

# True Grit

Anti-viral edition 5

May 2020

## ***Spring has Sprung out all over***

During 'lock down' we can take one exercise walk per day but we must keep our distance.

Lynn and Paul have to decide whether to go over the downs past the Cowslips or through the Bluebell Wood. Not an easy decision, I think you will agree. And how do they maintain their distance?



**A couple of non-alpine island endemics in flower at the moment.**

***Arisaema sikokianum*** is considered to be endemic to the Japanese island of Shikoku, but there have been reports of it being found in nearby parts of the islands of Honshu and Kyushu – the plants on Kyushu almost certainly being *A. sazensoo*.

On Shikoku it inhabits the small river valleys in the south of the island, inland from Cape Muroto, where it inhabits the edges of the mixed woodland (that includes both *Cryptomeria japonica* and *Acer palmatum*) along the valley sides. In the wild it flowers from late March to early May depending upon the season and it is not unusual for the leaves to expand after the inflorescence is at its best. The leaves vary from being plain green to having stripes and spotted patterns, and in Japanese horticulture it is these that are most prized. There is a particularly good form in the Makino Botanical Garden near Kochi, but plants with well marked leaves are not unusual in the wild.



***Paeonia clusii subsp. clusii*** is endemic to the Greek islands of Crete and Karpathos where it grows in the higher altitude garrigue and rocky places of the Lefká Óri (White Mountains), the Dikti Massif and to a lesser extent Psiloritis Massif. It is particularly known from the Samaria Gorge, above the Omalos Plain, and above Askifou. The white flowered form in my pot is the normal colour, but forms are known in varying shades of pink. All forms have the central boss of yellow stamens surrounding the red stigmas. Unfortunately the flowers don't last all that long before the petals drop.



Martyn Denney

***Molly the Witch***      *Paeonia daurica subsp. mlokosewitschii*

First, early in the year mysterious dusky red shoots break through the earth then fresh green leaves open and by mid April the pale yellow flowers appear. The inset flower is of a hybrid that has sprung up near by. One of the advantages of being a lazy weeder.





***More Irises***

I have a dozen or so Pacific Coast Irises plants dotted about the garden.

This is the first one to flower.

David Stephens

The second



The third



**And More**

The dwarf bearded Iris on the right is **Iris Captive Sun** that I bought in flower from Irises of Sissinghurst at a Plant Heritage fair. It is loving being let loose in the garden after several years of captivity.



**Iris schachtii**, below is from the Mayford raffle; the label looked like one of Joy's.



Ann didn't trust me to do weeding which I was quite pleased about and now I do it reluctantly and with a little difficulty. I was making a start pulling out the Forget-me-Nots and Bluebells that are going to seed when I discovered a **Pacific Coast Iris** nicely set of by the yellow azalea.



Thank you Karina for this evocative painting to remind us what the seaside looks like.



### ***A grandfather's dilemma during lockdown***

Knowing the weather forecast was going to be sunshine and showers I planned my gardening day carefully, first, between showers try to get rid of unwelcome invaders. As they are just coming into flower they are easy to see so digging out *Nectoscordum siculum* was the first target. Some time ago a friend, who has since passed away, gave me some bulbs of *Allium triquetrum* and that was my second target. Each year when I dig out more bulbs I imagine him looking down on me and laughing about his gift that keeps on giving.

That kept me going most of the morning, but I also dispatched a couple of slugs that had eaten some of our bedding plant seedlings. I had to stop when one of our daughters and two grandsons turned up to deliver some groceries. Whilst seated at an appropriate social distance one grandson was particularly pleased to find a rather fat caterpillar moving at a good pace on the pavement. He suggested we rescue it in case it got run over and wanted to put it on the flower bed. As I could see it was an Angle Shades Moth caterpillar that had probably got fat eating my cyclamen I suggested as gently as possible that it might be nicer for the caterpillar if it was carried over the road and put on some grass. All this against an overwhelming desire to deal with the caterpillar in the same way as the slugs.



### ***A special affinity between toads and hepatica?***

During one of my regular visits to the late Ruby Baker she pointed out a pan of the double red form of *Hepatica nobilis* which she had been given by a German snowdrop enthusiast. She said of special interest was that a toad had set up home



in the pot and she was happy to leave it there. During my last visit to her home following her funeral I asked her nephew if I might take the pan as a memento and he agreed.

Today I was checking out a pot of hepatica in a cold frame and noticed a movement under the foliage and on further examination it was a toad, very well concealed. As I always regarded Ruby as my mentor I left the toad well alone.

You can just see the toad in the second photo at 9.00 o'clock

Melvyn Jope



### ***Friendly reminders***

So many of the plants one acquires are gifts from other members, either directly or via the raffle. I've had a good many from Alan Wolsoncroft over the years. Those flowering at the moment include *Crepis purpurea*, a deep blue *Veronica* and *Dryas octapetala*. The *Veronica*, which has lost its label, is planted in a tub with a clematis and keeps the roots of the clematis a bit cooler.



Roof openings  
front and back

Sliding door both  
ends

Louvres at bench  
level

Low lights nor-  
mally open

### ***A stitch in time.***

I reported in one of the early issues of True Grit how I had seen the perfect greenhouse at a flower show just outside Paris. The salesman didn't have to work hard since the virtues were obvious. When I asked if he could deliver to England he told me they were made in England so when I returned home I bought one.

The design advantages that I appreciated were;

1. The low level opening lights greatly improved the ventilation and gave access to the space on the floor for growing.
2. The provision for roof ventilation was good and at bench level louvred ventilation could be provided. I specified the maximum number of both and chose to have sliding doors at both ends all to maximise the ventilation.

3. The sides slope. Many assume this is simply to improve the appearance but in fact it improves the transmission of sunlight in winter when the sun is low in the sky.
4. Traditionally, aluminium greenhouses had an advantage over wood in that the structure obscured less of the sunlight but the Alton was one of the first to use large panes of toughened glass which redressed the balance.

I modified the design inside a little to enable good access to the bench space. There were some diagonal supports that obstructed access so I left them out and replaced them with vertical pillars outside the area of the benches.

I made some framed netting panels to fill the space when the low lights were in the raised position. This is to keep out wildlife and for the same purpose the door frames have a netting door as well as the glazed one that is

normally open.

Not in the picture, because I have removed it for refurbishing, is a sun blind.. I had intended to design a system that would respond to the strength and direction of the sunlight but settled for a temporary system which I didn't spend too much time on because it was only temporary. It consists of three wires stretched between two supports mounted above the two ends on the front side only (South). On the wires is threaded the screen cloth and it can be pulled open or closed by cords attached to one end, the other being anchored to the support bar.

Not only did the sunscreen need repair but some of the cedarwood frame has rotted at the lower end of the roof panels. (There was a long period when I was dormant and didn't apply any preservative,) A kind friend has given me some cedar wood to use for a proper rebuild of the roof panels but this is not the



The upper picture shows the rotted joint in the roof frame. The weight of the glass has pushed the member down so there is a gap at the top of the roof.

The lower picture shows the member held in the correct position by a stout aluminium angle passing under the rotted member through the rotted joint and suspended from a bolt inside the greenhouse.



ideal time to take on a job of this sort so I resorted to a quick engineer's bodge as shown in the picture..

I chose an extra wide model greenhouse and took care putting firm level paving down the full width of the gangway. This was to allow easy movement of trolleys carrying plants. Having plants on a trolley gives tremendous flexibility in their environment. Several of the original trolleys I made were temporary structures and, you guessed it, they are falling apart.



### ***What Social Distancing?***

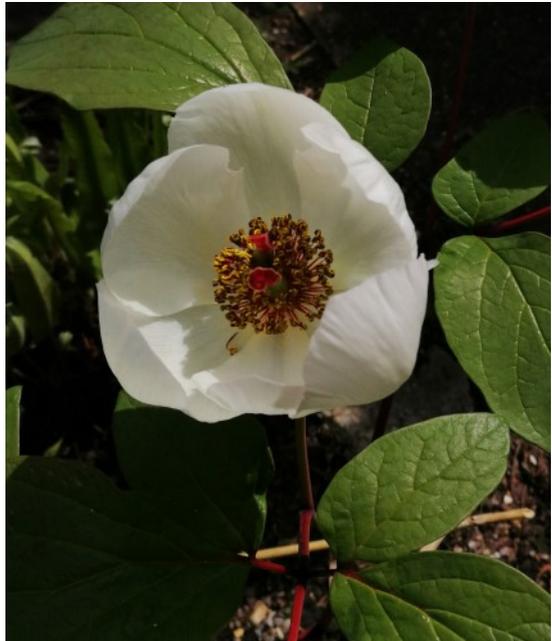
Thank you Robert for this lovely picture of Gnorman's friends paying tribute to all care workers; something to bring cheer. Gnorman keeps telling me how lucky I am to have a garden during 'these difficult times' and how lucky I am to have his help in it. Well, I agree with the first bit.

Keep well everyone.

### ***Another Paeonia***

I remember first seeing Paeonia obovate and being most impressed. The closed bud closely resembled an egg in shape and colour.

I've enjoyed growing species Peonies from seed for some time. The germination is usually good though it takes a couple of years before anything is seen above the surface.. Normally the surplus, for there are only so many Peonies one can accommodate, are distributed via our raffle tables and at the Open Garden. Well that is not going to work this year.



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