

## ***Hedera helix* 'Russelliana'**

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Many gardeners are wary of ivy because of its invasive habit, but not all ivies climb and invade. Besides tree ivies, which are derived from the mature non-climbing shoots of ivy, there are three shrubby cultivars of *Hedera helix* that have been grown for over a century in Britain, namely *Hedera helix* 'Congesta', *H. h.* 'Conglomerata' and *H. h.* 'Erecta'. All have adventitious roots up their stems, but only 'Conglomerata' can be trained to climb, though more often ends up as a tangled mound.

But there is a fourth erect, non-climbing ivy, *H. h.* 'Russelliana'. It too has an abundance of adventitious roots but it is its shoots that impel it stiffly upward. We grew it up a 1.5 metre fence post, tying in any branches that through their weight fell outwards; it reached two metres, then the support rotted and broke, so there is no knowing how high it might have gone! Any shoot veering even slightly off vertical will curl up to correct itself. It does not have to be grown as a sky rocket.

Neither ivy experts Peter Rose nor Hugh McAllister have been able to trace the origin of this ivy. Its existence pre World War II was confirmed to Peter Rose by John Russell (my husband's uncle), who had inherited the long established family nursery of "Russells of Windlesham" from his father L.R.Russell. I had understood that *H. h.* 'Russelliana' was an L,R.Russell introduction. The nursery catalogues that I possess (tantalisingly un-dated) list 'Russelliana' (3s-6d), but no mention of who introduced it. Maybe that was not the done thing, as the FACT that LRR introduced *Hedera colchica* 'Dentata Variegata' *inter alia* to cultivation is not mentioned either in those catalogues. However, John Russell's son Louis claims 'Russelliana' as an LRR introduction in his book on the history of the family nursery, but if this is so I am surprised that his father did not mention it earlier.

### **Bibliography:**

Peter Q Rose, 'The Gardener's Guide to Growing Ivies' 1996

Hugh McAllister & Rosalyn Marshall, 'Hedera - The Complete Guide' 2017