

## Plants for naming

(written up by Evelyn Stevens)

**Groups** With more time than expected for her PowerPoint presentation, Evelyn explained again the benefits to The Meconopsis Group of using the Group concept. The Groups (George Sherriff Group, Infertile Blue Group and Fertile Blue Group) were established to facilitate sorting out the identities and the naming of the considerable number of different plants, with a variety of confused names or no names, that were donated to the Plant Identification Trial over 10 years ago. A Group is defined as “a collective name for a group of cultivars within a genus with similar characteristics”. These features must be described and published for a Group to be established. Once a cultivar has been named, and is readily recognised, it no longer needs to be given its Group name when referring to it. Groups are only a horticultural convenience. For example, before naming them, *M.* Barney’s Blue and *M.* ‘Maggie Sharp’, with their Meconopsis Group code number, were assigned to George Sherriff Group and Infertile Blue Group, respectively. Now that we readily recognise these cultivars, their Group designation is no longer important when referring to them. For further details see [www.meconopsis.org](http://www.meconopsis.org), including the archive of the meeting in November 2008 (08\_14stevens).

**Awards** Evelyn then reviewed again the awards that The Meconopsis Group has been seeking, and continues to seek, from the Royal Horticultural Society for the cultivars that we have been sorting out and naming. The purpose for seeking such awards is that we hope in this way to get the range of cultivars more widely known, appreciated and grown by gardeners, both in private gardens and gardens open to the public. The RHS has 2 sets of awards.

1. Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee (JRGPC) awards These are awards given to plants for exhibition. We were pleased that this committee agreed to convene and assess our plants first in 2005 and 2006 in specially convened meetings here at the Botanic, and then again at Gardening Scotland in 2008 and 2009. We were pleased that 13, (plus one already with an award) of our cultivars have been given awards. This included three more this year: *MM.* ‘P.C. Abildgaard’ from Denmark, ‘Marit’ from Tromsø in Norway, and ‘Maggie Sharp’ from Oban (originally from Branklyn). There were AMs for the first two and a PC for *M.* ‘Maggie Sharp’.

2. Awards of Garden Merit (AGMs) The big blue poppies are not really plants for exhibition, so we are pleased that the RHS’ [Rock Garden Plant Trials Assessment Panel](#) has now agreed to trial the plants for the Award of Garden Merit. This award indicates that a cultivar or species has been judged by an appropriate committee to be of outstanding excellence for use in the garden. Only one cultivar and two species of *Meconopsis* already have an AGM, i.e. *MM.* ‘Slieve Donard’, *baileyi* (syn. *betonicifolia*) and *quintuplinervia*.. The trial has now been set in motion. It is to be at Harlow Carr from 2010-2013, possibly extending to 2015. There will also be “demonstration beds” at Wisley, Rosemoor, Holehird in the Lake District and in central Scotland at The Linns, Sheriffmuir. The extra “demonstration beds” is a new departure by the RHS. The list of 23 big blue poppies to be trialed was listed. It included *M.* ‘Slieve Donard’ already with an AGM, as a marker for excellence, cultivars which the JRGPC have asked specially to be assessed for AGMs, other cultivars we think are worthy and others perhaps less worthy for comparisons to be made. Twelve already have JRGPC awards – only one pre-dates our work.

### New plants for naming – at the next meeting on March 6<sup>th</sup> 2010

Altogether we now have more than 2 dozen named cultivars of big perennial blue poppies. About 18 of these were new names approved by The Meconopsis Group and accepted by the RHS. You might think enough is enough. But the fact is that there are still some more that we feel should be named over the next few years. Two were listed for the next meeting in March.

*M.* ‘Springhill’ This is a typical member of George Sherriff Group, similar to *MM.* ‘Jimmy Bayne’ and ‘Huntfield’. It is regularly listed in The Plant Finder and so should be recognised. It was previously grown well and in quantity at Logan Botanic Garden. A feature clearly distinguishing it from other cultivars lies in the foliage. There are consistently fewer teeth on the leaf margins, and, in the young leaf rosettes, the leaves are a bit more upright than in most of the other George Sherriff Group cultivars.

*M.* ‘Mildred’ A member of Fertile Blue Group which produces viable seed, but it is to be treated as a clonal cultivar, not a seed-raised cultivar. It was raised by Jim and Mildred Thompson and brought to our notice by Margaret and Henry Taylor. It is early flowering, vigorous and a lovely sky blue, tending towards turquoise. It always excites comment in the garden.

### Preliminary review of plants to consider naming in the future

Slides were shown of a few more clones which may be put forward for naming in future

1. A member of George Sherriff Group received from Mrs Isa Hall which may prove to be a usefully dwarfer-than-usual cultivar.
2. A cultivar, received as *M. grandis* GS600 and from General Murray-Lyon's garden in Pitlochry. This distinctive, tall, clone, obviously of long-standing is quite clearly not a member of George Sherriff Group.
3. A beautiful clone from Keillour Castle, which is obviously a near relation (from the same seed capsule?) as *M. 'Keillour'*.
4. *M. 'Marit'* has already been named. But there are several large-flowered white (near-white) cultivars to be named. Two were shown. One came from Kilbryde Castle, near Dunblane. It usually has fine blue streaks in the petals. It is very similar to another that still grew at Ascreavie in 2000, but which probably lacks the blue streaks. It is to be seen in a colour slide at Ascreavie, taken in 1969. Another white form came from Cluny. This is notable for being clothed in prominent, long, soft hairs. There also exist other large, white-flowered forms that still need to be assessed.
5. Finally four forms of true *grandis* were shown and discussed. Two are fertile and set masses of viable seed. Of these, one has rounded and overlapping petals, and in the other the petals are more frilly and rather narrower, tapering somewhat towards the apex. The other two forms of *M. grandis* are sterile. The reason for this sterility is not known, but in other respects they do appear to be *grandis*, rather than hybrid forms. One is very early flowering, with huge, sky-blue flowers, one per false whorl, and can be traced back to Ascreavie in 1976. The other is seemingly attributable to a Polunin, Sykes and Williams' seed collection. It is early-flowering and the single flower per false whorl is deep blue with rounded, overlapping petals. It is a very vigorous clone and can be readily propagated by division.