

PHOTOS: ANN CANN AND ALAMY

Penstemon 'Pensham Capricorn Moon' is one of Ann's cherished plants



'I caught the gardening bug from my son'

While most people are influenced by parents or peers, passionate gardener Ann Cann caught the growing bug from her son.

"Although interested in gardening from an early age, it was only when my son David started bringing unusual plants home that my sister and I also fell under their spell," said Ann, who has a small, hill-top garden in Crediton, Devon.

One of the plant societies she joined 25 years ago was conservation charity Plant Heritage, and she started propagating unusual varieties from her garden for its branch plant sales.



Ann Cann
Plant Guardian and passionate plant propagator based in Devon.

In 2013 she decided to catalogue all the plants in her garden on her computer. On checking her list against the RHS Plant Finder, an online database of garden plants in cultivation, she found many of her plants had two or fewer stockists, with some not available anywhere.

"This was when I became a Plant Heritage Plant Guardian," said

Ann. The charity's Plant Guardian members register and care for individual garden plants known to be rare or threatened. Some of her cherished Plant Guardian charges include pink Penstemon 'Pensham Capricorn Moon', dwarf-bearded iris 'Muggles' and alpine *Silene elizabethae*.

The first plants she registered were *Hebe laavidiana*, from New Zealand, and shrubby gumweeds *Grindelia chiloensis* and *G. integrifolia* from South America.

"I was amazed when the number of threatened plants reached over 100!" said Ann. "My favourite is *Hebe laavidiana*, a shrubby evergreen from southern New Zealand. It grows over a sunny wall and is so beautiful in spring."

She also loves *Klasea lycopifolia* (*Serratula lycopifolia*), a tall, stout plant with white, thistle-like flowers.

"Although I have no formal training I love propagating plants and I'm willing to try anything, from cuttings or seed. It's so important these special plants are not lost to cultivation."

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.



Grindelia chiloensis has gummy buds

NEXT WEEK A miniature orchid enthusiast with 10 terrariums in her bedroom



Grow your own!



This rare hebe is ideal for wall tops

Hebe laavidiana

This 20-50cm (8in-1¾ft) tall, evergreen shrublet is only found growing on the Banks peninsula in New Zealand's South Island, where it inhabits rocky granite outcrops and exposed cliff faces.

Threatened in the wild through habitat loss and over grazing by goats, it's also rare in UK gardens. Clothed in small, red-edged leaves it produces dense clusters of pale pink flowers in spring. Generally hardy, it needs an open, airy, sunny, well-drained position and is most effective on wall tops, pots or troughs. Lightly shear off spent flowering shoots to keep plant neat.

■ Available from www.botanicaplantnursery.co.uk; tel: 01728 747113.

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

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