

THE BULLETIN OF THE  
**HARDY PLANT**

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**SOCIETY**

1964



### 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 and other publications) 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.

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AFTER several months of very dry weather we will probably find it easy to capture the atmosphere of the first three articles in this Bulletin. How fortunate we are to have members of the Society as knowledgeable as R. D. Meikle and Margery Fish and who will give so freely of that knowledge in order that readers might benefit.

Henry Cocker opens the door to the new interest that is being taken in herbaceous perennials in Italy and writes with considerable enthusiasm and sound advice. A new style of Italian garden is emerging and one feels that inevitably the bolder colours will be the favourites under that brilliant sky.

There may be plants you do not know discussed in these pages; Noël Prockter suggests a few. It is a good gardener who tries a new plant each season and the Hon. Secretary welcomes inquiries and can help you to track down a source of supply if your favourite nursery does not stock the plant you want.

Best wishes for good gardening in 1965.

**Kay N. Sanecki**

*Hon. Editor*

**COVER**

The arresting white flowers slashed with maroon and green of *Arisaema candidissima* open very quickly, and it is an interesting plant for a shaded border. (see page 74). Photograph by A. J. Huxley.

# SOME PERENNIALS FROM CYPRUS

by R. D. MEIKLE

THE reason for my visit to Cyprus in 1962 was botanical, not horticultural and it might as well be admitted that had I been travelling in search of hardy herbaceous perennials, neither Cyprus, nor for that matter any other part of the Mediterranean region, would have been my chosen destination.

The Mediterranean climate, with its mild wet winters and hot dry summers, is not one which suits the majority of herbaceous perennials, nor, as the winter of 1962 demonstrated, can many Mediterranean plants, unless from high altitudes, be reckoned satisfactorily hardy in this country. Cyprus, moreover, enjoys (if that is the word) an extreme variant in Mediterranean climates, with exceptionally hot, arid summers, and mild, but frequently dry, winters. Few of the lowland plants will survive our winters outdoors, and though most of the species which occur from 3,000 feet upwards to the summit of Khionistra (6,401 feet) will tolerate low temperatures, they much resent the sunlessness and stagnant dampness of the average British winter.

This is simply a self-protective warning. By all means experiment with the plants I shall mention, and give them the hottest, sunniest corner of your garden, but do not blame me if the experiment is a saddening one.

Priority will be given to *Asphodelus microcarpus*, for it is probably the commonest of all Cyprus perennials, a tall and stately plant, with long spikes of white starry flowers. It is to be seen from the coast up to the tops of all but the highest mountains, and should be just as easy to grow here as the related, but less imposing, *Asphodeline lutea* (see page 82). *Asphodeline liburnica*, resembling *A. lutea* in flower, but with lax, branching inflorescences, is also worth trying; and I can vouch for the fact that Cyprian specimens have survived several winters outdoors at Kew.

The sages are well represented in Cyprus, as in most Mediterranean countries, and the annual bluebeard (*Salvia horminum*) is a common weed throughout the lowlands. Of the perennial species, *Salvia hierosolymitana*, with long panicles of claret-coloured flowers, is possibly the most decorative. It resembles the well-known *S. haematodes* in habit and leaf, and I am hoping that it will prove as hardy, and as persistent. *Salvia crassifolia*, with thick, broad, woolly leaves, and loose branching clusters of pale yellow and lavender flowers, is striking and unusual, but it is a rare plant, and restricted to very dry habitats even in Cyprus, so, like many woolly-leaved plants, I fear it would particularly resent wet, cold weather.

*Salvia lanigera (controversa)* is common in many parts of Cyprus, and has (as a seedling) survived a Somerset winter in a cold, draughty frame. It looks rather like *S. jurisicii*, being subshrubby and compact in habit, with deeply



Forests of giant fennel (*Ferula communis*) are to be seen in Cyprus near Dhiorios.

lobed leaves, but the Cyprian plants had flowers of a richer, deeper blue, and these were held upright, not upsidedown as in *S. jurisicii*.

Before leaving the Labiates, three showy plants, all subshrubby in character, are worth passing consideration. The crimson (or pale yellow) *Scutellaria peregrina* and its near ally *S. cypria* are common up to high altitudes on the Troödos Range, and should be easy to manage here. The butter-yellow *Phlomis brevibracteata* from the lower altitudes of the Northern (or Kyrenia) Range is probably less hardy, but so gay and free flowering, and so much more attractive than the common Jerusalem sage (*Phlomis fruticosa*) that one would like to see it in our gardens. Another Labiate, the tough, creeping *Thymus integer*, with relatively large pink or purple tubular flowers has, I know, been brought into cultivation, but with what success I cannot say. It makes fine, colourful carpets on the slopes of the Troödos Range.

The *Compositae* are present in bewildering numbers, the fields yellow with calendula and *Chrysanthemum coronarium*, or white with chamomiles. One of the chamomiles, *Anthemis tricolor*, is quietly attractive, with prostrate stems, finely lobed grey-green leaves, and pearly-white flowers, the disk and the base of the ray-florets tinged pink or purple—a form (or subspecies) occurs at high altitudes, and may perhaps be hardier than the typical lowland plant.

*Onopordon insigne*, a giant among thistles, has huge basal rosettes of silvery leaves and fiercely spiny, purple flower-heads on stems often 10 ft. high. It has



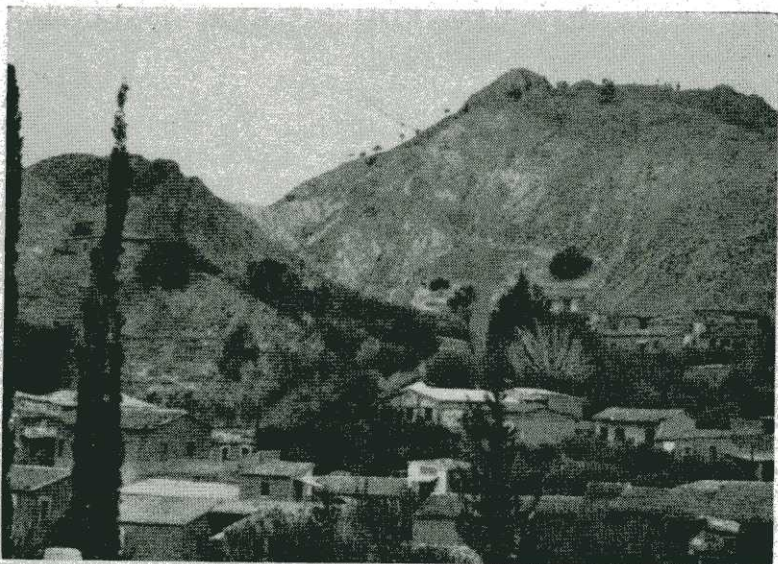
Paphos forest. The mountainside is covered densely with *Pinus brutia*. *Asphodelus microcarpus* can be seen, near left.

been grown successfully at Kew but, alas, proved monocarpic and failed to set seed. *Onopordon insigne* is definitely not a plant for the small garden, but what an idea for the Edinburgh Festival!

*Cardopatum corymbosum*, with mushroom clouds of clear blue thistly flowers, is a charming and conspicuous plant on waste ground all round Nicosia. Like *Onopordon insigne*, it is most probably biennial or monocarpic, but would be worth trying.

The pea family, *Leguminosae*, has not commended itself to herbaceous gardeners, and, apart from lupins and sweet peas, few representatives of this huge assemblage are in general cultivation. Two astragalus species cry out for garden space. The tall *Astragalus lusitanicus*, with handsome, silvery leaves and long candles of large white flowers, is common in the Troödos pine forests, and should look just as beautiful here. Its flowers are succeeded by spectacular, inflated pods, not unlike those of a bladder senna (*Colutea*). The second astragalus, *A. alexandrinus*, is smaller and rarer, and has dense clusters of fluorescent lime-yellow flowers, a startling colour, which I have seen in no other plant. Its fruits are also inflated but less showy than those of *A. lusitanicus*.

Vetches and vetchlings abound throughout Cyprus and are, on the whole, not much more ornamental than the species we see wild in Britain. Two closely related species, *Vicia lunata* (on the Troödos Range) and *V. cypria* (on the



An arid hillside above Kythrea; the home of *Salvia crassifolia*.

Northern Range) are, however, both quaint and unusual, with short racemes of parti-coloured white or yellow and mauve-blue flowers. They would probably be fairly hardy here, and would certainly be interesting additions to the less formal parts of a garden, for, like most of their allies, they have sprawling, untidy ways. I should like to add a very common clover, *Trifolium clypeatum*, to my list of desirables, I find its large loose heads of cream and pink flowers irresistible. But proper gardeners would dismiss it as weedy and uncivilised.

Finally, two plants, both members of the borage family, which left an indelible impression on my memory, perhaps because they were so beautifully matched and so unexpected. Both were growing together, and in considerable quantity, by a roadside not far from the village of Kannaviou. The taller was *Onosma giganteum*, some three feet high, with great branched inflorescences of golden-yellow tubular flowers, and with it was *Echium italicum*, a more formal pyramid of pale blue flowers, and greyish foliage. I do not know how they would fare in British gardens—perhaps they would be a disappointment—but I do know that if it had been seed-time, the patience of my travelling companions would have been once again exhausted while I filled my pockets and dreamed of glories to come.

# PLANTS FOR SHADE

by MARGERY FISH

When "Gardening in the Shade" was published in the spring of this year several members asked if Mrs. Fish would write a piece on the same subject for members of the Society; here we are pleased to present her contribution.

THERE are certain plants one thinks of immediately in connection with shady gardens, hostas, hellebores and bergenias among them, as well as lilies and campanulas, and many of the paeonies. There are many other plants that do well in the shade but whatever one introduces it is important to see that the soil is good and the plants do not dry out. It is so often forgotten that shade means trees, and trees mean poor, dry soil, which must be improved by the addition of humus and kept moist by watering and mulches.

Astrantias are receiving more attention these days and understandably as they are easy and rewarding plants and like to grow in shade. The one most often seen is *A. major*, with pale flowers touched with green and pink, on 2 ft. stems. It is not a showy plant but fits in anywhere and is sometimes called 'Hattie's Pincushion' or 'The Melancholy Gentleman'. Though not as bright as some of the others the plant has a long flowering period and seeds itself well. *A. carnolica* is so similar that some experts consider it synonymous with *A. major*. *Astrantia biebersteinii* has the same pale colouring with perhaps a little more pink in the flowers and leaves more like *A. maxima*. It used to be called *A. intermedia*, being intermediate between *A. major* and *A. maxima*. The latter which used to be called *A. helleborifolia*, is quite distinct with its three lobed leaves like those of a hellebore, its running white roots and flowers which are a definite pink inside and shaded green outside. It flowers in June and July then finishes for the season. *A. carnolica rubra* has the deepest coloured flowers of all, in dark crimson. It is not really as pretty a plant as the others but the colour break makes it quite popular. There are two others but they are not yet in general cultivation. One is a form of *A. major* with very large shaggy flowers, the long, shapely petals being tipped with green. *A. minor* grows to about a foot and has smaller leaves and flowers which are not much more than little bunches of stamens.

Solomon's seal, *polygonatum*, has been grown in cottage gardens for many years and is now enjoying a comeback because it is the type of plant suitable for informal gardening and like the astrantias looks after itself. *Polygonatum multiflorum* has several forms. The largest, *P. m. giganteum*, grows to 4 or 5 ft., the normal variety grown is about 2½ ft. and the small one, *p. m. pumilum*, about 18 ins. or a foot. The double flowers of *P. m. flore plenus* miss something of the grace of the single variety, but it is a rare and interesting plant. *P. verticillatum* is an uncommon British native which has leaves growing in whorls up the stems and small flowers also in whorls. There used to be a pink form, *P. roseum*, which had flowers of purplish-pink instead of white. The Solomon's seal with variegated leaves shows up well against a dark background but it is not as strong a plant as the other types. All the *polygonatums* look best above eye level so that one can see the green tipped white flowers hanging from the arching stems. The flowers are followed by black berries.





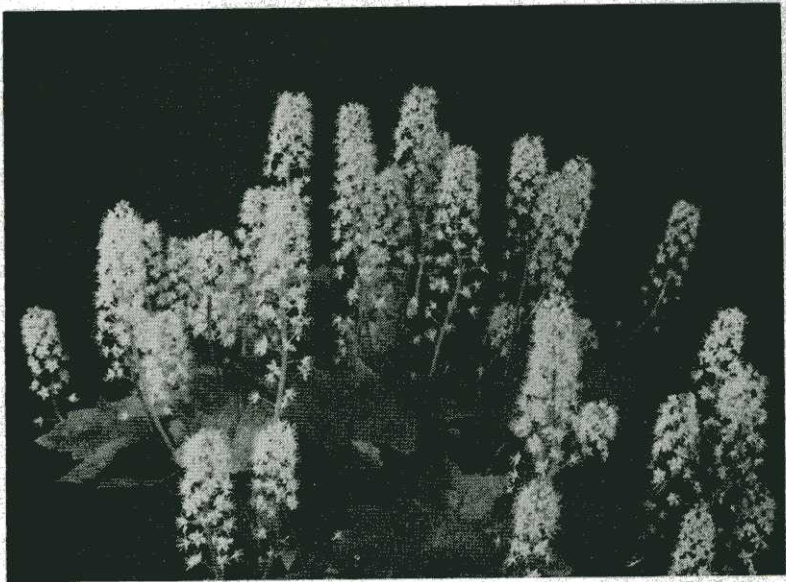
Photo—A. J. Huxley.

*Polygonatum multiflorum* or Solomon's seal produces graceful arching stems from which the green and white flowers hang.

*Smilacina racemosa* is not unlike the polygonatums but it has its sprays of small feathery cream flowers at the top of the leafy stems.

Most of the geraniums flower as well in shade as in sun but some get rather big and leafy and are more suited to a woodland garden or for under-planting shrubs. The three double forms of *Geranium pratense* with blue, purple or white flowers are worthy of any shady border. With me the purple and blue forms grow to 3 ft. or more but the white-flowered form is seldom more than 2 ft. *G. delavayi* has very good leaves and small, but interesting, reflexed flowers of dark crimson with prominent glistening red styles. The pale lilac flowers of *G. nodosum* hover above pale green leaves, which have a lacquered surface. It seeds itself mildly and mixes well with all other flowers. *G. atlanticum* has bulbous roots and is deciduous. It disappears completely in the summer and after autumn rain the well-cut leaves reappear, to be followed in spring by blue, red-veined flowers. Both *G. wallichianum* 'Buxton's Blue', with white-eyed blue flowers, and *G. grevillianum*, which has bright pink flowers, do well in shade and have beautiful leaves.

The leaves of the tiarellas are beautifully marked too and they all have feathery cream flowers which give them the name of foam flowers. *T. wherryi* is the most aristocratic with pointed leaves and neat habit but it seems to need a fairly damp position and does not increase quickly. Nor does *T. unifoliata*, which is rather woody and has large pointed leaves which colour well in autumn. *T. cordifolia* is the one most usually grown. It has running roots and rather flat leaves. There are two other species, *T. polyphylla*, with sprays of tiny pearl-like flowers and *trifoliata* which has small feathery flowers.



Photo—Amateur Gardening.

*Tiarella wherryi* is as light and lacy as its English name, foam flower, suggests.

Some people advocate that *Liriope muscari* should grow in full sun but the best plants I have seen have been in shade and that is where I grow it. The encrusted spikes of blue or white flowers appear in autumn above the grassy leaves. *Reineckia carnea* also has grassy leaves and soft, pinky-mauve flowers which are sometimes hidden by the leaves.

One of the most exciting plants to grow in shade is *Arisaema candidissima*. It makes its appearance late but with great speed. About the end of June one looks for it. The ground is bare one day and the next a pointed spike is about an inch above the soil and the handsome white flower, marked with crimson and green, opens in a day or two, to be followed by very large leaves.

The toad lilies, tricyrtis, have character too, with mottled flowers on 2 ft. stems. The flowers are curiously shaped and speckled with mauve or purple. *T. maculata*, *stolonifera* and *hirta* have mauve flecked flowers and there is also a white form of *T. hirta*.

*Speirantha gardenii* caused great interest when it was shown at Chelsea a few years ago. It is somewhat reminiscent of lily-of-the-valley with leaves of the same type and spikes of small white flowers. *Rohdia japonica* is similar but has larger, more fleshy leaves and shorter flower spikes.

Some gardeners dispute the name of *Selinum carvifolia* and consider it should be *S. tenuifolium*, which is the plant the late E. A. Bowles grew. Both plants can be seen in the Oxford Botanic Garden and both have very fine, fernlike foliage. *Selinum carvifolia* is a rare British native sometimes found in Cambridge-shire fens and known as Cambridge parsley. Its red stems and large heads of lacy-white flowers make it a sensational plant for shade.

# The Use of Hardy Perennials in Italy

by HENRY COCKER, A.H.R.H.S.

*Henry Cocker was formerly the Director of the gardens at Villa Taranto on Lake Maggiore and is now a horticultural consultant in Italy. His previous article in the Bulletin "Italian Plants in British Gardens" (Vol. 1, No. 5) aroused much interest at the time.*

**T**HE present enthusiasm for gardening in Italy is directed to a different type of gardening from the traditional, so called "Italian Garden", which gave greater importance to architectural design than to the actual plants. In new gardens, in particular, the components of the old style garden are no longer in favour, formality, symmetrical design, mosaic, carpet bedding, stone balustrades, statues, box edging and clipped hedges are definitely out of fashion.

Now, it is the so called "English style" which appeals to Italian imagination; with an abundance of grass, hardy plants such as flowering shrubs, informal groups of herbaceous perennials, small trees such as betula, catalpa, albizzia, paulownia, etc., with beds of roses, bulbous and tuberous plants, and annuals (or plants which are cultivated as such). The use of hardy herbaceous plants is particularly interesting and closely follows the style I introduced when making the Villa Taranto gardens; that is, groups of such easily cultivated plants as hosta, hemerocallis, *Iris siberica* and *Rudbeckia speciosa*, naturalized in rough grass. This method creates some very lovely effects, and is also a great saver of time and labour as the plants require practically no attention and can be left undisturbed for many years.

Herbaceous plants are also being widely used here in somewhat unusual, and completely unorthodox borders which are composed of a mixture of herbaceous perennials, polyantha roses and small shrubs such as caryopteris, erica and potentilla as a permanent foundation. At intervals spaces of irregular size are left for spring flowering bulbs and then later, summer annuals. Such a border has an extremely long flower effect (from April until November) and, although it may offend the purist, produces delightful results.

Even some of the old, traditional gardens are gradually being adapted and modified to these more modern styles. Roses and iris are particularly popular; the first because they are so generous with their bloom at a season when there is the maximum interest in gardening (May/June); the second, for the same reason plus their ease of cultivation; the criterion by which most plants are judged in this country.

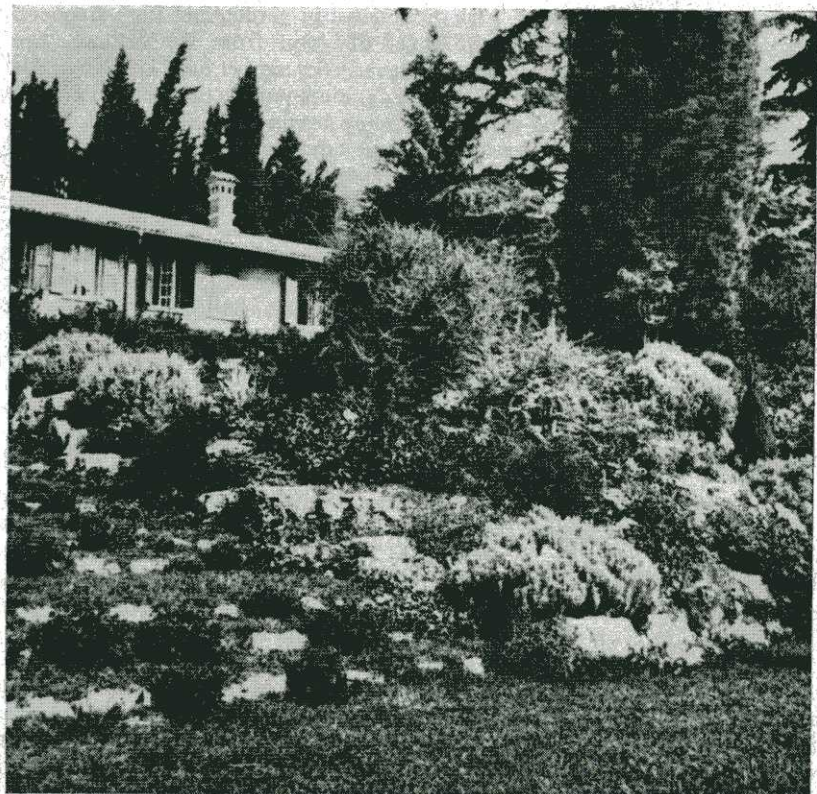
Practical, amateur gardening is much less popular in Italy than in Great Britain and the general public are not enthusiastic gardeners. Gardening is also



*Foto—Pellati.*

The swimming pool at Villa Idania, Italy, at the end of a lawn flanked by a border of groups of annuals, herbaceous perennials and small shrubs.

more seasonal, and people become garden-minded late in the year—when it is often too late for normal planting. Many Italians, with their exuberant and spontaneous characters, ask for immediate results (which the magnificent climate helps to produce) and are often impatient of the long periods of preparatory work and dormant periods. Another important factor in the selection of plants is that many Italians in the higher income category (and it is these people who are in the main patrons of gardening) generally maintain at least two establishments, and divide their time between their homes in the cities with their establishments in the mountains, by the sea, or in the lake district; with fixed periods spent at each place. It is only while they are actually in residence that any serious, personal interest is shown in the garden, and little enthusiasm is shown for general, routine maintenance. This is one of the basic reasons why herbaceous perennials are becoming so popular, as they are plants which can be more or



Foto—Pellati

Herbaceous plants and small shrubs used in a rock garden at Villa Idania, Garda, Italy.

less forgotten when not in flower; they require practically no pruning; they can be more or less neglected over long periods; and, if carefully selected, do not require tying or staking. They are also particularly free from pests and diseases (particularly in this country), and do not require any winter protection.

The great mass of suburban gardeners is almost entirely missing (although they are on the increase) and the weekend, all-the-year-round amateur gardener is almost unknown. Much of this periodic gardening is due to the climate, with its long, hot, dry summers, and the lengthy school holidays (from late June until early October). Such spasmodic gardening creates many unusual problems—particularly that of planting out of season, and to facilitate such a practice many nurseries keep a large selection of herbaceous perennials in pots, so that plants can be planted at any time. I know of nurseries where I can obtain pot grown plants of *hemerocallis*, *hosta*, *epimedium*, *aster*, *phlox*, *Anemone japonica*, at almost any season.

With regard to the seasonal, periodic interest in gardening, I am frequently asked to make a garden which will be full of bloom from, for instance, April to the middle of June; and then again from early September until late November. The other months are of no importance. Fortunately these two periods coincide very well with the flowering periods of many hardy perennials. As a general rule the seasons here are at least a month in advance of Great Britain, so the earlier flowering perennials such as iris, hosta, phlox, campanula, lupin, delphinium, monarda, hollyhock, papaver, aquilegia, paeonia, coreopsis, spiraea and astilbe, are ideal for the period May to June. For the second period, September to November, the later flowering perennials are suitable and great use is made of aster, helenium, helianthus, rudbeckia, echinacea, scabiosa, *Kirengeshoma palmata*, *Anemone japonica*, chrysanthemum (especially the Korean types), erigeron, verbascum, echinops and tradescantia.

### THE NEED FOR EXPORTS

Many of these plants are, however, not available from Italian nurseries. A lot of them—particularly the modern varieties, (plus many others) have never been heard of by the general public, and even when a genus is available the number of varieties is very limited. It is for this reason that hardy herbaceous perennials are being exported in increasing quantities from England. This trade could, with a little more enthusiasm and enterprise, be enormously increased. As usual, the Dutch have seen the value of this potentially new market and are already sending great quantities of herbaceous plants to Italy each year (both wholesale and retail). I have seen many of these consignments arrive and they are always beautifully packed and labelled; reasonable in price; promptly delivered; and excellent in quality. On the other hand, the packing of plants received from England often leaves much to be desired. Germany and Switzerland are also keenly interested in the Italian market for hardy herbaceous plants.

British nurserymen interested in the Italian market for herbaceous perennials should bear in mind the following points. With the exception of iris and hemerocallis, (of which abundant stocks, including many modern varieties, are available) many herbaceous plants are still largely unknown, especially the less common forms. They are planted in this country for their ease of cultivation, and for their early or very late flowering periods. Plants which can really look after themselves are particularly welcome (monarda, echinacea, coreopsis, phlox, aster, paeonia, lupin). It is for these reasons that hemerocallis have become so popular. The selected plants must all be lovers of heat. *Asclepias*, *liatris*, *physostegia* and *kniphofia* do extremely well. Herbaceous plants tolerant of lime are particularly in demand. Purely as a matter of interest, I doubt if a single plant of any of the following items could be bought in Italy: *Romneya coulteri*, *Chelone lyoni*, *Anemone lesseri*, *Salvia azurea*, *Cephalaria tatarica*, *Geranium grandiflorum*, *Kirengeshoma palmata*, *Lobelia fulgens*, *Meconopsis betonicifolia*, *Vernonia crinita*, *Ostrowskia magnifica*, *Schizostylis coccinea* and *Zauschneria californica*.

# AQUILEGIAS

by RALPH GOULD

**A**LTHOUGH Aquilegias, or columbines, seem to be known well enough they do not appear in gardens as much as would be expected. This is rather puzzling since their requirements in culture are reasonable and their graceful charm and distinction of form are an asset to any garden.

Among some 70 species in cultivation many are well suited for growing in beds and borders. Some are perhaps better suited to the rock garden but it is the taller types, including the long spurred hybrids which have great value for use as groups or for bedding. They flower at a time when there is not such a great choice of material for the border.

They have a reputation for being rather short lived and this is probably truer on the heavier and badly drained soils. One factor which tends to hasten their end is the tendency to seed so freely that they expend their energies prematurely. Certainly, the removal of dead heads helps to maintain the flowering period and in building up strong crowns for the next season.

So often the poor forms that may arise from self sown seedlings are allowed to remain and rapid deterioration takes place. Most of the species cross together so freely that it is almost impossible to keep the true form unless they are grown in strict isolation or propagated vegetatively. Certainly, seed raising is simple enough and a sowing in a cold frame or even outdoors in early spring will provide material for replacements. They do need early sowing to produce strong flowering plants for next season, and if sown under glass, without heat, in autumn and overwintered will give even better results.

Aquilegias seem to be subject to attack from few pests or diseases. Winter rot sometimes causes losses where drainage is poor and occasionally leaf spot attacks the foliage. Aphids can be troublesome and attack the growing shoots and buds in spring, but are now easily controlled if spotted in time. Often, with late spring frosts during the formation of buds the spurs become damaged and develop with a crippled appearance. Where this does occur some shelter from early morning sun may help.

Affection for the forms of our native *Aquilegia vulgaris*, known as Granny Bonnets lies, I think, in their association with older gardens. The quaint, short spurred, nodding flowers in rather sombre tones of blue, purple and rose, with occasional whites give a somewhat Victorian effect. The double and single varieties appear to thrive in fairly heavy shade and will appear in all sorts of odd corners. They seem to have a stronger perennial habit than the long spurred hybrids and are usually much more vigorous and broadly lobed in foliage.

The strains of long spurred hybrids now available have shown tremendous improvements during the last few years. I think they have lost nothing of the attraction of the parent species and have certainly gained in size, colour and form of flower. The clearly defined bicolours with white or yellow contrasting centres have mostly ousted the indistinct tones found in some of the older strains. Constant reselection is needed to keep the qualities desired and careful roguing of inferior blooms and short spurred types is necessary to maintain the strains.

Of the species which have contributed to the long-spurred hybrids, the blue of *A. coerulea* has given rise to some very clear shades as in *A.* 'Celestial Blue'. The yellow *A. chrysantha* seems to have a good perennial habit and has produced deeper golden yellows in the hybrids. The red forms, probably coming from *A. canadensis* and *A. skinnerii* are still rather lacking in size compared with other colours.

A good strain of crimson and white bicouling which is still very popular is 'Crimson Star' and the best strains of this show a clear contrast between sepals and corolla. Some tendency to cream and rose can be reduced by only saving seed from the best forms.

The introduction of *A. longissima* gave even greater length of spur and has had a strong influence when used for crossing with the mixed hybrids. The species itself, although at its best, with 4 in. spurs, seems somewhat shy in flowering here in Essex and never really caught on.

The spurless flatter flowers of the *A. clematiflora* hybrids were a distinct break in type but here again are rarely seen today. Now there is a new strain of this in double form with a colour range of pink, lilac, maroon, crimson and purplish shades. This was introduced as 'Double Supreme' and at first sight is difficult to identify as an aquilegia. The nodding flowers look up with maturity and are almost fully double rosettes. It lasts well when cut and makes unusual material for arrangements. Plants reach a height of about 2 ft.

A new dwarf strain, on trial, flowers well in advance of the taller kinds, with both single and double short spurred flowers. It seems to be free flowering and grow only 9 to 12 in. tall with an upright bushy habit. This was derived mainly from *A. glandulosa* crosses and contains a fair range of colours.

Another intermediate strain is the Dragonfly hybrids. This combines the qualities of the long spurred strains with a dwarf habit and reaches about 1½ ft. For grouping in the borders and for mass effect the richly coloured mixtures such as McKana hybrids and Monarch hybrids are unsurpassed and are great improvements on the older Mrs. Scott Elliott strains. The broadened petals and distinctive bicouling produced by careful selection give superiority over many mediocre strains and are as simple in culture.



*Aquilegia longissima.* Photo—H. Smith



## SEEN AT THE SHOWS

MANY of the early flowering perennials are extremely attractive on their own merit, needing no neighbour as foil and no planting scheme for effect. It was with this desire to know the early flowering kinds on a little more than nodding acquaintance that I looked for them at the R.H.S. shows early in the year.

At the R.H.S. Hall on March 10th *Helleborus argutifolius* was shown from Tal-y-Cafyn, Lord Aberconway's garden. This plant was formerly known as *Helleborus corsicus*, and still appears in many catalogues with this tag, though this specific name gives no hint at all of the handsome foliage which *argutifolius* suggests. A place in any garden would be justified for the handsome dark foliage, firm, slashed and toothed as well. The flowers are always a surprise to the uninitiated; they are a true green.

At the following show on March 24th, W. E. Ingwersen Ltd., staged a group of coloured hybrids of *Helleborus orientalis*, some of which were a good pink, others greenish and green suffused purple. On the same stand was *Mertensia virginica*, the virginian cowslip, with blue-green foliage arching to cover the dangling blue flowers. Once established this is a useful plant, for what else is there to echo the blue of forget-me-nots early in the year?

At the same show John Waterer Son and Crisp Ltd., had the white bergenia, *B. 'Silver Light'*. Somehow there seemed to be little substance to the petals, but a white is welcome to these hybrids. It is a German introduction 'Silberlicht' with rose buds opening to pure white, and it was shown again by Hillier and Sons at the Alpine Garden Society's Show on April 14th and 15th. Notable too, at the March 24th Show was an old blue auricula shown along with the silver-leaved plants by Mrs. Desmond Underwood, and I am told that the stock had been rescued from near extinction.

The Show on April 7th was almost entirely a camillia and shrub show on first sight, but Maurice Prichard had an attractive table garden which included *Helleborus orientalis* and a wonderful crown imperial, *Fritillaria imperialis maxima rubra* and R. Wallace and Co. had an exhibit in which *Lilium auratum* 'Pink Beauty' looked most inviting. At the previous show *L.a. 'Lavender Lady'* had caught many eyes, shown by the same firm.

Auriculas came into their own on May 5th in a collection displayed by the House of Douglas, Great Bookham. What a fascinating array of powered subtle colours! In the Old Hall, Sunningdale Nurseries had their shrub exhibit, but there beneath the leading characters were groups of alchemella looking gorgeous, especially after being sprayed over. Then *Peltiphyllum peltatum* was arresting and rather weird at first sight as we know the umbrella leaves rather better than the flowers. The big heads of pink flowers appear on bare red stems in spring and the plants are happy in damp shade or at the pool edge where the rhizomes often stabilize a shifting bank. Still known to many people as *Saxifraga peltata*, the new name conjures up all the necessary curiosity but does not denote any delicacy of flower. *Euphorbia epithimoides* also looked very fine on this stand, gentle green-gold, so early in the season and a flower that lasts really well and is an easy euphoria to manage provided that it is cut well back after flowering. Maurice Prichard also showed this plant under its synonym of *E. polychroma*.

KAY N. SANECKI



Amateur Gardening.



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Campanula Amateur Gardening.

**ALLIUM.** Onion. Golden Garlic. (*Liliaceae.*) *A. moly* is a beauty from the shady woods of Spain. According to Sowerby's English Botany, this onion was "Naturalized in plantations at Low Wood, near Belfast", undoubtedly this is the way to grow it. Farrer says, "This species spreads rapidly and is indestructable". Be this as it may, the compact umbels of bright yellow starry flowers, borne on 12 to 15 in. stems, are a pretty sight in May, June and July. When not grown in woodland it is as well to replant the bulbs frequently.

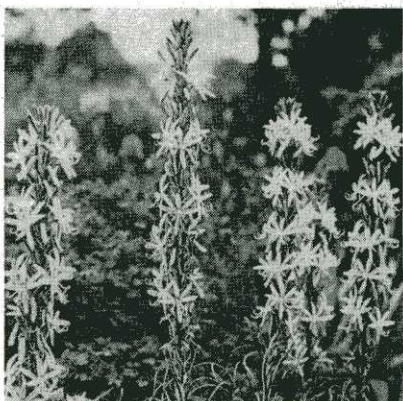
**Anthericum.** St. Bernard's Lily. (*Liliaceae.*) *A. lilago*, is a native of Southern Europe and was introduced in 1596. It is one of the liliaceous plants with non-bulbous roots. It is a very free-flowering species, and from tufts of narrow channelled leaves 12 to 18 ins. long, which are gracefully recurving, appear erect 12 to 18 ins. spikes of pure white flowers in May and June and sometimes later. They need to be planted in bold groups and thrive best in a rich loamy, leafy soil in a sheltered position, and in a winter such as 1962-63, some protection would be well repaid. There is also a larger flowered variety—*A. liliago major*.

**Asphodeline.** Asphodel. (*Liliaceae.*) King's spear, Jacob's rod. *Asphodeline lutea* (syn. *Asphodelus luteus*) is of similar vintage as *Anthericum lilago*, 1596, but still not as well known as it should be. It hails from Sicily. The plant has short rhizomes or clusters of fleshy roots and erect stems 3 to 4 ft. high, and the sweetly scented soft, yellow, bell-shaped flowers are borne in a straight raceme throughout June and July. The stems are covered with deep green, awl-shaped, furrowed leaves, with distinct paler veins. It is not fussy about soil and is easily propagated by division, in autumn or spring.

# You May Not Know

DOCKTER

**Campanula.** Bellflower. (*Campanulaceae.*) Dane's blood or clustered bellflower, *Campanula glomerata*, a native of Europe and found in Britain, is a plant that still seems to appeal, judging by the number of times I am asked to identify a flower in friends' gardens. Here is a plant that should be in every border for it never fails to give a good account of itself. It tolerates all types of soil, wet or dry, sun or shade. The stiff upright stems 1 to 2 ft. high carry a fine clustered head of rich violet flowers from June to August. There is a white variety *alba*, the deep violet purple *dahurica* and the rich violet-blue *superba*.



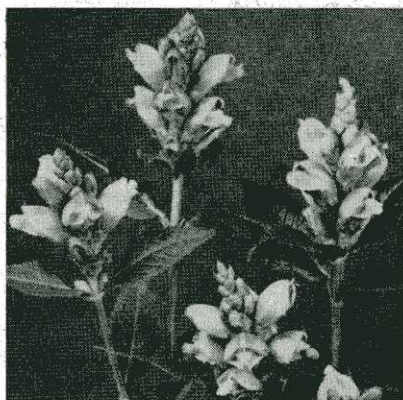
Amateur Gardening.

**Centaurea.** Centaury or Knapweed. (*Compositae.*) The yellow hardhead or yellow hardweed, *Centaurea macrocephala* is a plant that is interesting, but rarely seen in gardens today; even though it has been with us for nearly 160 years. It is a native of the Caucasus. Its flower head is not unlike the top of a champagne cork. On top of each 3 to 4 foot stem is a bulbous-looking golden head of bloom up to three to four inches across. The flowers are supported by a rough brown calyx. The stems are clothed by rough, sharp-pointed oblong leaves. It enjoys full sun and is ideal as a specimen plant where it can stand out as a predominating feature.



A. J. Huxley.

**Chelone.** Turtlehead. (*Scrophulariaceae.*) *Chelone obliqua* is a very near relation of the penstemons, but a coarser plant; its individual flowers resemble the head of a tortoise or turtle, hence its common name. The square stems are rigid and at each joint is a pair of broad, oblong leaves some 2 to 8 ins. long, which are smooth and sharply toothed. The deep-rose to rosy-purple blooms are clustered at the top of the stems and are in flower during August and September. In fact chelone in flower makes one feel autumn is coming and summer is past. It enjoys a rich well-drained soil and can be increased by seed or cuttings, or by division in autumn or spring.



Amateur Gardening.

# THE SHORT AND THE LONG OF IT....

by

E. M. UPWARD

*It was not one of the Merry Wives of Windsor, but a member of the Society, who wrote asking for a list of herbaceous plants with both tall and short varieties. A chance slip of a Shakespearian quotation has led to the production of this short article.*

VERONICAS immediately come to mind—between *V. alata* at 4 ft. and *V. 'Spode Blue'* at 2 ins. There is an interesting range of colour variation both in flower and foliage. From June to August the blue spires of *V. longifolia* reach 3-4 ft., with its sub-species *V. l. subsessilis* slipping down to 2 ft. with dark green foliage and rich purple spikes. At the same height but flowering later there is *V. spicata* 'Blue Peter', with paler flowers. Grey foliage and pink flowers make a delightful foil for each other in *V. spicata* 'Minuet' at 1-2 ft., followed by the easily grown *V. 'Shirley Blue'* and *V. 'Trehane'*—the latter with yellowish foliage and short blue spikes. With *V. rupestris*, the alpine stage has been reached at 4 ins., but with *V. 'Spode Blue'* at 2 ins. we can go no further.

Achilleas are a personal favourite, due mainly to the ease with which they can be dried and used as winter decoration. Their flat golden heads appearing in mid-June give a long display in the border. *A. filipendulina* 'Gold Plate' at 4 ft., 'Coronation Gold' at 3-4 ft. are both essential, the latter being a smaller but no less delightful version of 'Gold Plate'. *A. clypeolata* is a rather sudden drop to 2 ft. or so and there is *A. 'Moonshine'* with its sulphur yellow heads at the same height. I have found the latter to be unhappy on a sandy soil and suspect it prefers a good loam.

For a moist spot in the border, try some astilbes for June and July—'Bridal Veil' at 3 ft., 'Fanal' with delightful reddish-brown foliage in its younger stages and blood-red flower spikes at 3 ft. are both delightful. A slip down the scale to 'Red Sentinel' at 2-3 ft., gives the finest red yet raised. To complete the slide down there are *A. simplicifolia erecta* with pink flowers at 9 ins. and *A. x crispa* 'Gnome' also with pink flowers and crimped leaves.

How often have we been deterred from growing golden rod on account of the pathetic spindly specimens seen in some gardens? Those who dismiss the whole genus as weeds cannot have seen the delightful varieties available today. *Solidago canadensis*, which has become naturalized in Great Britain, is the parent of many hybrids, one being *S. x 'Golden Wings'* with its 5-6 ft. tall stems topped by broad much-branched flower-heads. Another native of North America *S. missouriensis* steps down to 3-4 ft. for the middle of the border, with 'Leraft' and 'Golden Mosa' just below at 2-3 ft. It need not be said that *S. 'Tom Thumb'* is a dwarf, but there are others that slip below its 12-18 ins. *S. bracystachys* at 6-9 ins. is a delightful miniature for early autumn.



Photo—Amateur Gardening.  
*Veronica spicata*

Campanulas are like blondes—beautiful but dangerous—'Loddon Anna', though, is an exception—a stately 4 to 5 footer smothered in delicate pale-pink flowers. A species that is rather variable but easily grown is the blue-flowered *C. persicifolia* up to 3 ft. It has many forms—some semi-double—but all acceptable. Another variable species is *C. lactiflora* at 3-6 ft. although the variety *alba* is preferable for its dwarfer habit. *C. glomerata* in name alone, with large blue globes of flowers on 1-2 ft. stems is quite attractive. *C. portenshlagiana* might be a deterrent to an intending purchaser and rightly so, for once its creeping rootstocks take hold it is very difficult to eradicate—pretty enough a plant, but beware. Beware also of finding it under its synonym of *C. muralis*.

Sneezewood is rather an unjust common name for helenium, especially as legend has it that they sprang from the tears of Helen of Troy. Helenflower is more acceptable. To start at the opposite end of the scale for a change *H.* 'The Bishop' provides the first show in mid-June at 1½ ft. *H.* 'Moerheim Beauty' is almost too well-known to need description but at 3-4 ft. it gives a bright display of rich red with petals tipped orange-yellow. The advantage of these two early-flowering varieties is the second crop of blooms obtained if the first dead heads are removed. A pure yellow—that is yellow centre and yellow florets—and at the same height as 'Moerheim Beauty' is 'Butterpat'. Flowering in August and September it helps to provide a continuation of bloom. Two comparatively recent introductions, 'Bruno' and 'Waltraud' take us a step further to the 4 ft. plus range. 'Bruno' is a delicious deep mahogany-red and 'Waltraud' rich-orange suffused with gold, both flower in August and September. At 5 ft. there is 'Riverton Beauty'—a bright yellow with a dark eye; and at 5 ft. plus to round off the season is *H. autumnale striatum*—basically orange-yellow striped red—almost as if it had virus!

Nowadays the term 'red-hot poker' would almost appear to be a misnomer. *Kniphofia* 'Bees Lemon' is a stately lemon-yellow at 4-5 ft., and when Mother Nature created 'Maid of Orleans' she must have opened the damper wide for, with its cream to ivory spike at 3-4 ft., it is more like a white-hot poker. More true to name is *K. macowanii*—a vivid but dainty orange-red at 2 ft. 6 ins. At 2 ft. *K. rufa* gives a slender yellow spike tipped with orange and to complete the list *K. nelsonii* at 1½ ft., is a delicate shade of orange-red, but unfortunately difficult to acquire.

# The Beauty of Dried Hardy Plants

E. W. BECK

A DISPLAY of dried hardy herbaceous material was seen at the fortnightly R.H.S. show in the coldest of months, February 1963, and raised much interest. There are tremendous possibilities in the use of dried seed pods, foliage, flowers and grasses for indoor arrangements.

In the arrangement which roused so much interest there was: *Iris sibirica*, *Physalis franchetti gigantea*, globe artichoke, montbretia and cortaderia (pampas grass). Thus the colour scheme for the arrangement was in various tones and tints of brown with a touch of orange and fawn.

There are a number of ways in which the different flowers and leaves can be dried, such as natural drying, oven drying, iron pressing, the absorption of glycerine and silica gel. The method I used was simply to leave the material to dry naturally. Flowers and leaves are picked at or just prior to maturity and put into small bunches and hung on a line to dry. In fact, I have several lines strung from wall to wall across a cool garden shed where a current of air comes from the open door. I never let the hot sun pour down on material that is being dried or the colour will be drained and the material fade. For a similar reason I do not recommend drying flower heads in the airing cupboard because the process is too quick and the plants become brittle and very difficult to manage as well as being rather browner and less attractive. The aim should be to dry the material quick enough to prevent mildew but not so quickly that it dries unattractively, and a little practise will soon reveal the right way to go about the job.

## Treatment of the material used in the arrangement

*Iris sibirica* which blooms in June produces some lovely seed heads which can be collected in the green stage and left to weather the rain and wind until November when they become a lovely shade of dark brown.

*Physalis franchetti gigantea*, or Chinese lantern is a very useful plant to grow for dried arrangements with its large, bright orange inflated pods. The stems should be put into a large jar to dry after being gathered and not hung up. Otherwise the lanterns would dry upturned and not hanging attractively.

Globe artichokes are truly magnificent plants to have in the perennial border and can be grown easily from seed. The heads are hung up to dry and are lovely in large or massed arrangements.

Pampas grass is both useful and feathery and can be used all the year round either fresh or dried. It merely needs to be hung up in a shed for a while and then stored away from the dust until it is needed. The majestic *Cortaderia argentea* grows to over 6 ft. and needs to be well back in the border. *C. pumila* is a dwarfer form which is useful for smaller arrangements and *C. argentea carminea rendatleri*, also a smaller type, has delightful rosy pink plumes. There are both male and female forms of these grasses and I find that the latter are more attractive for this work.

The montbretia is very hardy and has an attractive yellow-orange flat flower head which can be dried satisfactorily in a few days.

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