

Growing *Meconopsis* in Bavaria

by Jenny Wainwright-Klein

(lightly edited by Evelyn Stevens)

Jenny Wainwright-Klein, from the Munich Botanic Garden and Curator of the Schachen Alpine Garden in Bavaria showed us how she successfully grows a wide variety of *Meconopsis* species using both the facilities provided by the Munich Botanic Garden and the growing conditions provided by the Schachen Alpine Garden.

The Munich Botanic Garden lies at 500 m and the precipitation is between 950 and 1000 mm pa. Summers can be hot with the temperature often above 30°C in June, July and August. Winter temperatures fluctuate with minimums down to -25°C with or without snow cover. *Meconopsis* and high alpine plants for the Schachen Alpine Garden are propagated from seed in Munich, but the warm spells in April and May are problematic. Firstly because the heat arrives while most of the plants are still barely out of the seedling stage and more sensitive and secondly because with the heat comes mildew, a major problem in the cultivation of *Meconopsis* in Munich; weakening the plants to such an extent that only the more hardy species or monocarps live to flowering size. Since last spring space has been allotted to Jenny in the cool orchid house for newly germinated *Meconopsis*. This glasshouse provides the necessary cooler temperatures as it stands above the rain water tanks, separated only by an iron mesh from the cool, moist water.

As soon as the Schachen is snow free and open, the young plants are transported up to the Alpine Garden for planting out. The Schachen lies on the north side of the Wetterstein Mountains at an altitude of 1850 m. The snow usually lies until the end of May and the garden opens in the middle of June. A typical Schachen summer is cool and moist with rain every couple of days followed by misty days. Precipitation is approximately 1600 mm pa with snow from October until the end of May as well as occasionally in the middle of summer. The Garden is increasingly experiencing atypical long dry periods of up to 12 days, followed by downpours. So the precipitation is remaining the same but the distribution is different with misty days occurring less frequently. Day temperatures seldom rise above 20°C and nights are generally a cool 12°C.

The basic mix for *Meconopsis* consists of garden soil, compost, peat and some weathered granite. Mature plants are fertilized in June with a balanced mineral fertilizer. Since last year Jenny has found it beneficial to place a layer of pine needles around all the *Meconopsis* plants as a mulch to keep the roots cool and moist during the drier days.

One lovely sterile clone of big blue poppy was received as "*M. x sheldonii*" from RBGE in 1972. Jenny hopes that we will be able to clarify further its cultivar status. Other *Meconopsis* well established in the Schachen Alpine Garden are the following: *MM. baileyi*, *baileyi* 'Alba', *gracilipes*, *grandis*, *henrici*, *napaulensis* hybrids, *prattii*, *pseudointegrifolia*, *punicea*, *quintuplinervia*, *simplicifolia*, x *cookei*, and purported x *sheldonii*. New additions to the collection, planted in 2009 and 2010 and which have yet to flower are: *MM. bijiangensis*, *delavayi*, *paniculata*, *racemosa*, *superba* and *wilsonii* var. *orientalis*.

Over 1000 different species of alpine plants from the mountains worldwide are planted in the Alpine Garden, which is approximately ½ hectare. Himalayan plants are one of the main features.

For pictures and more information visit the website at
http://www.botmuc.de/en/garden/schachen_alpine_garden.html