

Special plants *Pat Mansey*

Shortia uniflora 'Kantoense'

This is one of my special little treasures whose flowers are fairly fleeting, but exquisite while they last. *Shortia uniflora* is a mat-forming perennial which has rather special requirements: firstly it must have humus rich acid soil, then it needs moist cool shade. As it is so special, I keep my plant in a pot in a cold frame where I can keep an eye on it and give it what it asks. It has glossy evergreen leathery leaves, green in spring but becoming reddish later in the season. The flowers develop in early spring, rising only a few inches above the foliage, and have five flat pure white petals with fringed edges, and prominent stamens. This



wonderful plant is worth all the effort involved in growing it. It is always fairly expensive, another good reason to look after it carefully! It can be propagated from seed or basal cuttings.

Fritillaria acmopetala AGM

Among the many varieties of fritillaries, I find this one to be most successful. It is a bulbous perennial, one of the European species, is about 20 inches tall, bearing 8 inch long, narrow, grey-green leaves alternately up the stem. The flowers are pendant bell shaped, about 12 inches long, sometimes two to a stem, the outer three petals are pale green while the inner three are reddish brown, making a marked contrast. This fritillary is fully hardy, flowering in early April, and, given well drained soil, should build up into a good colony over a few years. It is as well to look out for the destructive red lily beetle which is partial to fritillaries. *Pat Mansey.*

