

# The Archibald Archive – Genus Guides

## ANEMONE, HEPATICA AND PULSATILLA

These three allied genera in Ranunculaceae have all been included under Anemone. Pulsatilla is found in 'Flora of Turkey' and most North American floras under Anemone. This genus is such a cumbersome entity that we consider it both convenient and sensible to separate out such clearly defined groups of plants. Even after separating these two genera, we are still left with a diverse conglomeration of almost 150 species in the genus Anemone itself. These are distributed in temperate areas throughout the world. We list only a few of them but are interested particularly in two groups.

**Anemone:** The tuberous-rooted, summer-dormant species distributed from the Mediterranean area eastward to Central Asia include some very worthwhile plants, whose requirements fit in well with those of the many summer-dormant bulbs, corms and rhizomes from the same areas. These all have fluffy, wind-dispersed seeds which are best sown from summer to early winter for germination in spring. Many are not particularly long-lived and some seed should be sown every few years to maintain vigorous stock and avoid the repeating the loss to cultivation of such species as *A. biflora*, which was introduced in the 1960's then lost through failure to propagate it from seed.

The Sino-Himalayan species are also one of our enthusiasms. These have completely different requirements. The dwarf, buttercup-like perennials around *Anemone obtusiloba* include some extremely attractive plants, variable both in colour and habit. They are plants of damp montane meadow-habitats and enjoy a rich soil and cool, moist summer conditions, ideally becoming drier in winter when they would be snow-covered. Their seeds ripen quickly after flowering and drop when green. As flowers appear successively over a long period with us in summer, we can usually send out freshly collected green seeds between June and October. We have been told by Henrik Zetterlund that dried seed from these species will germinate satisfactorily but for the present, we shall try to send out only fresh, green seeds during the months of our summer.

**Pulsatilla** includes about 40 species of dwarf, herbaceous perennials with a circumboreal distribution, usually growing in steppe or dryish, montane grassland. They are easily distinguished from anemones in seed as all carry a similar, cluster of wind-dispersed seeds, each with a long, silky style attached. In cultivation, they are all very hardy and long-lived in a well-drained site in full sun. Like all alpine, some of the high altitude ones are intolerant of winter wetness and very hot dry conditions in summer. Some species are difficult to flower well. Seed usually germinates quite well in spring if sown between summer and midwinter.

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**Hepatica** with 7 species has a similar distribution to *Pulsatilla* but it has a disjunct, localized distribution in deciduous woodland habitats where conditions are moist in spring but dry and shaded in summer. They are a distinct group of species, separated from *Anemone* by having three-lobed leaves and three, small green sepals at the base of the flowers, which are carried on stems without any stem-leaves. They all flower in early spring and ripen their seeds rapidly. Seeds drop when green but fresh, dried seed should give no problems with germination if sown before the winter. We have had reports of good results of the germination of seed sent to growers in Australia and New Zealand, where there would be another 6 months delay before conditions would be right for germination. Most seed we might have available in summer would have come from the expert German grower of woodland plants, Hermann Fuchs, and availability depends on how favourable spring weather is for pollination.

Nomenclature and Further information: We follow the names used in the accounts of these genera in the standard floras: 'Flora Europaea' 'Flora Iranica', 'Flora of Turkey', 'The Jepson Manual', 'Flora of China' and so on, editing where necessary to separate *Pulsatilla* from *Anemone*. There is no book for gardeners dealing with these genera, though it was rumoured a year or so ago that Chris Grey-Wilson might be writing one. A publication covering all three genera would be welcome.