BOOK REVIEW


In fairly rapid succession in 2008 a number of papers were published (Frisby & Hind, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d; Hind, 2008; Lidén, 2008a, 2008b) on a colourful, and sometimes bizarre, group of plants summarized so well by the title of the book that is the subject of this review—‘Bleeding hearts, *Corydalis*, and their relatives’. Although a group with a long history of cultivation—since the mid 1500s according to the introduction—its popularity has been increasing, most notably since the 1990s. If one accepts that this group of plants belongs to the Fumariaceae (some 550 species in 20 genera), we are told that some 180 species (in 12 genera) are cultivated and the bulk of species, 150, in *Corydalis*. *Hypecoum*, although rarely cultivated, is excluded for some reason. At whom is the book aimed? The fly-leaf suggests gardeners and botanists, and one has to assume of the UK, USA and Europe.

The text is divided up into an introduction and six chapters. The first chapter covers the cultivation of this interesting group of plants. Beginning with their use in a variety of garden environments (woodland gardens, borders, rock gardens, peat beds, the alpine house and bulb frame), the authors cover propagation under two main groups, the ‘tuberous rooted’ and the ‘non-tuberous’ species; I did find this a little confusing, especially having grown a number of tuberous rooted *Dactylicapnos* (which are covered under the ‘non-tuberous’ species). Even the tuberous rooted *Dactylicapnos* can, with care, be propagated from stem cuttings—I have two such plants growing in my collection. Pests and diseases cover the usual culprits, from mice, insects and mites, ‘other creatures’ (slugs and snails) and fungal diseases—suggested remedies and treatments are provided. In the second chapter, on natural history, the authors have outlined the characteristics of this group of genera, which they place in the Fumariaceae, noting that some authors would place them all, alongside the poppies, in the Papaveraceae. The classification of the Fumariaceae, and its subfamilies and tribes is outlined, together with a cartoon-like family tree of the cultivated genera. Modern taxonomic changes are explained, which may cause some raised eyebrows amongst horticulturists, followed by a useful explanation of the floral morphology of the Fumariaceae. The chapter concludes with comments on distribution, habits and habitats, pollination, seed dispersal and insect interactions.

The next chapter, the shortest in the book, provides an identification key to all genera in the Fumariaceae; this appears perfectly adequate. Additional keys are also provided in the text of following chapters to identify the species of

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**Dactylicapnos** (in cultivation), *Dicentra* (all species, including an extra key to the subspecies of *Dicentra formosa*) and *Sarcocapnos* (all five species, not four as stated on p. 154), as well as keys to the ‘Tuberosous sections of *Corydalis*’, the ‘*Corydalis aurea* complex’ (although few would appear to be available commercially). The bleeding hearts (Chapter 4) are covered alphabetically by genus, as are the additional genera. Each genus is provided with a common name (although this is very American-centric—*Pseudofumaria*, the ‘Rock fumeworts’; *P. lutea* is just known as ‘Yellow fumitory’ or ‘Yellow corydalis’ in the UK), and a short English description, followed by a useful discussion of the plants concerned, their etymology, history, interesting features, distribution, horticultural history and horticultural use. Sometimes longer discussion ensues concerning hypotheses for their present distribution. The treatment of the taxa within the chapter on *Corydalis* (Chapter 5) is a mixture of taxonomic and horticultural, but with the claim that the ‘arrangement throughout is taxonomic’. The main division is between tuberous (divided into sections) and non-tuberous (divided by colour). Chapter 6 covers the remaining five cultivated zygomorphic-flowered genera other than *Corydalis*.

I found the four appendices valuable additions to the main text: useful addresses (societies and plant sources), beginners’ plants, RHS awarded plants, and measurement conversion tables (but why-oh-why repeat the units throughout the tables against every measurement when the columns are adequately headed?). The glossary too, helped to explain the botanical terms used, and those tempted further can turn to the ‘Select bibliography’ to find both scientific references and other useful horticultural texts.

The text is supplemented throughout by 50 thumbnail black and white drawings by Adèle Morosini and Paul Harwood, together with other assorted illustrations (e.g. pollen, nectar-stealing honeybee, and a dissected flower). There is also a central block of colour plates in this volume which does the photographers great credit, although I’m not too sure why such a dark photograph of *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* was chosen for the cover and plate 1.

There are a few problems with this book. In part, the *in expando* use of author citation for taxa has led to several clumsy errors; with rare exceptions, most botanical journals and texts use a standard abbreviation for authors names (e.g. Brummitt & Powell, 1992). A few examples will suffice (using the appropriate abbreviations!): *Adlumia fungosa* is given (p. 50) as ‘*A. fungosa* Greene ex Britton, Sterns & Poggenburg’, ignoring the fact that this is a combination based on *Fumaria fungosa* Aiton—it would be better as *Adlumia fungosa* (Aiton) Greene ex Britton, Sterns & Poggenb.; *Dactylicapnos torulosa* (Hook. f. & T. Thomson) Hutch. is given (p. 53) as *D. torulosa* (J. D. Hooker & T. Thompson) Hutchinson. Later reference to *D. roylei* is simply as ‘*D. roylei* Hutchinson’ (p. 54), which is incorrect as the name was a combination in *Dactylicapnos*, from a species described in *Dicentra, Dicentra roylei* Hook.f. & T. Thomson; it should be *Dactylicapnos roylei* (Hook.f. & T. Thomson) Hutch. Elsewhere in the text two species appear...
without authorities, *Dactylicapnos ventii* (Khánh) Lidén (p. 54) and *D. lichiangensis* (Fedde) Hand.-Mazz. (p. 54). Similarly, many genera appear simply as their generic name (*Adlumia*–p. 50, *Dactylicapnos*–p. 52, *Lamprocapnos*–p. 75, etc., etc.) yet *Corydalis* appears as *Corydalis* A. P. de Candolle. (which could simply appear as *Corydalis* DC.). Editors, please note that there are no words such as ‘cushionlike’, ‘spikelike’, nor ‘threadlike’! The combining form is attached to the preceding noun by a hyphen.

Minor problems aside, I can thoroughly recommend this book. At this price it is a useful reference work on what is certainly an expanding group of plants, as more come into cultivation.

REFERENCES


Nicholas Hind