



Plant of the Month, March 2019

***Glaucidium palmatum* f. *album*** - by David Ledsham

Anyone attempting to find out more about *Glaucidium palmatum* will discover that it is the solitary member of its genus and that its most coveted form is the one known as forma album or f. leucanthemum, which is the beautiful white form illustrated here. It also turns out to be narrowly endemic to parts of Japan, including Hokkaido and part of the Island of Honshu. In terms of its taxonomy its history has had something of a rough ride because although it is currently placed within the Ranunculaceae, the Buttercup family, it has previously found a home in the Peony family and even prior to that was considered to belong to the Poppy family, hence its popular native name - Shiran Aoi - The Wood Poppy. To my mind it seems very Peony-like until you take note of the leaves which are definitely palmate and also noticeably serrate along the margins. These characters are certainly not typical of the Peonies. Perhaps somebody somewhere is trying to sort out the phylogeny of this slippery species. I wish them luck.!



But putting all these taxonomic riddles aside for the time being, *Glaucidium palmatum* remains a much-coveted plant that would make a splendid addition to any garden. Once established this is a very long lived plant which in the wild prefers to grow in the damp semi-shade of woodland clearings and scrubby pasture. However in most gardens it resents disturbance of any kind and if dug up it might take a number of years to recover. I wish I had known this before I attempted to move my two plants into what I thought would be a better location. This turned out to be a very bad idea because neither plant has been seen since. I patiently await their return but fear the worst, in which case the images which accompany this article may only serve to commemorate lovely plants which have by now slipped away. Call me butterfingers if you like.....

