

Shade Monthly January 2017

As usual I really need more articles, particularly during the dark months. Tell us about a good garden you visited or an interesting plant you bought last year. Send articles to wasjsime@gmail.com.

(1) Plant of the Month: Woodwardia radicans

I had long admired this plant before buying it. There is a particularly fine stand of them at Powys Castle in a sort of cave-room cut into the hillside on one of the terraces. This is enough to tell you both the advantages and the problems of this lovely fern. It will take quite deep shade and still grow well, but it hates the cold and is not reliably hardy. Regardless, I decided to have a go and bought a plant in 2006. It is planted against a wall, and is protected from the wind on all sides by other, sturdier plants. It has been slow, and was reduced to one or two straggling fronds by the winter of 2010, but the relatively mild winters of recent years have been kinder to it and it is now some 4ft across and has started to form vegetative buds on the main rachis near the tip of the fronds. These root as the frond



Woodwardia radicans



Potted-up vegetative bud

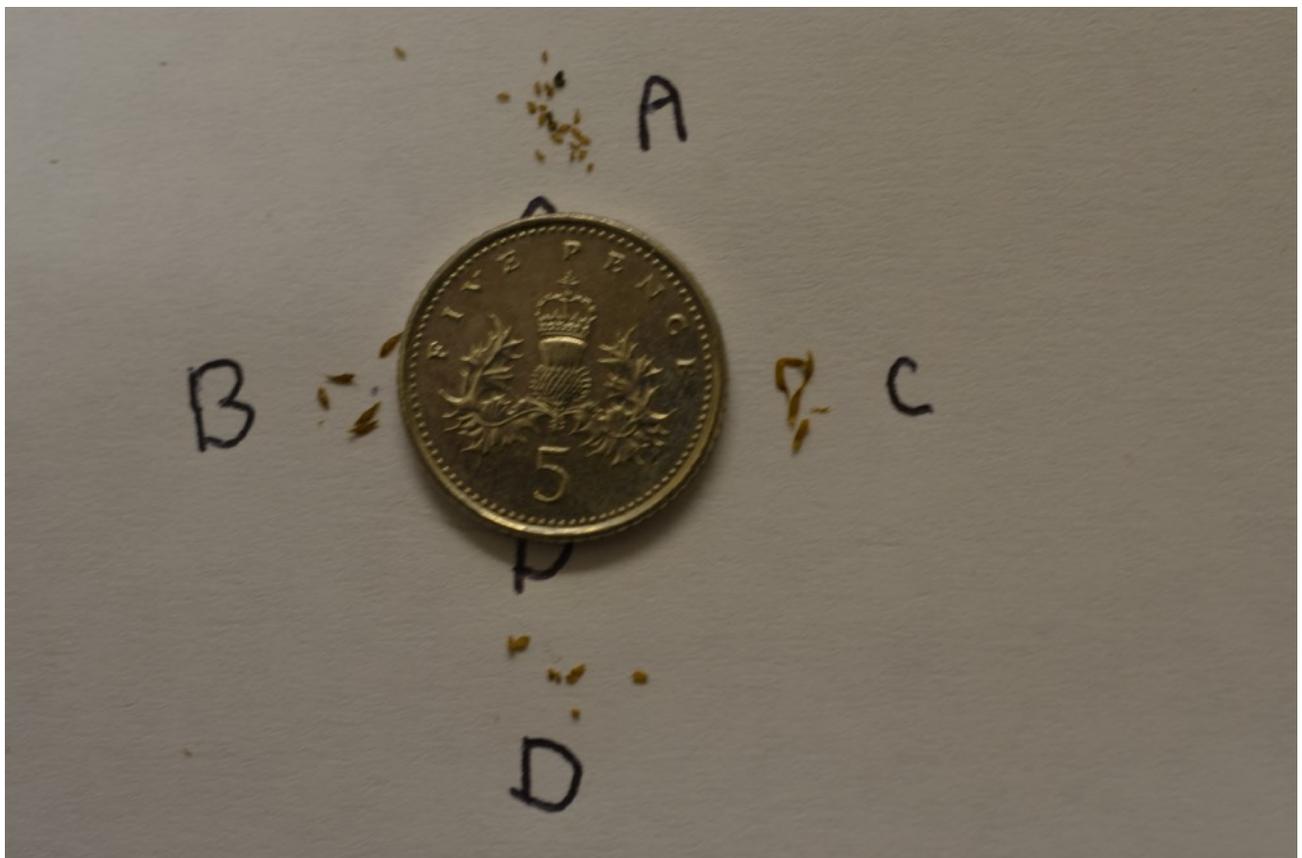
touches the ground. The photos show one that was potted up last summer.

I doubt our plant will ever become the 6ft wonder it would be capable of in its homeland in south west Europe, but it is still a good fern and looks lush on a dull, wet winter day.

(2) Hydrangeas from Seed:

You may ask Why? It is true that most hydrangeas are relatively easy to propagate from semi-ripe cuttings, and if you have the plant and want more this is the way to go. However there are three reasons you may like to try growing from seed. Firstly many species are relatively rare and hard to find. For example there are only three suppliers in the Plant Finder for *H. serrata* subsp. *yezoensis*. Secondly the rarer forms can be quite pricey and finally, as they can hybridise, there is the fun of seeing what you will end up with.

Collecting the seed is not that easy. The fruits take a long time to develop. Early flowering species such as *heteromalla* may be ripe in November, others like *serrata* will take until well into December. These are plants from areas with dry winters; they are not used to ripening and drying their progeny in dank, British Decembers and furthermore, severe, early frost can kill them off before the seed is formed. Thus it is best to pick the seed heads when they start to turn brown and bring them into the house to dry and split. I put them in old margarine tubs. Once they start to split you will see the fine dust that is the seed gathering in the bottom as the tubs are tapped. Not all plants will produce seed in all years, so expect about half of your collections not to produce anything useful. This year has been quite productive and there are several listed in the 'available seed' section below. The photo shows a selection of hydrangea seeds with a 5p coin for size comparison. A is from *H. serrata* subsp. *yezoense*, B from *H. heteromalla* *Bretschneideri* Group,



C from *H. paniculata* ex 'Tardiva' and D from *H. scandens* f. *angustipetala* ex 'Golden Crane'.

Once you have the seed, then prepare pots of seed compost onto which you spread a layer (about 5mm thick) of a mixture of fine grit and perlite. Sow the seed very thinly onto this and firm down gently. They should germinate reasonably quickly, but the seedlings will be very small. Keep them growing on in the pots until they are easy to handle (about 20 mm) and then pot up individually. It is worth giving them protection against frosts until they have a framework of good woody stems. They can then be planted out.

If you grow hydrangeas, particularly *heteromalla* or *paniculata* varieties, it is worth looking out for self-sown seedlings around the plants. I have several *heteromalla*, a *paniculata* and two fine *macrophylla* growing in our garden that I found as self-sown plants.

(3) *Camellia sasanqua*:

This is another rather borderline plant for us. I was given the one in the picture in 2008 and it has taken it a few years to



Camellia sasanqua

Flower Detail

settle in. It has really started to thrive in the recent mild winters. As you can see it is a rather straggly plant, and some people grow them against a wall to train and protect the branches. Ours is planted in a very lightly shaded spot, protected from winds on most sides by other trees and shrubs. They flower better with more sun, but the roots like to be in moist but well drained shade. If it flowered in the spring, I doubt that it would be very popular, but such flowers in December make it worth the struggle.

The species comes from the southern islands of Japan, where it is grown more for the tea made from its roots and the oil extracted from its seed. A fish poison is also made from the seed cake once the oil has been removed. I have never seen fruit on our plant.

(4) Mystery Impatiens:

In the November edition Gill Reagan asked for help in naming an Impatiens. Kath Carey clears up the mystery. She writes:

“I brought the impatiens to the AGM earlier in the year and Gill bought it. Yes it does self-seed and I am pretty sure that it is *Impatiens noli-tangere* but I am no botanist. I first saw it growing with *Gentiana asclepiadea* at Cluny Castle in Scotland. The contrast was amazing. Sadly my garden is not damp enough for the gentian but the impatiens has gently sown itself around and

it is lovely in the late summer and autumn. My original seed came from Cluny though labelled as *Impatiens* species. NB: Cluny also does *Gentiana asclepiadea* seed which is fresh and if sown before Jan 1st comes up like mustard and cress!! It is much more sporadic sown later in the year.”

(5) 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.

Paeonia wittmanniana

Abies koreana

Anemonopsis macrophylla double flowered (from plant shown in Oct Edition)

Kirengeshoma palmata

Arisaema ciliatum

Kirengeshoma palmata ex *Koreana* Group

Arisaema consanguineum

Clerodendrum trichotomum

Hydrangea paniculata ex ‘*Tardiva*’

Hydrangea heteromalla *Bretschneideri* Group

Hydrangea serrata subsp. *yezoensis*

Hydrangea scandens f. *angustifolia* ex ‘*Golden Crane*’

Sarcococca ruscifolia

Buddleja colvilei (not a shade plant... but a star turn)

Clethra monostachya

(6) Name this Plant E***** r*****

‘Herbs, perennial, scapose, from ovate to elongate bulbs, sometimes with small, beadlike segments of short, persistent rhizome attached. Bulbs narrowly ovoid, 35–50 mm, sometimes producing sessile offsets. Leaves 10–25 mm; blade distinctly mottled with irregular streaks of brown or white, broadly lanceolate to ovate, margins entire to ± wavy. Scape 15–40 cm. Inflorescences 1–3-flowered. Flowers: tepals uniformly clear violet-pink at anthesis,

with yellow banding at base, lanceolate to narrowly elliptic, 25–40 mm, inner with small auricles at base; stamens \pm appressed to style, 12–22 mm; filaments white to pink (darkening with age), flattened, \pm lanceolate, 2–3 mm wide; anthers bright yellow; style white to pink, 12–18 mm; stigma with slender recurved lobes 4–6 mm. Capsules oblong to obovoid, 3–6 cm.

Flowering early spring (Mar--Apr). Shaded stream banks, river terraces, wet places in forests; 0--600(--1000) m; B.C.; Calif., Oreg., Wash., generally within 100 km of Pacific Coast.

November's plant was *Hosta plantaginea*. Perhaps not as showy as the many variegated hybrids, but still a pleasing plant for the shade garden. It has excellent white flowers, particularly in the variety *grandiflora* (now *H.p.* var *japonica* according to the Plant Finder)



Hosta plantaginea var *grandiflora*