

Virtual Hortlandia 2020

Far Reaches Farm

www.farreachesfarm.com

This week Joanne Fuller interviewed Kelly Dodson from Far Reaches Farm nursery and edited the conversation for this article.

Kelly, what are some of the plants that are good to order from the nursery now?

We grow very limited quantities of plants, so the available selection is changing all the time. If you see something you want on our website, jump on it, 'cause it could sell out quickly. A great plant available right now is *Stylidium graminifolium*. It is a perennial found in Australia and Tasmania with grass-like foliage and a shocking pink flower spike. It likes drainage and will tolerate dry conditions. *Gillenia trifoliata* 'Pink Profusion' is a great plant available right now. Little pink flowers are held above darker foliage that is better in full sun, and it gets lovely yellow fall leaf color. This week, *Lobelia laxiflora* ssp. *angustifolia* is a new listing. It creates a graceful two-foot clump of thin leaves with masses of tubular red flowers with bright yellow throats. It blooms from mid-summer to fall and is surprisingly hardy here. And *Schefflera gracilis* NV 064 which is a smaller schefflera with nicely pointed leaves. It blooms young with creamy-white flowers followed by black fruit. It is a Far Reaches Botanical Conservancy offering.

How did Far Reaches get started?

My wife, Sue Milliken and I met on a seed collecting expedition to China in 1997. We found that we had a completely compatible vision of finding and growing the most impractical plants. We bought six acres in the city limits of Port Townsend and started building our collection of very rare plants. In 2015, we founded the Far Reaches Botanical Conservancy which is a non-profit organization created to hold and preserve our collection. The nursery allows us to grow a huge selection of plants and mail order created a national customer base. The problem with that is, now, we are not limited to plants that will grow here--we grow things that grow everywhere.

What is a Far Reaches Botanical Conservancy offering?

Plants that we designate as Far Reaches Botanical Conservancy offerings are threatened and vulnerable in their natural habitat. We are growing and preserving them for the future. When you buy a Far Reaches Botanical Conservancy plant, we contribute half of the profit to the Conservancy. Sue and I are passionate about playing our part in preserving rich biodiversity in the face of the destruction of much of the earth's wild spaces.

I'm sure you have many favorite plants, but will you share a few?

I love all of the Solomon Seals. That includes *polygonatums*, *disporums*, *prosartes*, *uvularia* -- the list is huge. Right now, we have so many good ones at the nursery. This week, our newsletter listed *Polygonatum pratti* MD12-38. It's a little thing with small white bells that are marked with magenta dangling from the leaf stems. This one is a Far Reaches Botanical Conservancy plant. I also love *Podophyllums*. We are doing a lot of crossing of the Chinese species to create new leaf markings and flower forms. These are very exciting plants. Customers can expect to see new introductions soon.

Right up there on the favorites list is *Cardiocrinums*. We have collected the seed of so many forms in the wild-- they are highly variable. We have everything from the traditional flowers which are white with a slight purple blush or mark, to flowers which are very heavily marked with purple. We are currently working on the development of pink forms. We have offered *Cardiocrinum giganteum* var. *yunnanense* ex. 'Big & Pink' which is one of two pink *Cardiocrinums* known to exist. We are now growing more seed from the pink forms to see what else we can get. It's a slow process developing new strains of a plant that takes seven years to bloom from seed.

But in the end, I love so many of them and they are all our babies.

Going on collecting trips, growing and selling so many rare plants, you and Sue must connect with rare plants people around the world?

We have plant nerd friends and customers all over the country. One thing we are proud of, is how many of our plants go to public and botanic gardens. The Hoyt Arboretum is home to a good many of our plants. And, we try to get our uncommon clematis species down to the Rogerson Clematis Garden. *Hortlandia* is definitely one of the best sales in the country. At *Hortlandia*, we connect with so many great plants people that are customers and vendors. It's a major plant swap for us, we never come home empty handed.

How do people buy your plants now?

We always do mail order from our website <http://www.farreachesfarm.com/>, and this year, we can hardly keep up with the orders. Some plants listed on the website are only available for pick-up at the nursery. Right now, we don't have the staff to manage a safe open weekend or by appointment visits. If things change, and we are able to have an open weekend this summer, we will announce that in our e-newsletter and on the website. If people are serious about buying plants from us, the best thing is to go to the website and sign up for our e-newsletter because that is where we announce nursery happenings and availability of many plants that sell out quickly.