

## Plant of the Month: *Hydrangea aspera* 'Macrophylla'

Joe Sime



Many of the forms of *H. aspera* make good understory shrubs for shade, but 'Macrophylla' is one of the easiest, being tough, tolerant and relatively fast growing. The one in the photos is a six year old cutting from our original plant which we bought back in 1999 and which is itself still going strong. It will make a largish, spreading shrub to about 6ft by 6ft. It is reasonably tolerant of drought, but would prefer a moist but not waterlogged site. It is not fussy as to pH as long as the soil is reasonably fertile. The one in the photo is planted close to the trunk of a very large mature oak.

It should not be confused with *H. aspera* subsp. *macrophylla*, a shrub from western China, now said to be synonymous with *H. strigosa*, which is harder to please, requiring a warm, sheltered site. 'Macrophylla' is a much tougher selection of garden origin dating back many years.



'Macrophylla'



subsp. *sargentiana*

It is often confused in garden centres with *H. aspera* subsp. *sargentiana*, and I have seen it sold as *sargentiana* in more than one establishment. *Sargentiana* is a good shrub, but slower growing, more upright in habit and with rounder and more conspicuously veined leaves (see photos).

## **Rosa 'Paul's Himalayan Musk'**

*Joe Sime*



I was prompted into this short piece by Diana Garner sending me the enclosed photo of her plant romping over a large holly bush. This is an old hybrid musk dating back to 1899. Although it is not a repeat flowerer, the one show a year is so spectacular it is well worth growing. It will grow in shade, sending up long shoots which need only a little help up into the chosen host. Ours is planted into a birch with dense shade on the north side and a sort of clearing among small trees on the south. This aspect becomes a sheet of the small pinkish, scented flowers in June.

If you have the room, give it a go. It is not as thuggish as 'Kiftsgate'!

## Nice thugs: *Saxifraga stolonifera*

Joe Sime

A few months ago Marian Goody wrote an excellent piece on the irregulares section of saxifraga. This article concentrated on the aristocrats of the section, the fortunei types and hybrids. It will be a month or two before these beauties come into their own. However, *Saxifraga stolonifera*, its varieties and hybrids look good most of the year and are now in flower. They are vigorous, spreading, evergreen plants with rounded, patterned leaves, forming new off-sets on short, thin stolons in the same way as strawberries. In a good woodland soil they will soon form a sizeable mat. The flower spikes are about 10ins tall with many white flowers, all with a pair of petals longer than the rest. Left to their own devices the mats will become congested and



the size of the plantlets decrease over the years. I find it best to do some ruthless thinning in the spring to give the survivors a bit more room. They will take quite dense shade, and will survive a dry period, but look best with a moist soil. There are several varieties. The photo shows *S. 'Cuscutiformis'*. *S. 'Maroon Beauty'* is similar, but with more purple in the leaf, and both are not that different from the basic species. There are other varieties available in the same group. All are worth a spot at the path edge in a woodland garden.

## Available Seed

If you are a paid up member of the Shade and Woodland Plants Group and would like some of the seed offered below, please send a SAE to S.J.Sime, Park Cottage, Penley, Wrexham LL13 0LS.

If you have seed to donate, please send it to the same address.

*Cardamine kitaibelii*

*Erythronium hendersonii*

*Rhodotypos scandens*

*Actaea spicata*

*Aralia kasuensis* ex CD&R 2289

*Jeffersonia diphylla*

*Mitella breweri*

*Paris quadrifolia*

*Tiarella polyphylla*

*Vancouveria hexandra*

*Ypsilandra thibetica*

## Article for the HPS Journal

Joe Sime

We have been asked to produce an article on dealing with Dry Shade for the Hardy Plant Journal in the Sept 2018 edition. We would like it to have contributions from four or five members. We already have one volunteer to write an introduction and another to do a section on raised beds. We would particularly like someone to write about 'low maintenance' and someone else to talk about a 'high input' approach i.e. with effort on soil improvement, mulching and watering. If you have tried either of these with or without success, a contribution (with photos) would be welcome. If you are willing to have a go please let me know.

## Name this plant

Joe Sime

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“Herbs perennial. Rhizome slender or thickened. Stem erect, simple. Leaves 4 to many, very rarely 3, in a terminal whorl, petiolate, lanceolate to ovate 25--40 cm tall. Rhizome creeping, slender, 2--5 mm thick. Leaves usually 4 or 5, subsessile; leaf blade broadly obovate or ovate, 5--10 × 2.5--5 cm, base subcuneate. Peduncle 7--10 cm. Outer tepals 4, spreading horizontally, green, ovate-lanceolate, 2--3 cm × 5--9 mm; inner ones yellow-green, filiform-linear, 1.5--3 cm × 1--2 mm. Stamens 8; filaments 3--5 mm; anthers 3--6 mm; free portion of connective 4--5 mm. Ovary purple-red, globose, 4--8 mm in diam., 4(or 5)-loculed. Stigma lobes 4 or 5, slender. Berry globose, purple-black many seeded. Seeds without aril. Fl. Jul, fr. Aug. Forests, thickets, moist places.”

Last Month's plant was *Tiarella cordifolia*. Known in North America as the foam flower this is a good plant to spread in a shady spot. A candidate for a future 'Nice Thug' .



## From the editor...

Joe Sime

Have you been to a good nursery recently or seen a great plant whilst on holiday? PLEASE send a report to [wajsime@gmail.com](mailto:wajsime@gmail.com).

SHADE MONTHLY is compiled by Joe Sime

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