

# LILY GROUP Newsletter

SPRING 2018



Lily Group  
summer visit  
announcement

see pages 6–7

Lily photo library  
and Seed List update  
with a request for more photos...

see page 11

The Lily Group  
**Bulb Auction 2017**  
RHS Vincent Square

full report on pages 8–9

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## Editorial

Pontus Wallstén

Welcome to the *Spring 2018 LG Newsletter*. It does indeed feel strange to talk about spring, when there is currently a heavy blanket of snow outside as I write, in early March. This had been preceded only a few days ago by record cold temperatures from Siberia, -10 °C and Arctic winds.

But below ground is a different story! As I have been digging up lily bulb orders for my customers during December/January, I have been amazed by the advancement of underground shoots at such an early stage. *Lilium canadense*, *L. humboldtii* var. *bloomerianum*, *L. martagon*, *L. rosthornii* and *L. pseudotigrinum*, to name just a few, had 2–3 cm long shoots. This is not uncommon however, as it has also happened in previous years, no matter how mild or cold the winter has been. In fact, my *Lilium alexandrae* kept in its pot on a cold balcony just above freezing, started sprouting in early January and is now about 20 cm tall. *Lilium nobilissimum* and some *L. humboldtii* kept on the same balcony are not far behind. It does seem that some species do not need a long dormancy period before beginning to grow again.

Our Lily Group committee have not been dormant for very long either, as they have been preparing LG Garden Visits (see pp. 6–7), mailing out seed orders (see p. 11), welcomed a new chairman, as well as a new



treasurer. The lily species guidebook that I had been working on for the past two years was completed last year as well (see details on p. 14). A LG Facebook page and a potential new website are also in the pipeline for the near future. Chris Hind highlights on p. 10 the advantages of the internet and social media when it comes to finding rare species for your collections. Hopefully spring is not too far away now, and in a few weeks, the first *Lilium* in our collections should start appearing above ground!

## Chairman's letter

Jamie Compton

As the freezing 'beast from the east' recedes and milder weather beckons, I should like to share with you the hard work the Committee are undertaking for the year ahead.

It is not easy stepping into Nuala Sterling's shoes. Nuala has guided the RHS Lily Group through a tricky period and set the group once again on a fair footing.

We welcome Chris Hind in his new role as our Treasurer and are delighted that Nuala has agreed to stay on as assistant co-Vice Chairman along with Alisdair Aird. I would like to thank Alan Mitchell for his superb editing of *Lilies and Related Plants*. He really has induced a wide range of contributors to write some fascinating articles for the Yearbook over the past ten years. I would also like to thank Rob Kirkham for his work and the excellent quality of the printing. Irene Hopton-Scott's tireless work recruiting and sorting the mare's nest of banking issues for our Membership must also get a special mention. It is most encouraging to see that our membership numbers are stable and that we are gaining new members regularly. We are truly a global Society with, (as of March 2018) 298 members in 21 different countries.

The Bulb and Book Auction held during the AGM in October 2017 could have been better advertised, however, all lots were sold—details can be found on page 9. The 2018 AGM and Bulb Auction will be held in Scotland on Saturday 20 October at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and will include a horticultural lecture on the experiences of George Forrest (see page 5).



This year we have a very exciting Seed list full of interesting Liliaceous (and other) plants. George Battle and Pat Huff who have put in such a huge amount of work preparing and communicating the seeds far and wide, explain more on p. 11.

In the future we hope to provide the mechanism for interactive communication among our membership and we are proud to announce that more and more images of lilies can be seen online [<https://gbattle7.wixsite.com/lilygroupseedlist>]. The range of lilies that are now available as seed, especially those from China, is greater than ever before.

As I write this in early March, the first fresh green leaves of *Chionodoxa forbesii* are showing through our damp soil and we are awaiting those magnificent bright blue flowers. The lily bulbs are shooting from under their leafy cover and we have an exciting list of events which Duncan will tell us about on pages 5–7. I wish everyone a good and floriferous season.

## Membership Spring 2018 update

Irene Hopton-Scott

A huge thank you to all our Members both in the UK and overseas for your continued support through your subscriptions. Our Membership is stable and we continue to attract new members annually. You too can also contribute to our work of conserving and growing lilies by becoming Seed Donors. So please do think about collecting seed this year and sending it to Pat Huff, whose contact details can be found on page 14.

### Annual subscription period

**1 January to 31 December**

#### HOW TO JOIN

The Lily Group Membership Form can be downloaded at: [www.rhslilygroup.org](http://www.rhslilygroup.org) Click on 'Join the Lily Group' and follow the on-screen instructions to complete and return the form in PDF format.

#### 1. PAYPAL

PayPal is the simplest option, especially for our overseas membership. Remember, you are not required to have a PayPal account to settle PayPal invoices.

**New members** will receive a PayPal invoice from the Lily Group via email, inviting you to pay the £15 annual subscription.

**Existing members** will receive a PayPal invoice from the Lily Group every January, with an invitation to renew.

#### 2. STANDING ORDER

##### New Members

The Membership Secretary will send your completed Standing Order Mandate to your Bank, who will pay your subscription automatically each year on 1 January.

#### Existing Members

It is your responsibility to notify your Bank of any changes. So please check your existing Standing Order is correctly dated and for the correct amount of £15.

**Note:** If you wish to cancel your subscription, you must notify your Bank to cancel your Standing Order. The Membership Secretary cannot do this on your behalf.

#### 3. PERSONAL CHEQUE

**New Members** should send their cheque made payable to **The Lily Group** to the Membership Secretary (Mrs Irene Hopton-Scott) with their Membership Form.

**Existing Members** will receive an invitation to renew in December each year

#### Are your contact details up to date?

It is important that you keep me informed of any changes to your email address or postal address. I am still following up a number of members whose details are incorrect.

**Mrs Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary**

# Programme of Events

2018

## ■ RARE PLANT FAIR

EVENLEY WOOD GARDEN

SUNDAY 25 MARCH 2018

View and purchase some of the finest plants from a selection of the best nurseries.

## ■ EVENLEY WOOD ENGLISH GARDEN FESTIVAL

EVENLEY WOOD GARDEN

SATURDAY 26 MAY TO SUNDAY 10 JUNE 2018

For more info please visit : <https://www.evenleywoodgarden.co.uk/whats-on/>

## ■ THE RHS LILY GROUP SUMMER 2018 VISIT

THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS OF WALES.

ABERGLASNEY HOUSE AND GARDENS.

WEDNESDAY 13 JUNE 2018

Organised by Duncan Coombs.

Please see pages 6–7 for more information and how to book your place.

## 2018 Lily Group AGM & Bulb Auction

Saturday 20 October 2018

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Scotland EH3 5NZ

The 2018 AGM and Lily Bulb Auction will take place in the David Douglas Room on the west side of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Arboretum Place, Edinburgh.

The meeting includes a horticultural lecture about the experiences of George Forrest, Scottish naturalist and plant hunter in Yunnan, China in the early twentieth century.

More details will be available in the Lily Group Autumn Newsletter or from Nuala Sterling, who would also welcome information on potential donations for the Bulb Auction. Please check the website for further updates or contact:

The Secretary, Tony Dixon





# RHS Lily Group summer visit



■ **THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS OF WALES**  
 ■ **ABERGLASNEY HOUSE AND GARDENS**  
**WEDNESDAY 13 JUNE 2018**  
 Organised by Duncan Coombs

**The National Botanic Gardens of Wales** is an extensive botanical garden with several separate themed gardens. Upon entry into the garden one first meets the Boardwalk. This has several water features including a sinuous rill and along one side has one of the longest herbaceous borders in Britain. The garden's main claim to fame is the world's largest single-spanned glasshouse, designed by Lord Foster. This contains the best display of Mediterranean climate zone plants in the Northern Hemisphere.

- 10.00 am** Meet at the main entrance to the National Botanic Gardens of Wales, Middleton Hall, Llanarthney, SA32 8HN Wales. Tel. 01558 667149.
- 10.15 am** Tea or coffee in Meeting Room Grier Room. Tea or coffee £1.20 per serving or £1.70 with biscuits or welsh cakes.
- 10.15 am** Chairman's report
- 10.45 am** Group tours the gardens
- 12.30 pm** Lunch in the Seasons Restaurant, The National Botanic Gardens of Wales, Llanarthney, SA32 8HN. Tel. 01558 667149.
- 1.15 pm** Travel in own cars to Aberglasney, Llangathen, Carmarthen, SA32 8QH. Tel. 01558 668998. Approximately 45 minutes drive.

## Wednesday 13 June 2018



**Aberglasney House and gardens** is a medieval house and gardens set in the Tywi valley. The cloister garden is considered Aberglasney's most extraordinary feature and at the time of our visit the Asiatic garden should be full of interest. *Cardiocrinum giganteum* is grown in the gardens and may be in flower at the time of our visit.

- 2.00 pm** Meet Garden Director, Joseph Atkins for a guided tour of gardens
- 4.00 pm** Tea in garden restaurant
- 5.00 pm** Group departs.

### Accommodation

For those who wish or need to stay overnight there is the Ty Mawr Country Hotel, Brechfa, Carmarthen, SA32 7RA. Tel. 01267 202332. There are of course other hotels available, but the above is the most local to the gardens.

**For more information or to book your place, please contact Duncan Coombs, the Lily Group's Programme co-ordinator.**

# The 2017 Annual General Meeting and Bulb Auction

Tony Dixon

The annual meeting of the RHS Lily Group and Lily Bulb Auction was held at the Royal Horticultural Society, 80 Vincent Square on 26 October 2017.

Sixteen members and guests of the Lily Group gathered at Vincent Square. The Chairman, Nuala Sterling welcomed all and opened the meeting with a minute's silence in memory of past Chairman and long-standing committee member Tim Whiteley, who died during the year.

In her report, Nuala mentioned the strong wish of many members to have a membership list and asked if there was support for asking members whether they would like to be included in a list of members and their postal addresses. The meeting approved this suggestion, which hopefully will make it easier for members to make contact with each other. Membership of the Lily Group has increased slightly during the year.

She added that the Lily Group committee had, for two years, followed the new RHS policy of encouraging new members to join Plant Committees, to bring fresh ideas and input, and by inviting long-standing members with contributions to become Friends, Corresponding or Honorary Members.

On the subject of finance, the Chairman was pleased to be able to announce that the problem of finding a new treasurer had been solved by member Chris Hind's agreeing to



take on the task. As this was a very recent development, he was unable to attend, but he was formally accepted by a unanimous vote and welcomed to the committee (albeit in his absence!). The Chairman drew the attention of the meeting to the summary accounts which had been circulated and also published in the Newsletter.

Preparations for the Lily Trial are making progress and Pat Huff reported that contributions for the Seed List were already coming in and that receiving payments by Paypal was working well.

Duncan Coombs reported on the very enjoyable visit to Savill Garden and announced that visits to gardens in Wales were in the pipeline for 2018 (see pp. 6–7 for



Below, *Lilium* 'Eros', one of the north hybrids donated by Madeleine Tinson to the 2017 bulb auction.

details). Duncan is also pursuing the idea of a visit to the USA in 2019.

Nuala then welcomed Jamie Compton and formally invited him to take the chair of the Lily Group, with her best wishes. He thanked her and praised her for the wonderful job she had done as Chairman. The meeting joined Jamie in a round of applause in appreciation.

Tim Upson, Director of Horticulture for the RHS thanked the Group for the opportunity of celebrating the outstanding contribution made by Nuala during her chairmanship to the world of lilies and the Bulb Committee. To warm applause, he presented her with the Lyttel Cup.

#### DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

##### THE 2018 AGM & LILY BULB AUCTION

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh  
Saturday 20 October 2018.

See page 5 for more details

Duncan Coombs completed the meeting with a fascinating and beautifully-illustrated talk on the Group's visit to Greece.

#### Bulb Auction

Members joined visitors to the Autumn Garden Show on the dais in the Lawrence Hall at Vincent Square.

Duncan Coombs was our able auctioneer for a good selection of hybrids and a few species lily bulbs, also a range of books on lilies, some of them quite rare. The sale raised £316 for Lily Group funds (£211 from bulbs, £105 from books), details as follows:

**Tony Dixon:** *Lilium leichtlinii*, Pink/mauve Asiatic, *Fritillaria meleagris* f. *alba*.



**Vince Graham:** 'Lady Alice', Oriental/trumpet hybrids no. 338 from 2010 and no. 340 from 2010, 'Leslie Woodriff', 'Coromandel', 'Mister CAS', 'Maytime'.

**Brian Matthew:** *L. pardalinum*.

**Nuala Sterling:** 'Ryube' no. 365 from 2010, (Giant white tr. × Dark Copper, wine reverse) × ('JBBT' × 'King Midas') ref Joel Howell L&RPs 2009/10 pp. 80–82, 'Leslie Woodriff', 'Black Beauty', 'Pearl Jessica'

**Madeleine Tinson:** 'Eros', 'Iona North', 'Marie North', 'Minos', 'Odysseus', 'Pan', 'Anastasia', 'Night Flyer', 'Scarlet Delight', 'Scheherezade', 'Tiger Babies', *L. rostbornii*, *L. henryi*.

#### Books

*Lilies of the World*, Woodcock and Stearn (reserve £35); *The Lily Garden and Patio*, Michael Jefferson Brown 1988; *Modern Lilies*, Michael Jefferson Brown 1965; *Lilies cultivation & management*, Drysdale & Coutts; *Lilies of China*, Stephen Haw (reserve £20); *Lilies*, Victoria Matthews; *Garden Lilies*, Leebrun; 2, *Lilies and cultivation*, Witham Fogg; *Lilies for garden and greenhouse*, MacFie; *Lilies in the Garden*, George Quint; *Lilies*, Patrick Syngue.

# The internet of all things, especially lilies

Over the past 25 years, acquiring lilies has become increasingly difficult as the commercial growers stop producing or obtaining the rarer species.



With the recent plant hunters in China a number of lilies are being reintroduced back into cultivation; *Lilium stewartianum* seeds have become available and it is hoped that the rare *Lilium sempervivoideum* will also be made available. This is down to a few plant hunters including Peter Zale with *Lilium eupetes* and *L. iridollae*, and Bjørnar Olsen with *Lilium stewartianum*, *Lilium souliei*, *Lilium xantbellum* and hopefully *Lilium sempervivoideum* as well as other Chinese species.

I have found that there are many ways to acquire the rarer lilies from a variety of different sources, and that is through late night searches on the internet. Not only can I source hard to find lilies, but also specialist garden centres in the UK that have rarer bulbs, such as Inshriach, Beeches Nursery, Kevock Garden Plants, H. W. Hyde & Son, RarePlants UK, Pitcairn Alpines and eBay.

Through contacts in the USA, I have been able to acquire all the American species; mostly as seeds but more recently also a few as bulbs. A Turkish Facebook friend has sent me seeds of all the Turkish lily species, with scales of *Lilium akkusianum*, *L. ciliatum* and a bulb of *L. ponticum*. From an Iranian grower I obtained *L. ledebourii* seed, then found it was available from Plant world seeds

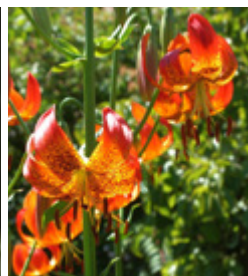
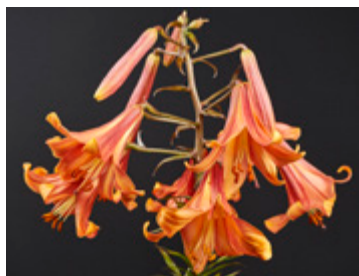
and then the SRGC, and lastly the RHS Lily Group (see the Members' archives on pp. 12–13 for Alan Mitchell's contribution on *Lilium ledebourii*). However as with all things, I will not be certain until they flower.

Through commercial sellers abroad, such as Pontus Wallstén, I have been able to further enrich my growing collection by obtaining a variety of harder to source bulbs such as: *L. alexandrae*, *L. nobilissimum*, *L. bakerianum* var. *rubrum*, and *L. primulinum* var. *ochraceum* 'Joseph Rock'

I now have over 75 different species at various stages of germination, all grown from seed, but also in addition, many species as nursery-grown, flowering-sized bulbs.

I would recommend anyone looking to obtain rarer lilies, to use the internet as a resource to find mature, cultivated bulbs, rather than spending years getting seeds and another seven to eight years waiting for flowers. Facebook is also a great means of making new friends and contacts the world over, who also have a passion for lilies. For those of you not yet members of the page, I would recommend you joining the species *Lilium* and *Nomocharis* enthusiast page. (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/388428798013664/>)

Chris Hind



## Lily Group Seed List

George Battle

Yes, compiling the Seed List is part chore but it is also a delight to see what wonders will appear. For the third year in succession *Lilium occidentale* has been on offer, giving hope that in a few years more members will be donating seed from bulbs raised from Lily Group seed.

A particular fascination are the differing forms of the various species: four very distinct types of *Lilium dauricum*, six selected varieties of *Lilium canadense* and three of *Lilium columbianum*, including a choice of wild-collected forms. These and many more are evidence of healthy diversity rather than the homogenised 'species' which sometimes appear in commerce.

Particularly exciting for me was to provide a Photo Library for the Seed List. A number of seed contributors generously sent in their photos of various forms of *L. dauricum*, *L. columbianum* etc. For hybrid lilies, photos can be a revelation. The exquisite poise of the American hybrids or the amazing range and variety of orienpets was there to see. While growers may not always have photos of new hybrids, seeing the pod and pollen parents is hugely valuable.

There were wonders, too, among seeds of other genera. A climber from the mountain

forests of northern India with orange-yellow flowers (*Dactylicapnos ventii*), a 'tree anemone' from the Sierra Nevada in California (*Carpenteria californica*) are just two of many.

Finally, a plea for next year: more photos of more species and hybrid lilies please!

### Lilies and Related Plants

Lily Group members will have received and, hopefully, enjoyed the 2017–2018 issue of *Lilies and Related Plants*.

I know it will be two years before the next issue is published, but I am already keen to start collecting articles, so should you have something in mind my please contact:

Alan Mitchell

Editor, *Lilies and Related Plants*

# Members' archives



**Chris Hind** UK

## *Lilium medeoloides*

*Lilium medeoloides* originates from the Japanese island of Hokkaido, parts of Russia and also the Korean peninsula.

I bought this lily three years ago from Rare Plants UK—and found it a delicate bulb that shed small rice grains that sadly failed to produce bulblets. I have been unable to obtain seeds so far.

The lily has a whorl of leaves up the stem, the flower is a 'turks cap' shape with recurved tepals, downward facing, they are red/orange with scarlet spotting, with orange pollen.

I grow this, as with most of my lilies, in a clay pot. The compost has extra leaf mould with a 3 cm grit base. This allows the compost to stay damp in the summer, yet remain free-draining. I have the pot sitting on a clay tray to retain moisture in summer.

Like most lilies, it likes shaded conditions;

I live in the North East of Scotland, so the sunlight and heat are less than further south in the UK, so it grows in full sun at the west side of my house in the spring, being moved to the east facing front of my house in summer, where the sun slips behind the back of the house by 14.00. This prevents the lily being scorched, but allows maximum sunlight in the cooler Scottish spring air. This extra care has produced a very vigorous specimen with seven flowers.

**Alan Mitchell** UK

## *Lilium ledebourii*

*Lilium ledebourii* is found in northern Iran and Azerbaijan. Related to *L. candidum*, it is easier to grow than it is to find, as I have never seen it offered by any Nurseries.

Many years ago I found it flowering in Chris North's garden, who, generously,



gave me the bulb, which I scaled to obtain more bulbs. More recently, I exchanged pollen with Alisdair Aird, which resulted in us sharing seed. A year or two ago I planted approximately a dozen healthy *Lilium ledebourii* seedlings in the garden and, as I am nearing the six or seven years it normally takes for members of the *L. candidum* group to reach flowering size, I'm hopeful of seeing this singular species flower.

## Gordon Hogenson USA

### *Lilium humboldtii*

I obtained the bulbs from Seven Oaks nursery in Oregon, a native plant nursery. My understanding is that they raised them from wild-collected seed, and have also offered other Western American lilies in the past, such as *Lilium washingtonianum*, *Lilium parvum*, and *Lilium parryi*.

The bulbs were obtained as three-year old seedlings, and grown in gravelly loam soil for three years before blooming, in a terraced bed on a southwest-facing slope. The native well-drained soil has been amended with compost. Bracken ferns and calendulas are grown as companion plants. In my area, we get 52 inches of rain annually and have a dry period in July and August. I gave them a bit of water weekly until blooming stopped; I then let them dry out and get crispy. I also cut off a number of seed pods to hopefully allow more energy to go into the bulbs.

When I planted these bulbs three years ago, I had very few lilies in my garden. I imagined that a few years

later, I'd have tall stems of beautiful orange, spotted flowers swaying in a summer breeze. In the summer of 2017, my dream was realized as three or four stems bloomed, the largest one with over 15 blooms! The flowers were very popular with humming-birds and Tiger swallowtail butterflies. I was able to donate seed to this year's Lily Group seed list.

The colour of var. *humboldtii* is described by Synge as a "clear, deep orange-yellow". I have not seen stem roots on these, so I'm comfortable with the identification of mine as *L. humboldtii* var. *humboldtii*.

The other point is the var. *ocellatum* is really only found in a very disjunct area from var. *humboldtii*. Whereas var. *humboldtii* itself is from the Sierra Nevada mountains, var. *ocellatum* is mainly from a few isolated locations in Southern California and the islands off the California coast.





# The lily species and their bulbs

by Pontus Wallstén

Our Newsletter Editor has written and self-published a comprehensive book entitled *The Lily Species and their bulbs*, printed by Four Way Print Limited in Cornwall. The book comprises an alphabetically arranged, fully illustrated and described list of 113 of the 115 or so existing lily species and their bulbs, with added cultural advice. Also included are a number of interviews with lily growers from around the world.

Anyone wishing to purchase a copy should contact Pontus Wallstén, our Newsletter Editor.

**Jamie Compton**



**For more information, visit:**

<https://pontuswallstenplants.smugmug.com/Home/Lilium-species-guidebook/>

Note: discounts applicable on grouped orders sent to one address, please see website for details.

## RHS Lily Group

## Honorary Officers and Committee 2018-19

**Jamie Compton, Chairman**

**Pat Huff, Seed List Distribution Manager**

**Alisdair Aird, Vice Chairman**

**George Battle, Seed List Compiler**

**Dr Nuala Sterling CBE, Vice Chairman**

**Tony Dixon, Secretary & Pollen co-ordinator**

### **OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

**Chris Hind, Treasurer**

**Caroline Boisset**

**Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary**

**Chris Brickell CBE VMH, Hon. Member**

**Alan Mitchell, Editor  
Lilies & Related Plants**

**Harris Howland, Past Chairman**

**Richard Hyde, Bulb committee member**

**Pontus Wallstén, Newsletter Editor**

**Colin Pope   Rose Voelker**

**Photo credits:** Front cover, p. 2, p. 9, p. 10, p. 14 (Pontus Wallstén); p. 3 (Tania Compton); p. 5 (James Nikitine); pp. 6–7 (Duncan Coombs); p. 8 (Nuala Sterling); p. 11 (left: Brian Bergman, middle: Darm Crook right: Axel Hintze); p. 12 top (Chris Hind); p. 12 bottom (Alan Mitchell); p. 13 (Gordon Hogenson); Back cover (Steve Garvie).



*Lilium henrici*, a phenomenally rare Chinese species, with its unique, exquisite and very elegant single flower; grown by Steve Garvie and photographed here in Scotland in June 2017.