

# LILY GROUP Newsletter

AUTUMN 2016



RHS  
Chelsea  
Flower Show 2016

An insider's view, by Sarah Hyde see pages 7-8

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# Editorial

Pontus Wallstén

At the end of the summer, many of you will most likely be doing pre-autumn planting research, trying to find and order more fabulous *Lilium* species.

I have just got off the phone to a UK nursery which specialises in growing rare plants. They offered only a handful of species, and needless to say the quantities available numbered mostly in single figures, proving once again that our beloved lily species have become a very scarce commodity indeed. This has also proved an issue for the upcoming RHS trial of species. This is why it is always great to be able to visit parks and gardens to admire the collections of your LG friends. Tim Whiteley reported a very successful lily day at Evenley Wood this year, with around 150 visitors and martagons looking stunning. Duncan Coombs recalls

two other summer visits on p. 9. Despite a very difficult season weather-wise, it seems members have had many exciting flowerings amongst their collections, some of which are described in the members' archive section. My personal two biggest successes of 2016 were a fabulously vigorous stem of *Lilium bakerianum* var. *delavayi* producing five flowers, as well as a first-ever blooming of the gleaming orange *Lilium medeoloides* from Japan (see inset). We are organising a survey in order to find out which of your species did best during this season. Results will appear in the next Newsletter. The clocks are ticking and excitement is rising in view of one of the LG's most popular yearly events: the bulb auction! For details please see p. 4. In the meantime, I wish you good reading, and a good autumn planting season!

# Chairman's letter

Nuala Sterling

Living in the New Forest where the water table is but two inches below the grass surface with extensive winter flooding I grow the majority of my lilies in pots, placing them among the shrubs as they come into flower.

This winter has led to death by drowning of one Wistaria, two flowering prunus and a *Cotinus coggygria*. Not an auspicious start to the year.

But after a very wet and warm spring, the summer sunshine has resulted in a very good season for lilies and promising seed pods. We hope members will continue selecting, cleaning, labelling and sending spare seed to Pat Huff which is such a valuable contribution to our worldwide society. A copy of your list should be sent to George Battle who prepares the Seed List. The majority of our distribution originates in gardens, but where members are in a position to collect seed in the wild it is important that they understand and adhere to the principles and guidance of the Nagoya Protocol. Always having the correct permission and permits and maintaining records of collection for 20 years. Some of you will already have collected, dried and refrigerated pollen for exchange, in which case can you update Tony Dixon of the detail to include on the website.

Our 2016 activities have included a group garden visit to Worcestershire in June reported on p. 9 by Duncan Coombs where we visited Spetchley Park and the Bryants' NGS garden. The famous Martagons were only just in bud, but we were fascinated to learn that each autumn the seed is collected, the top growth cut back and the seed redistributed over the shaded areas



of grassland. In May five members of the Bulb Committee presented a study day on choosing and nurturing summer bulbs during the Forde Abbey Tulip Festival. In this beautiful garden setting on a gorgeous sunny day, Christine Skelmersdale demonstrated the choices from a bunch of early summer flowers hand-picked from her garden. An 'identify the bulb' competition was a challenge for the coffee break. Anna Pavord held the audience spellbound on the history of the Tulip and described the display of English Florist Tulips sent by the Wakefield & NW England Tulip Society. My part was to encourage the audience of 40 keen gardeners to grow lilies from seed demonstrating why and how this might be done with publications, seedling lily species, and packets of seed with instructions to try themselves. We were joined by Alan Street and Matt Bishop for a lively afternoon Q&A session on bulbs.

This year, the Lily Group's AGM and Lily

Bulb Auction will be held during the Shades of Autumn Show at the RHS Halls at Vincent Square on Saturday 29 October, with a talk by Duncan Coombs on the 2015 Lily Group tour of NE Turkey (see panel below for details).

For 2017 we plan a plant hunting visit to Greece led by Christopher Gardner who organised the 2015 tour of Turkey (see p. 5/6).

We are indebted to Rose Voelcker who for 20 years has been our enthusiastic Membership Secretary but now wishes to stand down from a post she has greatly enjoyed in contact with the friendly Lily Group members. We have a volunteer to take over her role but remain interested in members who might wish to be involved in the communications activities of the Lily Group. Please contact

the secretary for further information. We are sad to report the death in July of Ann Dadd—previous Honorary Secretary to the Lily Group during the 1980s.

For efficiency, speed and cost we will continue to use the internet as our main communication link but should you require a printed copy of the Seed List or Newsletter please ask. We are circulating a questionnaire to find members' views and requirements of the society. Please tell us what you like and want. My disappointment is that many members are laggard in updating their membership subscriptions—so what are we doing wrong? It is hard on the membership secretary and the treasurer.

Nuala Sterling

## 2016 Lily Group AGM & Bulb Auction

### Saturday 29 October

The Royal Horticultural Halls, Vincent Square, London

The 2016 AGM and Lily Bulb Auction will be held during the RHS Shades of Autumn Show at the RHS Halls at Vincent Square on Saturday 29 October.

After the AGM, Duncan Coombs will present a short talk on the 2015 Lily Group Tour of NE Turkey. A Lily Group stand will be held in the Lindley Hall throughout the RHS show on Friday 28 / Saturday 29 October.

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 12.30 pm | <b>Lily Group AGM</b><br>Room 21, Lawrence Hall   |
| 1.30 pm  | <b>LG NE Turkey Tour 2015</b><br><b>Duncan Coombs, 40 mins</b><br>Lindley Hall              |
| 2.30 pm  | <b>Lily Group Bulb Auction</b><br>Set-up of donated bulbs and<br>auction, concluding at 4pm |

We would be most grateful for donations of spare bulbs which may be brought to the show or posted to Harris Howland or Nuala Sterling (see contact details on p. 14), preferably accompanied by a list. We should also welcome keen members interested in spending an hour or so helping committee members on the Lily Group Stand in the Lindley Hall on Friday 28 or Saturday 29 October. **Please contact Nuala on 01590 612378**



# Programme of Events

## RHS LILY GROUP TOUR TO GREECE

**1–9 JULY 2017**

Organised by Duncan Coombs. Email [dcoombs@warwickshire.ac.uk](mailto:dcoombs@warwickshire.ac.uk)

**TOUR COST** 1,810 Euros (based on two sharing, reduced from 1,900 Euros)  
180 Euros (single supplement)

**INCLUDES** All accommodation in comfortable hotels • All meals and transport • Guiding

**EXCLUDES** International flights (BA currently less than £200 return) • Personal travel insurance  
Personal expenses • Drinks (alcohol or soft drinks at evening meal).  
Note, we have soft drinks, juice etc. for lunch.

Our epic journey starting and ending at Thessaloniki Airport will take us through stunning scenery of spectacular mountains, forests, gorges and lakes. We will be staying for one or two nights at a time in beautiful villages and other places of interest—the hotel in Metsovo has an attached winery.

### The stars of the show

We can expect to see alpine *Lilium carnolicum*, woodland *L. chalcedonicum*, *L. martagon* ssp. *cattaniae*, *L. albanicum* and the fabled *L. rhodopeum*. Finding these last

two, we'll feel a real sense of achievement—they'll need 4WD vehicles for the bad roads, and a lot of hard walking. For *L. albanicum* the day involves several kilometres on foot from the road head at 1,800 m, to reach its site at 2,400 m.

We will also visit an area with a strong population of *Lilium candidum*. Though their season is earlier we may be lucky and find one or two still in flower.

### A treasure-trove of other wild flowers

This beautiful region of Greece is sparsely

Below left, *Lilium albanicum*, with right, *Lilium chalcedonicum*.



## RHS Lily Group tour to Greece

1–9 July 2017



Above, Some striking Greek scenery and *Lilium* species likely to be encountered on the trip: inset left, *Lilium carnolicum*, and right, *Lilium martagon cattaniae*.

populated and very rich in wild flowers. Our long week (and long drives) will take us through many different habitats, each with its own specialities.

On the mountain slopes we can expect such combinations as *Digitalis viridiflora*, *Dianthus deltoides*, *Viola doerfleri* and *Campanula foliosa* with its unusual globular heads, or perhaps *Hypericum olympicum*, *Anthyllis aurea* and *Digitalis lanata*. Elsewhere will be many orchids such as *Dactylorhiza saccifera*, *Gymnadenia conopsea* and impressive spikes of *Himantoglossum caprinum*, with other

flowers such as *Anthericum liliago*, *Pinguicula crystallina* and *Morina persica*.

### Are you interested?

If so please contact Duncan as soon as possible to get a detailed itinerary, as places are limited. An optional extra day at the end can also be arranged.

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Duncan Coombs

Telephone: 01684 594840

Email: [dcoombs@warkscol.ac.uk](mailto:dcoombs@warkscol.ac.uk)

# The Chelsea Flower Show 2016 – an insider's view

Sarah Hyde

In this article, Sarah Hyde offers an insight to H. W. Hyde and Son's Gold Medal winning lily display at Chelsea Flower Show, and recalls its preparation.



The Chelsea 2016 theme, HM The Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday design was based on Art Deco style, all straight lines and geometric designs. The style first used in the 1920s.

We decided when we knew the size of stand that had been allocated to us, that it would be a container-based display. So in October we started looking at possible shapes, colour, design, size and materials. First choice was a fibreglass range made in the UK. Price determined that this was not going to be an option for every container we would be

using, as then, the final sell-off prices would be hugely different from previous years.

The ideal is to sell all the plants off the display so the remainder can be brought back home in a single van load.

We went to see the manufacturer with an 'aged copper' plastic planter so we could compare the different shapes, heights etc. The plastic ones had been used at Hampton Court and were more affordable, and of good quality. They therefore became our choice for this year's exhibit.

**Below,** A BBC filmcrew immortalises Richard, Sarah and Liz Hyde's stand, with Carol Klein doing a short lily introductory piece to camera.

We start planting for Chelsea early in the new year. A percentage had been done as single pots to make up feature containers and as reserves, because only the very very best find themselves at Chelsea.

Colour now had to be considered. When the showhouse had been cleaned up, in the autumn, part was used to lay out the design. The path was measured and painted on the Mypex together with the outside. The edges were measured so we ordered enough wood. We were already planning 2017 while setting up the exhibit. One never gets total perfection, there's always more you can do. The judges had some interesting comments. These have been analysed and some changes will be seen next time.

The overall impression of our display was informal and got a lot of attention. At no

one point could everything be seen. We had taken inspiration from Blom's tulip displays. It provided a background for many photos, selfies, and TV shoots. We were very pleased that it had turned out as we had imagined it. The colours and scents were amazing. The plants ranged from dwarf plants 30 cm tall to a giant of 2 m. There were single and double flowers. Size ranged from small martagons to the largest possible hybrids. With very few unscented and a population of about 400 plants on the 8 m square the perfume drew people to the exhibit from a long way.

There were some special varieties that did not flower in time to go to Chelsea and we hope they will go to the show next year. One of the new ones that we found very good is Fujian. A strong-growing oriental  $\times$  trumpet hybrid with hybrid vigour and strong perfume.





Below, Mike Beak leads the Lily Group past the Iris border at Spetchley Park Gardens, June 2016.

## Garden visits

Duncan Coombs

RHS Lily Group Summer visit to Spetchley Park Gardens, Worcester and the garden of Colonel John Bryant in the village of Stoulton, Worcestershire.

The morning of 4 June 2016 saw 15 members and partners of the RHS Lily Group assemble at Spetchley Park Gardens, the 30 acre historical estate of Major John Berkeley.

We were met by the Head Gardener Mr Mike Beak and given a tour of the extensive gardens, plus most interesting and at times entertaining information about the history of the gardens. The extensive estate with its lakes and rare trees is a delight. Examples such as *Taxodium distichum* and William Lucombe's hybrid *Quercus* × *bispanica* 'Lucombeana' an eighteenth-century chance cross between *Q. suber* the cork oak and the Turkey oak *Q. cerris* which is evergreen with narrow toothed leaves are among many impressive trees.

The walled gardens are a constant horticultural challenge but packed in amongst magnolia and roses are delights such as *Tulipa sprengeri*, alliums, bearded iris and special collections of paeonies which were at their best.

Our visit was a little too early to see the hundreds of *Lilium martagon*, that are here naturalised in part shade, in flower, but Mike explained that this would probably be a good year for this species in this garden as the fungal disease *Botrytis cinerea* had proved much less of a problem than in previous seasons. *Lilium monadelphum* is also naturalised at Spetchley and a single stem graced us by being just in flower!

After a brief lunch at Spetchley we travelled



the short distance to Colonel and Mrs Bryant's NGS garden, The Tynings at Stoulton.

The garden is renowned for its collection of rare and unusual trees and shrubs, plus *Liliums*. On the day of our visit many clumps of lilies were looking most promising, but several other plants were outstanding including a superb specimen of *Lonicera* × *tellmanniana*, *Actinidia tetramera* var. *maloides* and a delightful group of *Iris ensata* cultivars in a small pool.

After a well-earned cup of tea and cakes on the patio, members departed after a very happy day in the presence of other keen gardeners. They were Allison and Andrew Allot, Tony and Thea Dixon, Nicola Harding (Nikki Snell), Raymond and Carol Hudson, Jean Johnson, Peter and Gill Regan, Nuala and Graham Sterling, Cynthia and Terry Young, and myself.

Below, *Lilium* aff. *majoense* (as labelled by Crûg Farm) originates from Crûg Farm collections in Vietnam.

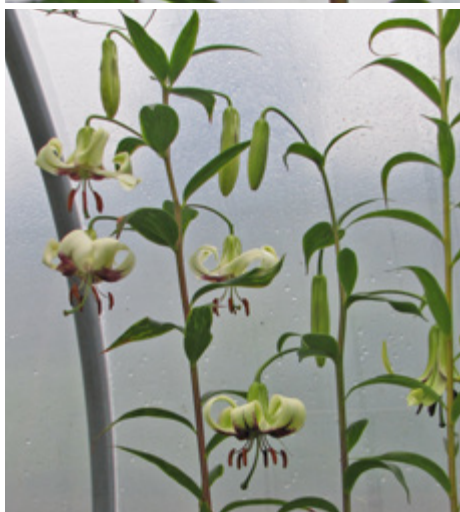
## Untangling *Lilium poilanei*, *L. primulinum* and *L. majoense*

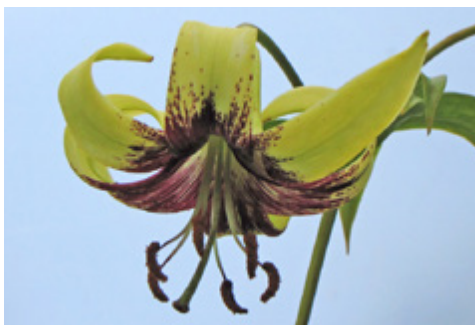
In the following article, Melvyn Herbert shares his thoughts on these three very closely related species, proving that they can be grown with success, given a bit of extra care and attention to their various specific needs.

The taxonomy of *Lilium primulinum*, *L. poilanei* and *L. majoense* does seem very confused. I tend to view them all as forms of *L. primulinum* but am careful to keep my stock from different sources pure so as not to confuse the situation further! I also keep them labelled as I receive them.

I have a pot of five plants from Crûg Farm labelled *Lilium* aff. *majoense* from seed collected in Vietnam, however, there are three forms in the pot which look different. One with few or no spots around the dark center, one with more spots rather like the plants labelled *L. majoense* but without the longer perianth tube and another which looks like the plants I have of '*L. poilanei*' from another of their collections in the same area. I think we are dealing with a complex aggregate of taxa in active evolution. Wouldn't it be great to travel to the area with enough time to study them properly! That is if they still survive there of course! In the mean time I will try to gather examples from different sources and keep them separated.

I am attaching some photos of plants which have flowered this summer, some labelled as *Lilium poilanei*, some as *L. aff. majoense*, some unidentified. Some are highly stoloniferous, others show no sign of this and send stems straight up. There is also





great variation in leaf size, shape and texture.

My plants are mostly grown in large pots filled with a loose free-draining mixture and are watered very carefully since the bulbs seem very prone to rotting, the exception being 'Rock's Variety', which is outside in the garden in a dry semi-shady position. The pots are placed in my polytunnel in mid-spring and watered very lightly until new growth appears. The tunnel is well ventilated. The aim being to keep the plants dry (in my wet drizzly climate) and protected from the wind rather than to raise the temperature

slightly. Watering is increased as growth progresses but they are always kept on the dry side and never wet. Flowering begins for me in mid-July and continues, depending on form, through into autumn. 'Rock's Variety' flowers outside in early September while others are still in bud in the polytunnel. The plants are dried off in the autumn and placed in large bin bags to maintain moisture, and placed in an unheated outbuilding for the winter. I would be very interested to hear from other members about their experiences with this beautiful group of lilies.

## Lilies and Related Plants

Alan Mitchell, Editor

Growing lilies in the garden is special, but I've always thought there is something extra special about looking for and finding them growing in their natural habitat, which I did most recently when I visited northern Greece.

Although finding a lily is like finding a beautiful needle in a seemingly endless hay-stack of tree-covered mountains, I was lucky enough to find plants of *Lilium martagon*, *L. chalcedonicum* and *L. rhodopeum* in flower. I also found *Lilium albanicum*, which, unfortunately, had already flowered.

Perhaps readers also have an experience of searching for lilies, or growing them in their gardens, which they would like to share with other Lily Group members by writing an article for *Lilies and Related Plants*? Should this be the case, please contact me by phone or email.

Tel: 01592 759255. E-mail: [mitchell.alant49@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mitchell.alant49@yahoo.co.uk)

## Members' archives

Once more, we delve into members' archives, to see some of the lily gems grown by them.

**Melvyn Herbert** UK

*Lilium rhodopeum*

In 2007 seed of *Lilium rhodopeum* was received from the late Jim Archibald. Apparently the seed was collected from a population on the Greek side of the border with Bulgaria, in the Rhodope Mountains. The seeds were sown in a compost of commercial ericaceous compost, medium grit and perlite in the ratio of 3:1:1 and covered with about a centimetre of the same mixture. Plants have grown on very slowly, looking after themselves in the main since I was still living in Germany for most of the period, and there have been regular losses. However, this spring several shoots appeared (from bulbs planted in the ground a few years back) and although two were eaten off by slugs the first flower opened at



the beginning of June. It was very beautiful and well worth the wait! Hopefully the remaining plants will reappear next spring and it may be possible to get some seed to build up the colony and distribute to others.



**Tony Willis** UK

*Lilium bakerianum aureum*

I purchased the lily from Chen Yi some years ago and it has just grown okay each year. No problems encountered so far. I keep them just damp and frost free in my garage over winter.

The only thing I can add is it is beautiful and gives me a lot of pleasure when it flowers, as much now as the first time – as do so many other plants.



**Susan Band** Scotland

*Lilium rubescens*

Perhaps trying to grow lilies which originate from the dry land of California is not the most educated choice for a Scottish garden. But as gardeners we always try to push the boundaries.

I think it was more in hope that I bought the *Lilium rubescens* seed from a Californian collector. I sowed them in an unheated polytunnel and left them to germinate. When they had reached a reasonable size they were planted out in a gritty bed in full sun, or the best it can manage here in Scotland.

Every year they come up and in most years flower well, however it is only in exceptionally dry years I manage to get any seed. So far they have survived about six or seven years producing stems with about five to six flowers of a beautiful pale pink gradually getting darker as they mature.

The main problem here is the frequent



rain and high humidity. I could move them under cover but if in pots they would still require watering from above. I think the best place to plant them would be at the edge of some trees but still under the canopy where they can be protected from summer rain but still get sunshine. Even if the soil dries out under the trees it usually stays cool.

Yet again this year the pollen was washed off with the rain and botrytis struck the stem. I therefore dug up one bulb to scale and hopefully next year will have young plants again to experiment with.

**Alan Mitchell** Scotland

*Lilium albanicum*

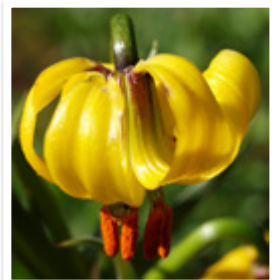
***Lilium albanicum* is still my first species lily to flower, at the end of May or the beginning of June.**

There is a clarity to the air in Scotland, in May and early June, that heightens the colours of flowers, a phenomenon that the vibrantly clear lemon flowers of *Lilium albanicum*, contrasted with the vivid bright green stem and leaves, captures perfectly.

Until recently I had only one bulb of this species, growing on a gravel 'beach' beside my pond. I chose this location because it is

south facing, the soil is gritty and drains well and large boulders have the effect of creating a sun

trap, which, as *L. albanicum* comes from Albania and northern Greece, I hoped would approximate to this lily's natural habitat. Given that my albanicum has flowered for many years, my assumption about location in the garden etc., seem to have paid off.



## Seed distribution and collection George Battle

We urgently welcome your donations for the next Seed List. Please send cleaned dry seed, free of chaff, clearly labelled with printed names in sealed packets to Dr Pat Huff, whose address appears below<sup>1</sup>. A typed list and/or copy emailed to Pat Huff and George Battle is a great help. **Seed contributions should be posted to arrive by 1 December 2016.**

Contributing Members will receive the Seed List **two weeks ahead of others** (in PDF or printed format with instructions for ordering) **and an allocation of free seed**. Those without internet access will receive a printed copy.

Seed contributors in the UK may opt for a printed list but other members should send a request together with a first-class stamp to George Battle (please see my contact details below<sup>2</sup>).

### Membership and the Seed List

1. New members joining prior to the deadline for seed requests will get the 2016/17 list. If joining later, they will receive the 2017/18 as a non-donor.
2. To receive the Seed List as a donor in one year (e.g. 2017), one must be a paid up member in the previous year (2016). See opposite for subscription details.

To comply with the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources, members who collect wild seed **must have any necessary permits and retain documentation**. More details and the seed distribution timetable available at: [www.rhslilygroup.org](http://www.rhslilygroup.org)

## RHS Lily Group

## Honorary Officers and Committee 2015-16

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#### Chris Brickell CBE VMH

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**Photo credits:** front cover main, top left and centre, p. 2, p. 6 inset left and bottom right, p. 7, p. 8 (Pontus Wallstén); p. 3 (Andrew Sterling); p. 5 bottom left, p. 6 inset right (Chris Gardner); p. 6 landscape (Alisdair Aird), cover top right, p. 9, back cover images (Nuala Sterling); p. 10-11, p. 12 top (Melvyn Herbert); p. 12 bottom (Tony Willis); p. 13 top (Susan Band); p. 13 bottom (Alan Mitchell).

Royal Horticultural Society Lily Group  
**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION 2017**

Please send your completed form to the Lily Group Treasurer:

Nataliya Cuttel, 216 Western Avenue, Dagenham, Essex RH10 8UL

Email: lilygroupfinance@gmail.com

# MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

## NAME

Including first and last names

## ADDRESS

Post code:

## EMAIL ADDRESS

## TELEPHONE

## SUBSCRIPTION

Please tick as appropriate

**GBP £15** ☐

until 31.12.17

**GBP £30** ☐

until 31.12.18

**GBP £45** ☐

until 31.12.19

## PAYMENT CAN BE MADE AS FOLLOWS:

Please tick as appropriate

- CHEQUE** made payable to **The Lily Group** drawn on a UK Bank, or ☐
- STANDING ORDER** on a UK sterling bank account in which case please signify by checking this option and you will be sent a Standing Order mandate form for completion, or ☐
- BRITISH, US, CANADIAN OR EURO CURRENCY NOTES** using the published rate of exchange but allowing 5% extra for bank conversion charges. Canadian Postal Money Orders are accepted but not cheques drawn directly on banks outside the UK, or ☐
- ONLINE**, our preferred option. On checking this option you will be invoiced by email for your choice (GBP 15, 30 or 45). You do not need to hold an individual PayPal account to use this option. ☐

Signature Please sign and date the form:

Date

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Please notify Nataliya of any change to your postal address. Notifications should clearly state the link with your previous address. Email address changes should be notified in a similar way.



RHS LG visit to Spetchley Park Gardens, Worcester, June 2016  
William Lucombe's eighteenth-century cross *Quercus* × *hispanica* 'Lucombeana'



Lily Group members at Spetchley Park Gardens, June 2016 (see page 9)