

**Plant of the Month: *Actaea japonica* Cheju-Do Island form BSWJ8758a**

*Joe Sime*

I acquired this from Colin Moat's nursery in 2014. Colin, who is a member of our group, offers a good selection of actaea. It is one of the section of the genus that used to be called cimicifuga, and has seeds in dry follicles rather than berries, although this one flowers so late that I seldom see ripe seed. As you can see from the photos it forms a good clump of dark green rounded, lobed leaves and several spikes of creamy white flowers, the whole thing rising to about 2.5 ft. This corresponds to most of the descriptions of the plant online, but I was surprised to find Crûg's site saying it should only get to 10 cms. Perhaps a misprint! It is growing in good



woodland soil in an open but very shady site and makes a welcome show when the rest of the bed is beginning to go over. I have not yet tried to propagate it, although I would like to spread it about a bit.



**Growing from seed: *A cautionary tale***

*Joe Sime*

In 2007 we received seed from one of the seed exchanges (AGS) labelled as *Panax quinquefolius*. It germinated well and in 2008 I planted out three patches in various parts of the garden. It was slow to establish and I forgot about it for a few years. It finally started to flower and fruit and it makes a good show at this time of year (see photo). I have collected seed and have sent it to the HPS seed distribution as *P. quinquefolius* several times.



I was going to use it as plant of the month this month, and decided to look it up online before writing it up. I quickly discovered that it was not *Panax quinquefolius*, which should be smaller, with a ruff of three compound leaves each with five leaflets surrounding the cluster of red berries, not 4 ft tall with several alternate compound leaves and racemes of clusters of black berries. A little more searching made it clear that my plant was *Aralia racemosa*, another North American member of the aralia family, but certainly not *Panax*. Of course, I should have checked this years ago, and certainly before sending in seed. So to any of you who have been disappointed by growing what you thought was American ginseng and turned out to be an aralia, many apologies!

## A Shady Garden in Autumn

*Helen Mount*

I've generally thought of the shadier parts of the garden as being mainly of spring interest and that may well be true when considering the spring bulbs, hellebores, hepaticas and primulas. Perhaps there is more of a variety of colour but over the past few weeks I've been looking at the borders anew and enjoying what they have to offer once I looked beyond the *Cyclamen hederifolium* which continues to be a star performer at this time of year.

There are two main shady parts of this 1 acre garden – the first is situated at the bottom half of the garden and contains around a dozen large trees including several oaks, *Pinus* and *Salix*, a liquidambar, *Crataegus prunifolia*, *Gleditsia*, *Acer campestre* plus a few fruit trees and numerous shrubs. The trees here provide shade during different parts of the day and there are several borders containing shade/woodland perennials as well as shrubs and bulbs. On very heavy yellow slipper clay there is standing water during prolonged periods of rain (usually winter and spring) then drying out like concrete and forming considerable cracks in the summer/autumn (see Fig.1). The apples in the illustration are on a tree just out of the picture and are baking apples 3-4 inches in diameter – just to give an idea of scale.



Fig. 1

In this part of the garden, the colchicums are blooming and giving great pleasure and the various ferns, particularly the Japanese painted ferns (*Athyrium*) have settled well and are forming good clumps where the borders have been raised above the worst of the wet. *Liriope muscari* is a plant that some find difficult to get to flower well but I wonder whether it has something to do with the clone as I have struggled



Fig. 2

to grow it in the past. I have several clumps divided from a large potful given by a friend a few years ago and wherever I have it in this garden it flowers consistently in September/October, whatever the weather and wherever I've placed it, although it is situated mostly in shade. There is one clump on the edge of the border at the side of the house which is in full flower and Fig. 2 shows a clump with

*Pulmonaria* 'David Ward' in virtually full shade. Both plants have demanded watering this summer and 'David Ward' almost succumbed as a persistent mole added to the dry conditions leaving roots dangling in thin air. *Podophyllum* 'Spotty Dotty' close by was another potential casualty but to date they have all survived and are doing well.

*Geranium nodosum* can be a bit of a thug with its seeding tendencies but what an



Fig. 3

asset where conditions are difficult and dry shade certainly falls into that category. The one that appears most in this garden has mauve flowers but variations pop up and in Fig. 3 the darker markings make a welcome departure. There is also a white form but whatever the colour they all flower over many weeks and are still going here in the latter half of September in sun, shade, wet or dry.

A relatively new addition this year has been *Roscoea* 'Spice Island'. This is currently sporting several purple-pink flowers along burgundy stems and I'm a convert to this genus (see Fig. 4).



Fig. 4

The second area runs alongside the house, next to a neighbouring property which has a variety of mixed hedging up to height of about 8ft. There is also an oak tree and a

large bay tree which make it a prime candidate for an award as dry shade area of the year! It is in shade for most of the day and stays very dry during the summer months, therefore demanding some watering. However there is a limit to how many watering cans of stored water can be carried up and down the garden. As this area is not seen from the house it tends to get rather overlooked despite being a relatively good place for the *Galanthus*.

Looking at this second border, one of the best performers has been *Heuchera americana* 'Autumn Bride'. In spring its fresh pale green foliage complements the emerging leaves of deciduous shrubs and perennials as well as the bulbs but in this latter quarter of the year it takes centre stage. It is positioned almost directly under the oak referred to earlier so is in one of the driest parts of this border as well as one of the shadiest.

However it never fails to impress with its large palmate foliage topped with a froth of white flower spikes (see Fig. 5) which attract numerous bees. Its autumn leaf colouring also makes an impact and I feel it should be more widely grown.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Also in the same border is what is now called *Eurybia divaricatus* (formerly *Aster divaricatus*). This is another plant more than tolerant of a variety of conditions including dry shade and it has been placed in several parts of the garden (see Fig. 6). With its wiry black stems and starry white flowers it lights up the border at this time of year and although it does seed around it doesn't have thuggish tendencies on the soil here.

Another member of the daisy family, *Aster peduncularis* (formerly *Aster asperula*) is one of my favourite edge-of-woodland plants in this border. It's a very gentle runner with the most delightful strong purple ray florets that have an almost metallic sheen in mid to late September (see Fig. 7).



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

Last but not least is another relative newcomer to me is a *Lysimachia* hybrid called 'Candela'. *Lysimachia clethroides* and *L. ephemera* grow relatively well here and do not reach the heights observed in other gardens where they get more moisture in the summer. This is no bad thing as they can need staking when they get too tall but this little plant has only reached around a foot in height and is flowering now with distinct spikes of white flowers earning it a place in the autumn border (see Fig.8).



Fig. 10



Fig. 9

The *Crataegus prunifolia* leaves have begun to change colour (see Fig. 9 to the right of the image) and the pink fruit on the *Euonymus alatus* are about to burst forth with their orange seeds (see Fig.10).

They are a reminder that autumn is here and there will be the more to look forward to as the liquidambar develops its tapestry and the pollarded stems of *Salix alba* var. *vitellina* 'Britzensis' lose their leaves then glow in the early evening light. Enjoy your gardens before leaf sweeping takes over.

## Fourth Meeting and AGM

**Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 at  
Bubbenhall Village Hall, Lower End, Bubbenhall, Warwickshire CV8 3BW**

Our fourth AGM and meeting will be in Bubbenhall, Warwickshire. After the short AGM there will be a talk, which is sure to be amusing, by Bob Brown on "Plants that do well in Shade but shouldn't". Bob Brown will have plants for sale, and there will also be a Members' plant stall. Before lunch we shall have a Plant Auction and a raffle.

In the afternoon we are visiting Avondale Nursery, Mill Hill, Baginton, Coventry CV8 3AG to see Brian Ellis' National Collection of *Anemone nemorosa* and have an introductory talk by Brian on his collection. Avondale specialise in choice perennials and have a good selection of shade lovers. Mrs Bee's Potting Shed Café will be open at the nursery if you wish to buy lunch or afternoon snacks.

The price for the day will be £6.50 for members of the Shade and Woodland Plants Group and £16.50 for non-members of the group. To book for the event, please email our Secretary, Diana Garner on [montana@cholesbury.net](mailto: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

or cheques should be made payable to "HPS Shade and Woodland Plants Group".

The AGM will be starting at 10.15, and coffee and registration will be from 9.30. We will be closing the meeting at 4.00 so you can get on the road before the worst of the traffic. We do hope you can join us

## Name this plant

Joe Sime

Name this Plant: S\*\*\*\*\* f\*\*\*\*\*

'Plants 24-40 cm tall. Petiole 5-18.5 cm, glandular villous; leaf blade reniform to subcordate, 3.3-16 × 3.8-20 cm, abaxially glandular villous, palmately veined, base cordate, margin 7-11-lobed; lobes broadly ovate, margin irregularly dentate, glandular ciliate, apex obtuse or acute. Scape red-brown crisped glandular villous. Inflorescence paniculate, 11.5-32 cm, ca. 35-flowered; branches slender, 6-6.5 cm, glandular hairy; bracts narrowly triangular, 7-8 mm, abaxially and marginally glandular villous. Sepals spreading to reflexed, subovate, 1-3.5 × 0.9-1.5 mm, abaxially (or both surfaces) and marginally glandular hairy, veins 3 and confluent at apex or 1, apex obtuse or acute. Petals 5, white to reddish; shortest 3 petals ovate, 1.3-4.1 × 0.9-1.7 mm, 3-veined, base rounded, with a claw 0.2-0.3 mm, margin glandular ciliate or glabrous, apex subacuminate or acuminate; longer petal narrowly ovate, 0.7-1.7 cm × 2-5.3 mm, 3-7-veined, base with a claw 0.2-0.6 mm, margin glandular ciliate or glabrous, apex acuminate; longest petal narrowly ovate, 1.2-2.4 cm × 2.8-6.5 mm, 3-8(-14)-veined, base gradually contracted into a claw 0.6-1.5 mm, margin serrate or entire, glandular ciliate or glabrous, apex acuminate or subacuminate. Stamens 4-5 mm. Carpels 3.2-4 mm; ovary ovoid; styles divergent. Fl. Jun-Jul.

Forests, rock crevices; 2200-2900 m. Hubei, S Jilin, Liaoning, Sichuan [Korea].'

Last Month's plant was *Phytolacca americana*. A bold plant coping with most garden situations but happiest in part shade. It is good in flower and fruit and very easy from seed.

### **From the editor...**

Joe Sime

I really need your articles. If you enjoy reading Shade Monthly then please send us something to include in it. It need not be very long and can cover any shade-related subject you wish. Please send contributions to [wasjsime@gmail.com](mailto:wasjsime@gmail.com).

SHADE MONTHLY is compiled by Joe Sime.

This web-friendly version is produced by Tony Bays.