

Meconopsis sp.

by Ian D. Scott

I have subscribed to Chris Chadwell's seed collecting expeditions for the last twenty years, and for a small outlay I have always been rewarded with something of interest. One of my finest Meconopsis (CC 3317) was collected at 3,300m on the Khumbu Himal in 1999.



It is a tall plant, growing to 9 feet in one Aberdeen garden, but also seems to grow equally well in the hotter conditions of Devon. A typical plant can produce over 100 white flowers and will continue to bloom into October, making it a most desirable plant. Seed of this plant was sent to the SRGC and AGS seed exchanges, as *Meconopsis wallichii alba*, for several years, but recent events have questioned the validity of this name.

In 2009 Chris Chadwell collected seed of *Meconopsis wallichii* (CC 6513) at 3,200m on the Makalu Himal. This plant also grows well in Scottish gardens and Scott Cook provided seed from his plants for the Meconopsis Group seed exchange in 2012. Interestingly, one of my plants produced flowers of a much darker hue, but at present I am not sure that this colour break is stable. However, it was obvious that our original plant, CC 3317 was different from this newer collection of *Meconopsis wallichii* in more than just colour.



Meconopsis wallichii (CC 6513) normal colour (left), darker colour (right)

The two plants were different in height, leaf shape, hair colour and seed capsule.



Meconopsis wallichii
CC 6513

Meconopsis sp.
CC 3317

As true *Meconopsis napaulensis* is supposed to be little more than 1 metre in height and yellow flowered, CC 3317 cannot be this species.

John Mattingley suggested that CC 3317 might be a white form of *Meconopsis staintonii* as he was growing something similar at Cluny. His plant had also been raised from Chadwell seed which had been collected 3 or 4 years previously.



There are similarities, but also there are distinct differences. *Meconopsis staintonii* is said to flower in late May to July (not up until October). Secondly, it should be up to 6½ feet in height (not up to 9 feet). Thirdly the hairs on leaf and stem should be golden-brown (not pale yellow to white).

In addition, the locations in Nepal where these plants are known to be found are two hundred miles apart. So it would seem that CC 3317 is not a white form of *Meconopsis staintonii*, but if not, what is it?

Note: In the previous lecture by Bob Mitchell showing photographs of plants seen during Len Beer's expedition to Nepal, one plant shown at a distance bore an uncanny resemblance to CC 3317. Perhaps the answer is out there, waiting for us.

(Note: print copies are not in colour)