

Roz Cooper Loves knowing the stories behind the plants she grows



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Francoa 'Molly Anderson'

Wreathed in history

The bridal wreath, *Francoa sonchifolia* isn't very well known but is an interesting hardy perennial from Chile. Victorians regarded it as tender, first growing it in conservatories, before trying it outdoors. The airy wands of white flowers appearing in summer were often woven into bridal wreaths.

Francoa will grow in most moist, well-drained garden soils in light shade and also in pots. To propagate remove young rooted plantlets from the edge of the clump or grow from seed. A range of species and varieties, including 'Molly Anderson', are available from seed from www.plant-world-seeds.com. *Francoa sonchifolia* is available from www.claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk.

'Plant hunters influenced my passion!'

Roz Cooper is passionate about plants of all kinds. She has squeezed a wide diversity of species and varieties into the various habitats she has either had to adapt or create on her sloping plot near Durham. There's a silver garden in a sunny spot, woodland plants in her shady zone, created by trees she planted for protection, or heavy clay prone to waterlogging in winter and frequently hard-baked in summer. "I grow a range of primulas in the boggy areas, particularly those collected by the plant hunter



Roz Cooper
Retired university project manager and librarian, gardening in a village near Durham

George Forrest," says Roz. "I'm fascinated by the intrepid individuals who scoured other countries and took great risks to collect plants we now take for granted. Besides primulas I've tried *Corydalis bulleyana* and *Iris forrestii*. I like to know where plants have come from and the stories associated with them." A plant enthusiast since childhood, Roz had her own bit of garden nurturing an ailing climbing rose 'New Dawn' back to health, while also growing a range of plants under the tutelage of her mother.

She joined Plant Heritage in the late 1980s, but demands of her job and family life prevented active involvement, until early retirement offered the opportunity to join the North East group in 2012, becoming branch chair in 2018. She also became involved with its 'Plant Guardian' scheme, which encourages

members to care for rare or endangered plants. She looks after a number of plants, particularly varieties of the bridal wreath *Francoa sonchifolia*, namely deep red 'Dr Tom Smith' and pink 'Molly Anderson'. She also loves asters and colourful daisies, with *Symphotrichum novae-angliae* 'Festival' and solidago 'September Gold' being particular treasures. "Some of my rare varieties come from Plant Heritage's annual national plant exchange, where you bid for plants put up for adoption and would like to grow. You can get interesting things you wouldn't get elsewhere and it's rewarding to be part of a movement caring for our garden heritage, while also doing your bit for conservation."



Symphotrichum 'Festival'

How you can be a plant hero

You can help preserve rare and unusual plants in your garden. The Plant Heritage charity works to conserve the nation's garden plants through the National Plant Collection® scheme and individual Plant Guardians®,

and is looking for Garden News readers to get involved with its crucial work. Contact collections@plantheritage.org.uk for information or visit www.plantheritage.org.uk.



Are you growing any rare or unusual plants? Let us know – see our contact details on page 3
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