



Linn Botanic Gardens

News Letter, December 2007

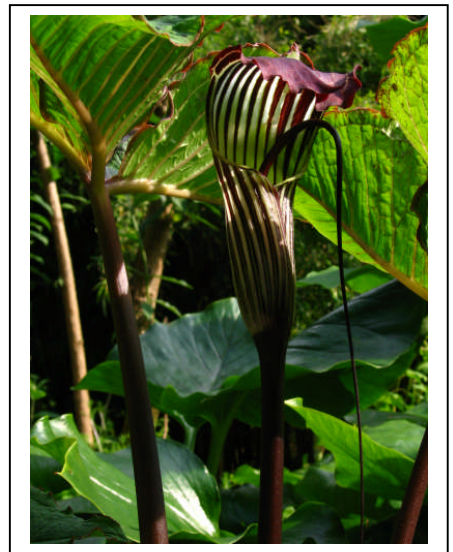
The gardens this year has been dominated at the start by too much rain with everything being too wet for my liking. All the major plumbing has now been done thankfully and I am looking forward to a dry winter without severe frost or snow. Let us hope! The ponds are due for a major clean out and the pruning is carrying on at a pace.

Rabbits and *Primulas* for the Gardens.

The gardens have now got a couple of new residents. The Lop-eared Rabbits are to be used to put grazing pressure on the wild flower meadow in the Top garden and are living in the tool shed at night. They were supposed to be a Male and Female and called Mr Rabbit & Mrs Bunny but due to the erroneous sexing of poor Mr Rabbit. He has been renamed 'Hailey' after a character in "Coronation Street". I established a good stock of the very dwarf *Primula scotica*. This rare pink primrose was sourced from Orkney seed and with the rabbits assistance I will try to establish this plant in the meadow. It will require the turf to be kept very, very short.

Arisaema wilsonii, Engl.

The Cobra lily photo opposite was taken on the 1st June and it was about eighteen inches tall. *Arisaema wilsonii* has beautiful new shoots in the late spring that look like spikes of lacquered wood which I admired in a friend's garden prior to ever seeing the beautifully striped spathe opposite. I was fortunate to be later given the plant opposite. *A. wilsonii* has a western distribution in China the plant opposite being sourced from Dochong La, Xizang in 1997. I am currently trying to build up the *Arisaema* collection now stands at fourteen species. Many are planted in the bed on the inside bend of the drive, worth looking out for. Another dramatic species I collected in China (Guizhou) is *A. consanguineum* and grows in several places in the garden notably by the Kiosk. Most of the plants have a silver variegation in the leaves which is unusual. (For those interested there are a couple of good reference books that can be referred to in the Garden Library by request).



Rhododendron Megacalyx, Balf.f. Kingdon-Ward.



A star performing *Maddenia Rhododendron* in the glen originally obtained from Liverpool Botanic gardens Ness. It has huge scented flowers which are very strongly zygomorphic (Only has one plane of symmetry). A lot of this group of Rhododendrons are scented and often white and tender. This Rhododendron can easily be recognised in seed by its huge calyx round the seed capsules hence its name. It is native to areas of China, Tibet & Burma. The plant opposite was photographed in the mid section of the Glen this June and is one of two that formed together a large scented mound about fourteen feet high.

Some Lilies at Linn garden 2007.

2007 has been a good year in the gardens for the Lilies with several species flowering for the first time here. There have been in the region of twenty flowering spikes of the Giant of all Lilies – *Cardiocrinum giganteum* (Old name *Lilium giganteum*) *Cardiocrinum* species have ‘spade shaped leaves’. *Lilium* proper has linear grass shaped leaves. Patches of the eastern form *C. giganteum* var. *yunnanense* with creamy yellow flowers did very well. They were originally obtained from an Irish garden. The taller western form with ivory white flowers had some spikes approaching three meters high! The flowers of both forms have a bonus of sweet scent and are out in July.

I have put four photos below to illustrate some examples of different types of lily flowers grown in the gardens. First is a Species of *Nomocharis*. These are different from *Lilium* by having flat flower i.e. saucer shape and quite distinct. *Lilium* have trumpet-shaped or reflexed flowers. *Nomocharis* are classic plants for the peat / woodland gardens and typically do well in Scotland. They are native to Asia.

Lilium mackliniae (below) has in the past been called a *Nomocharis* species due to the dome shape rather than trumpet shape flower but is now accepted as a *Lilium* species. It is the of the first lily species to flower here. It is from Burma and collected by Frank Kingdom-Ward who named it after his wife.



The next picture is of an Western North American species *Lilium columbianum*. In this plant the flowers are reflexed back and is known as a ‘Turks Cap Lily’. There have been good displays of this carrot coloured Lily. Two fragrant species from Asia worth mention are *L. pomponium* (Bed at the side of the drive) and, *L. durchartei* (in the rockery) that flowered here for the first time and second time.



The trumpet flowered *Lilium formosanum* from Taiwan is shown above right. This plant was grown from wild collected seed. Its stems are reaching two meters tall and is in flower now (4th December). It is the type. The usual form grown is *L. formosanum* var. *pricei* but is much shorter (30-60cm) and flowers earlier. It is a nice surprise as you walk round to see this large patch of Lilies in full flower out of doors in December. I hope these notes help show some of the differences in Lilies grown at the Linn.