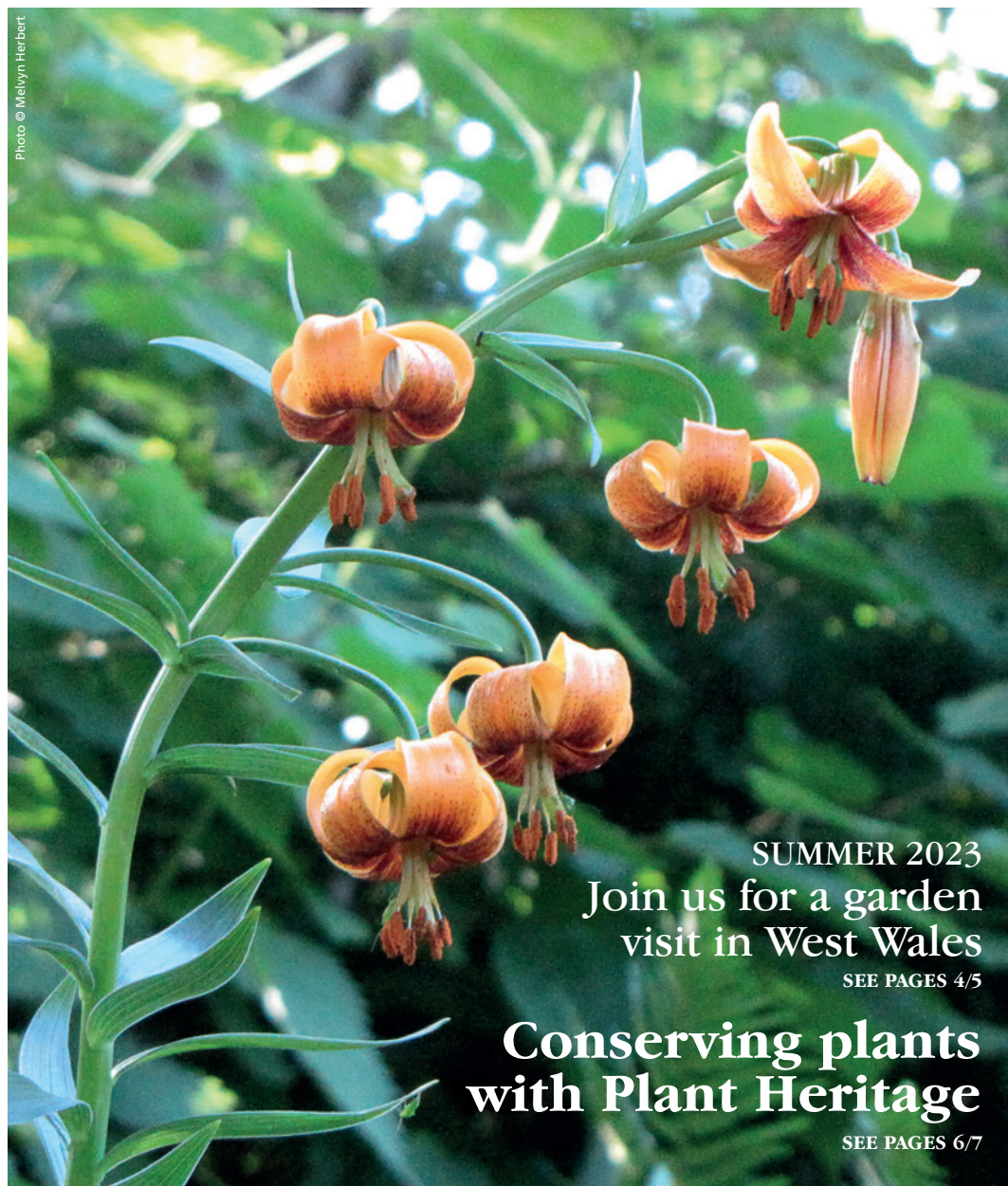




# LILY GROUP Newsletter

SPRING 2023

Photo © Melvyn Herbert



SUMMER 2023  
Join us for a garden  
visit in West Wales

SEE PAGES 4/5

Conserving plants  
with Plant Heritage

SEE PAGES 6/7

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Chairman's letter	2	Plant conservation and Plant Heritage	6/7
Activities and events 2023	3	Lily Group contact details	7
Lily Group garden visit	4/5	Lily Group AGM report	8

SPRING 2023

## Chairman's letter

Jamie Compton

In 2022 the Group weathered COVID-19, fallout from Brexit and a war in Europe. However, our membership are fortunately united in their love for six petalled (actually tepalled) single stemmed bulbous plants.

As I write a northern blast threatens to cover the emerging gentian blue flowers of *Scilla forbesii*, a plant I once knew as *Chionodoxa forbesii* from Babadag in southern Turkey, even though technically Spring has sprung. Fortunately, the new noses of the lilies still lie beneath leaf litter.

It is with sadness I have to report the death of former Chair Pat Huff, who for the past few years has been invaluable in helping

coordinate the seeds for distribution. Our former Chair and Vice Chair Nuala Sterling has sadly stepped down from her role on our Committee. We thank her hugely for her long and devoted contribution.

We welcome Gary Davison to our Committee. Gary has already made some very helpful suggestions as to how we can better our online presence and offered valuable assistance with the production of the Newsletter in-house in collaboration with Chris Clennett, our Newsletter editor. Later this year we look forward to a trip to Greece to see *Lilium rhodopeum*. May the scent of lilies draw you onwards again this year.



Photograph © Vladimir Trifonov

Below, *Lilium rhodopeum* in the wild – photographed in 2016 in Bulgaria.

## LILY GROUP ACTIVITIES & EVENTS

Chris Clennett

### Learning about lilies online

The possibility of online sessions to learn about aspects of lily growing and other related ideas was put forward at last autumn's AGM. The Committee has acted on this, with the first online presentation by Chris Gardner in November 2022. He explained more about upcoming trip to Greece and what might be seen by those joining the group in June 2023.

### Lily Group Webinar: Sowing Seeds

A virtual seed-sowing presentation on Saturday 18 February 2023, led by Mel Herbert, demonstrated his expertise in growing lilies from seed (skills which many members will be aware of). Those following Mel's presentation on Zoom were treated to a wealth of information and we can look forward to more talks and discussions of a similar kind in the future. Ideas are always welcome, so please do offer your suggestions.

### Growing, documenting and conserving

The Committee are working with various gardens and organisations to forge closer links and persuade more places to grow collections of lilies. We may be able to look forward to visiting more lily filled gardens in years to come if our work comes to fruition. In addition, as one of the Lily Group's main aims, we are trying to get more lily species and cultivars documented and conserved in collections around the UK. Working with Plant Heritage, individuals and gardens across the country should be able to grow and help to conserve more lilies for the future. Vicki Cooke of Plant Heritage explains all on page 6.

### JUNE 2023

#### Lily Group Tour to Greece

The next activity for members is the Greece tour in June this year. A select group have signed up for this trip to see lilies in the natural environment. We can look forward to hearing their thoughts and seeing some of their experiences in the autumn newsletter.

### JULY 2023

#### Lily Group Garden Visit, Wales

Members who are able to travel to west Wales are in for a delightful experience in July this summer. Mel Herbert is opening his garden for members of the RHS Lily Group on Saturday 8 July. A full description of what members might expect is given on pages 4–5. Look out for a reminder by email nearer the time.



Photograph © Tim Strudwick





# Lily Group Garden Visit

Saturday 8 July, Ceredigion, West Wales

Mel Herbert

All Lily Group members and friends are invited to visit Mel and Lin Herbert's garden on Saturday 8 July. This will be an opportunity to meet other lily enthusiasts and enjoy the garden and beautiful Ceredigion countryside.

## What might you see?

Not everything will be in flower or in peak condition but to give you a flavour, the different areas of the garden include an orchard with 26 apple, cherry and plum varieties. The 'stumpery' area contains a range of *Lilium*, *Arisaema*, *Polygonatum*, *Disporopsis* and *Erythronium* species. Look out for the green flowered form of *Cardiocrinum giganteum* and a large group of *Lilium tenii*.

There is a small cutting garden that is the 'territory' of my wife, Linda, and which contains a small greenhouse featuring the yellow flowered form of *Polygonatum kingianum*, red flowered *P. buanum*, *Arisaema leschenaultii* and some *Amorophoballus* species.

In the main garden *Lilium pardalinum*, *L. canadense* and *L. superbum* may be out, along with varieties of *L. martagon* including the lovely 'flaviflorum'. *Polygonatum* species here include the charming *Polygonatum*

*curvistylum* and the impressive tetraploid form of *P. biflorum*. The front patio area will contain lilies in pots and there is a small collection of *Arum* species in a sheltered south facing raised bed. In the Conservatory, amongst other things, you'll be able to see the wonderful and very rare *Lilium eupetes* (a Crug Farm collection from Vietnam).

The drovers' lane is home to several *Lilium* species, including *L. ciliatum*, *L. pyrenaicum* and the so called 'var. *rubrum*', *L. ponticum*



Opposite page, bottom, *Lilium superbum*; below left, *Lilium pomponium* and right, *Lilium tenii* at Mel Herbert's garden in West Wales.

All photographs © Melvyn Herbert



'artvinense' and *L. pardanthinum*. Other plants here are *Disporopsis aspersa*, *D. pernyi*, several species of *Polygonatum*, *Arisaema* and *Erythronium*.

*Lilium taliense* 'Jinfushanense' may be flowering in the woodland garden, which is also home to *Lilium mackliniae*, *L. medeoloides*, *L. armenum*, *L. kesselringianum*, *L. colombianum* and *L. japonicum* amongst others. There is also the very impressive *Arisaema dabaiense*, with leaves approaching 80 cm across, *Disporopsis undulata* and *Polygonatum vietnamicum*.

In a raised area behind the stable *Lilium punctulatum* can be seen, along with *L. davidii*, *L. kelloggii*, *L. tsingtauense* and forms of *L. bakerianum* amongst others. The stable terrace is usually used for raising young plants but it may be that *Lilium pomponium*, *L. chalcedonicum* and forms of *L. auratum* and *L. speciosum* may be accommodated there in containers.

Finally, there is the terraced fruit and vegetable garden that contains two poly-tunnels. One that houses mainly *Lilium* species which enjoy a slightly warmer summer, such as *L. pyrophyllum*, *L. michauxii* and *L. iridollae*, and another that is used for fruit

and vegetables, such as tomatoes, squashes, melons and grapes.

## What other activities will take place?

There will be free light refreshments (tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits) available; and for the more adventurous, an opportunity to try our very own Dornfelder red wine with some local prize-winning Hafod cheddar!

A small plant sale will take place (beginning at 14:00) with all proceeds going to Lily Group funds. Most of the plants will be young stock in 10 cm square pots for growing on. Numbers available of each are likely to be small and dependent upon how well they come through our currently very difficult winter. Please note that we will only be able to accept payment in cash on the day.

## HOW TO FIND US

Llwynteg, Bwlchllan, Nr Lampeter, Ceredigion. SA48 8QH

**Please note:** You are very welcome to just turn up on the day – but it would help us with catering and parking arrangements if you could let me know in advance. Email: lindmelve@yahoo.co.uk or call 01974 821797. And, really the last thing, don't forget your suitable footwear!



# Plant conservation and Plant Heritage

Vicki Cooke

For 45 years, Plant Heritage has been championing the conservation of garden plants. Our nation's long history of keen gardeners, plant hunters and plant breeders have gifted us with an extraordinary range of plants. Only by keeping plants growing and recording their existence, can we maintain this diversity – once they dwindle from nurseries and gardens, that effort, inventiveness and heritage is lost.

The National Plant Collections® encourage people to collect, document and conserve a defined group of plants. These living plant libraries come in all shapes and sizes and are held by a huge variety of people. Though you can find National Collections in botanic gardens, National Trust grounds, nurseries and local authority parks, the greatest proportion is held by private individuals. Whilst the largest include hundreds of trees, the smallest fits into a handful of living room terrariums.

Collections can be scoped to suit the means of the holder. A Collection might be a single genus, like all the cultivars of lavender,

or all the species of birch. As well as for conservation, having all the plants collected and grown together allows for detailed comparison and research.

Over the past decade we have encouraged a broader range of categories, to allow for smaller, more manageable collections and ones that can closely ally with your particular interests. Some have a geographic focus, such as British introductions of *Hosta* or a time based one, such as pre 1995 *Penstemon* cultivars. Others are focused around a single breeder, such as the Mylnefield lilies, bred by Chris North and held by Madeleine Tinson.

A collection need not be the responsibility of one person either. Dispersed collections are held jointly by several holders in different locations. This could include members of plant societies, who may be keen to join forces to conserve a specific group of plants. The Suffolk Group of Plant Heritage share the growing of an historic collection of *Narcissus* bred by the noted local breeder Rev George Engleheart. Members have each taken on a few cultivars and grow in their own gardens to keep his legacy and plants alive.

Dispersed collections can help safeguard large genera by spreading the collection around multiple sites. They offer increased insurance against pests, diseases or weather. They also make plant conservation easier and allow assessment of how plants grow in different soils and environments.

Many may not have space or time to dedicate to a full or part National Plant Collection, but they can still get involved.



Opposite page, bottom, North hybrids *Lilium* 'Ariadne' and below right, *Lilium* 'Odysseus' are fine examples of a successful programme of lily conservation thanks to Madeleine Tinson.

All photographs © Madeleine Tinson

Our Plant Guardian scheme uses data from our Threatened Plants Programme to work out which plants are rare and which might be lost to horticulture. Plants can become threatened if they fall out of regular commerce, and often the only place they can now be found is in people's gardens. Plant societies who join Plant Heritage can record up to 50 rare or threatened plants belonging to their members into this scheme. Having a known location informs us that this plant is alive in gardens and allows us to track whether numbers are increasing or declining.

The specialist knowledge of growers is also invaluable and at risk if not captured. Part of holding a collection is to meet minimum standards for recording and labelling. Plant records can be stored in our online database, *Persephone*, and linked to images, cultural information, research relating to that plant, and much more besides. Many people



can simultaneously view, use and add to this system, allowing for easy information gathering and sharing.

Without taking active steps to document and conserve our garden flora we are at risk of losing a legacy built up over hundreds of years. We are keen to work with the specialists in plant societies and groups to help the horticulturalists of tomorrow enjoy the range of plants we have today.

## RHS Lily Group

## Honorary Officers and Committee 2022–23

**Jamie Compton, Chairman**

**Chris Clennett, Newsletter Editor**

**George Battle, Vice Chairman, Seed Manager and Website Editor**

**Duncan Coombs, Links with botanical and other gardens**

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

**Madeleine Tinson, Lily conservation**

**Tony Dixon, Secretary & Pollen coordinator**

**Gary Davison, Digital media**

**Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary and Treasurer**

**EMERITUS**  
**Chris Brickell CBE VMH,**  
**Harris Howland (Past Chairman), Rose Voelcker**

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

**CORRESPONDING MEMBERS**  
**Keith Baldie, Walter Erhardt, Axel Hintze,**  
**Jürgen Koch, Alan Mitchell**

**OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS**  
**Alisdair Aird**



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Latest News and Updates  
[www.rhslilygroup.org](https://www.rhslilygroup.org)

The ease and convenience of digital connectivity meant that 25 members (from Australia, USA, Canada, Hungary and Germany as well as the UK) could gather online to attend our annual AGM back in October.

With formal Lily Group business completed, we enjoyed a striking video of the lilies in Peter Shotter's garden in south east England, followed by an interesting presentation about national plant collections from Plant Heritage's Vicki Cooke (see page 6).

## FINANCE

Irene Hopton-Scott reported that our finances are in good shape, but steps will need to be taken to avoid going into deficit after 2023. A suggestion was put forward to send out *Lilies and Related Plants* in electronic format only to save costs of printing and postage and to lessen the environmental impact. However, we consider it important to maintain the high standard and quality of our flagship publication.

## COMMITTEE CHANGES

Most notable was the sudden and unexpected death of Pat Huff, who was known to most members for her tireless work with George Battle on the Seed List. George spoke warmly of his time working with her and she will be much missed by committee members and no doubt many others too. Nuala Sterling, our former Chairman, Vice-Chairman and long-standing committee member had decided not to offer herself for re-election. Caroline Boisset who has served the Lily Group in various key roles over many years also resigned. However, Duncan Coombs and Mel Herbert were re-elected and Gary Davison was elected and welcomed as a new committee member.

## FEEDBACK

George Battle urged members to send him feedback on the format and content of the AGM, as well as ideas on subjects of Zoom presentations we might offer members in future.

## PRESENTATIONS

One of the great advantages of Zoom AGMs is the opportunity they give us to gain insight into other lily growers' gardens and into wider

© Melvyn Herbert



*Lilium parryi* which can be a challenging species to grow, is thriving in Peter Shotter's garden in Kent, SE England.

horticultural issues. Mel Herbert introduced Peter Shotter, who gardens in the Kentish North Downs. He has remarkable success with a number of unusual lily species, which many of us have struggled with or only dreamed of growing. Peter prepared for us a video showing the development of his lilies through a full season from promising young shoots to awesome blooms – including *Lilium fargesii*, *henrici*, *wardii* and many others.

Our time together was well rounded off by Vicki Cooke of Plant Heritage who gave us an informative and also somewhat challenging presentation on National Plant Collections. You will have read in this Newsletter how the scheme works. There is only one National Plant Collection devoted to lilies – Madeleine Tinson's collection of North hybrids – so perhaps we could all consider ways we can contribute to this endeavour ourselves?