

Meconopsis 'Slieve Donard' FCC & 'Bryan Conway' (Infertile Blue Group)



Background

These two cultivars, plus some others, have been grown for decades in gardens under the name *Meconopsis x sheldonii* (i.e. the cross *M. betonicifolia* x *M. grandis*). These hybrids are sterile and as a result, propagation must be done by division. Every resulting plant is genetically identical. Some other hybrids, which were also referred to as *M. x sheldonii*, are fertile. Many plants are raised annually from the abundant viable seed. To overcome the confusion in names, the hybrid name *M. x sheldonii* has been replaced by a number of cultivar names: Examples are *M.* 'Slieve Donard' and *M.* 'Bryan Conway' (genetically identical sterile hybrids) and *M.* 'Lingholm' (a fertile hybrid raised from seed and somewhat variable).

M. 'Slieve Donard' was raised by Dr. Curle in Edinburgh in about 1935 and subsequently named by the Slieve Donard Nursery in N. Ireland. We know nothing certain about the origin of *M.* 'Bryan Conway'. These cultivars are similar in many ways (e.g. foliage, style and seed-capsule features), but the petals in *M.* 'Slieve Donard' are broad and overlapping, in *M.* 'Bryan Conway' they are narrower and frilly

Cultivation

Plant in moist, humus-rich, well-drained soil in an open situation or in partial shade. Avoid close proximity to tree roots. Keep well-watered in hot, dry weather. Summer drought is the worst "enemy" of these plants. But also avoid boggy conditions.

To keep in good heart, divide every few years in early spring by lifting and carefully prising the clump apart. Try to avoid damage to the new shoots. Re-plant divisions in freshly cultivated soil with added compost or well-rotted manure. Water well until re-established.

The height of the plants at flowering is about 1m-1.25m and peak flowering is 2-3 weeks in late May to mid-June. *M.* 'Bryan Conway' comes into flower a little earlier than *M.* 'Slieve Donard'.

Note: *M.* 'Bobby Masterton', is another fine cultivar very similar in flower to *M.* 'Slieve Donard' and also opening a few days earlier than the latter. The appearance of the leaves and seed-capsules demonstrate clearly that it is a different and distinct cultivar.



The Meconopsis Group For much more information on *Meconopsis*, particularly on the big blue poppies, see The Meconopsis Group web-site: www.meconopsis.org This Group is primarily a study group. We welcome information, enquiries and applications for new membership. Present membership is over 150. A print-friendly membership form is available on the web-site, or apply to Dr. Evelyn Stevens, The Linns, Sheriffmuir, Dunblane, Perthshire, FK15 0LP Tel/fax 01786 822295.