

The Trillium

Piedmont Chapter
North American Rock Garden Society
Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, NC

Plants That Missed the Marketing Push

Mark Weathington

We all know about the marketing juggernaut that surrounded Endless Summer® hydrangea which followed in the footsteps of the pink potted Flower Carpet® roses over a decade ago. Whatever your experiences with these and other heavily promoted plants have been, the campaigns have certainly been successful - moving tens of thousands of plants and making a lot of money for many people. But for every one of these promoted plants there are hundreds which don't have their own press agent and often get bypassed as consumers dash toward the next must have plant.

It's hard to know where to start since there are so many plants that perform so well which are inexplicably absent from the trade. Evergreen and semi-evergreen oaks are one group of trees that should be looked at more closely. Several of the Asian species have trickled into production but the center of oak diversity resides in Mexico and the

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About Odyssey Bulbs

Russell Stafford www.odysseybulbs.com

Odyssey Bulbs began as quite a few small businesses do – because of a lack felt by its founder (whose identity you may have guessed by now). U.S. sources of geophytic delights such as spring-blooming *Colchicum* and fall blooming *Crocus* and *Lachenalia* and *Veltheimia* were few or none, which definitely raised the question: why should Great Britain have Paul



Photo from Odyssey Bulbs website

Colchicum 'Disraeli'

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Rock Garden Program Fall 2008-Spring 2009

November 15, 2008

Russell Stafford
South Lancaster, Mass.
“Little Bulbs: Old and New”

January 17, 2009

Bobby J. Ward
Raleigh, N.C.
“Rock Gardening in the South”

February 21, 2009

Scott McMahan
Clermont, Ga.
“Plant Hunting in the Himalaya and Vietnam”

March 21, 2009

Pam Beck
Wake Forest, N.C.
“Small Space Garden Design”

April 18, 2009

Lisa Bartlett
Atlanta, Ga.
“Container Gardening: Tricks of the Trade”

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higher elevation forms of these oaks are ideally suited for the southeast where they will tolerate our heat, humidity, and the cold. Plants like *Quercus crassifolia* with its deep red new growth and long yellow catkins are as showy as many



Photo by Mark Weatherington

Quercus crassifolia

spring flowering trees. For smaller settings, the elegant little *Q. rugosa* is another garden stunner. Both of these oaks have rough leaves which eventually become deep green and highly textured.

Another group that has never hit their stride in the U.S. are the smaller species of ash. *Fraxinus greggii* is a large shrub or small tree only growing to about 15'. The small, pinnately compound leaves are generally retained throughout the winter dropping just before the new leaves emerge. Over time it can be pruned into a small multi-stemmed tree displaying its attractive gray bark. Other smaller ashes include the Chinese *F. insularis* and Japanese *F. longicuspis*. Both make handsome flowering trees with frothy masses of white flowers. The deep green leaves of the Japanese flowering ash make it an especially nice landscape plant and to my knowledge, none of these ashes have proven to be es-



Photo by Mark Weatherington

Fraxinus insularis

pecially susceptible to emerald ash borer. The olive family (Oleaceae) contains more than just ashes. One of my all-time favorite groups, and the main reason I would never move up to the frozen North, is *Osmanthus*. Several species and selections are widely grown throughout the south, one in particular has inexplicably been passed over time and again. While most osmanthus are flowering in the fall, *O. delavayi* waits until April to open its pristine white, heavenly fragrant flowers. The black-green foliage



Photo by Mark Weatherington

Osmanthus delavayi

provides the perfect backdrop for these blossoms. The small size, generally only to 5'-10' in the garden, makes it an easy plant to integrate into most landscapes as does its adaptability to sun or shade.

The Araliaceae offers many bold-textured and tough plants for the garden. Many southern landscapes are graced by the ubiquitous *Fatsia japonica*, but on my recent trip to Taiwan I was able to procure several forms of the more deeply lobed *F. polycarpa* which should prove to be an excellent addition to the tropical look so popular nowadays and begs the question, "Why isn't this already in the trade?". Other members of this family that I collected on this diverse island include *Dendropanax dentiger* and *D. pellucidopedunculatus*, both small evergreen trees with deeply glossy foliage. If they are anything like the slightly more common *D. trifidus*, then their winter foliage should become a deep burgundy. Growing at higher elevations on rocky, exposed slopes was the sage green leaved *Sinopanax formosanum* which will surely prove to be a great textural element in the garden with its sycamore shaped leaves and pubescent foliage and stems. While heat tolerance may be an issue with *Schefflera taiwaniana*, the enjoy-

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ment of growing a species of what is normally a tropical genera makes taking a chance with this high elevation form worthwhile. I was happy to add this species to the growing list of hardy *Schefflera* we are trying to grow at the JCRA which include *S. hoi* var. *fantsipanensis*, *S. brevipedunculata*, and *S. delavayi*. The palmately compound, evergreen leaves and purple-black fruits add zest to any garden setting.



Photo by Mark Weatherington

Schefflera delavayi

The recent collecting trip to Taiwan presented an opportunity to collect several plants high on my “Why aren’t these plants in production?” list. Perhaps most exciting was *Illicium arborescens*, a 40’+, purple flowered tree form of anise. Not a bad collection for our first hour in the field. The various *Persea* (*Machilus*) were overwhelming, but the narrow, undulate foliage of *P. acuminatissima* is a feature I have long thought could be a valuable addition to the southern landscapes. Much of the *Trochodendron aralioides* germplasm in the U.S. comes from just a few wild collections. Most plants I have seen have relatively dull foliage, but plants collected in Taiwan were exceptionally glossy, some with extremely wavy leaf margins. These new accessions will hopefully prove to be as good growers as the old germplasm now in production. I thought I knew *Syneilesis* well, but was surprised to find an entirely new (to me) species on Taiwan. *S. subglabrata* grew in dryish shade under *Cryptomeria*. The typical dissected foliage will make a great foil in the woodland garden like its more available, but still undeservedly scarce relative *S. aconitifolia*. Hopefully the emerging foliage of the former will be as densely silver pubescent as the latter. Another herbaceous plant found in Taiwan is one I have long grown but with a good marketing campaign could become a star in south-

ern gardens. *Titanotrichum oldhamii* glows in a woodland garden with its large burgundy throated, golden yellow



Photo by Mark Weatherington

Titanotrichum oldhamii

flowers. We thought we might see some variation in the wild, but all the plants were as uniform as could be. Hopefully this plant will soon get some of the attention it deserves since its bright color and late flowering season bring some often needed oomph to the shade garden.

Many of our common landscape plants have close relatives which never seem to break out from the shadow of their more popular siblings. Of the many species of *Hydrangea* available, one of my personal favor-



Photo by Mark Weatherington

Hydrangea hirta

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ites is *H. birta*. While much more understated than its showy cousins, the flower clusters which appear without the large infertile florets typical of this genus are still quite attractive. Perhaps if it was given a different common name than hydrangea (powder-puff plant anyone?), it might fare better in the market – nothing a good spin-meister couldn't do. Another garden mainstay is the holly. They are used for virtually all landscape situations, but a few of the evergreen types don't have the spines that the more commonly grown selections possess.



Photo by Mark Weatherington

Ilex integra 'Ogon'

In my mind as a gardener the entire leaves of *Ilex integra* and *I. rotunda* make them much friendlier plants to work with. The former is an especially nice plant with black-green leaves and brilliant red fruit. Several selections have been made including both male and female gold foliated plants under the name 'Ogon' and a variegated form called 'Green Shadow'. *I. rotunda* is somewhat tender, but very heat tolerant. It bears large red fruit on a somewhat

open plant with ficus-like foliage.

Euonymus is another widely grown genus with members commonly found in all garden centers. Several of the tree forms have never made it into the mainstream trade though. Of special note is *E. carnosus*, a glossy leaved, semi-evergreen plant. Showy white flowers in June give way to pink winter fruits. The deep green leaves turn flaming burgundy in late fall and often persist into January or beyond. I've grown it both in sun and shade with similar fall color in both locales.

This is just a sampling of the myriad plants that have never managed to muscle their way into the spotlight. They would all probably benefit from a big-time Hollywood agent or at least a good marketing manager. Next time you're tempted by a full page color ad for Encore® azaleas, remember there may be some often neglected but truly spectacular plant waiting on the sidelines for its chance to shine in your garden instead. ☞



Photo by Mark Weatherington

Euonymus carnosus



(Continued from page 1)

Christian and Potterton & Martin and Monocot Nursery et. al., while this entire continent had little or nothing of the kind?

So Odyssey Bulbs was born, its first catalog (fall 2000) featuring colchicums grown in Oregon and a farrago of other uncommon and choice bulbs, rhizomes, tubers, and corms from the Dutch broker and grower Hoog & Dix. Today it offers an even wider variety of geophytes from its own nursery and from a far-flung network of growers (most of them a significant improvement on the Dutch bulb machine). *Colchicum* (30 or more species and hybrids),



Photo from Odyssey Bulbs website

Crocus 'Alionka'

“species” *Crocus* (both spring- and fall blooming), *Corydalis*, *Allium*, species *Tulipa*, *Juno* irises, the egregiously slandered genus *Ornithogalum*, *Cyclamen*, *Lachenalia*, *Nar-*



Photo from Odyssey Bulbs website

Colchicum 'Waterlily'

cissus, and many other rare treasures figure prominently in its catalog. You can find the catalog online at www.odysseybulbs.com &

*From the Berkshire Chapter newsletter, NARGS
November 2007 issue with permission.*



Photo from Odyssey Bulbs website

Colchicum kesselringii

A Plant For You To Consider—Arisaema

by Chuck Carlson

Reprinted with permission from September issue of the Minnesota Rock Plant Notes, newsletter of the Minnesota Chapter, NARGS.

Can you guess what plant goes by the names Bog onion, Brown dragon, Indian turnip, Wake robin or Wild turnip? Does the scientific name *Arisaema triphyllum* give you a clue? What if it has a **spathe** and a **spadix**? The **spathe** is known as 'the pulpit' and covers the **spadix** ('Jack'), covered with tiny flowers of both sexes. I am sure if I would have started saying this plant is known as 'Jack in the Pulpit' you all would have known the plant. This species flowers from April to June. The fruits ripen in late summer and fall, turning a bright red color. If the

seeds are freed from the berry they will germinate the next spring, producing a plant with a single rounded leaf. The seedlings will flower in about 3 years.

Arisaema (air-uh-SEE-muh) refers to the plant's resemblance to the *Arum* family and haima (blood); referring to some species bearing red blotches. *Triphyllum* (try-FIL-um) refers to the plant having three leaves. Care should also be taken to avoid confusion with **poison ivy**, which has 3 leaflets somewhat similar in appearance.

But one should know that the plant is poisonous. The **oxalic acid** and **asparagines** in jack in the pulpit are **poisonous** if ingested and the root is the most dangerous. Calcium oxalate crystals will cause a powerful burning sensation if eaten raw. The Native Americans used the root as a vegetable after cooking it thoroughly.

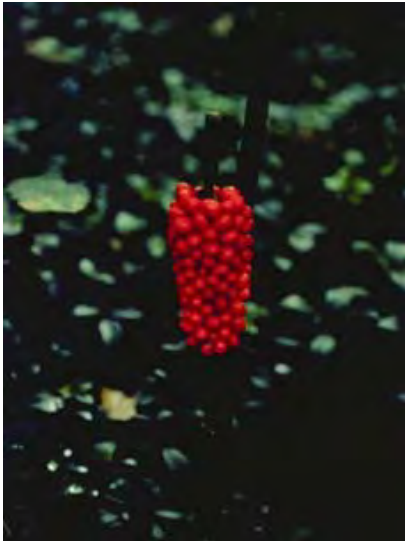


Photo Credit: Chuck Carlson

Arisaema Seed Pod



Photo Credit: Heronswood

Arisaema fargesii



Photo Credit: Heronswood

Arisaema taiwanense



Photo Credit: Heronswood

Arisaema thunbergii ssp. *Urashima*

This plant is very easy to grow if you follow these conditions.

Soil Type - humus rich, sandy loam

Soil pH - Neutral

Water - Moist

Light - Full - partial shade

In Minnesota there are three different varieties in the wild: *Arisaema triphyllum* ssp. *pusillum*, *Arisaema triphyllum* ssp. *stewardsonii*, *Arisaema triphyllum* ssp. *triphyllum*. But there are many varieties available from garden centers and specialty plant suppliers. I have included a few pictures of some of the special varieties.

Before buying these make sure they are hardy for your zone.

Plant a Jack in the Pulpit or two; I think you will be pleased to see them pop up each spring. 🌿

A REFRESHER ON BULB CULTIVATION: WORTHWHILE INFORMATION from the *ODYSSEY BULBS* WEBSITE



We detail each bulb's ornamental features, collection code (if applicable), height, month(s) of bloom (in our USDA zone 5b locale, except as noted), Royal Horticultural Society awards received (AGM = Award of Garden Merit; AM = Award of Merit; FCC = First Class Certificate), and cultural preferences. We base our descriptions on personal experience, reliable references, and educated guesswork. To estimate bloom time in your area, multiply the difference between our USDA zone number and yours by 1 to 2 weeks. Unless otherwise indicated, listed bulbs favor full sun (while in leaf) and well-drained, reasonably fertile soil. Their other cultural preferences -- and their likelihood of success in your region -- vary widely, however, depending largely on their native climate, which we categorize thus:

Montane: Cold, snowy winters; cool, moist springs; mild, dryish to moist summers. U.S. geographical range: western mountains.

Maritime: Cool to cold, moist winters; cloudy springs; mild, moist summers. Range: coastal Northeast; immediate coastal Northwest.

Modified continental: Cold to cool, moist winters; hot, moist summers. Range: eastern Midwest; interior Northeast; Mid-Atlantic; upper South.

Continental: Cold to cool, dryish winters; hot, showery, droughty summers. Range: western Midwest; Plains.

Steppe (Cold Mediterranean): Cold, relatively moist winters; dry, hot summers. Range: interior Northwest to Great Basin.

Mediterranean: Mild, relatively moist winters; mild to hot, dry summers. Range: western California; interior coastal Northwest.

Subtropical: Mild, dry to moist winters; warm to hot, damp summers. Range: lower South.

Tropical: Warm to hot winters and summers. Range: lower Florida.

Of course, we oversimplify climate's infinite variety. Moreover, you shouldn't dismiss a bulb merely because its native climate differs from yours; it may, in fact, thrive (and if it doesn't flourish in the open, it might do so in the shelter of a greenhouse, bulb frame, or south-facing wall). But the above generalities should help you determine the plants and cultural methods best suited to your conditions. For example, most bulbs from dry-summer climates require porous soil if grown in wet-summer regions, just as bulbs from wet-summer climates often need supplemental summer irrigation in dry-summer areas.

Additionally, we include (with some hesitation) a conservative estimate of the USDA zone to which each bulb is **cold-hardy**. Keep in mind, however, that a bulb's tolerances vary widely with cultural conditions and climate. For example, many steppe and Mediterranean bulbs considered tender in Great Britain and other maritime regions are quite hardy in hot-summer areas of the U.S. (casting suspicion on the hardiness ratings of British references such as the *RHS Manual of Bulbs*).

Moreover, some extremely cold-hardy bulbs are intolerant of hot summers or mild winters. Unless its native range is known, a bulb's hardiness ratings -- particularly if it is rare in U.S. gardens -- mean little (and they should always be viewed with at least a trace of skepticism). As for us (and for most other plant fanatics, many of whom consider hardiness ratings to be a contemptible canard), we usually assume a plant to be at least a zone hardier than its customary rating, until proven otherwise.


The tabs below indicate bulbs on the website.

[\[Allium\]](#) [\[Anemone\]](#) [\[Arisaema\]](#) [\[Arum\]](#) [\[Bellevia\]](#) [\[Biarum\]](#) [\[Bulbocodium\]](#) [\[Caloscordum\]](#) [\[Camassia\]](#) [\[Chionoscilla\]](#) [\[Colchicum\]](#) [\[Corydalis\]](#) [\[Fall Crocus\]](#) [\[Spring Crocus\]](#) [\[Eranthis\]](#) [\[Erythronium\]](#) [\[Fritillaria\]](#) [\[Galanthus\]](#) [\[Geranium\]](#) [\[Gladiolus\]](#) [\[Hepatica\]](#) [\[Iris\]](#) [\[Leucojum\]](#) [\[Merendera\]](#) [\[Muscari\]](#) [\[Nectaroscordum\]](#) [\[Ornithogalum\]](#) [\[Pinellia\]](#) [\[Puschkinia\]](#) [\[Rhodophiala\]](#) [\[Scilla\]](#) [\[Tecophilaea\]](#) [\[Tulipa\]](#)

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Piedmont Chapter Meeting

Totten Center, NC Botanical Garden

9:30 a.m., October 18, 2008

Bring A Friend Day—No Charge

Mark Weathington

JC Raulston Arboretum, Raleigh

**“Underused Species:
Plants That Missed the
Marketing Push”**

The Trillium, Newsletter of the Piedmont Chapter
The North American Rock Garden Society
1422 Lake Pine Drive, Cary, NC 27511

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Sept. Plant Sale Manager: Kirtley Cox

Refreshments:Gwen and Maurice Farrier

Refreshments at the Meeting

You are invited, actually encouraged, to bring goodies to share to the meeting. Beverages will be available. Use the first letter of your last name to match the month below as the best time to bring snacks.

October	A-E	March	P-T
November	F-J	April	U-Z
January	K-O		

New Members Welcomed

September 2007—September 2008

We welcome these new members to the Piedmont Chapter.

Martha Howard

Juliette LaBonte

Mark Mazer

Rose Mary and Bob Pries

Linda Quin

Sally Siggins

Dixie Spiegel