

## Seed Information Notes – Autumn, 2022

Dear Colleagues,

The Meconopsis Group seed list for Autumn 2022 will be sent out on **1<sup>st</sup> November**. Seed donors will be given priority until **10<sup>th</sup> November**. All requests must arrive by **1st December** when 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 packages which may have been lost in the post. Members requesting extra seed (at 50p per packet, plus £1 P&P) will be invoiced by e-mail after 1<sup>st</sup> 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 the closure date.

As your seed exchange manager I try to ensure that the listed Meconopsis taxa on offer have been correctly identified. As the plants are not growing in my garden, I must trust the donors, but errors can occur. Where there is an obvious problem with the shape, size, colour or quantity of seed (especially rarities), I usually ask the donor for background information, such as the source of the original seed or any photographs of the parent plant. As a specialist society it is important that members keep an accurate record of their sowings and plantings, so that knowledge is gained and identification errors can be dealt with promptly. Remember to add any designator (e.g. ex ACE 6829 or 'Zheduo Shan form') to your plant labels. Note the source of the seed (e.g. wild collected, AGS seed exchange, MG seed exchange, T&M, my cousin Jim) and which year. Finally, before passing on seed, please check that what you have grown matches the name on the label. If you are not sure, then ask other members.

As the summer heat-wave played havoc with so many gardens, I am not adding a list to show how many members donated the seed of each item on offer. Perhaps next year we will have more 'normal' conditions.

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

*M. balangensis* – once again 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 – from slate blue to sky blue.

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

*M. betonicifolia* hybrid MGS#3 – an accidental hybrid cross with *M. betonicifolia* being pollinated by *M. baileyi*. This hybrid appears easier to grow than true *M. betonicifolia*, and is an attractive plant which is stoloniferous and clump forming. Don't grow it close to *M. baileyi* as it will back-cross.

*M. x complexa* – this is the accepted 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. For the other donations, the seed may produce flowers of the same colour as the parent plant, but this cannot be guaranteed.

*M. delavayi* – this species requires special care and attention to ensure that it thrives. Fungal infections and too much direct sunshine have been cited as causes of demise.

*M. dhwojii* – a number of members reported having raised good plants, only to lose them the following winter. So this is one which may need some winter protection, such as a covering of fern fronds. The

degree of pigmentation on the leaves seems to be light dependent. The leaves are similar to those of *M. robusta*, but the lobes are smaller.

***M. fertile blue group (from 'Kingsbarns')*** – the original *M. 'Kingsbarns Hybrids'* came from James Cobb who lived in the Fife village of that name. Although the original seed was said to have come from a plant of *M. x sheldonii*, the identity of the pollen parent is uncertain. Plants of the first generation were variable but most had petals with a silk-like appearance and their seed capsules were like those of *M. grandis*, by being devoid of hairs. Being fertile, it is likely that these plants have back-crossed. Please record the characteristics of what grows.

***M. fertile blue group*** – only two things are certain: the plants will be fertile and blue. They will give a fine display if well fed.

***M. gakyidiana*** – assuming that you have been following recent discussions concerning what we are currently growing under this name, then you will realise that I am about to step into a mine-field. Previously this plant was known as *M. grandis* subsp *orientalis* but was elevated to species status and re-named. Many plants in cultivation are said to be 'ex NAPE' as their parentage can be traced back to seed collected in Arunachal Pradesh by Peter Cox and his colleagues in 2003 (Nagaland Arunachal Pradesh Expedition). However, after 20 years, the chances are that there is no longer a 'pure' strain and it has been reported that plants differ from those observed in the wild. In 2016 the Meconopsis Group introduced new seed which had been collected near Cuona by one of our Chinese members. If you are still growing the Cuona plants, then please let us know. The two items on offer this year are thought to be close to plants observed in the wild. Please photograph the plants which are produced and record whether it is 'A' or 'B'.

***M. grandis* subsp *grandis* ex Tibet** – the resulting plants should be typical of this subspecies in the wild with multiple peduncles above the false whorl and therefore having a longer flowering season than 'Himal Sky' or 'Astral Blue'. The donor has asked recipients to label them as ex Tibet and to keep them separate from other forms of this subspecies.

***M. grandis* subsp *grandis* 'Himal Sky'** – once again seed of this form is in very short 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'. Both of these forms should have seed capsules which are virtually devoid of hairs.

***M. henrici*** – seed of this purple flowering species is in very short supply and plants must be hand pollinated to ensure that seed is available to ensure its future in cultivation.

***M. heterandra*** – this species is very similar to *M. balangensis*, except that the flowers are held on basal scapes rather than a well-defined raceme. Please send in photographs of it in flower to confirm its identification, and keep it separate from any plants of *M. balangensis* that you might have.

***M. integrifolia*** - as plants of the two sub-species do not seem to conform to the species distribution map in 'The Genus Meconopsis', we are labelling them by their collection location while the problem is being investigated. Please record which form you are growing and keep them separate from other forms.

*M. integrifolia* 'Balang Shan form' has open-faced flowers whereas petals of the *M. integrifolia* 'Zheduo Shan form' produce a closed 'globe'. We need to know if the 'Jaijin Shan form' is similar to the 'Balang Shan form', so don't request seed unless you are prepared to grow it in isolation and keep a photographic record of the resulting plants.

***M. lijiangensis*** - if growers could take digital images of this rarity during its stages of growth and development, it would be of great importance for our understanding of how the yellow Meconopsis taxa are related.

***M. merakensis*** - the original seed was collected in Bhutan and the plant should be similar to *M. prainiana* from south-eastern Tibet. Members have reported that although they had a good germination the seedlings were lost soon afterwards, so sow the seed thinly to avoid root damage at the pricking out stage.

*M. napaulensis* – this item has been withdrawn for 2022. If you are growing plants from the 2021 seed exchange, please re-label them as *M. x complexa* as there is a problem with the seed.



Plants grown from the seed offered before 2021 may be correct. If so, then the foliage should be almost fern-like as shown in this photograph.

*M. paniculata ssp paniculata ex Sikkim* – the original seed was collected in Sikkim in 2015 and the plants have been growing in the absence of anything which could cross-pollinate them, so please ask label the plants as ‘ex Sikkim’. They may be distinct from other forms of this sub-species.

*M. punicea* – please hand-pollinate your plants when the petals start to fall from the pollen donor plant so that the pollen is ripe. Seed of ‘Sichuan Silk’ and the ‘perennial form’ are both in very short supply so don’t request both of them. All *M. punicea* seed should be sown immediately to get a good germination. I have reports that green seed sown in late August has already germinated in a cold greenhouse.

*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. Last year I was told that the ‘Kaye’s Compact’ form will produce seed, unlike the taller and rather ganglier form. Does anyone have evidence for this assertion?

*M. racemosa* – it would appear that all of the donated seed bearing this name in the 2020 and 2021 seed exchanges produced plants of *M. zhongdianensis*, but I am not giving up the hunt for the true species. There is a single donation this year so perhaps this will be it!

*M. robusta* – although this is seed from 2020, it still should germinate well and we need to establish a strong seed line to preserve it for the future. The plant resembles *M. dhwojii* in many ways, but the leaflet lobes are larger.



*M. rudis* – Many members find that this is a slow growing plant which may take 3 or 4 years to reach maturity. In the early years the plant may have just a few weak-looking leaves while the tap-root is developing. Leaves of a mature plant tend to be a glaucous blue-green colour with dark purple pigmentation at the bases of leaf spines. It probably will hybridise with *M. prattii*, so keep them apart..

*M. x setifera* – last year there was a donation of possible *M. horridula* which had originated from a European Botanic Garden. Sadly, the anthers were not a golden colour so, if you are passing on seed, label it as *M. x setifera*. This year there are four donations of unidentified ‘wee spiny jobs’. They may be distinct species or hybrids but should be interesting. Please grow them and find out.

*M. simplicifolia* – there was no seed donation this year. I hope that some members still grow it.



***M. staintonii* (red form)** – there were several donations of seed this year, with some originating from collections made by Chris Chadwell. The red flowered form normally has yellowish-green leaves covered in ginger coloured hairs. If the leaves look silvery or greyish, then the plant has hybridised and the flowers are likely to be white or pink. Both produce attractive rosettes of leaves during the winter which do not need protection.

***M. sulphurea* subsp *sulphurea*** – this species used to be known as *M. pseudo-integrifolia*. Plants of subsp. *gracifolia* should have narrower leaves.

***M. superba*** – this species has a persisting rosette of leaves over the winter months but the crown is prone to winter rot, so protection may be needed together with a free passage of air.

***M. wallichii*** – being one of the latest to flower, this species is a fine addition to any garden. However, it is not as widely grown as it used to be and more members are needed to ensure that it remains in cultivation.

***M. wanbaensis*** – seed was offered last year. How many members have been successful with it?

***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! Does anyone still have subsp. *wilsonii*?

***M. yaoshanensis*** – a small, deep purple flowered, beauty suitable for a large trough or raised bed. Beware – the fleshy green leaves are beloved of slugs and snails!



***M. zhongdianensis*** – the original seed was collected near Zhongdian, so it ought to be correctly identified. The stout raceme should have numerous tightly-held flowers with 7 to 9 rich blue petals and pure white anthers.

***M. sp ex BO-16-081*** – the original seed of this yellow flowered monocarpic plant was collected on the Biluo Xue Shan in Yunnan, and was said to be similar to *M. sulphurea*. The grower reports that it is distinct from *M. integrifolia* / *lijiangensis* / *sulphurea* and suggests that it **might** be the true *M. pseudo-integrifolia*. It should be grown well away from other ‘yellows’ and from *M. baileyi* or *M. grandis* to prevent hybridisation.

**Research Seed (MGS#100 series)** – this seed is intended only for research and hybridising purposes. Please contact me for further details if you have such a research project in mind.