



# Primroses

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## American Primrose Society Quarterly

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### On the cover

*This gold-laced polyanthus is just one of many entered by Agnes Johnson at the Tacoma Primrose Society shows over a 10-year period. Perfect form—well grown and well groomed—make it best in its class.*



## Memorial edition

This special color edition of the quarterly is presented as a memorial to Agnes Johnson. A substantial bequest from the family enables APS to offer full color illustrations in this edition and to purchase a national trophy to be awarded each year for best gold-laced polyanthus.

The society expresses its appreciation to Jack Zeigler, Mrs. Johnson's son, for his kindness. Mother and son were devoted friends, sensitive to each others' attitudes and goals. Knowing his mother's love of gardening and her skill, Mr. Zeigler made the memorial gift one of his immediate priorities. The check was presented to APS on the day of his mother's funeral as friends gathered in the little Anderson Island chapel to honor this outstanding woman.

Choice people, like choice plants, are never forgotten. Memories of their good qualities serve as a constant reminder that the search for perfection is a worthy goal.

## President's message

This issue contains tributes to two beloved and long-time members of APS who died recently: Agnes Johnson of Anderson Island, Wash., and Ivel Agge of Milwaukie, Ore. Agnes will be especially remembered for her lovely gold-laced polyanthus strains and Ivel for her improvements on marginata and others in the auricula section. Their enthusiasm and love for primulas inspired many others. They will be sadly missed.

The APS board met in August and November and wrestled with the problem of financing the quarterly without asking too much of smaller chapters and affiliated clubs. The result: a previous decision to assess these groups \$30 annually for APS support was rescinded.

Instead chapter and affiliated club dues will be \$7 annually, which includes a subscription to the quarterly. In addition, clubs will be asked to donate \$1 a member annually in support of APS. It is hoped that larger clubs will make larger donations and that all will consider fund-raising projects for their own (and APS's) benefit. You all know the rising cost story and the value of the journal, the seed exchange and other APS services.

Recently my wife Marian and I volunteered to re-do the mailing list of the quarterly for our overworked editors. What an eye-opener! Our hats are off to Cy and Rita Happy and their predecessors in the editor's office and to Mary Speers and her predecessors in the treasurer's job and all others who have kept up these lists in the past!

Think of the interpreting to get your hand-written name and address right, the deciding if the check from Minnie Jones is for the membership of Mrs. J. P. Jones, checking U.S. and foreign zip codes, deciding when to remove names for non-payment of dues! Please be patient and understanding if your name is misspelled or otherwise not how you want it or if there are errors in your address. Send a legible correction to treasurer Mary Speers, and we will get it right.

I hope the winter is kind to your primroses and tough on their enemies.

*James Menzies*



Juliana hybrid, Ida,  
tiny rockery jewel



Primula Japonica  
at poolside



Alpine auriculas in an English greenhouse

Primulas offer colors and growth habits to suit any taste. Meeting their needs for growing conditions is a never-ending challenge. Here are examples: poolside, cool greenhouse, rockery and border.

Double primrose dazzles spring border



'Jewel of spring flowers' . . .

## Growing gold-laced polyanthus

by Cyrus Happy

Perhaps the best way for me to write about gold-laced polyanthus is to make it personal.

In the 1920's my mother had several groups of small-flowered, mahogany-colored polyanthus in her garden. I remember them as my introduction to the primrose family. They had clear yellow centers and an occasional touch of lacing. I believe they came from Sutton's seed.

### Survivors

Peter Klein of Tacoma grew gold-laced polyanthus in the early 1950s. As I recall, they came from a few seeds shared by Florence Bellis of Barnhaven. A few named varieties had survived World War II in the north of England. The grower had sent some precious seeds to America. That was a new beginning for the gold-laced polyanthus.

I observed and grew some of the Klein plants. They were very good. Pete gave me a bit of advice on pollinating. He said the best seed parents are the second best plants, adding that plants with perfect lacing may pass on an overabundance of lacing to their offspring. Plants with very narrow and occasionally broken lacing make better parents. Further, seed and pollen parents should have a clear, well-defined yellow eye.

### Larger flowers

About that time I received from J. Antrobus of Wilmslow, Cheshire, England, a few seeds of gold-laced polyanthus. The plants had larger flowers than the Klein

plants. I then learned that Mr. Antrobus had been trying to bring about a modest increase in the pip size.

I'm afraid I was spoiled by the perfection of the Klein plants. Size did not bring equal refinement. Fortunately, Peter Klein lived long enough to distribute seeds to connoisseurs at home and abroad.

Mrs. C. C. (Violet) Chambers of Seattle was one of them. For more than 20 years she has had Klein strain gold-laced polyanthus tucked in her shrubbery border. Time has taken many of them, but about five survive.

### Agnes' 'busy bees'

I raised plants from her seed six years ago with good results. The best were crossed with one of Agnes Johnson's "busy bees," and excellent plants resulted.

Agnes had purchased a plant of old "Tiny" in Portland back in the 1930's (for a dime) and spread divisions and seedlings among her Anderson Island neighbors. The "busy bees" flourished on the shores of southern Puget Sound.

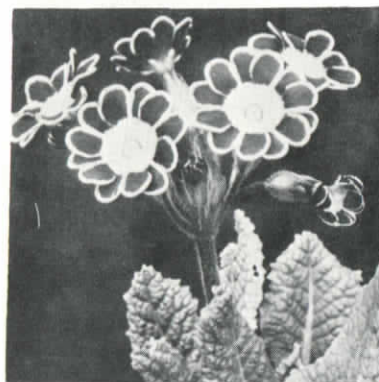
Peter Klein had been gone for at least five years, and the gold-laced polyanthus were not well represented at our local primrose shows. Then Agnes Johnson began appearing at the entry table with a basket of plants under her arm.

### Superb plants

Her entries always included a superb gold-laced polyanthus, single or few-

crowned, and groomed to perfection—as were all her plants. Agnes dominated the gold-laced section at the Tacoma show for at least 10 years.

Through the last 25 years Barnhaven in Oregon and later in England has offered good gold-laced polyanthus seed. From this source anyone who wanted to grow



them could get a good start. In a local garden several hundred plants were grown from Barnhaven seed. They were all gold-laced polyanthus. Some were pin-eyed and a few were silver-laced, but there was no doubt about the good quality of the seed. Of course, when it came to selecting show quality plants, the choice narrowed down to about 10 per cent.

### Exhibition quality

For exhibiting in the gold and silver-laced polyanthus class a plant must be thrum-eyed (anthers filling the tube and hiding the stigma, which must be lower in the tube).

Florence Bellis points out that George Glenny in his "Properties of Flowers," written about 1835, provides us with the point score still used. This is based on a six-point total.

Characteristic	Points
1. Strong, straight stem, 4-6 inches . . . . .	½
2. Footstalks of pips just long enough to bring all together in a compact symmetrical whole . . . . .	½
3. Truss not less than 5 well-expanded flowers . . . . .	1
4. Center or eye round, pure, without stain, and uniform with that on the edges . . . . .	1½
5. Lacing thinly and evenly laid on round each segment, cutting down to the center . . . . .	1½
6. Ground color red or black, unshaded and dense . . . . .	1
	<hr/> 6

One can see from analyzing the score that the emphasis is on the flower detail. The plant form is secondary.

Preference is for a five-petaled flower because it is usually less lumpy and not so likely to be crimped at the edges. Width of the eye should be the diameter of the tube; ground color should be the same width as the eye. (This reminds one of the ideal in show auriculas, the concentric circles.) The ideal diameter of a

pip is 5/8" to 3/4."

### Flat pips

The pip should be perfectly flat, never ruffled or waved, but slightly scalloped or indented on the edges. The pip should be divided in five or six places (depending upon the number of petals), each petal indented in the center to make a kind of heart-shaped end.

These plants, Mrs. Bellis pointed out, were developed in an age of ornate detail



Agnes Johnson's lath house

and for the purpose of bending nature to the will of the cultivator in a most exact and precise conception of what a show plant should be. At the time Glenny set up his score of points, these were primarily used for show table display rather than garden use.

#### Haysom's hints

C. G. Haysom of England wrote in "Florists' Auriculas and Gold-Laced Polyanthus" that the gold-laced polyanthus is easily grown and readily propagated when it is given the right growing conditions. It likes good rich loam with some well-decayed leaf mold and grit or sharp sand. Crumbly, old decayed cow manure is a good dressing in the spring. No strong manure or fertilizers should be used.

"The more simply the plants are grown the better," Haysom wrote. "More gold-laced polyanthus and auriculas have been killed by obnoxious feeding than by any other means."

He recommended beds elevated about four inches above ground level with bricks to retain the soil. Leave the joining of the bricks slightly open to allow water to drain away freely so the crowns and stems of the plants will be free of standing water.

#### Water properly

However, don't let the plants get thirsty. Although drainage must be excellent, plants must be well watered during dry weather and sprinkled again during hot summer evenings. If plants are allowed to dry out, Haysom warned, they are liable to attacks of red spider, a difficult pest to get rid of.

The gold-laced polyanthus is not quite as hardy as the garden polyanthus,

Haysom said. It requires a little protection against frost and east winds and against excessive winter wet. The plants like a bed facing west or northwest because they dislike strong sunshine.

#### Dividing plants

Plants must be lifted and divided every second year. Cut away from the main stem all the strong outer growths, making sure roots are attached. Rub a little powdered lime or sulphur over the cut and plant the divisions immediately. Don't throw away the old stems or fine roots. Plant them, and quite a few will produce new growth. Haysom advised that the beginning of August is a good time to divide the plants so they will become well established before severe winter weather arrives.

If you raise them from seed, sow the seed early in the spring in pans covered with a sheet of glass. Use good loam, leaf mold and sand. Press the soil down rather firmly, sow seeds thinly and barely cover them with silver sand. Spray the surface lightly with a syringe and place the pans in a cool, moist shady corner of a cold house.

#### Keep good ones

Examine the plants carefully as they begin to flower and discard the ones that don't meet your high standards. Breeding really good varieties of gold-laced polyanthus is a slow process.

It's worth the effort. Modern growers certainly have agreed with the early-day florists that the gold-laced polyanthus "in its perfection of form, coloring and properties shone brilliantly in the floral world."

It is, they agree, "a jewel among spring flowers."

I was primarily a border auricula grower and was working toward better borders when our spring show came up. I had little to show but found that some Barnhaven gold-laced polyanthus in the open garden were not too bad. I lifted some, potted them and put them on the show bench because I believe that every member should take something to help the show along.

To my surprise, I took a first; and at the auricula show a month later the same two plants took a second and a third. It was at this show that I noticed that Mr. Jarvis was showing a gold lace with six petals. (He kindly gave me the plant after the show.)

Mr. Warriner had mentioned years before in our year book that he had a six-petaled plant of gold lace like the picture of Burgard's Formosa in Mr. Hecker's book. This fired my imagination, and I set out to grow a six-petaled strain of gold lace.

I sent a questionnaire to a number of members. As a result I found that there are several strains of gold lace being grown, but few had ever thrown six-petaled pips.

From the local library I borrowed a book, Robert Sweet's "The Florist's Guide and Cultivator's Director" published in 1827. In it he illustrated pips and described them both as being "generally six-cleft."

As a result of my inquiries I have received seed from many growers. It looks as if I will be having a busy time next year. (I am also still trying to breed border auriculas.)

It was in the quarterly for spring 1977 that Cy Happy fired my imagination with an article about Anderson Island and

Agnes Johnson's gold-laced polyanthus. Finding that Agnes was a member of the NAPS(S), I wrote to her and started a friendship such as I had not dreamed of.

## Learning about gold lace

by Bernard M. Smith

Agnes wrote telling me about herself, sent me some seed and tried to send me some of her plants. Alas, the importation laws made it impossible for her to send them direct; however I found that if the plants were sent by passenger's "hand luggage," they could be examined at my home.

Before Agnes could send the plants she was called to that "Garden of Eden" where I am sure she tends her primulas, making heaven the beautiful place that she tried to make the earth. Although she has gone, I am told she left instructions for my plants to be forwarded to me.

People like her are like perfect gold-laced polyanthus. Rare to the extreme. We never met and yet I shall miss her.

Bernard M. Smith has five seedlings from Agnes Johnson's plants "going well and strong" and by now should have the plants from her garden. He says he owes "favours all over the globe. One day I will repay them." His garden is at "Windways," 35 The Drive, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 4BY England.

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This membership list is current as of November 1978.

It is hoped that members scattered across the countryside will find each other by using this listing. Those who live within driving distance may want to organize into study groups or small clubs to exchange ideas and plants.

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# I have a question!

Answers by Alice Hills Baylor

**Q. What time of year does one divide the primulas that go dormant in winter?**

A. I divide mine (*P. sieboldii*) soon after the plants bloom, the foliage still showing. Then I put small sticks where they have been planted so as not to disturb them in spring as they are late in showing. One can plant poppies over them for later bloom.

**Q. Are gold-laced polyanthus at their best when grown as single crown plants?**

A. The gold-lace that are to be left in the garden for display may be left to develop more than one crown for best development. If one wishes to propagate them they may be divided (and fertilized) every year. Same true of all polyanthus and acaulis.

**Q. Which primulas like dry soil conditions?**

A. According to H. Lincoln Foster, Kris Fenderson, Richard Redfield and myself, we do not know of any primula which likes dry soil conditions. The ones that will tolerate dryness to the greatest degree are the ones whose foliage dies down after blooming. (*P. sieboldii*) The next on the list might be the auriculas. However, they will not endure if dryness continues for a long period.

**Q. Does sawdust discourage slugs?**

A. I do not know. I have used well rotted sawdust for humus for years. There is a large supply here in Vermont, a lumbering area. However, one must not use new sawdust; it will take the nitrogen content from the soil. Large amounts of cow manure may overcome that, but I prefer to use sawdust for paths until it is black. Perhaps that is why I have had very little trouble with slugs.

**Q. Actually how many species of primula are "quite readily" available?**

A. If any one will send a self addressed and stamped envelope, I will be glad to send a list of the nurseries in the United Kingdom and Ireland that specialize in primula seeds.

**Q. What is recommended for a mulch? What about sawdust or bark?**

A. See above for sawdust. I buy a load of bark every year from the lumber yard and use it for paths until it is three years old, then use it for mulch. I expect all kinds are in the load; I have never known from what trees the bark was taken.

**Q. I should like to start a collection of double primroses. Where can I buy plants?**

A. Anyone who has plants of double primroses to sell can contact me for the name of writer of this question.

**Q. Can you suggest where I can get seed of *P. forrestii*?**

A. By kindness of Timmy Foster here are names of those members who have supplied seed of *P. forestii* in recent years: 1978, Dr. Earl Ewert, 39 Dexter St., Dedham, Mass. 02026; 1977, Joan Wilder, Old Manor Twyring Tweheshard C, Tos. DL 206 DS, England; 1976, Mrs. Sheila Hall, 14 Humeshad Road, Staines, Middlesex, TW18 2 RT, England; Dr. and Mrs. P.J. Wett Four Winds, 10 Ardover Road, No. Winchester, Hampshire, England.

**Q. If there are no slugs and no visible bugs anywhere on the plants, what is making little holes and turning leaves yellow?**

A. According to Kris Fenderson: "I have had flea beetles (very small, hard to see and extremely fast to vanish) bother the foliage in the section auricula; it sounds similar to me. They are worst in dry hot weather and drought conditions. They can really bother *P. minima* if it is dry, but all other primulas recover after the treatment of a daily hosing of foliage and a light dusting of Diazinon."

I had what sounds like the same condition several years ago and removed the yellow foliage, sprayed with a mild soap and Black Leaf 40 solution. The late James Mitchell of Barre, Ver., suggested years ago that the yellow foliage showed lack of iron in the soil. I soaked a half a bucket of iron scraps in water and poured that solution around the plants. It seems to help so continued it as a general health treatment.

Kristian Fenderson sent in the following as he said many people have asked him this question:

**Q. What are the differences between the cowslip, oxslip and primrose? Where do they come from and how do their growing conditions vary?**

A. The cowslip is *veris*, once called *P. officinalis*. It is common in portions of the British Isles, Scandanavia and much of Europe. It is usually deep yellow, has a large  
Cont. on page 38

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## **P. cockburniana**

by Dr. Ralph H. Benedict

This spring marked the eighth time that 16 plants of *P. cockburniana* have bloomed for me from an original seedling of 1969.

From all I can read this plant is a biennial or, at best, a short-lived perennial. In



fact, the "Pictorial Dictionary" says, "It has a way of dying off after a profuse blooming season or of disappearing from damp, rich or imperfectly drained soil in winter."

I think that in the midwest we have a good winter season to keep the plants dormant. The soil is sandy with leaf mold added to it each year.

The plants are transplanted each year after blooming. Every three years new soil is added to the bed. The plants are well watered. Systemic insecticides are used in the summer.

I cover all my candelabras with oak leaves after the ground freezes in the winter.

In the spring when I uncover the plants I replant or push down roots that have heaved out. I have had plants all the way out of the ground that survived if replanted. The leaf covering kept them from drying out after the heaving frosts.

For the connoisseur . . .

## **Violet-tinged P. cawdoriana**

Among the floral treasures Lee and Dorothy Campbell brought to the Tacoma show a few years ago was a superbly grown *Primula cawdoriana*.

Suitable only for alpine house culture, it must have found the ideal situation at the Campbells' on the northwest slope of Mount Rainier. Normally *P. cawdoriana* carries two or three flowers. This plant carried a full head, violet-tinged and jauntily cocked to one side on a four-inch stem. Ground-hugging leaves were irregularly toothed and hairy, daring the grower to allow just one drop of water to

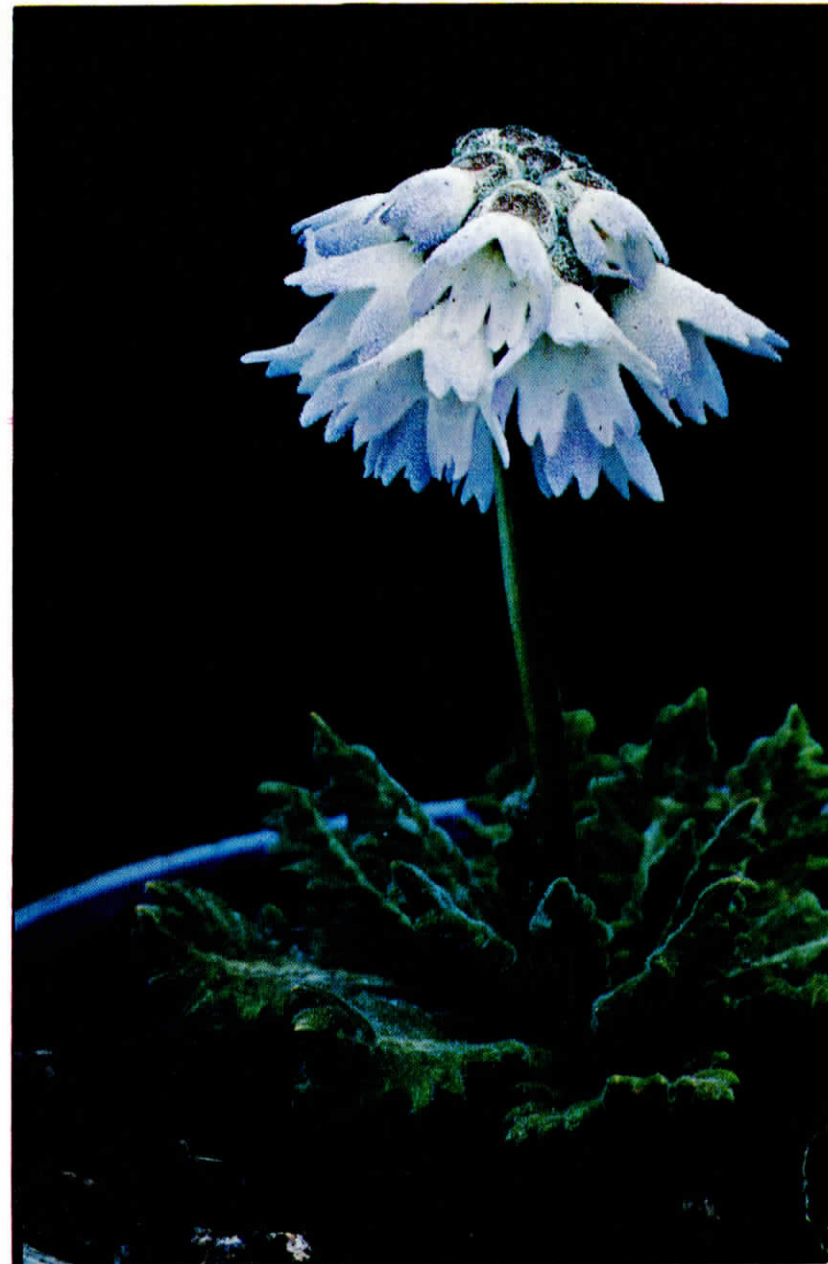
remain there and they would rot.

*P. cawdoriana* was introduced by Kingdon Ward in 1924. Its only known location is in southeastern Tibet on rocky slopes at the 13,000 to 15,000-foot level of the Himalayas.

A well-drained leafy soil, careful watering and good air circulation should be satisfactory in an alpine house situation.

Currently it is in cultivation. But it is somewhat rare.

Like most of the soldanelloideae section, *P. cawdoriana* tends to be a short-lived perennial. During periods of frost and dormancy it should be kept quite dry.



**Primula cawdoriana**

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# Diary of a Primrosier

by Cy Happy

A rainy day — the sort of day made for working on the quarterly. As I write, one of our most dedicated members, Ivanel Agee, is being laid to rest. May Ivy's spirit flourish in the rest of us and partially fill the void she leaves. Her hybridizing in recent years has centered on small species in the auricula section—marginata, carniolica and especially allionii—with fine results.

Our beautiful autumn can't last forever. Put together a cold frame from planks that drifted ashore. First tenant is my best gold-laced polyanthus, followed by a plant or two of my best show prospects in the vernaes group. Tacoma show will be March 31 and April 1—early! Hope there will be room in the cold frame for some late lettuce also.

## Weekend to include primula talk

Save the weekend of Feb. 23, 24 and 25 for another outstanding study weekend sponsored by Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia and American Rock Garden Society. This one is at Coach House Hotel, North Vancouver, B.C. Experts include Brian Halliwell from Kew and Dr. Ted Niehaus from Berkeley, Cal. A panel discussion on the primula is planned. Prelude to spring—don't miss it. The registrar is Mrs. Irene Mansfield, Box 102, Madeira Park, B.C. V7R 2K3.

A quick trip to Victoria, B.C., in September included a visit with Mr. Warren, horticultural consultant at Butchart Gardens. The gardens were spectacular, but I was more interested in the areas of nursery beds. The winter blooming pansies and polyanthus were starting to show color—thousands of them. Butchart is open year round, and management is searching for more winter blooming plants. The trial beds, hidden from public view, include donations from some of our members. Primulas will be increasingly important where winter and early spring color is needed.

## How to divide and transplant

Herb Dickson spoke on dividing and transplanting primula at the October Tacoma Primrose Society meeting. His recommendations:

Polyanthus: transplanting divisions. Put crown in middle of hand and trim. Cut off all leaves and roots that protrude. Replant the rest.

Acaulis: be more careful. Don't reduce to single crowns.

Candelabras: center crown disappears after flowering. Surrounding crowns are replanted as separate plants.

Sieboldii: pull apart when dormant and reset. Mark where they are planted.

Reidii: throw away old root. Reset young crowns.

He demonstrated his methods with the above, plus *P. clarkii*, *rosea*, *ioessa*, *frondosa*, *yuparensis*, yellow self auricula Hythe and alpine auricula Gordon Douglas. On

transplanting small seedlings, Herb has found that only when the plants begin to produce new heavy roots—usually with the advent of cold weather—can they be successfully transplanted.

## An expedition?

I jokingly suggested the primrosers should gather in mid-May at Wallowa Lake Lodge, Joseph, Ore., to look for *P. cusickiana*. To my surprise, several couples were interested. The lodge has 20 rooms plus several kinds of cabins with kitchenettes. Let's talk it over.

The British southern section of National Primula and Auricula Society has appointed coordinators for the exchange of seeds, plants, ideas and promotion of breeding programs for double and border auriculas. For double auriculas write K. J. Gould, Heatherdene, Milton Ave., Westcott, Dorking, Surrey. For border auriculas write R. Feline, 76 Green Lane, Worchester Park, Surrey.

## Russians work on hardy strains

Anyone working on extremely hardy forms of primula should write to Botanical Garden of Kirowsk, Murmansk, USSR. You might work up an exchange.

Had a nice note from Margaret Blethen, Waldron, Wash. She asked if Tacoma meetings always included a plant exchange. Yes, there is always an exchange. Margaret's card had a beautiful reproduction of a botanical watercolor, "Primrose, Marsh Violet, Bird's Eye Primrose and Fern" published by Gordon Franser Fine Arts, Bedford, England. Series RF 20/A 983.

## Endangered species rules change imports

Of concern to plant importers was a recent notice from the U.S. Department of Interior. Further documentation is required in order to comply with the Endangered Species Convention Regulations. Fortunately only species, not hybrids, are involved. In primulaceae only cyclamen is covered.

Long a favorite in Japan, *P. sieboldii* is grown and shown with great skill and taste. For exhibition four buds are planted in a 6 or 7-inch pot in winter. In late April and early May they are brought to the shows. Two major societies promote the plants: Sakurasokai, c/o Mr. Tsuneo Torii, 4774-183 Nakafuji, Musashi-Murayama City, Tokyo, and Naniwa Sakurasokai, c/o Mr. Shigeo Tanara, 2-55, Tainaka, Yao City, Osaka, Pref.

Anyone planning a trip to Japan, especially at show time, should contact these groups.

## Notes from Eastside and California

Meeting announcements of the Eastside Primula Society are informative. They also feature hand-colored illustrations. If you live in the Seattle, -Bellevue area, save 7:30 p.m. of the second Mondays. Call Beth Tait at 822-6176.

Have a note from Howard Kerrigan (Kerrigan Nursery), 24249 Second St., Hayward, Cal., 94541. He grows polyanthus and once worked with Frank Rienelt and Pete Antonelli, developers of the Pacific Giant strain. He is collecting polyanthus varieties to

use in a breeding program. He's into garden auriculas too.

### About Ivie

I'm going to miss the cherry and informative notes from Ivie Agee. I've saved many of them and will pass bits on from time to time. She was a fine grower and student of primulas.

For example, "There is a plant floating around here that came from Berry's garden. Thought it was kisoana so looked it up in Smith and Fletcher. They just list Kisoana—no varieties—but do mention the super-imposed umbel in some. The Japanese garden magazine lists this one as *P. kisoana* var. *shikokiana*. It's a wee bit sturdier than the type and has a dark ring around the center. Reuben Hatch has a nice planting and gave us a start."

See what I mean?

## Questions & Answers

Cont. from page 29

baggy calyx and small somewhat cupped flowers which are often slightly fragrant. It is a plant of light woods and open meadows. Many variants with different sized flowers and calyx features or leaf pubescence are recognized as subspecies.

The oxlip is *P. elatior*. It is not common in Britain. It has frequently been mistaken for a hybrid between *P. veris* and *P. vulgaris*. It is common over wide areas of Europe and, like *P. veris*, has many slight variations primarily relating to differences in leaf outline and degree of pubescence. It lacks the baggy calyx of *P. veris*, is a light clear lemon color, has nodding blooms of a rather flattened trumpet shape. They are considerably larger than those of *P. veris* and usually lack the orange markings in the throat usually present in *P. veris*. *P. elatior* occupies somewhat damper possibly shadier meadows and wood margins than does *P. veris*.

*P. vulgaris* is the primrose of England. It is a plant of northern Europe, the Mediterranean islands, and extends into Asia Minor. It is immediately distinguishable by its habit of bloom. Each large flower is carried on a slender often hairy stalk in contrast to *P. veris* and *P. elatior*, which bear clusters of flowers on one or several stalks. *P. vulgaris* is known as the hedgebank primrose. It inhabits damp, shady, well-drained locations. In Europe the generously sized flowers are the same clear soft yellow as those of *P. elatior*, most often with orange markings at the throat. In other portions of its huge range it may be white, pink or purple. Many variant forms have been named, including the subspecies *sibthorpii*, which is pink, and *abschastica*, a rich deep wine shade.

Do you have a question? Ask Alice Hills Baylor, corresponding secretary, by writing to her at Stage Coach Road, Rt. 2, Stowe, Vermont, 05672. She will select questions to be discussed in her regular column.

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# Primroses



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