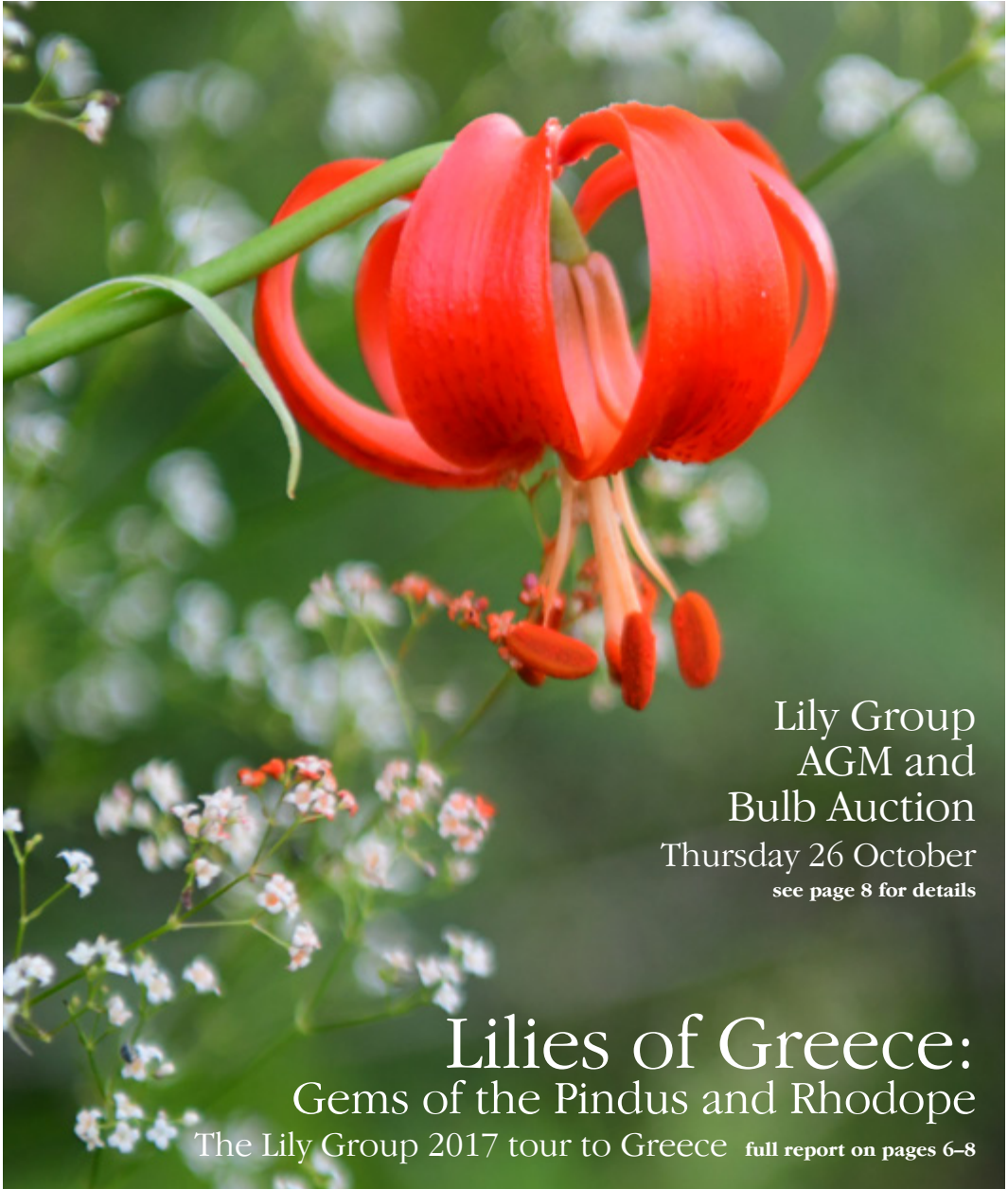


LILY GROUP Newsletter



AUTUMN 2017



Lily Group
AGM and
Bulb Auction
Thursday 26 October
see page 8 for details

Lilies of Greece:
Gems of the Pindus and Rhodope
The Lily Group 2017 tour to Greece full report on pages 6–8

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Editorial

Pontus Wallstén

It is the end of August here in Switzerland, with temperatures still well into their 30s. However, bulbs must be feeling autumn is slowly on its way, as colchicums and cyclamen are now in full bloom. But the lily season is far from finished.

As the last *Lilium speciosum* f. *album* flowers are fading, the superb long, fragrant, yellow-throated, white trumpets of *Lilium sulphureum* from Malipo, Yunnan, grace my raised beds, and there are nice buds on a late flowering form of *Lilium sargentiae*, as well as *Lilium poilanei* and *Lilium primulinum*, which will carry on well into October.

But instead of looking into autumn, let's look back at what has, for many, been a great lily summer. Firstly with the very nice Lily and Rose festival at Evenley Wood in June, followed by the very successful Lily Group trip to Greece in July (see Duncan Coombs's full report on page 6) followed by a LG trip to the Savill Garden, also in July. Members have been reporting some great successes this summer in their lily collections, but sadly it also seems to have been a good year for our dreaded lily beetles, especially here in Switzerland. Clearly, very unwelcome guests indeed!

A newcomer that is greatly welcomed however, is our new treasurer, Chris Hind, who is joining the committee in September. In this edition's Members' archives section,



he shares two of his greatest successes this year from his very extensive collection of species grown in Dundee in Scotland.

Some other highlights here this summer include, amongst others, a superb stem of *Lilium pyrophilum*, *Lilium canadense* var. *coccineum*, *Lilium bakerianum delavayi*, *L. humboldtii* var. *ocellatum*, *L. humboldtii* var. *bloomerianum*, *L. kelloggii*, as well as a superb new introduction *Lilium speciosum* 'Fourth of July', bred in Alabama. Only time will tell what jewels the 2018 lily season will have to offer, both in terms of flowers, and new exciting trips! Stay tuned for further information from Duncan Coombs, as things are in the pipeline as I write...

Chairman's letter

Nuala Sterling

In April 2011 just as I was completing my final medical work in Ashburton, New Zealand I received an email from Lily Group Chairman Pat Huff, inviting me to be her successor, whilst she took over the seed distribution from Alan Hooker.

On the long journey home I agreed. I came in to the middle of a complex constitutional situation, an impasse in the RHS's attempts to comply with the Charities Commission directive that our subsidiary charitable status must cease.

This was a challenging and trying time for the three groups with the RHS which gradually appreciated the loss potential of Rhododendron, Camellia, Magnolia; Fruit Group and Lily Groups who cooperated to encourage a more sensible approach to their constitution. By summer 2013 this was in place, each reporting to the Horticultural Board via a Plant Committee. We have two members on the Bulb Committee. Five years on there is harmonious integration! An RHS Lily Trial of species and hybrids at Wisley, in which the Group is heavily involved, commences this autumn—the last one—of hybrids, was in 1966–67.

Following Alan's death George Battle took on the seed list preparation with great effect (Pat continuing the actual distribution) and is now developing photographic links for your efforts. In June *The Garden* published an enchanting article on Martagon Lilies by Nigel Colborn, but disappointingly the lily propagation advice referred only to autumnal bulb division. I have forwarded the editor a copy of the 2016–17 LG seed list with its 81 hybrids and 28 species. Pat and George and



all our seed donors make a great combination.

The mountains of Greece tour led by Chris Gardner with help from Kurt Vickery included six members of the Lily Group, four Australians from Adelaide, a photographer of pollinators and an entomologist. What a good time we had, looked after in small family hotels, with the background of the mountains and gorges, a shared love of alpine flowers and wild lilies. We saw all six species present in Greece, almost all of them in full flower. The press might give the impression Greece is falling apart, but everywhere we saw attempts at recovery. Any piece of flat land beautifully cultivated with grape vines, fruit trees, sunflowers, corn cobs, beans, lavender, herds of sheep and goats. The IMF is making attempts at dealing with the crippling loans which did provide for the excellent roads.

On our Savill Garden visit John Anderson showed us potential sites for the Martagon trial and it was a pleasure to welcome

Below, The potentially intermediate form between *Lilium albanicum* and *L. jankae*, growing high up in the Vikos Gorge in the Pindus Mountains of northern Greece.

Anthony and Rosemary Pugh-Thomas just downsizing from a large walled garden, and Hugh Synge with lots of interesting experience in the Lily world—by chance I had chosen his father Patrick's book as a thank you to John for his guided tour, which Hugh presented to him.

Moving from the printed page to electronic communication many still cherish paper and print, which remains a Newsletter or Seed List option on request. Yet the option to own a complete set of the Year Book from 1932 to the present day is rare. The creation of the DVD in 2014 provides portable access to our fascinating history from 1932 to 2014.

We do gain from electronic communication with members: speed and postal costs. Paradoxically that contact is more easily lost. An alteration of email address or a change in ISP is difficult to track compared with a change of address where post is forwarded or returned with explanation. Irene Hopton-Scott is making strenuous efforts to remind members to keep their contact details up to date.

Most horticultural societies have declining membership even whilst attracting new members. Those that do reverse this trend have taken to the increasing popularity of Social Media that is vital in reaching out to young people. Updating our internet contacts and creating an interactive website is an important aim. The options on how best to make progress wisely and safely is under review by a working group.

Treasurer Nataliya Cuttell was pressured by work and family issues to resign. She had done well in streamlining procedures and was a great enthusiast for the Lily Group welcoming new members on the Lily stand. We welcome Chris Hind, from



Dundee, a keen lily grower with financial expertise, to take on this post.

Pontus Wallstén's professional development of the Newsletter continues to impress. Welcoming the many contributions from members please continue to send Pontus the photos and details of your successes.

As my term of office draws to a close at the Great Autumn Show, AGM and Bulb Auction on 26 October I look back on a busy and challenging time working with a cheerful and supportive committee, learning more about better growing and propagation of these wonderful plants from many special people. To be creative a committee needs change, welcoming new members yet retaining experienced members knowledgeable of the group history and development. I wish my botanist successor Jamie Compton every good fortune.

Membership Autumn 2017 update

Irene Hopton-Scott

The Lily Group's strength, like all good organisations, lies in its dedicated membership of lily growers: both experts and enthusiasts. So a big thank you to our members both in the UK and overseas who continue to support our work on growing and conserving lilies through our Seed List and seed distribution and other activities.

I have included below some information on maintaining your membership to help me keep my records up to date. The Seed List, Lily Group Newsletters and our biennial publication, *Lilies and Related Plants* are only available to fully paid up members.

The annual subscription of £15 is due each year on 1 January, irrespective of your joining date. The Lily Group Membership Form (on page 15), gives details of all the information you will need to join the Lily Group or to renew your subscription. You can download the form from our website: www.rhslilygroup.org

Subscriptions

The Lily Group gives you three easy ways to pay or renew your subscription...

1. PAYPAL

PayPal is the most straightforward option, especially for our overseas membership.

You will receive a PayPal invoice from the Lily Group via email for £15, inviting you to renew your subscription with instructions for payment in January each year. You do not need a PayPal account to pay this way.

2. STANDING ORDER

New or existing Members

The Membership Secretary will send your completed Standing Order Mandate to your Bank, who will pay your subscription automatically each year on 1 January.

Existing Members

It is your responsibility to notify your Bank of any changes directly. So please check your existing Standing Order is correctly dated and for the correct amount of £15.

Note: If you wish to cancel your subscription, you must notify your Bank to cancel your Standing Order. The Membership Secretary cannot do this on your behalf.

3. PERSONAL CHEQUE

In November or December you will receive a reminder by email or in the post, inviting you to renew your subscription.

Contact details

Please kindly check that your contact details are up to date. It is vital that you keep me informed of either email or postal address changes. I am still following up a number of members whose details are incorrect.

Mrs Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary

Below, *Lilium jankae*, a yellow flower with black spots and a pungent scent, as well as silver frosted leaves, typical of the species. Only one or two specimens were seen, the rest were what appeared to be intermediate forms between *Lilium jankae* and the closely related *L. albanicum*.

Lilium jankae

Lilies of Greece: Gems of the Pindus and Rhodope

Duncan Coombs

At Thessaloniki airport on Saturday 1 July 2017, myself and fellow lily enthusiasts: Eleanor and Bob Baxter, Bill and Arlene Garling, Heather and Martin Angel, Alisdair Aird, Nuala Sterling, Pontus Wallstén and Roger and Christine Skelmersdale (several being Lily Group members), were joined by tour leader Chris Gardner, assisted by Kurt Vickery, for the start of our tour of Greece.



Knowing the preferences of his tour members, immediately after checking in at the delightful Hotel Jennifer at Taxiarches near Drama, Chris whisked us off to a beautiful flowering meadow; masses of the dainty white *Olea grandiflora* stick vividly in my memory.

The next day we were off to Mount Falakro. On the lower slopes beneath *Pinus nigra* (Austrian Pine) forest we found a very deeply coloured form of *Lilium martagon* of the type known to gardeners as var. *cattaniae*. At about 2,000 m the now open rocky alpine environment gave rise to a diverse plant community the most photogenic of which were large blue flowering cushions of *Globularia cordifolia*.

The third day saw the group heading into the Rhodope National Park in search of the rare *Lilium rhodopeum*. Despite the best efforts of National Park Rangers only



Lilium martagon var. *cattaniae*, growing in a forest of *Pinus nigra* on the lower slopes of Mount Falakro.

Below, Kokkoris Bridge, first constructed in 1750, over the Voidomatis River in the Vikos Gorge.

Bottom, *Lilium chalcedonicum* photographed on Mount Vermion at approximately 1,000 m asl. 4 July 2017.



one spent flowering stem and seedlings were found. Local botanists blamed the exceptionally dry spring they had recently experienced for the non-appearance of many known mature bulbs. For the sake of this rare plant we can only hope for a better growing season next year.

Undaunted, day four saw us travelling to Agios Germanos via Mount Vermion. Vermion proved to be a fascinating area with a limestone base rock and clear evidence of ancient mixed woodland. Here our eye was caught by the dazzling red turkscap flowers of *Lilium chalcedonicum*.

The following day we were at approximately 1,000 m elevation on Mount Vournos. Amongst a mass of native flora a lily was found that may have been at least an intermediate between *Lilium albanicum* and *Lilium jankae*, as some of the plants had purple freckles on the yellow turkscap flowers.

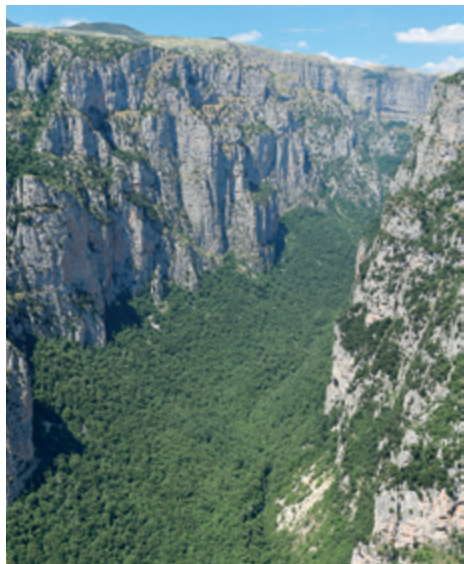
On day six, Thursday 6 July, we were on the Pindus Mountains, admiring the awe-inspiring depth of the Vikos Gorge; 900 m deep at its deepest point.

The next day was a hard day for many of the group. We had intended to walk up much of Mount Smolikas, but in the event decided to opt for the lower Mount Flega. At lower elevation *Pinus heldreichii* (syn. *leucodermis*), the Bosnian Pine, made a remarkable sight with many of the trees being very old and gaunt, but there was also clear evidence of natural regeneration. Higher in open grassland we found *Lilium albanicum*, and we were fortunate in that many of the lilies were in full flower.

Saturday 8 July was our last day. In the Vikos-Aoös Geopark we found picturesque stone bridges over the River Vikos and other

Below left, Vikos Gorge, in the Pindus Mountains of northern Greece.

Below right, *Lilium* intermediate between *albanicum* and *jankae* growing on a steep limestone bank at 1,000 m, Mount Vournos.



tributary streams. Several clumps of *Lilium candidum* were located, but only the wilting remnants of one flower remained!

For all of us this was a wonderful botanical holiday—having a successful quest for lilies, plus a multitude of other plants and enjoying Greek hospitality, especially the local cuisine, in small, exceptionally friendly hotels.

2017 Lily Group AGM & Bulb Auction

Thursday 26 October

The Royal Horticultural Halls, Vincent Square, London

The 2017 AGM and Lily Bulb Auction will be held during the RHS Autumn Garden Show at the RHS Halls at Vincent Square on Thursday 26 October.

After the AGM, Duncan Coombs will present a talk on the 2017 Lily Group Tour of Greece. A Lily Group stand will be held in the Lawrence Hall throughout the RHS show on Wednesday 25 / Thursday 26 October.

We would be most grateful for donations of spare bulbs which may be brought to the show or posted to Harris Howland or Nuala Sterling (see contact details on page 14), preferably accompanied by a list. We should welcome keen members interested in spending an hour or so helping committee members on the Lily Group Stand in the Lindley Hall on Wednesday 25 or Thursday 26 October. **Please contact Nuala Sterling.**

- | | |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12.30 pm | Lily Group AGM
Room 21, Lawrence Hall |
| 1.20 pm | Lyttel Lily Cup Presentation
to Dr Nuala Sterling by Tim Upson
Director of Horticulture, RHS |
| 1.30 pm | Lecture: LG Greece Tour 2017
Duncan Coombs, 45 mins |
| 2.30 pm | Lily Group Bulb Auction
Set-up of donated bulbs and auction,
which concludes at 4.30pm in the
Lindley Hall |

Lilium occidentale in cultivation in west Wales

Melvyn Herbert

In his book, *Growing Lilies*, Derek Fox says that ‘Only the real enthusiast will have to flower this one’. Well I’m not sure about that but I am certainly very happy to have the species represented in my collection here in Ceredigion.



Figure 1



Figure 2

My first encounter (or perhaps I should say near encounter) with this rare plant, rare both in the wild and in cultivation, was when I obtained seed labelled *Lilium vollmeri* from the NALS seed exchange in 2001. The plants which grew from the seed were clearly not as labelled and upon flowering appeared to be a *L. occidentale* hybrid (Fig. 1).

The tepals in this hybrid are not fully reflexed and the filaments are fairly wide spreading. There is not much green in the centre of the flower or on the reverse at the base; and the yellow spotted zone extends to the edges of the tepals. The plant itself is quite robust, reaching about 1.3 m in the garden here and carrying whorls of fairly

broad leaves.

In 2005 I received seed labelled as *Lilium occidentale* from the AGS exchange which germinated and grew well. These plants also appear to be hybrid, though the tepals reflex more than in the previous example (Fig. 2).

Then in 2009 I was fortunate enough to be successful in the NALS seed auction and obtained some seed of *L. occidentale* ‘Joe’s Delight’. This strain was said to be pure *L. occidentale* and had been maintained by hand pollination over many years. The seed germinated well and I now have a small colony growing in a semi-shaded and sheltered part of my woodland garden. The plants are quite slender and carry narrow



Figure 3



Figure 4

scattered foliage with the occasional whorl on larger individuals. The flowers really are beautiful (Fig. 3) with tepals fully reflexed and straight filaments. There is much more green in the centre and the yellow spotted zone is more restricted to the centre of the tepals than in the hybrids.

More recently a second form has matured in my garden. I'm afraid that the label for this has been lost but I think the seed came from the SRGC exchange. This was at least ten years ago and the plants have never done much until this year when one flowered

(Fig. 4). The plants are slender like 'Joe's Delight' and the flowers are very similar though the yellow spotted zone is smaller and the pollen a different colour.

Seed of another strain, 'Daniel Paul Gaut' was offered in the last LG seed list so I can't wait to see if they germinate and what that form is like.

L. occidentale seems to enjoy a sheltered position and to be happy with partial shade here in the rather damp climate of the hills overlooking the Aeron Valley.

Last minute lily attachments...

Backhouse *Lilium martagon* hybrids

Nuala Sterling would like to hear from any member who has special knowledge of the 'Backhouse' hybrid *Martagon* lilies or might be interested in creating a national collection.

Facebook aficionados...

and Lily Group members who have an interest in, or experience of, social media, and will help set up a Facebook page for the Lily Group, please contact Tony Dixon.



Lily Group Seed List

George Battle

And round comes the Lily Group Seed List again! Maybe it's my age showing, but every lily flowering season seems to be shorter than ever. Which means that seed ripening is upon us...

Contrary to what some may believe, The Lily Group really is a broad church. Yes, we are lucky enough to be able to offer a fantastic range of species seeds, but we also want seed from your hybrids, your breeding programmes, those experiments which may lead who knows where.

With your help, in our next Seed List we hope to publish photos of both species and hybrid lilies. Any photos of pod and/or pollen parents will be very welcome. There are so many distinctive forms of species that photos of these will also be a great help.

Please post/mail your seeds by
30 November 2017 to:
Pat Huff
Lily Group
Seed List Distribution Manager

Seed lists and photographs

An accompanying list of your seeds is always helpful and can be sent to me along with any photographs you have.



Lilies and Related Plants

The 2017/18 issue of *Lilies and Related Plants* is taking shape, but there is still some space to accommodate the contributions of those among you who would like to share your experience with regard to growing lilies, or their equally attractive relatives.

If you would like to contribute an article to L&RPs, please contact me by telephone or send me an email.

Alan Mitchell
Editor, *Lilies and Related Plants*

Members' archives

Chris Hind Dundee, Scotland, UK

Lilium oxypetalum

One of the main problems with growing lily plants from seed is that they are sometimes not the ones you were expecting, and you have wasted at least five years to make this discovery.

This is often true especially in the case of *Lilium oxypetalum*; seed offered are often from *L. oxypetalum* var. *insigne*, this is a very different flower and it has been suggested that this is a separate species.

Lilium oxypetalum is a rare plant from the Sino-Himalaya region, where it grows alongside *Lilium nanum*; it is about 30 cm tall with a nodding bell-shaped flower of a deep lemon / primrose yellow colour, it has been placed in both the genera *Nomocharis* and *Fritillaria* in the past. This plant was first described as *Fritillaria oxypetala* in 1840 and is named for the pointed tips of the petals. The plant was moved into the genus *Lilium* in 1874.

It likes a slightly shaded (for Scotland) cool area with well drained, but moist compost with plenty of humus

In 2015 I was fortunate to be offered a bulb of *Lilium oxypetalum* and advised that this definitely was the real *L.oxypetalum*. In reality I was extremely excited, I know that this is a beautiful and rare lily. I had never seen this in real life before and could only hope that this was the real deal.

The grower has a good reputation for



growing a small collection of lilies, but is a great grower of *trilliums*, he lives relatively near me in Northeast Scotland and has similar weather to me, typical cool summers, with cold damp autumns and a cold winter.

These are ideal conditions for growing *Lilium oxypetalum*, and it can be seen in the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh and in Branklyn Gardens in Perth.

My dilemma

I self-pollinated the flower earlier this year, despite being advised not to do so, as this would probably be unsuccessful and also would limit the fertility of future seedlings, but what the heck, it worked; I now have a nice fat seedpod full of seeds. Seed will be available from the seed list later this year.

Lilium martagon f. *album* 'Superbum'

The *Lilium martagon* f. *album* 'Superbum' is a selection raised by Max Leichtlin from collections he made in Dalmatia on the

Montenegro/Albanian border in 1874. *L. martagon* f. *album* was first described by English botanist Richard Weston as “*Lilium martagon album flore albo non punctato*” in the third volume of his *Universal Botanist and Nurseryman* p. 455 (1772). This is a pure white flower on a green stem

The only way to continue to get more white forms is to pollinate this with other white forms, as it is a recessive gene that may produce the occasional coloured form, this may be caused by unwanted pollinators

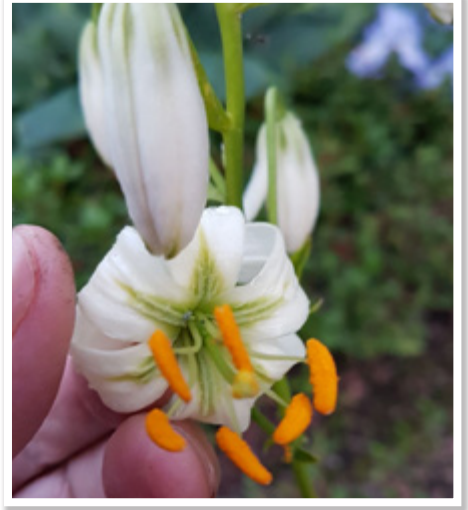
I have a few forms of *L. martagon* f. *album* from several sources, as well as seedlings from the SRGC seed exchange, but had heard that plants of the cultivar ‘Superbum’ were different shapes from others, with no green centres and a different appearance, articles suggested that they could be a white clone of *L. martagon* var. *cattaniae*, which was also originally described from Dalmatia and that appealed to me to look at them together.

I heard that *Lilium martagon* f. *album* ‘Superbum’ of good provenance was available locally at a reasonable price.

When I grew these I noted that the leaves of the ‘Superbum’ were not the same as the var. *cattaniae*, suggesting these were either not the ‘true’ f. *album* ‘Superbum’, or that the story that they were white variants of var. *cattaniae* might be incorrect. Yet despite this cooler Scottish summer the plants have been in vigorous growth with flower spikes, numerous bulbs and have thrown up lots of bulbils and small plantlets. Ideal for nurseries wanting to mass produce them.

Growing in pots

I use a standard 8 inch/ 20 cm wide clay pot



for my new acquisitions. The drainage hole is covered with a crock and 1 inch/2.5 cm of washed gravel, then 2 inches / 5 cm of Levington 50:50 John Innes compost mix. The bulb is placed on this, covered with the same mix and finished with 1 cm of limestone gravel.

I add some washed-in bone meal, an ideal slow release feed to which the lilies respond with well developed roots, large bulbs and strong flowers.

The advantage of pots is that I can move them to a situation that suits the plant as the temperature and sun strength increases into the three days of the Scottish summer. If they are too wet, the clay can allow faster drying than plastic pots. Martagons are certainly hardy and will tolerate minus 10 °C on occasions, so long as they can drain off; cold and wet is the end of the martagons in NE Scotland.

Seed should be available from the RHS Lily Group Seed List, later this year.

RHS Lily Group

Honorary Officers and Committee 2016-17

Nuala Sterling, CBE. Chairman to 26.10.17

Pat Huff, Seed List Distribution Manager

Jamie Compton, Chairman elect

George Battle, Seed List Compiler

Alisdair Aird, Vice Chairman

Tony Dixon, Secretary

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Caroline Boisset

Chris Hind, Treasurer

Chris Brickell CBE VMH, Hon. Member

Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary

Duncan Coombs, Programme advisor

**Alan Mitchell, Editor
Lilies & Related Plants**

Harris Howland, Past Chairman

Richard Hyde, Bulb committee member

Pontus Wallstén, Newsletter Editor

Colin Pope Rose Voelker

Photo credits:

Front and back cover, p. 2, p. 6, p. 8 top left, p. 11 (Pontus Wallstén); p. 3 (Andrew Sterling); p. 4, p. 7 top (Nuala Sterling); p. 7 bottom, p. 8 top right (Duncan Coombs); p. 9, p. 10 (Melvyn Herbert); p. 12, p. 13 (Chris Hind).



The potentially intermediate form between *Lilium jankae* and *Lilium albanicum*.

Some members of the Lily Group during their tour to Greece, photographed here high up on Mount Smolikas, which afforded stunning views of the landscape below, and more importantly, of the local lily populations. Despite its small size (the plants were uniformly short, no more than 30 cm high), a lily that was thought to be *Lilium albanicum* didn't escape the notice of the group, and was in full flower.

Full report on pages 6-8. From left to right: Manolis, Heather Angel, Bill Garling, Christine Skelmersdale, Duncan Coombs, Chris Gardner and Kurt Vickery.

