

Meconopsis Group Seed Exchange Report 2015

The wet summer of 2015 meant that, for many members, seed pods were rotting before seed could be collected and this did not bode well for the seed exchange. Despite this, many members generously donated the little seed that they had salvaged to provide a wonderful range of items to choose from. Our grateful thanks goes out to them.

In the autumn of 2015 we e-mailed all members to offer seed from a perennial form of *M. punicea* (MGS#5) for autumn sowing, and 25 packets were distributed. Some seed was retained for postal members in the Main Seed Exchange.

The pre-ordering of fresh seed of *M. delavayi*, *M. punicea*, and *M. quintuplinervia* for an autumn sowing seems to be working well, but members had to wait for seed of *M. delavayi* which took longer than expected to ripen.

A major influence this year has been 'The Genus Meconopsis' by C. Grey-Wilson, whereby *M. pseudo-integrifolia* has become *M. sulphurea* and the '*M. horridula* complex' problem may be resolved. Of particular use are the species distribution maps which allowed us to identify some purchased items to sub-species level. It is hoped that some members will have enough garden space to grow them in 'splendid isolation' to ensure a continual supply of pure seed.

There were some notable donations to the Main Seed Exchange including *M. x hybrida*, *M. baileyi* ssp *pratensis*, *M. grandis* 'Astral Blue', *M. dhwojii*, two donations of *M. 'Lingholm'* from very old stock colonies, two authenticated sub-species of *M. wilsonii*, *M. pseudovenusta* (aff) and an unidentified species which is possibly *M. zhongdianensis*. In addition, we purchased seed of *M. henrici* and *M. integrifolia* ssp *souliei* which had been gathered in China.

In 2015 the number of Meconopsis items on offer was 56 compared to 52 in 2014. Only three (all *M. paniculata*) were seed from the previous year.

There was a good supply of *M. quintuplinervia*, but no *M. punicea*. This was reflected in the SRGC seed list, and I would urge members to hand pollinate their plants this year. We also need to focus on a number of other species and hybrids, such as *M. delavayi*, *M. superba*, *M. simplicifolia*, *M. sulphurea*, and *M. x beamishii*.

Once again over 60% of the membership used the seed exchange in 2015. There were 83 UK members, 29 non-UK members, 3 Honorary members and 2 Complementary members. The Meconopsis Group sent seed to Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, China, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, Russia and the Netherlands.

New members who join after the Seed Exchange closes will be sent a selection of packet from the remaining stock to encourage them.

Our postage costs increase every year, but once again we have managed to generate a small surplus. Some of this is used to pay for the postage of seed to non-UK members. These members pay a higher rate of annual fee, but the nominal £5 is not shown in the Seed Exchange Accounts. Likewise Honorary Members and Complementary Members receive their seed *gratis*. Some of the surplus is used to cover the cost of packeting seed for sale at Gardening Scotland. This generates a substantial profit for the Meconopsis Group. In addition some of the surplus will be used to purchase seed collected in the Himalaya for the 2016 seed exchange.

In 2016 I am hoping to see the fruits of our labour from the 2014 seed exchange. Donations of seed from *M. punicea* (perennial form), *M. napaulensis* (true species), *M. grandis ssp grandis* 'Astral Blue', *M. dhwojii* and *M. henrici* would be most welcome.

The 'companion seed' (i.e. not *Meconopsis*) will continue to be listed as a separate page on the seed list, but will not expand beyond the single page. Last year there was a high demand for some very desirable species.

Lastly, in an attempt to stop this apparent competition for title of 'speediest responder' I sent out the seed list well after midnight. My plan didn't work as, within 20 minutes, I had the first seed request e-mailed back to me. I am considering sending it out in Swahili next year. That should do the trick! By the way, the Swahili for 'Meconopsis seed' is 'Meconopsis mbegu'.

Ian D. Scott
31st January 2016