

LILY GROUP Newsletter

AUTUMN 2019



Lily Group AGM and Bulb Auction

Saturday 19 October

SEE PAGE 3 FOR DETAILS

Our new website:
repackaged with
many new features

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Plans for Japan 2020

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lilies in the wild and visit a very special nursery

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Chairman's letter

Jamie Compton

The summer is high and growth has been good in spite of the intense blasts of heat and sudden downpours. *Lilium* 'Anastasia', *L.* 'Conca d'Or' and *L.* 'Valencia' have been outstanding. These followed the first flowers from the fabulous *L. candidum* var. *plenum*. This year has seen the beginning of a totally revamped and much more user-friendly RHS Lily Group website (rhslilygroup.org). The photographs of the wild species contributed by several Committee members are superb. The site has been rebuilt with enormous assistance from the staff and students at Halesowen College, West Midlands in collaboration with our Secretary Tony Dixon and our Seed Collator George Battle. See page 4.

We were fortunate enough this year to visit the Devon garden of Dr Martyn Rix, world expert on the genus *Fritillaria*, although we were a little too late to see many in flower. His woodland garden houses several rare and attractive Liliaceae including *Cardiocrinum giganteum* and sheets of *Erythronium revolutum* (see opposite). After a brief visit to the fabulous walled garden at Knightshayes Court for lunch we travelled into the Somerset levels to meet Paul Cumbleton and his partner Colin Everett at their garden near Somerton. Paul's expertise in cultivation was once evident at RHS Garden Wisley, where he had been supervisor of the Alpine section. He developed new grit mixes and potting



Photograph © Duncan Coombs

methods for growing South African bulbous plants and members of the orchid genus *Pleione* successfully under glass. Paul and Colin have successfully naturalised species of *Ixia*, *Tritonia* and *Sparaxis* in their lawn, and have one of the best collections of *Fritillaria* species I have ever seen. Outside their three glasshouses are further beauties being cultivated in a raised rock garden of monumental proportions. All in all it was a fabulous day away from home.

We look forward to the AGM and Bulb Auction at Pershore on Saturday 19 October (see opposite). Please do bring any spare bulbs or any other lily-related items to this event if you have anything to spare.



Spring visit to the West Country

The Lily Group's visit to Dr Martyn Rix's garden in Devon earlier this year—and mentioned by the Chairman, opposite, will be described in next Spring's Newsletter. Meanwhile here and opposite are photographs taken by Duncan Coombs on that visit.

Top, left, *Epimedium* hybrid; Top, right, Hybrid *Erythronium revolutum* x *Erythronium californicum*, and right, one of about 200 huge blooms on a *Magnolia campbellii*.



2019 Lily Group AGM & Bulb Auction

Saturday 19 October 2019

Pershore College, Avon Bank, Pershore, Worcestershire WR8 0NN

The 2019 Bulb Auction will include many different lily species and hybrids, also other bulbs and books. A very helpful source of funds for the Group, the success of the Bulb Auction depends on members donating bulbs.

So please do bring whatever spare bulbs you may have to the meeting. If you can't come to the meeting but can spare bulbs, please contact: Nuala Sterling.

PROGRAMME

10.00	Arrival ¹ ; coffee and biscuits
10.30	Minutes of last AGM
10.40	Chairman's report
11.00	Treasurer's report
11.30	Illustrated foretaste of the Group's Tour to Japan 2020 (see page 8)
12.30	Lunch break ²
13.45	Bulb Auction
15.00	Tea and biscuits
15.30	Close of meeting

RSVP 12 October 2019

Contact Tony Dixon by Saturday 12 October that you plan to attend.

¹ Ample free parking on site.

² A selection of sandwiches, but we can't provide lunch if you don't let Tony know!

Lily Group website

George Battle and Tony Dixon

The new Lily Group website, relaunched after two years' extensive work, has many exciting new features. Think of it as our new meeting place.

The global spread of our membership, covering 23 countries across five continents, makes us a very widespread community. So good communication is a major priority. Keeping in touch with each other is the purpose of our new website. [Latest News](#) on the Home Page gives fuller information.

Photo Galleries

The perennial question is identification. While photos can't replace a detailed botanical description, they are a great help.

The following link: <https://rhslilygroup.org/photos/> brings a series of Photo Galleries, covering around 170 of the species, their varieties and forms. The A-Z species gallery is for quick reference. How do you tell one member of the *Lilium pyrenaicum* subsp. *carniolicum* complex from another, or the different sorts of *L. speciosum*?

The main [Species Lilies](#) gallery (see screen shot, opposite) is arranged by geographical region to allow comparison of related species. Photos can also show the diversity in wild populations—see the *Lilium michiganense* forms displayed there.

Our [Hybrid Lilies](#) gallery gives an idea of the various types of hybrid lilies and classics such as 'Leslie Woodriff'. There's certainly scope to expand this gallery with your help—for one thing, we'd like to show what our members are hybridising now. We also have passionate growers of fritillaries, erythroniums etc., so there's a photo gallery

for [Other Liliaceae](#) too.

Members' Area

This is where everyone can have an input. Here you'll find the [Lilium Species Profile](#). Every few months, Mel Herbert will post a short article on a different species: the first is already online—*Lilium amabile*. However, this is only the start. We want you to tell us your experiences growing the species in question. What we learn from you will go towards a fuller article in the next issue of *Lilies & Related Plants*. [Posts & Queries](#) is where you can share your lily experience with others. We especially want to invite blogs/posts on:

- propagation and cultivation
- identifying individual species or hybrids
- searches for a particular bulb

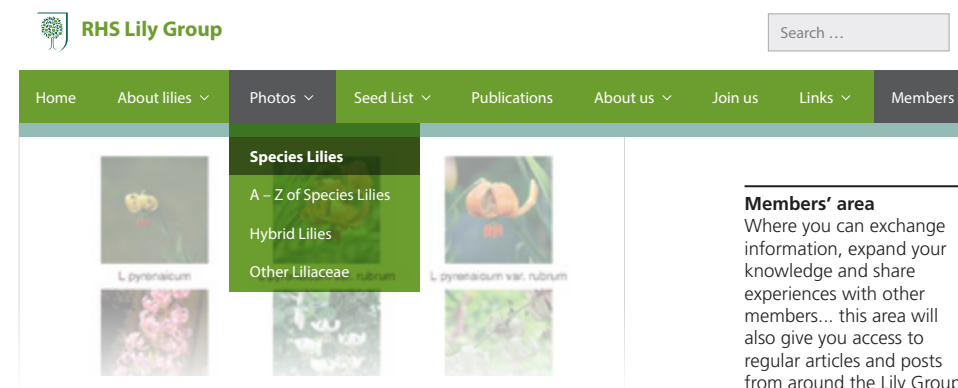
The Members' Area also archives old Newsletters and recent editions of *Lilies & Related Plants*. Every Seed List from 2012 is now online, too.

Growing and propagating lilies

Click on the [About Lilies](#) tab to find [What do Lilies Need](#), an excellent step-by-step guide to planting lilies in open ground or in pots. What makes this guide particularly effective is the detailed set of photos illustrating key aspects of the process.

Click on [Propagation](#) for two illustrated guides by Mel Herbert. [Growing from seed](#) is ideal for beginners, and [Increasing your](#)

Below, A 'screen-shot' from the new Lily Group website. Easy to navigate, searchable and a growing trove of lily related knowledge waiting to be unearthed. To visit the site, go to: <https://rhslilygroup.org>



[stock](#) takes you through the main types of vegetative reproduction. There are resources for all levels of experience here: click on [Germination types](#) for a quick-reference table covering the germination mode of each species.

Easy access to useful reference sources

Look under [Links](#) and then [Online botanical guides](#) and the first thing you'll find is 'The Lily Register' plus all five supplements. Also here are online floras such as 'Lilies in the Flora of China'. How about a list of specialist nurseries which sell unusual lilies? [Where to buy lilies](#) gives an excellent range from the UK, Europe, North America and further afield. *Do check [Links](#) regularly – it's a section we want to grow. With so much exciting academic research going on, this will be the place to keep us all updated.*

Don't forget the Seed List

The website is where you will find the latest information about donating and ordering seeds. Key dates for 2019–2020 are now online. On average, 50 or 60 members contribute seeds each year. Please make this the

year you donate your lily or liliaceae seeds. This is where you'll find the [Seed List Photo Library](#) too. What we love to display are not stock photos of species or hybrids but photos of **your own plants**. When photos are available then seeds are in much greater demand. Photos of pod and pollen parents are ideal for hybrids.

How can you contribute?

This is only the start for our new website. Please help to develop and improve it by:

- Sending us your ideas for what else you'd like included
- Sharing your experience on the blog/post page
- Posting/blogging your queries, bulb searches etc.
- Contributing your photos

More photos of hybrid lilies, in particular are always welcome, with information about the source of the bulbs, if possible. Please send your photos, suggestions and comments to George Battle or Tony Dixon.

All that remains now is to enjoy using the website—and we hope you do!

Lily Group Summer Visits

Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire

Alisdair Aird

A lovely early summer's day in June at Evenley Wood and Bletchingdon.

Nine of us from various parts of England, Wales and the Channel Islands were warmly welcomed to Evenley Wood Garden in Northamptonshire by Sue Russell-Wilks, who looks after the more than 1,000 lilies, mostly

species, planted there. Sue, with Tom Clarke the head gardener, then showed us around this idyllic woodland, planted so lovingly by the late Tim Whiteley, our former chairman. Sue was full of interesting information about the lilies, as was Tom about the many rare trees and shrubs.

We were surprised to learn that many of the lilies, though apparently in the open ground, were in fact in very big sunken pots, so as to make sure they were in compost that suited them. Many others have settled happily into the wood's natural soil, which varies from clay to sand to some very stony ground: for instance, it looked as if there would be a fine crop of seed on the many fruiting *Lilium pyrenaicum* which were spreading through one sandy glade. Some of the other martagons were also already over, but many were still at their peak. An



Opposite page, Part of Sue Bedwell's garden in the village of Bletchingdon, Oxfordshire.

Opposite page, bottom, *Lilium* 'Theodor Haber' and below, *Lilium monadelphum* at Evenley Wood Garden in Northamptonshire.

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extensive stand of the 1970s *L. martagon* × *tsingtauense* hybrid 'Theodor Haber' looked magnificent spreading through the trees in the dappled sunlight, amply justifying the special pride Tim Whiteley had taken in it. And we had hundreds of other lilies in full flower to admire. It was for instance interesting to compare one true *Lilium monadelphum* of impeccable provenance with others which shaded much more towards *L. szovitsianum*, without perhaps being conclusively identifiable as that. Many other lilies in bud promised a later blaze, such as a very strong-growing group of handsome stems that turned out to be the recent hybrid 'Yang'. Many of these later-flowering types were in a recently planted area, the Anniversary Glade.

Many of the lilies have had to be protected against the depredations of rabbits and deer. On the other hand, it's a huge pleasure to see them growing in their natural woodland conditions, with the background of birdsong and the breezes rustling through the leaves high overhead. Our eyes kept straying up into the trees themselves, of course. Among memorable sights were the massive blooms of *Magnolia macrophylla* (the biggest flowers of any North American plant), the glowing pink globes of the fragrant recent introduction *Rosa gigantea* 'Lijiang Rose' storming up through other trees, and that legendary doyen of climbing roses, 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' with its even more pervasive scent.

After a relaxed lunch in the attractive open-sided wooden pavilion run by volunteers, we crossed the border into Oxfordshire and a real contrast—Sue Bedwell's lovely cottage garden behind her seventeenth-century stone-built house in the pretty village of

Bletchingdon. Her garden is a glorious mass of choice plants, thriving in conditions that are by no means easy—with one end cold and sunless in winter, it's hot and dry in summer. Sue's own sunny personality seems to spill over into the garden itself, with an overall impression of exuberant growth, and yet all sorts of intricate details to catch a plantsman's eye, with an astonishing range of different types of plant. It was a delight to end our day with tea served outside in such a cornucopia of interesting species and cultivars.





Much thought and work has gone into next year's Lily Group Japan tour. Here, Duncan Coombs provides the backdrop to this particularly enticing and, arguably, ambitious adventure, designed to appeal to all members.

Chris Gardner, the botanist and author who has arranged previous successful lily tours for the Lily Group, has now planned our most ambitious tour yet.

In a recce this summer he has tracked down sites where we will find several of Japan's beautiful native lilies growing in the wild—a face of Japan very few people from abroad are privileged to see. Also, the tour will spend a day with Lily Group member Katsuro Arakawa, who will kindly show us round his Lily Farm. This is the focal point of the Japan Lily Society's work, and is where Mr Arakawa maintains populations of the fabulous *Lilium nobilissimum*, now extinct in the wild, among many other lily species.

The tour begins in Tokyo on Wednesday 24 June 2020, after an overnight stay near Narita International Airport (most people will have arrived the day before). It will conclude on Friday 3 July with a night in Tokyo, in preparation for catching flights home on the Saturday. People can of course arrange to extend their own trips before or after, for instance with two or three days in Kyoto.

Chris has chosen UK-based professional pianist Hiroaki Takenouchi to lead the tour for us. Hiroaki, who accompanied Chris on the recce and is a passionate naturalist and botanist, is more familiar than he with Japan's flora—not to mention its food and culture. He has fluent English.



Japan 2020, in brief

International flights to Tokyo,
Narita International Airport

Arrival	Tuesday 23 June 2020
Tour starts	Wednesday 24 June 2020
Tour ends	Friday 3 July 2020
Touring days	Eight
Approx. cost	£4,500 pp
Supplement	£400 pp (single room)
Includes	Meals, accommodation, fees and domestic travel
Excludes	International travel Travel insurance Wine, snacks, gratuities

There will be a good deal of travelling by plane or bullet train, and a great variety of lowland and mountain scenery, on both the main islands of Honshu and Hokkaido and the offshore island of Oshima. The lilies we expect to see in the wild are *Lilium auratum* and its var. *platyphyllum*, *L. japonicum*, *L. maculatum*, *L. pensylvanicum*, *L. rubellum* and (probably in bud still) *L. lancifolium* and *L. medeoloides*. We will see interesting bog, mountain, coast and forest plant communities housing a tremendous range of other choice plants from primulas, campanulas, fritillaries, hostas, orchids, irises, ferns and golden day lilies to unique *Paris japonica*, strange *Monotropa uniflora* and towering *Angelica ursina*.

The cost will be approximately £4,500 per person (with a £400 single-room supplement) to include all meals, accommo-



dation, fees and internal travel. Please contact Duncan Coombs as soon as possible if you are interested in joining this exciting tour.

Duncan will send you the planned day-by-day itinerary. The Tokyo Olympics start just a few weeks later, so accommodation will be at a premium—the sooner we can finalise arrangements, the better.

Lily Group Seed List

George Battle

Yes, seed pods may still be ripening in Europe and North America, but it's time to think about next year's Seed List.



Will the list include those rarities everyone is after: *Lilium chalcidonicum*... *L. grayi*... and the like? The pictures on this page, and the one on the cover (*L. occidentale*), are of actual lilies raised to flowering from seeds donated to the Group's distribution.

Just as exciting, what new hybrids will be on offer: a true yellow martagon... a beautiful North American hybrid... a completely new orientpet? And, of course, it's thanks to you that many of these may be available.

There's an increasing interest in the provenance of both the species and the hybrids. Any extra information you can provide on species diversity is always valuable. As a hybridiser, your crosses may be new or experimental, but a few words about what qualities you're aiming for would be great to have.



2020 Lily Group Seed List Distribution

22 January 2020

sent via e-mail to all seed donors

10 February 2020

sent via e-mail to all non-donors

Lily photographs

Photos of your lilies are incredibly popular – they really boost demand. Please send these to me via email, together with a list of the seeds you are sending to Pat. We will then post them online to show other members the results.

Please send us your seeds by 30 November 2019

To: Pat Huff
Seed List Distribution Manager

Don't forget to enclose a list of your seeds

Membership update, Autumn 2019

Irene Hopton-Scott

First, a very warm welcome to those of you who have joined this year: seven from the UK, two from Europe and three from the United States. A huge thank you too to all our members both in the UK and overseas for continuing to support the Lily Group through your annual subscription.

You can also contribute to our work of conserving and growing lilies by becoming Seed Donors. So please do think about collecting seed this year (see opposite).

A quick reminder that the annual membership of £15 runs from 1 January to 31 December. All subscriptions (renewable on 1 January 2020) let you take part in the Lily Group activities and the 2020 Seed List. If you join in October or later in the year your subscription will carry through to the end of the following year.

Your subscription is renewed automatically if you have chosen to pay by Standing Order through your Bank. However if you have chosen to pay by PayPal you will receive an invoice by email on or around 1 January 2020 inviting you to renew your subscription. Please pay promptly if you wish to receive our 2020 Seed List. Cheque payers will get a reminder letter in January 2020.

I hope you will visit and use our new website, where you will find information on events, the Seed List, and Membership Renewal Forms. A Membership form is enclosed for members who have elected to receive this Newsletter by post or who do not have access to the Internet.

Please contact me via email if you have any queries or questions about your membership status.

RHS Lily Group

Honorary Officers and Committee 2019–20

Jamie Compton, Chairman

Alisdair Aird, Vice Chairman

Dr Nuala Sterling CBE, Vice Chairman and a Bulb Committee Vice Chair

Tony Dixon, Secretary & Pollen co-ordinator

Chris Hind, Treasurer

Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary

**Melvyn Herbert,
Editor *Lilies & Related Plants***

Pat Huff, Seed List Distribution Manager

George Battle, Seed List Compiler

**OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Caroline Boisset**

**Chris Brickell CBE VMH, Hon. Member
Duncan Coombs, Programme co-ordinator
Harris Howland, Past Chairman
Richard Hyde, Bulb Committee member
Colin Pope, Rose Voelker, Pontus Wallstén**

The RHS Lily Trial 2018–2020

Nuala Sterling

The RHS plant trials select plants deserving the Award of Garden Merit (AGM), specifically with amateur gardeners in mind. Last trialled in 1966, lilies are hugely popular, but only five species and six cultivars now have the AGM.



Left, 'Cali' in late June this year, seems almost weather-proof and right, 'Agostini', another strong hybrid with good potential.

In 2013 the RHS Lily Group proposed a new trial. Endorsed by the Bulb Committee, this was accepted by the trials team initially as a two-year trial, then when it started in 2018 extended to three years. Appraisal is made at fortnightly intervals in summer by a forum of amateur and professional enthusiasts, growers and horticultural experts. Scrutiny of the 256 varieties, usually half a dozen or so samples of each, records specific points of structure, leaf, flower and stem form, and resistance to weather.

The Wisley trial's two long plots, vulnerable to frosts, are in full sun, though most lilies prefer some shade. The plots are prepared for an acidic pH, suitably fertilised, sprayed to prevent invasion of lily beetle, and carefully supervised and watered. But a single regime may not suit all lilies equally. Also, planting times depended on bulb availability—not

always ideal.

Weather is another challenge. For example this year's warm March encouraged rapid early growth and bud formation, then heavy rain followed by two sharp April frosts led to ideal conditions for botrytis and nipping of buds, especially for the small Asiatics. Also, some lilies were afflicted by *Phytophthora*, some by virus diseases, some by nematodes. So this is a severe trial. Yet while whole areas have looked a disaster, with plant dieback, aborted bulbs and distorted flowers, by contrast some stalwart stems have had magnificent flowers. You can be sure that any lilies which come through these three tough years with flying colours will do well in any garden.

Next summer do look at the trial field, imagine the lilies in your own garden—then walk on Battleston Hill and appreciate the stands of lilies in appropriate settings.