

# Primroses

Fall 1993

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**PRIMROSES**

Quarterly of the  
American Primrose Society

Fall 1993  
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**PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS**

All black and white photos are credited.  
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**WE ALMOST LOST IT!**

The final proof of the quarterly was lost by  
UPS courier service November 10th for two  
weeks. It finally reappeared November 24th.  
That put our printing schedule behind by two  
weeks. With some luck you might get this  
issue before the end of 1993. Hope you enjoy  
the color photographs.

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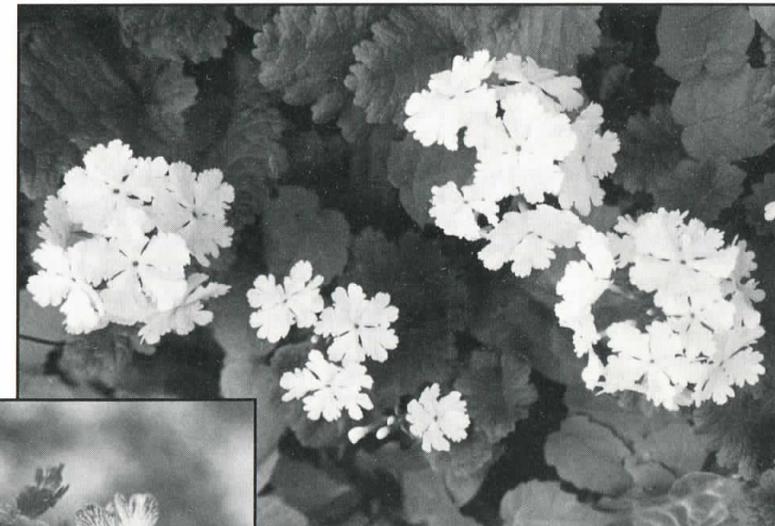
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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION			
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**ON THE COVER**

A lovely bi-color variety of *Primula sieboldii*  
from Paul Held's extensive collection. See  
article page 18.

Photos by Paul Held



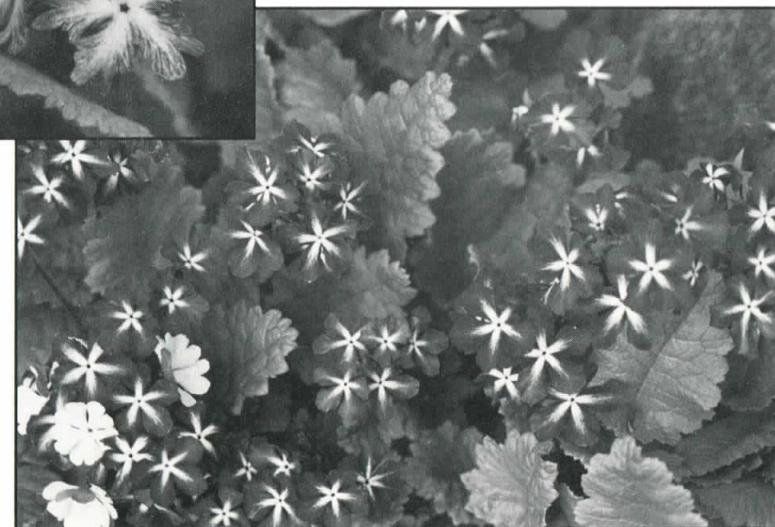
White snowflake variety.



An interesting striped variety.

**Primula sieboldii**  
from the collection  
of Paul Held.

An unusual, striking star pattern.



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### Dues Reminder

*Membership fees are due.*

*See page 10.*

## Growing Primroses in the Potomac Valley

by Ann E. Kline

On holiday, sitting on our fourth floor balcony and gazing out at the blue Caribbean in February 1991, I read the latest issue of **Primroses** which included the annual membership list. Out of curiosity I decided to see how many members of the American Primrose Society lived within a hundred mile radius of Falls Church, Virginia. I came up with a list of fourteen members — I might have missed some — eight of which are current members of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rock Garden Society and were already known to me.

My next step was to write a letter to each of these members outlining my background and interest in primulas and my own experience with the family. I asked them to share their experiences with me to see if we could come to some kind of a local consensus on cultivation in our area as far as primulas were concerned. I was most gratified to find a number of letters waiting for me when I returned home and to receive several phone calls shortly afterward. Many discussions followed, either by phone or by personal contact with members of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the American Rock Garden Society at our regular February meeting at the National Arboretum. The following is a general summary of the information I received from eleven APS members.

Everybody agrees that the seeds germinate reasonable well and grow happily, provided they are in pots with very well draining soil and are kept moist at all times. This means misting or watering every day. Everybody also is in agreement that primroses are happy in the local area during our mild winters, providing they are covered with evergreen branches of some sort. Branches prevent heaving from our abrupt changes of temperature and desiccation from the dry, dry winter winds that normally accompany our cold weather. Evergreen branches are better than leaves because they

don't mat down with rain or snow and prevent the formation of conditions suitable for the development of rot.

*Primula acaulis* formerly *P. vulgaris*, *P. elatior*, *P. x polyanthus*, *P. juliae* hybrids, and *P. veris* all do well in early spring, but once the temperatures approach the 80s, which can begin in March, the largest flowering cultivars feel the heat and show it by a collapse of flower, leaf and stalk. They revive once the temperatures drop at night, but watering is necessary to sustain the plant's turgor. Despite the special attention needed, several members wrote that they were growing primulas for sale in our area.

*Primula auricula*, blooming just a little bit later, seems to get caught in the first blast of heat, and even their tougher leaves provide little or no protection. They seldom give more than a token bloom for anyone and then quietly disappear. *Primula japonica* and *P. sieboldii* seem to survive as long as they are in deep shade.

*Primula kisoana* is a relative newcomer to us, and all who have tried it are very satisfied with its record. Strange that there is so little written about it in my primula reference books, including the New Royal Horticultural Society Dictionary of Gardening. Actually, I suspect that the U.S., with its Pacific Rim influence, is more apt to grow plants of Japanese origin while the English grow ones of Himalayan origin for historical reasons as well as horticultural ones.

The Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens in Richmond, Virginia, is probably growing primroses under optimum outdoor conditions and they added only *P. denticulata* to the general list given above. Some lucky enough to

*continued on page 4*

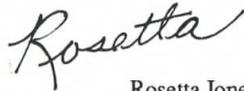
## Tips from Rosetta

*An expert in raising primula from seed — mostly seed from her own hybridizing — Rosetta has promised to pass on tips for better growing.*

When the ground is frozen and there is no snow cover to protect the primroses, it's time for a good ground cover. This year I'm going to have a bale of alfalfa hay on hand.

The hay can be fluffed up to keep it light, and the leaves will fall to the ground adding nutrients to the soil.

The hay would be a lot easier to apply than fir boughs — my fir boughs are at least 25 feet from the ground! — and less trouble to dispose of in the spring. If you had a chopper, the hay would be great for the compost. Without a chopper — well, I'll think about that later.



Rosetta Jones ❖



## Election of Officers

*Change in procedure — Get ready — Mark your ballot*

In the mail soon you will receive a ballot for the election of officers of the society. This time it is very important that you fill in your selection and return it. There has been a change in the by-laws, and officers can only be elected through a returned ballot process.

Do your part for the American Primrose Society — make your choice for officers of the club. Watch for your ballot and return it promptly.

## Growing Primroses in the Potomac Valley

*continued from page 3*

have greenhouses have added *Primula malacoides* and *P. obconica* to the list, but not very enthusiastically unless the green house is well-shaded in summer and cooled with air-conditioning, and who has that?

Eric Grissell of Silver Springs, Maryland, wrote that he has had *Primula denticulata*, *P. frondosa*, *P. hirsuta*, and *P. vialii*, none of which lasted more than one or two years before

doing the usual disappearing act. *Primula allionii* did well for him in the greenhouse along with a single super germination of a pot of *P. obconica* seedlings in the cold greenhouse.

In general everyone thoroughly agreed with my observations and wished me luck in trying to grow any kind of primula in our less-than-perfect conditions. ❖

## Meet the Seed Donors

*by Chris Dodd*

*Our APS editor, Maedythe, had this great idea to widen our acquaintance with primula growers who live outside the Pacific Northwest, so last July I began writing to APS seed donors in the eastern U.S. and around the world. I dropped the letters in the mail with the same feeling that I might put a note in a bottle and drop it in the ocean. I had no idea what to expect in response, so it was very exciting when foreign stamps began to appear in my mailbox.*

*These are a few of the generous people who take the time and effort to make rare seed available to all of us. I hope you enjoy meeting them as much as I have.*

### IVO BENES, CZECHOSLOVAKIA

*Ivo Benes lives about 85km. [52 miles] southeast of Prague in an area of the Czech Republic where conditions are good for alpine primulas. During the past several years, he has sent seed of *Farinosae* such as *P. halleri*, *P. scandinavica*, *P. scotica* and the American *P. laurentiana* as well as *P. amoena* and *P. denticulata*.*

*The government-owned factory where Mr. Benes worked as a gardener became a private business last December and released most of its employees. While job hunting, he has been helping his wife with her private gardening business. At their home they maintain a garden that includes a pond with water plants and fish, a planted rock wall, and a heather field with rhododendrons and other shrubs. He writes...*

I began growing primulas and other alpine species seven years ago and still I have to consider myself a beginner. Together with my wife, who shares actively my hobby, and with our two children, I live in Bestvina, a small village lying under the ridge of the Iron Mountains at the height of 355m [1000'] above sea-level.

The level of our primulas and other alpine species is predestined by the climate and soil conditions. Our climate is very mild with the warmest weather in July when the day temperatures are between 25° and 30°C [77° and 86°F] and the night temperature about 15°C [59°F]. The coldest month is January with -10° to -15°C [14° to 5°F] at night and during the day the temperature rises to -5°C [23°F] or sometimes even above freezing. During the last several years we have had practically no winter as the snow which is typical of our winter weather did not fall more than three times during the whole winter period and the snow cover did not last more than one or two weeks.

The average rainfall in a year is about 650 mm [26"]. Absolute monthly totals are in June, July and August 200 mm. [8"] and are often accompanied by storm. By contrast, in January and February there are the lowest rain/snow falls. The sun shines about 1600 hours during the year, with 210 hours in June and July and 40 hours in December.

In these climatic conditions we have the best results in growing of primulas — *Primula scotica*, *Primula scandinavica*, and American primulas — with less good results. We grow the primulas and other alpine species from seed which we gain from various societies and friends from all over the world.

Before sowing them out into pots we freeze the seed for several days in a refrigerator. The pots are then placed into cold frames next to the glass-house, and after germination (we achieve usually more than 90 percent of good results) when they grow up to the full ripeness they are ready to be transplanted into the rock-garden. Though beginners, we have succeeded already in growing nearly 700 of various specimens of alpine species (primulas and other alpine species) and bulbous plants.

### Meet the Seed Donors continued

Some of the alpiners we propagate by cuttings from mother-plants, dipping the cuttings into a growth stimulator. For them we use pots with diameter of 5 cm. [2"] in a glass-house till they root enough to be transplanted outdoors. For planting we use a mixture of garden soil, peat, sand and natural soil from underneath the pines, adding perlite to make the mixture airy.

With exception of the growth-stimulator we try not to use any chemicals as we want to maintain all plants in natural conditions. Our rock garden is also mainly natural. The center of it is a natural rock which is nearly 3m. [10'] high and was part of the plot where our house was built. All screes and the whole rock-garden have been made out of natural material gathered nearby. We believe that this way of growing plants is our small contribution to the world environmental movement.

### DR. KEITH SELLARS, HAMPSHIRE, ENGLAND

*In low humidity and sandy soil in the south of England, Dr. Keith Sellars triumphs over bugs, fungi, and diseases often enough to send us seed for a wide variety of primula species. These have included P. wilsonii, P. boveana, and Cortusoides types — P. heucherifolia, P. jesoana, P. loeseneri, and P. polyneura. Here is his account of his efforts...*

The A.P.S. press gang has been at work and I find myself writing a few lines on growing primulas in the U.K. More appropriately I could write on how to lose primulas, how to avoid seed being set and how to induce seeds not to germinate! The shelf holding the dead label box sags under the strain.

I am retired and live in Farnborough, Hampshire, a town of about 50,000 population situated 30 miles to the southwest of London. I have a garden of almost half an acre largely given to lawn, vegetables and soft fruit (the last

two my wife's domain). A small 8' by 6' alpine house is supplemented by cold frames, a small peat garden and a relatively small area of dappled shade. The soil is light and sandy and devoid of humus other than what has been added over the years.

My interest in primulas started some years ago when I coveted a gold-laced primula. Subsequently I heard of Barnhaven and, in addition to purchasing seed for gold-laced polyanthus, also grew some 'Cowichans', cortusoides types, and doubles. Germination was excellent and I found myself growing on large numbers of seedlings. Alas, all of these with the exception of one magenta colored double have long since disappeared. The double, which I named 'Jean Sellars' after my wife, is totally indestructible, and I now have dozens of plants — most of which need splitting again.

At this juncture I have found an opportunity to offer an apology to the seed raisers who are growing No. 233 from the last seed list. My plants are planted out into a herbaceous border and, after flowering, are lifted, divided and consigned to an inconspicuous area. Last year to my surprise one of the plants produced seed which I collected. To my horror when the plants were planted out into the border this year, one produced small, insignificant single flowers; I realized that a stray seedling must have got in. I cannot be certain that this was the plant that produced the seed, and my own seedlings have yet to flower. I cross my fingers but fear the worst.

Subsequent to Barnhaven I launched into growing a wide range of alpiners, including other members of Primulaceae such as dionysias and androsaces. Apart from plants on a rockery, almost all have succumbed to red spider, botrytis, collar rot and aphids together with many undetectable causes. Since then I have concentrated mainly on primula species, as opposed to the more exotic hybrids, though the success rate has little improved.

I started to acquire a reasonable collection of *P. marginata* clones, but this was decimated by red

spider and, despite alleged claims on various insecticidal products plus exposure to high humidity, the red spider proved totally invulnerable. Of the few that still remain my ambition is to flower 'Beatrice Lascaris'—does anyone have a clone which flowers?

My favorite primulas are the Petiolarids, but these are not easy to grow in the south of England as opposed to the areas of higher humidity in the north and in Scotland. Unfortunately, I acquired cucumber mosaic virus to which petiolarids are particularly prone. It is virtually impossible to prevent its spread and, as a result, Petiolarids usually last only one season, though I have moved some to a different part of the garden in the hope that aphids which transmit the virus are not long distance travelers. Among the Petiolarids my favorites are *P. edgeworthii* (now *P. nana* according to John Richards in his latest excellent book **Primula**) and *P. whitei* 'Arduaine'— though I would be very happy to be able to grow and flower any of this section.

Section Sphondylia is another of significant interest and as I write this article (August) *P. edelbergii* is in flower on a one-year-old seedling. *P. boveana* and *P. verticillata* have flowered but unfortunately not set seed.

The only other primula currently flowering is a three-year-old seedling of *P. macrophylla* which is flowering for the first time. The flower is white with a black eye, rare according to Richards, and the leaves are covered in a golden farina. The artist's brush treatment is about to be applied in the hope it will set seed.

My impression of attempting to grow primula is that many are short lived. I have still to prove to myself that *P. vialii* is not monocarpic. In the open garden they grow well where they are happy but, being unable to speak, they usually die before one finds out they are not. In the past I have cosseted *P. veris* but the last one died some years ago. Imagine my surprise when a plant appeared and flowered this year in a dry part of the lawn adjacent to a flowering cherry. Of three clumps of *P. burmanica*, each clump

planted within one yard of the other, there is a very significant difference in size. Plants in the best clump are almost twice the size of those in the worst.

When it comes to seed raising I find that Livingston Universal peat-based compost (recommended for seed raising, potting and taking cuttings) gives the best results. Seedlings are potted on into Bowyer's soilless ericaceous compost (a balanced acidic, peat based compost for heathers, rhododendrons, azaleas etc.). This has proved far more successful for seedlings than my other compost — a 50/50 mixture of John Innes No. 2 and coarse grit. These are proprietary products whose precise formulation is not revealed though I am sure equivalent products are available in America.

In the U.K. we are fortunate in having some very good nurseries, particularly in the north, and they offer a wide range of primulas. It is my fate to ensure that their livelihoods remain unaffected by the influence of any economic recessions.



### TAKAO MAKI, JAPAN

*If you are so fortunate as to have attended the symposium, you may have met Takao Maki, who travelled from Japan. He has sent seed for P. floribunda and P. verticillata. He writes...*

I am a research chemist, aged 54, working in industry. From my childhood I have been interested in raising plants. After growing up, my interest changed from conventional garden flowers to wild plants. I joined several clubs

*continued on page 10*

# Diagnosis: Primulitus

by Teresa Richardson

"Where the bee sucks there suck I;  
In a cowslip's bell I lie;  
There I couch when owls do cry  
On the bat's back I do fly  
After summer merrily.  
Merrily, merrily shall I live now,  
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."

William Shakespeare

I was enchanted by primroses, cowslips, and oxlips before I ever saw one, through the immortal words of English poetry. But somehow I knew in my heart that the flowers inspiring the bards with their gentle simplicity could not be the brazen-faced hussies offered at the local grocery store each spring. That, more than anything, was what influenced me to beg my mother to give me a ride to the Kirkland Coast-to-Coast hardware store that spring in 1978, where a show put on by the American Primrose Society had been advertised.

There, my soul rejoiced. I saw chaste little *Primula elatior*, with its flower heads of modestly downcast pale faces. *Primula vulgaris*, in its true form, squatted in plump comfortable cushions of scented buttery-hued artlessness. Earnestly lifting their impish sunbeams, *Primula veris* seemed only to be asking to be settled with a couple of hundred of their own kind in some damp meadow tangled with crowds of other wildflowers. Here were the true primulas, the primulas cherished so long ago, even more endearing now as one experiences a feeling of sharing timeless delight in the lines:

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows  
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;  
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine  
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine.

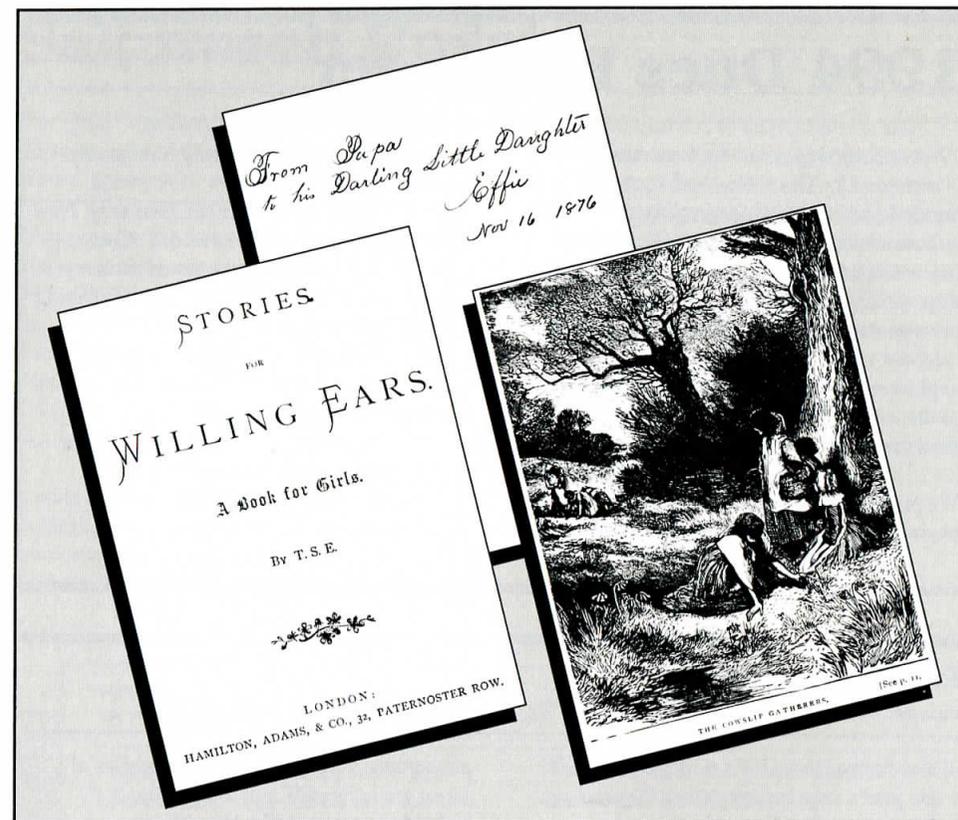
William Shakespeare

Of course, there were other primulas at the show as well. The tapestried glamour of the gold-laced polyanthus cast its mesmerizing spell on me that day; the unbelievable purity of sweetness was tracked down to *Primula auricula* and its bewildering array of fantastic and bizarre hybrids. Globe-trotting species alternately put me into a trance of fascination or sent me into ecstasies: the purple poodle-tails of *Primula denticulata*, the many-tiered candelabras of *Primula japonica*, and more enticed me by their variety and grace. We all know the moment I'm talking about. The disease had claimed another victim.

For years I attended nearly all the shows of all the chapters in Washington State, always wanting to join the society but always too shy to put myself forward. Members would offer copies of past quarterlies as bait, and these would be taken home and devoured from cover to cover. In this way, and by careful examination of entry tags, I secretly came to "know" who was who in the society. It began to dawn on me that these people were the caretakers of horticultural history, tending and passing down through time plants that surely would have been lost, neglected, as too many others had been, if not for the efforts of the dedicated.

Furthermore, I discovered another fact. These people were quietly making history themselves, through their endeavors at breeding. Their interests and their talents were immediately apparent in their show plants, so much so that I began to learn to identify the blossoms as a signature of the grower before seeing the entry tag. Herb Dickson. Cy Happy. Peter Atkinson. Rosetta Jones.

Finally, in 1991, Allen Jones charmed the membership dues right out of me at the Washington Chapter show, and I attended my first meeting the next month. Call me corny, call it maudlin, but that night is forever freeze-



"The Cowslip Gatherers" frontispiece from a little book owned by Chris Dodd.

framed in the VCR of my memory. For other people it might be crooners or movie stars, but these were (are!) my idols, and I never dreamed I'd actually have the good fortune to be among the **August Presences**, much less meet **Them**. Yet as I hid, mortified, in the back row, our chapter president, Gene Reichle, called on everyone to introduce themselves. And there they were, turning around, one by one, the magical names attaching themselves into real people: "Herb Dickson." "Darlene and Lyle Heller." "Peter Atkinson." And, for me, best of all, "Rosetta Jones." I was awed and humbled. Had to sit there like I meet my superheroes every day; it was nothing, nothing at all. When they had finished, I could only stammer, "You're all legends to me." (In my imagination, I'm prostrating myself on the floor, exclaiming, "I am not worthy!")

These unostentatious people deserve to be recognized, to be aware of the reverence and esteem with which we, their "apprentices," hold them. It is a priceless honor to be in the presence of these keepers and makers of history, to know them and learn from them. The future of the genus *Primula*, especially its cherished rarities and "freaks," is a legacy and a trust that they are passing on to us. This is a distinction we must strive to earn and an obligation of safekeeping for future generations so they can know our plants as more than a picture in a book.

Who knows – perhaps we may make some history ourselves! ❖

## 1994 Dues Reminder

1994 membership renewals were due November 15. The annual rate for both domestic and foreign membership, individual or household, is \$15 U.S. per year (\$16 for renewals postmarked after January 1); \$40 for three years; or \$200 for an individual life membership. Membership is based upon the calendar year. The year your membership expires is shown in the upper right-hand corner of the address label affixed to the envelope used to mail your quarterly, **Primroses**.

We prefer that foreign members make payment in the form of an international money

order. However, payment may be made by personal check in currencies of Australia, Austria, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, New Zealand, Norway and Switzerland. Checks payable from foreign funds should be in an amount based upon the current exchange rate, plus five percent.

Make checks payable to the American Primrose Society and mail to:  
Addaline W. Robinson, Treasurer  
9705 S.W. Spring Crest Dr.  
Portland, OR 97225  
U.S.A.

## Meet the Seed Donors

*continued from page 7*

and also noticed the APS's activity. I applied for one year's membership, about 20 years ago, but the next year I did not renew it.

Fortunately I had a correspondent in the society. She kindly sent me a membership gift. Since then, my interest has become much stronger and finally, now, I am a life member of the society. Her name is Mrs. Anita Stevens, now living in Port Angeles, WA.

I am not a professional but a Sunday gardener. My garden is very small. The problem in growing primula is, however, not the size of the garden, but the climate here. I live in Fugisawa, which is a suburban town to Tokyo and situated by the sea. Altitude is a few meters above sea level. Thus in the summer it is terribly hot and humid. It is a most unfavorable climate to primula. Here it is almost impossible to maintain a primula garden, and pot culture is the only way to enjoy them. However, strong cultivars of polyanthus and acaulis can withstand in the garden. Sophisticated

polyanthus, auriculas, most wild species of Japan are rather difficult to grow here. *P. sieboldii* is not so difficult in the pot.

I like every primula, but I would like to avoid handling difficult and fragile species. 'Cowichan' hybrids are marvelous but they are a little bit weak here. Juliae hybrids and 'Wanda' varieties are good. So-called 'Sibthorpii' is my favorite.

It was one of my most exciting experiences to have had an opportunity to join the last symposium at Beaverton, OR. I felt that the Pacific Northwest is a heaven for primula. The same way to raise primula cannot be applied here, and to find what is an acceptable style of primula cultivation is important, I think.

*The network of the seed exchange seems to cover the globe. You can get Middle Eastern primulas from Japan, Chinese ones from England, and Americans from Czechoslovakia. ❖*

## Sakurasoh Update

*One of our members had a border, numbered Sakurasoh flower this summer. Here's his report.*

I have the border Sakurasoh no. 2-37b. Because I have not had great success here in the East with sieboldii as pot plants, I planted 2-37b in a bed outdoors. The bed was designed to grow those plants that like a rich, peaty, moist soil in dappled shade, and 2-37b has grown very well along side other sieboldii, jeffersonia, pinellias, etc.

It surprised me by being half the size of the usual sieboldii. But the leaves, though smaller, are beautifully formed and make the plant quite attractive when not in bloom. The flowers are

about three-quarters of an inch across and upfaced, with each of the five petals clearly separate, unnotched, and reversed; magenta centers (not really eyes) fade into the palest pink at the edges. There is a hard, metallic cast to the flower, making the overall effect that of a large upholstery tack. Although small, the plant has a stalwart look that is quite becoming.

I find the plant interesting enough to want to propagate it by division in seasons to come, and to trade plants for other border Sakurasoh with those growers who also have been bitten by the collecting bug.

*Yours,*  
Robert Brotherson, Revere, PA  
July 27, 1993

## Thank you for your help!

Primrose readers, thank-you for your offers of help. The society now has someone to review the journals, a new column "Under the Overhang" about growing alpine primroses by Rick Lupp, and offers of articles from two or three new writers.

We still need **regional reporters**. Especially the central and eastern United States. Also reporters from other countries and eastern Canada. Is there someone out there who would offer to do this for the society?

The APS could make much better contact with other gardening societies. I need someone who could write letters and exchange ads with the other groups. I have a list and copy for the ads, but I still need a

volunteer to do this bit of "public relations" on behalf of APS.

Flip Fenili is kindly looking after some **publishing chores** that have to be done in the Tacoma area, but he would like some help. Can you offer to do this, even for only a year?

**Don't think we have everything we need so you can relax!** Every APS member has a story of interest to other readers. Remember to send them to me so they can be published in the quarterly where we can all share in your triumphs and delights.

Thanks again, everyone. Keep up the good work!

Maedythe Martin,  
Editor ❖

# The APS *Primula* x 'Juliana' Registry

by Dorothy Springer

The American Primrose Society Board of Directors decided at the "Primula Worldwide" symposium in 1992 to establish a registry system for the identification of the many *Primula* x 'Juliana' hybrids, both old and new.

I was delighted to accept the responsibility for the registry as I have been collecting — and losing — 'Julianas' for over thirty years. Contrary to the article in the last *Primroses*, my collection is not the result of the registry but will serve as the nucleus around which the registry collection will be built.

I have drawn up a registry form which will be used to describe each variety individually in complete detail. This description will be combined with a color photograph showing both the plant in flower and a close-up of an single floret.

Sounds like an impossible job? I'm finding it to be almost just that!

Many of the older varieties are no longer grown, or, if they are still in existence, it is because they are tucked away somewhere in a garden outside the scope of the APS. The same variety may be grown under many different names, the error in naming being perpetuated by a newer generation of commercial growers who sell it under the incorrect name.

My plan is to collect varieties I don't have, verify them as correct under that name, photograph them and then store the entire registry, complete to that point in time, with the rest of the APS archives. From time to time, the editor plans to use variety descriptions and their photographs in issues of the quarterly bulletin.

I need your help! First, let me say that I am NOT a commercial grower and do not have

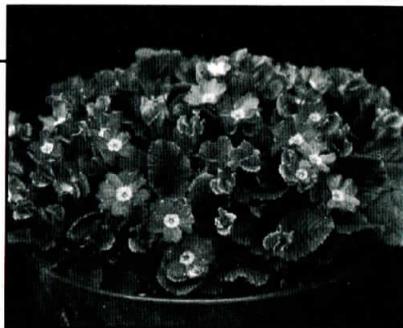


Photo by Cy Happy

Cushion type *P. juliae* hybrid Peter Klein's *Jack-in-the-Green*.

plants for sale. I will swap plants I have for yours only to complete the registry. I also need lists of varieties grown in the Midwest and on the East Coast and everywhere in between. I need photographs — plants in the garden, in pots, and individual flowers. In color, please.

If you know of someone who may have a variety we are seeking, ask them if they will share with us. I need you to do a lot of the leg work. Search out older gardeners, former society members, your relatives and friends and their relatives and friends. Ask them about any 'Julianas' they have.

This is a time-consuming project, one which will not be completed for several years to come. We have a good start; let's keep going!

If you raise a new variety you feel is worth naming, write to me for a registration form, making sure to include a photography. We also are in need of a Royal Horticultural Society chart of colors for proper color identification so that when we describe pink, for example, we all mean an exact shade of pink as indicated on the chart.

Happy hunting and write to me!

Dorothy Springer  
7213 South 15th St., Tacoma, WA 98465 ❖

Photo by Cy Happy



Stalked type x 'Juliana' hybrid 'Lady Greer.'

## Do you know the location of any of these *Primula* x 'Juliana' varieties?

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 'Bright Eyes'                        | 'Old Port' (syn. 'Tawny Port')            |
| 'Buckland Wine'                      | 'Apple Blossom'                           |
| 'Lollipop'                           | (not the Garryard form.)                  |
| (from Lamb's Nurseries, Spokane, WA) | Was from Lamb's Nurseries)                |
| 'Kay'                                | 'Frolic'                                  |
| 'Snow Maiden'                        | 'Nettle Gale'                             |
| 'Violetta'                           | 'Lavender Cloud'                          |
| 'Maiden's Blush'                     | East Coast version of 'Wanda' (pin-eyed)  |
| 'Rosalinda'                          |   |
| 'Barker's Variety'                   | Many of these were obtainable as recently |
| 'Red Riddle'                         | as 1985 from members in the Ohio and      |
| 'Julius Caesar'                      | Michigan areas. Let me know.              |
| 'Buttercup'                          |   |

Dorothy Springer

# Primrose Notes

by Cy Happy

The good news is that Herb Dickson plans to be at his nursery in Chehalis for another year. He announced this with a great big smile. Seed sowing and dividing plants proceed as usual – and he's had a good year.

More good news. Thea Oakley is our new bookstore-librarian. Her first offering is a good usable photocopy of McWatt's *Primulas of Europe, 1923*. It will cost \$13.55 plus \$3.45 postage. Thea's address is 3304 288th Ave. NE, Redmond, WA 98053. McWatt's nomenclature may be a bit out-of-date, but growing hints and the history of auriculas are excellent.

Sadly I announce that Sybil McCullough died this October. With her went a vast knowledge of gardening lore and a sharp wit – a great lady. She was currently president of Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society of Victoria, B.C.

The Seattle Northwest Flower and Garden Show on Feb. 9-13, 1994, will again include our APS booth. We need volunteers and plants. Call Thea Oakley at 206-33306177.

Stopped at Flora and Fauna Books, 121 First Ave., S., Seattle, WA 98104 on a rare trip to Seattle. Best collection of gardening books I've seen. They had *Primulas* by John Richards. It is new and beautiful, but it is a "coffee table book," and it is \$50. Hands will have to be scrubbed before using. Grubby gardeners would be better off taking Halda's *The Genus Primula* to the garden or greenhouse. It's more of a working handbook (also found at the bookstore). I bought Brenda Hyatt's *Primroses and Auriculas* 64 information-packed pages at \$7.95 – more my speed.

President John Kerridge has been working with Randy Burr, micropropagator. Their goal is to make scarce, named-variety primroses and auriculas available to our membership at

reasonable prices. As an experiment, they propagated Beth Tait's red self show auricula "American Beauty." It's first rate and a good grower.

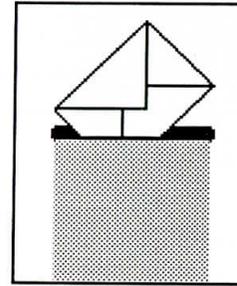
Visited Betty Ritch at her garden in Victoria last spring. She is an excellent grower. I got great slides of her *Primula sieboldii*, garden auriculas and *Primula palinuri* – beautiful yellow, auricula section, from the southern shore of Italy. Very heat tolerant.

Many of you want to know how to get primula seed to germinate. Some seeds need to weather for several years. Most germinate in light. Many need cool conditions. Supermarket primroses germinate quickly at 70° F. Most species and their hybrids take their own sweet time and never come all at once – some the second year and even later. I recommend *Seed Germination, Theory and Practice* by Dr. Norman Deno, 129 Lenor Dr., State College, PA 16801, \$20, for your winter reading.

At the Perennial Plant Association symposium at Whistler, B.C., I met Klaus Jelitto, supplier of species and hybrid primula seed from Hamburg, Germany, and Andre Viette from Fishersville, VA. Klaus said the plants sold in this country as 'Wanda' hybrids are his Pruhonica strain. He sells the 'Wanda' strain too. Andre said his double polyanthus, 'Mark Viette,' was grown from Florence Bellis' seed many years ago. It is a very sturdy short polyanthus propagated by division – rose colored. Klaus Jelitto's address is PO Box 560127, D2000, Hamburg 56, Germany, The Viettes are found at Rt.1, Box 16P, Fishersville, VA 22939.

I need an 8 x 16 green house. My old glass one is gone. Any suggestions? Light quality, ventilation, durability and price are important. The one-piece Fiberglass named Solar Green (1-800-371-4271) is certainly durable. A large

continued on page 39



## From the Mailbox

Letters from our readers

some of my plants and a first bloom on some that hadn't bloomed yet. I haven't lost one of the plants and I must have around 50 in pots. So that turned out okay. You must remember that I am a rank beginner at this.

I found that *P. sieboldii* like a nice layer of pebbles around them and then they do much better for me. I have a couple of different varieties of this delicate flower, and although it isn't my favorite primula, my husband is very fond of them. I plan on putting some of them outside in one of my new troughs.

And speaking of troughs, after the Oregon primrose show in April, we found the Berry Gardens in Lake Oswego, due to some very good directions from Orval Agee. Have to admit that we hadn't been in that area for about 20 years. Anyway, we just sailed on to the Berry Gardens with no problems. And we discovered trough gardens there and we are hooked! We came right home and made a small trough from the recipe that the gardener at Berry Gardens gave us; and I planted a wee Julie I had bought at the plant sale at Beaverton, in the new trough, with a couple of rocks. It just loves its new home, and we have since made two big troughs and several more small ones.

The recipe that was given to me at the Berry Gardens is one part each cement and peat to three parts of perlite, by volume. I have since altered that recipe to make a stronger trough. You can line just about anything with plastic sheeting and use it for a mold. One of my favorites is an old clay cooker. It is oval and about the right size for small primroses. Of course, in the large troughs you need some sort of reinforcement, like wire. We are making a trough garden on one side of the front of the alpine house. This has been a fun project, and the book *Miniature Gardens* from Timber Press has a lot of information on troughs, with

July 8, 1993

Dear Editor,

Thank you for printing my SOS for alpine house information. So far, I haven't heard from anyone about alpine houses, but we did go to the primrose show in Beaverton in April and, after talking to Herb Dickson, my husband built me a 12' by 8' building with a hot house plastic roof. The sides are wood up to the bench height and are screen from the bench up to the roof. We put a regular aluminum screen door in the middle of one of the 12' sides. My primroses love it. The plan is to put up hot house plastic shutter, for the coldest part of the winter.

Right now I have *Primula auricula*, *P. frondosa*, *P. sieboldii* and *P. vialii* in bloom in the alpine house, and, oh yes, lots of *P. malacoides*. Outside I have *P. florindae* in bloom and the lovely smell wafts into the alpine house. I might add that all these plants were grown from APS seed exchange seeds. We are in the process of building box-beds all around the alpine house and are about half done. I have amended the soil in one for auriculas and in another for *P. florindae*.

We plan a rock garden bed on the sunniest end of the alpine house, which is situated in a shady area of the garden. After reading all I could find on auriculas in pots, I held my breath and jumped in. I repotted all my auriculas in new soil and in the right size pots. I also took all the old soil from the roots, as I had read to do, somewhere. At any rate, I had a lot of them in the wrong size pots and in the wrong soil mix. I did this after all were done blooming, per instructions. Lo and behold, I have been rewarded for my efforts by a second bloom on

*From the Mailbox continued*

good pictures, too. When I get my trough garden all done. I will send you a picture.

We really enjoyed the primrose show in Beaverton and we met a lot of people that I had read about in the quarterly. The plant sale was excellent, and I was able to buy several really nice plants, including some lovely double acaulis which are doing very well here.

Don't think I have ever been so enthused about a plant as I am about primroses. We live in the woods and so growing primroses isn't difficult. They like the shade and we have plenty of that.

Happy Gardening,  
Jan Kelly,  
Coquille, Oregon

P.S. Forgot to mention that I have been sharing my extra primroses with the Shore Acres Botanical Gardens in Coos Bay, Oregon. Nice to have a place to give your extra plants to, since you always seem to end up with more than you need for your garden and I sure hate to kill a plant.

August 30, 1993

Dear Editor,

... I think time is getting away from me this summer. There are so many things to do garden wise. The primulas all did so well this year. We had a drier than normal June and July, so I had a lot of primulas set seed. There are many of my X-Julianas that had some seed pods, nice big ones. I think I may offer these as a mixed x 'Juliana' in the exchange. None of them were hand-pollinated so I have no idea what the bees were up to! It will be like getting a grab bag of Julies: 'Kinlough Beauty,' 'Irish Gem,' 'Millicent,' 'Early Girl,' 'Jewel,' 'Jay Jay,' 'Pinkie,' 'Royal Velvet,' and 'Little Gem' are some of the ones that set seed.

I also had one of those "hand painted" primulas show up in my Cravens special mix polyanthus. This was a yellow poly with strokes of red lightly brushed on the petals, almost as if an

artist was stroking so very lightly in a very subtle way. Not all the blossoms had this; some were all yellow. Of course, it didn't set seed, so I hope it will develop a lot of offsets. It is definitely a rarity.

That Cravens special poly mix was definitely a treat for me. I had two Jack-in-the-Greens, a semi-double reverse gold-laced (red on the outer petals and gold on the inside), several almost-black, red 'Cowichans,' some polys with a real star center, some with more of a hexagon shaped center. Actually, every primula of that batch of seed was different in some way. I thoroughly enjoyed looking at them. Do you know of anyone else who had ordered this mix from Cravens? Let me know as I would be delighted to hear from them on the rarities they found in that mix.

Here I am telling you all about my primulas when I should be writing more letters for the seed exchange. I am definitely glad that I was chosen to do the seed exchange. Every year since I joined APS my world has grown a bit more in a positive way. First, I started to purchase every primula with a name that I could find; then growing from seed began until I had that down pat. Letters to various APS members were written and friendships were formed. My thoughts on primula were transformed into articles in the quarterly, foreign seed companies were contacted as there were not enough rare primulas in my garden. Talks on how to grow primula was the next step, and taking pictures and slides of all my primula. I attended the symposium "Primula Worldwide" and I was in heaven with all the primulas and people I met, including meeting you. Now I think my wildest dreams have come true as I was chosen to do the APS seed exchange. You know, the lady that started me with primulas left us for primula heaven this spring. She was my great-aunt Katy. She would have been so proud that her love for primula, the very primula she gave to me as a loving gift, has enriched my life so much. I think she is aware of her legacy.

Marie Skonberg,  
Ouzinkie, Alaska ❖



## Under the Overhang

by Rick Lupp

### GROWING IN THE ALPINE HOUSE AND CONTAINERS

This column is to be the first in a continuing series which will deal primarily with the culture and propagation of primula and Primulaceae in the alpine house in troughs and other containers. We will deal at times with companion plants and with general approaches which apply to a rather wide range of plants.

I look forward to your feedback in the form of questions or suggestions regarding future topics. I would also appreciate information from our readers on methods which have proven effective for them in growing some of the more demanding plants which in nature grow in dry climates (winter or summer) or grow under natural rock overhangs or cliffs and are the sort of plants which we all covet.

The first order of business shall be a loose definition of what constitutes an alpine house. An alpine house can be anything from a custom made glass and cedar house with built-in ventilation and heating to a simple frame of wood or PVC and plastic. The main factor which will determine just what you need in the way of an alpine house will be your climate and the sorts of plants that you wish to grow. I have no experience at growing in an alpine house or frame in a severe winter climate, so much that I say will require extensive extrapolation for those of you who do live and grow in such areas.

Here in western Washington, where we have a rather mild climate, the main purpose of an alpine house is to provide protection from winter wet. Protection from winter cold is of secondary importance. The small scale grower

in our climate can get by just fine with a simple cold frame, while the more ambitious may wish to have a small house with plunge benches.

I recently received a catalog request from a gentleman who said he was looking for plants for his new scree and alpine shack! Thus, anything that will provide protection from winter wet and provide adequate ventilation will work just fine in a mild climate, and there is no need to worry about heating as long as you plan on growing hardy plants.

Here at the nursery at Graham, Washington, we grow almost all of our plants in 10' by 20' hoop houses with the plants staged on benches and with the ends of the houses staying wide open the overwhelming majority of the time. We use many of these small houses instead of a few large houses so as to minimize summer heat build-up and to maximize air flow. When the temperature drops below 20° F, we close the ends of the houses and when below 10° F we move the plants to the floor.

During prolonged cold spells, we cover the plants with a material called microfoam. It provides insulation while allowing water, air and light to pass through. The only problem we have had with this approach is that every rodent in the area seems to move in under the microfoam to take advantage of the protection and the gourmet salad bar!

A simple plunge frame made of treated wood and filled with sand works very well for a great

*continued on page 38*

# How to Become Obsessed... Growing *Primula sieboldii*

by Paul Held

Photo by Paul Held



*Primula sieboldii* variety with delicate pink nodding flower.

It all began when I met my wife and her family. Her great aunt Audrey Townsend, a dedicated rock gardener, had left my wife's father some property. My wife, Jane, had received some land close by. During one visit with my in-laws, I was rummaging through the books left by Audrey and came upon Doretta Klaber's book on primroses, complete with Audrey's personal notes about primula.

On holiday in New Hampshire, at another family property that Audrey developed, I found what keyed to be *Primula sieboldii*, a beautiful form with a pink back and a white face. I brought a plant back to Connecticut and enjoyed the flower, but no seeds were set.

Through the Scottish or English rock gardening societies I received some seed that germinated. Soon these plants, and Aunt Audrey's, started to produce seed. Other seed from the exchanges did not germinate, but almost all the seed I saved did. New plant forms were beginning to appear, and before five years were up, I had separated and given a one-foot growing space to each of 100 different forms. I remember putting one of my favorites in a local show and lost — with the comment from an "expert" that the stems were too long!

It was around this time that I joined the American Primrose Society and tried to get seed of *P. sieboldii*, but none was available then. One issue of the APS quarterly had a feature article about *P. sieboldii* written by Kazuo Hara of Japan. It's the Fall 1988, Vol. 46, No. 4 issue, edited by Richard Critz.

The history of *sieboldii* was fascinating, and I wrote to Critz in Pennsylvania complimenting him on the article. He said he had slides from Mr. Hara and that he would be giving a talk in Pennsylvania. I drove there, heard the talk and Richard was nice enough to loan me the slides. I used them to give a presentation locally here in Connecticut. I tried to enlist others to register in Mr. Hara's Sakurasho Society at \$30 per year.

After two or three years still no newsletter had been published by the Japanese society but there was a seed exchange where overseas members could order as many seeds as they wanted. The seed arrived in mid-April, and thus was slow and spotty to germinate. After two more years, one plant finally did germinate, but when it flowered, it was only the common one. There was no choice on the seed list — just "*P. sieboldii*."

*continued on page 37*

Photo by Paul Held



*Bi-color variety of Primula sieboldii from the collection of Paul Held.*

## Cultural Directions for Growing *Primula sieboldii*

Some people seem concerned with how to grow *Primula sieboldii* — or even how to germinate them. I have had great success in germination by using the following method. For germination, seed is sown in flats that have some Osmacote slow-release pellets, 14-14-14 or the like, that lasts three months. The mix is one third sand, one third Promix, and one third seed-free loam. I dress the top of the soil 1/8" deep with seed starter material: peat moss, sand or finely ground Vermiculite. Really any material would do. The important things are to get the seed outside in February, mix in some fertilizer for the seedlings when they start off and make sure they get watered every day after they come up.

I have found that transplanting in late summer is not advisable here on the East Coast. There are too many rains that soak the soil and heave the small plants out. It is much better having them dormant, crowded and draining excess water in the winter. The seedling pans are placed directly on the ground out of the sun and lightly covered with pine needles or breathable plastic sheets. I put Osmacote pellets — fertilizer again — on them in the late fall so they will have an early boost. Transplanting can be done to new pots in the winter while the plants are frozen — a quick thaw does no harm — or in the spring.

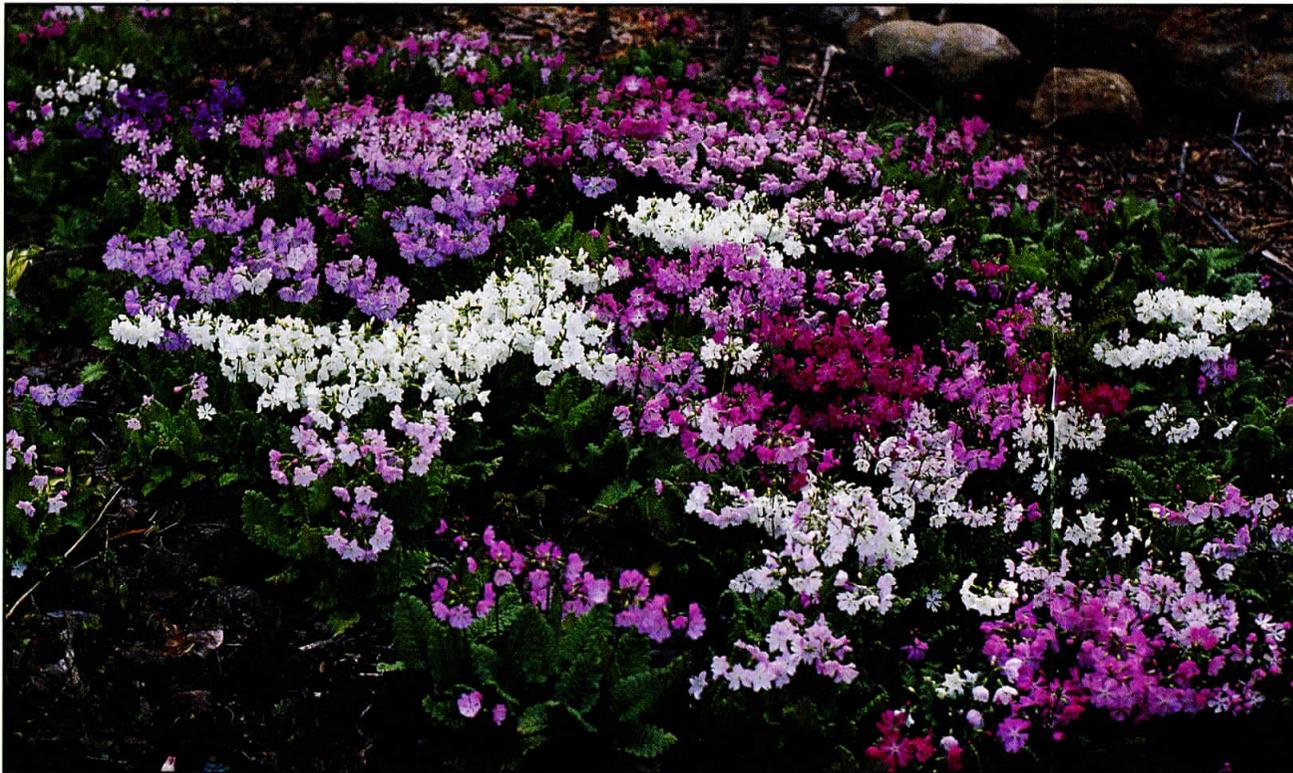
Plants will grow in full sun here in the east if the roots are kept moist. The soil can be clay. Ideally they have conditioned themselves to grow on the flood plains of rivers in Japan. So putting some silt or fresh soil over them in late fall or early spring should suit them. Some crowns ride the surface but then bow down and dig themselves in. Other plants are comfortable to be buried 1/2" below the soil level. Plants not in direct sun can take considerable dryness, but they will not grow robustly.

Quite frankly, *P. sieboldii* has a classic beauty. Some people are used to the colors in the vernalis section — yellows and blues — and so dislike the *sieboldii* because its color range is limited to reds, fuchsia, mauve, purples, lavenders, whites and all kinds of pink. These are the colors of many difficult-to-grow primula. *Primula sieboldii* does grow easily in the Northeast where the vernalis suffer and die unless coddled.

*A form similar to Primula sieboldii found in the wild.*



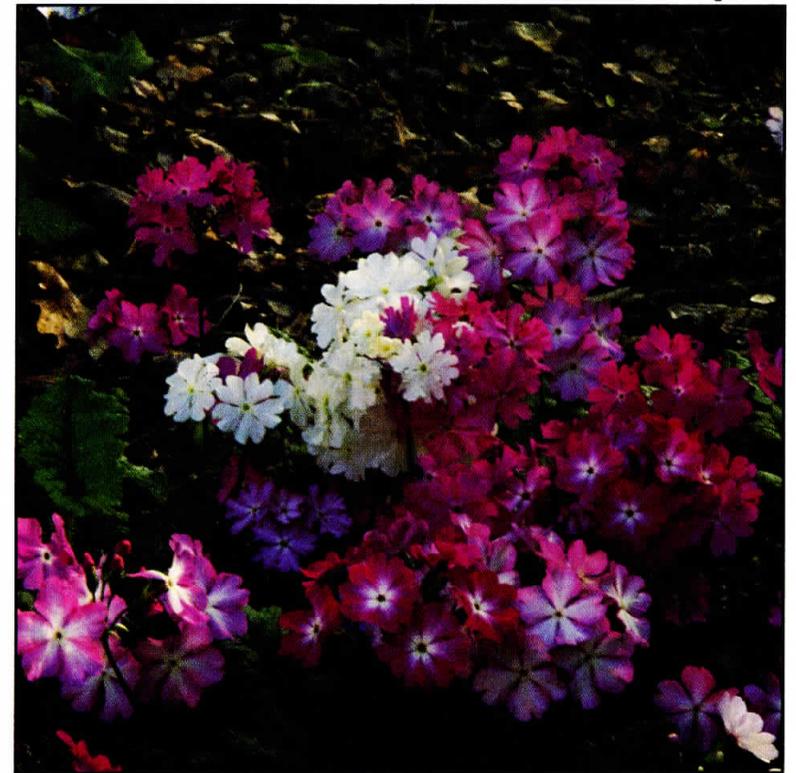
*A group of Primula sieboldii in Paul Held's garden.*



*A cupped bi-color form with a white face.*



*Some of the many varieties in Paul Held's garden.*



## Seed Exchange — 1993/94

The seed exchange is on its way! Various worldwide sources have been contacted for contribution of primula seed. Thanks to you members and to other generous donors, we have a choice selection of primula seed in our society's unique seed exchange.

Rare primula seed will be packaged five to a package to insure that these seed will reach more members. Some seed is purchased from commercial sources and also will be packaged in small amounts, as costs require us to do this to break even. Other primula seed will be packaged in larger quantities depending on the amount of seed we receive.

I am quite excited to be able to list some of *Primula tschuktschorum* var. *arctica* collected in the wild on the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea, Alaska. This seed literally appeared on my doorstep one day, a gift from a sweet young lady to whom I will be forever in debt. You can find this seed on the seed list in short supply in company with some other goodies I have received along the way.

## News from the Chapters

### ALASKA

John O'Brien reports that he has canvassed the Alaska group for comments to be relayed to the board, which meets on October 10, 1993. He will give these to President John Kerridge.

The group is also busy putting together the slide shows for the fall and winter season. One additional note is that Alaska APS member Cheryl Fluck has visited Herb Dickson's nursery in Chehalis twice this year and brought away forty auricula plants in her luggage the first visit and another thirty on the second. She's very seriously putting together a collection of auriculas both from Herb and other sources. Our treasurer, Addaline Robinson, suggested Herb as a source of plants when new member Cheryl inquired.

Our seed exchange does depend on you, the membership, for contributions and success. We are probably the only seed exchange worldwide with such a diverse selection of primula seed. I want to thank all donors, past and present, as we are all in this together, doing it for the love of primula and the happiness they bring us each spring!

Watch for the seed exchange list in late November or early December. I hope to have all the seeds listed by then. Distribution can start once I get your orders. The list will contain further information on how to order and schedules for mailing.

Please contact me if you have any questions:  
American Primrose Society Seed Exchange,  
Marie Skonberg, P.O. Box 70,  
Ouzinkie, Alaska, 99644.

*Thank you for your support.* ❖

### PENNSYLVANIA

**Doretta Klaber Chapter**  
No report

### WASHINGTON

**Eastside Chapter**  
Meets the first Monday of every month at the Universal Savings Bank, 6615 132nd Ave. NE, Kirkland at the Bridal Trails Mall at 7:30 pm.  
August program: Picnic at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens. A tour of the gardens was included.  
September program: Harvest pot-luck dinner.  
Note from Editor, Don Keefe: "Good primula seed. It's time to be thinking of buying some good primula seed. Top notch primula seed from Field House

*continued on page 24*

## Notes from the Editor

### A SURE SIGN SPRING IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Today I received the Barnhaven catalog supplement. What a great variety of primrose seed to choose from! There are even some — a number of the 'Victorians' among them — where there is a price reduction due to the bumper harvest. We are all so glad the this was a good year for Barnhaven and that there is a good supply of seed once again.

Did you notice that you can now stay where the Barnhaven seed is grown? The Bradfords have a 150-year-old cottage for rent by the week. APS members would think they'd died and gone to heaven.

### SLIDE AND VIDEO PROGRAMS ON PRIMROSES

A letter from John O'Brien in Alaska has brought the good news that he is working on slide programs to be available to the society for the fall and winter season. Need a program for a meeting? Write to John. Some topics that will be available include: wild primroses of Alaska, auriculas, the Sikkimensis/Florindae sections, primroses in Alaska gardens and maybe one on 'Cowichans.' Slide librarian's address: John A. O'Brien, Sr., 9450 Herbert Place, Juneau, AK 99801.

John also mentions he's had very good luck growing 'Cowichans' from John Kerridge's seed, (Saltspring Primroses 2426 W. 47 Ave., Vancouver, B.C. Canada, V6M 2N2.) They have grown so well he's had to divide them, and found there were over 100 offsets. Another bumper crop!

### PRIMROSES AND THE NEW YORK TIMES

Thea Foster responded to over 100 letters from "potential primrose growers," as she puts it. Letters came from New York state, New Jersey, Maine, Connecticut, Pennsylvania and other Eastern seaboard areas as far south as the Carolinas. There were some queries from the Midwest and even one from Canada. Speaks about how widely the New York Times is read, doesn't it?

Thea wrote out notes on growing primroses, mentioned the APS and its journal, and threw in a little history for good measure. She mentioned the Doretta Klaber Chapter in Pennsylvania and some good advice on where to read about and buy primula

plants. All in all, a very credible job. Thanks, Thea. And Pat Foster — who addressed all the envelopes!

### THE COLOR COVER

I know members have wanted more color photographs of primroses in the quarterly ever since we did the special 50th anniversary color issue. In June I received a box of over 200 color photographs of *Primula sieboldii* in all colors, shapes and sizes — and put the two together. Voila! — some color photographs in the quarterly. The photos belong to Paul Held of Connecticut who, one could safely say, is nuts about sieboldii. What a wonderful collection of plants he has put together! We're really fortunate to get a glimpse of all these exquisite flowers in his keeping.

For those who want a color cover, we have one. And for those who want the photographs in color on the inside to keep them from getting marked, there are some for you, too. I don't think we'll break the budget, but the printing cost are one and one-half times more than for a black and white issue. The coffers seem to be able to bear the expense. Please let me know if this is how you want the society and the editor to spend your dollars. How often shall we do color photographs in the quarterly? Do you like color covers, or inside photos, or both?

### WORLD-WIDE NOTICE

President John Kerridge has an article on primroses in an Australian gardening journal. The photographs came out very well. We're getting world-wide coverage!

### SOCIETY HISTORY

John has also been sending out requests to gather up any historical material that belongs to the society. Do you have any records or mementos that you'd like to place in the society's keeping? Please let President John Kerridge know.

### JOURNALS

The Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia has APS members among the regular winners in the primula classes in their monthly pot shows. These include: Bob Bunn, who raises and grows an amazing variety of species primula, Renee Oakley, John Kerridge, and Thea Foster.

### Notes from the Editor continued

At the September meeting of the Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society Keith Muir, an APS member up at Duncan, B.C., brought in a tiny *Primula scotica*. One can immediately see why it is referred to as a jewel in the literature: the deep tone of the flower petals are set off by the silver farina on the sepal, stem and leaves of the plant.

A note in the American Rock Garden Society **Bulletin Board** states that Herb Dickson has sold up

and is moving to Missouri. We know better! Herb is still at Chehalis and has seed and plants for sale, at least for the moment. We hope he'll be there for the spring shows, too. We know Herb is moving, the question is when. APS is grateful that it isn't just yet!

The ARGS library also has slide programs on primulas that you might borrow for a meeting if you have a member of that society among your number. In their list, #17 is on *Primula* (presumably rock garden ones) and video #1984-4 is "Primroses I have grown" by Molly Sanderson. ❖

### News from the Chapters

continued from page 22

Alpines in England can be obtained from June Skidmore [Field House Alpines, 6730 West Mercer Way, Mercer Island, WA 98040].

Choice primula seed can be obtained from Angela Bradford (the world famous Barnhaven strains, now grown in France. [Barnhaven Primroses, Langerhouad, 22420 Plouzelambre, France]) Herb Dickson of the Chehalis Rare Plant Nursery [2568 Jackson Hwy, Chehalis, WA 98532] sells choice show and exhibition alpine auricula seed. Rosetta Jones [E.170 Dunoon Pl., Shelton, WA 98584] sells her very fine double seed (auriculas and primroses). Hopefully Peter Atkinson will soon be back in the seed business with some unique creations from his own strains, such as Jack-in-the-Greens, Hose-in-Hose, new color combinations. [16035 S.E. 167 Place, Renton, WA 98058].

#### Seattle Chapter

Meets four times a year.

August program: Picnic at June Skidmore's.

**Report** on the August meeting: The Seattle Chapter met at June Skidmore's home for a potluck picnic. "Significant others" were also present. The same officers as last year will continue and we will continue with four meetings per year. Programs were discussed and volunteers for the Northwest Flower and Garden Show were recruited. The weather was simply marvellous and the company excellent. What more could a "primulunic" ask for?

Report by Barbara Flynn, Redmond, Washington

#### Tacoma Chapter

Meets the first Tuesday of each month, except July and August in the Fireside Room of the United Methodist Church, 1919 West Pioneer, Puyallup at 7:30 pm.

No meetings, July and August

September program: presentation by April Boettger on the care and raising of auriculas. April is starting a new nursery, A Plethora of Primula. Tentative date of 1994 show: April 9 and 10.

#### Washington State Chapter

Meets the second Friday of each month except July and August at the United Good Neighbor Center at 305 S. 43rd St. Renton at 7:45 pm.

September program: April Boettger, who has worked with Herb Dickson for some time now and has started her own nursery, A Plethora of Primula, will speak on auriculas.

#### BRITISH COLUMBIA PRIMROSE GROUP

This new group met on June 1 for an organization meeting and on September 15 as the first of their regular meetings. Welcome to this new group.

**Report:** "The new "British Columbia Primrose Group" met at Thomas Hobbs' Southlands Nursery on September 15, 1993, with 15 people present. John Kerridge explained that we wanted to keep it very informal with business kept to a minimum.

There was a "show and tell" time when John showed us a lovely little alpine auricula and explained the difference between exhibition alpine and garden auriculas.

## Board of Directors' Meeting

Held July 10, 1993, at Herb Dickson's home, Chehalis, WA

This is a summary of the board meeting.

There were reports from the secretary, treasurer and an editor's report. The large number of letters received from the New York Times article was discussed.

Chapters reported. The Eastside Chapter will handle the Northwest Flower and Garden Show in 1994.

The Seed Exchange has moved to Alaska, to be managed by Marie Skonberg. John Kerridge led a round of applause for out-going coordinator, Candy Strickland. Micro-propagation was discussed. The issue is tabled for further investigation.

Greg Becker's suggestion of a library and/or bookstore was raised. The big question is who would run it.

Chapter presidents can send a delegate in their place to board meetings. A suggestion that APS put

together a video on primrose culture, including how to make cutting, how to repot, how to pollinate was tabled for further research.

The APS board presented Herb Dickson with a plaque to commemorate his many years of service to the society. Herb said it was premature!

The next meeting will be October 10, 1993, at Chehalis.

From the report respectfully submitted by Barbara Flynn, Recording Secretary ❖

**Dues Reminder**  
Membership fees are due.  
See page 10.

### News from the Chapters

continued from page 24

Thea Foster, an expert hybridizer, brought in some of her plants and explained the parentage and some of the possible problems. Bob Bunn brought along and talked about *Primula allionii*, which had formed a beautiful cushion in the pot.

I was asked to talk about my method of growing from seed. The only difference from the article I wrote for the quarterly (Winter 1992, v.50, no.1) was that I now use a thin layer of very fine vermiculite at the top instead of Redi-earth, which contained too many lumps of peat and bits of sticks to my liking. The idea of the vermiculite is to make sure that the seeds do not dry out, as that is fatal.

I told the group that maybe because I didn't know any better or maybe because Thea Foster told me that fresh seed is best, I go on planting seed all the year around. Thea told me at this meeting that a *P. helodoxa* of ours that she won as a door prize at the June meeting has set seed. She has harvested it, planted it, and the seedlings now, at September 15, are about one-half an inch high. Many of the seeds I planted on August 14 are germinating well. So there

is no need to wait until December to sow primula seed.

Bodil Leamy, who is in charge of the Perennial Garden and all of the primulas at the Botanical Gardens of the University of British Columbia, has collected an assortment of seed from the candelabra primulas. She is donating them to the group for packaging and sale.

Elke Knechtel of Rainforest Gardens brought in and donated a flat of 'Wanda Wonder' seedlings, raised from seed hybridized by John Kerridge from 'Wanda' and selected polyanthus. These plants have the dwarf form of 'Wanda' but have different shades of flower colors. They are very attractive! Incidentally, the flats of beautiful primroses that Thea Oakley brought to the National Show in Tacoma this year came from Elke's nursery.

Several people told us that they enjoyed the meeting very much and are very grateful to Thomas Hobbs for the use of the room at his nursery. But then, like many of us, he is a primula nut!  
Report by Renee Oakley, Richmond, B.C. ❖

# Membership List

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In this issue you will find a membership list arranged by state for the US, by province in Canada and by country for the rest of the world. APS members have indicated they would like to be able to get in touch with other primrosers in their areas and a list in this order should help. **Please remember: it is arranged numerically by postal or zip code numbers.**

Check your area — there may be other members nearer than your think, even just across state borders. It's fun to exchange notes, and even plants. How else can you get those rarer treasures? In some areas there may be enough of you to meet occasionally and show some slides or see a video from the society slide library. Perhaps you can have a small "show and tell" session or even invite a speaker.

Such a group now exists in British Columbia.

## Where Do APS Members Live?

compiled by April Boettger

Who in the world reads the APS Quarterly?

The following 647 folks. Of these 477 are from the U.S., 66 are from Canada, and the the other 104 are from foreign shores.

### CANADA: 66

4 Alberta 3 Nova Scotia  
34 British Col. 18 Ontario  
1 Manitoba 3 Quebec  
3 Newfoundland

### FOREIGN: 104

5 Australia 11 Japan  
1 Austria 3 Netherlands  
1 Belgium 11 New Zealand  
1 Czech Republic 1 N Ireland  
5 Denmark 3 Norway  
38 England 4 Scotland  
3 France 6 Sweden  
5 Germany 2 Switzerland  
3 Ireland 1 Wales

Other regional clubs have sprung up in Washington State — the Kitsap County Primrose Club, for example — was active in the 1970s.

"Primrosers" are certainly a different breed of folk; over half of the notes I receive, whether society business or personal, are on greeting cards with a primula motif. It's a joy to receive them and experience that mutual love for our special interest.

The notes contain descriptions of gardens and plantings all so dear to everyone's hearts and personally prized. It is a wonderful addition to share such a pleasure and hear about everyone's experiences.

Keep growing primrose plants, and spread the word and the plants.

John Kerridge,  
President

### UNITED STATES: 477

1 Alabama 7 New Hampshire  
31 Alaska 17 New Jersey  
22 California 25 New York  
6 Colorado 10 N. Carolina  
26 Connecticut 1 N. Dakota  
3 Delaware 20 Ohio  
2 Idaho 47 Oregon  
9 Illinois 21 Pennsylvania  
2 Iowa 1 Rhode Island  
3 Indiana 3 Tennessee  
1 Kentucky 1 Utah  
9 Maine 7 Vermont  
7 Maryland 10 Virginia  
25 Massachusetts 1 W. Virginia  
19 Michigan 121 Washington  
9 Minnesota 1 Wash. D.C.  
1 Missouri 5 Wisconsin  
1 Montana \*1 Puerto Rico

## THIS LIST IS ARRANGED NUMERICALLY BY POSTAL CODE NUMBER

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St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 13B9  
Stanley Atkins - 89 Whiteway St.,  
St. John's, Newfoundland A1B 1K5

#### Nova Scotia

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Rose Bay, Lunenburg Co., Nova Scotia B0J 2X0  
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Eva Gallagher - Box 900, Deep River, Ontario K0J 1P0  
Leal & Bruce Quarrington - Box 234,  
Grafton, Ontario K0K 2G0  
Agriculture-Canada Library - Sir John Carling Bldg.,  
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Gerald Taaffe - 460 Riverdale Ave.,  
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Elke Knechtel - 13139 224th St., R.R. #2,  
Maple Ridge, B.C. V2X 7E7  
Jean Hausemann - 20265 82nd Ave., R.R. 11  
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Simon Daly - 56 Dundonald St., Dunedin, Otago  
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## How to Become Obsessed . . . Growing *Primula sieboldii*

continued from page 18

When I attended the "Primula Worldwide" symposium, I looked forward to the presentation on *P. sieboldii*. When the slides were shown, I realized I had most of the forms and also other forms not shown. After the presentation, I approached one of the Japanese speakers and suggested that we trade seed from our best plants. He said that seed was not saved, but distinct plants were propagated. If I wanted to, however, I could send pictures and he would consider my request. I have recently mailed him a note saying that the pictures are ready.

I came back to the East Coast that year just before the *P. sieboldii* were about to bloom. When the flowers opened on plants in flats where I had sown 250 seeds each the year before, I was able to prick out another 60 different forms. Some are deeply laced, some very short, some very bright, some are recurved like a shooting star, some are very large and opulent. Wow! I also came back with a *P. sieboldii* plant from Japan — 4000 miles away — in my hands. My year was made!

That following winter, in hopes of finding and giving each one of those plants that germinated a better chance, I potted up hundreds of individual 1 1/2 inch by 1 1/2 inch pots from my original crowded flats. I did this in the basement in February. This May there were no new finds from the 50 individual plants that were crowded in each of twenty flats. What does this say? Well, from a novice's point of view, *those* plant that had nerve enough to bloom in crowded pots had hybrid (new) vigor and the others did not. So, one way to find new varieties is to crowd them. The ones that are strongest will be hybrids. The weakest tend towards the natural plain *sieboldii* that grows along the river banks in Japan.

This year I have sown separate lots of my own seed soaked in colchicum juice, though maybe not long enough to encourage them to mutate. Seed sown this year is from the new finds plus

another 18 flats of just plain excess seed — seed from the Lunns and others who traded seed with me, from Jared Sinclair of Barnhaven, even seed from Parkes and Cravens in England. Parkes and Cravens' *sieboldii* turned out to be miniature versions of the plain *sieboldii* — about one fifth the leaf size and half or less the height — tiny plants and flowers.

Then the plant from Japan that I bought at the sale bloomed. What a beauty! It was a border type by number, but a dark solid red back and a clear white front, deeply lacinated petals, strong short stems — a perfect flower and plant.

Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery has supplied me with at least half a dozen named plants. All told, when putting the collection together, taking photos, and numbering them, I find there are more than 250 varieties in my collection.

It's hard to keep track mentally. Some are very close in color, tone, petal form, habit, height, though each is distinct in some way. To help solve that problem, I've found a local food market, Stew Leonard's, that sells a hundred cartons of grapes a day. They discard the styrofoam cartons that the grapes come in. The plants *love* the cartons because of the deep root run, insulated sides and, in the winter, the styrofoam cover can be placed on top for further insulation.

I have collected 200 grape containers to give each form a good space of its own. Plant by plant can be checked for identity, and no loose tags will be lost. All this takes time. It seemed that almost everyone I met at the symposium was retired, or close to it. I am still working every day. I want to do more with the *sieboldii* but don't have the time to do it as well as I would like right now. Retirement is about six years away.

*How to Become Obsessed continued*

Thanks to the generous gift of information from the Japanese in the articles they've sent, and the volunteer work by our editors and friends, some order can be made from the multitude of forms. And some seed has finally germinated from Hara - two years later - and, in the third year has given me a new form, a curled inward, small hybrid with a red face instead of a white face. I understand this incurved white form was supposedly the first hybrid from the "regular" sieboldii.

Each year I look forward to the previous year's sowing to turn up something new. What I need is a clear identification of the varieties and a fixed idea of what I have before I can intelligently make crosses that would have benefit. As it stands now, all my primula are open pollinated, by what, I have no idea. I've never seen any insects around the flowers.

Once I collected a stalk from one of my favorites while it was green, just after the flowers had faded, and put it in a glass of water and waited until it turned brown. I cleaned the chaff and put the seed in a glass jar in the refrigerator. I then sowed the seed and put it outside in February. After the seed germinated in the flats, I potted up well over 200 plants that came from that one stalk. When the plants bloomed, not one flower was the same. I was

**Under the Overhang***continued from page 17*

many plants. Most folks find no great problem in providing some sort of translucent covering over the frame to ward off the winter wet. For those of you who want to grow a few plants to perfection for a primrose show, display or just your own personal satisfaction this approach works about as well as any alpine house. You can seldom bloom a plant as well outdoors as you can under cover. And let's not forget that almost everyone has an area under the eaves of their house which provides an excellent place to

able to select at least six new forms I had never seen before. That is the lure. That is what drives my lust for *P. sieboldii* — the anticipation of finding the one new form that is different. What will it be like?

I will keep seeking new genes from other sources — perhaps from Japan, but I have not heard from growers there. Perhaps from the generous gift of plants that the Japanese donated at the symposium will come seed that has the genes from all of Japan's favorites, to cross with ours.

My dream is to have the first North American Sakurasoh Society, with dues of \$10 and a letter once in a while and a seed exchange of only *P. sieboldii* seed donated by members. Of course there would be an initial free pack of seed to start newcomers off.

Also I dream of opening a nursery to offer over 200 forms of just *Primula sieboldii*. I would make up a catalog that would describe each one and would have a picture or drawing, hopefully, in two colors, shades of black and red.

Doretta Klaber was correct to warn us in her book of 1966 on primroses; "Beware!...primroses cast a spell." ❖

**Dues Reminder**  
Membership fees are due.  
See page 10.

make a small plunge bed and you generally have three or four exposures to choose from for your plants.

Next issue I will write a bit about growing and propagating some specific primula under the overhang.

*Rick promises information on some choice primula species, such as Primula allioni for next issue.* ❖

**Primrose Notes***continued from page 14*

fir tree fell and squashed one flat. As soon as the tree was cut away, the structure popped right back up with only stress marks to show for its adventure. It meets all requirements, but \$1,500 is their rock bottom factory-second price. Any ideas?

More primula judges are needed. To qualify, begin by getting test sheets from Rosetta Jones, E. 170 Dunoon Pl., Shelton, WA 98584. (It's an open-book test.)

For assistance in importing plants, June Skidmore will be glad to advise you. Her

address is 6730 W. Mercer Way, Mercer Island, WA 98040. My experience with many named variety plants is that they are often difficult to get acclimated. Seedlings you have raised yourself don't have this problem.

John O'Brien from Alaska reports their group of growers is having regular meetings. January's subject is candelabras; February, sikkimensis; March, polys and primroses. We agreed that shells are the best source of lime for primulas - eggshells or seashell and - my favorite - decomposed starfish. ❖

**Dates to Look Forward To:****Winter Study Weekends**

Eastern: January 28 - 30, 1994. Connecticut Chapter, sponsor. To be held in Stamford, CT

Western: February 25 - 27, 1994. Alpines of the Northern Hemisphere. To be held in Richmond (near Vancouver) at the Delta Pacific Inn.

**Corrections****There are corrections from the last issue:**

Thea Foster is Corresponding Secretary. I knew that! Sorry, Thea. Also, managed to miss you from the list of officers. Fixed it up in this issue!

Also relating to Thea, the name of her prize-winning auricula in the Alpine Garden Club of B.C. show was a hybrid of 'Marguerita' crossed with Herb Dickson's 1977 yellow prize-winning auricula, not 'Marguerita,' herself, as was reported. Thea's hybrid won best in class. Sorry about the mis-label.

Our new board member serving until 1995 is Fred Knapp, not Frank Cabot as listed. Fred

lives in New York State, will represent an eastern view point and can be reached at 58 Kainuck Lane, Locust Valley, NY 11560.

Also, in the letter by John Kerridge to Mary Kordes on hybridizing, in the Spring 1993 issue (vol. 51, no.2) there was a word left out in the last paragraph, right hand column, on p. 29. The phrase should read, "...one can predict that one in four of the next generation would be all recessive genes (aabb) and a start for a new line." That makes better sense. ❖

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### SEED EXCHANGE

Marie Skonberg,  
P.O. Box 70, Ouzinkie, AK 99644

### SHOW JUDGES

Rosetta Jones,  
E 170 Dunoon Place, Shelton, WA 98584

### SLIDE LIBRARIAN

John A. O'Brien, Sr.  
9450 Herbert Place, Juneau, Alaska 99801

### MEMBERSHIP

Dues for individual or household membership  
in the American Primrose Society, both  
domestic and foreign, are \$15 U.S. per calendar  
year (\$16 for renewals postmarked after January  
1); \$40 for three years; or \$200 for an individual

life membership. Submit payment to the  
treasurer. Membership renewals are due  
November 15 and are delinquent at the first of  
the year.

Membership includes a subscription to the  
quarterly **Primroses**, seed exchange privileges,  
slide library privileges and the opportunity to  
join a Round Robin.

### PUBLICATIONS

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.

Advertising rates per issue: full page, \$60; half  
page, \$30; quarter page, \$15; eighth page and  
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