

I first came across *Clematis rehderiana* in the late 1980s or early '90s, when my husband and I were beginning the restoration and replanting of the late Arthur Hellyer's garden. Because the garden at Orchards was essentially a wild garden, this clematis with its rough, nettle-like leaves fitted in well (fig. 1). I planted my specimen – bought, if my memory serves me well, at a small nursery attached to a fine country house we were visiting in Somerset. The texture of its leaves charmed me; I would often choose a plant for its foliage rather than its flowers.

I planted it with its roots in the shade of an ancient wisteria, planted by my father in the late 1940s or early '50s. The clematis was encouraged to grow up and through the many wisteria stems, until it sunbathed happily across the mole-grey cedar shingle roofing. The tiny creamy-yellow bells, reflexed at the tips to show the greenish-brown anthers, further delighted when the sweet fragrance – some say that of cowslips – would flow in through the open bedroom window (fig. 2).

I have rarely come across it in nurseries – there are only 15 suppliers

Clematis rehderiana
Penelope Hellyer

in the current *RHS Plant Finder*, as opposed to 24 in the 2014 edition that I have on my shelf. Imagine my delight when I bought a small amount of seed at the HPS Annual Lecture



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Fig. 1 *Clematis rehderiana*



Fig. 2

Penelope Hellyer ran a small specialist nursery from her garden at Orchards, Rowfant, Sussex, opening the garden – originally planted by Arthur Hellyer and his wife Gay – for charity, until she retired to Italy in 2005. Her memoir about the garden at Orchards, *The Haphazard Gardener*, was published in 2012. Signed copies of the book are available from Penelope direct – email penelopehellyer@icloud.com for details.

Day hosted by the Norfolk & Suffolk Group in March 2017, where I had been invited as the daughter of a founding member.

It may not be a plant for gardens with limited space, but you can still enjoy its vigorous growth by hard pruning each year; it is an ideal choice for an arch or an arbour. It likes its roots in the shade and its head in the sun, as do most clematis.

It dislikes soil that is too dry or too wet; but if the leaves begin to wither and curl in a dry spell, a good watering soon brings relief to the fibrous root system. It blooms in late summer into autumn: the clusters of nodding flowers can be borne up to a height of 3–6m once the plant is mature, and in addition to the wonderful perfume, it is loved by bees and butterflies, making it an essential plant for the garden. 🐝

The British Clematis Society (BCS) exists to promote the cultivation, preservation and enjoyment of clematis.

All members receive our annual journal *The Clematis*, as well as regular newsletters, plus access to our clematis seed exchange and information on local garden visits run by our regional BCS Groups.

We hold national meetings at regular intervals, featuring recognised expert speakers. To join or for further information, visit www.britishclematis.org.uk/joining.htm, or ring 01244 851327 for a new member application form.

