

# Special plants *Pat Mansey*

## *Dracunculus vulgaris*

*Dracunculus vulgaris* is a rather weird but magnificent hardy tuber, common name Dragon Arum. The leaves appear in early spring, packed into a tight pointed spear. The stalk develops into an extremely stout trunk, heavily mottled, making it look very strange, and sometimes measuring as much as three and a half inches across. It needs to be this sturdy in order to support the weight of the huge flower, consisting of a spectacular deep red spathe, 28 inches tall, which slowly unfurls, exposing a shiny almost black spadix.

The most remarkable feature, remembered by anyone encountering this plant while in flower is its foul smell, like rotting meat, but if viewed from a distance it is an impressive sight, looking splendid if grown among hellebores for instance.



## *Eucomis bicolor*

This is one of several species of bulbous perennials, bordering between hardy and frost tender, producing in midsummer large wavy-edged green leaves. A stout stem develops in late summer, darkly spotted, at the top of which is the flower head, composed of many star-shaped pale yellow/cream flowers, each outlined in maroon and which open from the bottom of the stem upwards. A topknot of leaves, resembling those of a pineapple, splays out above the racemes of flowers.



The whole plant reaches about 24 inches, prefers a sunny spot, and is best grown in a pot to facilitate moving into shelter in winter. *Pat Mansey*