

LILY GROUP Newsletter

SPRING 2017



The RHS *Lilium* Trial,
help make it a success

see page 11

Cameras at the ready:
George needs your
lily photos...

see page 9

The Lily Group
Bulb Auction 2016

RHS Vincent Square

full report on pages 5–7

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Editorial

Pontus Wallstén

2017 started on a very sad note for all of us in the Lily Group, with the unfortunate news in early January of the death of past Lily Group Chairman and longtime member Tim Whiteley.

Tim had set up from scratch, since the early 1980s, his fabulous woodland garden at Evenley, in Northamptonshire, where his *Lilium* collection, one of the biggest in the UK, thrived. He was always eager to share his passion and knowledge about them to visitors during walks through the wood. The English gentleman who loved lilies will indeed be greatly missed. Alan Mitchell is currently compiling a tribute to Tim for the next issue of *Lilies & Related Plants*. If you knew Tim, or have fond memories with him to share, please get in touch with Alan (contact information at the end of this Newsletter). Alan will also eagerly welcome further articles, as the upcoming issue (to be published in December) is not yet full.

To finish on a positive note, there will be several things to look forward to this year for us lily lovers, including the Lily Group trip to Greece in July (which is now fully booked), as well as other, shorter UK-based visits (for more information see p. 8). The Seed List this year was very good, with many rare species rarely (if ever) offered before, such as *Lilium ponticum*, *L. maritimum* and *L. occidentale* (see George Battle's full report on p. 9).



After a fairly cold winter here in Switzerland, summer arrived instantaneously, with almost no transition through spring. As I write, in mid-April, we have had summer-like temperatures (20–23 °C) and sun almost every day since mid-March—one of the warmest springs on record here. This has advanced the growth of most plants, two or three weeks ahead of schedule. Lilies looking promising, *Iris × germanica* already in bud, ready to open, most tulips and frits already over, and paeonies in the starting blocks! But colder weather with frosts is apparently forecast! A strange climate indeed!

Chairman's letter

Nuala Sterling

A new member enquired recently whether the RHS Lily Group was an international society? Yes absolutely, in fact almost from its inception in 1932, when the Group was formed from the 1931 Lily Committee.

E. H. Krelage commended the 1933 Conference dinner to toast the worldwide RHS esteem and the hope we should continue to maintain that cooperation with kindred organisations in other countries. Early Year Book editions (on our DVD 1931–2014) make fascinating historical reading of horticulture and the experiences of growing lilies. A third of our members are from overseas and I am certain we all benefit from this interaction.

I have just returned from another visit to New Zealand, I have not missed the English January one bit. On arrival in Christchurch our first event was the NZ Lily Society visit to the beautiful NZ Broadfield Landscape Garden of David Hobbs, whose many own hybrids enchanted us. It was a pleasure to meet several members already known by email contact through the seed exchanges. Then we had fun exchanging ideas with Bev Winter about to transfer her hundreds of lily pots to a new house and garden—the builders' rubble looking a challenge. Next a visit to Martin Toon's new garden and the impressive shade house of developing seedlings from the seed exchange, not forgetting the rows of hybrids especially 'Conca d'Or' pending reconstruction and replanting of the main garden before creative selection and transplantation. A nostalgic visit to Alan Trott's special garden at Racecourse Road, Ashburton*—my absolute refuge in the happy days of working at the hospital



there. He and Catherine created the three hectare garden out of paddocks. His Queen's Service Medal in the New Year's Honours list is a just appreciation. Our northward drive from Wellington to Auckland permitted returning visits to 88-year-old Bill Doreen of Lilies International fame, now frail but still as knowledgeable as ever on lilies, and finally to the beautiful Greenhaugh Gardens and Plant Nursery of Lynne Atkins in Palmerston North—a very English feeling with sumptuous lilies amongst other perennials and shrubs. Just short of Auckland we had the opportunity to explore the garden and greenhouses of expert Margaret Liddell at Morrinsville, roses, lilies, succulents, and lachenalias; she explained that NZ has four lily groups scattered through its islands: Auckland, Waikato, NZ Lily Society in Christchurch, Otago and Timaru.

*See New Zealand Gardens Trust.

The Lily Group Questionnaire gave some

Below, Greenhaugh Gardens and Plant Nursery in Palmerston North, North Island, New Zealand owned by Lynne Atkins.

Bottom, Martin Toon (Christchurch, New Zealand) with his seedlings grown from the 2016 Lily Group seed list.



interesting results: 50% of our responders have a background in horticulture or science; the seed exchange and our publications are the main attraction; almost everyone grows lilies from seed and 40% hybridise; interest in other bulbs, species and hybrids was widespread. We will keep the broad-based seed list, look at ways of enabling members to make contact with others in their locality, contact those who are interested in becoming

more involved with writing or joining the committee and consider how we might develop a new membership list. Thank you to all those who replied.

After a joint visit to Kew with the Fritillaria Group of the AGS on 26 March, our 2017 activities include a visit to the Savill Gardens in July after the fully-booked visit to Northern Greece to see lilies in the wild. **The AGM and Bulb Auction** will be held during the RHS Autumn Garden Show at Vincent Square 25–26 October. My term of office ends then and I am so pleased to announce that James Compton, botanist, plant explorer, past Curator and Head Gardener of the Chelsea Physic Garden has agreed to be my successor.

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Tim Whiteley OBE VMM, of Evenley Wood Garden, chair of the Lily Group for ten years from 1995, a splendid horticulturalist and arborist whose support, kindness and generosity in sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm for lilies was outstanding. He will leave a huge gap.



The 2016 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 29 October 2016.

Twelve members and one guest attended the Lily Group AGM in Room 21 at Vincent Square, during the Shades of Autumn show.

The Chairman welcomed all and reported on the very successful and enjoyable visits made by the Lily Group during the year—to Spetchley Park and Colonel Bryant's garden The Tynings at Stoulton in Worcestershire, a two-week trip to see lilies growing in the wild in Turkey, and a joint visit with the Bulb Committee to Bramdean House and Exbury Gardens, to see the hardy Nerine trial. She hoped that we can develop closer relationships with other groups too. She also drew attention to the 2017 visit to Greece.

Nuala thanked the new committee members (Nataliya Cuttall Treasurer, Pontus Wallstén Newsletter Editor and Tony Dixon Secretary) for their contributions during their first year in office. She also paid tribute to the great contribution over 20 years by Rose Voelcker as Membership Secretary, who now wishes to stand down. Irene Hopton-Scott has agreed to take this on, proposed by Harris Howland, seconded by Duncan Coombs, agreed by the meeting.

Seed Distribution

Pat Huff preceded her comments with a special vote of thanks to the Chairman for all her work in connection with the Lily

Group, in particular to the continuing closer relationship with the RHS in the past five years. She thanked the seed contributors for all the work they do. She enjoys being involved with the Seed Distribution because of its value to so many members and the major contribution it makes to the Group's income. The Chairman thanked her and George Battle for their work and explained that spare seed is sent to botanical gardens and nurseries which can then make rare bulbs available.

Pollen Exchange

Tony Dixon reported on and thanked the small band of stalwart contributors who are willing to supply pollen and encouraged members to make use of this valuable resource.

Treasurer's Report

Nataliya Cuttall reported that she is trying to simplify our procedures and is changing to a web-based accounting system. Collection of subscriptions has been a problem—to help this she will be sending out PayPal invoices towards the end of each year and reminders in January. The Chairman has worked hard to get non-payers down from about 80 to about half that, but it is an ongoing problem.

Nataliya emphasised that we are here for the benefit of members and would like to

encourage all to put forward suggestions for improvements to our systems and activities.

Programme 2017

Duncan Coombs reported that a visit to Savill Garden in Surrey is being explored and organisation of the trip to Greece is well under way. He would appreciate feedback from members about the trips and whether we should organise more of them. Suggestions for future visits included Keukenhof in Holland and more joint visits with the Bulb Committee. Duncan can be contacted via email: dcoombs@warkscol.ac.uk

2017 AGM and Bulb Auction

A Scottish proposal to hold the 2017 AGM and Bulb Auction in Scotland was received

with enthusiasm; the meeting agreed it should be put to the December committee meeting. (The Committee, while welcoming the proposal, decided against it for 2017, in view of the cost and distance.)

Following the formal business, Duncan Coombs gave a lively and entertaining talk about the trip to Turkey, with his characteristic enthusiasm. This was illustrated with colour slides, and it was exciting for all of us to see lilies growing in their natural surroundings.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

THE 2017 AGM & LILY BULB AUCTION

80 Vincent Square, Thursday 26 October during the RHS Autumn Garden Show.

Lily Group Bulb Auction 2016, RHS Vincent Square

Holding the AGM and the Bulb Auction and having a stand during the Shades of Autumn show, gave us a great opportunity to promote lilies and the Lily Group.

There was a lot of interest at the stand, seeds and bulbils were given out to interested visitors and five new members signed up at the show. Many more went away with membership forms.

The Bulb Auction was held in the main hall and was attended by a good crowd of eager buyers. Duncan Coombs made his debut as an auctioneer and fulfilled the role in a very entertaining and effective manner. The total sum raised was £675. Fortunately we had a large number of bulbs for sale to match the number of buyers—both *Lilium* and other bulbs. And the auction included a number of lily books. Bulbs donated were as follows:

Alisdair Aird: *Lilium columbianum*, *bansonii*, *kesselringianum*, *leichtlinii*, *maculatum*, *michiganense*, *wigginsii*, *parryi*, *parvum ballidayi*, *superbum*, × *chrysalense* from Lake Tahoe.

Duncan Coombs: Hybrids *L.* 'Alkestris', 'Red Ace', 'Pan', unnamed yellow trumpet.

Nataliya Cuttell: Asiatic hybrids *L.* 'Arsenal', 'Elodie', 'Mystic Dream', 'Patricia's Pride'.

Tony Dixon: *Lilium* 'Prato', 'Starburst', 'Karen North'; *Fritillaria meleagris*.

Vince Graham: Hybrids (many grown from Lily Group seeds) *Lilium* Pink Perfection × *L. leucanthum*, white/magenta trumpet, mixed hybrids, Ryiube, Bright Star × *L. henryi*, deep yellow orienpet, 'Leslie Woodriff', 'Topeka', 'African Lady', 'Ice Cube'.

Colin Hamilton: *L. lancifolium*.

Below, Duncan Coombs officiating at the 2016 Lily Group Bulb Auction in October last year. Duncan (standing) was kindly assisted by Irene Hopton-Scott and Tony Dixon.

Harris Howland: *L. pardalinum* var. *giganteum*, *leichtlinii* 'Iwashimizu', *leichtlinii* var. *maximowiczii*, *sulphureum*.

Brian Mace: *Littonia modesta*.

Jan Pennings (Chairman of Bulb Committee): crocus 'Grand Maître'; hyacinths 'Royal Navy', 'Blue Eyes', 'Jan Bos', 'Blue Jacket'; *Leucojum aestivum* 'Gravetye Giant'; narcissus 'Kokopelli', 'Cragford', 'My Story', 'Lucky Numbers', 'Golden Oxford', 'Crevette'; tulip 'Green Lake'.

Nuala Sterling: *L. regale*, 'Casa Blanca', *Crocus speciosus*.

Madeleine Tinson: *L. speciosum*, *hansonii*, North hybrids 'Ariadne', 'Eros', 'Karen North', 'Minos', 'Pan', 'Rosemary North', 'Orestes'.

Pontus Wallstén: *L. auratum*, 'Thunderbolt', 'Kushi Maya', 'Black Beauty' (tetraploid form), 'Ariadne'.

LILY BULB STORAGE...

A note to bulb donors for future Lily Group bulb auctions

Bulbs that are not dug up the day before the auction should be stored in plastic bags in slightly moist peat or similar medium (ideally in a fridge). It is important that the temperature is kept constant (between 5 and 10 °C).

Bags must not be sealed. Damp, closed-in, warm atmospheres with no air circulation will make the bulbs rot. Keeping lily bulbs for several weeks in closed bags at room temperature should therefore be avoided. *Lilium* bulbs have no protective tunics, and dry out very easily once out of the ground. They should always be kept in a medium which prevents them from drying out.

Compiled with kind assistance from Richard Hyde



Programme of Events

2017

■ RHS LILY GROUP AND FRITILLARIA GROUP MEETING

ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS, KEW, 26 MARCH 2017

We will have had a joint meeting with the Fritillaria Group Spring Meeting at RBG Kew on Sunday 26 March in the School of Horticulture. It included a tour of the Alpine yard and house with lectures open to the public. We welcomed this opportunity to renew our previous close relationship. Please visit www.fritillaria.org.uk for more information.

■ RHS SPRING PLANT AND ORCHID SHOW

RHS LINDLEY AND LAWRENCE HALLS, 29–30 MARCH 2017

The RHS Lily Group Stand at the RHS Spring Plant and Orchid Show included a photographic display together with seeds, growing advice and publications, but there were no talks or plant sales at this event. The next stand will be at the **RHS Autumn Garden Show** at Vincent Square on 25–26 October, which will include the **Lily Group AGM, Bulb Auction** and a lecture on the visit to Greece. Any members visiting the show would be most welcome to join committee members on the stand for an hour to encourage new members.

■ MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR TIM WHITELEY

EVENLEY WOOD GARDEN, THURSDAY 1 JUNE 2017 AT 2PM

A memorial service for Tim Whiteley will be held in the garden.

■ EVENLEY WOOD LILY AND ROSE FESTIVAL

EVENLEY WOOD GARDEN, SUNDAY 25 JUNE 2017

■ THE LILIES OF GREECE TOUR

SATURDAY 1 JULY TO SUNDAY 9 JULY 2017

The RHS Lily Group tour with Chris Gardner is fully booked but may be repeated in 2018.

■ LILY GROUP VISIT TO THE SAVILL GARDEN

WINDSOR GREAT PARK, SAT NAV POST CODE: TW20 0UJ, WEDNESDAY 19 JULY 2017

The Lily Group will be accompanied by John Anderson, who was appointed the Keeper of the Crown Estate Gardens in July 2016 after 10 years at Exbury Gardens in Hampshire. If you would like to attend, please contact the Secretary, Tony Dixon.

■ THE LILY GROUP AGM AND BULB AUCTION

RHS VINCENT SQUARE, THURSDAY 26 OCTOBER 2017

More details will become available on the Lily Group website in due course. Enquiries should be directed towards the Secretary, Tony Dixon.

Below, Brian Bergman's *Lilium* 'Big Orange'

Some reflections on the 2016/17 Seed List

George Battle

One thing that always impresses me when compiling the Seed List is the wonderful variety of lily breeding undertaken by our members.

So many of our listed seeds are not available commercially and nowhere is this more obviously true than in the myriad of hybrids produced by keen growers in the group.

We are lucky in that every year a superb range of species lily seed is on offer as well as that from famous cultivars—those searching for 'Mrs R. O. Backhouse' or 'Theodore Haber' won't be disappointed. But then... for the adventurous there is the promise of unknown wonders from unregistered hybrids and crosses from bulbs with well-known or mysterious bloodlines.

How do we do justice in the List to the wealth of seed offered? This year we received 36 different hybrids bred by Rimmer de Vries. Henry Foster in Tasmania sent us a superb range of his *Lilium henryi* and *L. rosthornii* hybrids. The Alberta Regional Lily Society sent us around 40 different *L. martagon* hybrids. Brian Bergman sent us a selection of his amazingly vigorous orientpets. Great to have the choice but difficult to know which to choose!

It was Paige Woodward of Pacific Rim Native Plant Nursery who pointed me in the right direction. Why didn't I, Paige asked, provide photos of as many hybrids as possible, or at least their parents, on a website? Why not indeed? So, that's what I will be working on over the next few months, ready to make it available around next September.



Not that this is all about hybrids. There are five different types of *Lilium ponticum* donated by Darm Crook in the current List. This is matched by five forms of *L. columbianum*. Then there are the four varieties and crosses of *L. speciosum* var. *album* sent in by Jennifer Kerry. Photos of different forms, varieties or subspecies would be a great benefit.

So, here's my appeal to you: this website needs your photos. Please take lots of different shots of your species and hybrids during the coming year. There's no need to wait until you decide which seeds to donate next year, email me your photos as soon as you can. I'll provide an update in the Autumn Newsletter and a link to the new site. Together we can make this into a great resource for all lily growers!

Below, Six healthy 'Xi Phi' × *henryi* var. *citrinum*.

Bottom, Lily Group seedlings including two Trumpet lilies ('Arthur Grove') 14-15-242, at the back of the group.

Sharing my successes with Lily Group seeds

Gary Davison

It is also some recognition, perhaps, of all those helpful people who send in their carefully gathered seed each autumn—their efforts are appreciated and very worthwhile.

I made up a free-draining potting mix using John Innes No.3, horticultural grit and very well rotted leafmould in roughly equal proportions. To this was added some vermiculite and a small amount of ericaceous



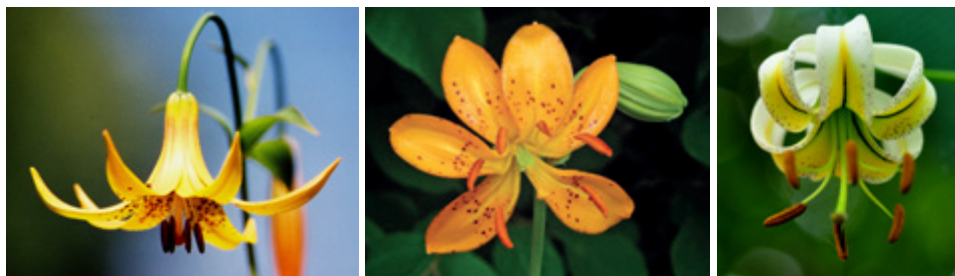
compost to try and keep the pH about neutral. The seed was all from the Lily Group seed distribution, mostly from the 2014-2015 list which I hadn't managed to sow in 2015. I selected a variety of different lilies, some of which looked more difficult to germinate than others—I started in late autumn 2015 through to January this year.

A gentle bottom heat was used along with horticultural quality lights to help encourage any seedlings, which was important because within a few weeks the first seedlings appeared. After about six weeks, there was a little forest of small seedlings, mainly Trumpet lily hybrids and Martagons. I also tried germinating the latter in a bag of damp vermiculite, but this wasn't as productive as using a potting mix.

When a few of the pots hadn't shown any green shoots, I put the pots in the fridge for a few weeks and then moved them back to the propagator; this helped to germinate some *L. monadelphum* × *L. szovitsianum*, but unfortunately snails later ate all but one of them. The photographs were taken in late September 2016 and show a selection of the best seedlings. Next spring, I will transplant most of these into their own pots and try and get them to a flowering size in one piece.



Below, from left, *Lilium canadense*, *L. hansonii* and *L. taliense* var. from Kaichen.



RHS *Lilium* Trial

The RHS is conducting a Trial of *Lilium* species and cultivars at the Trial Grounds at RHS Garden Wisley, from the end of 2017 for three years.

Proposals for lilies have been coordinated by the RHS Lily Group and knowledgeable members of the Bulb Committee under the Chairmanship of Jan Pennings.

The trials forum Chairman will be Dr Nuala Sterling, Chairman of the RHS Lily Group (and a Vice Chairman of the Bulb Committee), aided in the trials assessment by a group of knowledgeable horticulturalists. The Lily Group have been responsible for co-ordinating the Species proposals for trial and Richard Hyde and Jan Pennings have been responsible for proposing the Hybrid selection.

We are conscious that not all of our selections are available in the trade, though they may be available at small specialist nurseries. Yet many appear in our seed list grown by members. So we are asking if they might be in a position to make any flowering-size bulbs available to the RHS for trial planting at the end of 2017 for the three-year trial. The following list are the species for which we think it may be hard to find the five to ten bulbs needed for each:

Lilium auratum, *L. canadense*, *L. duchartrei*, *L. hansonii* (true species, not dutch commercial stock), *L. leitchlinii* (seed-grown), *L. leucanthum* var. *centifolium*, *L. lijiangense*, *L. pardalinum*, *L. dauricum*, *L. rostbornii*, *L. superbum*, *L. szovitsianum*, *L. taliense* from Kaichen, *L. wardii*.

Please let the Chairman or Secretary know if you can help locate or provide some of these bulbs. The RHS will then contact you directly about possibly requesting bulbs.

Lilium martagon var. *pilosiusculum*

Canadian Lily Group member Darm Crook is searching for pollen (or bulbs) of the rare Mongolian native, *Lilium martagon* var. *pilosiusculum*. He has a flowering-sized bulb, but needs pollen /a second flowering-sized bulb to cross-pollinate (thereby having a better chance of producing seed.

If you can help, please contact the Lily Group Secretary, Tony Dixon.

Members' archives

Cheung Siu Ming Hong Kong

White form of *Lilium gloriosoides*

I first saw a photo of this lily online and a friend from Taiwan sent some seeds to me. For me, the Taiwanese form of *Lilium speciosum* var. *gloriosoides* is definitely the easiest oriental lily. It blooms very well in Hong Kong because the climate is similar to that of Taiwan. My Taiwanese friend grows many of these lilies in his garden. He has discovered a white form (right) amongst his seedlings that I have never seen before. It starts to grow in the milder winter both in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The bigger bulbs begin to grow earlier but then flower later. If you have different sized bulbs, you can enjoy flowering from July to October.

The white form of *Lilium gloriosoides*



George Battle U.K.

Lilium pitkinense

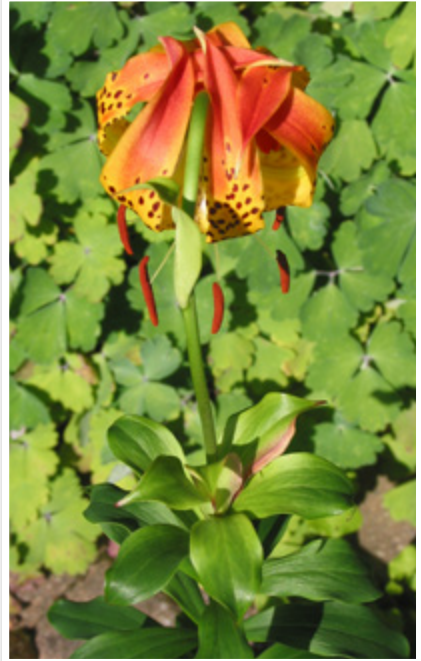
Lilium pardalinum var. *pitkinense* is rare and endangered in the wild.

So rare in fact, that its purest form can only be found in one locality: the Pitkin Marsh in Sonoma, California. It is so site-specific to these swampy marsh conditions that it proves difficult in cultivation. A big bulb may produce a myriad of small un-flowered stems, only to then divide into many small bulbs which eventually decline due to loss of vigour. Sadly, it is also a species that is very prone to virus and George has now lost his vigorous clump.

Charlie Kroell U.S.A.

Lilium michauxii

I grew this lily from a bulblet supplied by a young man in South Carolina. Although we enjoyed its flowering for only two seasons and each time the stem carried but a single bloom, it was a joy to have done so. *Lilium michauxii* is wonderfully fragrant, its scent reminiscent of the Western North American species *L. rubescens*, *L. washingtonianum*, and *L. kelloggii*... to my nose suggestive of hyacinth. In the evening, the scent of its single flower would permeate our family room. Unfortunately I've never seen this lovely species in the wild. The foliage is thick and 'waxy', the bud very long, the throat creamy-white in colour and the floret 'more than' fully reflexed. Altogether, a gem within *Lilium*. Of course this is but a single specimen, and we know so well the great intraspecific variation that characterises the genus in general.



We need a new Treasurer... can you help?

As a result of work and family pressures Nataliya is having to relinquish the post of Treasurer on 1 June which she has undertaken with great enthusiasm over the past year and a half. So we're searching for a replacement to help out.

Our recent questionnaire revealed that some of you might be prepared to get more involved with the Lily Group and join the committee. So why not consider this important post as a first step?

The work is busiest in the first quarter of the year and involves close co-operation with the Membership Secretary and the Seed distribution team. The banking, accounts and PayPal systems have been streamlined to create as straightforward a system as possible.

The Treasurer does not need to be an accountant, but will be familiar with spreadsheets and balancing accounts (or willing to learn from a previous treasurer).

If you are interested in undertaking this important role, please contact either:

Nuala Sterling, Chairman

or

Tony Dixon, Secretary

Membership Irene Hopton-Scott

I have now taken over from Rose Voelcker as Membership Secretary. Rose will be a hard act to follow having done the job with loving care since 1998 as I know from the many emails I have seen from our members. I will endeavour to maintain her high standards.

The 2017 Membership Form is enclosed with the printed Newsletter and is also available to download from our website:

www.rhslilygroup.org

The form can be returned to me.

Please do contact me, via email, if you have any membership questions.



Lily publications available

The Chairman has a substantial number of Lily publications available in English, European and Oriental languages, including NALS Year Books (1948–1980) and RHS Lily Group Year Books (30 issues dating from 1932).

Please contact Nuala Sterling for more details. All proceeds to the Lily Group.

RHS Lily Group

Honorary Officers and Committee 2016-17

Nuala Sterling, Chairman

Pat Huff, Seed List Distribution Manager

Alisdair Aird, Vice Chairman

George Battle, Seed List Compiler

Tony Dixon, Secretary

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nataliya Cuttell, Treasurer

Caroline Boisset

Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary

Chris Brickell CBE VMH, Hon. Member

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

Duncan Coombs, Programme advisor

Harris Howland, Past Chairman

Richard Hyde

Colin Pope

Pontus Wallstén, Newsletter Editor

Rose Voelcker

Photo credits:

Front cover, p. 2, p. 7, p. 11 (Pontus Wallstén); p. 3, p. 4 (Nuala Sterling); p. 9 (Brian Bergman); p. 10 (Gary Davison), p. 12 top (Cheung Siu Ming); p. 12 bottom (George Battle); p. 13 top (Charlie Kroell); back cover (Lin Wei); p. 13 bottom (Alan Mitchell).



The highly sought after and rarely seen Taiwanese form of *Lilium speciosum* var. *gloriosoides*, photographed in its natural habitat in Taiwan in September 2015 by Lin Wei from China.