Plant of the Month: *Cardamine trifolia*

*Joe Sime*

This is a charming little woodlander from Central and Southern Europe. It forms a neat mound of evergreen trifoliate leaves which are almost black in the winter and dark green in the summer. In spring it puts up stalks topped with white, cross-shaped flowers. This is not a typical thuggish cardamine. It is very well behaved. My plants have spread from an area 10 ins across to one 30 ins across in 20 years. It relishes deciduous shade, and although it will perform quite well in a dry site, it is better with a little moisture. It will not tolerate water logging.

Propagation by division is easy. Just pull up a small piece and plant it elsewhere. It is also said to grow easily from seed, but I have never had any. All my plants are from the same initial plant bought about 25 years ago. It may be that you need at least two clones to get seed.
Notes from Seattle – March 2017
Walt’s latest update from the west coast

We just finished our coldest and wettest February in over 30 years but you wouldn’t know that anything has changed going into March. Long-range forecasts indicate more of the same. Nonetheless, many plants forge ahead.

My *Chrysosplenium macrophyllum* started blooming back in January and is just starting to wane now.

*Ypsilandra thibetica* has been another brave plant looking decent even after two snowfalls each lasting several days.

*Omphalodes cappodocica* and ‘Alba’ are beginning to bloom as well.

Spent blossoms of pink from the overhanging *Camellia x williamsii* ‘J.C. Williams’ (over 7 m./24 feet), make for a colorful display.

Downslope, *Edgeworthia chrysantha* is opening up; the stark branches still take some getting used to, but it is backed up by the dark foliage of *Podocarpus lawrencei* ‘Purple King’.
Between heavy rainfalls, I've been cleaning up the beds of winter debris and late additions of leaves from nearby tall sweetgums and an English oak that wait until after I call it quits in November to finally dehisce. I know if I wait too long, I'll end up stepping on emerging shoots. Already, I can spot the sanguinaria, erythroniums, trilliums, aconitums and others in amongst the decaying leaves. I scoop up the majority of those and add them to the compost pile but will add a light coating of chipped/shredded material to help raise the organic level of the sandy soil. With our naturally acidic soils, to some I add some dolomitic limestone. And I also add a little topdressing of greensand, a natural source of potassium every other year. Besides some plants getting a handful or more of composted manure, everything else is on its own.

A good reminder to look up at times came while stretching my back from roguing out a patch of low Oregon Grape (*Mahonia nervosa*) to make room for some Pacific Coast Iris.

Above, the tassels of the male *Garrya elliptica* were putting on a dance in the slight breeze.

Although the mahonia roots came out without undue effort, it was the intertwining roots of the nearby Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) that took extra time and brute strength. Its roots run parallel to the surface no matter whether the underlying soil type is soft or compacted. Trying to establish new plants under these giants (trunks over a meter in diameter) takes some finesse. You want to not disturb major laterals but find gaps for your new treasures. Regular watering is de rigueur for the first year and possibly beyond, as thuja is a thirsty tree.
Nice thugs:  *Omphalodes verna*

*Joe Sime*

I grow three species of *Omphalodes* in shade:

*O. cappadocica* is a well behaved clump former and, apart from the occasional very welcome seedling, it stays within its allotted bounds.

*O. nitida* is larger, more sprawling, and each plant usually lasts only for a couple of years; however, it makes up for this with enthusiastic self-seeding.

*O. verna* is a committed spreader. Its stems snake out at the soil surface and root as they go, so it can quite quickly cover a sizable area. The grooved leaves are pale and evergreen, so it provides ground-cover even in the winter. In the early spring it bears many light blue, forget-me-not-like flowers. There is a white-flowered form *O. verna* ‘Alba’ and one with supposedly larger flowers, *O. verna* ‘Magniflora’. The description conned me in to buying this... but I can see no difference in flower size.

It is easy to grow, asking only for a well-drained site, and it will take quite deep shade with only a little loss of flower power. I suppose it will grow from seed, but it is easier to dig up a rooted bit and move it to where you want it. If you have an area to cover, and like blue flowers in spring, this one is for you.

Two excuses to postpone the weeding

The group has two good events programmed in May.

Firstly there is the **AGM** in Kent on the 6th May.

There will be a talk on “Designing a Woodland Garden” by Keith Wiley of Wildside Garden and Nursery. Wildside will have plants for sale, and there will be a Members’ plant stall. Before lunch we shall have a rare plant auction and a raffle. The afternoon will be spent exploring the woodland garden of Henny and Peter Shotter, a short drive away, which features many woodland and shade plants, erythroniums are a particular favourite together with a collection of magnolias and rhododendrons with contrasting foliage and scent. The garden also houses many rare shrubs and trees often sourced from France.
The price for the day will be £10.00 for members of the Shade and Woodland Plants Group and £20.00 for non-members of the group. To book for the event, please email our Secretary, Diana Garner at montana@cholesbury.net or mail to Montana, Shire Lane, Cholesbury, Herts HP23 6NA giving your name, address, telephone number, email address, and HPS membership number.

If you wish to pay by electronic transfer the details are as follows:
Branch sort code: 40 32 02
Account number: 21574647
Account name: Shade and Woodland Plants Group Reference: Your HPS membership number and last name.

Cheques should be made payable to HPS Shade and Woodland Plants Group.

Secondly the NW mini group has organised a visit to Clearbeck House and Waddow Lodge on the 20th May.

The programme is:
11.00 am Arrive at Clearbeck House, Mewith Lane, Higher Tatham, near Bentham, North Yorkshire, LA2 8PJ (Tel. 01524 261029) www.clearbeckgarden.org.uk We will be welcomed by the owners Peter and Bronwen Osborne.
Tea and coffee will be served followed by a visit to the garden which is open under the NGS and has extensive views across the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is a surprise around every corner with fountains, streams, ponds, sculptures, boathouses and follies. Rapunzel’s Tower. Temple, turf maze, giant fish made of CD’s, walk-through pyramid. 2-acre wildlife lake attracts many species of insects and birds. Planting includes herbaceous borders, grasses, bog plants and many roses. Vegetable and fruit garden, Painting Studio, featured in Lancashire Life and on BBC2 programme ‘Alan’s Garden Secrets’. Many grass paths, some sloped.

12.45 Break for Lunch. Please bring your own picnic.

1.30 Depart for Waddow Lodge Garden, Clitheroe Road, Waddington, Clitheroe, Lancashire, BB7 3HQ (Tel. 01200 429145) www.gardentalks.co.uk, Peter and Liz Foley will lead you from Clearbeck across the Bowland Fells via Slaidburn and Newton-in-Bowland to their garden at Waddow Lodge. Much of this is by narrow, single track, moorland roads with passing places so do not attempt to hurry but it is a very scenic route for you to appreciate.

2.15 approx. Arrive at Waddow Lodge which is a right fork at the 30mph signs at the far end of the village on the B6478. Proceed up the tarmac drive onto the gravel parking area.

Peter and Liz will welcome you to their garden and walk around with the group answering questions on the way.
The garden is around a Georgian house built 1824 with distant views across Bowland and nearby Pendle Hill. It has been much developed and expanded over the last nine years once Peter handed Holden Clough Nursery over to his son John. It is a Plantsman’s garden, again open under the NGS, and contains beds of perennials, woodland plants in two shade garden areas, roses, a fruit and vegetable garden as well as a Bog and Wildlife Area, many shrubs and Clematis, alpine plants and a heated greenhouse together with a small orchard of local apple varieties. Bees are kept on site by Liz. Featured in Lancashire Life and for over 20 years Peter was a member of BBC Radio Lancashire’s Gardening Team.

After the tour there will be plants for sale in the small nursery area together with tea or coffee and homemade scones and jam. Please do not select plants from other areas of the garden.

The cost of the day is £6 payable to Peter Foley on arrival at Clearbeck on the day.

**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*
*Clethra barbinervis* ex BSWJ11562
*Clethra delavayi*
*Camelia japonica* ex ‘Akashigata’
*Rhodotypos scandens*
Name this plant
Joe Sime

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‘Herbs small, with annual pseudostems from erect, reduced rhizome. Plants 15--40(-60) cm tall. Leaves 3 or 4; leaf sheath glabrous or densely subappressed pubescent; ligule ca. 1 mm; leaf blade lanceolate or linear, 5--15(--40) x 1.5--3 cm, strongly keeled, scabrous, adaxially with scaly pustules, abaxially glabrous or densely subappressed pubescent, base narrowed, apex obtuse to acute. Inflorescence shortly to long exserted from leaf sheaths; peduncle ridged; bracts green with brownish veins, tubular, 4--6 cm. Flowers 1 to several opening together, purple, yellow, white, or rarely pale pink, sometimes appearing before leaves develop. Calyx 3--5.6 cm, split to middle on 1 side, apex 2-toothed. Corolla tube 3--3.5 cm, slender; lobes lanceolate, 2.5--2 cm. Labellum reflexed, obovate, 2.5--3 cm, external margin crisped, apex 2-lobed. Anther linear, 1--1.5 cm including spur. Capsule oblong, 1.5--3.5 cm. Seeds ellipsoid to 3-angled. Fl. May--Aug.

Pinus forests, dwarf scrub, meadows, grasslands; 2000--3500 m. Sichuan, Yunnan.’

The solution to last month’s puzzle was Sanguinaria canadensis, a beautiful if transient member of the poppy family. It is usually found in nurseries as the double form, which is nice enough, but I prefer the simple single one. Easy in a good woodland soil.

From the editor...
Joe Sime

Not many articles this month. If you like reading them then please start writing some. We are not looking for Pulitzer Prize quality… please have a go. Send articles to wasjsime@gmail.com.