



HPS

HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

Gardening with hardy perennials

CORNUCOPIA

*A journal of the Local & Specialist Groups
of the Hardy Plant Society*



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CORNUCOPIA

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Editor: Marion Jay

Email: cornucopia@hardy-plant.org.uk

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© Bill Hodgson

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FROM THE EDITOR

As someone with a small woodland area in my garden, I am always trying to extend the season of interest under the deciduous tree canopy. Spring is easy, with an almost unlimited choice of flowering plants and bulbs, but planting for summer colour can prove a little more tricky. Part of the answer is to rely on foliage, of course - ferns, *Hakonechloa*, various forms of Solomon's seal, for example - but it's not impossible to provide colour in shady areas from June to August. Two fine candidates feature in this issue of *Cornucopia*: martagon lilies and roscoeas.



I bought my first roscoea from a Plant Heritage stall at a fair near Penzance. I was dubious, thinking it might find my garden too dry or too cold, but it has been surprisingly obliging, sending up its cane-like stems topped with rich purple flowers every August. Last year, I invested in another, this time a red variety. They are unassuming plants but very useful in shade, and remarkably attractive once they begin to bulk up.

My experience with martagon lilies has been less successful, but I now understand that hybrids are much easier to grow than the species. Unfortunately, my fragile white martagons were always a magnet for lily beetle which, despite a strict assassination regime involving a walnut half-shell and a sharp stone, eventually won the day. I'm going to have a shot with *L.* 'Claude Shride' this year, to see if a stronger-growing cultivar might help me defeat the Red Peril.

As I write, we have just endured storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin, which tattered our garden and left us without power for three days. I know many people have been flooded, so I count myself lucky. However, I now have to decide what to do with our *Arbutus unedo* 'Compacta', originally bought as a tiny 'winter colour for pots' shrub, which is now 2m tall and leaning at 45° in the border. Efforts to stake it have been partially successful but I fear it may just be a temporary reprieve. I'll be sad to see it go, especially as it was just beginning to flower.

Here's to a benevolent and less turbulent spring, with plenty of opportunity to get gardening.

Marion Jay

ROSCOEAS

Colin Crews

R*oscoea* are attractive and useful plants of the ginger family, Zingiberaceae, that do equally well in the ground or in pots. Across the small genus they have a long period of flowering and variety in their size and flower colour.

Lush, grass-like stems - actually pseudostems of wrapped leaves, which are often corrugated - grow from the tip of a pyramidal cluster of dahlia-like roots to produce a series of flowers that are likened to orchids; a hooded hanging primary petal with a lip of sterile stamens below, and two smaller ones to the side. The predominant colours are shades of purple and pale yellow but there also are red, white and bicoloured forms.



© Jill Raggatt

Roscoea 'Red Gurkha'



Roscoea tuber

Most roscoeas come from the Himalayan areas of India, Nepal and China, and are generally hardy in the UK if planted deeply enough to be protected from frost, and are not exposed to excess winter wet. They are well suited to cool, partially shaded areas with adequate summer watering, dryness being indicated by curling of the leaf edges.

Roscoeas can be grown from seed, or by separating newly produced tubers during early spring when dormant new shooting

tips can be seen, although such divisions can be made at any time. In pots they are best grown in loose compost with about 10% perlite. It's a good idea to add about 10% of good quality bark (such as that used for orchid culture), as this makes the tubers easier to separate. Seeds germinate readily, even after dry storage. Depending on species, the flowers develop on stems either held above the leaves, or encased by the sheaths of the pseudostem. In the latter case, the seeds are often difficult to retrieve once the seed pod has split.

Roscoea cautleyoides

An easily grown, early-flowering plant of 20-35 cm with abundant pale yellow or purple flowers. *R.* 'Jeffrey Thomas' is a strong growing and floriferous yellow cultivar. The more vigorous 'Harvington Raw Silk' has pale yellow/cream flowers with pink bracts. 'Kew Beauty' is similar, and probably a hybrid between *R. cautleyoides* x *R. humeana*.



© Collin Crews

R. 'Harvington Raw Silk'

Roscoea auriculata

The purple flowers of *R. auriculata* are produced over six weeks from early July, at a height of 30 to 40 cm.

The best cultivar is 'Harvington Summer Deep Purple' (sometimes, erroneously, 'Deep Summer Purple'), which is more vigorous than the species.



© Collin Crews

**R. 'Harvington Summer
Deep Purple'**

Roscoea x beesiana

A hybrid, probably of *R. cautleyoides* x *R. auriculata*, from the old Bees Nursery, growing to about 30 cm tall. Flower colour and patterning vary considerably even on the same plant, possibly related to temperature. The base flower colour is a yellowish-white splashed with purple tinges and spotting, although occasionally plain white. Floriferous over a long period of time, *R. 'Monique'* is the form most commonly encountered.



© HPS Image Library

R. 'Monique'

Roscoea forrestii

A distinctive roscoea with very pale yellow flowers. There are a couple of forms, 'Ice Maiden' and 'Snow Queen', that are much closer to a pure white, and flower from mid-June to mid-July.



© Collin Crews

R. 'Ice Maiden'

Roscoea humeana

R. humeana has broad leaves and flowers with a distinct curved hood, produced early in the year and with a long season, typically from mid-May until August. The commonest flower colour is a pale purple but the pale yellow *R. humeana* f. *lutea* is also popular. A fine white form, *R.*



© Collin Crews

R. humeana* f. *lutea

humeana alba, produces many flowers over a shorter period of time for the species, and before the foliage has made much growth, but the plant is reportedly short-lived.

A hybrid, 'Guincho White Stripe', has flowers with a striking pattern of purple and white. 'Stephanie Bloom' has rich purple flowers with some white blotches.



© Colin Crews

R. 'Guincho White Stripe'

Roscoea purpurea

The *R. purpurea* species has seen more active cultivar production than most other roscoeas in recent years. The preponderant flower colour is purple but the relatively recent discovery of the red flowered plant, familiar as *R.* 'Red Gurkha' (see image p.3), has enabled the development of colours ranging from pale to dark purple, some with a strong red component. The plants grow best in moist shade. They do not emerge until late summer, and appear to be difficult to pollinate. Seed ripening is slow and requires a warm summer.

R. purpurea f. *rubra* has striking red flowers with an orange tinge, held on stems of red or green. The name 'Red Gurkha' is now usually applied to red-stemmed forms but the RHS prefers 'f. *rubra*' for both forms.

'Dalai Lama' is a *R. purpurea* cultivar with attractive pale violet flowers and



© HPS Image Library

R. 'Brown Peacock'



© Peter Cox (Wikimedia)

R. 'Dalai Lama'

red stems. Some of the violet/pale purple flowering forms are tall, with attractive cane-like stems reaching 50 cm. The best of these are 'Brown Peacock', which has leaves with a wavy edge and a red underside; 'Spice Island', with deep red stems; and 'Cinnamon Stick', which has long paler green leaves with prominent veining.

R. 'Emperor Strain' grows very fast from seed to form a very substantial plant with purple flowers with a strong red tinge. 'Sultan Strain' is similar but shorter, with red, purple or lilac flowers.

Some minor species for the enthusiast include *R. tibetica*, which has purple flowers and broad leaves on a squat plant (although there are white, 'tall' and narrow-leaved forms); *R. scillifolia*, which is a very slender and diminutive plant with pink and almost dark-flowered forms, best grown as a potted clump; and *R. wardii*, whose very elegant dark purple flowers on short stems lighten with age. The latter is slow growing.

There are roscoeas for most situations (other than dry sites). They are relatively inexpensive, easily available, and free from common pests and diseases. There is certainly scope for the development of other crosses and cultivars which we will hopefully see in the not too distant future.



© Terra Nova Nurseries

***R.* 'Spice Island'**



© Colin Crews

***R.* 'Sultan Strain'**

GEORGIAN TOWN GARDENS

Carol Jones

Fashion goes in circles, and the 18th century trend favoured natural planting, in contrast to the previous influence of William and Mary, who brought the formality of Dutch gardens to our shores. Whilst this was suitable in a good-sized estate in a rural setting, it did not translate very readily into the urban environment.

To appreciate the urban Georgian garden, you need to know a bit about town planning, architecture and the environment. Housing development in London embraced the terrace, and as time went on more and more houses were built around central squares. Houses were narrow, and so were gardens. A garden's length and, to an extent, width depended on the wealth of the owners. The best overlooked the great parks and benefitted from the borrowed view. Others may initially have enjoyed rural scenery from adjacent land but, as the town grew, this advantage was frequently lost. Many houses were rented, often only for a year at a time. In some of the better areas they might mainly be used for a short period during the London Season from the end of April to June.

The modern trend for digging out basements is not a new phenomenon. In Georgian houses, it was common for the basement to be dug out and, at the front, a bridge led to the front door, with steps going down into an 'airy' which provided light and ventilation to the basement rooms. At the rear, ground was also dug out to house more buildings used to service the house (laundry, kitchen, staff toilets), usually with another 'airy'. These were known as the 'leads' because lead was used to waterproof their roofs, and gardens could be created on top of them. Access to the garden for residents was often down steps or over a bridge from an upper storey.

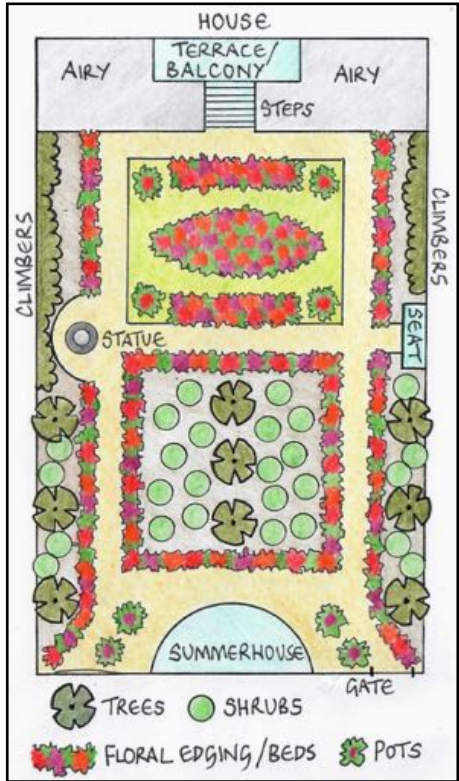
The other factor, common both nowadays and in Georgian times, was a tendency among builders to bury their rubble in the garden. London streets were noisy, dusty and dirty places, not generally paved until a series of Improvements and Building Acts were passed, starting in 1730. Coal burnt in domestic fireplaces produced copious amounts of soot. Faced with a narrow, flat plot, shaded with walls on all sides, a thin layer of soil over the 'leads', and poor border soil polluted with lime and brick

dust, all coated in soot, what would a modestly affluent Georgian want from their urban garden?

The garden would usually echo the regular and horizontal design of the house, and be viewed from an upstairs window or balcony and/or from a raised platform. There might be a summerhouse at the far end. People chatted with their neighbours from their respective balconies - their version of 'over the garden wall'.

In effect, the garden retained the formality of the previous era. The most formal part of the garden would adjoin the house, usually on top of the 'leads'. The layout was often quite a simple parterre style, with lawn separated by paths of sand or burnt brick, some box borders and perhaps pyramids of ivy. Stone vases on plinths, filled with flowers, were sited at intervals. Soil would inevitably be shallow. Symmetrical paths led around the garden, often made with crushed oyster shells - then a very cheap commodity - or hoggin [a mix of gravel, sand and clay that binds firmly when compacted].

After the parterre came the 'grove', where more space allowed trees, underplanted by flowering shrubs, to provide shade when walking about. Borders could be edged with flowering plants. The aim would be to conceal boundaries and, where possible, to borrow the view beyond. Brick walls might be painted white, especially near the house, to both contrast with greenery and to light up the area. Popular features included trellis bowers, arbours or even trompe-l'oeil murals on the garden walls.



Original design by Carol Jones. Drawn by Marion Jay

A typical Georgian town garden layout, as imagined by the author (not to scale)

Right plant, right place was quite a challenge. Some urban gardeners may have tried to grow new plant introductions, but most were content with robust, common and reliable specimens, given their often very short life expectancy. The vases and parterres near the house might use dame's violets (*Hesperis matronalis*), stock-gilliflowers (*Matthiola incana*), carnations, cranesbill and Spanish jessamines (*Jasminum grandiflorum*). One, clearly very large, urban garden designed in 1751 included, at the path's edge, pinks, carnations and 'little flowers', which faded into roses and honeysuckles, succeeded by laburnums, cherries, lilacs, acacias, canopied by a backdrop of ash, oak, planes, pines and spruce! The average householder would be grateful for a couple of flowerbeds, a few shrubs and a small tree or two. Neither would they wish to fill the borders to capacity - it was common practice to have individual plants surrounded by soil so that they might be better appreciated.

To further enhance their gardens, many bought from shops or yards called 'statuaries', which produced copies of statues and monuments seen in the finer gardens, squares and courtyards. These were affordable, mass-produced, badly finished and much criticised by the style police, but incredibly popular with householders. They were used to end a vista or furnish an alcove, or to add something to a specific area. The very well-off might have a water feature, but this was considered a luxury. Water supply was not constant or even universal, and until the early 19th century it could not be piped above ground level. Gardens would have to rely on rainwater or water from local wells. Given the dryness of town soils, the use of pots and the need to regularly syringe (wash) the leaves, this represented another onerous task.

For the care of their gardens, the majority of folk would rely upon the services of a jobbing gardener. Household servants would provide general daily care such as watering pots, sweeping paths and scouring garden furniture. The jobbers dealt with bigger, seasonal or difficult tasks. If you were lucky or careful you could get someone with some training and skill, but there were many with no experience whatsoever!

The development of contract gardening probably provided a more consistent, reliable service. This entailed regular visits to prune and syringe plants, and replace those which had wilted; the pollution from soot and dust meant that many flowering plants had a very short life.

Exhausted plants would be taken away and rejuvenated for re-use. You could even hire plants for the night if you were entertaining, or have outdoor vases, plant displays or window boxes provided and maintained for a few months at a time.

We have two remaining Georgian gardens here in Nottingham city centre. After the Civil War, the first Duke of Newcastle built a palace in Nottingham, now known as Nottingham Castle. This led to the building of elegant houses nearby so that their owners could enjoy the benefits of the ducal court. Willoughby House on Low Pavement, built between 1730 and 1740 - now a Paul Smith shop - was one such property. Old drawings show a large and formal garden, and spying on it via Google Earth reveals there is still a garden to the rear, albeit much shorter and simpler. According to one witness who has seen it from the shop's rear window, it is now a small, dull patch of grass with few other plants in it.

The other especially significant garden is behind Bromley House Library on Angel Row in Nottingham, built in 1752. It is possible that the layout has not changed since this time (the sooty atmosphere probably put people off spending money on it), although beyond the current original walled area there would have been a far longer, if narrow, garden and an orchard on the right hand side, now built over. Nottingham HPS member Julia Claydon and longstanding gardener Elizabeth Robinson produced a booklet about the garden in 1997, revised in 2000. Having visited the garden in 2017, I'm now awaiting the chance to go back, in Julia's company, for a guided tour.



© Carol Jones

The garden behind Bromley House Library in Nottingham

~ First published in the Nottingham Group Newsletter, Spring 2021 ~

SPHAERALCEAS

Malcolm Allison

During recent hot summers, some plants have coped better than others. Among those that have thrived have been sphaeralceas. These North American mallows originate in the drier regions of the south and west (Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, etc). The ones we grow in this country are largely sub-shrubs and have stems which overwinter, but those stems never get very woody.

Many mallows have pink flowers and, although there are some pink sphaeralceas, most species seem to have flowers in shades of orange and red. The individual flowers are quite small (about 2 to 3 cm across) but they are produced abundantly over a long period during the summer. The leaves tend to be small, felted and grey green in colour, an indication of the plant's drought tolerance.



© University of California, Berkeley

The globe mallow, *Sphaeralcea incana*

I grow three different varieties. *Sphaeralcea incana* has light orange flowers on slender stems to 60cm. I have it growing in a gravel bed where it suckers mildly.

S. 'Newleaze Coral' has coral-red flowers on branching stems, again to about 60cm.

S. 'Childerley' was introduced by Hopleys Nursery in Hertfordshire and is reportedly hardier than 'Newleaze Coral'. It has apricot flowers.



© Sarastro Stauden



© Annie's Annuals

S. 'Childerley'

S. 'Newleaze Coral'

All three types seem to grow well in large containers, or in well-drained soil in sun, and they tend to overwinter best in such a situation. As regards propagation, if suckers appear they can be detached and rooted, but I take tip cuttings in summer.

~ First published in the Western Counties Group Newsletter ~
August 2021

SANGUISORBAS

John Sirkett

As a hardy planter I have always tried to use herbaceous perennials to produce a show through the summer and autumn, but it isn't always easy. Many herbaceous perennials suffer in a wet or windy summer, crashing to the ground in dank sheaves of depressing foliage. The prairie movement has been slow to take off in Cornwall because we can't rely on the bright autumn sunshine that shows grasses and late perennials to advantage. Michaelmas daisies do not look good with their flowers limp and clammy in the rain as the wind blows them flat, and the mildew gobbles up their foliage.

Meadowsweet has been spectacular in the hedges and ditches of the county this year, filling August with its strange perfume. I grow the variegated one in the herbaceous border here and it is a stout sensation, waving golden flags of colour like some strange form of semaphore. Down on the Lizard I saw it growing wild with *Sanguisorba officinalis* and it reminded me to try more sanguisorbas in the border. There is an enormous selection available, and RHS Wisley has been trialling them for the last three years.

S. minor, the salad burnet, is a delightful small plant for the vegetable garden. The young leaves can be added to a salad for their unique 'cucumber' taste. However, the genus *Sanguisorba* is rarely spectacularly bright and salad burnet is deeply uninteresting in appearance. It didn't make it into the Wisley trial as an ornamental.

On the other hand, there were a great many selections of *S. officinalis* on show. The species grows wild throughout the northern parts of the Northern Hemisphere, producing maroon-red heads of flower in airy clusters during the height of summer. The heads turn chestnut-brown as they age, but retain significant decorative appeal. It is a vigorous native and a large number of improved forms have been selected. They all do well in the border, producing trouble-free clumps of low foliage and tall clouds of bloom. Once planted, you will have it for decades (even if you change your mind) so it is worth positioning it with care. Just like *Acanthus mollis*, it will come up again if you dig it out, but there are

herbicides available that will deal with it if it needs evicting.

Most modern selections have superior flowering performance and colour. Selections with particularly bright mulberry-coloured flowers are especially valued and are usually termed 'red' (which is an unfortunate fiction). The first of these that I discovered was *S. o.* 'Red Buttons', selected by Dove Cottage Nursery for its compact habit, long flowering season and good colour. However, my favourite

is *S. o.* 'Red Thunder', a taller plant with dark, brooding flowers. I love it as much for the name as anything else, a suggestion of distant claps of thunder rumbling over the late summer border. It was selected by Piet Oudolf from a seed collected in Korea.



All photos © John Sickett

S. officinalis 'Red Buttons'



S. 'Raspberry Coulis'

S. o. 'Crimson Queen' is a new cultivar that promises flowers that are nearly red. So far I have never seen it deliver them, but it is astonishingly free-flowering and a splendid garden plant if you can forgive the name.

If you are looking for something taller to dominate the back of a border then there are plenty of sanguisorbas to choose from. *S.* 'Raspberry Coulis' was introduced by Avondale Nurseries and is well named, capturing the colours of the flowers to perfection. It grows to about 1.5m tall, and although it can

flop a bit in the wind, the trial showed that the stems can be bundled up against a single stake very effectively. *S.* 'Red Busby' is more upright and withstands gusty weather well. At about 2 metres tall, it has the same sense of transparent structure that makes *Verbena bonariensis* so useful.



S. officinalis 'Red Busby'



S. officinalis 'White Tanna'

S. tenuifolia is a tall-flowering species from China and Japan, where it grows in wet meadows and damp soils. It is ideally suited to the moist Cornish atmosphere and there are a number of good selections available. *S. t.* 'Pieters' has compact, upright flowers freely produced over a long season. There are other forms, including the white-flowered *S.* 'Alba' with more arching flower clusters.

Burgundy red is a valuable and fashionable colour in modern gardens, adding richness to almost any colour combination, but there are a couple of other colours available among *Sanguisorba* that increase their usefulness. For extravagance of display, it is difficult to imagine anything better than *S. officinalis* 'White Tanna'. The flowers come early in the season, reaching their best in July. They arch gently in profuse clusters from stiff stems.

If you want something larger, then *S.* 'All Time High' is a selection (or possibly hybrid) of *S. tenuifolia*, with dangling white flowers that make a bright show throughout August. Raised by Coen Jansen, it brings the

same style to the border as a traditional prairie plant but prospers in moister and windier conditions.



S. ten. 'All Time High'



S. ten. 'White Elephant'

S. 'White Elephant' has flowers that add interest in the detail of their shape, the slender drooping heads of flower turn up at the ends. White on opening, they gradually blush as the days pass, becoming pink when fully mature.

There are also a number of cultivars with pink flowers that give a lighter, brighter feel to the display. The best one in the trial was almost certainly *S.* 'Misbourne Pink', a voluptuous fountain of rose-pink flowers held up by a discreet stake. *S.* 'Pink Brushes' has a richer colour but is lower growing and less striking. It does, however, introduce a small group of species with distinctly fluffy flowers, which contrast well with the tight formal structure of plants in the style of *S. officinalis*. The best of them is probably *S. hakusanensis*, which can flower as early as late June. The warm pink flowers hang straight down from the ruthlessly erect stems to good effect. The selection *S. h.* 'Lilac Squirrel' is particularly floriferous. *S. obtusa* has a similar appearance, although the flower heads are fatter and arch in a leisurely fashion rather than hanging down.



S. ten. 'Misbourne Pink'



S. hak. 'Lilac Squirrel'

There are a number of breeders who have recognised the value of *Sanguisorba* in recent years. Avondale Nurseries have introduced a number, and their *S.* 'Skinny Fingers' has tall fluffy white flower clusters with a distinctive poise that perhaps show the way for future development.

At Sussex Prairie Gardens, a number of cultivars have been selected that make tidy, upright clumps, supporting a good flowering display long after the spring flowering shrubs have faded. *S.* 'Sussex Prairie Iroquois' is a particular favourite of mine, with tall stems supporting fluffy pink flowers, perfect for the low light of late summer evenings.



S. 'Sussex Prairie Iroquois'

❧ First published in the Cornwall Group Newsletter, September 2020 ❧

HOW I LOVE MY HOTBINS

Jan Oakley

During the first lockdown, our recycling centre closed and the council stopped emptying our garden waste bins. Not too much of a problem in winter, but as the weather warmed up I thought it was time to do things differently. We had a couple of compost heaps that we turned every now and then, but it took an age to get any mulch or compost from the waste. I'd read adverts for the HotBin Mk2 and thought I'd give it a try.

Firstly, I must say they are not cheap at over £200 each. When I went online [in 2020], it became



All images © Jan Oakley

Jan's HotBins



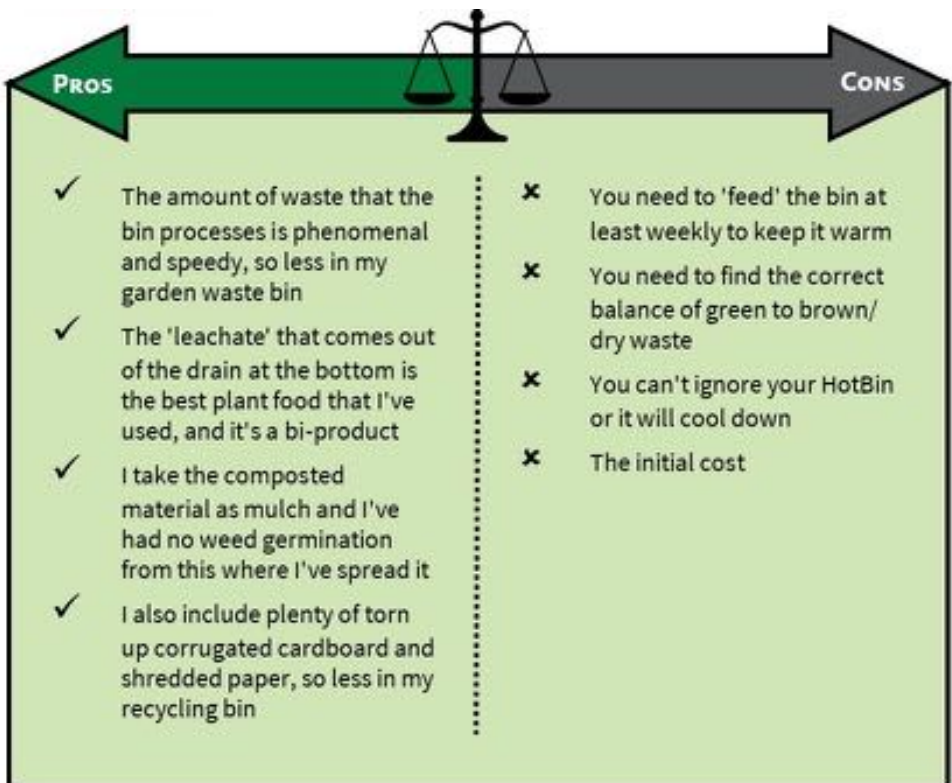
The temperature after 24 hours

clear that other people had had the same idea, as there was a waiting list, but I was advised of this at the outset. I purchased two bins.

The instructions for the setup were clear, and in no time at all I was composting at 50 - 60°C. I'm not sure they 'compost' so much as 'cook' the waste. I top them up on a regular basis, and HotBin recommend adding a bulking agent, such as small wood chips, which facilitates better aeration. I have found that it also improves the compost consistency, if you intend to use it as a mulch.

What are the main points you need to consider before you buy a HotBin?

- As with all compost-making, waste should be shredded before it's added to the bin.
- You need to feed the bin at least weekly, to keep the internal temperature up.
- Getting the right balance of moisture in the bin takes trial and error.
- The maximum proportion of grass clippings you can add is about 25%.
- It's best to put the HotBin about 3-4 inches higher than the surrounding ground, for easy access to the drainage hole at the base of the bin where the 'leachate' drains from. HotBin now include a stand in their accessories range. The leachate can be diluted and used as a plant feed.



For us, the HotBins have definitely paid for themselves. Since owning them, we've made no trips to the recycling centre and added nothing to our old compost heap. With a round trip of 30+ miles to recycle our excess green waste once or twice a month, there has been a reduction in petrol consumption and we have reduced our carbon footprint. With good management, we may also be able to let one of our two council garden waste bins go, with a yearly saving of £42.

In summary, I've been really surprised at the phenomenal amount of garden waste, cardboard and shredded paper that the HotBins have processed. Yes, it does require more effort than before, but I'd rather spend time shredding than driving to the recycling centre. Despite composting for almost four months now, it has only produced about four wheelbarrows of mulch, despite the many wheelbarrow loads I've put in at the top.

Personally I would recommend a HotBin, and I understand that the RHS have recommended them too: it is a worthwhile investment that will pay for itself in more ways than one.

HOTBIN	HOTBIN Mk.2	HOTBIN Mini
DIMENSIONS mm	1145 x 550 x 550	1125 x 450 x 450
DIMENSIONS inches	46 x 22 x 22	45 x 18 x 18
CAPACITY (internal)	200ltrs (approx)	100ltrs (approx)
WHAT DOES IT EAT?	Practically everything	
WEIGHT	6kg (empty)	4kg (empty)
SPEED	32x faster than cold composting	

<https://www.hotbincomposting.com>

First published in the Norfolk/Suffolk Group Newsletter
Spring 2021

CHIPPING OR TWIN-SCALING SNOWDROPS

Eddie Roberts

In June 1993, Margaret Owen and the Shropshire NCCPG organised the first Snowdrop Gala for 100 years. During the conference, I went to a workshop in David Bromley's front parlour, during which Audrey Vockin described twin-scaling snowdrop bulbs. It sounded like a piece of cake, and I was so confident after half an hour listening to Audrey that I offered to twin-scale some of David Bromley's National Collection of Snowdrops. He gave me *Galanthus nivalis* 'Walrus', *G. n.* 'Sandhill Gate', *G. n.* 'Virescens', *G. n.* 'Saville Gold', *G. plicatus* 'Early Byzantinus', *G. pl.* 'Late Byzantinus' and *G. pl.* 'Trym' to practice on.

Twin-scaling involves cutting a dormant bulb into segments, or 'chips'. I was determined to do the job well, so I borrowed a biology lab at school. All went well till I got to *G. pl.* 'Trym'. In the 1990s, *G.* 'Trym' was an extremely rare and valuable bulb. Science lab sinks don't have a trap or U-bend, so that any acid can go straight through to the sewers. I had been washing the chips under the tap. This time, I turned the tap on a little too hard and, disastrously, all the 'Trym' chips went down the sink.

Twin-Scaling Technique

First, select your victims in the spring and pot up the bulbs until they're dormant. In June or early July I prepare to cut them up. I use a different coloured label for each batch each year so I can track their progress.

It is important to be as sterile as possible. I wear new disposable gloves for each snowdrop. I also use bleach to clean the surfaces between each snowdrop, a new blade on the scalpel and methylated spirits to sterilise the scalpel handle.

The first step is to remove the outer scales, the roots (with a thin slice of the basal plate) and the top, until the



All photos © Eddie Roberts

bulbs look like cocktail onions, with no brown marks or stains. I then dip the bulbs in dilute bleach.

If you take a slice off the top of the bulb it's a lot more stable on the work surface. Cut the bulb into segments. I used to try to get as many as possible - sometimes up to 36 from a bulb - but now I usually settle for 8 or 12. Chips are the segments, but if you are really ambitious (greedy) you can split each segment into two twin-scales. I then dip the chips or scales into a solution of fungicide.



Prepare the vermiculite by adding a mixture of water and fungicide. I allow it to absorb the water, aiming for a moist, but not soggy mixture. I use cheap plastic freezer bags to store my chips, but other people use old take-away boxes with lids. Make sure the chips don't touch one another, as they'll stick together. Cover them with more vermiculite, exclude the air and seal the bag.



Write the details on the bag and enclose a label. I record all the details in my snowdrop notebook, including the number of chips or scales and any problems with the bulb. In the next column I'll record the number of bulbils in October and the next column is for the leaves that hopefully appear in the spring.

Here they are all cosily wrapped up, airtight, until October.



In October, I check the bags and usually there are one or two bulbils in each chip. Sometimes they have started to make roots. I prepare a square 11cm aquatic basket with a mixture of 25% each of sterilised soil, peat-free compost, vermiculite or perlite and coarse sand. I put in a bit more vermiculite for *G. gracilis*. I put a layer of sand on the top and plant the bulbils in this layer, spray them with fungicide and then cover them with the vermiculite from the bag. Each aquatic basket is then placed into a square 11cm plastic pot, to reduce water loss. I put a dollop of sand at the bottom of the plastic pots to get a snug fit. Then they go onto the greenhouse bench over their first winter.



Here they are popping through in the spring. I then plant the whole trellis pot (minus the outer plastic pot) in the garden and in two or three years, they should flower.

Top Tip: start with something cheap and easy, not your most valuable and precious snowdrops. Try *G. plicatus* or a daffodil, as they're big, which makes the whole process much easier.

~ First published in the Galanthus Group Newsletter, Autumn 2020 ~

SCENTED CAMELLIAS

Caroline Bell

The garden in February is cheering because of the lure of scent. I pass the wonderful witch hazels, *Sarcococca hookeriana*, *Daphne* 'Jacqueline Postill', the winter honeysuckles and *Chimonanthus praecox* (wintersweet) which are now going past their best, and look out for the scented camellias. Already in flower, they will be in bloom right through into April - a far longer period of flower than the other plants. I am a fan of scent in any species, but scented camellias are a joy in winter, although you nearly always have to put your nose into the flower to catch the fragrance.

Scent varies according to the species, and the Wabisuke Group of *Camellia japonica*, represented at RHS Rosemoor by the white, single-flowered 'Shiro-wabisuke' in their Winter Garden, are a particular seasonal delight. Unfortunately, 'Shiro-wabisuke' is rarely for sale in the UK, but there is another fragrant wabisuke: *C. 'Shōwa-wabisuke'*, usually sold under the synonym *C. saluenensis* 'Apple Blossom'. My 20 year-old plant has been in flower here since December and will continue until April. The single flowers are creamy white with a pink mark on one petal. If you like white, single flowers, *C. jap.* 'Charlotte de Rothschild' and one of her parents, *C. jap.* 'Alba Simplex', are both sweetly scented, unless the weather is very cold. *C. jap.* 'Kingyoba-shiro-wabisuke' also has a white, scented single flower, and glossy fishtail-shaped leaves which carry foliage interest all year.



© Caroline Bell

Camellia 'Shōwa-wabisuke'

My mature plant of hybrid *C. x 'Yume'* starts to flower in November but peaks in February and continues into March. Whatever the weather, it smells of violets and primroses and is ridiculously floriferous, with

© Caroline Bell



C. 'Yume'

© Caroline Bell



C. x 'Marshall'

several buds to a stem. It comes from Japan where the name translates as 'Dream'. A bi-coloured hybrid of a scented Chinese species, *C. yuhsienensis*, the flower has a pinwheel colour effect - half purple, half white. 'Yume' has produced a scented seedling, of American origin, which has recently become available, called C. x 'Marshall'; it peaks in February. Both cultivars are hardy to around -12°C.

Neat, small-leaved hybrid C. x 'Minato-no-akebono' (Japanese for 'Harbour at Dawn') has miniature, two-toned pink, single flowers with a honey scent that packs a punch - an attribute derived from one of its parents, the most scented camellia species of the lot: *C. lutchuensis*. This species originates in the Liu Kiu islands in the far south of Japan, and is not fully hardy. I grow my plants of both the species and its hybrids close to a wall or behind the house here in Devon and, so far, no problems at 450 feet in our open, exposed garden.



© Caroline Bell

C. 'Minato-no-akebono'

© Caroline Bell



C. 'Toni Finlay's Fragrant'

I have many other scented camellias which flower as spring progresses, including single pink *C. x williamsii* 'Mary Jobson'; rose-pink, peony-form *C. 'Senorita'*; large-flowered, single white *C. jap. 'Nioi Fubuki'* (meaning 'Scented Snowstorm'); reddish-pink, fishtail-leaved *C. 'Kingyo-tsubaki'*; pale pink *C. x 'Fairy Blush'*; and compact, white-flowered *C. 'Quintessence'*, so I have more to look forward to and need never be without a scented camellia during their long season of flower.

I ask you - why buy a camellia without fragrance when there are literally hundreds with scent which add an extra dimension to the garden? Do not settle for less!

Caroline Bell holds a National Collection of *Camellia sasanqua*, *C. x hiemalis*, and *C. x vernalis* at her garden near Tiverton, Devon.

There are even double-flowered camellias with scent. One that I know to be available in the UK is *C. x williamsii* 'Toni Finlay's Fragrant', which has a light flesh-pink, anemone-form flower and blooms from early January to April. It was bred in New Zealand by Jim Finlay, a retired bank manager turned camellia breeder, whose sole goal was to produce camellias for scent.



© Gardens Online

**The fishtail-shaped foliage of
*C. 'Kingyo-tsubaki'***

❧ First published in the Devon Group Newsletter, Spring 2021 ❧

GERANIUM 'ANN FOLKARD'

Oliver Folkard

Staycations – holidays in our own country – are necessarily the fashion just now, though they were also fairly common when I was young. This meant that summer would see us set off either to the Isle of Wight, where we had relatives, or to Yorkshire because we liked it there.

Heading up the A1, one of the signs that we were well on our way was that meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) began to appear on the verges; it seemed to be a more northerly plant, though whether that impression was correct, I don't know.

Since then, *G. pratense* has been associated in my mind with holidays and so, by extension, any geranium is a pleasant sight. After a time, our garden in Staffordshire came to include *G. psilostemon* and *G. procurrents*, amongst several other geraniums. One day, idly looking at these handsome plants, I wondered what a cross between the two would look like.

Trusting to beginner's luck, I took a paintbrush and dusted pollen from one to the other. In due course one seed developed from that experiment, which I carefully collected. I have been told since that only about one in twelve seeds of *G. psilostemon* set, so I was lucky with this one, though in fact it was *G. procurrents* that produced the one special seed. That winter we moved cross country from Staffordshire to Lincolnshire, taking our solitary seed with us. It subsequently germinated and the seedling grew into a most interesting and attractive plant.



© Dave's Garden

G. 'Ann Folkard' AGM

The rest is history: I sent a note to the RHS publication *The Journal*, as it then was, together with a brief description, naming the plant as *Geranium* 'Ann Folkard' for my wife, and attaching a photograph. This appeared in the July 1974 issue of *The Journal* (Vol XCIX, Part 7).



© Schram Plants

The striking black veining on the petals of 'Ann Folkard'

There was interest from a number of people, including Alan Bloom at Bressingham, who I believe later tried to propagate 'Ann Folkard' by micro-propagation, but without success. Peter Yeo at Cambridge also requested material, and corrected my description: what I had called *G. collinum* in my original note was in fact *G. procurrens*. How that confusion happened, I am not sure.

Alan Bremner in Orkney made the same cross (amongst many others) at about the same time, resulting in the plant now known as *G.* 'Anne Thomson', which is smaller and less spreading than 'Ann Folkard'.

Others made contact, generally asking for cuttings. Of course, at this stage the plant was unique, and the only propagation option was to risk everything by digging the plant up and chopping it into pieces. This was the last thing I wanted to do, but taking a spade in one hand and my courage in the other, I dug the plant up and divided it. Fortunately, it is easy to divide; I lift it just as it is coming into growth in the spring and, as long as there is a growing point or two, the divisions grow on well.

And so *Geranium* 'Ann Folkard' came into being. It has been a real and enduring delight to have been instrumental in creating something so beautiful which has given pleasure to so many people. Since then she has made 'guest appearances' in all sorts of settings. I've kept a record of some of them in a box file of cuttings. For instance, she has featured in *The Observer* magazine and on the front cover of *Woman's Weekly*, not to mention publications of our own HPS and the RHS. Even now, she still appears from time to time in gardening programmes on television.

Around the time 'Ann Folkard' appeared, Plant Breeders' Rights came into operation, so this was an option to be considered. However, I decided not to take it up. Apart from the time and expense involved in making and administering an application for PBR, I felt that G. 'Ann Folkard' had cost me nothing and so there was no call to ask others to pay me for it: I was repaid by the creation of something so beautiful; why should it not give pleasure to others with the same freedom? Freely come, freely give. My only wish was to share it with others.

G. 'Ann Folkard' was awarded, and still holds, the RHS Award of Garden Merit but, for me, perhaps the ultimate accolade arrived when I first saw it in a garden centre, colourfully labelled with a picture of the plant in question, announcing to the world that this was *Geranium* 'Ann Folkard'.



© Oliver Folkard

❧ *First published in the Hardy Geranium Group Newsletter* ❧
Autumn 2021

MARTAGON LILIES

Wilma Keighley

First, let me admit that I am not an expert on martagon lilies. I wrote this article simply because I love these lilies and thought it would be useful to do a bit of reading around the topic to pass on to others while, hopefully, becoming a bit more knowledgeable myself in the process.

Lilium martagon is hardy throughout UK and most of Europe, tolerating temperatures as low as -20°C (classified as H6, zones 3-7 or 3-9 USA), and will grow in anything from full sun to partial shade, though it will need a more moist spot if in full sun. Ideally they prefer some sun (preferably in the morning) since they won't flower well in deep shade. They are not too fussy about soil pH, with a slight preference for alkaline.

Like all lilies, they need good drainage in winter, so an edge of woodland spot often suits them as the tree roots help to keep the soil drier in winter. They like as much humus as they can get, and are not generally recommended for heavy clay soils that become waterlogged, although some experts suggest adding grit to the planting hole in those circumstances. At the same time, most sources advise against soil that is too dry! I garden on heavy clay and I've added as much compost as I can at planting time, to try to improve the soil. That seems to have worked; my plants are flowering well and seem to be increasing in size.



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Lilium martagon



L. martagon var. *album*

Since martagons flower in June, the bulbs should be planted in autumn/winter. Originating in mountainous regions, they don't mind some frost, although it's best to avoid planting in freezing temperatures. Planting depth should be 2 to 3 times the height of the bulb, so about 10 - 15cm (4" - 6") deep with a spacing of about 10 - 15cm (4" - 6") between them, and in small groups. One suggestion is to space the plants farther apart as the amount of shade increases. This allows for increased air circulation, reducing the risk of botrytis. Hostas planted between martagons make nice 'spacers' and provide a good structural contrast in a woodland garden. The species *L. martagon* and *L. martagon* var.

album, both of which have the RHS Award of Garden Merit, often take a couple of years to get into their stride after planting, although martagon hybrids seem to be more accommodating.

My lilies are grouped in threes, mainly because larger groups were too costly, but I have some grandiose plans for huge drifts from seed. Martagons are easygoing, with no current major disease worries and no particular pruning regime: just cut the flowering stalks down when the leaves have yellowed. Diseases such as *Xylella fastidiosa* and *Plantago asiatica* mosaic virus may come to be a problem for martagons as our climate warms. DEFRA classifies xylella as having a 'medium likelihood' of affecting martagons and 'high seriousness', with plantago mosaic as a 'very high likelihood' but 'medium seriousness'.

Although said to be prone to slugs and aphids, the only pest I have encountered is the pesky lily beetle. Despite my best efforts (I go on lily beetle patrol every day in spring/summer), many of my plants end up

with lacework leaves. Although this is unsightly, flowering doesn't seem to be affected. I have not needed to stake any of my hybrids, but I've noticed that some people recommend growing martagons through shrubs, to support the stems. Perhaps this is advisable with some of the really tall cultivars.

Botanically, martagons are 'true' lilies, placed in Division II of the genus *Lilium*. Five different species make up the Martagon Group of lilies, which share the features of whorled leaves, small downward-facing flowers with smooth, re-curved petals (except *L. tsingtauense*), and good-sized seedpods. Martagon hybrids are the result of crossing non-identical lilies from the martagon group: *L. hansonii*, *L. martagon*, *L. tsingtauense*, *L. distichum* and *L. medeoloides*. The first three of these are generally available commercially, if you feel like trying some hybridisation; the latter two less so.



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L. x 'Mrs R O Backhouse'

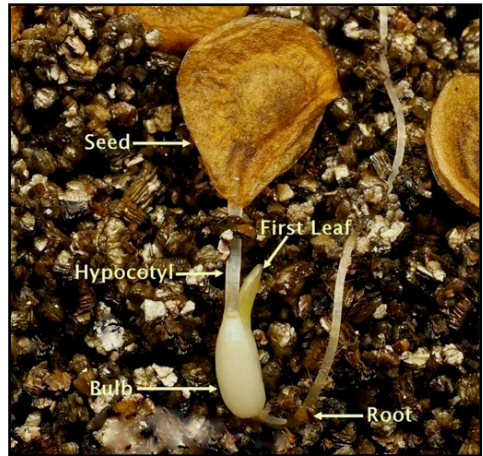
The species has been in cultivation for a long time (see Linnaeus, C. 1753. *Species Plantarum* 1: 303.) Amateur hybridisers were certainly at work by the mid 19th century, the most prominent hybrids being the Backhouse series of martagon / *hansonii* crosses by Robert and Sarah Backhouse of Herefordshire. Most of these hybrids are no longer available commercially, with the exception of a lovely golden hybrid, *L. x 'Mrs R O Backhouse'* (AGM 1921).

Hybrids (there are more than 500) are generally accepted as being easier to grow, and are more vigorous than the true species. There is a far wider range of height and colour within hybrid forms, from pure white through

pinks, deep reds to almost black. All shades of yellow occur, from cream tinged with peach, through golden yellow to rich orange. I lost count of the number of recently introduced hybrids when I researched these, with many originating from Canadian enthusiasts - the Manitoba, Fox and Arctic series, for example - but these seem to be easy enough to obtain by mail order (if your pockets are sufficiently deep).

Propagation is by division, scaling or seed. Clumps of martagon lilies may be lifted and divided in autumn, when the foliage is dying down. Individual scales from lifted bulbs can be placed in moist, warm peat until bulbils develop, and grown on from there. I often grow from seed and have, for the last two years, sown trays of *L. mar.* var. *album* from seeds obtained in the HPS seed exchange.

Martagons are hermaphrodite (have both male and female organs), and are pollinated by moths and butterflies. The seeds ripen from August to September and should be sown immediately. Martagon seeds display 'delayed hypogeal germination', which means that, during its first summer, the seed turns into a micro-bulb with a root. A cotyledon grows but remains underground and acts as an umbilical cord between the seed and the micro-bulb. The micro-



bulb then waits for a longer period of cold temperatures, and when the temperature increases in the second spring, it sends up its first true leaf. Stored seed needs a warm/cold/warm cycle to emulate this pattern.

Most sources recommend leaving the seedlings in their original pot until their second year, at least. Imagine my disappointment when I read that flowering typically takes more than seven years from seed. My grandiose plan of a drift of white martagons growing through hydrangeas may take some time! The Alpine Garden Society recommends feeding the seedlings regularly while in growth, to help speed up the maturation process.

There are several scholarly articles regarding hybridisation within the Martagon Group, detailing which species prove the most successful pollen parents and which the best pollen acceptors. Newer developments also include the hybridisation of martagons with lilies from other lily groups. In most cases these crosses are not viable naturally, with the embryo being rejected before the seed can form, but nowadays the embryo can be 'rescued' and grown in a test tube to become a small bulb.

Examples of this form of hybridisation include crossing *L. martagon* var. *album* with non-martagon *L. pumilum* (from Asiatic Lily Division 1), and *L. martagon* with non-martagon lilies from Division IV, the American lilies. You can find details of this in articles from the North American Lily Society (www.lilies.org) and the RHS Lily Yearbook (see *News From the Old Martagon Country* by Petr Srutka at https://www.rhslilygroup.org/RHS_LilyYrbk_1512.pdf) if you are interested in finding out more.



© brecks.com

L. 'Claude Shride'



© plantust.com

L. 'Orange Marmalade'

With a seven year wait for something that might turn out to be a disappointment, I expect many of us will prefer to buy hybrids where we can see in advance how the plant will develop. So far, I have only grown widely available hybrids: deep red *L. 'Claude Shride'*, maroon-splashed orange *L. 'Arabian Knight'* and bright tangerine *L. 'Orange Marmalade'*, and I can recommend any of these as 'good doers' and lovely with it. I have detected no fragrance from any of the martagon lilies I grow.



© brecks.com

L. 'Arabian Knight'



© Florium.ua

L. 'Manitoba Morning'



© lilygarden.pl

L. 'Sunny Morning'



© Aukštyte.it

L. 'Albi Morning'

Two random facts to close: all parts of the martagon lily, especially the pollen, are extremely toxic to cats, but the tubers can, and have, been used a substitute for potatoes (but I don't recommend trying this!).

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The Hardy Plant Society
3 Basepoint Business Centre
Crab Apple Way
Evesham WR11 1GP

Tel: 01386 710317

Email: admin@hardy-plant.org.uk

Website: www.hardy-plant.org.uk

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