



Book Review by Margaret Hodgson

The Gardener's Guide to Growing Hellebores by Graham Rice & Elizabeth Strangman

Timber Press, Portland, Oregon, 1993.
Reprinted 1996.

154 pages, approx. 38 pages colour photos, 14 line drawings. Appendix and Index of Hellebores. Hardbound, ISBN 0-88192-266-8 (hardcover)

Graham Rice Trained at Kew and spent eight years on the staff of *Practical Gardening* magazine. In recent years he has contributed to all the major gardening magazines and written a number of books, including *Plants for Problem Places* and, with Christopher Lloyd, *Garden Flowers from Seed*. He has served on several committees of the Hardy Plant Society, and is currently a member of the Floral A Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Elizabeth Strangman spent a year at Cambridge Botanic Garden before Studying for a Diploma in Horticulture at Studley College, Warwickshire. Over the past twenty years she has successfully raised and marketed many new strains of hellebore, and has built up an international reputation for the choice plants

she supplies from her Washfield Nursery in Kent.

Roger Phillips is a world-renowned horticultural photographer, whose superb close-up shots of individual plants and blooms broke new ground when they first appeared in books and periodicals, and have set the standard for detailed plant photography ever since.

Hellebores are the most captivating of all spring flowers. While winter is still at its worst their buds burst through, their delicate and mysterious blooms opening in an ever-expanding range of colours and forms as spring progresses. In our climate we see these plants sending out their flowers even earlier. ***The Gardener's Guide to Growing Hellebores*** features a wealth of practical advice on cultivation and propagation, plus an explanation of how to improve your plants through the breeding and selection of better strains.

Gardeners will appreciate the jargon-free accounts of species in the wild, descriptions of varieties currently being grown and the extensive chapter on associating hellebores with other plants and arranging groupings for maximum effect in the garden.

The book is arranged in the traditional way of giving the reader some background of the lure and magic of Hellebores to the authors. The ecology and botany chapter also gives basic classification to divide the hellebores into groups of similar species and nomenclature is covered.

Under "Cultivation", the authors give good tips of soil types to use, preparation needed and general care. Pests and diseases are covered in detail. From there, the authors move on to suggest good plant associations that work well with hellebores such as seasonal plants or colour planning.

Much information is included on dividing hellebores, growing hellebores from seed, storage of seed, sowing seed, and a wide range of topics associated with propagation.

The book also deals with identification of Hellebores and their occurrence around the world. The colour plates of various collections are exceptional and a great help in identifying that one unknown hellebore in your own garden.