

Meconopsis Group Seed Exchange – Autumn, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the Meconopsis Group Seed Exchange List for Autumn 2020, and hopefully you are all keeping well in these troubled times.

Seed donors will be given priority until **10th November**. All requests must arrive by **1st December** after which the seed exchange will close. It would be appreciated if members could e-mail me when their seed arrives, so that I can track any which may have been lost in the post.

This year there are some alterations to the procedure - **there is no charge for your initial allocation of 10 packets** – this applies to both UK and non-UK members. Members requesting extra seed (at 50p per packet, plus £1 P&P) will be invoiced by e-mail after 1st December. Please do not attempt to pay in advance as extra seed may not be available. A list of remaining seed will be sent out just before closure.

The following list indicates how many members donated the seed of each item on offer this year:

M. aculeata ..(6),
M. baileyi .. (21),
M. baileyi MGS#1 .. (1),
M. baileyi MGS#2 .. (0),
M. baileyi alba .. (7),
M. baileyi ‘Hensol Violet’ .. (8),
M. baileyi hybrid (x *M. latifolia*?) .. (0),
M. balangensis .. (4),
M. betonicifolia hybrid MGS#3 .. (1),
M. xcomplexa .. (13),
M. delavayi .. (2),
M. dhwojii .. (0),
M. Fertile Blue Group .. (4),
M. Fertile Blue Group (purple) .. (1),
M. ‘Lingholm’ .. (11),
M. gakyidiana .. (5),
M. grandis .. (5),
M. henrici .. (0),
M. integrifolia .. (6),
M. lijiangensis.. (0),
M. paniculata .. (4),
M. prattii .. (2),
M. punicea .. (6),
M. quintuplinervia.. (5),
M. racemosa .. (4),
M. robusta .. (1),
M. rudis .. (1),
M. x setifera .. (1),
M. simplicifolia .. (1),
M. staintonii .. (5),
M. sulphurea .. (5),
M. superba .. (3),
M. venusta .. (1),
M. wallichii .. (2),
M. wilsonii .. (2),
M. yaoshnensis .. (1),
M. zhongdianensis.. (7),

M. aculeata – this is an attractive item for a raised bed or trough and will self-seed in the right conditions. It should not need winter protection. There can be some natural variation with petal colour.

M. baileyi – MGS#1 is a distinctive small-growing, fertile form or hybrid of *M. baileyi*.

M. baileyi – MGS#2 is a cluster-flowered form of *M. baileyi* which originated in Sweden.

M. baileyi (violet) – Peter Kohl donated seed of a form of *M. baileyi* which is lighter in colour than ‘Hensol Violet’ and has foliage differences. He has suggested the provisional names of ‘Sue’s Violet’ to distinguish it from others forms. Please trial it and report on its garden-worthiness.

M. baileyi (mauve) – Peter Kohl’s second coloured form of *M. baileyi* has been given the provisional names of ‘Margaret’s Mauve’ to distinguish it from others forms. Early reports from Branklyn suggests that it breeds true to colour and is performing well in the garden.

M. baileyi (pink) – Cyril Lafong has donated seed from a fine pink form of *M. baileyi* which arose spontaneously in his garden. Firstly we need to know whether it will breed true to colour and, secondly, is it soundly perennial?

M. baileyi hybrid (x *M. latifolia*?) – this may be the same plant currently circulating as *M. latifolia* in various seed exchanges. The genuine *M. latifolia* no longer remains in cultivation.

M. balangensis – for the second year running we have seed from garden plants. Even so, we need more members growing it in raised beds or troughs to ensure that it remains in cultivation. There seems to be quite a variation with petal colour – some a slate blue and others sky blue.

M. balangensis var. *atrata* – possibly a bit trickier than the normal species, and with dark red flowers.

M. betonicifolia hybrid MGS#3 – seed of hybrid origin with both *M. betonicifolia* and *M. baileyi* in its make up, and possibly more. This is an attractive plant which can be stoloniferous and clump forming.

M. x complexa – this is the new name for *M. napaulensis* (of hort) in its various colour forms. The mixture labelled as Carig Dhubh is from a wonderful selection of mixed colours. The seed donated from red flowered plants had no other colours in the colony and should breed true. The others may be the same colour as the parent plant flowers but this cannot be guaranteed.

M. dhwojii – a number of members reported having raised good plants, only to lose them the following winter. So this is one which needs some winter protection for success.

M. fertile blue group (purple) – this year’s seed was donated by a member in the UK and may be different from last year’s offering which came from Sortland in Norway.

M. gakyidiana – this was previously known as *M. grandis* ssp *orientalis* but has been elevated to species status and re-named. The long established plants (ex NAPE) were raised from seed collected in Arunachal Pradesh by Peter Cox and his colleagues in 2003 (Nagaland Arunachal Pradesh Expedition).

M. grandis ssp *grandis* ‘Himal Sky’ – seed of this named form is in very small supply. If you are growing it then please hand pollinate it for next year’s seed exchange, otherwise it may be lost. The same applies to ‘Astral Blue’ as no seed was available this year. Both of these forms should have seed capsules devoid of hairs.

M. henrici – this is a real beauty with rich purple flowers and dilated filaments, but one for a trough or raised bed rather than the open garden and needs attention so that it is not lost to cultivation.

M. integrifolia ssp integrifolia ex W/O 7158 – the original seed came from the Kangding area (Yajiagen and Zheduo Shan), and originally was identified as *ssp souliei*. However, the plants have very globular flowers, not open-faced, and the collector has re-identified this item as *ssp integrifolia*.

M. integrifolia ex Zheduo Shan – this seed originated from plants growing close to the previous item, but may not be identical. As plants in this area do not seem to conform to the species distribution map in ‘The Genus Meconopsis’, the problem is under investigation. It would be helpful if members would label their seedlings as ‘ex Zheduo Shan’ and keep this epithet only for seed resulting from hand pollination.

M. integrifolia ssp souliei – the original seed came from the Balang Shan in Sechuan and the plants have been grown in isolation. We have two members who are maintaining these plants at sub-species level, rather than incorporating them into existing stock, or mixing them with *M. integrifolia ssp integrifolia*.

M. ‘Kingsbarns’ – this name comes from the Fife village where Dr James Cobb was gardening when he discovered viable seed in a plant of *M. x sheldonii*. The seed produced a number of plants with variable characteristics, but some had attractive shot-silk coloured petals. Seed and plants were distributed widely under the name of ‘Kingsbarns Hybrids’. It is said that these plants had hairless seed capsules, and I would be please to know if this is still the case.

M. paniculata ssp paniculata – The original seed was collected in Sikkim in 2017 and the plants were grown in isolation to prevent hybridisation and maintain the purity of the sub-species at this level.

M. paniculata ‘Great White’ – Meconopsis sp. ex CC 3317 moves on yet again, after circulating as a white form of *M. wallichii*, and then as a white form of *M. staintonii*. Until we have DNA analysis carried out we cannot be certain, but this is the latest theory concerning a fine plant. The ‘Great White’ epithet may be self-explanatory, but is also tongue –in-cheek. One of our US members was having problems getting his seed allocation through US customs, and wondered what they would say if he told them that he wanted to import a ‘Great White’.

M. prattii – this seed was collected from an isolated colony of plants raised from seed distributed as W/O 7160. The original seed was collected as *Meconopsis rudis* but the upper leaf spines lack pronounced purple blotches and resemble those of *Meconopsis prattii*, which grows in the same collection locality. It has been suggested that some forms of *Meconopsis rudis* do not have these blotches but, without genetic analysis, I cannot tell if this is correct or whether the two species have hybridised. Thus I will apply Occam’s Razor until proven otherwise.

M. punicea – those who pre-ordered this species were sent seed in the autumn. Luckily, more seed was forthcoming for the main seed exchange. Once again, please ensure that you find time to hand-pollinate your plants when the petals start to fall from the pollen donor plant so that the pollen is ripe.

M. quintuplinervia – this is a first rate species which can be used to produce excellent dwarf hybrids. It is a pity that so little seed is ever collected, but it probably requires more than one clone for successful seed-set. I have been told that the ‘Kaye’s Compact’ form will produce seed, unlike the taller and rather ganglier form. Is there evidence for this assertion?

M. racemosa – As I said last year, there is little doubt that some plants being grown under this name are *M. zhongdianensis*, which is very similar. Consequently, the three donations (one from Norway and the other two from the UK) are offered separately and labelled ‘B’ ‘H’ and ‘W’. When they flower, I would like to receive pictures, especially of the stigma and seed capsule, so that we can confirm their identity.

M. robusta – a new addition to our list and hopefully it has been correctly identified.

M. rudis – it is always difficult to know whether plants are still pure or have hybridised. This year’s seed has come from plants with blue-green leaves and spots of purple pigmentation at the bases of leaf spines, so it appears to be the true species. I would welcome images of the adult plants to confirm their identity.

M. x setifera – for years there have been donations of *M. horridula* which, clearly, was misidentified as the stamen boss was not a golden colour. The plants from this seed will probably have a hybrid parentage and lots of spines – but not as big and ferocious as on genuine *M. horridula*! Still, it can produce interesting small plants with attractive flowers, and good colour forms should be selected.

M. simplicifolia ssp *grandiflora* (Cuona) – it is wonderful to see that seed from Cuona, which was distributed a couple of years ago, has produced healthy plants in Norway. The grower protects the crowns with dry leaves over the winter. It is essential that we keep this species in cultivation so please give it special attention.

M. staintonii (red form) – one donation of seed (ex CC 3964) was from hand pollinated plants and the packets are marked ‘HP’. Those which are not marked ‘HP’ might produce various shades of pink, despite which they still make an attractive addition to the open border.

M. sulphurea ssp *sulphurea* – several gardens including Branklyn have fine displays of what used to be known as *M. pseudo-integrifolia*.

M. venusta – this is the last of my stored seed, and unlikely to be made available again, unless we can have success with raising plants.

M. wilsonii – there are two separate sub-species on offer this year, but they are grown by very few members. Majestic plants and quite distinct from anything else, so give them a go!

M. zhongdianensis – as previously mentioned, there is still a lot of confusion with this species and *M. racemosa*. The first one is from an isolated colony of plants raised from seed collected at Napa hai, north of Zhongdian in north-west Yunnan. The second batch marked ‘J’ are from a UK garden. When it flowers, I would like to receive pictures, especially of the stigma and seed capsule, so that we can confirm its identity.

M. sp ex BO-16-081 – unidentified but appears to be *M. sulphurea*. The original seed was collected on the Biluo Xue Shan in Yunnan.

M. sp ex CC 6715 – the original seed was collected in East Nepal in 2009. The plant is a very tall, late-blooming, monocarpic plant with white flowers, possibly a white form of *M. paniculata*.

Research Seed (MGS#100 series) – this seed is intended only for research and hybridising purposes.

Seed from a form of a species (e.g. *Meconopsis baileyi* ‘Hensol Violet’) should breed true, within the range of natural variation. However, Big Blue Poppies which, probably, are hybrids (e.g. *Meconopsis* ‘Jimmy Bayne’) tend not to breed true from seed and usually produce inferior plants. True plants of *Meconopsis* ‘Jimmy Bayne’ can be produced only from vegetative divisions - a slow process, which explains why named clones are expensive.

Until 2016 the Meconopsis Group seed exchange did not include such seed as there was the possibility that, through human error, these inferior seedlings might get passed on, misnamed as the original clone plant, which could undo years of hard work by the Meconopsis Group. At the same time it was recognised that the seed could be important for selectively breeding a superior plant, which might be of such quality as to merit being a named clone in its own right.