

Alan Elliott: Propagation of Meconopsis

Alan began by apologising to the members who had attended his practical courses since they had already seen some of the slides.

His main points were as follows: The points were illustrated by slides.

1. Propagation of Meconopsis can either be by seed or by division.
2. Some of the monocarpic species cannot be divided so can only be propagated by seed.
3. Such species include *Meconopsis napaulensis*, *Meconopsis punicea* and *Meconopsis horridula*.
4. He sows seeds of *M. punicea* in January.
5. All of the big blue perennial poppies can be propagated by division.
6. They can be divided in spring or in October.

Alan demonstrated the technique with slides of *M. 'Slieve Donard'*.

Clumps of *M. 'Slieve Donard'* are dug up in October and placed on a plastic sheet. All dead flowers and stems are removed. They are divided into smaller clumps using two hand forks. The larger of these clumps can be re-planted in the border, in fresh soil or compost.

If more plants are needed then the clumps can be divided into single plants, each with a crown or growing point. These can be planted in pots in a peaty compost. At RBGE they are kept in shade at the back of the Alpine area. For last year's divisions there has been a success rate of 80%.

Pests and Diseases.

There have been a lot of enquiries concerning the golden root mealy bug in the past month. It has been found in Glasgow, areas north of Edinburgh and in Edinburgh.

Below is a summary of information on this pest, which can also be found in the newsletter.

The non-native golden root mealybug, *Chryseococcus arecae* was first recorded in the UK in 2012. It is a native of New Zealand that unlike other root mealy bug species found in Britain can be found on the roots of outdoor plants all year round.

Common name Golden root mealybug **Scientific name** *Chryseococcus*

arecae **Plants affected** *Meconopsis*, *Primula*, potentially many other plants

Main symptoms Lack of vigour, yellow mealy bugs on roots **Most Active** All year

Golden root mealy bug is a sap feeding insect that feeds on the roots of a wide variety of plants, although it has only been found on *Meconopsis* and *Primula* in the UK. Unlike most other mealy bug species found in the Britain it is able to survive the winter outdoors.

There are currently no pesticide controls for golden root mealy bugs in the open ground. Heavily infested plants should be removed and burnt or disposed of in council waste.