

Perennial Notes

The Newsletter of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society
January 20 , 1998

Then as I walked on a little way, I came suddenly upon an enchanted forest, where the boles of the trees were columns of jade encrusted with emerald and malachite, cinnabar and chalcedony, mosses as softly colored as polished stones, and with rocks of oxblood and cinnamon, garnet and carnelian; overhead the petrified branches of oak trees laced the low metallic clouds that closed in on a mineral world. Nothing moved, no animal, no bird. The air was still. ---Elizabeth Lawrence, Gardens in Winter
(Doesn't your garden look like this in the dead of winter?)

COMING EVENTS

February 1, 1998 11 AM, Atrium, Olbrich Gardens. Annual pot luck brunch with the hosta society. Coffee and juice will be provided. Bring a dish to pass plus your own eating utensils. Our featured speaker will be Professor James Steakley, UW Professor of German. His topic will be "German Gardens--Their Reflection of German Culture". John Frisch and John Cannon also promise to produce another fabulous slide and music show. The theme of this year's presentation will be "Plant Marriages in Madison Area Gardens".

February 18, 1998. 7 PM, Olbrich Gardens, Upstairs Meeting Room. Jeff Epping, WHPS member and Horticulture Director at Olbrich Gardens, will speak on "Gardening with Containers".

February 21,22 1998 . WHA TV Garden Expo, Dane Country Forum. We will have a booth and a slide presentation entitled "To Make A Garden". If you are interested in helping out with the booth either Saturday or Sunday give Stephanie Bloomquist a call at 274-8326.

March 18. 1998, 7PM. Olbrich Gardens, Upstairs Meeting Room. "Gardening with Groundcovers", Cathy Freeland, Midwest Groundcovers, St. Charles, Illinois.

April 15, 1998, 7 PM. Olbrich Gardens, Upstairs Meeting Room. Members potpourri. A repeat of last year's popular format. Select members will be asked to present slides of exciting new plants in their gardens

May 23, 1998. Members and friends plant sale. In the garden of Teresa Countryman.

June, 1998 Tentatively planning a tour of Milwaukee area nurseries--Johnsons and Leeds to be included.

June 24-July 2, 1998. Tour of the gardens of England. It's still not too late to sign up for this trip. After February 1 we will be offering spots to other than WHPS members. If you subscribe to *English Garden*, please note that Painswick Rococo Garden is featured in the February/March issue, in honor of its 250th anniversary. The WHPS tour group will be luncheon guests of its owners, Lord and Lady Dickinson. If you need the information on this trip call Convention Plus Tours at 271-3050. A number of us are going over a day early (June 23) in order to rest up before hitting Sissinghurst on June 25. If you would like to be part of this one day early group call Frank Greer at 233-4686.

July, 1998. Tour of area gardens. Details forthcoming.

August 19, 1998. 6 PM Pot luck supper at Olbrich Gardens. At the October business meeting, the WHPS voted to donate \$2000 towards the purchase of plants for the new perennial garden. Come see the results!

September 5, 1998. Second annual "Great Perennial Divide" for members only. Details to be announced.

September 16, 1998. 7 PM, Olbrich Gardens. Speaker to be announced.

October 10, 1998 830 AM to 430 PM. Gardening with Bulbs. Olbrich Gardens. A one day symposium with four national speakers. There will be a \$45 fee to attend this event. Featured Speakers:

1. Brent Heath -a third generation owner of the Daffodil Mart, Gloucester, Virginia, mail order, bulb company, and one of the finest US importers of Dutch bulbs. Brent has his own warehouse in Holland and contracts with over 100 of the finest-quality Dutch-specialty bulb growers. He makes several trips to Holland every year to insure that the Daffodil Mart gets only the best. He and his wife Becky are the authors of Daffodils for American Gardens (1995). Brent is known throughout the US for his slide presentations. He will give two talks. "Hooked on Daffodils" is a comprehensive overview of genus, emphasizing the best daffodils for American gardens. "The Awesome Alliums" covers the ornamental onions and will review more than 40 species and cultivars that will make a hit in your garden.
2. Scott Kunst -proprietor of Old House Gardens, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Scott's background is as a landscape historian and preservationist, helping historic house museums and home-owners research and restore their grounds. In 1993 he launched the country's only mail-order business devoted to antique flower bulbs. His presentation will be "Antique Bulbs for Gardens Old and New", a lecture which explores colonial daffodils, Victorian tulips, Jazz age dahlias, heirloom hyacinths, crocus, lilies, cannas and more. He combines a history of bulbs in gardens from the Middle Ages through the 1930s with an encyclopedia of antique varieties still available today with recommended sources. Knowing the historic aspects of bulbs growing in your garden will only increase your enjoyment of them.
3. Mike Heger--owner of Ambergate Gardens, Chaska, Minnesota, a mail order nursery, which is located just down the road from the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. Mike's specialty is lilies, and he is most renown in the trade for his production of specific cultivars and hybrids of martagon lilies, the premier lily for the

shady garden. He is very well known as a speaker in the Upper Midwest. Mike's talk will be on "Gardening with Lilies in the Midwest". You will be absolutely stunned by his slides of the martagon lilies which can be easily grown in area gardens.

4. Galen Gates--director of Plant Collections at the Chicago Botanic Garden, has searched the world over for new plants for the upper midwest, most recently in Russia and China. His presentation will be "Incorporating Spring Bulbs into the Landscape". He will tell you how to successfully plant bulbs for a succession of blooms from March into June, in combination with other plants in the garden. He will also touch on growing spring bulbs in containers and window boxes.

Discussants/Commentators: Marlyn Sachtjen, local gardening figure and book author; Jack Ferreri, former president of the Wisconsin-Illinois chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS), past board member of the NARGS; Ed Hasselkus, Professor emeritus, curator of Longenecker Gardens; Frank Greer, President of the Wisconsin Hardy Plant Society, and organizer of the Symposium

October 21, 1998. 7 PM Olbrich Gardens. Annual business meeting.

November 18, 1998. 7 PM Olbrich Gardens. Speaker to be announced.

December 9, 1998. 7 PM Olbrich Gardens. Speaker to be announced.

Frost is weather at its most clandestine. On clear nights, when the moon is white and the stars are as sharp as glass, you can almost smell it. But there will be no dramatic arrival, as there is with the first flakes of snow. Frost is insidious, hard to pin down, for it neither rises from the ground nor falls from the sky. It is more like a distillation of atmosphere, a tightening of muscles of the air which contract with the intense cold.

From Sugar Frosting, by Helen Gunn. *The English Garden*, Dec/Jan 1997.

OTHER EVENTS OF NOTE

February 11, 1998 Midwest Perennial Conference, Country Inn Hotel, Pewaukee WI. Featured speakers are Darrel Apps, Woodside Nursery, Bridgeton, NJ, "Celebrating the Midsummer Garden"; Pam Duthie, Northbrook, IL, "Designing with Perennials"; John J. Sabuco, Glenwood, IL, "They Still Die in Winter: Exploring the True Definition of "Hardy"; Betty Ann Addison, Rice Creek Gardens, Blaine, MN, "Building and Planting Rock Gardens". For details call 414-253-1412. There is a \$50 fee.

March 1, 1998. 1 PM Olbrich Gardens. Winter Hardy Cactus for the Midwest, Iza Goroff, WI-IL Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society.

March 3, 1998. 8AM to 4 PM. Olbrich Gardens annual Horticulture Magazine annual road show symposium--"Small Gardens: Maximum Impact in Limited Areas. Featured speakers include Tony Avent (Plant Delights Nursery, Raleigh, NC) and

Lucy Hardiman (President, Oregon Hardy Plant Society). Call 1-800-395-1901 to register (about \$90)

April 5, 1998 ? PM Olbrich Gardens. Dennis Anderson, (Indianapolis) 1997 winner of the Howard Hite Award for 1997 from the North American Day Lily Society, will speak to the Wisconsin Day Lily Society.

May 23-24, 1998. Olbrich Gardens. The Rock Garden Society is sponsoring talks by Gwen and Panayoti Kelaidis, respectively the editor of the Rock Garden Quarterly and the Rock Garden Curator of the Denver Botanical Garden. The two day event will also include garden tours. Details to be announced.

Gardens are the respite of humanity. They speak of peace and rejuvenation. They quiet the soul and render us to solitude. They are the earthly residences of gods, angels, druids, gremlins, and spirits of all kinds. Charming us with nature's subtleties, gardens captivate us with vibrant color. They cool us with their mighty arms and bring forth images of birth and rebirth. They speak of health and well being of the earth and ultimately ourselves--the garden of Eden, the garden of earthly delight.

Ralph Kylloe, Rustic Garden Architecture, 1997

Musings of A. Hort Hound

Gerry Kopf was the speaker at the WHPS September meeting. His subject was ornamental (meaning non-native) grasses. Gerry owns Bald Eagle Nursery in Fulton, IL, (only 130 miles from Madison near the Mississippi River) which is devoted exclusively to grasses. He has organized 20 other notable horticulturist across the US to rate these grasses in their local landscapes. As one who lives and breathes these plants, his knowledge was profound which inspired us all to plant more grasses. His introduction *Miscanthus* 'Bitsy Ben' was a chance seedling in his nursery and it has charmed everyone. It reaches only to a height of 3 feet, so is much more in scale for home use (after all, *most* of us do not have space for a prairie in the front yard) and it blooms early so that the very white inflorescence are "fluffed out" by mid September. Unfortunately, Bald Eagle Nursery (the 'Ben') is the only supplier of this grass and it is in limited supply. The 12 page handout, with Gerry's personal comments on 100 different grass cultivars, is an information classic for zone 4 in the midwest.

The WHPS trip to Dubuque with the Wisconsin Hosta Society on 20 September was a memorable one. Despite the gloomy, cold, rainy, blustery forecast, it was a perfect fall day, and the event was enjoyed by about 25 persons. The Dubuque arboretum is noted for its roses and garden conifers, but the group spent the majority of the time in the extensive hosta collection which was in good shape despite the lateness of the season. From there we proceeded to Jim Schwartz's hosta nursery and garden maintained at his nearby home, where indeed we were treated to, what else, more hostas. A number of purchases were made and then the group proceeded to the home and garden of David Leifker on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River in Hazel Green. David's hosta garden was also very nice, and we all agreed that Hosta

'Wedgwood Blue' was the bluest hosta we had seen all day. For a swan song, a smaller group of the diehards proceeded to Timber Ridge Nursery in Elizabeth, Illinois about 10 miles south of Shullsburg, WI. The ride across Northwest Illinois was spectacular, particularly the stretch of US 20 between Galena and Elizabeth, as scenic a highway as any in this part of the US. The route follows the crest of a ridge with spectacular views to both the left and right simultaneously, and indeed it was hard to stay on the road if you were the driver. In the middle of the ridge is a couple of miles of virgin oak forest--Tapley Woods--which was an unexpected surprise. Timber Ridge Nursery has a gorgeous setting and we parked the car right next to the display garden of ornamental grasses where everyone immediately recognized *Miscanthus* 'Bitsy Ben'. A mad dash then pursued to the ornamental grass area of the nursery, where everyone was able to buy as much 'Bitsy Ben' as their heart's desired (well, this is how the trip *should* have ended, don't you think?). The hosta sales area was mind-boggling with prices that don't get anymore reasonable. It was especially appreciated that the cultivars were arranged in alphabetical order so that one could quickly proceed to the items on their wish list. There was a broad selection of other perennials and no one came home without a few more plants. Dianne Sharkey took the prize for the most dollars spent, as usual. However, Heidi Carvin was the only one who had points deducted for gardening misconduct. Though she told everyone she had no more room in her garden for any more plants, she proceeded to fill the rear of the van with her purchases, leaving hardly any space for anyone else. She was then observed as we were about to depart, deliberating over the northern oat grass (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) exclaiming that she absolutely had no place for it. However, again with a fine display of sheer will power, she purchased not one but three containers of the stuff!

I have almost--almost, please note--given up buying plants on impulse, as I've got so fed up with not being able to find a good place for them. I hate the way they glower at me from their pots, reproaching me for my greed---Anne Wareham, Moral Extremes in the Garden, The Hardy Plant, Autumn, 1997.

A. Hort Hound has a new favorite *Tricyrtis*---'Togen'. Though in the garden for two or three years, it finally made something of itself this September--a three foot arching stem covered with a white blossoms edged in pale lavender punctuated by orange anthers (or is it stamens--I never know the difference). The nearly spotless blossoms (somewhat unusual for the genus) were held well out from the leaf axils on relatively long stems each holding three to four blossoms. It produced a lovely flower display for almost six weeks! It also made it through several down pours and wind storms with no signs of damage.

The spectacular autumn crocus pictured on the cover of the October issue of Horticulture Magazine and again in the same issue illustrating Lauren Springer's column, is indeed *Crocus speciosus*. Too bad Tom Fischer doesn't mention it in his article, for some strange reason, on fall blooming bulbs. It is the best of the whole bunch of fall blooming bulbs he talks about (actually, doesn't talk about), most of which are not hardy in zone 4. True, *Colchicums* do well around here, but even if their fall flowers are spectacular poking through the *Lamium* in September and October, the large, dying strap like foliage in June and July is just plain ugly. (The *Colchicum*

display this September in the southern border of the Allen Centennial Garden was indeed spectacular) The foliage of *C. speciosus* is inconspicuous, and it is the only one of the fall crocuses which seems to tolerate our summer moisture without the need for a good, dry baking to survive. It has to be ordered from the bulb companies early, as it is usually shipped out ahead of the rest of your order and should be planted in early September for a late October display. They were still in bloom in my garden on December 1 this year!!!

If you weren't at the October business meeting of the WHPS, you not only missed out on a good slide show of garden highlights of 1997, but perhaps you are just realizing that you were elected to the WHPS Board or Directors. Frank Greer is the new (old?) President, Dick Eddy is the Vice President, Richard Bloomquist Secretary Treasurer, Stephanie Bloomquist Recording Secretary, Tom Cottingham Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and Ed Hasselkus is Chairman of the Travel Committee. New board member at large are Betty French, Diane Sharkey, and Terri Beck-Engel.. We voted to increase the annual individual dues to \$8.(which will just cover the costs of the mailings), family membership to \$12, and business memberships to \$25. Dues will be solicited in September and members who are not paid up by April 1 will be placed on the inactive limbo list. The group also voted to donate \$2000 to Olbrich Gardens to buy plants for its new perennial garden. By the way, have you noticed that it is basically the same few people doing the majority of the work for the WHPS? (Isn't this true of every organization, which would quietly succumb if it weren't for a few key bodies?) Members frequently make suggestions for new activities of the group but never volunteer to see them through. Members maybe critical of specific activities, but then never offer to do them any better? Why is this? We would give anything to have new members involved with running the WHPS.

A. Hort Hound recently received a complimentary issue of a new gardening journal--*Traditional Gardening, A Journal of Practical Information on Creating and Restoring Classic Gardens*. In it is an article entitled "Foundation Plantings for Victorian Houses". Essentially, these were kept to a minimum as the Victorian landscape architects believed that the last thing the inhabitants of newly cleared countryside wanted was a house surrounded by "gloomy vegetation", to quote Cleveland and Bachus, whose 1856 book *Village and Farm Cottages* was a widely read book of the era. The Cleveland brothers and Mr. Bachus were disciples of Andrew Jackson Downing, the first person to begin formulating theories of a distinctly American, as opposed to European, landscape. Heavy planting near the house, they felt, "shuts out the light of the day and the wholesome warmth of the sun.... The shade and humidity....is unfavorable to the health." Planting large trees and shrubs close to the dwelling "sometimes fills the house with insects," and wooden roofs, "when overhung with branches rapidly decay." Finally, there was the aesthetic objection. "It is not in good taste..."to hide your house and hide your grounds behind a wall of leafage." Plantings were secondary to the overall scheme and in large part were to be viewed from the house, not against it. Keeping these thoughts in mind, how many times has the WHPS been asked to assist in the landscaping 19th century Madison landmarks--Dean House, Gates of Heaven Synagogue, the Urban League building, etc? Most of these places are probably already landscaped just as they would have been in the 19th century.

What is the place of music in the garden? I will confess that I have attended many European conferences where an evening reception is held in a fine garden to the accompaniment of a small ensemble. In fact one of the most memorable of these was a string quartet serenading the garden strollers in the baroque style Herrenhauser Castle garden in Hannover. However, I was rather distracted by the Muzak sound system which pervaded the Dubuque Arboretum on our recent trip there. This was particularly upsetting as I viewed the wind swept herb garden with its surrounding conifers. The smell of the wind ravaged sweet cicely was wonderfully overpowering. How I also longed to be able to hear nature's own music in this scene. That is not to say that music cannot imitate a garden in a satisfactory way. In 1924, Respighi's master piece, *The Pines of Rome* swept through the western world. Indeed, the sound of the winds blowing through the pines coupled with the rhythmical tramp of the Roman legions on the Appian Way are forever haunting. The final measures of the composition even calls for a nightingale's song which was played by a phonograph in the original score. There is nothing like the music of the nightingale in the garden. In a summer of the mid-70's, in my small garden in the Dahlem section of West Berlin, we were treated every evening with its serenade from the beach hedge which defined the garden's perimeter. My German neighbors gathered with me regularly to listen to it with great reverence, for they believed that it was the first time since the war that a nightingale had been heard in Dahlem. The "forest murmurs" theme from Wagner's "Siegfried" is a beautiful rendition of a woodland scene at dawn, and in the next opera of the Ring, "Götterdämmerung", Siegfried's journey along the Rhine is climaxed by a musical description of a fabulous sunrise. On the other hand, the only plants suggested by the music of Stravinsky's "Rites of Spring", are the first ones to emerge from that organic soup from which all living things originated. I do know some folks who garden with head phones (surely they are not listening to a broadcast of the Green Bay Packers), but what could be more musical than the lonely cry of the hawk, the evening twitterings of the night hawks, the rustling of the leaves, the whisper of the pine needles, the sounds of water from the pond, or even the cacophony of acorns falling from the trees?

Wasn't it the strangest of all falls? Temperatures in the 80's nearly everyday the first week of October followed by a record snowfall during the last week with nearly all the leaves still on the trees? No wonder the plants were all mixed up, as well as certain gardeners who were still raking leaves the weekend before Christmas and spreading pine needles on a night in January just ahead of a snowstorm. Nearly half of the leaves of the white oaks fell after Thanksgiving! The color of the autumn foliage was as unspectacular as I have ever seen it and I was not sufficiently motivated to snap a single photograph! As you might expect, many plants were still in bloom on the 5th of October, in fact too many to list. Eight different tricyrtis were in blossom, a few blossoms of *Tiarella wherryi*, and *Hosta tardiflora* was in bloom for the first time in three years. *Aconitum carmichaelii* (syn *A. fischeri*) was just coming into spectacular bloom and for the first time that I can remember, every single bud opened before a killing frost. Thus, it was no wonder that it was still in bloom on 2 November along with *Corydalis lutea*, *Helleborus x hybridus* 'Windsor strain', *Viola canadensis*, *Lamium alba*, *Chelone lyonii* (pink turtlehead), and *Crocus speciosus*. In fact, a blossom of the latter was observed on December 1! Fall bulb planting was not completed until the first week of December and a handful of *Primula sieboldii* buds

(registered cultivars) received in the mail from Paul Held were planted in unfrozen ground (scraping off an inch or so of snow) on the 20th of December. Do you believe this??

The following piece is from the newsletter of The Hardy Plant Society, Mid-Atlantic Group, used with permission. Carleen and Sam Jones are the proprietors of Picadilly Farm, Wholesale/Retail Nursery, 1971 Whipoorwill Rd, Bishop, GA 30621. The nursery specializes in mail order hellebores and hostas. If you have ever ordered a hellebore from a catalogue (i.e., Wayside Gardens) then you know what they are talking about in their commentary. Picadilly Farm is the largest grower of hellebores in the US--last year they supplied 30,000 one gallon plants and 140,000 four inch pots of hellebores to nearly 500 wholesalers in the United States. Chances are, if you purchased a hellebore from any supplier in the US, you have the Picadilly strain. Every year Carleen and Sam host "Hellebore Day", the first Saturday in March on their nursery near Athens, Georgia. So if you are in the area that time of year, plan your trip around that date! As the Michelin Green Guide would say, "three stars, worth a journey!". By the way, *Helleborus x hybridus* is hardy in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, the foliage looks like--(you fill in your own word here)--at the end of a Wisconsin winter and I treat them like epimediums with a shearing to the ground before the flowers emerge in the spring. Hellebores do not bloom with the early spring bulbs in Wisconsin as they do in milder climes, but tend to be later spring bloomers with flowers lasting well into June.

Hellebore Buyers Beware!! Carleen and Sam Jones

Is there too much hype and misinformation about hellebores? As avid gardeners and growers producing thousands of plants each year, we think there is! There is no doubt about it: hellebores are marvelous perennials. Unfortunately, we see misinformation being written about them. We have to agree with Will McLewin, a hellebore specialist and owner of Pehdar Nursery in England. He stated in his 1997 seed list: "Most published material about them (hellebores), particularly in magazines and newspapers and also, alas, in catalogs, is halfbaked, misleading, inaccurate twaddle; cannibalized and anecdotal, where the aim is not to disseminate carefully presented information but to be enticing and easy to read."

There are several species of hellebores, but the most reliable garden plants is the one known in the trade as *Helleborus orientalis* or the Lenten rose. The proper name for Lenten rose is actually *Helleborus x hybridus*. This name reflects the fact that our cultivated Lenten roses contain genes from an array of species and thus are considered to be hybrids. We have hundreds of mature clumps in our garden and nursery and have yet to find two alike. They vary in number of morphological features, not just in flower color. This supports the idea of a diverse genetic background.

Several hybridizers, mainly in England, have been making crosses designed to increase the range of colors in *H. x hybridus*. They have successfully produced some luscious colors. If hand-pollinated and grown in isolation, many of the progeny of these selected color forms will be similar to the original parents. However, one cannot

be certain of the flower color until the seedlings flower, as they do not come absolutely true from seed. Yet we see catalogs offering small seedlings, which come from nice strains but which may be disappointing to the gardener expecting a specific color. Magazine articles often show some of these mouth-watering color forms, but the authors of these articles have no understanding of the plants' availability in the trade. Commercial production of hellebores by division is not feasible, and thus far they have not been successfully tissue cultured. This is the reason seed must be used for commercial propagation. Patience is required--it takes an average of five years from the time the seed is collected to the season the plant flowers for the first time. To be absolutely certain of the flower color, you must see the plant in bloom. Pictures in books, magazines, and trade publications do not always reflect the true flower colors.

Will McLewin and Brian Matthew commented on the problem of color reproduction in the March 1997 issue of *The New Plantsman* as follows: "The puzzlement and sometimes disappointment that these properties of hellebore flowers engender are greatly increased by the routine publication of unrealistic pictures of single exceptional flowers using colour-enhancing film. It is sadly ironic that the enormous technical improvements in the taking and manipulation of color photographs are so often used meretriciously."

This sort of hyp we observed is illustrated by a recent article in a national magazine. Christmas rose (*H. niger*) was mentioned, but the article emphasized the Lenten rose. Color photographs of *H. x sterni.*, *H. torquatus*, *H. odorus*, *H. cyclophyllus*, and some unusual strains of *H. x hybridus* were pictured. Out of 12 pictures, only one was of a form of *H. x hybridus* likely to be available in the trade. This misleads the gardening public. I am confident the unknown author had no knowledge as to whether the ones pictured were available in the trade.

Another national magazine recently had a special offer of Lenten roses with an excellent color photograph showing an array of color forms, but they made what may be a deceptive statement. The ad implied that the plants would bloom before the spring bulbs in 1998. The plants mentioned in this ad were purchased from our nursery, and unfortunately gardeners who purchased them will be disappointed, as we know that most of them will not bloom in 1998.

One can find plant lists with a number of strains of *H. x hybridus* being offered at expensive prices. According to Elizabeth Strangman, the English hellebore breeder, true-to-type strains should produce progeny that are about 95% uniform in color, shape, and constitution. This however, does not mean that each plant will be identical. She estimated that it takes approximately six years after hand-pollinating for plants to come into flower, and the first-year flowers may not be typical. Naming strains and giving individual clumps cultivar names should be done with the utmost restraint.

Will McLewin also pointed out that seed collected from garden grown species will not come true, as many of the species hybridize readily when grown together.

We recently received a retail catalog listing a half-dozen named cultivars of seed-grown *H. foetidus* (bear's foot hellebore). Having grown thousands of seedlings of

this species, we can assure you that they do not come true from seed. Naming these cultivars is ridiculous, unethical, and dishonest.

Lenten roses and other hellebores should be promoted for their superior garden qualities and without misleading hype. As the old adage goes, if it sounds too good to be true, let the garden consumer beware!

*Bright as the silvery plume, or pearly shell,
The snow-white rose or lily's virgin bell,
The fair helleborus attractive shone,
Warmed every sage and every shepherd won.
Darwin, The Lives of the Plants*