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The inspiring and descriptive catalogue of **Pan-Global Plants** tempted Roy Lancaster to this nursery in Gloucestershire where he found selections he could not resist. Photography by Tim Sandall



Tetrapanax papyrifer 'Rex' is a magnificent selection with vast leaves up to 1m across

Nurseries to visit

PLANTSMEN IN THEIR ELEMENT

Roy Lancaster (far right) meets Nick Macer at his nursery in Gloucestershire. Both share an enthusiasm for plants that is as apparent in Nick's catalogue descriptions as in Roy's books

IN MAY 1981, WHILE following a trail on the western flanks of the Cangshan, a range of mountains in China's Yunnan province, my colleagues and I met with a species of *Viburnum* totally new to us. We were members of the first Sino-British Botanical Expedition examining the flora of an area previously visited by the likes of Jean Delavay and George Forrest. The *Viburnum*, a deciduous shrub of around 2m or more with relatively small leaves and nodding racemes of white flowers, pink tinted in bud, was identified by our Chinese colleagues as *V. chingii*, a recently-named species not yet in cultivation. The few ripened fruits we collected eventually produced plants that I subsequently came across growing in one or two specialist collections in the United Kingdom.

It was not until June last year that I saw this rare species being offered for sale. The nursery I was visiting, Pan-Global Plants, is situated in a former walled garden at Frampton Court, Frampton on Severn, just off the M5 as it passes to the west of Stroud in Gloucestershire. Thrilled as I was though to see the viburnum, it was but a precursor to a wealth of rare, new and unusual woody plants offered

by owner Nick Macer, a passionate and knowledgeable plantsman with experience at several of England's best-known woody plant collections.

A plantsman's friend

I remember visiting Nick when he first set up his business on a small site at the Rococo Garden in Painswick. That was nine years earlier and it was obvious to me, barring disaster, he would establish himself as a 'plantsman's friend'.

This he seems to have done, as a glance through his impressive catalogue confirms. Its subtitle, 'A catalogue of inspiring and idiosyncratic plants', gives an inkling of what to expect and I was delighted on visiting the new nursery to find that most plants I had earmarked were still available – including *Deutzia pulchra*, my favourite *Deutzia* species, which will grow in most soils and has reached 3m tall for me. It is admired by all my gardening visitors for its long willow-like leaves, its free-flowering, bold panicles of large, white blooms in June and July, its pale cinnamon bark peeling away in sheets during winter and, lastly, for its noble aspect. The most interesting thing about the plants at Pan-Global however, were



their pink-stained flowers.

Associated with deutzias, as they bloom in summer, are philadelphus, the flowers of which are an unrepentant white except for a handful of species and hybrids that possess a central rose or purple stain. Unlike deutzias, the flowers of many (though by no means all) philadelphus offer fragrance. An exciting recent introduction is *Philadelphus maculatus* 'Mexican Jewel', a small, slender-stemmed shrub collected by plantsman extraordinaire Martyn Rix in the mountains of Mexico and grown successfully for years in his garden in Devon. Its small foliage is ideal backing for the small, neat, four-petalled white flowers, each with a reddish-purple stain and an intense sweet fragrance.

Other refined philadelphus

Pan-Global is also offering *Philadelphus mexicanus* 'Rose Syringa', a shrub with an interesting if confusing history that was known by a different name for much of the 20th century. The story behind this,

involving specimens in Ireland, Scilly, Cambridge and Kew, can be read in Bean's *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles* (pp135–136, 8th ed, Vol 3).

It makes a larger, more vigorous shrub than *P. maculatus*, to 2m – taller against a wall – with larger leaves but similarly purple-stained flowers; both share a rich, pervasive scent. It is said to be one of the parents used by French nursery and breeders Lemoine in producing such outstanding hybrids as *P. 'Belle Etoile'* and *P. 'Sybille'* in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both the above species need a warm, sheltered, sunny situation in well-drained soil, acid or alkaline. Naturally, I purchased one of each to plant at home in the hope that climate change will bring me my just rewards.

Another sun lover is *Indigofera pendula*, one of the most unusual and ornamental of its clan, noted for its long, slender, erect stems, well-clothed with large, pinnate leaves, and more especially for its long, pendulous tapering racemes of ▶

BLOOMING CLASSICS

Plenty at Pan-Global Plants made Roy smile, including *Deutzia pulchra* (below), 'my favourite *Deutzia* species ...admired by all my gardening visitors', and *Philadelphus mexicanus* 'Rose Syringa' (bottom), with its rich, pervasive scent, that needs shelter and warmth

NURSERIES TO VISIT



PAN-GLOBAL PLANTS

The Walled Garden, Frampton Court, Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire GL2 7EX
Tel 01452 741641
Web www.panglobalplants.com
Open 1 Feb–31 Oct, 11am–5pm, Wed–Sun including Bank Holidays. Closed 2nd Sunday in September
Nov–Jan Please phone first
Location 3 miles west of M5, J13
Facilities Toilets, wheelchair access, catalogue (for printed copy please send four 1st-class stamps); refreshments in village



IN PRAISE OF HYDRANGEAS

Nick Macer is especially fond of *Hydrangea serrata*: 'A hardy mountain dweller from Japan, *Hydrangea serrata* enjoys cool shade; most cultivars are good by a north wall and reach 80–150cm high. They like a leafy soil, but are fairly tough despite their delicate appearance, and also more drought tolerant than more common *H. macrophylla*.'

Recommended cultivars



***Hydrangea serrata* 'Tiara'**
A fine selection with superb red autumn colour. Blue or pink flowerheads over a long period.



***H. serrata* 'Miyama-yae-murasaki'**
When grown in acid soil, this bears beautiful, brilliant blue lacecaps, the sterile florets distinctly doubled.



***H. serrata* 'Kiyosumi'**
Leaves emerge red-tinted; lacecaps have white, sterile florets edged in deep red-pink and a central zone of pale pink.



SHRUB FOR SUN Ornamental *Indigofera pendula* (above) produces attractive drooping racemes of pea-like flowers and delicate, feathery leaves

small pea flowers that are a carmine and lilac-grey bicolour appearing pink from a distance. I have seen this remarkable species growing by mountain roads and through scrub on hillsides in southwest China and have tried it several times in my garden, only losing it to cold, damp winters. Given good drainage and a warm, sheltered, sunny situation on an acid or alkaline soil it should thrive, and I know of many that do.

A wealth of rare trees

Having no need of sharp drainage or heat is *Carpinus fangiana* (Fang's hornbeam), a magnificent rare Chinese species that possesses the largest, longest leaves and fruiting spikes of all hornbeams. The leaves, which emerge coppery-red or bronze-purple in spring, are notable for their drooping habit and parallel venation. The fruiting spikes, meanwhile, are an impressive 10–25cm long and hang like pale green lemurs' tails from the ends of the shoots. I have a 3m-tall specimen in my garden which, as I write in December, has a shapely rounded crown and big, green, pointed winter buds fit to bursting. Larger trees up to 18m or more are found in the wild in mountain woods.



Carpinus fangiana, with its stately leaves, makes a choice garden tree

Close by this hornbeam at Pan-Global Plants I found stocks of other rare trees including *Carrierea calycina* and *Euptelea polyandra*, the former from China, the latter from Japan. Like Fang's hornbeam, the *Euptelea* is worth growing for its elegant foliage, richly-tinted when young. Unlike the hornbeam, the leaves are rounded and jaggedly toothed, with an abrupt tail-like point and a long slender stalk that causes them to tremble and glisten in the breeze. It is usually seen in cultivation as a multistemmed tree 6–10m high and as much across, though it can be trained to a single stem. The petal-less flowers are either male or female and borne separately on different trees. Neither have any obvious beauty in the conventional sense, though the clusters of red stamens on male trees, appearing before or with the leaves in spring, can have a collective beauty. The foliage in autumn is capable of rich tints.

Rainforest reminder

Carrierea calycina is another relatively unknown and neglected tree though it has only in recent years become available once more from seed introduced by Peter Wharton, Curator of the Asian Garden at the University of British Columbia in



Lonicera hildebrandiana is an impressive but tender honeysuckle

Vancouver. An old tree – and, at 16m, the British and Irish champion – grows from EH Wilson's original seed introduction at Birr Castle Demesne in Co. Offaly, the Republic of Ireland. *Carrierea calycina* is a vigorous tree, and some specimens of only 10 years are already beyond 5m in several gardens in England including the Howick Arboretum at Alnwick in Northumberland. Why grow it? Because it has a pleasingly open, almost tabulated growth pattern, while its large, long-stalked, leathery and glistening green leaves present an almost tropical-rain-forest effect, especially with their long, drip-tip points. Several trees I know of, including the Birr champion, are now producing pale green, curiously formed flowers borne in loose terminal clusters in summer. Like *Euptelea*, this tree seems to enjoy most (especially fertile) soils and will take shade or sun so long as moisture is available in summer.

I have long held *Berberis valdiviana* to be the king of berberis and one of my top-ten shrubs for the garden. I frequently extol its virtues in articles and when showing its image during lectures but, always, the downside has been availability. It rarely produces seed in cultivation, can be slow (if not a devil) to root as cuttings,



ROY LANCASTER

and is rare if not endangered in the wild in Chile. So you can appreciate my surprise and delight when confronted with a batch of fine young *B. valdiviana* at Pan-Global Plants which, so Nick assured me, were raised as cuttings.

Tempting honeysuckles

Although he does a certain amount of propagation, mainly from seed, some plants Nick gets from specialist growers such as Mark Fillan in Devon, a friend and plant-hunting companion.

One example of this is recently introduced *Lonicera subaequalis*, a twining, deciduous honeysuckle from China, with pendulous terminal clusters of tubular yellow flowers protected from above by a characteristic hooded bract. I have seen this unusual species wild in southern Sichuan province in the wooded mountains above the Yangtze, where it climbs into trees before sending its long, pendulous shoots down through the canopy. The flower clusters, which are sometimes red-tinted, hang above one's head in spring like colourful baubles on a Christmas tree. Nick's particular plants had been grown from seed collected by Japanese plant explorer Mikinori Ogisu. I purchased a plant – it is now growing

NURSERY-MAN'S CHOICE
'Me oh my I love this bamboo,' Nick Macer writes about *Phyllostachys vivax* f. *aureocaulis* in his online and printed catalogue. 'Truly marvellous and jaw-droppingly impressive'



PAN-GLOBAL PLANTS (above) is based in an old walled garden at Frampton Court in Gloucestershire. The building in the background is an 18th-century orangery

into a small hornbeam in my garden – and for good measure bought a plant of spectacular though tender *Lonicera hildebrandiana* which, given its potential vigour, I have planted outdoors in a sheltered corner. It should not survive winter with me but, nothing ventured...

The plants I have described above are but a few of the profusion stocked by Pan-Global Plants. I haven't even started on the recent Mexican introductions nor the many other exciting attractions Nick Macer offers, such as *Tetrapanax papyrifer* 'Rex' with its enormous leaves or golden-stemmed *Phyllostachys vivax* f. *aureocaulis*. For plant lovers this nursery is like an Aladdin's cave and I challenge anyone to leave without clasping some prize to their bosom. Inspiring and idiosyncratic? It most certainly is. ■

Roy Lancaster VMH is a member of the RHS Woody Plant Committee

I Readers with an in-depth horticultural interest will find articles about other choice plants in the Journal's sister publication, *The Plantsman*, Garden Writers' Guild Magazine of the Year 2006. The March issue includes features on *Chusquea* and *Stachyurus*. To subscribe call 020 7821 3401

