

LILY GROUP
Newsletter

SPRING 2024

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our new
Chairman**

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Chairman's letter

Madeleine Tinson

When I joined the RHS Lily Group in 2009, never did I imagine that by 2024 I would be the Chairman. Is there somebody out there on a similar journey, I hope you are. The Lily Group relies on the membership to survive and those of you who volunteer to help. We need to have fresh ideas and insight to help us stay relevant, it's as simple as contacting Tony, our Secretary, to find out more.

Do you benefit from being a member, could you give something back, in the form of your time. On the committee or helping in the background. Committee meetings are held virtually, so you could join us from where ever you live on this planet, meeting time is 6pm GMT. Our youngest committee member is Janos Agoston who lives in Hungary.

We all have different reasons for joining, be it the opportunity to buy seeds not easily available elsewhere. Thanks to all who have grown the lilies, saved the seed, prepared them, then posted to George. He has a monumental task, from sorting the seed, into divisions, compiling the lists. Then the business of allotting them, once request come in from yourselves. He has to acquire Phytosanitary certificates, customs declaration forms for overseas postage, then posting them all out.

Unfortunately, due to plant health regulations, only UK based members are able to bid at the Bulb Auction. Bidding can often become ruthless as someone is determined not to miss the chance

for getting hold of a rare bulb, with eye watering amounts have been bid over the years. Originally the auctions were held at the Flower shows, then at our AGM's, but since Covid they are now held online. The Auction is organized by Andrew Holms and Scott Cook who volunteered to help. Thanks also goes to those who donated bulbs, from the much sort after species to the humble but worthy hybrids. Please remember, when you are lifting and dividing your lilies save some to donate.

The group only survives on the monies raised by your subscription, seed and bulb sales. Our Financial Officer Irene keeps a close eye on our income and expenditure, I am told technology has helped in this demanding task.



There is also the opportunity to visit gardens not always open to the public, organised by Duncan (see back page).

Lilies and Related Plants, our journal 2023-2024, is a bumper edition full of fascinating article and useful information. Due to an error on the Customs declaration form our European members were adversely affected, but I am sure you will agree it was well worth the wait.

My first article published in the 2011-2012 edition was called "The Beginnings of a National Collection". If you have something worth sharing, be it growing or the thrill of trekking to see lilies growing in the wild, Mel Herbert the Editor would be pleased to hear from you. As would Chris Clennett, the editor of the Newsletter, as they are always looking for articles. When ready Chris hands everything on to Gary Davison who organizes it into its digital format.

Why did I join - in the hope of finding North Hybrids, as I had found it impossible to find Norths to buy in UK. I did discover a website dedicated to North Hybrids. It mentioned Alan Mitchell, former Editor of Lilies and Related Plants, as he was at the forefront of the Conservation of the Norths. He was the person who encouraged me to become a member. Maybe you know someone who loves seeing your lilies growing, could you make them a gift of a subscription or encourage them to join.

Being awarded the 2018 Lyttel Cup is a treasured moment. I was the last to physically receive the cup, nobody takes it home to put on the mantle shelf anylonger, as it's too valuable, so we are given a silver dish as a memento.



Now back to where I started, is anyone growing 'Adonis', 'Eureka' or 'Invergowrie', which are still missing from my National Collection, or do you know somebody who is?



In 2023 Zoom again provided the platform for members to gather for our AGM. Twenty-three members from all over the world tuned in for a most enjoyable time together.

Chairman's Report

Vice Chairman George Battle stood in for Jamie Compton (who was unable to be with us) and reported on the year's activity with particular focus on the seed distribution. Although more packets than ever before were sent out, some problems arose with new customs regulations. George is working to find a solution to these.

Finance

Irene Hopton Scott had circulated the 2022 financial statement in advance. Our membership numbers have dropped, which in the long term will result in a reduction in income from subscriptions. We will need to address this challenge in the coming year.

Election of Chairman and Committee Members

Jamie Compton had completed his term of office as Chairman and decided not to offer himself for re-election, but being willing to continue as a committee member was elected as such. Madeleine Tinson was proposed as Chairman by George Battle and elected unanimously. Irene Hopton Scott (Treasurer) and Tony Dixon (Secretary) were re-elected. Dr. Janos Agoston from Hungary was elected as a new committee member, strengthening the scientific representation on the committee.

Future Priorities

Stricter regulations on sending seeds internationally have meant that from now on we will have to restrict our seed distribution to Liliaceae only. Willing hands to serve as committee members are also much needed; anyone who feels they may have a contribution to make is encouraged to get in touch. Consideration was also given to possible topics for future Zoom presentations to be made during the year.

Presentations

Two speakers gave well-informed and entertaining presentations. New committee member Janos Agoston gave a knowledgeable talk on lily pest management. Lily Group member Ruth Plant, who joined the lily-hunting trip to Greece earlier in the year, shared her experience with us through an enthusiastic talk and many beautiful photographs of scenery and lilies growing wild in their natural surroundings.

Questions to both speakers from attendees at the meeting gave rise to a lively discussion with further information on the topics covered coming from members of the audience.



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The Lyttel Cup winner 2023 – Mel Herbert

Jamie Compton

Melvyn Herbert has a remarkable collection consisting of mainly wild sourced but with some cultivated lilies. His garden in mid-Wales is set on the side of a steep wooded slope with a terrace on which sits the house along with his covered polytunnels and conservatory. Mel's knowledge of the cultivation of lilies is extensive. He is well-read on the scientific side of the genus *Lilium* and has contributed his knowledge to both amateur and professional growers of the genus with great generosity.

Like all good growers Mel understands the specific needs of the species from studying their native habitats and any specific needs required by that individual species. Chinese species from the western mountain meadows along with those from the Himalaya are given a more open well-

drained position while those also from China and Japan that need a rich woodland soil are found in a similar habitat under the tree canopy. More easily grown species are found dotted hither and thither within the flower beds borders of the garden. The really difficult species are nurtured in pots in specific places either under glass or in the polytunnels where watering can be carefully controlled.

Mel and his wife Lin's garden is by no means limited to the cultivation of lilies. He has an extensive interest in and collection of other bulbous plants such as *Arisaema*, *Smilacina*, *Eucomis*, *Galtonia* and a range of other woodland plants.

The second string to Mel's bow is his editorship of the flagship journal for the RHS Lily Group - *Lilies and Related Plants* which is produced biennially. This requires a good deal of work on his part contacting authors around the world who are happy to write about their experiences and share their own knowledge of such plants. So far Mel has been involved in the production of two issues of this journal and is as we speak collating the articles for his third.

For all these reasons and more besides the Lily Group Committee felt that Mel is a worthy recipient of the Lyttel Cup awarded annually for excellence in the knowledge of the genus *Lilium*.





Lilies tours of California & Japan

Vira Nature are pleased to offer two contrasting and fascinating tours to see wild lilies.

Despite experiencing such different climates, both Japan and California offer enticing and unique selections of lilies (and other plants).

Japan comes with a unique cultural aspect, represented by a delicious cuisine, its hot baths and the classic gardens and temples of Kyoto, all framed by lush, verdant landscapes. Dedicated reserves hold thousands of lovely pink *Lilium rubellum* and the outsized flowers of *L. auratum* have to be seen to be believed, suspended in the air from banks or bursting from among coastal scrub. The autumnal shades of *L. dauricum* illuminate the woodland edges of Hokkaido, whose marshes and coastal strip throng with countless *Iris ensata*

and golden *Hemerocallis*. Its woody wealth can't be ignored, the contribution of Japan to our gardens is considerable. *Hydrangea paniculata* enshrouds tree trunks, maples, birches and viburnums fill the woods along with luxuriant herbs such as *Paris japonica* and *Glaucidium palmatum*. Intriguing fern-filled boglands are another aspect of this unique experience.

California is a contrasting world, enjoying a Mediterranean climate of dry summers, and the north-west is the lily heartland. Here we can find at least ten taxa of lilies from the fiery *Lilium pardalinum* in its various forms, crowded in seeps and ditches, sometimes in large numbers or the thousands of *Lilium columbianum* that line the highway in places. As in Japan, there is great

All Lily photographs © Chris Gardner

variety in the form of species encountered, from the enchanting pink duo of *L. kelloggii* and *L. bolanderi* to colour changing *L. rubescens* and *L. washingtonianum*, which both shift from ivory to blush as they age.

California 3-12 (-15) July 2024 <https://www.viranatura.com/tour/100060/lilies-of-california-jewels-of-the-wild-west>

Prices include; all accommodation, transport, entry fees, guide services and food (and water)

within the tour dates.

Prices do not include;
International air tickets, personal expenses, travel insurance or drinks.



Lilies are plentiful and the accompanying vegetation includes monkey flowers, paintbrushes, buck-wheats, penstemons, lewisias and phloxes, especially in recently burned areas which can be a blaze of colour. Around towering Mount Shasta grow the elegant vases of *Calochortus macrocarpus*, whilst bogs and seeps are crowded with the hundreds of sculptural pitchers of *Darlingtonia californica*, a remarkable carnivorous plant. Neither will we leave out the statuesque redwood forests, an otherworldly experience of gigantic trees.

An extra few days are offered to track down the charms of *Lilium parvum* and more.

Tour Dates:

Japan 25 June – 9 July 2024 <https://www.viranatura.com/tour/100031/japan-lilies-galore>



Joint spring garden visits for RHS Lily Group and Fritillaria Group

Duncan Coombs

Programme for a day of garden visits Sunday 10th March 2024.

Arrive. 10.30am. The garden of Dr Martyn Rix, Quince House, Bishop's Nympton, near South Moulton, North Devon. EX36 4PW.

Directions... Quince House, and the other Quinces, are best accessed by leaving the A361 at Moortown Cross, continue to Rose Ash and from there along the ridge to Quinces Cross; turn right here, and we are the first house on the left, among some trees; there are other houses on the right, opposite.

If there will be more than about 6 cars, we will open the lower gate, to park by the old farm buildings.

Coffee followed by a garden tour. Martyn has been busy developing a fascinating woodland garden.

Depart. 12.00 noon.

Arrive. 12.30pm. Knightshayes National Trust (NT), Bolham, Tiverton, Devon. EX16 7RQ.

Here the *Erythroniums* in the woodland garden should be at their best. I am told that the NT has recently planted many thousands of bulbs in this famous garden. Free entry into garden for NT members. A quick light lunch is available at Knightshayes. Non-NT members do not have to pay the entrance fee if just having lunch. Please stagger your arrival at the café. This will be Mother's Day and the caterers fear they will be swamped if we all arrive at once.

Depart. 2.00pm.

Arrive. 3.00pm. The garden of Paul Cumbleton and Colin Everett. The Maples, Watts Quarry Lane, Somerton. TA11 7JD. Here we will see the Fritillaria Collection, raised beds with numerous bulbs and alpines, plus many unusual bulbs growing outside in grass.

Depart. 4.30pm.

Please note.

With the exception of Knightshayes, these are private gardens very kindly opened to us by the owners. Please do not share the address of either garden with anybody other than Group Members.

The timings are tight so please do stick to them if you wish to see all three gardens.

We hope to arrange further visits later in the season.



Above *Erythronium revolutum* 'Knightshayes Pink' at the RHS Trial, Wisley

Left *Erythronium revolutum* at Knightshayes Court

