Primroses

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President's Message

Dear Members,

Another year has again passed by so quickly. It seemed there was no happy medium weather-wise. While part of the country was havine tornadoes and flooding other parts were having drought and, like the Northwest, were on water restrictions. In order to conserve water many of us were saving our dish and rinse waters to water the flower baskets and parts of the vegetable garden. The usual lush greend leaves of the many varieties of primula turned a sickly color and left either a very small ragged rosette or a dormant looking bud stage. Only the coming spring will tell how many primroses survived the dry summer and fall.

Every year is different in some way. This year will be different due to the loss of two primrosers last November. First Al Smith, past APS President for two years and Vice-President for two years prior, avid gardener and wood craftsman. Then, two weeks later, Florence Bellis, last surviving founder of APS, editor emeritus, primrose hybridizer and author. Most of you did not personally know either one, but I was fortunate to know both. I often visited with Al and his wife Lena. I also met Mrs. Bellis at the 1984 National Show, chatted with her a bit and later corresponded with her on occasion. We have all enjoyed her writings thru the years and learned much from them. I am very glad her new book is being so well received by gardeners everywhere. It is sad she will not be here to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the APS, but perhaps it was enough to know she was to be honored at this Conference.

While I'm on the subject of the 1992 Conference, things are progressing, but there is much more help needed. The APS has approximately 800 members, many of whom are capable and willing to help with the Conference proceedings, but haven't been asked. We are asking now. If you would like to assist, please write Conference Chairman, Richard Critz. It would be helpful to let him know what area and capacity you would like to work in.

I hope all of you have paid your 1988 dues by now. If all went as planned, the membership list is printed by zip code. This is to help those of you interested in contacting other primrose growers living close by in order to get together and perhaps start a new chapter. There is nothing like regular meetings to keep the enthusiasm of growing primroses at its highest peak. For those of you wishing to start a group but don't know exactly how to begin, contact me, we will try to help in any way we can.

For the rest of you who are to spread out to have meetings on a regular basis, plan on coming to a primrose show this year. They are always interesting and informative and you may be able to pick up a plant or two you have been wanting for a long time.

Sincerely,
Irene Buckles

Florence Bellis
1907 – 1987

A letter from Anita Alexander brought the shocking and unexpected news. "The American Primrose Society has lost its founder and editor emeritus. Florence died in her sleep on November 15 – congestive heart failure. She had been feeling great this fall – had her house sparkling, garden areas weeded and mulched, and had made arrangements to fix the car so she could shop with it again. Her body was cremated, and the family will have a week in December to celebrate her life.

I fought with Florence, loved her and will be forever grateful to her for the many ways she enriched lives. Her innate observations and talents were well-used."

It is too soon for me to have heard from many of the members about this great loss, but Carolyn and I were privileged in the last few years to have come to know and love Florence dearly, and we had a lively correspondence with her. Here are excerpts taken from one of her last letters to me:

11/3/87 "After three weeks at the clinic, which has kept me in good condition for 30 years, I am back – completely remade. Home! To lifting one lily bulb – the glorious Golden Splendor trumpet – without a day's rest. Instead of the 10 to 20 bulbs it should have produced, I received the questionable gift of over 200! And they say lilies are hard to raise!! particularly in the clayey soil of the coast. But instead of resting, I hauled rock and steer manure and planted them all. I think they might do extremely well in your parts and may be next fall, when I dig the surplus you might like to pass them around."

Later: "You will never know how much "A Bellis Anthology" means to me. I suffer from aloneness and, like all children raised without love, believe – or rather, disbelieve – that I am loved in this way. I have had Xeroxed a few copies, and keep the first paragraph above my typewriter to remind me that I AM loved, not just a work-horse. Richard, how is it that you continue to make me believe in myself? I have often wondered, but knowing you and your foundation, am no longer surprised at anything you do."

And finally, excerpts from one of many fine reviews of her remarkable book "Gardening and Beyond", from the N.Y. Times of May 31, 1987:

"Florence Bellis' place in the international world of horticulture is assured, thanks to her achievement in originating, over many decades of careful and imaginative hybridization, the many strains of primroses collectively named after her Oregon home – Barnhaven. These remarkable and extremely hardy plants come in a palette of wonderful colors: glowing scarlets and crimsons, golds and yellows, pristine whites, deep blues, as well as blends and combinations of several colors. Her main subject in *Gardening and Beyond* is her breeding of primroses, but to tell the story she ranges very far indeed, touching on soil chemistry, the long evolution of plants and animals, agriculture and the Industrial Revolution, exploration for plants in the 19th Century, and the joys and frustrations that alternate in every true gardener's life. Mrs. Bellis moves so effortlessly from one topic to another and writes with such personal authority that both novice gardeners and long-time practitioners of the art will learn many surprising things from her. The Barnhaven primroses enrich our springtime gardens; *Gardening and Beyond* enriches the gardener's (mind and) library."

When all is said and done, Florence herself has said the last, best word about her remarkable and fruitful life in her book, *Gardening and Beyond.* If you have not read it, do yourself a favor and procure a copy for your library. And to you, good friend, sweet rest. We will meet again.

Fortunately, Spring – Like Pippa – Passes or Life At the Primrose Factory

by Florence Bellis

The article which follows reached my hands just a week before word came that Florence was gone. It was accompanied by a brief note reading, "Dear Richard, If, by chance you see fit to use this, a note stating it was written in 1971 might be good, to avoid readers thinking that Gardening and Beyond *is in any way connected with it."*

In a correspondence with Dr. David Winstanley, Editor, about its earlier publication in the 1985 Yearbook of the Southern Section of the National Auricula and Primrose Society, Mrs. Bellis wrote, "In a few days I'll be sending you a breezy piece which you may find too lively for your publication. However, since I have become something of a primrose legend in these past 50 years and 'going on 80', and since this is a true but amusing presentation of LIFE AT THE PRIMROSE FACTORY, I think of it as a part of the history of the 30s which saw primroses propelled from an English hobby to their present flourishing position. Such a behind-the-scenes piece might be a little yeast in the dough.

I wrote this in 1971 when I was trying to escape the loss of my husband. A few months ago I began tearing up many of the words written at that time, and as I tore up this piece my eye caught a line and I laughed. So I dug down into the waste basket, retrieved the torn sheets, taped them together and got the idea that it might entertain others as well as give them a true picture of such a life. Anyway it will give APS readers a view of my humorous side! If you can use it sometime – fine!"

The way I remember it is the way it was back in the early days when specialty mail order nurseries were new and few, and a glamorous business to all those who weren't in it. To think of it. Nothing to do all day long, but frisk about in sunlit fields of primroses and then ride over to the post office in the afterglow to gather all the golden eggs laid in your box that morning. And then when you candle the eggs after the afterglow and find that there's barely enough to victual the morrow's breakfast you have your choice of meditating indoors and waking everyone with your meditations or walking back and forth among the white flowers in the moonlight.

In the winter you learn to live without eggs because the chickens don't lay. It is the season of full moult brought by Santa as well as the weather. Winter is when you keep feeling around in the nest box every evening knowing full well it will be empty until sometime around St. Valentine's Day when the birds start mating again. Winter is the dream time. You dream about how nice it would be if the post office let you charge your catalog postage. Not all of it, just enough to send out a few thousand so you could get something in to pay for enough stamps to send out another few thousand so that eventually you could get enough in to send out the whole twenty-five thousand and quiet the printer with a little something.

The only good thing about February was that January was over and, if you were lucky that year, only twenty-eight days to go before it was March. Every February was bad news beginning with the first day simply because it was February 1st. On February 2nd things began to go from bad to worse. Who cared whether the ground hog showed or didn't show. The weather intended to stay as nasty as usual and you knew it. When you sleep with the weather for thirty years you don't expect surprises any more.

February was the time of year people were starving for flowers and nurserymen were just plain starving. So the old Nurserymen's Friend here would advance the first budding plants by the truckload in exchange for the promise to pay in March when the plants were sold. But they all went into total eclipse until some time in June when everyone got through using my money to buy and sell whatever they could lay their hands on until the bedding season was over. But one must not be crass in the flower business. One must simply make their annual trip over the lea to the bank where you hope to hit a sale.

Sandwiched between visitations the desk work goes on and on. People who are starving for flowers have hit the planning stage. So back to the lady in Cleveland who was interrupted in the midst of telling me exactly where each little what is planted in her garden and wondering "what do you see in the way of color for early spring in the back border over here to the left" indicating the spot in question on a detailed map two feet square. The color of her bathroom, she confides, is persimmon and black "a rather difficult Chinesey theme to relate to, don't you think?" Why not at all. I'll have no trouble whatsoever relating to your bathroom no matter what its persuasion in May when I know what colors are left over.

Well, no money from Cleveland. Here's one postmarked Atlanta. Now wouldn't you know it? Not a dime from Cud'n Camilla in Atlanta, either. BUT, "could Ah please have a couple hundred of those great big beautiful primroses in full flahr foh mah gahden pahty Mahch 14th?" Why of cose you can, honey pot. At first sight of that li'l ole check I'll wade right out across this li'l ole bridge with a suction-pump and siphon them right out of this nasty ole mud. Or if the east wind's blowing, I'll take the pickax and chip them right out of that mean ole ice. So what happens? Cud'n 'Milla gets her great big beautiful primroses in just-so bud to make sure they'll be in full flahr on Mahch 14th when she entertains her gahden club, the Peachtree Gahden Club – is there any other? – and I get to hold the sack for a month or two waiting for her to get the time to write that li'l ole check.

And now we come to our wee little weekly from Bala Cynwyd, always sachet scented with the same. Bala Cynwyd – pronunciation also personalized – is Philadelphia's bedroom for a lot of intellectual class and a lot of intellectual money but so far all I've seen is the class. This lady, for instance, is giving my talk on how she raises primroses successfully from seed and she's writing to make sure "just once more, **please**" that the plants reach her in plenty of time to

look like they'd been blooming in her garden since her forefathers hung the Liberty Bell.

That leaves only the old maid from Strawberry Plains, Tennesee and you know without opening it that there'll be no money in that one – never was, never will be, now or forever, amen. But what can you do. Her mule died a couple of weeks ago and she wants to know if I think her chicken manure will do the same kind of job for her that her mule manure did. What do you think?

As far as that goes, what's so funny about March. March is when half of Portland comes out to go to my bathroom and I'm always near the end of the line. March dissolves everything but the primroses on this hundred-mile-wide strip west of the Cascades, the range that divides the wet third of Oregon from the dry two-thirds. The primroses sit in the mud of March looking more placid with every burst of rain, hail and snow while everyone is side-stepping mud puddles on the creek bottom as they pick their way to the pollinating sheds. The puddles don't bother them as much as the minnows swimming around in them.

March is when everyone is slipping and sliding around on the hill trying to beat everyone else to the same plant because they absolutely have to have it. That is the plant I staked first because I absolutely must have it for the pollinating benches. And of the 50,000 more or less to choose from, that 's the plant the shippers will dig for Bala Cynwyd, or Atlanta, or somewhere else when my back is turned. Or for the $3 Surprise Gift Box for Mother that Floyd and Edith remembered to order a week after her happy birthday.

March is when you've got the money for postage but not the time to send out the catalogs; when the daily mail is bundled, tied, dated and stacked like cordwood along the wall at the back of your desk. March is when you try to sow some 100,000 seeds that you've carefully counted and labelled in 73 shades. But can you? No. You're a sitting duck out there. Questions are fired at you until the last one leaves and then you turn on the lights and start the morning's work. March 15th is the deadline for sowing in order to get the seedlings transplanted the first week in May. With a good deal of luck you get it done by the first of April and bump along two weeks behind schedule all summer.

March is when the plants I beat everyone else to are sitting around in flats on the duckwalks and in the aisles of the pollinating sheds, relief stations for cold poodles and stepped in by everyone else. These are the plants waiting for me to label, place, and plant in the benches for the pollinators to pollinate until their fingers freeze to the last bloom they worked. They are making seed of shades and colors already fixed and fixing new shades and color. As the buds open they tear off the petals, pollinate what the labels tell them to pollinate, and drop the used and unused petals on the ground. All day long they do this. I get to do it only at night straddling a kerosene camp stove and in the morning the aisles are carpeted with primrose petals – long runners of tints graduating to shades and shades graduating to colors – rainbow rug woven by Nature and the hand of man.

April is something else again. In April the sun comes out every now and then, half the Pacific Northwest comes out to go to my bathroom, and I contemplate the woods. In April the primroses are a handsome sight, no longer Twiggies in bud but full blown

and I am slipping and sliding around on the hillside staking plants that I absolutely must have for the pollinating benches. April is primrose gatherers month. Primroses gatherers are ladies who come mornings at seven to my hillside, all dew-pearled, pick handfuls of primroses and drop them into their umbrellas when they think no one is watching. But you mustn't reproach them. They're just little girls at heart who want to make the show look nice and wake up the next morning to find their arrangements all hung with ribbons of blue and rosettes of gold. April is high society month – spike heels crucifying the hillside in the afternoon; white gloves expecting a fifty-cent plant to bloom diamonds, making you stand there with your trowel hanging down till it does.

April on the creek bottom is still dodging-questions-and-getting-caught month. In April Mother brings Little Nuisance out to teach him about the birds and bees by way of the pollinators pollinating. To keep from telling Mother what the birds and bees really do, L. N. pinches off some fifty bucks worth of gestating seed pods. April on the creek bottom is seed germinating and compulsive weeders month. You mean these little weeds I've pulled up are primroses? I have? Oh dear.

April at the desk is bundling and dating the daily mail and stacking it on top of March. Mid-April is acknowledging mid-March plant orders; packaging mid-March seed orders; shooting out catalog requests by return mail. Strike while the iron is hot is the motto of the month. The end of the spring catch is in sight. The rocks of May loom dead ahead.

Oh the merry, merry month of May! May may be a merry month for you but not for me because May is when I vow I'll stand firm, bound to my resolve. We shall overcome. Alas. That in May the primroses look like Mae West after fifty years as an ingenue doesn't help when I'm on the hill crawling around on my hands and knees among the potholes looking for Twiggies in bud. That's what the east coast expects in May. Well, like Miss West, they had a lot to start with but they don't have so much any more.

May is when you fire up the boilers in the primrose factory and put production on a tight assembly line. You either get the pollinated plants out of the benches and into the matenity ward by the 7th or lose a lot of seed by way of rotting stalks. The maternity ward is the plot of ground on the creek bottom where the plants mature and ripen their seed. This plot is fenced in against kids, cats, rabbits, dogs and deer and is deer-dog-rabbit-cat-and kid proof until you get the plants settled into it sometime during the third week in May. You had to wait for the rain to stop long enough to get the plot plowed up before you could plant the plants so that they could get jumped into by everything but the fish.

In the meantime the seedlings keep on growing and crowding and showing signs of damp-off. They should have started to move out of the seed benches into flats by May 8th or 9th. Fifty thousand will wind up on the hill again but will they begin to bloom in February when my hungry nursery friends comes to get first pick for their springboard into summer? And will the other fifty thousand listed in the catalog for July shipment as transplants be large enough to suit the customers who wanted them on the early morning delivery in April? Not at this rate they won't.

The problem is that there's no place to put the seedlings until the pollinated plants get out of the sheds so

that the transplanters will have some place to put the flats instead of standing there holding them. So the transplanting doesn't get into gear until the third week in May because you had to wait for it to stop raining long enough to get the plot plowed up to plant the pollinated plants to make room for the seedling flats to – well, what does it matter now.

What mattered then was that you could stagger back to the bank, three months to the day, with what they let you have with interest. The cornerstone for next February was laid. Every May you did this when what you wanted to do was to keep on going over the mountains and never see the man at the bank any more, or the printer, or a customer, or a piece of mail, or a primrose, or mud – never, ever again, any more.

Over the mountains, lying big and hot and beautiful in the summer sun, is the two-thirds of Oregon so many people know so little of. Where winter is winter and summer is summer and in between you know where you are. Where deserted homesteads and pioneer churchyards cover their sun-bleached bones with sheets of yellow roses. Where wheat fields wave in the hot wind mile after mile farther than the eye can see. And out on the high plateaus beyond the wheat, great arthritic junipers grey-green and pungent with the smell of gin writhe in the tortuous heat waves or the racking sub-zero cold. And stretching seemingly endlessly beyond the junipers is the high desert country of sand and sage, jackrabbits and rattlesnakes, and buzzards balancing in a fevered or frigid sky waiting for a tragedy to happen.

And beyond the sage, mile-high cattle country with a private plane pastured on every spread. Rangelands so vast and grass so deep you could lose Delaware, Rhode Island and Connecticut with Maryland thrown in as an afterthought. Indian country where every Cadillac has a teepee roped on top; high pine country with polished forest floors; sheep country with alps as high as the canyons are deep where cougars and coyotes work the fringe – all in this awesome, splendid, harsh part of Oregon so few people know is lying out there on the other side of the mountains.

In wrenching myself back to this soft and yielding strip, this green-green primrose country, I find that my expansive mood has shrivelled up on itself. I can't feel kindly toward the summer-comers who knock on the door before breakfast wearing a camera around their neck and that eager baby-in-a-buggy look that only photographers wear when I know there's nothing left to photograph but potholes. Nor look kindly upon those who come when I've just scrubbed up to deliver the oven of its charred lump and stand there, all aglow in the violet dusk, expecting to be welcomed by someone out of Godet's Book for Ladies with a basketful of primroses in one hand playing Mozart on the flute with the other.

But all that is in the long ago. Another has been treading this same primrose path in England's Lake District these past twenty years while I have been pegging down my carnations and gathering roses and lilies, forgetting that I was once the toad beneath the harrow as he is now. Yet the years have taught me that my life would have been very poor indeed without the hardships endured but forgotten every spring when the primroses bloomed. Perhaps the one who now dodges the tooth-points of the harrow learned before I that the toad does wear a precious jewel in his head and that imbedded in the adversity, work, and the joy it continues to give others are the riches that otherwise passed us by.

"Big Things Are Coming!"

by Dee Peck
Philadelphia, PA.

All American Primula Society members have an exciting event to look forward to in 1992. Between April 9th and April 14th of that year, the 50th anniversary of our society will be celebrated at a Fifth Primula Conference, to be held at the Berry Botanic Garden in Portland, Oregon. All indications point toward a meeting of international scope, with knowledgeable speakers from all the great primula growing areas of the world – from the west coast of North America, through Britain, continental Europe, the Soviet Union, to Asia, including China and Japan.

Besides the opportunity to hear these addresses, the attendees will be able to see and absorb the dazzling collections of primulas to be exhibited at the Berry Botanic Garden and the Portland City Japanese Garden. There will be visits to other gardens in the area, including those of APS members. There will be workshops on primula cultivation, including soil, seed sowing, transplanting and division. Look for exhibits of garden pottery, trough making and planting demonstrations, a seed exchange, an international primula show, a plant sale and a raffle. It is anticipated that optional pre- and post-conference tours to other areas will be offered. All potential interests of primula growers are being considered.

The greatest news to date is the interest and participation of the Royal Horticultural Society of Great Britain. They are particularly interested in a proposed expedition to western China in 1991 to discover, and hopefully collect, seeds and plants of new *Primula* species. The two to three week long trip is to include staff of the Royal Horticultural Society and members of interested plant societies such as ours. The group will be accompanied by a professional film crew who will make a film that will be shown at the conference banquet. Who knows – it may even make television or the pages of a prestigious magazine such as the National Geographic!

The last, but not least, exciting thing we anticipate is the revision of "The Pictorial Dictionary of the Genus Primula". The Royal Horticultural Society will also be involved in this. The new edition is expected to be a hard cover, two volume set, in full color. The first volume is to cover the *Primulae* species, and the second the hybrids. There will be sections on history, cultivation, propagation, sources, etc., etc., etc. Each person attending the conference will receive a copy, reason enough to be there!

The committee that is formulating the bones of the conference is based on the East coast. It consists of "Primroses" editor Dick Critz, long time member and great primula grower Anita Kistler, editorial committee member Dee Peck, plantsman-lawyer Bill Schwarz (whose legal expertise will be invaluable), and Chuck Ulmann, super-organizer and computer expert. Easterners often feel left out of APS activities, and this gives us an opportunity to make an important contribution to our society. However, and this is a very important "however", once the basic planning stage is completed, the main activity will move to the West coast, and it is then that the rest of you must be ready to pitch in. Although the Berry Botanic Garden and the Royal Horticultural Society have accepted the responsibility of much of the conference, when it comes down to the fine details it cannot succeed without the cooperation of local members. So start polishing up your plantings, volunteer your gardens for a tour, and offer your time, ideas and labor to make it all happen.

The committee needs as much input as possible **right now.** Send your ideas, criticisms, and offers of help to Dick Critz immediately. Look over your copy of "A Pictorial Dictionary of the Genus Primula" and tell us what you think should be changed, retained and added. Most of all, put the conference date on your calendar and plan to attend. We are aiming for 500 conferees! A lot of planning has been done, but a great deal more must be done before we can realize the sensational coming-together we envision.

The Art of Composition

by Bruce G. Gould
Vincentown, NJ

(This is part II of Bruce Gould's series on photographing primulas. Part I appeared in the Fall 1987 issue)

The photographer/artist, scientist, journalist part of your brain has now visualized your photograph, deciding on the subject, looking at the possible view. This free-wheeling imagination phase is now over and it's down to decision-making and real work. Just as standing on the coast of England and visualizing France will not get you credit for swimming the Channel, visualizing a photograph without the hard work of getting it on film will not create a fine picture – but it's a start.

The decision to bring the camera into play at this point is only the first of many decisions you must make. Many people make this their first and last decision, failing to realize that it is here the photographer's skills are put to the ultimate test. The few moments between looking through the viewfinder and tripping the shutter are the most important time spent in making a photograph.

What must one do in that time? Look and see! It's easy to see; the question is, what are you looking **at**? Most times, it's the main subject, even if that only comprises 50 percent of the photo. What about the other 50 percent? Our mind's eye is very selective in what it sees, but your camera – only a dumb machine – records on the film everything and anything that's in front of the lens. Is that other 50 percent of the photo just wasted space, or will it be an interactive part of your whole picture?

The way all of the elements of a photo go together is called composition. Composition is a misunderstood, misused, ignored and abused subject. Those who have instinctive understanding of it claim it doesn't need thinking about. Those who have no idea what it is about claim it is voodoo magic that doesn't really work for them. For everyone in between these extremes, composition is a set of rules that we know but may not fully understand. Since both sides tell us to ignore them, we may never find out what it's all about.

The rules of composition deal with subject placement, horizon lines, leading lines, format and framing. Two analogies apply here. First, composition is a road map to a photograph. You want the viewer's eye to start at a given spot and move to another, seeing all the things in between. Second, composition is a sign system with arrows and pointers to indicate to the viewer what you think is important and asking him to linger.

If we go back to the photo with 50 percent main subject, the other 50 percent is used to get the viewer to look at that important subject and to look for a longer time.

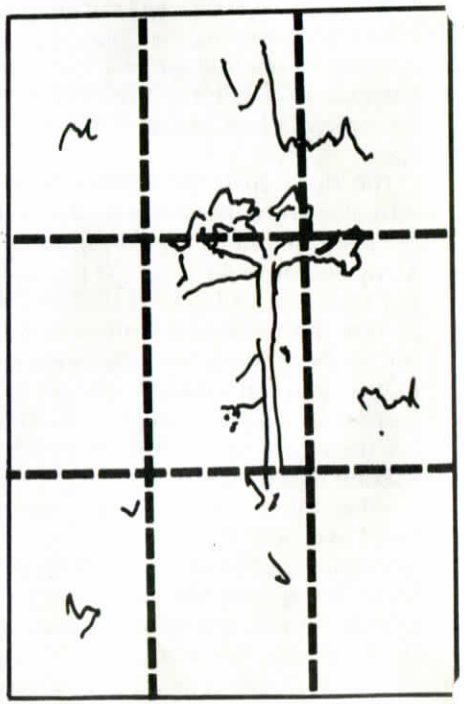
Composition can only start when we section out a piece of reality. This is what happens when we look through a view finder. Out of the whole world, our interest is now centered on a very small portion enclosed within the frame of the finder. It is within this areas that things must work together to communicate to your viewer. The frame must relate to all that is enclosed and vice versa.

Let's look at the Rules of Composition one by one. There are not many and they are simple.

1.) The Rule of Thirds: This rule addresses the placement of the main subject. The field of the photo is divided into thirds both horizontally and vertically and the Point of Interest is placed at an intersection of these lines, not in the center of the photo. Images placed here are more interesting and less static than those located at dead center. The Rule of Thirds is the oldest composition rule we have, dating back to the early Greeks.

2.) Horizon Lines: In this usage, the term horizon line means any relatively straight line. It should not divide the photo in half either horizontally or vertically. Lines placed midway in a picture lack interest and depth. By placing the horizon line in the upper half, the photo has more foreground and, therefore, more depth. By placing it in the lower half, depth is decreased and interest is trapped in a smaller area with much more background to set it off.

Framing

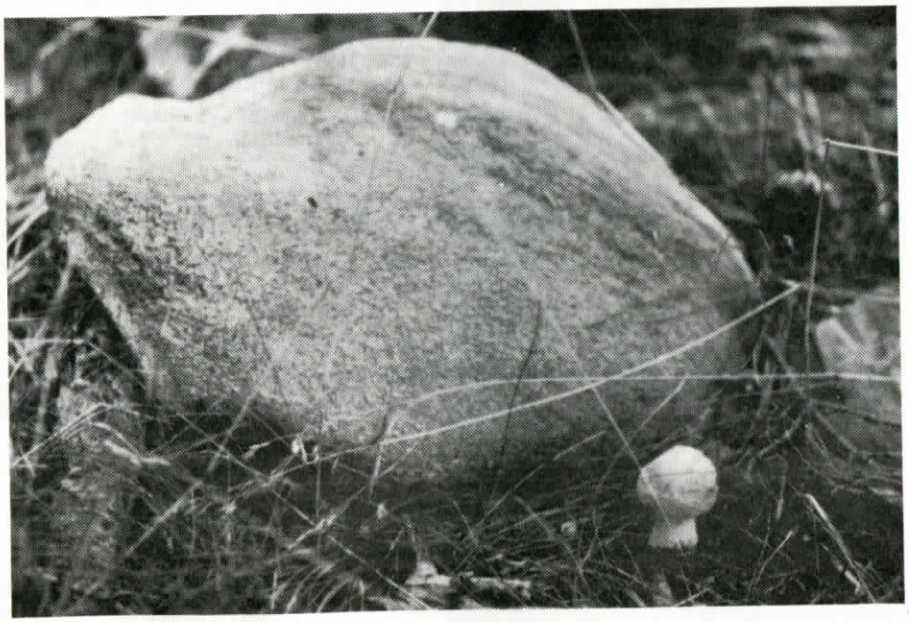


The Rule of Thirds

3.) Color and Shape Balance: Colors, including black and white, tend to recede or advance according to density. Dark colors quickly become a background, with lighter colors moving to the foreground. They will also balance each other in different proportions on film, different from what the eye sees. A small, light-colored object against a dark background will become a main interest in the foreground, whether we want it to or not.

A small dark object against a light background will become a hole, even if we wish it to be the main subject in the foreground. This becomes a real trap for someone using black and white film because some colors may photograph in a grey darker or lighter than we perceive the original color to be. To use black and white successfully, one must study the transfer of color to black and white film and train the mind to "see" in black and white. This, by the way, is no easy task, for humans think in color and react to it. The best advice for someone who would like to take this track is to read Ansel Adams' "Theory of the Zone System," and practice.

4.) Format: When working with a camera that produces a photo that is rectangular, use the option of creating a vertical or a horizontal finished piece. Not only will this create more dramatic photos, it will sometimes allow more of the subject to squeeze into the picture. It is really amazing how many people do not know that their camera will work on its side. A tall tree that screams to be presented from top to roots as a vertical will often be photographed as a horizontal, cutting off the top or bottom and wasting all that space on the sides. (Going back to horizon lines for a moment, one can also see that a vertical composition allows more space in the top half for a horizon line, therefore giving the photo more depth.)



Balance of size and color

5.) Framing: This is another way of giving the photo depth and keeping the viewer's eye from escaping from the composition. By including sharply-focused items in the foreground or surrounding the subject with them, the viewer will have a feeling that he is looking into a three-dimensional scene. Using this movement into the scene instead of across and out, the viewer will spend more time studying the main subject.

6.) Leading Lines: These are the sign posts in the analogy, pointing the viewer from one place to another, then to the main subject. They can be true lines, such as a road, a branch, a tree, a fence or a blade of grass, no matter what the scale. Sometimes they can be imaginary lines that the mind sees, such as common colors or connected highlights, like a child's connect-the-dot game. When the

Leading Lines

lines appear in pairs such as railroad tracks or the sides of a road, the pointing is much stronger. Leading lines can be straight and to the point or curved to bring the viewer back to the subject time and time again. We must always be sure that the lines lead to the subject. There is nothing more frustrating than following a pointer to an empty space, or, even worse, to have them lead the eye to something other than the subject.

The very nature of the camera provides some other composition strategies. Because there are several laws of physics that control lenses, a photographer has the option of changing the focus of the foreground or background. This focusing option allows us to selectively depict an in-focus subject against an out-of-focus background. If we soften the background the viewer understands that it is not important. The object in focus

is instantly thrown forward. By the same quirk, the mind has a real problem with things in the foreground being out of focus. We try to find out what it is and where it properly belongs.

These "rules" are simply guidelines to putting a picture together. As it has been said by many wise and talented photographers, great photos break rules. Break rules, yes; ignore them, never. We must understand how they work before we can alter them to our own needs.

Practice and critique are two of the best ways to learn composition. Be thick-skinned enough to pull your work apart and analyze why it works or why it doesn't. Then do it again. Start by going by the rules; you can't break them if you don't know them. If you would like to study this subject further, go to the library and read "Guide to Photographic Composition," by Paul Jonas. Unfortunately, you can't buy it – it's out of print at this time – but many libraries have it.

I have written much about photography and there will be more to come, but I still haven't said much about equipment. Somewhere along the way, many photographers feel that if they get one more lens, a different camera, or more lights, all their photographic problems will be over. But this is an illusion; if anything, the problems will get worse. Great photographs start in the mind. If there is nothing there, that's what will be in the picture. If you can't get a photo to work by understanding and using the simplest of cameras, chances are a bag full of expensive equipment won't help. If this were the case, only rich folks would be great photographers. Thankfully, that's not the case or I would have had to give up long ago.

(to be continued)

Primrose Vegetative Propagation

by Roy W. Preston, O.D.
Seattle, Washington

When plants are grown from seed they all vary slightly. One plant may have a nice flower or another may be particularly vigorous or may show better size or a habit that is striking. Whatever the reason we may want to reproduce one particular plant.

Many species can be divided or carefully cut and pulled apart. This is usually best done after flowering when the plant is in vigorous growth. It is at this time that primroses are often moved from their flowering location to a more shady and moist spot for the summer. The plants are dug, remembering that primrose roots are long and run deep, then most of the soil is removed and placed back into the hole leaving the leaves, the crown with offsets and the long roots. Some washing may be helpful at this point but usually the offsets are easily seen and removed by pulling them down and away from the main stem. Depending on how much root is on the division, then it is either planted in a moist shady garden area or potted and placed in the alpine house where close attention can be given to keeping them moist. Plants can be encouraged to produce offsets by deep planting and then mounding soil around them as they grow, also a good winter mulch not only protects from frost but helps encourage offsets.

Most primulas can also be propagated by root cuttings. At the time that they are dug and washed then several long roots are removed and cut into pieces about one inch long. Care is used to distinguish the top of the root by cutting it square, then the lower end is cut on the diagonal. The root cutting is then placed vertically in a sand and peat media, with the top of the root even with the top of the media, and covered by glass.

An alternate and perhaps better way is to place the roots horizontal on top of chopped sphagnum media in a polly bag. Then when roots and leaves have developed, the root cutting is planted in moist cool leafy compost.

Some primulas can be reproduced by leaf cuttings. These leaves have at the base, just where they are removed from the parent stem, a small leaf bud; so that when the stem is placed in a closed container, rested on a peat media and illuminated, perhaps by fluorescent lights, then some roots and leaves develop from this small bud. Primulas reproduced like this include *edgeworthii, whitei, scapigera, bractosa,* and *aureata.*

Occasionally small plants will be produced at the top of the bloom stem which when pegged to the ground will soon send down roots and become a separate plant.

Indoor Primroses

by Evelyn Best and Peter H. Johnson

From this first family of bedding plants come a few charmers for your windowsill.

Reprinted by permission from "House Plants & Porch Gardens" magazine.

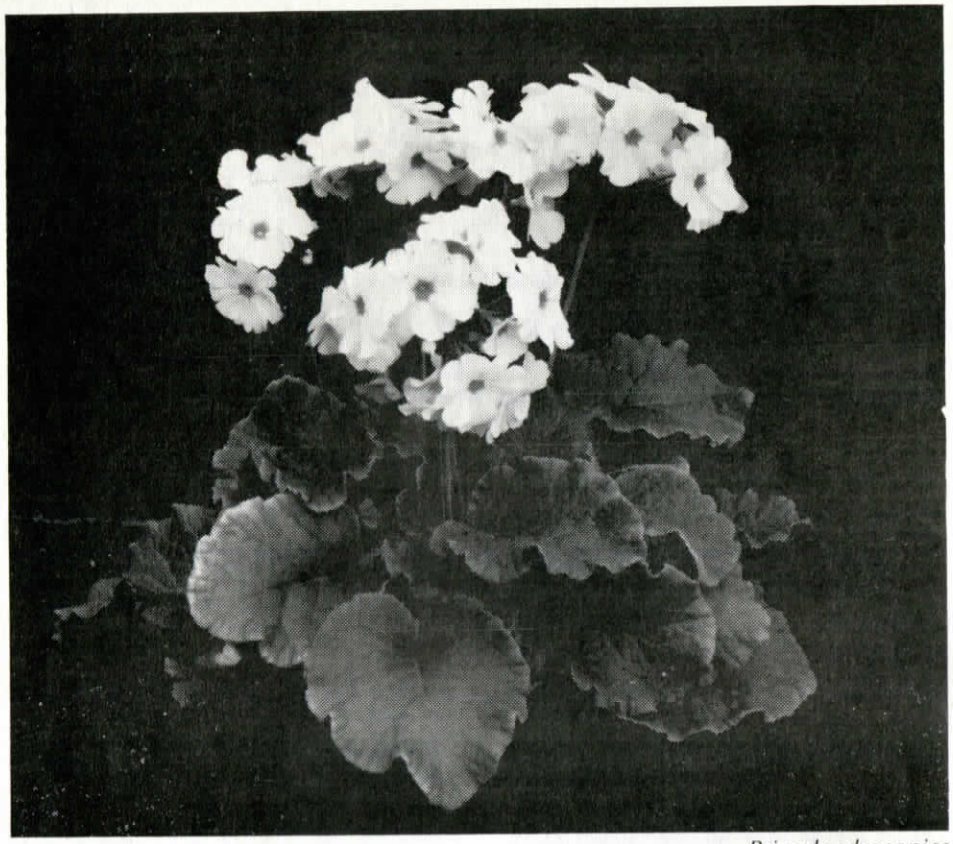
Long before man began tampering with plants through the use of radiation, artificial fertilization, grafting, training and forcing, plants bettered themselves. They respond to changes in their habitats by adjusting their methods of growth and reproduction until they are perfectly suited to the climate, soil and other plants in their environments. And when they are able to withstand drought, flood, disease, marauding insects and hungry animals, they grow and spread. The most successful plants exploit whatever is available to them in very efficient ways. And so, being perfectly adapted to a particular set of circumstances, they can dominate a region. Eventually, a species population may grow until it covers a huge territory.

At the edges of a species' range, a few plants can become isolated from the main group. Their seeds may be carried by wind or water to areas far beyond the region of the original plants. When these wanderers get far enough away from their native climate, they once again begin adapting, evolving to suit their new condition. If successful, they become quite specialized. Growth habits change, flower structures modify. Some changes are so drastic that these new plants are incapable of interbreeding with members of the original species. The plants become new species, completely on their own. They still may resemble the original plants in many respects, but they hav evolved their own identity. Sooner or later there may come to be a hundred different species within one genus, spread out over thousands of square miles. A single genus may even be found represented on several continents. This is what is known in the plant world as success.

Thunder Out of China

By any standard, primroses, members of the genus *Primula,* have been very successful. There are about five hundred species in the genus (dozens of which are cultivated), with members native to every continent except Australia and Antarctica. Most of the different species existed before men began collecting and hybridizing them. From their origin somewhere in the mountains of western China and Tibet, primroses made their way east and west into folk medicine, countless cottage gardens and the plays of Shakespeare. Primroses have been horticultural successes, too. They were among the first plants to be cultivated for their beauty.

Of the hundreds of primrose species that have spread themselves around the Northern Hemisphere, only four or five have become popular as indoor pot plants. The other



Primula oboconica

cultivated *primulas* are famed as bedding plants and are among the first flowers to emerge in spring. Most primroses are perennials or biennials and they're tough in the face of unseasonable weather.

Primula foliage is as variable as the weather. Some species have leaves resembling those of geraniums, some look like *streptocarpus* and others are like spinach leaves. Leaves of still others are deeply lobed, almost feathery. Regardless of shape and texture, *primula* foliage grows in flattened rosettes or dome-shaped crowns.

The foliage is interesting, but, as befits a plant with the word rose in its name, the flower is the thing. Primrose flowers consist of five *sepals* (the usually green basal "leaves" of a flower) fused into a green tube from which arise five petals that flare into an open, slightly bell-shaped *corolla* (the petals taken collectively). The petal edges can be smooth or lobed or fringed. Flower colors run the gamut from deep blue through red, pink, lavender, purple, cerise, yellow and white, and they come in tightly bunched blossoms that sit a foot or more above the foliage.

Two Flowers Two

If you take a look at enough primrose flowers, you're bound to see that there are two distinct types of flowers: "pin-eyed" and "thrum-eyed." A pin-eyed flower has a little knob, called the *stigma,* poling up from the

A thrum-eyed polyanthus flower

throat of the flower. The stigma is the female flower part and is shaped like the head of a pin. It's broad and sticky to better enable it to receive pollen grains, the male sex cells. The *anthers,* or the male pollen-bearing organs, are located further down this pin-eyed flower's throat, just out of sight.

With the anthers located so deep in the flower, it's difficult for the pollen to just "fall" on the stigma. Without the help of friendly bees, pin-eyed flowers never could fertilize themselves. Even with bees buzzing around, they only rarely accomplish the feat. Preventing inbreeding is beneficial, however, because self-fertilization in the long run allows deleterious genes to accumulate in a steadily dwindling pool of genetic variability. Cross-fertilization (fertilization involving two different individuals of the same species or two different species) blends many more characteristics from unlike parents and thus enlarges the pool of genetic combinations. Progeny of such crosses usually are stronger than self-fertilized or inbred plants.

Pin-eyed plants are half of the primrose's scheme. Thrum-eyed flowers are arranged in the reverse manner. Rather than the anthers being below the sticky stigma, they are stationed at the opening of the flower above the recessed stigma. In thrum flowers, self-fertilization easily can occur. But in any population of *primula* flowers, there are almost equal proportions of pin and thrum flowers, ensuring an adequate mixture of pollen between the two types, thanks also to the assistance of pollinating bees.

This condition, where there are two different flower forms in plants of a single species, is called *heterostyly*. Heterostyly is an effective means of preventing self-fertilization and partially explains why there are so many different species of primroses around. The better adapted a genus is to cross-fertilization, the more likely it is to generate a number of species. There were more than twenty different kinds of *Primula* being grown in the seventeenth century, despite a lack of knowledge of hybridization. Primrose growers simply culled the standouts from the plants growing wild along stream banks or in moist meadow lands.

English Primroses

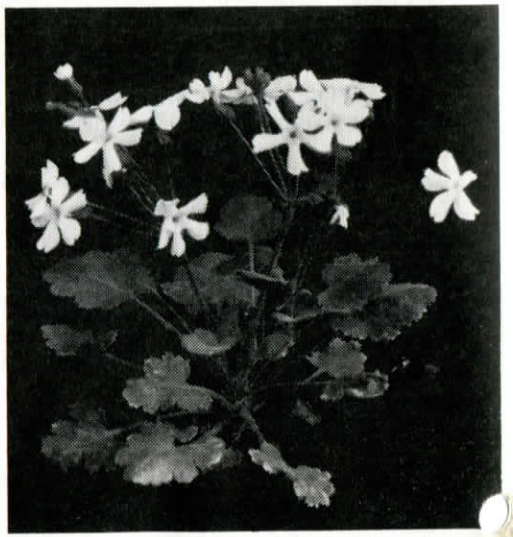
Primroses have been cultivated in the West for about 450 years and some of them, such as the *auricula* and *polyanthus* hybrids, enjoyed great popularity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Workingmen's flower societies sprang up in the industrial cities of England. These societies sponsored great flower shows where *auricula* and *polyanthus* (outdoor) primroses were grown to exact standards. Many fine old varieties grown and groomed for show became extinct after the mid-nineteenth century due to a strong movement toward more "natural" plants and plantings in gardens. (Today, however, there is still a large selection of primroses. And the trend toward cooler interiors coupled with the increasing cost of heating greenhouses is making these cold-hardy plants popular again.)

The first cultivated primroses were derived from native English species: the common primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), the cowslip (*P. veris*) and the oxlip (*P. elatior*). These native species had been cultivated since the Middle Ages and by Elizabethan times were grown in kitchen gardens and as ornaments. Late in the seventeenth century, other primroses brought to England from other parts of the world enriched the native collection with a wider selection of flower colors and types. To this day England continues to be a major source of primrose varieties.

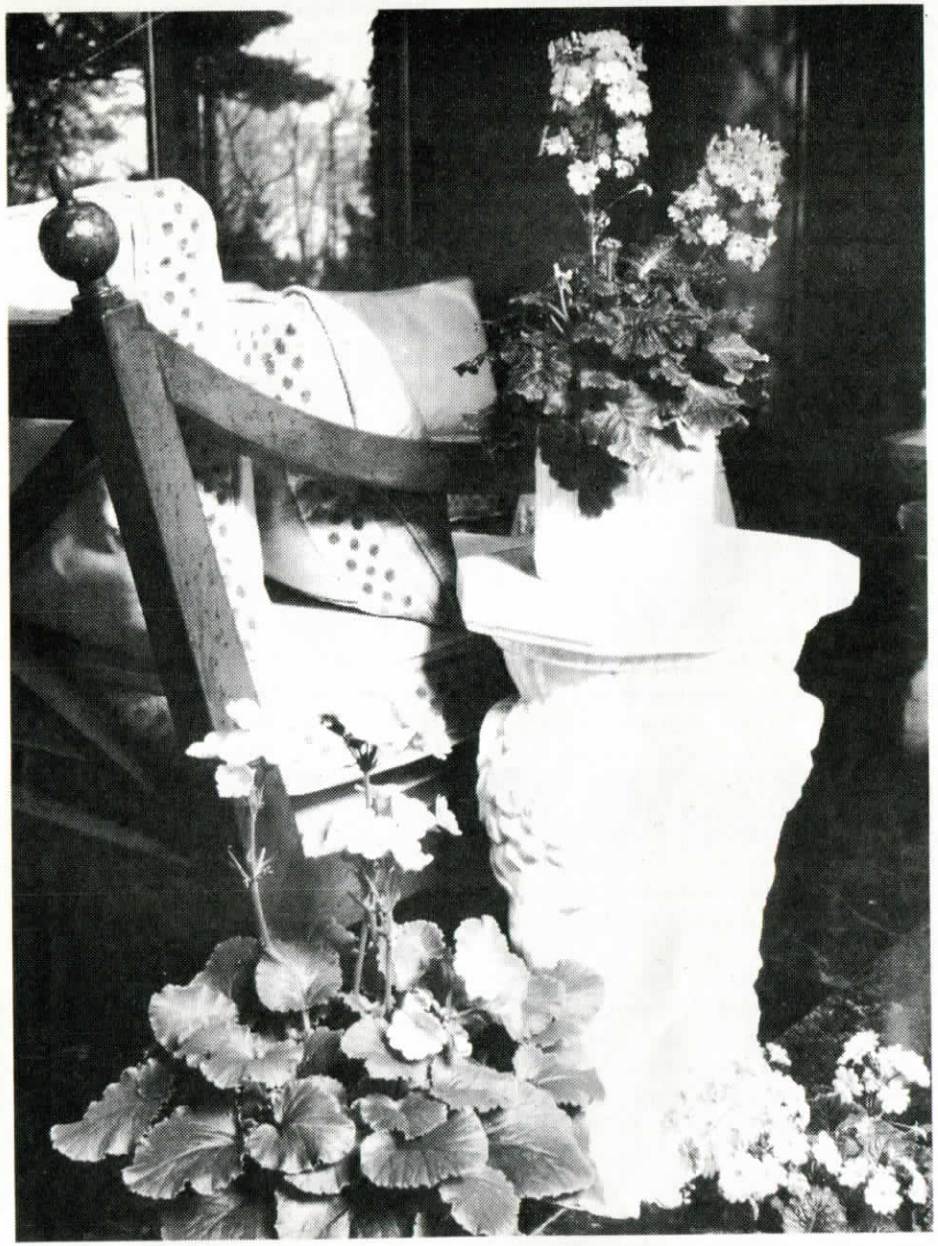
Potted Primroses

Although primroses generally are started and cultivated in cool greenhouses, they usually are grown that way only until they're ready to be planted outside in massed beds or borders. Left there through the winter, some die and some don't. Some may be brought back inside the cool greenhouse to provide winter color. A few species are known as true indoor pot plants and grow well as long as they are kept near a cool window.

Among the popular indoor species is *Primula sinensis,* the Chinese primrose. Following a few hundred years of cultivation in its native Orient, *sinensis* (also known as *P. chinensis* or *P. praenitens*) was introduced in



Primula sinensis



Primula oboconica *on the left,* ***P. malacoides****, center and right. Oboconica has aquired the unfortunate reputation as a "poison plant" because an oil in the hairs coating the plant produce as rash in some people. But it is very beautiful and flowers for as long as 6 months at a time.*

England in 1820. The original *sinensis* had light purple or lilac flowers, but intensive hybridizing over the years has produced blooms of scarlet, fuchsia, pink, lavender and white. The cultivar *P. sinensis* 'Fimbriata' is especially showy, with delicately fringed petals. The foliage is dark green and hairy, with round, deeply lobed and toothed leaves. *Sinensis* flowers from February to May. The inch-and-a-half-wide flowers are arranged in clusters around the stem.

Primula malacoides, the fairy primrose, came to England from China in 1908 and quickly became a popular pot plant. It grows about eighteen inches tall and blooms abundantly from the flat-topped clusters surrounding the stems. Many color forms and both simple and double flower types are available. The flowers can be white or range through shades of pink to lavender, carmine and purple. The plant's stems are covered with a fine powder or "farina" thought to be a protection against bright sunlight. As long as the blossoms are removed as they fade, flowers will keep coming for several months.

Fairy primrose seed sown in late June or July should yield flowers from December through the following April. The plant can be held over after it exhausts its blooming period. Fed periodically until fall, a primrose can be kept around for another season. It's best to sow seed and start fresh, however, since the old plants just won't be up to their former glory. Many primrose fanciers sow seed year-round to be sure of having a constant supply of the faintly fragrant flowers.

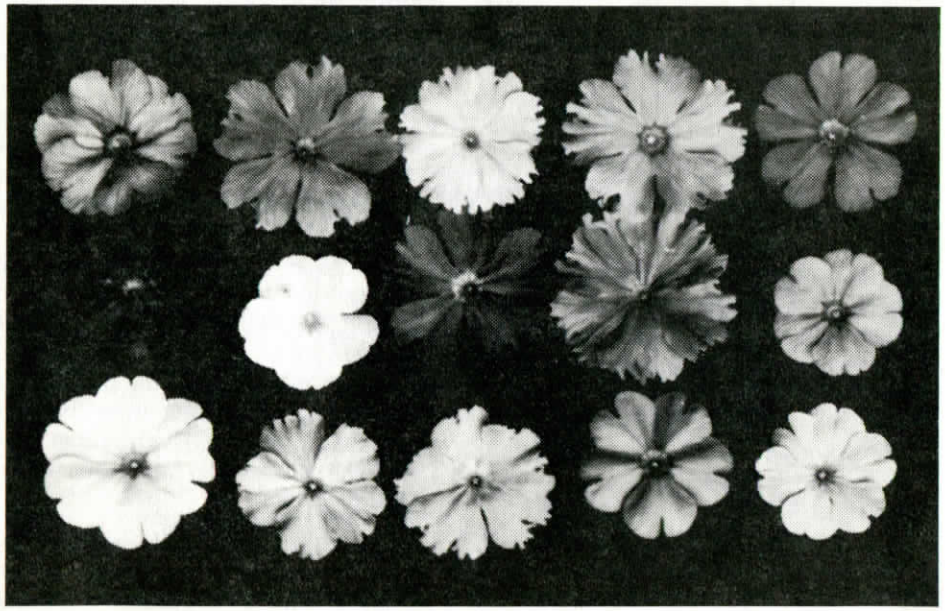
Primula obconica, the German or poison primrose, acquired its "poisonous" reputation because the fine hairs on the plant cause a skin rash in some people, but only after they've handled numerous plants.

Obconica has been a popular pot plant since the 1880s. Like *sinensis* and *malacoides,* this is a Chinese import. It's a larger plant than the fairy primrose, with half-dollar-sized blossoms growing in large clusters of white, pink, crimson and sky blue. A new introduction, *Primula obconica* 'Louvre', has salmon flowers. This species is happy in any lighting exposure, but is sensitive to sudden changes in temperature. Give it a cool, partially shaded position. Keep these plants tidy by pulling off dead leaves, flowers and stems and they'll grow more vigorously. A well-tended *obconica* flowers for six months at a time.

Polyanthus or bunch primrose (*Primula x polyantha*) is an old-fashioned garden plant that makes an excellent indoor pot plant. The earliest ancestor of polyanthus probably appeared in England in the mid-seventeenth century and is thought to be a natural hybrid of the three native English species. Most available polyanthus specimens are descended from a single plant grown in 1875 and carefully bred over a fifty year span by English gardener Gertrude Jekyll. Popular plants today include the English 'Europa' mixture and the giant 'Pacific' strain developed in California. Flower colors run from red and yellow to blue, with a bright yellow "eye" in the center of each blossom.

Primula x kewensis is a hybrid with pure yellow flowers. It resulted from an accidental cross between two species at England's Kew Gardens in 1898. One parent, *P. floribunda,* is native to the western Himalayas, while the other, *P. verticillata,* comes from Yemen, on the south coast of Arabia. *Kewensis* is one of the best primroses, growing quickly and flowering over a long period of time.

Primula oboconica *(left) and* ***P. crendsii multiflora*** *(right.)*
Photo by Elmer Baldwin



This photo of ***P. oboconica*** *flowers suggests the wide range of colors and forms they can take. There are many fully double cultivers as well*

Growing Primroses

Primroses are started almost exclusively from seed. Division of mature plants is possible but not practical. Besides, plants started from seed flower very quickly, often within six months.

A primrose germinating bed should consist of equal parts of vermiculite, sterilized potting soil and sand. *Primula* seeds are very small, but they can be handled easily if you sow them from a paper funnel made by folding the paper in half, putting the seeds into the resulting trough and then gently tapping them onto the planting medium.

The planting bed should have a drainage layer of charcoal chips or gravela covered with a two-inch layer of the premoistened mix. Firm up the surface with a flat object and sow the seeds sparingly on the surface. Cover them with a thin layer of very fine vermiculite and water carefully with a mister. To retain moisture, seal the container with a sheet of plastic. If the soil dries out even for only a few hours, most of the seeds will not sprout. A shaded location and relatively low temperatures of 50-60°F (10-16°C) also are desirable and lessen the likelihood of drying out.

As soon as the seedlings germinate, usually within three or four weeks, remove the plastic cover. When three small leaves have developed, transplant the seedlings into three-inch pots filled with the germinating mix. Special care should be taken in planting the seedlings so that the crown, the point where root meets stem, if even with the soil surface. If the plants are put in too deeply, the bottom leaves will rot, if they're above the soil, the plants may topple over.

Primrose roots are sensitive. To avoid disturbing the seedlings, water from below by setting the individual pots on a large water-filled tray until the surface of the growing mix feels wet. And don't allow the seedlings to get rootbound. You'll run the risk of stunted plants. Check your seedlings every couple of weeks and move them into pots one inch wider if a lot of roots are showing.

Most primroses need six-inch pots by the time they reach maturity (*P. malacoides* seem satisfied with a four or five-inch pot). The roomy pots assist in keeping soil moist and avoiding a wilt-inducing situation from which the plants can't recover.

At least as important as the moisture requirements is a *primula's* demand for cool temperatures. They flourish in daytime climes of 50-70°F (10-21°C) and in nighttime temperatures as low as 40°F (4°C). All of these species can be grown under fluorescent lights, too, as long as a fair drop in temperature is recorded after dark.

If you don't have a light garden, or a greenhouse for that matter,put your primroses in a cool north or east windowsill where they won't catch any direct sun. Place them on a shelf close to the glass so they can feel the heavier cool air as it sinks toward the floor. When the coolness requirement is met, primroses are dynamic and durable house plants, rarely bothered by common insect pests.

Primrose seedlings, however, are susceptible to damping-off disease, a fungus that causes the stems to rot at the soil line, toppling the plants. Use of a sterile mix arrests the problem at the onset. If you encounter this disease later, treat with a drench of captan wettable powder mixed according to directions.

Mealybugs and aphids occasionally infest *primula* leaves, especially close to the crowns where all the leafstalks come together. These insects feed on plant juices and cause wilting and deformation of foliage. A plant that isn't in flower can be rinsed in the sink with tepid water, which will dislodge most of these pests. (You can't rinse a flowering plant without staining the blossoms.) Should the pests persist, water the soil with a solution of Di-Syston, a systemic insecticide that renders the plant poisonous to the insects.

Brown spots on the leaves of mature plants are caused by one or two species of fungi. These can be controlled by spraying the foliage with a solution of Benlate.

When you buy potted primroses, choose immature plants whenever possible. Already flowering plants most likely have been forced in a greenhouse and their blossoms last several weeks in a cool spot. But with immature plants, you can get a longer blooming period. Remove any buds you see and repot the plants in larger containers, taking care that the pots drain well and the plants' crown are at soil level. Eventually, the plants will give you plenty of flowers as long as you feed them at least once a month with a balanced fertilizer showing, for example, a 20-20-20 reading on the product label.

Once you have them established in their roomy pots, primroses are excellent pot plants for a cold winter window, even able to withstand the steady drafts that quickly debilitate other flowering plants. If all goes well, the delicacy and fresh color of their flowers and foliage will suggest spring at a time when you really need a reminder of what is to come.

Readers please note:

This is the last copy of PRIMROSES you will receive unless you send your 1988 dues to Treasurer Brian Skidmore promptly. Please renew.

AMERICAN PRIMROSE SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1941

Information

Question and Answer

In a recent letter to your Editor a reader posed a quesiton, requested an answer and asked if we could please have a question and answer column as a regular feature in PRIMROSES. I brought it up at the Fall Board Meeting and Herb Dickson, our many times former president and one of the best primula growers agreed to give it a try. So write me your questions as soon as you receive this and I'll pass them on to Herb for a response in the spring issue. Meantime, as an example of what you can expect here are excerpts from a study session, with growing plants as illustrations, given by Herb in October:

Petiolaris Primulas

In nature the petiolaris primulas grow in the Himalayas at 14-18,000'. They are under snow cover all winter, bloom in running ice water, have two months monsoon season, a **short** dry period and then snow again. Since these conditions are impossible to create here in our area, petiolares species are difficult to grow. One thing these plants do not appreciate is a long spell of hot, dry weather. In fact, I lost the gorgeous *P. aureata* shown at the Tacoma show this year, to just such weather.

I first started growing petiolares with *P. edgeworthii alba,* from seed from Jack Drake in England. Some of the other petiolares species I've grown are *P. petiolaris, P. gracilipes, P. scapigera, P. griffithii* and a *P. petiolaris x gracilipes* hybrid brought back from England by Larry Bailey. This hybrid is one of the easiest to grow and keep growing. Like many hybrids its growing conditions are less demanding than some of the species.

I try to keep petiolares growing all winter in the greenhouse and to let them go dormant. But all the petiolares species are very susceptible to root rot. We use a systemic fungicide (combination of Benlate and Subdue) in the spring and summer. Other tips: do not water overhead when the plants are in bloom or they will rot very easily. The only time to divide any petiolares is when the weather is cool. Be sure to keep plenty of room between the plant and the side of the pot so you don't get any water on the leaves.

Leaf cuttings are very difficult but certainly possible. The rooting medium needs to be one that stays moist, but not soggy, and must be sterile. A leaf cutting must have the growing bud or "eye" still attached; just barely pushed into the medium; with a fungicide to avoid problems. Once they root, they grow very quickly.

(Ed. note: Herb has been very generous and has donated petiolares species to the Berry Garden in Portland, Oregon and to the Rhododendron Species Foundation in Federal Way, Washington.)

1988 Showdates

Announcements of up-coming shows were made and they are as follows:

Eastside Chapter	April 15th & 16th Set up April 14th
Milwaukie Chapter	April 16th & 17th Set up April 15th
Tacoma Chapter	March 26th & 27th Set up March 25th
Washington State Chapter National Show	April 9th & 10th Set up April 8th

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Candy Strickland, Secretary

Book Review

GARDENING MY MAIL – A Source Book, by Barbara J. Barton, Second edition, revised and enlarged, Tusker Press, Sebastopol, CA, 1987, $16.00, 336 pp, with line drawings.

Here we have a most practical and thoroughly meaty reference volume. It is inconceivable to me that any gardener, once having come into possession of a copy, could be other than a constant user. Since the first day it arrived I have been consulting it. I needed to compile a list of plant societies for a mailing, I wanted to locate a nearby nursery selling episcias for that gardening friend on my Christmast list, a piece of research for an article in PRIMROSES needed to be checked out at a large specialized library, and on and on it goes. In short, if you don't have a copy – get it. A fascinating, beautifully put together reference work that must have required a lifetime of work to compile. You will find more than a thousand nurseries and seed companies arranged alphabetically, and then indexed by plant specialities and by location; more than 360 garden supply and service companies in the U.S. and Canada listed alphabetically and then indexed by product or service and trade names; more than 230 plant and horticultural societies throughout the English-speaking world, indexed by special interest; more than 150 useful gardening books, more than 120 horticultural libraries for research, listed by location, more than 200 horticultural and gardening magazines, newsletters and society publications.

Gosh, what a spread! And all so attractively done. Do yourself a big, big favor and make sure it is on your shelf without further delay.

R.L.C.

Primula Stalkers Take Note

Larry Bailey and Lee Bower are again planning on stalking the wild primrose; this time in the House Mountain Range, southwest Utah. Two years ago Larry did find the very recently discovered *Primula domensis* Kass & Welch (July 1985 – Great Basin Naturalist), but unfortunately it had just finished blooming. This June, Larry Bailey and Lee Bower are putting together a safari into the House Mountain Range to photograph this rare and new Primula. Anyone who is interested in venturing into the back country of Utah on this safari is welcome to contact Larry Bailey at 1570 9th Ave. N., Edmonds, WA 98020.

The trip is presently planned for around the weekend of June 11-12, 1988; but could change to one week before or after this date, depending upon your response.

The House Mountains rise out of the southern part of the Great Basin

Desert to heights of over 9000 ft. This range of mountains is isolated from civilization (50 miles), very dry and temperatures in the daytime can become "warm". High axle vehicles can drive to a base camp within 4 to 5 miles of the primula location, but one should expect a day hike into the Sawtooth Canyon, and up an incline for approximately 1500 feet. Two evenings are expected to be spent at the base camp in this remote location.

This area is unique in flora, and one can expect to find many varieties of plants including penstemons, miniature ferns, flowering sage, phlox, Papaveraceae, Onagraceae (evening primrose), allium, as well as many in the Cactus Family.

The group's size will have to be limited. If you are interested in joining this adventuresome and fun loving party, do not hesitate to contact Larry as soon as possible indicating the date most convenient. Additional information will be furnished, to those who express interest, as it becomes available.

Garden Symposium

The nation's oldest gardening conference – The Williamsburg Garden Symposium – continues to thrive and grow! In fact, the theme for the 42nd annual Williamsburg Garden Symposium, to be held April 10 through 13, 1988, is "The Lure and Lore of the Garden." This exciting program, tailored to the interests of both professional and amateur horticulturists and garden enthusiasts, includes daily lectures, clinics, special tours, films and more. Topics included on the 1988 program encompass Georgia's Callaway Gardens, irises, peonies, woody plants, Colonial Revival gardening and the gardens of Seattle (the featured city). A highlight of the program will be a demonstration by renowned British flower arranger Sheila McQueen. Registration is $160 per person. For more information or registration, contact Forums Registrar, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, P.O. Box C, Williamsburg, Va. 23187.

More on the National Show

As an added feature to the '88 National Show, visits to five gardens in the Seattle area have been arranged. A.P.S. members will be able to enjoy a variety of primulas as well as early flowering Rhododendrons and spring flowering bulbs.

Gardens will be open for A.P.S. members between the hours of 10-2 on Sunday, April 10th and Monday, April 11th.

Maps and directions will be available.

Seed Exchange

Seeds for the seed exchange have been coming in very good despite reports of poor seed set due to the very hot and dry summer. I have had many reports from the members that they have had good success with the seeds they have received. For this I am terribly grateful. The seed list will be sent out shortly after the first of the year. I have a very good selection this year, with some new ones, at least to me.

Last year one of my regular customers, Mr. John Rapp, passed. Mrs. Rapp wrote me a very nice letter telling me of Mr. Rapp's pleasure with the Primrose Society, and enclosed a gift to the Seed Exchange to be used in his name. With this gift I purchased Mr. Fenderson's new book, *A Synoptic Guide to the Genus Primula".* Along with the Pictorial Dictionary, the Seed Exchange is the proud owner of *Primulas of Europe and America,* and *Asiatic Primulas.* These books have been a great deal of help to me and believe me, I've had to use them a lot!

I hope everyone has a very successful growing season and that each and every one will try something new and interesting this year.

Book Review

THE OPINIONATED GARDENER – Random Offshoots from an Alpine Garden, by Geoffrey B. Charlesworth, David R. Godine, Publisher, Boston, 1988, $16.95, 197 pp, with at least 100 exquisite line drawings by Laura Louise Foster.

Now here is a delightful book! It will probably never be a great book in the sense that Reginald Farrer's are great books, but it is more entertaining by far than any other garden book I have ever read, and it is packed with useful, interesting information.

What a wit Geoffrey Charlesworth is. It's absolutely delicious to read on the train or over the lunch break, but it's even more fun to read aloud with a fellow gardener. My wife and I howled and chuckled almost all the way through. For instance, there's this gem on p. 44: "As you get deeper and deeper into alpines, reading books and journals, talking to the cognoscenti, seeing slides, and attending conferences, you begin to take in the fact that a number of plant names crop up time and again. Eventually you also realize that it is 'everybody's' aim to grow these plants. It is one of the rites of passage to have tried and either failed completely or succeeded partially. If you succeed you join the Blessed in Valhalla or Olympus – your choice. Ordinary folk have a few partial successes and more failures. But then they can talk about these plants with at least the authority of a failed Ph.D. If you haven't tried any of them, you haven't received the call. Perhaps you need psychotherapy, or have an acute case of sour grapes."

The author has done an uncanny job of expressing himself in prose, with all his hope and persistence and, yes – greed. As an example I invite you to read "Planting Out" beginning on page 160. When I finished the book I liked Geoffrey Charleworth, and resonated very strongly with him.

The illustrations are so beautiful – just short of holy. How I wish I could persuade Laura Louise Foster to do a job like that for me. It would make writing the book – any book – a song. Thank you Timmy for these lovely, lovely drawings.

And thank you Charles for a memorable treat. Your book is joining my permanent colleciton.

R.L.C.

Correspondence Desired

The following letter came to our Treasurer recently:

A few years ago, I saw an English book describing beautiful old forms of primroses and related plants. Asking the best and most prolific rare plant collectors in Australia, I managed to unearth an old 'spray-form' poly-primrose, a gold laced polyanthus called "Willet's Duke of Cumberland" (a family treasure for several generations), and an assortment of pre-Pacific Giant polyanthus. Scarcely realising I had done so well, I started to look for seeds and the elusive double primroses. I found an Old House and Garden magazine my parents had bought in the 1950's and noticed a nursery advertising *'Lilacina plena'.* The nursery is still operating and the assumption that nurserymen don't throw away good plants paid off. Although the plant had not been offered for sale for many years, the man was willing to let me have a piece in response to my enthusiasm. I feel the colour is too dark to be the real thing. When it flowers this year I would like to send a slide to someone who may

be able to give a better guess at the name. I naturally found Barnhaven and Goodwins and have grown a great pile of plants from their seeds. The doubles from both sources are quite distinct from the *'Lilacina plena'* in habit and flower form. I am starting to understand the auriculas better this year after indifferent success with seed last year. I think it is patience as much as skill I am learning with these auriculas!

My new home is in a hills region which has a cool damp and very foggy winter with rare snowfalls. The temperature seldom goes below -5°C and the summer is not as hot as the inland regions where I lived before. Generally it seems a much better primrose climate and the recently transplanted clumps bear this out with clean fresh-looking flowers.

In the future, I hope to establish letter contact on a more regular basis with some members of your Society. When I try some hybridising and establishd more the plants I have, I will have much more to discuss and share.

Best regards for now,
Robert Peace
34 Vickery Street
Alexandra
Victoria 3714
Australia

Albert Smith

For those of you who do not know, Al Smith, former APS President, APS Judge and member of both the Washington State and Eastside Chapters, hads a fatal heart attack on November 4, 1987 at his home in Duvall, Washington.

Al was a hard worker, felling trees for both wood heat and his woodworking hobby, raising sheep, caring for his large fruit orchard, and raising and showing primroses, especially auriculas.

He was most generous with the American Primrose Society and the Primrose Chapters.

Al will be missed.

Viola Mildred Purple

Viola Mildred Purple, 81, a resident of Pe Ell for the past 20 years, moving from the Seattle-Auburn area, died Friday, December 4, in a Centralia nursing home.

Born September 1906, in Fairview, Kansas, she owned and operated the Purple Florist and Greenhouse. Purple was president of the Primrose Society and was a member of the Pe Ell Garden Club and The Pe Ell Rebekah Lodge. She was also active in flower shows in Washington.

Rememberances may be donations to Children Orthopedic Hospital.

At the request of Purple, no services will be held. Arrangements were under the direction of the Brown Mortuary Service.

1988 Oregon Chapter Show

April 16-17
Milwaukie, Oregon

If you would like more information, contact Show Chairman, Etha Tate, 10722 SE 40th Ave. Milwaukie, OR 97222

Help Wanted

Your Editor has lost his copy of Walter Blasdale's wonderful book "The Cultivated Species of Primula", a gift from Florence Bellis. If you can provide a replacement for him, another copy, please contact him ASAP. Compensation, of course.

Membership List as of 12/20/87

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