

Primroses

Spring 1992
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PRIMROSES

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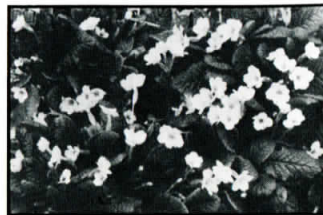
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**ON THE COVER**

A classic favorite, the wild primrose, *Primula vulgaris* is a true harbinger of spring. Photo by Cy Happy.

Profiles of the Growers

Have you ever wanted to know more about the growers of those wonderful primrose plants that appear on the show tables? How did that person get interested in primulas? Here are answers from some of the people who grow the plants.

Darlene Heller

Mount Vernon, Washington

Prize winner at APS shows, Darlene says she has grown primroses since 1973. She enjoys their early blooms, and the many varieties and colors. Also she likes the ease with which they grow for her — the soil is acid enough that they grow rampant on her farm.

Primula denticulata, *P. capitata mooreana*, *P. seiboldii* are the ones she grows the most, along with *P. sikkimensis*, *P. rosea* and auriculas. Also some julies. Her favorite is the Cowichan, for its velvety beauty, bright colors and fragrance.

If she has any dislikes, it is *P. kewensis* — it looks like a glorified thistle. And however much she loves the gold-laced polyanthus, she hates it for causing lacing on all nearby primroses. Hard to keep the julies pure, too, for the polyanthus keep crossing with them.

She and her husband, Lyle, send this story:

"We are always amazed, Lyle and I, each spring as we walk through our garden beds of primroses and catch new hybrids popping up. They are like a bonus from last year.

"Our farm soil was naturally acid and once a primrose was planted, it took off and multiplied like Adam's sons — except for the auricula, which died.

"We sold our farm and moved to a hill top home in Mount Vernon, Washington, and found to our dismay only clay. Our auriculas are thriving and the Cowichans are dying.

"We are trying to renew our soil with peat and grass and leaf mould but it will be a constant battle with all of this clay. We use steer

manure, bought in bags at the local feed and seed store, and primroses seem to love it mixed in with their potting soil, or into the beds. Living on a farm for 30 years, we had no idea we would ever be in a position where we would have to buy cow manure.

"My husband does all the back breaking work of building up the primula beds and soils, and I wouldn't be able to raise primulas without his major contribution."

Mary Baxter

Bothell, Washinton

Mary has a number of primula treasures which also show up at the shows.

She tells us that she started with primroses about 40 years ago, when she begged and pleaded with a little old lady to sell her a blue acaulis of which she had 27, and at that time they were mighty rare. "Instead, she sold me a dozen other primrose plants, at 20 cents a plant and said, 'Mary, I want you to plant these and next spring I want to see them blooming. Then I'll know if you are really interested in raising primroses. If you are, then I'll give you a blue one, and some seed and you can grow your own.'

"She came the next spring, she saw all my beautiful polyanthus and acaulis. I got the blue plant and the seeds, the know-how to grow primroses, and all the joy and beauty from growing primroses ever since."

The Vernales section primroses are her favorites — easy to grow from seed, easy to pollinate, and the glorious range of colors is unbelievable. "Right now," she writes "I have polyanthus,

Profiles of the Growers continued

acaulis, a few julies, candelabras, *P. florindae*, denticulatas, gold-laced, hose-in-hose, Jack-in-the-Green and a lot of Cowichans, with a few odd-balls, scattered in."

She reports, "The auriculas are my least favorite — probably because the ones I like require a green house or lath house, and greenhouses and I just don't get along that well. For me, if my plants can't take the weather as it comes, they just have to go. I feel the auriculas are very formal-looking, without the bright coloring I find in the Vernales section."

Mary gives us some hints for starting primrose seed, and lets us get a glimpse of her enthusiasm for primroses with this story.

"Starting plants from seed has always been an exciting adventure for me. After preparing the flats in September with the usual sand, loam and leaf mould, I mix about three tablespoons of Captan into each flat and then let them sit on benches in the open weather until December 17, My Day!

"I get all my seeds of every type of primrose I might have bought, pollinated or got from the seed exchange and mix them all together. I scratch the surface of the flats, take a pinch of seed and scatter as much or as little as I like on each flat, all the while muttering to myself a little wish for their well being and dreaming of a bountiful crop.

"A two-by-four, cut to the same length as the flat is used to press the seeds into the damp soil. I cover them with a piece of damp sheet, put a screen over that, and forget about them until early February. They freeze and thaw and get rain, all on their own outside.

"Early February, I sneak a look. Seedlings have sprouted, so I remove the sheets, sprinkle lightly with Captan and then I begin watering them

with a weak solution of 20-20-20. I take good care of all the seedlings because this is the fun time for me — trying to guess which is which, day after day, not knowing for sure until something blooms. I even babied a dandelion for weeks before I decided what it was. It ended up in the salad bowl with a lot of others of its ilk!"

Rick Lupp

Graham, Washington

One of our members owns an alpine plant nursery, and has become interested in the alpine primroses. He tells me he started growing the more unusual primula about eight years ago.

"I first got started with the unusual primula when I read an article in Sunset magazine that featured *Primula japonica*. The article listed Rosetta Jones as a source for species primula. I visited her nursery with a friend and became hooked. Rosetta told us about a show the following week sponsored by the American Primula Society. I attended the show and joined the APS on the spot."

Rick is especially fond of the alpine primula because of his interest in alpine plants seen while hiking and climbing in the mountains of the northwest and other areas of the world. "I specialize in alpine here at the Mt. Tahoma Nursery. Some of my favorite primula are *P. x bileckii*, *P. daonensis*, *P. allionii*, *P. minima*, *P. marginata* and *P. minima x wulfeniana*. I also enjoy *P. capitata* for its late summer and autumn bloom and I really enjoy the *P. x juliana* hybrids."

Helen Moehnke

Banks, Oregon

A long standing interest in primroses has resulted in the lovely plants Helen brings to the shows in Oregon. She says she can't remember the year she first grew primroses, but it was soon after she moved to her home in Banks, Oregon in 1945. She remembers her mother

had primroses and gave some from her garden to Helen. That's how she got started.

Helen gardens 1,000 feet above sea level, and has tried every kind of primula she could get her hands on, but grows the ones that do well where she is. These include the julies, polyanthus and acaulis.

"In 1975 my neighbour and I heard of a primrose show in Beaverton. We joined the Valley-Hi chapter that day. I have been a member ever since.

"We have bought a lot of primrose plants at the shows over the years, and also grown plants from seed. I'm going to try again this year and see what happens. I have a lath house, and they grow quite well in there, but ground animals find them, and I lose a lot."

Helen has become interested in shrubs, and has started to propagate them from cuttings. Her love of gardening now extends to perennials and hardy plants, as well as the primroses.

Anita Kistler

West Chester, PA

The point at which Anita got "hooked" was when she took a trip to Switzerland and the Austrian mountains. "We were taken by an Austrian botanist to the top of Patshelkoffel to see *Primula minima*, *P. hirsuta* and all sorts of others growing in the wild and in his garden up near the tree line on the mountain. That was it!"

Her favorites now are wild species of *P. auricula*, as well as other species. She has *P. japonica* and *P. rosea* growing near the springhouse, polyanthus, *P. pruhoniana*, and *P. denticulata* in the rock garden, *P. marginata*, *P. frondosa*, *P. viscosa* and *P. pubescens* in troughs, and some pots of *P. allionii* in the alpine house. Scattered about elsewhere are *P. seiboldii*, *P. kisoana* and some hose-in-hose and acaulis. "I used to have *P. juliae*, but it only lasted two and a half year."

Having seen auriculas growing in the mountains in Switzerland, and following the precepts of her mentor, Doretta Klaber, Anita says her least favorite primroses are auriculas grown in pots. She wants to see auriculas and primulas grown in the rock garden. And she does have lots, in her rock garden — also under the crab apple tree, the pear tree and in the springhouse area. There are over 300 plants in all.

"I used to go up to Doretta Klaber's to help Ellie Brinckerhoff Springarn (from Connecticut) weed Doretta's garden in latter years. I knew her "primrose path" well. As far as I know, it is no longer in existence."

John Kerridge

Vancouver, British Columbia

John has been growing primroses for about 25 years, ever since he noticed an old yellow polyanthus thriving on its own in his garden. Perhaps one of the Munstead strain of primroses, it spread until he was over-run with it.

As a guest at an Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia meeting John glimpsed an auricula and was hooked. John's enthusiasm has led to a large collection of primulas in his garden. One of his initiatives is the gold-laced polyanthus, crossed with garden polyanthus to get a large flower and vigorous plants that will do well as bright garden plants.

Another is his julie hybrids, that are coming along with encouraging results. From growing a lot of Barnhaven seed, John now has most of the Barnhaven lines of primroses marching in rows in his garden beds. And of course he is an admirer and collector of show auriculas: "No equal for beauty, but such a short season!"

As well as the thousands in his back garden, he also has many more plants that he is naturalizing at his cottage on one of the Gulf Islands.

Profiles of the Growers continued

Seriously involved in propagating primulas and auriculas from seed and divisions over the last few years, John passes on these tips:

- ◆ auricula offsets root well in a pumice/peat moss mix with bottom heat. Or try peat pellets, the number 7 size.
- ◆ the old root stalks of polyanthus left over when dividing garden plants can be trimmed off and washed clean with a fungicide and will sprout all over again if kept almost dry in perlite.

Tony James

Victoria, British Columbia

After seeing the beautiful and unusual primulas exhibited at the Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden shows in Victoria, Tony became a fascinated grower of primroses. First he acquired auricula plants from local nurseries, then from Herb Dickson in Chehalis, Washington. Next he began growing them from seed.

Once a member of the American Primrose Society, his interest extended to other primroses — Cowichans, gold-laced, acaulis and some of the species: *P. frondosa*, *P. farinosa*, *P. halleri*, most of which he grew from seed.

"This year I am growing, or hoping to grow, some of Rosetta Jones' double acaulis and auriculas, as well as some of Herb Dickson's seed. I have not ventured into hybridizing yet."

Primroses and auriculas are tucked into every corner of his garden where over 300 plants now grow in garden beds, cold-frames or on benches in the greenhouse.

Tony is interested in the show auriculas too, especially the edged ones, but finds it difficult

to maintain them in a healthy condition in a pot over a period of time. "Only too often they decline and die on me," he tells me. Any tips from successful growers of show auriculas would be most welcome.

Keith Muir

Duncan, British Columbia

"It's difficult to give an exact date when I became interested in primulas, but I suppose as long as I have been gardening, which is since I was a schoolboy. The exception is the twelve years I spent on the Canadian prairies — not great primula country. I have grown primula for sale on a small scale for the last five years.

"As a lad in the west Midlands of England, I perpetually divided clumps of primula. They were a fixture of our, and probably most, rural gardens. Most of them were a sooty red with a large yellow eye, as I remember.

"My real attraction to the species was the clear color of the wild acaulis which grew in a few rare and untended, untrammelled spots in the area of my boyhood. I was not particularly attracted to the cultivated forms of primroses until attending agricultural college in the late 1950s. The horticultural department had some impressive massed plantings. I now regret not finding the origin of those plants at the time."

Keith says he is very fond of the solid color forms of the Barnhaven strains and finds them particularly easy to grow. The Cowichans are of special interest, especially living, as he does, in the valley where they originated. The doubles, acaulis and auriculas are all a fascination to him, too. "Commercially we grow several of the bold Asiatics on a small scale and clone a few of the more saleable acaulis, gold-laced, Barnhavens and named varieties of primroses. For fun, I grow as many species from seed as I can find time and opportunity to acquire. My favorite? Perhaps it's only

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Pictures with Primroses

by Jerry Sedenko

I'm not a collector — at least I try not to be. Succumbing, as we all do, to successive fascinations with new genera I prefer to think of it as inquisitive, rather than purely acquisitive.

I have a criterion for continuing to grow any new plant: aside from whatever beauty or uniqueness it possesses, can I use it in my garden? By this I mean "Does it enable the picture?" for that is what gardening is, a series of pictures which change over time. Successfully growing the most peevish Mother's darling may create a sense of accomplishment for some, but I get a much deeper spiritual resonance from a pathway that invites me down it and into another world, one where I'm completely surrounded by Flora's glories.

Growing a collection requires technical mastery; making a garden requires vision and

artistry. And while it seems that the genus *Primula* lends itself perhaps too easily to plant lust and collect-o-mania, an artist's approach which includes the various species in appropriate pictures will allow the plants to express their deeper nature — and will wow your friends!

The most obvious, and rather hackneyed use of primroses is in carpet bedding and planting schemes in parks and around public buildings. Monochromatic swaths of glowing polyanthus, alone or in combination with tulips or daffodils, possess a certain shock value, I suppose. Worse are mixtures of every color made available by the hybridizer's art that look like the aftermath of an explosion in a confetti factory. Okay, so it's early spring and we're hungry for **any** color. But a little restraint, please.

Perhaps you can't fund a "nuttery," as Harold



Candelabras with skunk cabbage, iris and marsh marigold on a stream bank.

Pictures with Primroses continued

Nicolson did at Sissinghurst, carpeting it with polyanthus in crimson, yellow and cream. But even a planter filled with maroon-faced pink pansies, creamy yellow wall flowers and rich rose primulas can be the very essence of the season.

Lining a path of aged, purplish brick may seem obvious, but the richness of old fashioned wallflowers and polyanthus, in deep muted colors, will create a romantic feeling worthy of William Morris. And we can't forget the pure burning colors of the Cowichan polyanthus: more than an urn-full would be almost too much to take. A circular bed centered with a variegated kerria or pristine white abeliophyllum is begging for an under-planting of blue or red primroses. For the brave, old tried and true 'Wanda' would not be too brash.

While primroses and polyanthus lend themselves to sweeping tapestries, the garden auriculas are better used as doilies. Their complex color patterns and leafiness invite close inspection, so even a dozen plants of one variety seem extravagant. So, too, double or "novelty" forms of primroses and polyanthus. And it is possible to miss altogether the darker forms of laced polyanthus, unless backed by something as brilliant as Bowles' golden grass: "exotic" isn't the half of it!

All of the plants mentioned so far are "florist's flowers," completely contrived and unnatural. And that's probably why they seem more appropriate around buildings and structures. But there are plenty of varieties for more "natural" and less architectural settings.

In a woodland garden, the obvious plants to use are native to just that environment. In fact,

Kingdon-Ward bestowed the term "woodland primroses" on *Primula cortusoides*, *P. polyneura*, *P. saxatilis*, *P. sieboldii* and others of their ilk. I would include *P. kisoana*, a willing doer in Seattle area gardens that strews its fuzzy, crinkled rosettes about with the enthusiasm of the strawberry.

Primula sieboldii, with its many forms, never bores me. It reminds me of *Phlox divaricata*, but with toothy, elegant leaves a phlox could only dream of. Its one drawback is its early dormancy; most references say it dies down in autumn. In my garden, which is definitely on the dry side, it vanishes by the end of June.

Some dwarf lobelia, like 'Cambridge Blue' will preclude a gaping hole for the balance of the season. Woodland primulas are best in substantial groupings of a square yard, and are delightful with hellebores, spotted pulmonarias and, yes, *Phlox divaricata*. A carpet of plum-leaved *Viola labradorica* and *Anemone nemorosa* is begging for a clump of *Primula sieboldii* and muscari or chinodoxa. My favorite epimedium, *E. x perralchicum*, whose dime-sized canary yellow flowers apologize for the rest of the genus, sparkle next to primulas in white or shades of lavender. Some Bowles' golden grass or woodrushes, and a few ferns add extra color and texture. The spreaders, like *Primula kisoana* and *P. sieboldii* are perfect underpinnings for rhododendrons, and are certainly more interesting than ground bark.

Because most woodland plants have to do their "thing" before overhead trees leaf out, woody gardens tend to peak in spring. Not so a marsh or bog, where many other species of primula make their home. While not many besides *P. florindae* will grow in water, many thrive stream- or pond-side.

Since there's no lack of water, many bog plants have evolved large leaves, primulas among them. Great cabbagey clumps of leaves of members of the Candelabra section are matched by some of the Sikkimensis section, notably the aforementioned *P. florindae*. Combine these



A group of *Primula sieboldii* and *muscari* brighten a shady corner.

Drawing by J. Sedemko

with darmera, rogersia and calla lilies. For texture, ostrich ferns and osmunda furnish the lace while the dozens of varieties of *Iris ensata* and *I. pseudacorus*, particularly the variegated one, give firmness and line to the picture.

Ligularias form a group of striking companions. Many have purple petioles or even leaves, and all have towers of gold or orange tousled daisies, so avoid pink primulas. But show some pizzazz and use those purple and red-violet species, like *Primula burmanica* and groups of glowing gold or orange *P. helodoxa*, *P. chungensis* or *P. bulleyana*. Add some beet-leaved Lobelia 'Queen Victoria' with its slender spires of clear, ruby red. Cover the ground with marmalade-scented variegated houttuynia, splashed with coral, hot pink and chartreuse and you've got yourself a real show-stopper.

The pink primulas needn't feel left out. They'll do nicely combined with the pale yellow and heavenly scented *P. florindae*. Group these with the new blue, rose and violet hybrid lobelias, plummy astilbes and filipendulas, and

the nodding pink bottlebrushes of *Sanguisorba obtusa*, plus irises and ferns for a very different feeling.

Most of these same boggy species do just fine in a border setting. If you can manage some blue meconopsis, you need little else. Soft pink *P. pulverulenta* 'Bartley Strain' is a particularly lovely plant in the border, and lifts a grouping of too globular peonies. I also love candelabra primulas — even the orange ones — with campanula, like *C. persicifolia*, *C. latifolia* and *C. lactiflora*. Hardy geraniums also go well. Geranium 'Johnson's Blue' and *G. x magnificentum* are naturals, as are the forms of *G. sanguineum*. But a real statement is made by a combination of black-penciled, screaming magenta *G. psilostemon*, orange *P. cockburniana*, with a billow of chartreuse lady's mantle foaming below. Who says primulas have to be airy-fairy all the time?

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When Do We Meet?

Chapters of the American Primrose Society

If you want to attend a chapter meeting, the following general schedule outlines when the meeting is regularly held. Check with the chapter executive for exact dates.

Doretta Klaber Chapter

Contact President Anita Kistler,
1421 Ship Road, West Chester, PA

Eastside Chapter

First Monday in the month.
Contact President Thea Oakley, 206-880-6177

Oregon Chapter

Contact President, Thelma Genheimer,
7100 SW 209th Ave., Beaverton, OR 97007

Tacoma Chapter

First Tuesday of each month,
except July and August.
Contact President Candy Strickland,
8518 28th Ave. E., Tacoma, WA 98445

Valley-Hi Chapter

Contact President Etha Tate,
10722 SE 40th Ave, Milwaulkie, OR 97222

Washington State Chapter

Second Friday of each month,
except July and August.
Contact President Gene Reichle,
7140 North Fork Road SE,
Snoqualmie, WA 98065

Seattle Chapter

Irregular.
Contact President June Skidmore,
6730 West Mercer Way,
Mercer Island, WA 98040

Pictures with Primulas

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I must mention my bias against the mish-mash of colors in the 'Harlow Car' strain of candelabras. The colors are no different than those mentioned above — it's just that they're all there, together, at once, looking like the creation of a demented *pointilliste* painter. Drama is one thing, chaos quite another.

The longer we garden, the more we come to value foliage. Some primulas have already

been mentioned as possessing noteworthy foliage. Don't overlook the dusky-leaved Cowichans and 'Garryard Guinevere'. After the flowers finish, their leaves are still an asset.

So get out there and liberate your primulas from the "Collector's Corner". In their proper setting, you'll understand more of what they are all about, and love them even more. ♦

Jerry Sedenko is a garden writer who puts his great ideas into practice whenever he can — if not in his own garden, in that of a friend.

Primulas in a Botanical Garden

Part 2 - More about primulas in the Garden at the David C. Lam Asian Garden, University of British Columbia Botanical Garden in Vancouver, British Columbia. Part 1 was in the Winter 1992 issue of Primroses.

by Bodil Leamy

The University of British Columbia Botanical Gardens are found in a unique location near the cliffs at the end of the University peninsula.

*In Part 1 of her article on primroses in the Lam Asian Gardens, Bodil Leamy, a horticulturalist at the Gardens, described the setting and microclimate and started her description of the primroses with those that bloom first in the season: *Primula denticulata*, *P. veris* and its subspecies, *P. amoena*, *P. rosea* and *P. luteola*. Now she continues with the primulas that follow the very early bloomers.*

A Shy Flowering Primrose

Since I wrote about *Primula luteola* in part 1 of this article, I borrowed a copy of Doretta Klaber's book *Primroses and Spring*, published in 1966, and found that she had the same experience as I did: namely, no flowers after the first year's bloom. I wonder if the clone in cultivation is reluctant to flower? I would like to hear from other growers if they have this problem with *P. luteola*: no flowers, no matter how much care the plant has been given.

Primula sonchifolia is a choice early-flowering species in the Petiolaris section with lovely ice-blue to mauve flowers and I wish we could say we had it in cultivation. However, we can only claim we grow it. There are still three plants alive in the Garden. However, to say we have a plant in cultivation, I mean that we have the plant growing in the Garden where it has flowered, set seed and then grown for at least another year.

In 1987, we imported six plants of *Primula sonchifolia* from a nursery in England, and



Primula cortusoides in the Asian Garden.

these plants were successfully established in our nursery. They flowered there, in the spring of 1988, and when I planted them in the Garden in mid-April the plants had already set seed. In early June of 1988, the seed capsules started to change color and the still-green seeds were sent to the nursery and sown at once. The seed germinated at the end of June that same year and no less than 42 seedlings were potted up and grew strongly. The seedlings were planted in various places in the Garden. Some were put into clay pots and plunged in benches in the Alpine House. They simply hated this and succumbed to spider mites.

Over the years the parent plants have died: the last one in the winter of 1990-91. Three of the seedlings are alive and well and at this date (January 1992) are visibly swelling and

Primulas in a Botanical Garden continued

beginning to show the first flower buds. The three survivors are planted approximately two feet above a little creek on a steep bank facing east. There is plenty of light from above but no direct sunlight at any time and it is always cool and moist even in the hottest weather. The plants have flowered the last three years, but set no seed so far.

Species *Primula seiboldii*

In April, the various cultivars of *P. seiboldii* flower and they are some of my favorite plants. Unfortunately, it is not a species we have much luck with in the Asian Garden. Six different cultivars imported at the same time as *Primula sonchifolia* were easily established in pots in our nursery and grew strongly. It was a different story after they were planted out in the spring of 1989. They have dwindled away each year and I really don't expect to find any live plants this year.

Last year I managed to get seed of the species from Sendai Botanical Garden, Tohoku University, Sendai Japan, but unfortunately only three seedlings germinated. I find that we must plant at least a dozen specimen of a species to really test the garden-worthiness of a new introduction.



Primula polyneura, one of Bodil's favorites, thrives in shade.

We suffer from lack of labor, as do so many other botanical gardens. Starting with so few plants, we have to ask ourselves if the species is important enough to justify the extra care the plants will need to get established. All primulas need this extra care at first, but we do try to establish a primula species even if we have only a few plants.

Asian Species

Both *Primula vialii* and *P. capitata* are short-lived in our garden. They have been raised from seed and planted many times in different locations but the longest they have survived is about two years. Due to growing so many rhododendrons, we water a lot in the summer and early fall, which these two species hate. Planting them under our large native evergreens has not been successful, either, since the wide-ranging roots of the trees use all the available moisture in the ground.

Years ago, I had four plants of *P. vialii* survive in my own garden for four years. They were under large holly trees which seemed to suit them very well. On such slender evidence I hope to find the perfect balance in the Garden between moisture and lack of winter wet to satisfy those two species. I don't ever remember reading about *P. vialii* or *P. capitata* self-sowing.

The various color forms of *P. alpicola* seed around just enough to maintain themselves but the number of plants do not really increase. Of the three colors we have, I find the pale yellow form, *P. alpicola* var. *luna*, has not generated any self-sown seedlings and I now have only one plant left. *Primula alpicola* always gets a lot of notice from our visitors who are used to the strong color of *P. polyanthus* and *P. auricula* cultivars. They find the soft colors restful.

From the Cortusoides Section

The few numbers of the Cortusoides section that we grow seem to be very happy and self-seed regularly. I guess my favorite is *P. polyneura*, since in our Garden it is such a "good doer." The only care it receives or seems to need



A snow-flake form of *Primula seiboldii* in a shady corner of the UBC Garden.

consists of keeping the pop-weed from smothering the plants in the early spring, and a general clean up in the winter. This species also seems to thrive in much deeper shade than any other primulas in the Garden. It has an extended flowering period beginning in early May and ending even as late as early July. The vivid magenta flowers are echoed in the equally vivid flowers of the biennial honesty, *Lunaria annua*, and if you grow the variegated form, the combination becomes even more striking.

For years I have been intrigued with *P. mollis*, another member of the cortusoides section. Just as every primula book condemns *P. grandis* as unworthy of cultivation, so do the same books say without fail that *P. mollis* is not hardy, the flowers are too "squinny" and neither species is worth growing.

Primula mollis is a native of Bhutan, but the seed I received was collected in Nepal. The seed was sown in December 1988 and half the plants were planted in a very sheltered spot in

the fall of 1990. They grew very well, and did not turn a hair during our bad winter. In the spring of 1991, the other half of the plants were planted out and both groups were in flower by mid-May 1991.

The flowers are not large, only about one-half inch across, but they appear in great abundance, some plants showing ten scapes at the same time. The scapes themselves carry many superimposed umbels, each with five to seven flowers of a dark pink to raspberry colored corolla, fading slightly with age.

I kept careful notes last summer on the length of flowering time for *P. mollis* and I see that several plants were still going strong in the beginning of August. Finally the flowering petered out, but on the September 17 a new scape appeared. I think this is the longest flowering time that I recorded over the years

Primulas in a Botanical Garden continued

for any primula species, beating even *P. florindae* and *P. japonica* 'Postford White'.

A Primula with Poor Press

I mentioned *Primula grandis* above as another species which is declared worthless and not fit for cultivation by any discerning gardener. As a matter of fact, it has been removed from the genus *Primula* and should be called *Srendinskya grandis* according to *A Synoptic Guide to the Genus Primula* by G.K. Fenderson. I am afraid that I disagree totally about *P. grandis* and its worth as a garden plant. I think that the large leaves do not look out of place at all and the suggestion that it could be used as a foliage plant is a good one. Placed behind dwarf ferns or astilbe, the foliage loses its coarseness and only the sky-rocket effect of the pale yellow flowers is noticed. In seed, the drooping flowers turn 180 degrees and the capsules stand erect.

We harvest lots of seed each year and some has been sent to the American Primrose Society seed exchange. I hope other people share my opinion of *P. grandis*' worth as a garden plant. Since it has now been removed from the genus *Primula*, it can stand up and be counted as a delightful plant on its own, not endlessly condemned with faint praise as an inferior primula.

Mystery Species Identified

Another interesting primula species flowered for us in spring 1991. This species was collected in Sichuan, China, under the collecting number SICH 128. Seedlings were raised in our nursery and nine plants were planted out in the fall of 1990. Just like *P. mollis*, it came through the hard winter of 1990-91 beautifully. In the spring of 1991, a further 10 plants were placed in the Garden, and all flowered profusely. The flowers were small, dark maroon-colored and star-shaped, with reflexed corolla. They reminded me of a cyclamen species.

The scapes were tall — 12-15 inches high — which were much too tall in proportion to the half-inch flowers. The flowers emitted a

strong, delightfully spicy scent, but the species could really only be loved by a passionate primula lover. The phrase "of botanical interest only" would obviously be applied here.

Eventually the species was tentatively identified from Fenderson's *A Synoptic Guide to the Genus Primula* as *P. maximowiczii* or a closely related species belonging in the *Nivales* section. The species is illustrated on page 154 of Fenderson's guide and has been in cultivation several times but has obviously not been treasured much. I don't remember ever noticing this species in any seed list I have read. Our plants set lots of seed, so hopefully it will be possible to raise more plants. ❖

To be continued in following issues

Profiles of the Growers

continued from page 6

nostalgia, but it has to be the wild acaulis."

To Keith's eye, the mixed color batches of commercial primulas available give a "dog's dinner" appearance to a planting. Lack of hardiness and poor perennial tendencies in some of the recent seedling strains are not acceptable to him. "I don't want to treat my primulas as annuals.

"With a finger and toe and thumb count, I have about 22 species, which don't include the auriculas, acaulis and seiboldii. There are about 15 named varieties of these, including the Barnhaven and seiboldii forms. I am still building our house. We have no landscaping done, so all of the collection and those grown for sale are in pots." ❖

If you are an ardent primrose grower and would like to be included in future Profiles, please send a note to the editor and request a Profiles questionnaire.

Primula Notes

by Don Keefe

Self-Pollinating Primroses

Some primula species, such as the floribundas, Scottish bird's eyes, the verticillatas and their relatives, are self-fertile. Also, self-fertile plants may occasionally occur in any primula population and frequently in polyanthus. For further information, look at the chapter in *Primulas of the British Isles* by John Richards, 1989, Shire Publications, Riseborough, Buckinghamshire, England.

Exciting New Juliana Seed

June Skidmore, agent for Field House Alpines, has available a new type of F1 juliana seed that was obtained from Germany. The plants are similar to the Wanda strain that has appeared in the APS seed exchange list for the past couple of years, but I think, superior. Jellito advises that the plants are truly winter hardy.

Many of the flower colors are remarkable, some like the Barnhaven Cowichan colors, with the unusual velvet sheen but in a broader color range. Also, the foliage of many of the plants is an unusual dark green with bronze tips to the leaves. While the foliage is often larger than most juliana plants, some plants have the small leaves of the typical julie hybrid.

In my opinion, many of these delightful plants deserve to be "selected" and named like the early julie hybrids and propagated by division. I think that selected forms will definitely turn out to be choice plants and will be included in the collection of juliana connoisseurs.

Barnhaven Primroses

Angela Bradford, who worked in England with the former owner Jared Sinclair, has issued a new seed list. The famous polyanthus, acaulis and Cowichan strains developed by Florence Bellis and then Jared Sinclair are there, along with some candelabra and belled primulas, notably *P. florindae* hybrids. Also included are garden auricula, both double and single.

If you want a list, write to Barnhaven Primroses, Langerhouad, 22420 Plouzelambre, France.

Unusual Juliana Hybrids

Dorothy Springer of Tacoma has several very unusual juliana hybrids. One has a true medium grey flower that I have never seen before. As I recall, it is a stalked form. Another has a strange off-bluish flower with thin silver lacing — exotic looking. I believe Dorothy crossed Bob Putnam's "Silver-Laced Blue" with *P. juliae* to produce it. These are not named, as yet.

Dorothy has another juliana with a jack-in-the-green ruff. It is the same color as 'Garryard Guinevere'. She has named it 'Wilber Graves'.

Mary Baxter of Redmond has some choice rose ground-color gold-laced and silver-laced plants that also have the well-defined jack-in-the-green ruff. Another one of Mary's plants is a dark red stalked jack-in-the-green. The fairly large leaves of the ruff extend well beyond the bloom to form an exquisite corsage.

Primula Articles

In case you missed it, the summer 1991 issue of the American Rock Garden Society bulletin contains 5 excellent articles about primulas. Authors include Nancy Goodwin, Charles Oliver, Joann and Fred Knapp, Martin Jones and Jay Lunn, treasurer of our society. Copies of the bulletin are on file at the Elisabeth C. Miller Library on the University of Washington campus in Seattle. It is open to the public.

Sakata Seed

The 1992 Thompson and Morgan catalog lists what appear to be Sakata 'Julian Hybrid' seed under the heading "Juliana mini-hybrids F-1." If these are the miniature hardy types, the price

Primula Notes continued

listed at \$3.95 for 80 seeds is a really good bargain. However, Sakata does not list such plants as F-1 hybrids in their annual catalog. Perhaps they are from Sakata's semi-miniature F-1 'Hybrid Lovely' series?

'Wanda' Hybrids

Another Thompson and Morgan listing is for 'Wanda' hybrids: 15 seed for \$3.95. Hope there are some in our seed exchange!

These unusual, hardy plants, with blooms up to one and a half inches, are absolutely delightful. They often have the bronze tone in their leaves, and come in seven gorgeous colors. Craven's nursery in England sells the Wanda strain with the different colors in separate packets, which is a big advantage. According to the Craven ad in the last APS quarterly, they now have the 'Wanda' strain in yellow and white, as well as carmine, red, maroon, pink, salmon, lavender and lilac-mauve.

Plant Finder

Those of you who are planning a trip to England this year to bring home some extra choice plant goodies are encouraged to purchase a copy of **The Plant Finder**. This book is updated every other year, and is published England by the Hardy Plant Society. The 1990/91 issue lists over 45,000 plants and where to buy them.

Wild Animals

The wild critters found around greater Seattle's East Side gardens includes coyotes, opossums, raccoons, squirrels, deer, field mice, salamanders, porcupines and garter snakes. However, I felt rather humble after telling this to Marie Skonberg when she was down on a visit. She mentioned Kodiak brown bears, which I believe are the world's largest carnivorous animals, frisking around in her garden plot in Ouzinkie, Alaska.

More on Primula Seed

APS members have expressed interest in getting Peter Atkinson's primula seed. This is quality seed, often hand-pollinated, from his own hybridizing. Peter still has seed available for julianas, stalked julianas, F-3 hybrids, yellow hose-in-hose and gold-laced polyanthus. Send a letter to him at 16035 SE 167th Place, Renton, WA 98058, enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope (if mailing in the USA) and he will send you a seed and price list.

'Juliana' versus 'Pruhoniciana'

G.K. Fenderson's book **A Synoptic Guide to the Genus Primula** indicates that a 'juliana' (*Primula x 'juliana'*) is a cross between *P. juliae* and *P. elatior*, and that *P. pruhonicensis* (*P. pruhoniciana*) is a *P. juliae*, *P. elatior* and *P. vulgaris* cross. The book **Primulas of Europe and America** by G.F. Smith, B. Burrow and D.B. Lowe indicates that *P. pruhoniciana* has a synonym: *P. x juliana*.

Miniature Denticulata

The miniature *Primula drummondiana* described in Mary A. Robinson's book **Primulas — the Complete Guide** on page 232 "like a miniature lavender *P. denticulata* only two to three inches high" now has a miniature cousin. John O'Brien of Juneau, Alaska acquired a dwarf lavender *P. denticulata* from another gardener in Juneau. It appears to be slightly larger than *P. drummondiana*, using a photo of the Juneau *denticulata* along side some julianas as a basis for comparison. Hopefully, John will send us full details of the tiny *denticulata*.

Primula megaseifolia

In the article "Exotic *Primula megaseifolia* from Turkey: a Hybridizer's Dream" (**Primroses Summer 1991**) there is an error in the bibliography. In the section Primary Sources, the reference for Josef Halda's information should be changed to: **APS Primroses**, 48:47-51, 1990. ♦

Weevil Control, An Integrated Approach

by Dave Whitehead

Dave Whitehead has taken an enterprising and responsible approach to pest management using organic and when necessary low-toxicity pesticides in an integrated program to control the unwanted insects that eat our plants.



The weevil in action eating the roots of a shrub.

Weevils, notably the Black Vine Weevil (*Otiorynchus sulcatus*) or the Strawberry Root Weevil (*Otiorynchus ovatus*), are serious plant pests for many ornamentals in the garden. Plant damage by these insects is due to feeding, either by the adult or the larva. Some plants are attractive to both stages. The favorite foods of these destructive pests include a wide range of decorative garden material: camellia, rhododendron, azalea, pieris, photinia, cedar, yew, rose, cyclamen and of course, primula.

In any integrated pest management program, the axiom "know thy enemy" is of primary importance. Characteristics and habits of these weevils help us understand their control.

Weevils belong to the order Coleoptera, in the family Curculionidae. The adults vary in color from light grey to black and possess a characteristic "snout nose" with the elbowed antenna located half-way along the snout. Having lost their ability to fly, most adults range no more than nine meters away from where they hatch, though some observations reveal the occasional insect ranging much further. They are night feeders, and are seldom observed on their host plant — they take refuge under garden debris for the daylight hours. Evidence of adult feeding damage is the characteristic notching of leaves along with the occasional girdling of stems of the plant.

It is in the larval, or grub stage that this insect poses its most serious threat to our plants. The creamy-white, C-shaped larvae can damage plants to the point of death by eating feeder roots

and the bark of larger roots, or even the root/shoot collar, until the plant cannot obtain any water or food from its roots.

Although weevils produce a single generation per year, their life cycle is complicated by the fact that it is staggered, with adult, larvae, pupae and eggs present at all times of the year. In addition, all adults are female, each capable of producing 500 to 1,000 eggs in its lifetime.

A primary first step in weevil control is exclusion. Inspection of plants, particularly the rootball, for weevils or their damage and the destruction of any larvae found can go a long way towards control. The knowledge that the adults, being flightless, must crawl into our greenhouses and up onto plant benches can be used in our favor. A barrier of sticky material on the legs or around the perimeter of the benches will trap invading pests before they reach our plants. It is certainly worth the effort to design or redesign growing areas with this in mind.

Weevil Control continued

Many of the insecticides used to control weevils in the past are now either ineffective due to resistance or have had their registration removed. The few that remain registered for weevil control are highly toxic and can be hazardous to handle.

Fortunately, biological control organisms, known as entomophagous (or parasitic) nematodes are showing promise as a less-toxic means of weevil control. Not to be confused with plant parasitic nematodes, these beneficial nematodes invade the larval stage of a broad range of insects, infecting them with a deadly disease. Specific to the larval stage of insects that inhabit the ground at this period in their life cycle, they are no threat to humans, and in fact photo-decompose quickly.

Entomophagous nematodes are very safe to handle and apply, though successful insect control depends on several important factors. At least two species of nematodes are commercially available in Canada and the United States under a variety of names: Biosafe, Biovector and Guardian.



Adult weevil commonly seen in gardens.

Mixing and applying these organisms is slightly more complicated than using chemical pesticides. The nematodes must be released from a suspension, activated and then diluted in water before application. Although they may be applied in a conventional sprayer, it is often more convenient to simply apply them directly to the root zone or pots by watering can. After preparing the solution, and just prior to application, it is interesting to examine a drop of the solution with a hand-lens to observe the tiny, active worms and verify their viability. Further instructions concerning coverage can be found on the product labels.

As mentioned above, these nematodes have several critical requirements that must be met in order for the control to be effective. To date, none of the species available will survive soil temperatures less than 10 degrees C (50 degrees F). For northern gardeners, this limits the time for application from late spring through to early fall. This range can be extended in green-houses.

Nematodes require moist soil conditions, and will not survive drought. Pre-watering application sites and watering in after application can aid nematode movement into the soil. Although parasitic nematodes will reproduce within infected hosts, they cannot be expected to remain in the soil at levels high enough to be effective for longer than three months. Therefore, repeated applications are necessary as long as conditions are favorable and as long as hosts, the larval insects, are still present.

Because ultra-violet rays of direct sunlight harm the nematodes, application on cloudy days, in the morning or evening hours, and watering in well will help insure survival.

Keep in mind that you are using living organisms as a pest control tactic. Like any other bio-control agent, beneficial nematodes are not compatible with chemical pesticides. Be aware that we are affecting only the larval stage of the weevil. Since all stages of weevils can be present at any one time and adults can live up to one year, we can expect complete control to

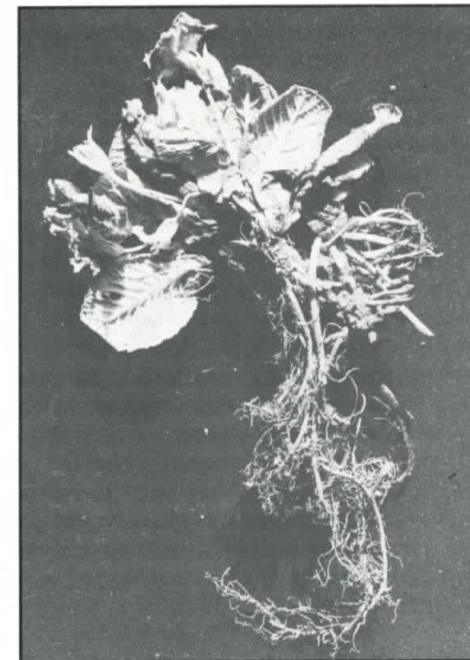
require one full year, barring the possibility of reinfestation.

As you have probably realized by now, the integrated approach to weevil control is neither quick nor simple. The truth of the matter is that there are no "magic bullets". The pesticides that promised quick and simple solutions have failed us, leaving us only with false expectations.

Integrated pest management brings pest management back under our control and fits it into the basic horticultural philosophy of observation, patience and wonder. Just as we will wait months for seeds to germinate, then further years to see our first blossoms or fruit, so we must be prepared to take the time required to establish ecologically sound, effective, long-term pest control strategies. The rewards can be as laudable as any other horticultural challenge. ♦

Dave Whitehead of Biosafe Horticultural Services (517 Victoria Ave., Victoria, B.C. Canada V8S 4M8 (604) 595-7965) is one of the new breed of pest control managers, and is building his business gradually as gardeners become aware that there is another way to handle pests in the garden.

The biological approach to pest control is becoming available in most major cities in North America. Check with your local state agricultural office.



Plant damage, after the grub eats the roots, shows up suddenly when the primrose wilts.

1992 SHOWS

Tacoma - Lakewood Mall - April 4-5

Seattle - South Center Pavilion - April 25

Eastside (Seattle) - Totem Lake Mall - April 17-18

Victoria, B.C. - Rock and Alpine Garden Show - April 3-4

Portland/Beaverton - National Show at the Symposium - April 10-11-12

News from the Chapters

Doretta Klaber Chapter

Saturday, February 15 is the seed sowing workshop at Anita Kistler's.

Eastside

At the February meeting, Sally Cadranel, vice-president, will discuss the use of pesticides and harmful side effects and Thea Oakley, president, will lead a discussion on fertilizing primulas, and growing primula seed. There will also be a cake to celebrate the birthday of the Eastside Chapter.

Members of the chapter (Thea Oakley, Darlene and Lyle Heller, Don and Mary Keefe) were down in January to help Candy Strickland, seed exchange chairman, package seed for distribution.

Editor, Don Keefe, reports that he and Mary have started growing most of their seed in pop bottle containers. An example will be brought to the meeting so you can see how they are made.

Seattle

For the February meeting, June Skidmore, president, will lead a discussion by members on growing primula from seed. Members are requested to bring samples of the smaller containers used for growing seed, with seedlings growing if possible.

June will also give a talk, "Prime Time Primula" in the public horticulture lecture series at the Center for Urban Horticulture, March 11, 1992.

Jay Lunn, treasurer of the American Primrose Society, will give a talk and slide presentation on "Native Primula of the United States" at the meeting, May 31, 1992. The slides are outstanding — Jay is an excellent photographer.

Washington State Chapter

Everyone was involved in the January meeting: Rosetta Jones spoke on raising primroses from seed, stressing the efficiency of the pop bottle method which is easy, results in good germination and has a minimum of problems. Darlene Stump spoke on candelabra primula. A prime source for her was the 1984 spring issue of *Sunset* magazine. Don Keefe gave a short talk on his favorite, *Primula x julianas*, and will continue with more information on them at the February meeting. Members are encouraged to bring a julie plant for identification.

Tacoma Chapter

The program for January will be Rick Lupp talking on the campanian plant, the campanula. February meeting speaker will be Cy Happy, APS president, talking on primulas for the rockery and the bog. He will include a wide range of primula in the program, focusing on those easy to grow. ❖

SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL SHOW

Thanks are sent out to members of the following Chapters for donations in support of the National Show to be held in conjunction with the Symposium *Primula Worldwide* in Beaverton, Oregon April 10-12, 1992:

- Valley-Hi Chapter
- Oregon Chapter
- Washington State Chapter
- Tacama Chapter

Now, keep your eye on those primroses and tidy them up for the show itself. We're looking for a really outstanding display!

Primulas in Scandinavia

by Ove Leth-Moller

You will remember a letter from Ove Leth-Moller, Chairman of the Danish Primula Club, to Don Keefe mentioned in the Summer 1991 issue of Primroses. Now Mr. Leth-Moller has written us about some of the primroses grown by primrose fanciers in Scandinavia.

Scandinavia consists of the countries Denmark, Norway and Sweden, all situated in the northern part of Europe. These three countries are all independent kingdoms and have been so for more than a thousand years. In Scandinavia, there are six native wild primula:

- ◆ *Primula veris*
- ◆ *Primula elatior*
- ◆ *Primula vulgaris*
- ◆ *Primula farinosa*
- ◆ *Primula scandinavica*
- ◆ *Primula stricta*

Only the first four of these are found in Denmark, while all six are found in Norway and Sweden.

In Denmark, the wild primroses are called "cowslips," a name the population gave them hundreds of years ago. They were called by this name in Simon Paulh's book *Danish Herb Book* which dates from 1648. This was the first book of this kind, and most fashionable at the time.

Primula veris mostly grows in meadow areas, where the cows are grazing, and got the name "cowslip" because they drive the cows away. At least, the cows avoid eating them. The reason is that the primroses — like several others belonging to the cowslip family — contain strong saponines.



Primula vulgaris is native throughout northern Europe and Scandinavia.

Primulas in Scandinavia continued

From olden times, the population has paid much attention to primulas, partly because they were used in medical treatments, but also — and not less importantly — because of the joy of seeing their flowers in the early spring. *Primula veris* tells us, "spring is coming!"

Primula veris got its name from two Latin words: "prima" meaning the first, and "veris" meaning spring, that is, the first flower of spring. Its name was given to it by the old botanists long before the Swedish botanist Carl von Linne (1707 - 1778) put the world of plants into the system of naming still used today.

In olden times the people from different regions gave these primulas different names, often connected with local legends or events.

Primula veris, *P. elatior* and *P. vulgaris* bloom together with the blue *P. amoena* from the Caucasus, and it is the natural hybrids among them that are the origin of the polyanthus. These colorful primula are beloved in Scandinavia and are found in most gardens.



Literature on the hose-in-hose primula, enjoyed by Danish growers, dates from Elizabethan times in England.

Very robust, they start flowering in April and keep on even until July. Many start again in the autumn and often continue until spring.

Many exciting varieties of primula originated from these hybrids, and mostly developed by British gardeners. The ones we particularly enjoy are:

- ◆ *Primula polyanthus* 'Gold-Laced'
- ◆ *Primula polyanthus* 'Hose-in-hose'
- ◆ *Primula polyanthus* 'Jack-in-the-Green'.

People in Scandinavia are very fond of nature and of their gardens. Many have their own house and garden. Gardens can be about 800 square meters up to 3,000 square meters. Often they are divided: part for flowers and part for vegetables. But now there is a tendency to keep the whole garden in flowers. In many gardens you will also find greenhouses, from 10 to 20 square meters.

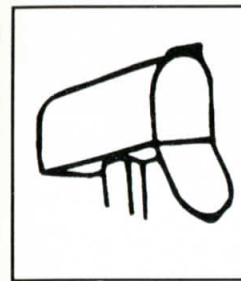
In Denmark we have no mountains or rocks, except on the island Bornholm. But along our beaches and in the fields you will find many large stones, brought with the ice from Norway and Sweden during the last ice age. Gardeners in Denmark collect these stones and build them up, often around a little artificial lake, in order to create a natural rockery for plants. In Danish gardens we have many evergreen trees and bushes, like rhododendrons and azaleas which create a good environment for other plants. We plant the primulas in groups in the places most suitable: shady and damp.

The beautiful primulas from the section *Prolifera*, such as *P. beesiana*, *P. bulleyana*, *P. helodoxa*, *P. japonica* and *P. pulverulenta* are often seen in large groups in the shade, together with ferns. The humidity is higher here, and you get a rich, colorful bed of plants which flower from May until August. Along the edge of the little lake you can grow primulas from the section *Sikkimensis*. After all — primulas can be planted in any convenient place in the garden, but always in groups, and in places with good drainage to avoid surplus water. It is often

Continued on page 35

From the Mailbox

Letters from our readers



Devon, England
November 1991

To the Treasurer:

... my interest is mainly with the Vernales. ... Living as I do in the "West Country" there are no specialized shows (re primulas), not as far as I am aware. In fact I am not aware of anyone in this area that is the least bit interested in these plants. Perhaps it is because primroses are so common here in the spring that most people take them for granted. They do not even stop to consider the many other forms and colours, let alone the old types that are still available.

Even now, in Exeter city centre there are beds of polyanthus showing some autumn flowers and, providing we get a mild winter, they will go on flowering until May.

Yesterday (Sunday) I visited a garden centre some 15 miles from Exeter at a little place called Olter-St.-Mary and bought two plants — 'Garryard Guinevere' and 'Tawny Port'. These were in three inch square pots and cost only two pounds five pence, about four dollars.

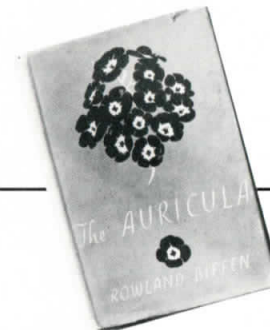
Double primroses are also easy to get hold of now, no doubt having been micro-propagated. They are mostly the modern varieties, and the prices range from about 75 pence to four pounds, according to plant size.

Will look forward to receiving the autumn (sorry, fall) journal and seed list.

Yours sincerely,
Doug Simmons

As a postscript I would like to write for a few moments about the rather mundane affair of plant labels. I have over the years used most things from waterproof pencils to felt-tip pens but the system I now use is as follows: Using a white four inch long plastic label, I write (print) the names with an ordinary "NB" black lead pencil. Then I paint on one coat of ladies colourless nail varnish. I have used polyurethane and clear varnish, but I find these will go yellow after a while, whereas colourless nail varnish painted on thinly stays clear and seems to last forever.

Someone out there may be interested. Best wishes. Doug



Oxford, England
January 1992

The Editor,

I greatly enjoyed reading the 50th Anniversary number of *Primroses*. I noticed your favourable comments in your "Notes" of the short book by John Richards, *Primroses of the British Isles*. It is indeed full of information not to be found elsewhere.

I now write to draw the attention of your readers to a book by another professional botanist — *The Auricula* by Rowland Biffen. As this was published in 1949 it is not easily obtained, but is sometimes stocked by second-hand booksellers, and also by the sections of the National Auricula and Primula Society.

Sir Rowland Biffen was a geneticist at Cambridge University but grew auriculas as a hobby; he brought all his experimental skills to unravel some of the mysteries of his favourite

From the Mailbox continued

plant. If you have wondered why there is such an unbelievable variety of colours, what makes the "paste" or indeed about the origin of the auricula, this is the book for you.

It is not a long book, but in spite of being written so long ago it is not out of date. Shortly before his death, many of Biffen's plants were given to C.G. Haysom, who is mentioned in the Anniversary number as having provided seed in the early days of the American Primrose Society. It is a great pity there is no new issue of this book.

When I read of the multifarious interest of members of the APS, I often wonder why there is so little mention of the cowslip, *Primula veris*, which was of course one of the parents of the polyanthus. However, it is a wonderful plant in its own right and well worth growing.

Once people could use it to make wine and children made cowslip balls, but it became scarce with the ploughing up of permanent pasture; happily it is making something of a revival. It was always fairly common on the verges of quieter country roads like those of the



Cowslip lawn in the small Priory Garden of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.

Cotswolds, but now is appearing on the banks and verges of motorways and in the safest of all nature reserves, the central reservations. Its wonderful golden colour and delightful scent rejoices the heart. It is quite hardy and should be easy to cultivate in the Northwestern states and in British Columbia but it prefers a basic soil. In central England I have never seen a red-flowered cowslip in the wild but they are sometimes found, particularly in Devon, and many nurserymen can supply them. It was the red-flowered form which, crossed with the similarly coloured primrose, *Primula vulgaris*, gave us the first polyanthus. Recognized as a garden plant around the 1670s, it is the plant from which the gold-laced flower developed in the next century.

Yours sincerely,
Ruth Duthie

P.S. I enclose a photo of the cowslip lawn in the small Priory Garden of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. ... To get such a "flowery mead" growing cowslip plants have to be put into the ground but once there, will increase from seed.

REMINISCENCES

A letter from Jane Holden

It was a great surprise to receive the anniversary issue. I have been a member for over 20 years. I do not know exactly when I joined, but much has happened in that time.

We used to live on the Bothell-Kirkland Highway for 25 years and had our nursery, known as Holden's Nursery, there for many years. Our oldest kids went to the Juanita School and to the church across the street. When we first moved there in 1950, my husband worked for some years at the Hopkin's Nursery. In "Down Memory Lane," in the anniversary issue, Izetta Renton says the Hopkin's Nursery was owned by a Fred Huey but I think that is not so. Harold Hopkins inherited the nursery from his father.

I saw pictures of the old man driving in his wagon pulled by horses. Today, as far as I know, Harold's sons still own and operate the business. But Mr. Huey owned a place a little more towards Juanita and it was Mr. Norteson who bought it. That one was called Bonneybrook Nursery. He has long since died, too.

We have been away from Juanita close to 17 years, but we still operate a nursery. However, we have turned it over to our son, now and help out as much as we can. We live on our place here.

The next thing in "Down Memory Lane," when Izetta Renton speaks of a place called Flower Acres, I have some vague idea of it. But I remember Mr. Day very well. In fact, we bought his lath house which we dismantled and put up on our own place. Mr. Day had a beautiful display of red azaleas by the road, but I never got one from him, nor did I find out what variety they were.

On around the corner was Finn Hill. I have been to Mrs. Tait's place when the primroses were in bloom. It really was a sight. The picture in her article in *Primroses* does her justice. She is just as I remembered her.

I, too, went to Butchart Gardens years ago. It was a beautiful place, and while in Victoria, we stayed at the Empress Hotel, too. My neighbour and I made a tour on the Princess Marguerite from Seattle, there and back in one day. We thoroughly enjoyed our trip.

One year we put a display in the Kirkland Primrose show. I made a point of meeting John Shuman. The reason was that I wanted to see Mr. Frank Michaud. Mr. Shuman gave him the message. Well, next day, towards late afternoon, a green Chevrolet drove up our drive, and a lady and gentleman got out of the car. They introduced themselves as the Michauds from Alpenglow Nursery. You cannot imagine how happy I was. We became such good friends. I went up to his place several times and we bought plants from him. I still have some of them growing in our nursery.

Did you ever see his place with the white borders around it? Since it was on such a busy highway we usually drove past it and then turned around and came up on the right side of the road. The house was so perfect. The greenhouses were a delight with all his rare plants packed in the benches, and were beautifully heated with an oil or coal burner. I met Rodger, his son, and Christine, his daughter.

Mr. Michaud took me up to the Top Garden, behind the house, across a wooden bridge, over a ravine and up to the many frames of plants at the top. The last time I saw him, he told me people were breaking into the frames at the top there, and stealing plants. He was such a lovely

From the Mailbox continued

man. Finally, as time went on, he died and it hurt me quite a bit. Then Christine got sick and Rodger did not want us to come up any more. It was too much work and he was not a youngster any more. He wrote occasionally, but then that stopped. I wrote to a neighbour who told me that Christine was getting ready for supper one evening and Roger did not come in. She went out to look for him, and found him dead in the garden. That was the last I heard of the Michauds. I would be happy to know what became of Alpenglow and Christine. Since I do not have a picture of Mr. Michaud I sure appreciate the one in the anniversary issue.

And long ago, too, there was a grocery store in Juanita, called Keiffer's Market. Roy Keiffer was a nice fellow and Judith, his wife was really nice, too. They also operated a nursery on the side and had beautiful baskets of begonias which he fertilized with Liquinox. He was the distributor for it. As time did not stand still, Roy passed away. I do not know how long Judith carried on with the store. We were already here, on the island. She sold it eventually, and retired with her dog, Rocky. Every Christmas we got her letter and card and then she must have passed on to a happier place.

So this last summer I met Rosetta Jones for the first time. She lives in Shelton, now. I have not been active in the Primrose Society due to my own work in the nursery. But believe me, I always enjoy reading of it when a new issue comes along. And this last one has been most wonderful because it brings back beautiful memories of times that cannot be compared to the ones of today. We had such fine nurserymen. It was always a joy for me to receive their catalogs and letters. They gave freely of what they knew and the stock was excellent quality. It's not so today. Now the only thing that really counts is the mighty dollar. Yes, which is necessary, I know.

I still love my plants very dearly and work very hard in the summer to keep control of the weeds. Last year I bought primrose seed from the APS and I must say I had very good luck. I hope to do the same this year. Some are blooming in this cold weather — some very simple ones but their faces are so beautiful. I hope that I have not bored you too much with my letter.

Thank-you again for a most wonderful issue.
Have a happy new year.

Yours truly,
Jane Holden

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COWSLIP WINE RECIPE

A recipe from June Skidmore

June Skidmore found this recipe in an old cook book and sends it along as a suggestion of another way to use our primroses. The old fashioned forms of primroses do seem to engage our affection in a way that the more modern hybrids sometimes do not.

This recipe could have been used by any household manager wanting to put away some wine for winter evenings any time from the 12th century to today. If you grow enough cowslips, you could give it a try. ❖

Cowslip Wine

1 gallon water
3 lb. loaf of sugar
Rind of 2 lemons
Juice of 1 lemon
Rind and juice of 1 Seville orange

Yeast
1 slice toast
Brandy
1 gallon cowslip flowers

Method — Bring the water and sugar to boiling point, and boil for half-an-hour, skimming as the scum rises. When cold, add 1 slice of toast thickly spread with the yeast. Leave it to ferment in a tub for 36 hours.

Put the cowslip flowers into a cask, add the thinly pared rinds of the lemons and the Seville orange, and the juice of the lemon and orange. Pour on the sugar-and-water liquid, and stir carefully daily for a week. To every 5 gallons of wine add one bottle of good brandy. Cork tightly, and let it stand for 6 weeks before straining and bottling.

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A Small Mystery

A note from the President, Cyrus Happy

For more than 20 years the Corydon Wagner garden in Tacoma (now Lakewold) has had a small yellow stalked julie growing in a most unlikely place on a vertical bank in the old grotto. Even more unlikely is an ancient, shrubby *Primula marginata* about three feet across growing stream-side in almost total shade.

But back to the yellow julie. It is smaller than 'Lady Greer' but a similar pale yellow. There is never any hint of pink. There is one distinctive feature -- the very first flowers are often acaulis and have a Jack-in-the-Green ruff. In show condition, it is much more compact than either 'Lady Greer' or 'Dorothy' and the leaves are very small.

While studying Barbara Shaw's book *Primroses*, I realized 'Craven Gem' or 'Craven Bells' is very much like this yellow julie. Could this be Mrs. Wagner's julie?

She and her sister, Mrs. Bloedel were very competitive and would go to great lengths to out



Little yellow julie.

do each other and Betty Miller, another formidable competitor. They each gathered quantities of plants at the Seattle Arboretum preview sales treasures. Competition was the life blood of the sisters' relationships, and they enjoyed it immensely.

I guess what I am saying is if 'Craven Gem' was ever available in this part of the world, Mrs. Wagner would be the one to have it.

Its history, according to Barbara Shaw, is fascinating. One of the early hybrids derived from the species *Primula juliae*, it was developed and grown by Reginald Farrer in his garden in 1902. This is much earlier than many of the other julie hybrids, including 'Wanda', which date from the 1920s.

Another possible source of the primrose is suggested by the recessive Jack-in-the-Green trait. Peter Klein had been breeding for julie jacks. It might have come from his nursery during the 1950s. ❖

The Unlucky Pupil

by Thomas Hogg

Excerpt from an article "On the Cultivation of the Auricula" by Mr. Thomas Hogg, Florist, Paddington, London published in The Floricultural Cabinet and Florists Magazine, volume 1 (1833).

The author, Thomas Hogg, (1771-1841) was an amateur (Florist) author of a treatise on carnations and articles such as this on other florist's flowers. He is not to be confused with the nurseryman Thomas Hogg (1778-1855) who had emigrated to New York in 1820 with his infant son. This younger Hogg continued the New York nursery business, surviving until 1892.

Hogg claims, in his early years in cultivating auriculas, to have assisted Emmerton in writing his Treatise on the Cultivation of the Auricula (1816; 2d ed. 1819). In the present article, Hogg, discussing the ingredients Emmerton used in his composts, says, "for the most part, (they) are of a nature too filthy and offensive for general adoption, as well as too tedious in preparation, and very prejudicial, if used prematurely," though admitting that the auriculas that Emmerton grew at that time "have not been surpassed, if equalled, by those of any florist of the present day. They were remarkable for their bold trusses, broad expanded pips of brilliant colours, strong stems and large fleshy foliage; indisputable proofs of good culture."

There was a person residing at Newington, belonging to the India House,¹ whom Emmerton² had imbued and inoculated with the auricula fancy, and who entered into it with spirit, and purchased at least one hundred plants of the best sorts then in cultivation. He likewise had got enrolled as a member of a Flower Society in that neighbourhood, and felt almost confident, under Emmerton's auspices and tuition, of winning the first prize, the silver cup; but unlooked-for accidents will often mar the best-laid projects, and occasion disappointment.

Good compost was a particular object of solicitude with both of them; and as Emmerton contended, that without bullock's blood and goosedung they would stand no chance; now, as the latter was a species of manure very difficult to be obtained in that quarter, he persuaded his pupil to commission some country waggoner out of Sussex to bring him, at Midsummer, two geese and a gander; which, according to Emmerton's calculation, would produce dung enough by Christmas to last him two years, when they would be fat and fit to kill, and well adapted for good fare, wherewith to treat his friends at that joyous season.

This project was soon put into execution; the geese were brought to town, and cooped up in a corner of his small garden, which might be ten yards long, by five wide. Everything was going on smoothly; the plants grew and the dung accumulated; only the man's wife complained of the filthy smell, arising from the heated and fermenting dung, than which nothing can be more offensive; but Emmerton promised soon to remedy that evil, by covering it with loam; notwithstanding, as the dung increased and was stirred up with the blood, the fermentation and stench increased too, and became so intolerable, that the women living in the two adjoining houses joined their complaints with hers, and abused him whenever he made his appearance; and they all insisted upon its being instantly removed, threatening him with their immediate vengeance, in case of refusal. Emmerton, finding the storm gathering in right earnest, judged it prudent to decamp; telling them, that the London ladies were too fine-nosed by half; but he never dared to repeat visits, after.

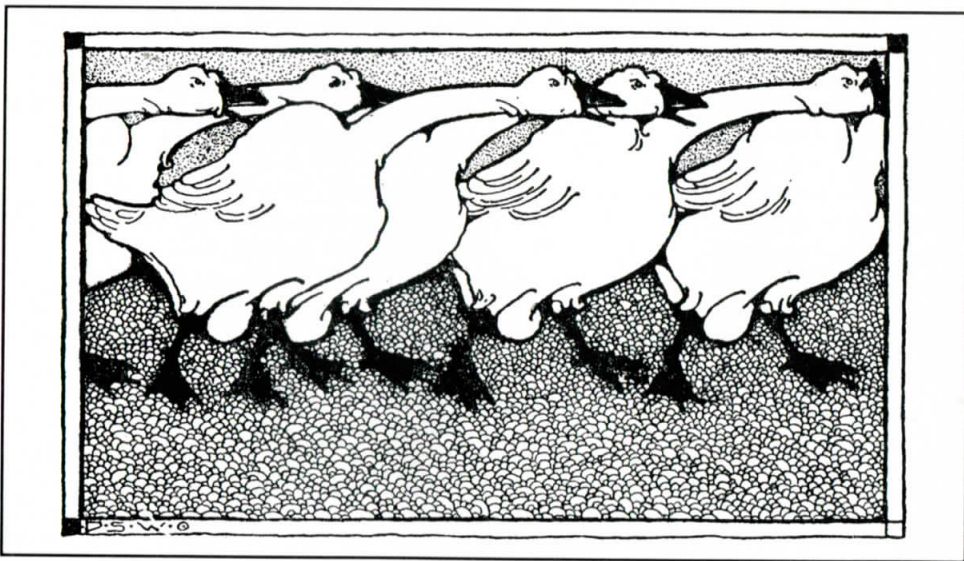
The Unlucky Pupil continued

This was only a prelude to the vexation which the gentleman had to experience himself. One day, when absent at his office, the door of the coop was by some means left open, and the geese, finding themselves at liberty, waddled about the garden, unnoticed; and having been deprived of grass and green meat so long, fell upon the auriculas in the frame, pecked, bit and pulled them out of the pots, and trod over, and spoiled them so completely, that they were of little worth afterwards. One of the geese was killed and eaten at Michaelmas; and would, no doubt, have met with this fate, whether the said offense and trespass had been committed or not. The two others were stolen a day or two after. This sad mishap deprived the owner at once of all hopes of the silver cup, and inflicted upon poor Emmerton the certain loss also of many a

good dinner on a Sunday; when, unfortunately for him, a dinner was an object of no trifling importance.

1. Headquarters of the Honourable East India Company, the powerful corporation that had a monopoly on the lucrative trade with India.
2. Isaac Emmerton, the younger (c. 1769-1823) continued his father's nursery firm in England, moving the nursery to Barnet and Holborn nearer London; an eminent grower and authority on auriculas with pronounced views on the components of potting composts. ❖

Excerpt and notes by Ian Gillam, an "amateur gardener" with wide-ranging interests living in Vancouver, B.C., who found this in one of his old books and copied it out for John Kerridge.



From *The Girl Who Sat by the Ashes* by Padraic Colum, illustrated by Dugald Stewart Walker.

American Primrose Society

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The Board of the American Primrose Society met on January, 1992 in Chehalis, Washington.

Minutes and treasurer's report were presented. The year to date expenses exceed the budget, primarily due to the 50th Anniversary issue of the quarterly. The treasurer's report was approved.

The out-going treasurer will compile a budget for the next fiscal year if members of the executive get information to him before the end of February.

The by-laws do not state the term of the fiscal year. Traditionally, it has been from April 1 to March 31. However, that is not a particularly convenient time of the year for year-end activities. Don Howse, with assistance from Dorothy Springer, has agreed to look into this matter in relation to the society by-laws.

Pictorial Dictionary

There will be 50 copies of the pictorial dictionary photo-reproduced for sale at the symposium.

Membership

The president suggested a system of regional area membership chairmen and one membership organizer. Sylvia Sykora from Oakland has agreed to work on membership in California; John Kerridge will act for British Columbia. Cy Happy will contact others for the remaining areas and for a coordinator.

Some chapter members are not APS members. Local chapters are encouraged to pay for or subsidize APS dues for any of their members who cannot afford the full amount. Jay suggested developing a sponsor's fund that will pay dues for eastern European members who do not have access to US funds.

Membership efforts should be directed toward obtaining new members as well as improving the quality of APS services to current members.

National Show

Plans are well underway. Show schedules were available. There is a discrepancy between the schedule and judging rules: a motion was passed to change the judging rules permanently to read "plant must be in owner's possession three months before the plant can be entered in show."

Purchase of special trophies for the show will exceed the budgeted amount. The show chairman, Thelma Genheimer, asked each chapter to donate \$40 for the trophy fund. Donations should be sent to the treasurer.

An APS floor display will be constructed in the lobby area for the Symposium. A motion to have the show and plant sale open to the public for the hours shown on the schedule was approved.

Permanent Portable Display

The cost at this time is prohibitive. However, some photographs are being made for a display in California by Sylvia Sykora. These photographs will belong to the APS and could be included in a permanent display later.

Editor's Report

The additional cost of the 50th Anniversary issue was not covered by donations. Extra copies will be distributed to the chapters for sale. For each copy sold, \$3 (\$3.50 Canadian) will be sent to the APS treasury. If chapters wish to charge more, they may keep the difference. A motion was passed to make an exception to the policy of charging \$2 per copy for back issues of the quarterly.

American Primrose Society continued

The Symposium has purchased for \$500 enough copies of the 50th Anniversary issue for one to go in each registrant's package. This has turned out to be less than the cost per issue. At this point, the Symposium cannot re-examine their \$500 commitment.

A suggestion that color covers for the quarterly be adopted was tabled until the financial situation improves.

A motion to delete punching holes in the quarterly was passed.

Seed Exchange Report

The board approved the sale of excess seed at the Symposium this year only, as an exception to policy.

Nominating Committee

The list of officers and board directors has been submitted for election:

President: Cy Happy
 Vice-President: John Kerridge
 Treasurer: Adaline Robinson
 Secretary: Barbara Flynn
 Board Members: Karen Schellinger
 Don Keefe

The ballot will be sent out in the winter issue of the quarterly.

Judging Committee Report

The judges have been chosen for the National Show. Guests from overseas will be invited to accompany them during the judging.

There will be two judging symposiums: February 8 and 22.

Symposium Report

To date there are 215 registrants. Four out of 10 are APS members. Nine thousand direct contacts have been made to people around the world. Ninety seed and nursery supply

companies have been contacted and some will provide door prizes.

APS members can still assist:

- ◆ Encourage members and friends to register.
- ◆ Bring plants for the sale tables.
- ◆ Supply to Greg Becker, Symposium Chairman, the names of nurseries that would be willing to have a sale table at the plant sale.
- ◆ Ask local nurseries to post Symposium flyers. Solicit door prizes from these nurseries, if possible.
- ◆ Camcorders, slide projectors and tape recorders are still needed.

John Kerridge agreed to set up the APS display at the Symposium. The Eastside Chapter will be selling primrose sweatshirts.

The April board meeting will be combined with the annual meeting and take place at the Greenwood Inn, Friday April 10, 1992 from noon to 2:00 pm. ❖

Notes from the Editor

A New Primula Book

A notice of an advance publication offer on a new book on primula has recently come into our hands: **The Genus Primula in Cultivation and in the Wild** by Josef J. Halda, illustrated by Jarmila Haldova. You may remember a series of articles by Josef Halda on primula included in the quarterly in 1989 and 1990, also beautifully illustrated by Jarmila. The book will be a welcome addition to any primrose lover's library.

It is available from Tethys Books, PO Box 421, Denver, CO 80220-0421. Approximately 400 pages, with more than 300 detailed, scientifically accurate and beautiful drawings and 16 pages of full color photographs.

Primulas in Delaware

A note to the treasurer, Jay Lunn, from the Winterthur Museum, Inc. in Delaware brings news of primula plantings on the east coast. The Museum has been a member of the Society for at least 10 years, and a note was sent by Richard Both, a volunteer at the garden and member of APS.

If you are planning a late spring or early summer trip this year to the Wilmington area, you should consider stopping at the Winterthur Museum and Gardens. Volunteers have planted 18,000 *Primula japonica* along a quarter mile of the stream at the entrance to the Museum. Eventually the garden curator hopes to have 50,000 to 60,000 primulas. This should produce a magnificent display that any primrose fancier would not want to miss.

The garden is open 9am to dusk every day but Mondays and holidays. For more information contact Linda Eirhart, Associate Curator, Landscape, (302)888-4600.

Plant Preservation

A press release was received by the Society about the newly formed American Council for



Winterthur Garden, near Wilmington, Delaware has a magnificent display of Primula japonica.

Plant Preservation. For your information, it is included here.

The American Council for Plant Preservation (ACPP) is a non-profit organization comprising some of the most well known and respected names in horticulture today.

It is modelled after the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) at Wisley, England, and has been formed with their assistance.

The ACPP goals are to:

1. Encourage the conservation of uncommon plants that are valuable because of their historic, aesthetic, scientific or educational value by propagating and distributing them as widely as possible.

Notes from the Editor continued

2. List plants held in important collections and gardens.
3. Stimulate the widest possible cultivation of uncommon and endangered plants by arranging conferences, exhibitions, discussions and visits to gardens, specialist plant collections and nurseries.
4. Encourage the re-introduction and distribution of uncommon and endangered plants.
5. Establish and support National Collections of specific genera and other defined collections of plants for the enjoyment and information of the public and the benefit of science.

The council seeks inquiries from those parties, both private and institutional, including botanical gardens, arboreta, colleges and nurseries who are interested in holding "National Collections." A guide will be published listing those collections.

For more information, write to the American Council for Plant Preservation, Rt 5, Renick WV 24966.

From the Journals

Exchange programs regularly bring the society journals from sister societies. News and information from these issues follows.

The winter 1992 issue of the American Rock Garden Society is a very handsome one dedicated to bog plants and water gardens. Wonderful color photographs of amazing pitcher plants. The annual meeting of the society will be held May 29 - 31 at Guelph, Ontario. Registrar is Andrew Osyany, Box 146, Shelburne, Ont. L0N 1S0.

The Alpine Garden Society quarterly bulletin, No.4, December 1991 has an interesting article

on the types of rocks found when plant hunting, how to recognize them, and how they are formed. Also included are notes on Awards of Merits. One petiolarid primula is included: *Primula pulchra*. The distinctive plant has "small, long-stalked leaves with heart shaped blades...each with a blue-green undersurface and somewhat fleshy texture." This clone was collected by George Smith in the vicinity of Kanchenjunga several years ago. "It was almost dead when he passed it on to Mike and Polly Stone who proceeded to revive, grow and propagate it. From them, all the stock of this species in cultivation emanates."

The plant appears to be totally hardy, requiring a peaty mix that is moist but well drained, and shaded from too much sun.

National Auricula and Primula Society, Southern Section show dates for those of you who may get a chance to go to England this spring, are:

Primula show: Saturday 4th April

Auricula show: Saturday 25th April

In addition, there is an autumn meeting to be held 10th October.

Auricula Theater — Again

Further to the note on the auricula theater at Calke Abbey in England included in the summer 1991 issue of *Primroses* — just received a newspaper clipping from the Nottingham Evening Post, January 1992, relating that Valerie Wooley and Doug Lochhead of Field House Alpines in Gotham, England have taken over the curatorship of this auricula theater.

They are hoping to show a collection of different types of auriculas in the theater in this spring's display. There are 150 to 200 plants to be displayed on the little roofed set of shelves that make up the theater.

Auricula theaters date from the 18th century when 'florists' displayed their show auriculas in such structures. Very few still exist, and it is an admirable undertaking of Valerie and Doug to recreate a display in this historic garden feature.

Botanical Prints

Had a good report on the service offered by Cranborne Antiques in supplying botanical prints of primroses. Service was prompt and the prices competitive. These prints are hard to find, nice to have a source. ❖

BLASDALE'S BOOK WANTED

Betty Ritch would very much like to get a copy of Walter Blasdale's book **Cultivated Species of Primula**. If anyone has an extra copy, please write to her care of the editor.

Primulas in Scandinavia

continued from page 22

during the change from winter to spring that most primulas die. This is because the earth is often frozen, the water cannot drain away and the primula will rot.

Alpine primulas, too, are very much fancied here. They are planted in rockeries, together with other alpine plants. The most suitable ones are *P. auricula*, *P. hirsuta*, *P. marginata* and *P. scotica*.

One type of primula which has become very popular here in Scandinavia during the past few years is the English show auricula. These primula, with their unique characteristics, can grow in an alpine bed, but are best suited for pot culture. Now-a-days you can find them as "name-sorts" formed by Meristem culture, which means that you get for sure a plant 100% like the mother plant.

And something new — the Danish Primula Club is now creating interest in the beautiful *Primula seiboldii* hybrids from Japan called

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks go out to Mrs. Francis Orman, Short Hills, NJ, for her donation to the society. This will be directed toward the cost of printing the color photographs in the 50th Anniversary issue of the quarterly. Much appreciated!

Sakurasoh. First of all, we worked on gaining a good knowledge of this plant with help from Mr. Kazuo Hara, Chairman for Matsumoto Sakurasoh and Primula Club, Japan.

In Scandinavia it is normal for gardeners to propagate their plants from seed, cuttings and graftings. Our organization, therefore, makes a great effort to supply our members with seeds from abroad. Seed is sown here in December or January, placed in a protected place in the garden and covered with nets or branches to prevent birds from damaging them. The species need frost to germinate. In February or March they are placed in the greenhouse where they will germinate within three to four weeks. Later they are pricked out into pots — ready to be planted out in the garden in August and September.

I hope this article will have given you an idea of how we grow primulas in Scandinavia and the sorts we prefer. ❖

Ove Leth-Moller would be pleased to hear from any APS member. His address is Danmarksvej 41B, 2800 Lyngby, Denmark.



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Back issues of the quarterly are available from the secretary.

Manuscripts for publication in the quarterly are invited from members and other gardening experts, although there is no payment. Please include black and white photographs if possible. Send articles directly to the Editor, Maedythe Martin, 951 Joan Cres., Victoria, B.C., Canada V8S 3L3.

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