

'Comte du Gomes'.

These cultivars have proved very successful both at the propagation stage and during subsequent growing on.

In the last two years we introduced the newer Williamsii hybrids 'Anticipation', 'Debbie', 'E.G. Waterhouse', 'Elsie Jury', 'Grand Jury', 'Inspiration', and 'Sayonara', with the cultivar 'Tomorrow' in the *C. japonica* groups. We find that these cultivars are fairly hardy and strong growing. The good solid blooms and color are advantages in the garden centre. But initiation appeared to be better and easier to achieve than in the older cultivars.

It is hoped that we shall continue working on direct rooting into various types of modules and as stock becomes more plentiful, then stem cuttings will be used in order to cut one year in our production system.

HARDY PERENNIALS WORTH PROMOTING

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Plants that do not readily fit into nursery production systems tend to be dropped. The result is more and more plants of ever fewer cultivars and a general impoverishment to horticulture. Some of the plants mentioned below seem to me to appeal strongly to the public when they are given the chance to see them in a flattering environment.

Rheum australe (*R. emodi*) strikes me as a handsomer rhubarb than the more widely grown *R. palmatum*, because its leaves are more deeply incised and the rich purple coloring on their undersurfaces is long retained. The pure white inflorescence, borne in May, shows up well against a dark background.

The liliaceous *Veratrum album* carries a striking, branched inflorescence whose whiteness shows up more tellingly in a general garden or landscape setting than the better known, dark maroon-flowered *V. nigrum*, which is in more general circulation. *V. album* has a long effective season from July onwards. It produces an abundance of seed, but about 4 years is required to raise flowering-sized plants.

Blechnum chilense, sometimes known as *B. tabulare*, is a handsome, tough-leaved evergreen fern that makes excellent ground cover in an open situation. In a sunny site you get a contrast throughout the spring to autumn growing season be-

tween the copper of young foliage and the dark green of that which has matured. The plant is calcifuge but otherwise of easy cultivation, propagated by division of its mat-forming rhizomes.

The dwarf bamboo, *Arundinaria viridistriata* (*A. auricoma*) grows only 2 ft tall if cut to the ground each April, which is the treatment that obtains the brightest, freshest coloring from its green and yellow striped foliage. This is a clump-forming, non-invasive bamboo, propagating by division when signs of renewed growth have become evident in the late spring.

Next to this, and at the front of a mixed border, I grow a violet from Western Australia that has proved remarkably hardy, *Viola hederacea*. It is deciduous, overwintering as a dense mat of surface rhizomes. The first burst of its upright mauve-and-white blossoms opens in June, a succession being maintained right into autumn. *V. cucculata*, from Labrador, is especially striking in its white form, which has purple pencil marks in the centre. It self-sows abundantly and makes such a striking feature in its April to May season as to sell on sight then. This is a large-flowered violet, deciduous and bone hardy.

Erigeron karvinskianus (Syn. *E. mucronatus*) is hardy only in the milder winter parts of Britain. It has naturalized in many parts of Europe, including the Channel Islands, but originates from Mexico. It is a 9 in-tall daisy with thread-like stems, flowering with unremitting abundance from May till late autumn. The pink and white effect created is owed to the young rays expanding white but changing to pink as they age. Plants self-sow and readily colonize the cracks in walls and paving. An excellent seller when the public can see what it is capable of.

Convolvulus mauritanicus, from Morocco is again hardy only in milder climates but a very beautiful trailing perennial for rock ledges or ornamental pots and tubs with a long succession of clear lavender funnels. Propagated from soft tip cuttings at any time during its growing season.

There is currently a great vogue for herbs, epitomizing a return to the simple, good life as we imagine it once to have been. If herbs can look beautiful rather than weedy, as is so often the case, they have the greater garden appeal and such is the golden marjoram, *Origanum vulgare* 'Aureum'. It does not look much when grown in a container but if there is a flourishing stock plant in the open ground near your selling area, it will do you proud. At its best the color is fresh lime green. In too hot and dry a position it may bake and scorch, as with the majority of yellow-leaved plants.

Crepis incana, in its vegetative state, looks like a grey-leaved dandelion and many visitors tell me, seeing it in that phase, that in their gardens it would quickly be weeded out. In

this they are no doubt correct. When they see it covered, in its July season, with clear pink blossom on a mounded foot-tall plant, they sing a different tune. Propagation, as for the dandelion, is from root cuttings but *C. incana* never makes itself a nuisance.

Epilobium glabellum belongs to a genus of take-over weeds and one is therefore surprised to find that this willow-herb is not entirely hardy. Cuttings of its vegetative, resting shoots should be taken in the autumn and overwintered under cold glass. On neat, 9 in-tall plants the 5 months-long succession of cream-white funnel flowers is borne from May onwards and has a wide appeal.

Yellow daisies are two a penny in the late summer garden scene, but *Grindelia chilensis* (from the island of Chilo off Chile) has style and distinction and appears to be a good deal hardier than one expected, coming through the last hard winter without protection. It makes a loose, sub-shrubby mat in the manner of *Osteospermum barberae* (Syn.: *Dimorphotheca barberae*) and is increased from soft cuttings. The plant's habit is semi-sprawling, without need of support and the bold daisies are carried singly on long stems. While still in bud they are tacky, with the wetness of a healthy dog's nose.

By its side I have a sub-shrubby ballota that makes a change from the popular grey-leaved labiate, *Ballota pseudodictamnus*. This one, *B. acetabulosa*, is a little greener, more upright in its habit, its inflorescences of interrupted whorls carried in graceful spires, less than 2 ft tall.

Grey-leaved shrubs have a general susceptibility to damage by frost. Thus if gaps tend to appear in low hedging and edgings of santolina or lavender, an excellent and entirely dependable substitute may be found in the South African *Helichrysum splendidum* (which has also been listed as *H. trilieneatum* and its Syn.: *H. alveolatum* in its time). They are a feature of the formal parterre at Drummond Castle in central Scotland, a garden that is situated in a frost hollow. The bushes should be clipped over each spring. The small yellow flowers carried on the young shoot tips are of no significance.

Clematis montana var. *wilsonii*, introduced by Wilson from Central China around 1900, looks like any other white montana when in flower and it has the same vigor, easily climbing to 40 ft on house, castle or tree. But its season, if the right clone is secured, is a full month later than the type-plant and is at its peak in the second half of June — at least in Scotland. Its strong scent, carried on the air, is of hot chocolate.

Another plant I have seen more in Scotland than elsewhere is *Nepeta nervosa* and it is surprising to find that it received

the RHS Award of Merit as long ago as 1930. Unlike the popular catmint, this species has a neat upright habit, a foot tall with dense flower spikes very much on the blue side of mauve. It flowers at midsummer and makes a good edger. It is most easily propagated from seed, which will flower in the year of sowing.

The best stand I have seen of *Thalictrum chelidonii* was at Inverewe in northwest Scotland and the only nursery I know of offering it is Jack Drake's at Inshriach, Aviemore, Inverness-shire. It is not so tall growing as the well-known *T. dipterocarpum*, about 3 ft as against 6, the flowers a little larger, nodding and of an intense shade of mauve.

You also meet *Codonopsis* more in the north than down south and this little grown genus within Campanulaceae is exceptionally hardy. Nevertheless, with me, in Sussex, *Codonopsis convolvulacea* is easier to keep going and multiply when grown in large pots and it makes a fine autumn display feature when grown up brushwood in a 10 in pot. This is a climbing herbaceous perennial that starts growth late in spring. The campanula blue flowers are saucer-shaped, often mistaken by the public for a clematis. It can be increased by its freely produced tubers, or from seed which germinates quickly and flowers in its second year.

Its adaptability to wet places explains why *Senecio smithii* is seen far more in the north of Britain than elsewhere, though it will flourish in any boggy spot. In Orkney it has naturalized in many parts of the Mainland island and it is probable that it was first introduced there by one of the many shepherds who used to do a few years shepherding down in the Falkland Islands where this groundsel is native. It has lush, glossing undivided leaves and a large panicle of daisies with white rays and yellow discs.

The hippeastrums, often misnamed amaryllis, come from South America and are mostly tender, but *Hippeastrum pratense* is an easy-going bulbous plant as hardy in Scotland (where I first met it) as elsewhere and not requiring extra heat to make it flower freely. The trumpet-shaped, dazzling red blooms are clustered on foot-tall scapes and open late May or early June. The bulbs increase naturally by division but seed is also freely set and germinates quickly.

Native plants tend to be denigrated by gardeners in their own country, which perhaps explains why the hardy terrestrial orchid, long known as *Orchis maculata*, now *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, a plant distributed in its many sub-species throughout the U.K., is seldom met in cultivation. Get it into a border, however, and it soon builds into fat clumps and makes a showy June display with its mauve spikes above handsomely spotted

foliage. From southwest Europe we have the similar, but even more impressive and equally hardy *D. foliosa*, with rich reddish-purple flower spikes. These species flourish in moist shady conditions and the clumps increase fast enough for division of their tubers in the dormant season to be a reasonable method of propagation.

As plants for border margins, it is interesting to compare *Achillea taygetea* (which I want to push) and *A. 'Moonshine'*. The latter is six inches taller and stronger growing, its foliage more silvery, its corymbs the brighter shade of yellow. It is an easy and deservedly popular plant. *A. taygetea*, at 2 ft, is an even more convenient height and its coloring is a really soft, pale yellow of a shade all too rare in hardy perennials. Though less robust than 'Moonshine', it is still an easy plant, best propagated from soft cuttings in spring.

In a good strain, *Omphalodes cappadocica* makes a striking display of intense blue on 9 in-tall, ground-covering plants for many weeks each spring and is a compulsive self-seller at that season. It is a remarkably versatile plant, flourishing as well in the deep shade of evergreen rhododendrons as out in the open. Clumps can be split and potted in early autumn for sale the next spring, but seed offers another quick means of increase.

Bergenias as a group have been overexposed of recent years, and the fact that many have coarse and leathery foliage, obtrusive for the entire year, has for too long been ignored. The neatness of *Bergenia stracheyi* is a welcome relief. Its warm pink heads of blossom are borne in early spring at a mere 6 in above small stiff leaves that change to reddish purple in cold weather. The white-flowered form is equally attractive.

The attractiveness of the flowering hebes soon makes gardeners forget the losses they sustain in hard winters like 1979, and anyway precautionary cuttings are easily taken in autumn and overwintered in a safe place. *Hebe 'Watson's Pink'*, which the RHS gave an Award of Merit when I showed it in 1977, makes a very pretty plant in a 5 in pot within less than a year of being struck. This is more than can be said of clones like 'Midsummer Beauty' and 'Hielan Lassie', which seldom flower in their first year at all. 'Watson's Pink' has numerous short, slender spikes of a clear pink shade, and associates well with grey-leaved plants like *Artemisia ludoviciana*. Its leaves are small and it is considerably hardier than large-leaved cultivars like 'Andersonii Variegata' or 'Simon Delaux'.

The aging joke that spotted aucubas look as though they had been sprayed with Paraquat, has grown very tired. Those who enjoy spotted variegations will agree that the ordinary spotted aucuba is not spotted enough. The splashes of yellow

are too small and indistinct for effect. Nobody should be content with this but should go for a really boldly marked clone like *Aucuba japonica* 'Crotonifolia'. It thrives in shade and any branches that come pure yellow here will be the safer from scorching, to which they are otherwise subject. This is a splendid evergreen shrub both in the garden and when cut for the house.

Another evergreen shrub of astonishing hardiness, considering its Tasmanian provenance, is *Helichrysum ledifolium* (Syn. *Ozothamnus ledifolius*). Nowhere that I have heard of did it suffer in Britain in the 1979 winter. It makes a dense dark green 3 ft. plant, relieved by the pale yellow-green of its shoot tips which show the undersides of their leaves. In May the expanding flower buds are a rich shade of burnt orange, similar in coloring and season to that of *Euphorbia griffithii*. This is their finest moment, before they expand into a white frost of tubular flowers. At all seasons the shrub wafts a strong aroma of stewed prunes. Cuttings are easily rooted, like lavender or rosemary in early autumn, but plants are a little slow to make up.

DISCUSSION GROUP REPORT
DAPHNE PROPAGATION
CHAIRMAN — A.R. CARTER

The difficulties of producing daphnes in commercial quantities attracted quite a number of people to this discussion session chaired by A.R. Carter.

It started with a recommendation of the book, *Daphne*, by C.D. Brickell and B. Mathew, published by the Alpine Garden Society.

SEED

A list of plants that provided a seasonably reliable seed set was given. Although experience was limited among group members, it was stated by one that his *Daphne giraldii* did not crop regularly.

D. acutiloba
D. giraldii
D. laureola
D. longilobata
D. mezereum

D. m. 'Alba'
D. oleoides
D. pontica
D. retusa
D. tangutica

In general, seed should be collected before the berries are fully colored. Birds can be troublesome and greenfinches will take the berries whilst still green.