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The review of the book
THE WORLD OF CONTEMPORARY
ORNAMENTAL PERENNIALS AND GARDENS.
Establishing, caring for and transforming
perennial beds and gardens

Christian Kress, *Meine Welt der Stauden. Staudenbeete anlegen, pflegen und verändern* (My perennial world. Setting up, looking after and changing the perennial bed), 224 pages, 220 colorful photos, Stuttgart (Hohenheim) 2017, Verlag Eugen Ulmer, ISBN 978-3-8001-0834-3, www.ulmer.de

Christian Kress is one of the most famous perennial gardeners in Central Europe. Ch. Kress's perennial horticulture under the name "Sarastro Stauden". ("Sarastro Perennials") was founded in 1995. "Sarastro perennials" means the man-made changes in existing botanical perennials to excellent ornamental garden perennials. This is similar to the process of transformation of the evil Sarastro priest into a noble ruler. The most important perennials grown by Ch. Kress are shade-loving plants, alpine plants and bedding perennials. The most famous plants include wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), barrenwort (*Epimedium*), yanhusuo (*Corydalis*), snowdrop (*Galanthus*), funkia (*Hosta*). The well-known plants of Ch. Kress also include flowerbed perennials and prairie perennials. It is necessary to mention here such species of perennials as yarrow (*Achillea*), giant hyssop (*Agastache*), ornamental garlics (*Allium*), not yet known yet long-lived blue-star (*Amsonia*), many species of asters, mainly of North American origin, as well as baptisia (*Baptisia*), sparges and geraniums, peonies, sage, daylilies, catnips, European goldenrods, stonecrops, houseleeks, delospermas (*Delosperma*). Ch. Kress's favorite

perennials also include the so-called wild perennials (botanical perennials), such as burnets (*Sanguisorba*), knotweeds (*Persicaria*), goat's beard (*Aruncus*), Solomon's seals (*Polygonatum*). Very characteristic is a large collection of floxes (*Phlox paniculata*, garden flox).

The Sarastro Stauden perennial garden has a show garden where you can admire the perennials grown there. The presentation of perennials takes place on a relatively narrow bed, over 60 m long and only 2 m wide. The garden blooms from early spring (snowdrop) to summer perennials until late autumn, when asters and grasses are still blooming. The garden and horticulture of Ch. Kress is a sightseeing site (it is on the border between Bavaria and Austria)¹.

His rich botanical and gardening experience was presented by Ch. Kress in "My World of Perennials. Establishing, caring for and changing the perennial bed". Ch. Kress's book is extensive (224 pages) and richly illustrated (220 colour photographs). A study by Ruth Wegegerer entitled "A Brave Man in the Perennial Garden: Christian Kress" has an introductory character. The author of the introduction emphasizes the peculiarity and uniqueness of "Sarastro Stauden" gardening and its founder. Frost-free perennials are grown there in conditions close to nature. For example, there is the "Museum of Phloxes" with many varieties, including Russian ones. Four basic parts of the study can be mentioned: "Fascination and vocation" (pp. 9-44); "Practical knowledge about perennials" (pp. 45-116); "Most personally favourite perennials". (pp. 117-142); "Several experiences and examples of planting plants" (pp. 143-216), as well as "Service" (pp. 217-224).

In the first part ("Fascination and vocation"), the author presents the common day of his perennial horticulture, as well as natural stands for his favourite perennials. This section presents: the characteristics of his own perennial horticulture; the characteristics of a perennial gardener throughout the year; the breeding and selection of perennials; and the discovery of perennials under natural conditions. Since 1995, Ch. Kress has been involved in the propagation of perennials, shaping their assortments and advising clients. More than 2000 species and varieties of perennials are grown in "Sarastro Stauden" horticulture. This is characterized by a passion for harvesting perennials; old varieties and a new range of perennials are important; the gardener is dependent on the tastes of the customers. In Kress's view, small specialized perennial horticulture is still a viable option alongside large garden centres. Perennial horticulture is characterized by the following seasons: peace before the storm: January; slow-progressing development of activities: February; cold and urgent potting of plants: March; the season affects us: April; much to do in May and June; summer: work for all; second spring for the perennial gardener; preparation for frost and winter.

In the opinion of Ch. Kress, many exciting varieties of perennials were found as random seedlings (e.g. the bellflower 'Sarastro' and the stonecrop 'Matrona'). Many of the perennials in Kress' horticulture come from the surrounding area, where many inter-

¹ Christian H. Kress "Sarastro Stauden" Ort 131, A-4974 ORT/INNKRIS/Austria.

esting plants were found. The International Union of Perennials has contributed to the spread of many perennials. However, the collection of seedlings and parts of plants from the natural environment requires a great deal of care. Many interesting perennials have been discovered in mountainous areas, such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia: Many interesting perennials have been discovered in mountainous areas such as the Dinar Alps and the Olympus in Thessalia, Northern Greece. Many perennials come from Turkey, Iran, the Himalayas and China. Relatively few cultivated plants come from the Southern Hemisphere.

The part entitled "Practical knowledge about perennials" is devoted to the use of perennials (different life spans of perennials); soil relations; the size and forms of discounts; the problem of planning discounts; basic rules for the use of perennials; the influx of new varieties; the need to abandon the most expansive perennials; the problem of using edible and poisonous plants to avoid poisoning; the issue of growing perennials until late life; measures for appropriate soil conditions; proper care of perennials (basic work in the first year, care in the rhythm of the year, cutting old parts of plants); culture of perennial rejuvenation; possibilities of perennial propagation. According to Ch. Kress, the most important perennials for flowerbeds include aconites, wolfsbanes, phloxes, irises, lilacs and black bugbanes. Many perennials are marked with longevity and live for more than 10 years. Some perennials, however, are very expansive. These include plume poppy (*Macleaya*), knotweeds (*Fallopia sachalinensis*, *F. japonica*), some dwarf bamboo and even autumn-flowering anemones. Only a few plants, including perennials, are extremely poisonous. Weeds are a major threat to perennial beds. One of the most dangerous weeds is the field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*). There are already numerous methods of weed control.

The part titled "The most personally favourite perennials" has a very personal character. The following sections can be distinguished here: alpine perennials and rock gardens; perennials in semi-shaded areas; or perennial beds. It would be difficult to list all the perennials discussed here. Alpine perennials and rock gardens include, among other things, the Schwarz wulfenia (*Wulfenia x schwarzi*), the characteristic Prophet's flower (*Arnebia pulchra*), the beautifully fragrant carnation (*Dianthus plumarius* 'Ohrid', the radiant beauty of Arizona Hamenoxys scaposa, the *Stachys lavendulifolia*) and the Schwarz wulfenia (*Wulfenia x schwarzi*). There is a wide selection of plants for semi-shaded areas, among others: anemone 'Rotkäppchen', green-and-gold of Virginia (*Chrysogonum virginianum* 'Andre Viette'), various corydalis species (*Corydalis elata*, *Corydalis* 'Craigton Blue' or *C. solida* 'George Baker'), different species and varieties of snowdrops, stinking hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*), common hepatica, many varieties of pilewort, and original Tibetan orchid (*Pleione limprichtii*). In autumn, rockfoiles *Saxifraga fortunei* flower, as well as the large-flowered Himalayan meadow-rue (*Thalictrum reniforme*).

Ch. Kress grows many attractive flowerbeds. These include the flower chive (*Allium schoenoprasum* 'Forescate'), a relatively unknown amsonia from the prairie area (*Amsonia illustris*), the beautifully flowering aster variety (*Aster dumosus* 'Augenweide', *A. x frikartii* 'Wunder von Stäfa', *A. novi-belgi* 'Nannis Liebling'), and the abundantly flowering bergenia (*Bergenia* 'Eroica'). The "flagship" of Ch. Kress's perennials remains the

Campanula "Sarastro" bellflower. The beautiful flowerbed plants include: Korean reed (*Calamagrostis brachytricha*, diamond grass), chrysanthemum *Chrysanthemum* 'Poesie', the long-flowering erodium *Erodium x hybridum*. The following flowerbed perennials belong to this group: spurges *Euphorbia amygdaloides* 'Purpurea', *Euphorbia griffithii* 'Fern Cottage', and *Euphorbia cornigera* 'Goldener Turm'), geraniums – beautiful varieties (*Geranium x oxonianum* 'Königshof', and *Geranium psilostemon* with interesting varieties), sneezeweeds (especially *Helenium* 'El Dorado'), Austrian lilacs (especially an attractive variety is *Hemerocallis* 'Haller Kardinal'), beautiful varieties of perennial phloxes (*Phlox paniculata*) among others, 'Düsterlohe' (K. Foerster's variety), 'Drakon' (Russian variety), 'Ostinato' (discovered by Ch. Kress). The gardens must also have such perennials as *Sanguisorba* 'Scapio' burnet, *Thalictrum* 'Elin' meadow-rue, *Sedum* 'Matrona' stonecrop and *Solidago* 'Hiddigeigei' goldenrod – beautiful yellow leaves, as well as *Solidago* 'Loysder Crown' with sulfur-yellow flowers.

The last part of Ch. Kress's book is devoted to his own gardening experience and examples of (most characteristic ones) plantings of perennials. There are presented here problems such as: the dynamics and statistics of planting; species diversity and minimalism; the extent of sustainability of shaded gardens; major challenges – dry shaded areas; wet shaded areas; beds with changing humidity in full sun; climate change features – gravel and steppe gardens; extreme positions – between asphalt and communication; extreme positions – perennials on roofs; plant world richness in alpine and rock gardens; mutual planting of vegetables and perennials; perennial richness in pots, crates and containers.

When gardens reach the stage of maturity, they remain alone without excessive human interference. This is particularly true for shaded gardens. Trees are of great importance here: tupelo trees (*Nyssa sylvatica*), maple trees (*Acer rubrum* 'October Glory', *A. triflorum*), whitebeam trees, viburnum (*Viburnum plicatum* 'Mariesii'), ornamental varieties of elderberry and coniferous trees. The most beautiful shady garden in the spring presents itself, among others, barrenworts, hellebores (*Helleborus*), many shadow grasses, primroses, and Solomon's seals. Dry shaded gardens are inhabited by numerous species of barrenworts, large-flowered comfrey, white-brown ground elder (very popular in the United States), very weather-resistant big root geranium (numerous varieties) (*Geranium macrorrhizum*). There is also no shortage of plants for damp centipede gardens. One can mention such perennials as thyroid astilboides (*Astilboides tabularis*), colorful primulas from the Himalayas, majestic skunk cabbage (*Lysichiton*), as well as many species of grasses and fern. Irises and eupatoriums (*Eupatorium*) grow on beds that are variable in terms of humidity. Gravel and steppe gardens are increasingly being established in climate change conditions. The English gardener Beth Chatto has a great deal of merit in creating gravel and steppe gardens. Most of the cultivated plants come from European Pannonian areas, Central Asia, dry prairies of North America and Mediterranean areas. They are doing without irrigation systems. Nowadays, many plants can be grown in gravel gardens (p.191); a similar situation applies to extreme positions in cities (the so-called communication islands). Creating alpine and rock gardens requires imitation of nature. Many interesting plants can be cultivated here.

Ch. Kress's book "My World of Perennials. Establishing, caring for and changing the perennial bedding" deserves the attention of Polish readers. It presents well the state of the theoretical foundations and practices in the field of perennial cultivation and the creation of gardens. Numerous colour photographs make reading easier. The author uses his own horticultural and botanical experience in a comprehensive way. This book deserves wide popularization in Poland as a valuable help for specialists – gardeners and a wide range of plant and garden lovers. It would be worth translating this well-written book into Polish as well. It contains many interesting considerations in the conditions of climate change.

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