

NATIONAL PLANT COLLECTION®

Hypericum spp. & cvs.

The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens

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Introduction

Hypericum is a genus of almost 500 species in the family *Hypericaceae*. It comprises trees, shrubs and perennial or annual herbs which are found in all regions of the world except the lowland tropics and arctic, desert or very wet areas. There are various common names, but the most often associated with the genus is St John's Wort. Two kinds of glandular dots or lines are usually visible on the leaves, these can be translucently clear or sometimes black. Its flowers are almost always a shade of yellow, with petals often tinged red in bud; the numerous stamens are either in 5 groups (fascicles) opposite the petals or with the groups united partially or wholly in a ring. This arrangement of stamen is a feature of the flower that makes them so recognisable. Those with free or partially united fascicles are basically Old World in origin, whereas those with fascicles united in a ring come originally from the New World. The petals and stamens sometimes fall after flowering without withering, as they do in Section *Ascyreia*, the principal subject of this exhibition.

Superb garden shrubs, suitable for a variety of situations, preferably with good drainage on a sunny site, from herbaceous borders to rock gardens, woodland and container gardens. Flowering is often over a very long period, beginning in May, with the later species extending to the end of autumn.

General Cultivation

Hypericums are one of the easiest garden shrubs to cultivate. They are tolerant of most soil types, some are quite drought resistant and they generally only need to be pruned once a year with a hair cut after flowering. They are susceptible to very few health problems and if damaged by extreme weather conditions, can be hard pruned almost to the ground, to regenerate healthy growth. A hard prune can be administered every other year to keep plants looking fresh.

Propagation

Seed is a good method if a large amount of plants are needed. Alpine varieties, perennial and annual species are best grown from seed. Seed is usually very fine and light. It should

be surface sown on to any good seed compost and kept moist. Germination is usually very fast and plants mature quickly.

Cuttings - these root easily, most species can be increased in this way. Cuttings are taken of soft wood in spring or semi-ripe wood in autumn. Cuttings should be of tip growth and no smaller than 2 inches. Cuttings root in 6 to 8 weeks.

Recommended species and varieties for garden culture:

H. androsaemum

This is a British shrub, a very common species with black berry-like fruits. Its wild hybrid with *H. hircinum* (*H. x inodorum*) has reddish fruits, but cross breeding has produced plants with fruits of various colours from dark red to pink, making such plants popular with florists. There are many name varieties of *H. x inodorum* including: 'Magical White', with white berries, 'Magical Sunshine', with yellow berries and 'Magical Beauty', with pink berries. A form of *H. androsaemum* called 'Gladys Brabazon', has heavily variegated foliage.

***H. kalmianum* 'Gemo'**

A small, evergreen shrub or subshrub with upright branching that typically grows in a dense mound to 2-3' tall. It is native to the Great Lakes region of the US where it typically occurs in rocky to sandy soils, ranging from relatively dry open woods to moist lakeshore areas. This variety has masses of smallish yellow flowers with a very fluffy clump of yellow stamen. A very attractive and long flowering small shrub.

***H x hidcoteense* 'Hidcote'**

Bushy, dense, semi-evergreen with mid-green leaves. It will only lose its leaves in very cold winters. Masses of large, 2 inch wide, showy, saucer-shaped, bright yellow flowers with prominent darker yellow stamens appear continually from July to October. Flowers best in full sun, but will tolerate partial shade. Very colourful and hardy hedge. Awarded the prestigious RHS Award of Garden Merit.

Norman Robson

Norman Robson first took an interest in *Hypericum* in 1950, when he worked on the British species at Aberdeen University as an undergraduate exercise, and subsequently expanded his concern to cover the whole genus for a PhD thesis at Edinburgh University (1956). He continued this interest, first while working on Flora Zambesiaca at Kew Gardens and later (1962), when he moved to what was then the British Museum (Natural History) as curator of part of the herbarium (ie dried and pressed) collection of non-European flowering plants. He has contributed accounts of *Hypericaceae* and other families to Floras almost worldwide. In 1972 he started work on a detailed monograph of the genus *Hypericum*, which was completed in 2012 with the publication of Part 9.