

In 2001, Marlene Ahlburg wrote for my Hepaticakatlog

Hepatica x media and consorts

Hepatica x media is supposed to be, according to L. Simonkai (1878), a hybrid between Hepatica nobilis and Hepatica transsilvanica occurring wild in the Carpathians. It is very doubtful whether it exists in nature at all, probably no one has ever held it after its discoverer. In any case, it has never been in culture and has never been scientifically studied.

It was not until 1898 that Professor Friedrich Hildebrand, a botanist at the University of Heidelberg, published a brief report on his crossing experiments with the then known species of the genus Hepatica. None apparently satisfied him, except one. He wrote that it was amazing that the puny white Hepatica nobilis, of all species, had handsome offspring with the blue Hepatica transsilvanica and described it with great passion. Breeding takes long years, so he probably hadn't gotten very far with propagation when World War I broke out. After that, nothing more was heard of them. Had they died, for lack of care? Or stolen and cultivated incorrectly? No one knows. But in the middle of the war, in 1916, a single new plant appeared in England, bred by Ernst Ballard, = 'Ballardii', which looks like a beautiful image of Hildebrand's plants - with large, beautifully shaped soft blue silk flowers. Until long after the World War, this was the only hybrid, probably essentially in England, sparingly distributed among enthusiasts, and even today its number has not greatly increased, as this hybrid cannot be cultivated from seed. It is unfortunately sterile!

It is estimated that for 10-12 years now something is stirring again here and there among the hepatica friends. Nobody knows how many breeders are active in this field and where they are located. For sure there are a few in England, and in Germany of course. This is our home game, so to speak!

In the Lüneburg Heath, three Hepatica x media have been named so far. This does not yet mean that they are already plentiful enough for sale, but you can already make a note of them:

1) porcelain white-blue stars, leaves large, strongly lobed, marbled = '**Prof. Friedrich Hildebrand**',

2) white with lavender blue edge = '**Max Leichtlin**'.

3) white with bright red margins, long-stalked, marbled, staminodes red, pistils light green = '**Rötgesbüttler Röschen**'



'Ballardii'



'Maria Sybilla Merian'



'Max Leichtlin'



'Prof. F. Hildebrand'

The flowers of such hybrids are of different sizes, the shape of the flower also varies. The leaves are always trans-silvanica - form, often larger and more intricately formed. If the Nobilis - parents have patterned leaves, the *Hepatica x media* is also green-silvery spotted in a variety of forms. The shoot buds in the ground are vertical as in *Hepatica nobilis*, not oblique or horizontal as in *Hepatica transsilvanica*.



So far I know only plants that are sterile. This is usually easy to recognize by the stunted, ray-shaped pistils and stamens of the bastard. When it comes to flower colors, you get surprises depending on which parents you start from. I suspect that by far not all pollen grains of the other parents are really fertile. The number of crosses made is far too small for that. One simply has to try it out. Maybe one is lucky enough to find a particularly prolific parent pair, or one that shows excellent colors or flower shapes. Who knows?

The arena is free!

Marlene Ahlburg