

## PLANTS FOR FREE

*Janet Norman*

It may not have been a wonderful summer in 2015 but it's been a bumper one for self-sets around my garden. So many have appeared that I thought I would make a list for myself.

I still have antirrhinums and *Primula denticulata* from the previous owners of fifteen years ago; both are welcome, as are the foxgloves, forget-me-nots, marigolds and primroses, which fill the spring gaps and can be discarded later when you need the space. There are some plants I find difficult to grow from seed, so I am very grateful to find the seedlings under the parent plants of trilliums and *Disporum smithii*. They can then be potted up and brought to the HPS Group plant sale.

*Cerinth major* 'Purpurascens' grows everywhere for me, especially in the mower danger-zone at the edge of the lawn. I tried scattering the seed where I wanted them but they usually failed to germinate, so I now transplant self-sown seedlings to safety when they are big enough. I remember Helen Yemm asked if *Geranium palmatum* self-sets around here - well, it does for me. A very cold winter will finish off a few, but under the conifer hedge some will survive, as do *Geranium pyrenaicum* 'Bill Wallis' and *G. harveyi*, a South African native.



*Verbascum creticum*



*Beesia calthifolia*

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Strangely, not all plants that produce large quantities of seed also produce self-set seedlings. Delphinium, for one; I can say I have never found one in the garden but grown in seed trays, they are like mustard and cress. One of my favourite plants at the moment is *Beesia calthifolia*. Mine came from the 2012 Derbyshire Group trip to the Courson Plant Fair in France. It is evergreen with gorgeous, glossy, heart-shaped leaves, and the flowers are held on a white wand, similar to a tiarella. It produces copious seed for many months, but I have only managed to grow one plant from it.

As for the prolific seeders, we have aquilegias, hellebores, *Dierama pulcherrimum*, and *Campanula hofmannii*. That's a few for a start, and the very worst (or best, according to your point of view) is *Verbena bonariensis*. This plant has more or less invaded my whole garden and this year I had to cut it down whilst still in flower to avoid a complete takeover next year. I still love it to bits, though. Also, *Verbascum creticum* made a welcome reappearance this year after a few years; it is a biennial of Mediterranean origin, with large, scented, yellow and cream flowers.

These are just some of the plants that arrive along with the ivy, holly and yew provided by the birds, free of charge. Of course, you can collect your own seed and send it to the HPS Seed Distribution Scheme, as I do. This year was not particularly good as many seeds were late ripening, but I still managed to produce between 40 and 50 packets and the distribution scheme is a great way of trying out new varieties you can't get anywhere else. Why not have a go when the next Seed List comes out? Try something different.