

MATHIASELLA BUPLEUROIDES

Roger Trigg

Looking rather like *Helleborus foetidus* on steroids, *Mathiasella bupleuroides* created quite a stir when we featured it on the Herts HPS stand at Chelsea 2006, courtesy of Bob Brown. Everybody wanted it. Now everyone can, as it's almost reached the 'widely available' rating in the *RHS Plant Finder*, although I've yet to see it in a garden centre.

Perennial it is, herbaceous perennial it is not - treat it as such and you will never see a flower, as it flowers in spring on shoots made the previous year. In a cold or snowy winter, the stems may get defoliated but, as the weather warms, the stems resume growth and soon produce terminal umbels of green, semi-pendant bell-like flowers that last for weeks and eventually turn a pinkish hue. They will last until the autumn, but I think it's better in mid-summer to cut the flowered stems to the ground, or to a point at which a new shoot is developing. New shoots will also be appearing from the base, as in the manner of shrubby euphorbias.



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I recall Bob Brown saying he'd never seen seeds of the plant and, as it's not listed by Chiltern Seeds, I think it's safe to say that seeds are not available. In the trade it's propagated by tissue culture, but for us mere mortals root cuttings are the best option (at least that method worked for me).

Mathiasella is thought to be a single-species genus, which makes one wonder about the parentage of the cultivar 'Green Dream' by which name this plant is commonly sold. What could have been crossed with what? I suspect this is an expedient to avoid the use in commerce of the full botanical name. *Mathiasella* 'Green Dream' does fall somewhat easier off the tongue, I suppose.

Green dream or not, for me the plant has become one of the highlights of the spring border, flowering at a time when the bulbs have gone over and the summer display is yet to begin. It reigned supreme in April and May in one of our borders this year.

~ First published in the Hertfordshire Group Newsletter Spring 2015 ~