

The Meconopsis Group

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Newsletter May 2012

Dear Member,

Welcome to the May newsletter.

Weather problems

The *Meconopsis* plants have recently been subject to some awful weather in the UK.

Although there was little winter snow, most of Scotland had a very wet and windy winter, whereas much of England experienced drought. Recent heavy rains, cold winds, late snow, hailstorms and late frosts throughout the UK have damaged plants.....some of mine which were 'through the ground' in February have died after leaves were shredded by giant hailstones in April.

Although I have not prepared a questionnaire as such, if you wish to submit a report of the recent weather effects on your plants, please send it to me. I will gather the information together as a record. Please give a heading with the area and dates if known. Perhaps some kind member would like to volunteer to collate it?

Gardens to visit now

The Woodland Garden at the **Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh** has been planted with *Meconopsis* recently given Awards. It is open daily at this time of year from 10am to 7pm. Garden entry is free, with a charge for the Glasshouses.

Branklyn Garden (NTS) in Perth has a range of outstanding plants - rhododendrons, alpines, herbaceous and peat-garden plants - under the care of Steve McNamara. There is also a *Meconopsis Trail*, with Fact sheets detailing the location of many of the named plants. Gardens open daily 10 am to 5 pm at 116 Dundee Road, Perth PH2 7BB. There is a **Meconopsis Open Day on May 30th**. Steve hopes to have plants for sale. Please visit. There are other Gardens to visit too - **Explorers**, **The Scottish Plant Hunters Garden** (Pitlochry), **Logan Botanic Garden**, (Port Logan), **Dawyck Botanic Garden**, (Peebles), **Crarae Garden**, (Inveraray) and **Attadale Gardens** at Strathcarron (being developed)

Gardening Scotland Show 1st, 2nd and 3rd June 2012

We do not have a stand at the Gardening Scotland Show at Ingliston, Edinburgh this year. But please visit the Show!

***Meconopsis* on trial**

The main RHS Trial is taking place at Harlow Carr. 23 cultivars from three hybrid groups have been planted. Their performance will be compared to demonstrations at two other gardens in the UK - at Windermere and Stirling (The Linns, Dunblane). Planting at RHS Gardens Rosemoor and Wisley will show how they cope in hotter, drier areas.

The Committee which is assessing the Trial is meeting this month at Harlow Carr. More details will be available in the September newsletter.

Next Group meeting - November 3rd 2012

**The next Group meeting will be held in the Conference Room
at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) from 10.30am - 3.30pm.**

The provisional programme has been organised, with invited speakers Chris Grey-Wilson and Bob Mitchell. The detailed programme for the meeting will be sent out in the autumn.

Named plants

M. 'Cruickshank' Following further careful observations over more than ten years in the National Collection at The Linns, it has been concluded that the plant material derived from the Cruickshank Botanic Garden in Aberdeen for the identification trial in 1998 comprised two different clones. This had now been "sorted out", one of the clones being the same as *M. 'Bryan Conway'* and the second being retained as *M. 'Cruickshank'*.

M. 'Dagfinn' originated in Tromso from *M. grandis* EMAK 473 seed, and named there after the raiser. It is thought to possibly be a natural hybrid between *M. grandis* and *M. simplicifolia*. It was donated by Finn Haugli. It performs very well in Tromso, but Evelyn has not found it very easy – although it has persisted in her garden for about 10 years and work is continuing to bulk it up. It is very similar to *M. 'Houndwood'*, which Evelyn also finds not easy to maintain, but both are worth every effort to do so as they are so attractive and distinct.

M. grandis 'Himal Sky' is a form of true *M. grandis* that is very perennial, always sets capsules full of viable seed and breeds true. It is being trialled by the RHS at Harlow Carr and so far doing very well there.

M. 'Great Glen' is another form of *M. grandis*, but it has invariably been sterile every year since its acquisition by Evelyn Stevens in 1998; hence no specific name is included. But in 2012, for the first time, it did set viable seed. On enquiry, it was learnt that on a few occasions it also set seed with donors, Mike and Polly Stone, who gave it to The Meconopsis Identification Trial. They had received it as "*M. grandis* Early Sikkim" from Ascreavie in 1976. It is a marvellous plant with huge, sky-blue flowers and is amongst the very earliest to flower. It will be interesting to see if the recently germinated seedlings breed true.

M. 'Strathspey' Some clarification was given regarding a recently named plant submitted to Evelyn by Dr. James Gauld. It is a plant grown for many years at Jack Drake's nursery under the name *Meconopsis grandis* PSW 5423. It became sterile as with many introductions and following correspondence with Chris Brickell, it was decided to drop the specific name and call this clone *M. 'Strathspey'*.

Publication: The Alpine Gardener

An article entitled "Sorting out' the big blue poppies" written by Evelyn Stevens will shortly be published in The Alpine Gardener. It describes very briefly the work The Meconopsis Group, with brief descriptions and photographs of all the cultivars that have received RHS awards.

Membership Renewal 2012

If you have sent your subscription but have not received a receipt and membership card please let me know. Non UK members receive an e-membership card.

Annual General Meeting 3rd March 2012

The Minutes of the AGM will be available before the AGM to be held on March 2013.

Reports from the meeting held on March 3rd 2012

I enclose with this newsletter a number of items in PDF format.

- Newsletter May 2012
- 'Phylogenetic Relationships and Molecular Dating of the Genus *Meconopsis*' by Al Elliott
- '*Meconopsis* in Hexham and China' by Prof. John Richards
- 'In search of the Queen of *Meconopsis*' by Jim Jermyn

If you do not receive any of them, please let me know.

If you have any problems with this mailing please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes

Norma McDowall (Secretary)