia*, 5 feet tall, a showy relative of the wild sea-kale sometimes found on shingle beaches, has large panicles of white flowers and huge leathery leaves, so that rather after the manner of *Phormium tenax* it might be used to create a sub-tropical effect in a seaside garden. None of these plants requires staking; indeed this is almost an impossibility in a windy garden on the coast.

For low massed plantations there are few hardy perennials so indifferent to soil and so decorative and long-lasting in flower as *Sedum spectabile* with thick glaucous leaves and flat carmine flowers. It has at last received the Award of Merit which this useful late bloomer richly deserves. *Sedum spectabile* 'Brilliant' has flowers deeper and brighter in colour that contrast well with the type. The soft pinks and purples of perennial mesembryanthemums act as a foil to the exotic colouring of that old favourite, *Gazania splendens*, bright orange with a black centre and all the newer large-flowered hybrids in varied colours. Not hardy enough for colder inland gardens they make spreading mats of colour from May to September by the sea. Both 'mezzies' and gazanias like a light sandy soil and no spot is too hot for them.

AGAPANTHUS

THE HON. LEWIS PALMER

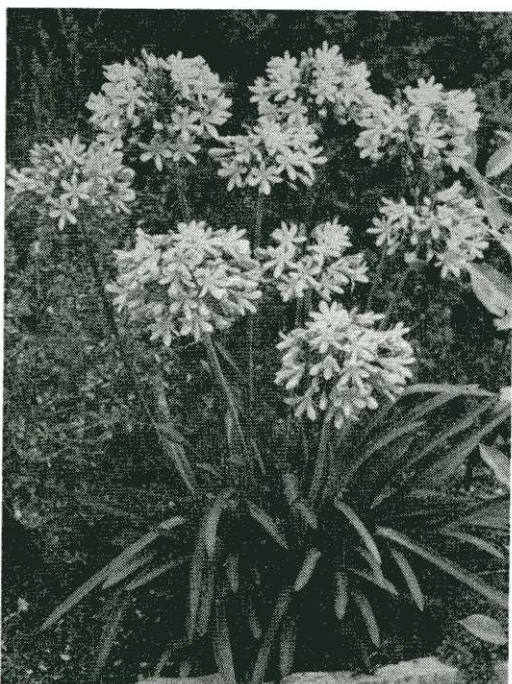


Photo. J. E. Downward

A handsome group of agapanthus in full flower. Note how sturdily they stand above the clean leaves.

THE old-fashioned idea that agapanthus or African blue lily was not a hardy plant was largely the fault of the botanists of the last century, who included all the varieties of agapanthus that came from South Africa (and they are found wild nowhere else) under a single species *Agapanthus umbellatus*.

In fact it is now established that there are now some fourteen or fifteen different species of agapanthus that inhabit very different climatic regions in their native land, and the name *A. umbellatus* belongs to none of them!

Those that come from the coastal regions of the cape and Natal are usually not hardy and those were the first to be introduced into British gardens in the 17th and 18th centuries. But, those that naturally inhabit the dry cold high veldt and the mountains of the Drakensberg are generally perfectly hardy under English conditions.

Agapanthus have been cultivated for some two and a half centuries in African gardens and it is fairly safe to say that the vast majority of forms of garden origin are of hybrid blood. A great many of these hybrids have a greater or lesser dose of hardy blood which often give them the same hardiness as their hardy ancestors enjoyed. I have been breeding and selecting from these hardy strains for nearly twenty years and I have plants in my garden now that came through the winter of 1947/48 in the open. Last winter which was a very severe one for shrubs, killed 9 of my agapanthus in the open out of over 200 plants and some of those were recent acquisitions that had been planted out experimentally.

Hardy agapanthus are of all sorts, tall or short, deciduous or evergreen, early flowering (July) or late flowering (September) with open bells or hanging tubes dark blue, blue, pale blue or white. The leaves of deciduous varieties turn yellow and die down in the autumn, those of evergreen varieties stay green until frost comes to reduce them to a pulpy mush. One would imagine that the plants would be severely damaged by this but it is not the case. The following spring the leaves come up again as strongly as ever and they flower just as well as the deciduous varieties.

All like a hot well drained position in full sun and are perfectly happy in a hungry sand or plain chalk. What they do not like is getting their roots wet in water or being dug round in the autumn since their long white fleshy roots extend for quite a distance all round the plant. I find they respond with increased vigour to an autumnal mulch of chopped bracken or of bonfire ash.

This year, like everything else, they are very late. Instead of beginning to flower in the middle of July, the first blossoms opened in the first week of August and now at the time of writing during the second week of August I can see from my window over a hundred flower heads making a haze of blue at the bottom and at the top of my rock garden.

ARISTOCRATS OF THE BUTTERCUP FAMILY

KAY N. SANECKI

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FLOWERING plants are collected into groups or natural orders by the botanists according to their common features and likenesses, and broadly speaking, display family characteristics and idiosyncrasies. Quite often the same general cultural treatment is required for each member of a group.

In the border, for example, some of the most useful and showiest plants belong to the family Ranunculaceae. Better known to amateurs as the buttercup family, the plants all need a good deep soil with plenty of humus or moisture retaining material, or even a damp loam. All have attractive deep green leaves sometimes leathery as in the case of the hellebores and peonies, always deeply cleft like a hand, particularly so in delphiniums, hellebores and trollius. The flower parts are arranged in a circle except in the showy aconitums and delphiniums and sometimes double flowers are produced as in peonies, trollius, crowfoot, delphinium and thalictrum.

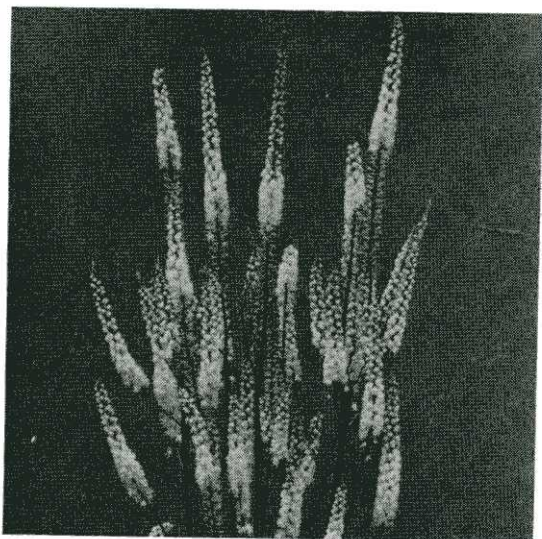


Photo. J. E. Downward

The apricot cream flowers of *Cimifuga cordifolia* (syn. *C. americana*) are in slender spikes and look well at the back of a late border, or even on the edge of a woodland garden.

A fetish of plants belonging to Ranunculaceae is that they resent disturbance and often take a year or two to establish themselves. This is particularly true of the hellebores, (*Helleborus niger*, the Christmas rose, *H. orientalis*, the Lenten rose) all of which thrive well once they have settled down and are happy and allowed to make good clumps. The peonies, too, like to be carefully planted with good soil round their roots and the crowns not too deep. Once they have accustomed themselves to their own particular spot in the garden they can (and indeed must) be left for some years if they are to give of their best.

Anemone hybrida (japonica), the latest flowering of the genus, likes to be left alone once it is established. The showy monkshood or aconitum also takes time to sort itself out and then increases steadily and can be left undisturbed for years. Generally, these plants which hate being uprooted like to be mulched in spring and prefer both moisture and shade. This is especially so of the hellebores. Peonies will tolerate full sunshine but like to spend their mornings in the shade, particularly the early breaking kinds.

Another characteristic of the family is that some of the plants are poisonous. The aconitum probably springs to mind first for its tuberous taproot is very poisonous, and when one has scratched hands great care must be taken in dealing with this plant. *Aconitum napellus* is the one used in homeopathy, a straight spur to the flower indicating a better medicinal variety than a curled spur. Good forms of this border plant are Spark's variety, which has a slightly branching habit and big deep violet-blue flowers, and Bressingham Spire reaching to 3½ ft. when it is happily situated.

The name helleborus is supposed to be derived from helien "to cause death"

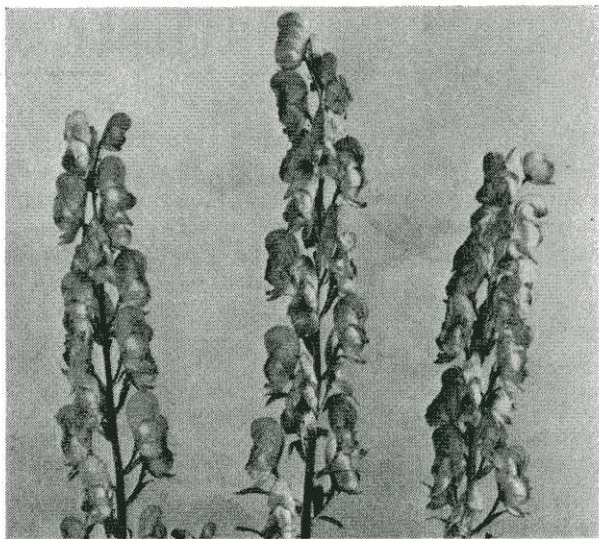


Photo. J. E. Downward

Another late border plant is *Aconitum napellus* Bressingham Spire now well established as a favourite of hardy plant growers. The hooded flowers are of the deepest blue and are carried on three-foot sturdy stems.

and bora "food," a reference to the poisonous properties of the plant; they are frequently illustrated in old herbals called Setterwort. The native plant *Helleborus foetidus* is really evil smelling and shares this property with the flowers of *cimicifuga*, another genus of herbaceous plants that is included in Ranunculaceae. All *cimicifuga* flowers, with the exception of *C. racemosa*, the tallest growing one which reaches 6 ft., smell unpleasant, hence the English name bugbane (*cimex* "bug" and *fugo* "drive away").

Cimicifuga seems to be a little grown plant and yet it is free standing, cuts well and has pretty feathery finely cut leaves. *C. cordifolia* has tiny apricot flowers reminiscent of thalictrum and which seem to take a long time to open. *C. racemosa* is the one to grow for cutting because the others have such a dirty odour when brought into the house. Again these roots prefer a deep soil and, like all other members of the order, can be divided in the spring.

Apart from their normally yellow buttercups and their garden relatives the ranunculus and trollius, most of the border plants discussed have flowers ranging from pale pink and mauve to deep blue and rosy-pink. The flush of pink of some varieties of Christmas rose is echoed in *Anemone japonica* and reappears in some of the long spurred hybrid aquilegeas. All the pinks and blues combine to make the splendour of the delphinium spires which rise above the rest of the border.

Perhaps the most important common fact of this group of border plants is that they are strong growing and have good straight stems. With the exception of the delphinium most of the others need no staking at all except in windy situations. But the delphinium is like the flamboyant dowager whose whole effort goes on effect, and so needs to be upheld and cosseted through every storm and every winter.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

ALAN BLOOM

It was said, ten years ago, that nuclear science would revolutionize plant breeding as one of the minor activities of being able to harness this new and mighty power. The evidence however scarcely points either to this power being harnessed or to see any startling achievements in the world of plants, due to atomic agency. They may come, but I for one view the prospect with very mixed feelings. I am not at all sure either that plant breeding should become such a scientific matter or that a host of outlandish, freakish 'cultivators' will benefit the mass of ordinary gardeners. I am in fact, one of those who believe that the development of plants should be a labour of love, for plant lovers who know what would be an improvement and strive for it patiently and objectively. Though I am certainly not against truly progressive methods I am deeply suspicious of anything that claims to be revolutionary. Sure progress usually has to be slow.

Objective plant breeding is subject very largely to the law of supply and demand. The hybridist who follows a whim seldom produces anything likely to be in great demand, as has happened with several freakish varieties in the past from green auriculas to black tulips. Less whimsical, but not always on the lines of public taste or demand are those who try to produce blue roses or red delphiniums. New breaks in genera where a certain colour is lacking are apt to become an obsession with some breeders. Though success would be startling enough, it usually becomes a will o' the wisp, elusive, tantalizing and not altogether commendable because in most people's minds the hoped for new colour is not characteristic of the plant in question. Who really wants a red delphinium, a pink scabious, a yellow *Chrysanthemum maximum* or a blue dianthus? I may be wrong, but surely there are sufficient genera available in both species and varieties already with a sufficient range of their own characteristic colour, to make every garden gay without trying to go against nature to this extent?

Of course there is room for improvements in hardy perennials. There is room too for colour variations, but what to my mind is of far greater importance is the factor of garden worthiness in other directions than colour alone. Some of the most startling colours in hybrid varieties have proved to be poor growers—e.g. pink delphiniums. What is needed, surely, are varieties that can be relied upon to adapt themselves to a wide variety of soils, to grow erectly and strongly, to flower for a long time with the least amount of fussing and care to the gardener. This fact is at last being recognized. Colour and size of flower are not the only criteria, sturdiness must play an increasing part in the efforts of plant breeders to meet public demand for the future.

The future may well see an increasing interest taken in the species. For a long time now breeders have found a pretty good outlet for new varieties in popular genera such as asters, iris, lupins, phlox, but I really think the useful limit has been thereabouts reached. What more keen amateurs are looking for is uncommon species which have definite claims to garden worthiness. Many of them have been undeservedly neglected during the era of 'popular varieties' but now that

some are being brought out into the open they are being treasured as few 'novelties' could ever be for long. Such species possess enduring as well as endearing qualities. Their possessors regard them as discoveries as well as acquisitions of value because they came as a reward for patient search rather than by costly purchase. Any amateur who sets out to stock his garden with only the best kinds of perennials will be surprised how many of them are species. One must have both species and the best of the named varieties and no gardening ambition could be more worthy nor more rewarding than this, steadfastly pursued.

DOUBTFUL HARDINESS

A request to members with limited gardening time

WHILE hardiness is of first importance to those of us with too little time to give to our gardens, inevitably the day comes when the experimental spirit gets the upper hand, and so, maybe we try a few plants that are doubtfully hardy. Whether we have failure or success, the results are thought-provoking. Is a failure our own fault or is the district unsuitable? Is success due to the locality being specially favourable or to some special measures we have taken, or is the plant just more hardy than is generally supposed?

It is a great pity that much of this experience goes unrecorded. The range of plants commonly grown might well be extended if it could be shown that, at least under certain conditions, some of the less hardy could be grown with a reasonable chance of success without demanding too much attention.

As a contribution to this end, it is proposed to collate information on the performance of doubtfully hardy plants in the care of members. Please send:—

1. Name of Plant.
In full sun/partial sun/complete shade.
In dry/damp situation.
Aspect.
Drainage.
Whether sheltered by wall, hedge, etc.
2. Type of soil in your garden and subsoil if possible.
3. General weather conditions and rainfall of the area.
4. Any special measures to give protection.
5. Any comments on possible causes of success or failure.

To be sent to:—Miss Barbara White, 10 St. Barnabas Road, Emmer Green, Reading, Berks.

This enquiry should be very worth while, but its value depends on receiving contributions from a large number of members.

Until such time as sufficient material has been collected to make a report, any information in the records on a particular point will be given on request—but first, please, help us to build up the records.

JUST FOR FUN

by

FRANCES BRUMMITT

Do you ever choose your plants, not for any beauty in form or flower, scent or leaf but just for fun? Do try just that some time. There is such a choice apart from the obvious ones of pansy 'faces' whiskered or not, to laugh at you, and burning bush (*Dictamnus fraxinella*) for the fun of setting the volatile gas alight on a warm, still evening.

You can grow obedient plant, shoo-fly, touch-me-not, Aunt Eliza, mouse plant, hag-tapers and black dragons, to name but a few.

The big surprise plant *par excellence* is the big balsam of the Himalayas (*Impatiens roylei*), naturalized now by many British rivers. The blooms in every tone of pink are so exotically shaped that many people enquire if it is an orchid. I used to grow it by my garden gate where my baker, a gentle, unassuming man one day surprised me by saying in conspiratorial tones, "I always tell the boy to touch it just there (on the pod tip), I just LOVE to see him jump when it shoots him." If your garden is small then beware, for it will undoubtedly shoot seeds everywhere and mean many seedlings to pull up every spring, but it is well worth growing for the fun of catching so many people unawares.

The large seed leaves are so aggressively, healthily obvious and unmistakable that it is a simple matter to distinguish them from all others—and there's always the compost heap (or should be) to receive them as welcome grist. I strongly object to a bonfire to burn up potential humus, or to a rubbish heap, happy home-from-home for woodlice and countless other pests.

Literally millions of seeds of foxgloves and mullein go in my heaps annually, all to re-appear as welcome mulch and life-giving humus for deserving friends. Lest that conjure up visions of surprised friends wallowing ankle deep in mulch, I hasten to add deserving *plant* friends.

With balsam as a funny ha-ha plant there is also a funny-peculiar plant which is not often seen—the mouse plant (*Arisarum proboscidium*), with the green or brown hindquarters and curling tails of its 'mice' projecting from among the tiny arum foliage.

It is so obvious that the forequarters and the head of the 'mouse' must only be hidden by the leaves—but that alas is a false surmise, and an additional surprise. To grow 'mice' is startling enough, but headless ones!

Of course you must have foxgloves. Have you noticed that you never need to tell youngsters what to do with the fallen 'gloves'? They always seem to know instinctively. Even some oldsters have been seen to recapture their childhood pleasure in putting their digits in the digitalis. I get a bonus smile from mine when my marmalade cat stands on his hind legs with an alert air of puzzled expectancy, trying to locate the confined buzz of an exploring bee in the bells.

Do you grow 'Aunt Eliza'? Not a far cry that from its correct name of antholyza, and much easier to remember! Do your eyes twinkle to see your friends' eyes travel up from ground to five foot orange spikes and to hear their amazed "Good gracious! I never saw a monbretia that size before!"

My companion to that is *Senecio clivorum* which I grow for the pure orange of its large daisy heads on five foot stems, for the muted purple of its leaf under-



Photo. J. E. Downward

Foxgloves, or fairy fingers are beloved by young and old alike. There are now many attractive garden varieties.

sides and for the all but patent disbelief when one describes it quite truthfully as a giant groundsel.

Do you know *Phyteuma scheutzeri*? Yes, I agree—a terrible name for the poor dear! While not as completely and utterly fascinating as its alpine relation *P. comosum* it is yet quite captivating.

Take the flower in your hand, look closely, and you will see that those narrow blue petals swing out and in again to show a paler lining just like the old fashioned slashed sleeves.

Do you think green flowers are odd, unnatural, curious or funny? A family of plants which has come to the fore in recent years is the euphorbia. It gives me much pleasure to grow *E. cyparissus*, the Cypress spurge for the peculiar feel of its soft, almost nothingness when drawn through the hand. Bottlebrush (*Poterium obtusum*) comes into the same category. The airy, cherry-magenta brushes seem, like the Cypress spurge, to have no substance.

If you want masses of flowers *E. characias* will provide bright yellow crescents among the lime green bracts. *E. wulfenii* gives purple with its green and *E.*

epithymoides (Oh, these names!) produces a bright glow of gold most cheering to see so early in the year, and all are so lasting.

Have you tried caper spurge, (*E. lathyris*) with those wide airy umbels of light green with surprising lilac stems and fat green 'capers' to follow?

This is very striking too in the pre-flowering stage, with that distinctive white stripe centering the glaucous green leaves which march so sturdily two by two, four square up the juicy stem, like some exotic tiny tree. But beware of children handling the euphorbias, for the juice is usually poisonous.

A plant of magnetic attraction to children is the wand flower, (*Dierama pulcherrimum*), known in imaginative catalogues as fairy fishing rods.

From a clump of long, narrow but surprisingly tough leaves tall arching sprays of dangling bell-flowers rise so unexpectedly and so unnoticeably. I have never yet managed to catch mine half way up. The plant stays just the same for so long that one passes it by for a day or two—and lo, the rods are up and the bait dangling! It's as bad as waiting in spring for the buds of *Iris reticulata* to pop—they usually do that too when I am not there.

And talking of emerging buds, what about the evening primroses? *Oenothera biennis* and *O. odorata* are two biennial favourites, the former high wide and handsome, the latter dainty and unobtrusive in growth. It is well worth while to walk in the garden just at dusk to catch the actual springing of the blooms that seem to have an inner glow, guaranteed to give a lightening of the heart at the end of a wearying day.

One evening I called to my husband a few paces behind me, "Look, there are seven new primroses out already on this stem." I turned my head back, and there were thirteen—just like that, and while we stood firmly and resolutely expectant, out came five more. Parachute packers might well be interested in this unfolding.

Oenothera biennis is apt to be over-generous in its seedlings, but as aforementioned the compost heap is always waiting.

How I do dislike just throwing away the aggressively healthy seedlings of too-prolific doers, and what satisfaction I derive from tucking their vitality into my compost heap.

Do we sufficiently appreciate the mulleins (*verbascums*) 'hag-tapers' though they be in their wild state? An old friend *V. nigrum*, frequently adorning the wayside near Stow-on-the-Wold gives me a quiet joy in my garden, clean, crisp, fresh yellow blooms every day anew. Each lasts but a day, companion to the lovely blue chicory nearby, but when there are hundreds on each spike who cares? I once began counting the open blooms on an 8 ft. *V. pulverulentum* but gave up at 1,200. To remember that these would all fall that evening and that the following day would see a further similar display was a somewhat overwhelming thought, a kind of daily resurrection. No wonder its roots penetrate the subsoil for its mineral sustenance.

Who can resist the clear purple and dainty flower sprays of *V. phoeniceum*? When shall we see that grand colour in a hybrid the size of the white 'Miss Willmott,'? and what a startler that would be!

Both 'Miss Willmott,' the yellow 'Harkness Hybrid' and others will give branching spires of large flowers, but the perennial 'Cotswold Gem' and 'Pink Domino' types are sometimes apt to be a little gappy in bloom, though all share that each-morning-anew habit. *V. 'Gainsborough'* is more like a flowering bush, so prolific are the branches of moonlight yellow blooms.

PETASITES FRAGRANS

A WARNING

E. A. LETT

The idea of having some flowers of hardy herbaceous perennials brought indoors every month of the year, seemed quite a good one. Though people are apt to think that the season for the herbaceous borders does not begin until April, and is over by October, or perhaps November, if the weather is mild, a little study of the flowering season of a number of perennials shows that it could be possible to cut flowers from one's own garden all through the year.

Only a very large garden could be relied upon to provide enough flowers to fill a good-sized container regularly. Just a few, however, would be very satisfactory, giving a feeling of pride at having grown flowers with very little cost at a time when prices in a florist's shop were at their highest.

Helleborus niger, the Christmas rose, seemed an obvious choice for January, yet the only specimen in my garden obstinately refused to justify its popular name, often showing its first flowers as late as February. Something more reliable would have to be chosen. Adonis? *Iris unguicularis*? *Petasites fragrans*?

It was the word '*fragrans*' that resolved the problem. Something fragrant, the sweet smell of a summer garden, would be just right for a dull winter day. Therefore, *Petasites fragrans* won the day.

It very nearly won the whole garden! In fact, five years after planting one normal sized specimen, the battle is far from ended. Admittedly, it was mentioned in the catalogue that *Petasites fragrans* was 'not suitable for small gardens,' but the warning was too gentle, too insignificant in small print. It should have been printed in big, black letters, preceded by the word—'WARNING' in bigger, blacker capitals.

At first its aggressiveness was not noticable. The small, dainty flowers, looking something like pink-tipped, downcast daisies, too shy to raise their heads, duly fulfilled their purpose, and even one small vase containing only seven or eight heads, filled the room with a most delightful, compelling scent. The word '*fragrans*' was certainly well deserved.

Soon, however, the plant became a nuisance. It spread too rapidly and was not easy to keep in check. The little grey, rolled-up shoots seemed to spear the ground everywhere, then unfurl into the large, unattractive, ugly green leaves, as ugly as coltsfoot leaves on a railway embankment in an industrial town. The neighbouring plants were almost engulfed by the excessive growth, and it became evident that one small breath of fragrance in mid-winter was to be paid for very dearly.

For a while the question "is it worth the trouble?" remained unanswered, but the decision was finally made one day when my new neighbour, wandering round her garden to see what treasures the previous owner had left, held up a leaf, saying, "I don't recognize this one. Is it a weed?" The justifiably untruthful answer was "Yes! In a small garden it is undoubtedly a weed. Get rid of it." And from that moment the fight was declared.

DIMORPHOTHECA BARBERIAE

A request for information concerning the behaviour of Dimorphotheca barberiae appeared in a news letter last year. The following correspondence has been received. Please write to the Editor or the Secretary if you have any further details to add.

'I have very light sandy soil and it grows splendidly. It started to flower in April, 1961 and survived 5 deg. of frost at the end of May while in flower. It went on until the end of August.'

Jane Firth (Miss),
Hazel Hill,
Hambleton Road,
Godalming, Surrey

'In Somerset I find *Dimorphotheca barberiae* hardy. My garden is limey, about 250 ft. above sea level and very occasionally the temperature has dropped to zero but more often the winter temperature does not exceed 12-20 deg. of frost. I have kept it now for some 15 years without protection though occasionally an odd plant has succumbed. The site is exposed.'

Dorothy Lowe (Miss),
Hinton St. George,
Somerset

'We read in the August News Letter (1961) a request for members to report on their experience as to the relative hardiness of *Dimorphotheca barberiae*.

We have grown this plant for over 20 years, and have found it reliably hardy in our frost-pocket nursery with the exception of the winter of 1956, when the plants were completely killed to ground level, and many were grubbed up in the belief that they had been killed.

Plants which were left undisturbed consequently broke into growth in June, and made quite a good recovery.

Our lowest frost was a night of 28 degrees, and we had continual freeze-up conditions for about ten days.

We therefore consider that the plant is reliable, at any rate in southern England as a border plant. You may be interested to know that we also grow the following species and varieties.

Dimorphotheca hybrida (*barberiae* x *ecklonis*)

D. hybrida rosea (pink form of the above)

D. ecklonis

D. jucunda

D. jucunda rosea

D. Wisley Hybrid (believed to be *jucunda* x *barberiae*)

In our experience the latter varieties and species are only suitable for milder parts of the West Country, and are not suitable for general distribution, at least for inland gardens.

Neil G. Treseder,
Treseders' Nurseries (Truro) Ltd.

BOOK REVIEW

Collins Guide to Bulbs by PATRICK M. SYNGE

(Collins 30s.)

PUBLISHERS blurbs are usually read with a certain amount of reserve. In the case of Patrick M. Syngé's latest work, *Collins Guide to Bulbs*, through the comment on the dust cover that "his book will be a treasure for any gardener" will be echoed, one feels, by all who dip into its pages. It is certainly one of the most important gardening books to appear in recent years.

Many years of work have gone into its preparation, it is extremely comprehensive (650 species and varieties are described), and it is written with the authority of a specialist who is completely at home in his chosen field. Like the previous two titles in the Collins series of garden guides, Mr. Syngé's book is superbly illustrated, with 330 plants represented in colour and 27 in black and white.

The author has, as he points out, interpreted the term bulbous "liberally", including corms, tubers and rhizomes where these need the same treatment as bulbs and are listed by nurserymen in bulb catalogues. The emphasis has been placed, too, "rather on the hardy or nearly hardy than on the tender bulb" and only a few outstanding plants needing warm greenhouse or stove treatment have been included.

Above all else, the book brings home to the reader the quite remarkable range and diversity of the bulbous plant kingdom, a kingdom which embraces, in addition to the well-known and much loved genera, such splendid plants as the beautiful *nomocharis*, *paradisaeas*, the attractively marked *Ariseama candidissimum*, *calochortus* and *Crinum powellii*. The author was faced with a formidable task in reducing to manageable proportions such genera as *Narcissi*, *Gladiolus* and *Tulipa*, and his policy of including only those of proven merit was obviously the correct one to adopt.

This is a book to turn to when in doubt—the different genera are dealt with alphabetically in the main section of the work—and to browse over with delight when time allows. It should find as ready a welcome from the newcomer to gardening as from the connoisseur of bulbous plants. The publishers, too, are to be commended for making it available at such a very competitive price.

ROBERT F. PEARSON

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