

## ***Klasea lycopifolia***

### **Malcolm Allison**

While this is a very striking and distinctive plant, there's some uncertainty about its correct name. I have come across it as, variously: *Cirsium pannonicum*, *Serratula bulgarica*, *Serratula lycopifolia*... there are probably further Latin names assigned to it as it exists in gardens.

It is a very large thistle, and from a basal rosette of dark green, coarsely serrated (but not spiny), strappy green leaves arise upright stems carrying a number of large, white thistle heads. These start appearing usefully late in the season (from mid-July) and continue for a month or more. Like many thistles, the flowers are very attractive to bumblebees and other pollinators. For a white-flowered plant, the dying and dead flower heads are not too obtrusive.

In a wet summer, the flowering stems will reach seven feet or more, but this year, in the drought, they're only growing to about five feet. Otherwise, the plant seems largely unaffected by the drought, and the leaves remain a good, dark green, with little die back. It does not seem fussy as to soil, growing both in heavy clay and in sandy patches at the nursery. It self-sows to an extent, but any unwanted seedlings are easily pulled out.

Propagation is either by sowing seeds, which will produce flowering plants in the first season if sown early, or by dividing established clumps.