

surrounding darker, orange brown cones. The flowers have a rose-like fragrance. Hardy to U.S.D.A. Zones 4–8. Developed by Richard Saul, Saul Nurseries (Georgia) from a hybrid cross of *E. purpurea* × *E. paradoxa*. Available in 2005.

### LITERATURE CITED

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## Exploring for New Perennials in Northern China®

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### INTRODUCTION

“Why China?” is the question often asked by the non-plant-nut. The answer, of course, is that the climate and soils are very similar to the U.S.A. and many Chinese plants have cousins here; i.e., *Betula*, *Ulmus*, *Pinus*, *Abies*, *Tilia*, *Populus*, *Rosa*, *Clematis*, *Scutellaria*, *Quercus*, etc. They have evolved from the same roots, but on the opposite side of the globe and so they have different interesting and ornamental characteristics, as do the *Penstemon* species that inhabit opposite slopes of the tall mountains in Colorado and Utah.

Because we know the North American relatives, it is easier to evaluate, breed, and select the Asian counterparts in less time. It's not difficult to put a herbaceous perennial on the market in 5 or 6 years and certain shrubs and trees in 10–12 years.

Of course, there are some down sides.

- It's a long hard trip.
- The language barrier; you don't easily learn Chinese and even that won't help you communicate with the Tibetans, Mongols, and Uygers, so you may need a translator who is fluent in three languages to get the whole story.
- The food is different, i.e., mare's milk wine, yak butter, and so forth.
- The plants of Asia have an easier climate because of the larger landmass, I suppose. They aren't subjected to the spikes in temperature we have. Spring warms more gradually and winter comes more or less without the 50 to 60 °F drops that we can have in the Great Plains.

**BUT WHY THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF INNER MONGOLIA (NEO MONGOL)?**

The Autonomous Region of Inner Mongolia is much like the Northern Great Plains. It's a 1500+ mile crescent-shaped territory that reaches around the south border of Mongolia. It has harsh environment, sparse human population with herds of livestock including horses, camels, goats, sheep, and cattle. It includes deserts, mountains, and the steppes, which are similar to the Sandhills of Nebraska.

It is a potential source of highly adaptable hardy plant material to use in the landscape and for further breeding with our own species.

Our ticket to Inner Mongolia is the Chinese Bureau of Forestry, a very powerful and important department of government, and with whom my colleagues, Dr. Bill Gustafson and Todd Morrissey have had a long two-way relationship.

Among the plants of Inner Mongolia that have been collected, some of the perennials have been introduced through the GreatPlants® for the Great Plains program, a joint effort by the University of Nebraska, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, and the Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association. They are not protected; however there is a 10¢ per plant collected for use in promoting the plants and further breeding programs.

Examples of plants collected and introduced are: *Allium senescens* subsp. *senescens* 'Mongolian Gem', *Clematis fruticosa* 'Mongolian Gold', *Lilium pumilum*, *L. tenuifolia* (see *L. pumilum*), *Scabiosa superba* 'Mongolian Mist', *Scutellaria scor-diifolia* 'Mongolian Skies', and *Sedum tatarinowii* 'Mongolian Stardust'.

Some material that GreatPlants® for the Great Plains program is working on are: *Viburnum mongolicum*, *Hydrangea bretschneideri*, *Quercus mongolica*, *Caragana microphylla*, *Lonicera microphylla*, *Clematis* species, and *Patrinia* species.

For more information on plant exploration and collecting, see *Plant Exploration Protocols for the Present, Concerns for the Future*, a symposium proceedings published by Chicago Botanic Garden in 2000 (Ault, 2000).

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