

# Primroses

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Fall 2002

# Primroses

Quarterly of the  
American Primrose Society  
Volume 60, Number 3, Fall 2002

The purpose of this society is to bring the people interested in Primula together in an organization to increase the general knowledge of and interest in the collecting, growing, breeding, showing and using in the landscape and garden the genus Primula in all its forms and to serve as a clearing house for collecting and disseminating information about Primula.

## Contents:

- 1 President's Message
- 2 An Interview with Rosetta Jones  
by Robert Tonkin
- 7 Primulas & Spring Wildflowers  
Along the Alaska Highway  
by Ed Buyarski
- 13 Color Genes in Primroses  
Hybridizing Ideas of Carl Heimburger  
in Victoria  
by Maedythe Martin
- 16 Root Aphid  
by April Botteger
- 26 2002 APS Membership Roster
- 36 APS Website Growing  
by Pam Eveleigh
- 36 APS August 2002 Board Minutes

**Cover Photos:** Rosetta Jones' hybridizing journal, her pollen gathering technique, and a semi double juliae in her garden this spring. Robert Tonkin photos.

**Back Cover Photo:** Primula nutans growing on a riverbed draining into the Donjek River, Yukon Territory, Canada. Robert Tonkin photo.

## OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ed Buyarski, President  
P.O. Box 33077  
Juneau, AK 99803-3077  
(907) 789-2299  
amprimsoc@hotmail.com

Cheri Fluck, Vice President  
17275 Point Lena Loop Rd.  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 789-0595

Robert Tonkin, Secretary  
3155 Pioneer Ave.  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
(907) 463-1554  
primroses@gci.net

Julia Haldorson, Treasurer  
P.O. Box 210913  
Auke Bay, Alaska 99821  
(907) 789-5860  
julia-haldorson@ak.net

### DIRECTORS

#### Through 2005

Mary Kordes  
HC2 Box 852  
Allouez, MI 4980  
mkordes@up.net

Phyllis Petrovich  
Box 424 Forks, WA 98331  
Calgary, Alberta T3E 6A1  
phyllis@olypen.com

#### Through 2004

Pam Eveleigh  
6520 Law Drive  
Calgary, Alberta T3E 6A1  
(403) 240-4417  
eveleigh@shaw.ca

Elaine Malloy  
P.O. Box 38  
South Salem, NY 10590  
elaineprim@aol.com

#### Through 2003

Terry Mitchell  
17 Fearnley Dr.  
Ossett, West Yorkshire WF5-9EU  
England  
(144) 1924-261-698  
terry@auriculas17.freeserve.co.uk

Judith C. Sellers  
R.D.3 Box 233A  
Unadillo, New York 13849  
(607)369-9237  
jsellers@mkl.com

## Primroses

### EDITOR/GRAPHIC DESIGN

Robert Tonkin  
3155 Pioneer Ave.  
Juneau, AK 99801  
(907) 463-1554  
primroses@gci.net

### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Judy Sellers  
Pam Eveleigh  
Ed Buyarski

### EDITORIAL DEADLINES

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## Presidents Message

Greetings Primrose Society members, it's time for me to say thanks to all of you who have helped this year with shows and plant sales. Thank you if you've shared information about primroses with friends or neighbors. Thank you if you've written articles for our Quarterly or contributed your time as a Board member. Those of you who are now processing seeds that others of you have donated to the Seed Exchange deserve our thanks. Thank you all who believe in this Society for being members and for renewing your membership or your twin's membership at this time.

There may be a reminder stamped on your Quarterly envelope to renew now and avoid the rush when you realize that there is no new issue coming to your mailbox in January or February or even in March as the first Primroses of the year are blooming. Recruit a new member or give a gift subscription in the coming months to help keep the American Primrose Society growing. Ask a question or propose a subject for a future article of interest. Better yet, research and write one to make our Editor happy! Grow some plants and take some pictures too.

Thank you to Duane Buell for all your work putting together the APS website and to Pam Eveleigh who is carrying on your work and improving it with all our help and suggestions.

This year has been anything but normal in Juneau, having two months of record dry weather followed by a cool, wet summer and wet fall. As I write this there are local flood warnings on some creeks and even the slugs are rowing peapods up and down the rows. The snow line is still above 3000' so I hope it stays there a while until I get all those last minute gardening chores done.

It has been a good year for me seeing wild Primula species in the north as you will read in this issue. I saw

## Number 11

### An Interview with Rosetta Jones

*The following conversation was tape recorded by me at the home of Rosetta Jones in April*

**RT:** Rosetta, when primrose growers think of primrose hybridizing, your name comes right to the top of the list. I'm hopeful you will share your hybridizing journey with our membership. How did you come to join the American Primrose Society?

**ROSETTA:** I like flowers. Many years ago I was working as a secretary in downtown Seattle. I saw an article in the Seattle PI that there was going to be a demonstration of primroses at Fredrick and Nelsons, the big department store. So at my lunch break I went up there to see them. It turned out to be Dorothy Dickson, who would turn out to be my best friend. They were showing the California strain of polyanthus. They were gorgeous. Well, at the time I thought I knew something about primroses. I knew a primrose when I saw one. But I never saw primroses that looked like that before! So while there I found out where they would meet. They met out at the University in the Arboretum, in what I think was an old schoolhouse. So I started going to the meetings.

I was living on Beacon Hill at the time. I think the year was 1952, although I don't remember for sure. There was a big group at the time and they were very enthusiastic. They were at the time really wrapped up in show auricula. I stuck with it. It was kind of lonesome at first by myself, as no one

paid much attention to me, but I decided to keep going anyway. So I became interested and involved. I don't remember the year I joined National. I was a member of the Washington State Chapter for quite a while before joining National. After some time I became Secretary of the group. They would meet once a month and had very good programs at the time. We had show and tell at every meeting. There were usually forty to fifty people at each meeting, quite large for a primrose group. The size of the meetings would depend a lot on the information we were getting out of England at the time. At that time the great florists were still alive. The show auricula was the big thing then.

I'm not sure just when the nursery idea came about. I had been working with the Seattle Fire Dept for a number of years. I remember thinking to myself at the time "Here I sit. I'm now forty and I could work for another twenty years and retire. Oh great!" Well, it wasn't too long and I was out in the Kent valley with my little old nursery. Alan continued to work and I started up the little nursery. I started with perennials. It didn't take long to realize perennials are not the best plants to grow. They're too much work and no money! Of course I never made any money in primroses either. I learned the business the hard way, by making mistakes. I wouldn't grow primroses to sell because there wasn't any money in them. I was doing rhodys and azaleas.

I do remember what started me growing doubles. Dorothy Dickson and I were judging a show in Chehalis and we were getting into the doubles tables.

They were sad plants with weak stems that would fall over when you picked them up. We were talking with each other about how terrible the plants were. They were probably beautiful in the garden but they simply look bad on the table. When we were finished judging this lady came up to us, she was our clerk, and she wanted to know what was wrong with a plant, so we told her, turned out it was her plant.

We had quite a few doubles in the area, from England, but after awhile they all disappeared. All the yellow disappeared too. I remember I was at home, I had a little twelve by twenty greenhouse, a propagating house actually, and I was standing there potting and I thought "I'll bet you I could grow a yellow double with strong stems that is hardy. I didn't have any doubles at the time. That's what started me. I finally got a hold of some seed from a guy in Oregon. He sent his old seed, but I said that was alright, send it anyway. It was horrible stuff. He crossed it with poly's. It was a wild mess, and I worked with that for years. I kept trying. I kept taking the best of the lot and kept working them.

It was six years later I took one, Number 11, to the show in Tacoma. Number 11 was a strong stem, very pale yellow, I called it pansy face, semi double with pollen, lots of it. That's the basis for my doubles, Number 11. From then on Number 11 went into everything. That was the pollen! This is what happens in hybridizing. If you see the right plant when it shows up, and it will, don't say "Geeze, that's pretty" and go on. See how can you use it. I can think

over the years of many different plants that had good potential. The trouble with Number 11 after I used him on everything, and at that time I remember I even put Number 11 on to JayJay, it got more double and more double, but no pollen. It's just a shame, because that was just a fantastic plant. It produced pollen for about three years, and that was it. It was my basis, my big jump. From then on it just kept getting better and better.

Number 11 was my first bench win. I never named it. There's no way you can do this work if you're going to name them. Now some of the auriculas I've named, as it is necessary to do that. I never wanted to promote myself. I just wanted to see if I could grow that yellow double with a strong stem, and I did it. Not only did I get yellow, I got all colors. Along the line you learn a lot. For instance, I learned that pale yellow is a soluble pigment and you put that on a hard color you get pastels. That's why all my doubles are pastels. Cause I used lots of Number 11.

When I first started I may have had some time to pull the petals off the doubles with tweezers and get some of the pollen, but that luxury soon went away. I had to start using semi doubles, which would have the pollen. Actually I think Number 11 was a semi double rather than a double, and obviously the most gorgeous double I've ever seen. It was a straw yellow, almost white. It's there. Anyone can do it. It's tedious, it's hard work, but anyone can do it.

In the late 70's I started selling the seed. It wasn't even ten cents a seed to start

with. It was 50 seeds for five bucks, or something like that. I sold seed that way for quite a while. It took awhile. I now know I was doing this twenty years too soon. I was selling to England as well as the rest of the world. Then I got an order one day from William Holt for thirty dollars. That's a pretty good order. So I sent it to him. About three months later here comes an order for three hundred dollars from William Holt. Every one of his previous seeds came up and they were healthy robust looking plants and he wanted some more. Well, the next spring he sent me six hundred dollars. That was six thousand seeds. From then on every year Holt ordered six thousand seeds. Apparently he sold all the doubles.

A while later Herb Dickson wrote an article for Horticulture Magazine and a principal buyer from Thompson and Morgan read it. Well, he spent three years trying to talk me into supplying him seed. But after a while I had a twenty by forty house, so I decided to fill his order. I finally got three ounces. That's about twenty eight thousand seeds. It was a huge effort for one person. I had to pollinate hundreds of plants to get that seed. I had a nice place to work and it was fun, but it was work. The only trouble was it took six months to get paid. Not too long after that the buyer quit T&M and went into business for himself as a broker so I went to work for him. I sold to him for several years, as much as I could do. I didn't want to lower my quality, and I sold good seed, everybody knew that. I strained it and shook it. When I started doing it by the

ounce I went to a gun store and got a powder scale. I counted out two thousand seeds and went to the druggist and had them weighed. I still have my powder scale, although I don't intend on needing it. That's the way it went for many years.

Life went on, Alan and I never divorced, but he did move to our summer place and I stayed at the nursery. That's when I started to put some money into the nursery and started to get some money back out of it. This was when I really started to get into it. For the first ten years I was just having a good time growing plants. When I moved out to Kent I started to learn about things. When I was fifty two I went back to school to get my botany degree. I went to school in the morning, ran the nursery in the afternoon, and studied at night. I remember one stretch of sixty nine days I did that nonstop. I don't know how I survived. Anyway, I was a senior at the University when I got colon cancer, had an operation, and never finished. I got the knowledge I went for in the first place, and that's what's important. There were some classes I couldn't get because I couldn't go to school in the afternoons. I took every science course they had. It's fascinating. I got so interested in it. I had this nursery, I was growing all these things, both from propagation or seed, but I didn't know what the hell was going on in there.

I had a good time going, but I hated the University. They don't care two cents for you unless you're a graduate student. The graduate students could

come back into your class to improve their grades, so you're competing with someone who had already taken the class. Yeah, I hated the place. I guess I learned a lot. At that time I belonged to the International Propagators, which is a wonderful outfit. The growers and the Universities finally got together after years, because lots of things will work in the lab that won't work in the field, and lots of things are done in the field that the lab should know. Dorothy Dickson put my name in and I was accepted to be a member. I was going to these symposiums and could only understand half of what was being said. I knew what the growers were talking about, but I would get lost when the Doctors talked. Most of them were from Davis in California. So I went to school. After a while I knew what the hell they were talking about. It was worth it. That was how it went.

I didn't retire wealthy. You have to get big to do that. I didn't promote my business that much, and I know I didn't charge enough. Micro propagation has changed a lot. It took them awhile to learn how to do it with primroses. Like I said, I was doing this twenty years too soon. I have Dorothy to thank for a lot of it. We were such very good friends. The kind of friend you don't have to say any thing to, you know what they're talking about. You don't get many of those. Anyway, I was doing it on my own and the place was beginning to fall apart. It was the wettest year ever and four big trees fell across the property. I was seventy and I thought it best to sell the place so I moved up here to Shelton. I

thought I could play around up here, but it's harder. I just want to get another greenhouse and do it again. This is so much fun.

Lately I've hit a snag with my work on double julies. I have to go back to JayJay. I got the doubling on the plant, but I can't get the little leaves and little roots, I keep losing them. So I have to take one of the plants and reintroduce JayJay back into the Julie body. I'm not just trying to make just a double plant, I'm trying to make another plant with a double top, keep the body... it's a whole new thing. Anyway, I thought I was so smart... I didn't do it so fast! I wrote an article on this for the quarterly, my experiments with JayJay, I can't tell you what year it was. I talked about introducing Number 11 pollen to JayJay. It was way back, because Number 11 was my first break through (*Winter 1980, Vol 38, No. 1...Ed*) The article is there if anyone wants to look for it. I have hit a snag though. I've played with them all through the years. Once I got part way with Number 11 back then. Gosh, I wish I had Number 11 again!

Anyway, so I really accomplished what I set out to do. They're all over the world. Anyone else can do it if they have my seed. And they did, believe me. Most of the plants that are being micro propagated, those have my line in them. They are from my seed. Not probably directly seed from me, but from my line. Dawn Ansell I'm sure. One way you can tell is that it has the Julie root system. I didn't notice this until a few years later when I got a note from a lady friend in England that knew William Holt and she

said he was saying to her "I wonder why there are so many yellows". So I told her why. She said he was describing to her how most of them separated so easy. Mr. Holt told her that most of the yellows had Julie roots. Well, since I don't grow them in the ground I don't notice, they don't do it in the pot much. They don't last too long in the pot either. You see, the roots don't run around out there like a Julie, but they separate, they have a short little stolon, so the plant comes apart real easily, cause they aren't hooked to the crown. So if I see plants that have that, I know they are from my line. Maybe somebody else did something like that, but I don't think so.

I've grown so many doubles now. I stop and think of some of the gorgeous doubles over the years. Micro propagation wasn't around then. They have come and gone. I would let them die if I didn't sell them because they wouldn't produce any pollen so they wouldn't make any seed. I didn't have time to deal with them as I was running a nursery. Anyway, that's the story. I had a great time doing it. They are all over the world. I know I've carried at least ten thousand flats of plants into and out of shows over the years. I've made some wonderful friends over the years too.

It's so important to keep good records. Here's my bible (*see cover*). It might last as long as I do. There is the history. That's where I began (Rosetta points to the very first entry.) I numbered every plant I used and every plant had a label. It looks like I dated them in the early days. This is just one book of the records I keep. I wrote down the number of

seeds I took off of every plant, I record everything. I number each plant I use as well as the crosses. It's important because if something good shows up you need to know where you got it.

Once in awhile I would have an auricula. I was always told they like it dry and what not, so I dried them up, and they died of course. I had almost nothing to do with auriculas and then one day at the Tacoma show Earl Welsh, an interesting fellow that could grow most anything, including beautiful double auriculas, had some plants in a show that I took home with me, as he didn't go to the show because he would have to go into the city on a Sunday and that was something he didn't like doing. Anyway, two weeks later he came down to my place to pick them up and he had some seedlings of double auriculas. So I grew them on and started working with them. Brownie was the result. I didn't get into them right away. I do more auriculas here in Shelton now than I've ever done.

I need another ten years to do this double Julie work. Come outside, I'll show you.



Rosetta Jones & Linda Bailey at National

## Primulas & Spring Wildflowers Along the AK Highway

by Ed Buyarski

Springtime in Interior Alaska brings visions of clouds of mosquitoes, moose in the ponds and flowers everywhere. Though Robert Tonkin's vision may have been clouded with mosquitoes, we did find wild Primulas that were present in several memorable areas.

I was invited to present a talk on 'Primulas for Rock Gardens and Troughs' at the NARGS 2002 Annual Meeting, "Tundra Magic" in Anchorage, Alaska in June. The Alaska Rock Garden Society organized the event and did a wonderful job with all the talks, tours and open gardens to be seen. Robert Tonkin came along to share driving and photography duties and to maintain the APS booth at the conference. He and I loaded my Subaru with 15 flats of plants plus primrose books and quarterlies, camping and fishing gear and two large drybags on the roof with our clothes and sleeping bags. We drove onto the Alaska Ferry from Juneau to Haines and then drove through the Yukon to Anchorage during a beautiful stretch of dry weather as spring came to the mountains and tundra. I had contacted Sylvia 'Tass' Kelso before this trip to get some of the locations of the wild Primulas along the highway that we might search for. She wrote her Doctoral thesis "Systematics and Biogeography of the Arctic and Boreal Species of Primula" in 1987 at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and was very helpful.

Knowing that we were going to be carrying plants through Canada back into Alaska, we had made a list to show the US customs outside Haines who gave it an official looking stamp to show to the Canadian officials across the border. They added their own stamps to the list so we could show the next US Border station officials that we had not sold or purchased plants along the way. Coming back from Anchorage we did the same with our newly purchased plants; luckily a lot fewer than we started with.

On our first morning in the Yukon after a pleasant though brief stay at a B&B on Kluane Lake; it took us a half hour to drive three miles back to the highway as we found lots of wildflowers to photograph. Blue flax, *Anemone multifida*, *Dryas octopetala* and *D. drummondii* were beginning to bloom in the dry gravel roadsides. Our first search for *Primula incana* in a damp meadow near the lake was unsuccessful but we vowed to stop again on our return trip in a week in hopes of finding flowers. A brief stop at Sheep Mountain to watch Dall sheep high on the south slopes and we were off to Destruction Bay. At the edge of wooded areas we found *Mertensia paniculata* and some beautiful clusters of purple flowers on *Rhododendron lapponicum* while Lupines were blooming everywhere. One of the bays on the lake was still packed with wind blown ice as spring was a bit late coming here.

Our next stop at the Donjek River was a location recommended by Kelso for *Primula nutans*. A muddy side road

along the river got us out to visit some moist meadows and Robert's shout of "here they are!" brought me over to see these precious gems. The small plants that were blooming were only 4-6cm across with one or two 10-20cm flower stems. These held from one to four blooms each. There were also some of last year's seed capsules present so we collected some seed and spread some more in the area. On our walk back to the car, a fisherman's trail lured us astray through the woods. We broke out onto a small side channel where we found hundreds of the blooming primroses on each small silty, gravelly island! These were certainly flooded during high water flows which must help spread the plants or seeds downstream. *P. nutans* also grew on the streambanks but were competing with *Rubus*, *Cornus*, and other herbaceous plants and were less plentiful. Again there were still large chunks of ice on the river here.

Kelso mentioned a location near the White River for *Primula mistassinica*, but due to new bridge and road construction, we were unable to find them. We did enjoy the time out to stretch our legs and the sunny weather was a nice change from the wet spring we had been having in Juneau. I was pleasantly surprised that there were so few mosquitoes around but the season was later than usual. Robert didn't share my impressions of the scarcity of bugs however.

Driving the Alaska Highway has changed tremendously since I first hitchhiked on it in 1977. Construction has straightened, paved, and shortened

it which is good for drivers but has resulted in the closing and abandonment of many old road houses that once provided food, gas, and lodging to tired, dusty travelers. It is interesting to see how the old road beds have grown up in trees and other vegetation over the years. Every year there is construction and repair of sections of it due to the severe weather and areas of permafrost which help to crack and heave the road way.

We were fortunate to spot a black wolf briefly walking on the edge of the old road in the Yukon, before an uneventful border crossing. Near our fueling stop at Northway, our search for another Kelso *Primula* location was very successful. Muddy roadside flats with silty soil revealed many more *P. nutans* growing among *Equisetum* and *Budweiser* sp. Again, this was a seasonally flooded area near the Chisana River that is regularly mowed by the highway department to enable drivers to see and avoid moose nearby. On the nearby muskeg areas were blooming *Ledum groenlandicum*, *Andromeda polifolia* and Cloudberry, *Rubus chaemaemorus*. Back on the highway, we had to make a photo stop for a yellow patch of *Arnica alpina* lit up by the sun in another gravelly spot. Our camping place this evening was the Tok RV Park where the *Dodecatheon*, *Polemonium*, lupines, and wild roses were in bloom in a nearby meadow.

The next morning after a hearty breakfast and Robert's coffee fix, we drove up to Delta Junction to connect to the Richardson Highway and drive south. A stiff southerly wind slowed us

as the big drybags on the roof of my overloaded Subaru acted like a sail. Clouds of dust were being blown off the Delta River flats and our plant hunting stops were brief in the brisk wind until we reached Donnelly Creek to search for *P. egalikensis*. Our first impressions were not good when we saw that beavers had dams along the creek flooding the area. We spent an hour looking in the dryer areas and saw a few orchids, *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, and *Pinguicula vulgaris*, an insect eating plant that should be well fed here. Robert and I both had to chase our hats blown off by the wind, but finally, just before we were ready to leave, I walked to the edge of a road ditch and found a few tiny pink flowers deserving a "Eureka!". Growing among grass and moss, the leaf rosettes were only 1-2cm across with a single pink flower or two on 5-8cm stems whipping in the breeze. We each served as wind breaks for the other's photographic attempts between gusts.

Driving south over Isabel Pass at 3000' in the Alaska Range, we saw Summit Lake still ice covered. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline parallels the highway here and is easily visible since there are few trees in this windy area. Dall sheep were again seen on the south slopes of some of the mountains. As we dropped in elevation the weather warmed and trees and vegetation increased. That evening we stayed in a campground on Tolsona Creek where I must confess I had to use my head net while quickly pitching the tent. The grayling fishing proved to be an enjoyable yet fruitless endeavor.

The highway to Anchorage took us through some incredible scenery with the Matanuska Glacier and peaks of the Chugach Mountains to the south of us. At a State Park and other roadside areas we saw *Corydalis aurea* and a very dwarf *Amelanchier* in bloom with white and blue flax (*Linum*) on the dry hillsides and *Pyrola* and a primrose relative *Trientalis borealis* in cooler wooded areas. There was also a beautiful *Stellaria* (chickweed) that we were told makes a nice rock garden plant! It was a very warm day and was near 80 F by the time we reached Anchorage.

Mary Jo Burns graciously put up with us for the duration of the NARGS conference. We tried to help by identifying some of her plants and weeding her garden. I even got to prune an apricot tree in her yard! We could also see how many different plants, shrubs, and trees are tasted and enjoyed by the urban moose that are the worst pest in Anchorage. The city has a six foot height limit for fences which is no barrier to these critters. We had a nice gathering that evening of people interested in primroses where we talked about the benefits of the APS, picked up some new members, and sold some books and 60<sup>th</sup> Edition Quarterlies. The folks decided to start an informal group to learn more about primroses and perhaps rent some of the Society's slide shows this winter. We also enjoyed a tour of Mary Jo's gardens.

On Tuesday June 11<sup>th</sup>, we hauled our plants and APS display to the Hotel for the conference and checked out the

competition in the Trade Show area. Of course that meant that we looked at the plants at the other booths and hoped that we could sell or swap all of ours to make room for new ones to take home with us. Luckily, most everyone was interested in trading for Primulas, even the T shirt and garden art sellers. Unfortunately the bookstore did require real money. Pam Eveleigh contributed a wonderful group of photos for our display and everyone wanted those varieties of course. It was also fun to reconnect with some of the ARGs China Team members that I had spent a month with in the fall of 2000. We were comparing notes on the successes and failures of some of the choice seeds that we had collected.

Sally Arant's garden and nursery was another nice visit and she was growing beautiful *Primula marginata* varieties without any protection along with lots of auriculas in her garden beds. *P. veris* and *vulgaris* varieties and other early species were also thriving in her partially shaded site. She even had a few *P. sieboldii* coming into bloom! Sally and other Anchorage gardeners had to keep reminding us that they do have to water regularly unlike those of us in SE Alaska who are always wishing for sun and working to improve drainage to keep our plants dryer.

On Wednesday morning, we began the conference with a hearty breakfast and loaded buses for hikes into the nearby mountains to see the alpine flora. I chose a trip to Arctic Valley and was fortunate to find that Jacques Mommens was on the same hike. What an interesting

character to finally meet in person after having corresponded via email about APS Seed Exchange matters. We had a bit of friendly competition to spot and name plants though I have to say that he had an unfair advantage in having been in the area already earlier in the week. He was teasing me about having seen this or that choice plant just back there a ways! *Gentiana glauca* was just showing color in bud but not getting enough sun to open but *Loiseleuria procumbens* and *Diapensia lapponica* were colorful mats of flowers. Bright yellow *Geum rossii* caught our eye and the pink and white bells of *Cassiope* were quite attractive. We had several guides along to keep us informed and safe who had been well trained by Verna Pratt. Mary Jo Burns was one of the guides and she mentioned that *Primula cuneifolia* var. *saxifragifolia* was ahead in the saddle at 3700'. The pink flowers of *Oxytropis nigrescens* first fooled me until finally the small Primula was found, just beginning to bloom in very similar conditions as near Juneau but earlier and at higher elevation. Nearly bare silty soil with plenty of rocks is the typical habitat and several hundred plants were in the area. I was also fascinated by the gnarled arctic willow on the exposed slopes with their upright male and female catkins resembling small fuzzy candles. One of our hikers had done research in the Canadian Arctic and had aged some of the plants; finding an incredible 500 or more years of growth rings in their prostrate trunks sprawled on the tundra. It is amazing to compare these 2-4 cm ancient woody

plants to our 200 foot tall Sitka spruce of similar age, the Alaska State tree.

Gradually we worked our way back down the slopes to the buses and we watched a few ground squirrels below us. As we descended, I saw an opportunity not to be missed. On the north side of the ridge was still enough snow that I put on my rain pants and slid down several hundred feet, avoiding much of the wet and muddy trail. Some of the other hikers accused me of cheating; I thought I was merely taking advantage of the conditions!

Each night after dinner, we had presentations on the geology, geography and plant associations of arctic and subarctic areas from Norway and Iceland through Canada and Alaska to Siberia.

For Thursday's hike, we had a gentle, well groomed trail in the Glen Alps that brought us some fine specimens of *Pedicularis lanata* and *P. capitata*, woolly and capitate lousewort. Gorgeous cushions of *Silene acaulis* were photographed and larger yellow mounds of *Potentilla uniflora* opened and closed their flowers as the clouds uncovered the sun. *Saxifraga bronchialis* bloomed in clumps among the rocks and on the gravelly slopes. The yellow oxytrope, *Oxytropis campestris* was common at the lower elevations and I found a few *Primula cuneifolia* again just beginning to show color at the edge of a snow bank. As we came down the trail, we were buzzed by a helicopter overhead and found a group practicing their alpine rescue and EMT techniques on a snow field just off the trail.

On Friday morning, after my Primula talk, we gave away some primrose plants and an APS membership to the crowd and thanked all the people from the Alaska Rock Garden Society who had made this great conference possible. Some last minute swapping and trading and we were off to visit a few more gardens on our way out of Anchorage.

Carmel Tysver and her husband have hauled tons of rock (he's a geologist) and tufa from Canada to build some large and small scree beds and displays. A special plant that she showed us was a white *Primula cuneifolia* in bloom that came from a mining claim north of Anchorage. She also had a large patch of a golden brown auricula (christened 'Carmel' by us on the spot) and was kind enough to share starts of it and a few seeds from last year's capsules that we hope we can share with others. Sally Karabelnikoff's gardens included some nice sunny and shady woodland garden areas and an orchid greenhouse to visit (a new hobby of mine). Rhonda Williams 'Recluse Gardens' in Wasilla had impressive rock gardens built by her husband (one year he gave her 10 tons of rock for her birthday!) and a new alpine house rapidly filling with plants.

From our buggy campsite on Tolsona Creek the next morning, we drove northeast up the Tok cutoff in the sunshine. Mount Drum and Mount Sanford in the Wrangel-St. Elias Range were our southerly companions for several hours as we approached Mentasta Summit at 2434'. In some dry gravelly road banks we found beautiful pale yellow *Papaver alaskanum*

blowing in the breeze. In the meadows near Tok, *Aconitum delphinifolium* and Anemones had begun to bloom since our first passing a week earlier. We revisited *Primula nutans* near Northway and watched a cross fox hunting for insects and mice along the roadside. The sun was still very warm that evening and the fox lay down for a while near us in the shade of a small bush and panted before continuing its hunt.

Two cow moose spotted in a pond near the White River lured us out into the swamp for a few pictures and we found wild chives growing at the edge of the woods with several fine clumps of *Pyrola* also. We could not pass up the patch of *P. nutans* at the Donjek River either before finally camping for the night.

The Duke River seemed another possible place to search for Primulas but we found dryer sandy conditions, perfect for *Arnica alpina*, wild strawberries, and silverberry, *Eleagnus commutata* in bloom; it's tiny green flowers having the fragrance of *Gardenia*. Just before reaching the Sheep Mountain viewing area, we stopped near a dry rocky slope and were fortunate to find a few *Penstemon gormanii* with its blue flowers and a few of last years' seeds for the NARGS Seed Exchange along with some flowers and fresh seed of an *Erigeron*. We stopped again at the site on Kluane Lake where *Primula incana* had just begun blooming! We had walked across the very same area a week earlier but the tiny plants held their secret until they bloomed. Kelso correctly described the

area as moist alkaline clay soil along a tiny creek. The plants were in full sun, 5-10cm tall in flower and 10-15cm tall in fruit; some of last year's capsules remained for us to collect. The leaves were quite mealy but their rosette was only 2-3 cm across. We were really pleased to have added this fourth species of northern primrose to our trip log! The last leg of our drive contrasted the dry Interior of the Yukon and the lush green forest and meadows of the Coastal zone at Haines. We put 2000 miles on the car during our 9 day trip and now want to try another next year to some other northern *Primula* locations.

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## Color Genes in Primroses: Hybridizing Ideas of Carl Heimbürger in Victoria

by Maedythe Martin

I first met Carl Heimbürger when he had been retired for some years. He was a small, slight man, a bit stooped, with a round gnomish face and wisps of white hair. He seemed to have an endless supply of energy and also talked very fast. He had a heavy accent that made it a bit difficult to understand what he was saying. At this point, in 1979, I was living in Toronto, and he whirled into town, phoned me out of the blue, said he had my name from APS, and did I want to go and see the Speyside cowslips, in the countryside of Ontario, outside Georgetown? Taking a deep breath, I agreed.

We did go and see the escaped cowslips – they must have been from a garden at an old homestead site. There were hundreds of plants, in all colors, from yellow through buff to a rusty orange. They had no trouble with the snowy, cold Ontario winters. Later in the summer I went back myself and (fighting mosquitoes all the way) collected seed – tablespoons of it. I didn't have a place to plant them in Toronto and brought the seed back to Victoria when I returned, but they never did much at the west coast.

When I got back to Victoria in 1980, Carl was deep into his hybridizing program. He had gone to some trouble to get seed for a number of *Primula* species, and some of the old forms of 'Wanda' – such as the hose-in-hose. I

didn't understand then, but the old forms that are vegetatively propagated have old genes. These were of interest to him in his hybridizing.

Over the next six to eight years, Carl tried to impart to a few of us interested in primroses the sense of what he was doing. He had been a botanist all his working life, and I am not botanically inclined, by any stretch of the imagination. Some of his ideas are interesting though, even to a neophyte like me. I'll try and describe some of his studies.

Sadly Carl suffered more and more from dementia as time went on, and when his wife died suddenly, he had to go to a care facility. His plants and records were lost in the closing of his home by family in the mid 1980s, and all we have are a few of his plants and some notes from his talks. He died in 1990.

### The Julie Color Intensifier

One of the things that Carl wanted to explain was why Cowichans have such deep colors. This issue is discussed in an article in the APS quarterly *Primroses*, Fall 1980, V. 38 no. 4, p. 13 – 15 written by Carl Heimbürger. The article is densely written, a whole concept in a sentence, sentence after sentence. He explains that the deep Cowichan red "is purple minus the blue gene." (p.13). He cites a German source to support this. He continued to mull over the chemistry of the color genes in primroses, but reached no conclusions about Cowichan red, saying it needs to be investigated further.

But he was convinced that there are



two color genes in *P. juliae*. One is a gene for anthocyanin, which determines color, and the other intensifies the first. Both are dominant, and the result is bright, strong colors. (Carl, in his article p. 14, cites Huskins, 1929, as the source for this information.) Carl had determined that *Juliae* species has the two genes, but 'Wanda' has only one. The Cowichan also has the two color genes, and this probably determines the depth of color. Carl's hybridizing program also determined that crossing *P. veris* (cowslip) with Cowichan results in bright scarlet colored plants, and crossing *P. veris* with 'Wanda' results in a rusty or Bloody Mary type color. One little plant we have had around is a tidy rust polyanthus, probably from this latter cross.

Carl's genetic observations are now 25 years old, and no doubt there have been developments in color theory in primroses, but his ideas are still interesting.

### Creeping Rootstalk versus Tufted Plants

Carl's other main concern was to incorporate the gene for creeping rootstalk in as many *Primula* as possible. If you have a good plant and want to reproduce it vegetatively, how much easier this would be, if the plant has a creeping rootstalk, which can be cut into pieces, and each will grow. Also, Carl felt the plant was a better survivor if it had a creeping rootstalk, for if one growing point rotted off, there would be others that might not. In a tufted plant, if the center growing point rots – that's the end of that plant.

Carl discovered that *P. pallassii* has no dominant gene for a tufted plant, although it is tufted (has one main growing source or crown.) A cross with 'Wanda' produced some tufted and some creeping plants. He insisted that if you kept crossing the offspring that showed a tendency to creep, you would eventually get 100% of plants with the creeping habit. (As an aside, Carl said some cowslips can be reproduced from leaf-cuttings. I haven't tried this – had anyone? Curious idea, and worth a go.)

*Primula elatior* also came under Carl's scrutiny and he had some observations to make. In the Julianas, there are 'Lady Greer' and 'Dorothy', both pale yellow *Julie* crosses. Carl surmised that they were *P. juliae* crossed with cowslips. But the true difference was that 'Lady Greer' was at base a white flower, while 'Dorothy' was a yellow flower. This would make a difference if you were making crosses to get a white *Juliana*. It also must reflect the character inherited from the original cross – *P. juliae* and what else beside cowslips? Carl maintained that *P. elatior* had hidden qualities and was an interesting specimen with which to make further crosses.

### More on Color

Having identified the color intensifier gene, and the dimensions of the red in Cowichans, Carl decided it would not be hard to get black primroses. This is not as far fetched as it sounds, for indeed, the gold-laced polyanthus in the most traditional form has a black petal background – with gold, or yellow lacing.

Here's how it goes. Take a yellow primrose, and cross it with a blue primrose. This could be *acaulis* or polyanthus. (Please don't cross polys and *acaulis* – you get what are called poly-*acaulis*, some short flowers and some stalked like polyanthus. I think this is an abomination and SHOULD NOT be done.) From this cross, you will get wine-colored offspring.

Now you need a second strain to cross with this first stain. So start with a yellow primrose, perhaps a brighter yellow than used in the first cross and a different strain of blue. From this you will get red-orange offspring. If you cross your wine-colored hybrids with the red-orange plants, you should get some black flowers in the second generation. With some experimentation, you should be able to get French grey flowers, as Peter Atkinson referred to them, and mahogany (like the Barnhaven 'Spice' strain) and perhaps some black or dark mahogany with wire-edged lacing, not the full lacing of gold-laced polyanthus. Wouldn't that be striking?

And, the ultimate to be aimed for, in Carl's opinion, was a gold-laced polyanthus with creeping root-stalk. Just think, you could have dozens of perfectly laced plants in no time, if this creeping rootstalk gene could be captured in a GLP. This is truly something for the hybridizer to try for.

It's a shame we don't have more of Carl's work left to us, but his ideas are here, and worth following up. Now if I can just get my hands on two different blue primroses and two different yellow primroses....

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Another source of interest to Carl, a copy of which I still have with my notes from his talks, is: Valentine, D.H. 'Evolution in the Genus *Primula*'. Reprinted from "A Darwin Centenary," edited by P.J. Winstanley, 1961. T. Bunch & Co., Abroath, September 1961.

*Carl was born in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1899. He studied forestry in Denmark, and following graduation worked in Finland and Sweden, and then immigrated to Canada in 1925. Carl graduated from the University of Toronto with another degree in Forestry in 1928 and went on to do his Doctorate at Cornell University, receiving it in 1933. At the height of the depression he moved to a job in B.C. with a lumber company, but in the next year, he joined the Dominion Forestry Service and worked in Ontario where he was at last able to follow his first interest, plant breeding. He spent 22 years researching forest genetics.*

*In 1953 Carl was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, the first and only forester to be so honored. Following his retirement, he moved to Victoria. Here he found the mild climate allowed him up to three generations of poppies (his next interest) a year. Carl died in Victoria in 1990. He is survived by the several hundred thousand plant genes in the trees and flowers that have benefited from his work.*

## Root Aphid

by April Botteger

I am past tired of having things in piles I should read, I mean to read, I will read, but not today. So I had just decided to discontinue my subscription to GPN, when Fred says "Did you see this article on root aphid". Well anyone growing *Primula auricula* soon meets these nasty beasts, so of course I right away had to read it. In the past there had been little written about this pest, because it did not affect major money crops, or so I had been told. The only information I had been able to find was from primula books, APS quarterlies, and other auricula addict sources. Many of the pesticides they referred to were from the UK, and not available here, or they have been banned. Needless to say I was quite surprised, but grateful to find this article.

The article was written by Stanton Gill and printed in the November GPN, a commercial magazine for nurseries. The research was done through the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service. GPN can be found on the NET at [www.onhort.com](http://www.onhort.com). This article contained much more information than I included here; so it would be well worth your time to read the entire article. A few of the other things it touched on were insect growth regulators, predators, and parasites. It also contains additional information on other insecticides. In response to this article Stanton Gill was sent an email suggesting that *Hypoaspis miles*, a soil mite, may also be of assistance in eliminating root aphids.

The research was done between two nurseries that were having problems with root aphids in their gaillardia, aster, and boltonia. They had already tried Talstar (bifenthrin) and Marathon (imidacloprid) with poor results.

Ray Cloyd, an entomology specialist, suggested they try Orthene and Dycarb as soil drenches. They also decided to try BotaniGuard (*Beauveria bassiana*), an entomopathogenic. The tests were done using 1 gallon plants by drenching the soil with the pesticides (on different plants-not together). They also removed some plants from the pots and dipped the rootballs in M-Pede insecticidal soap for-30, 60, 90, & 120 seconds.

The results: Orthene was almost 100% effective. Dycarb was 85%. BotaniGuard was 96% when soaked for at least 90 seconds-good news for the more organically inclined folks. The BotaniGuard also removed the white wax, while with the Orthene and Dycarb treated plants it was still present 2 weeks later.

Typically February and August are the most effective months for treating these pests. The February treatment may need to be delayed a bit if freezing weather persists. It may be advisable to check with your local extension agent about your best timing. In any case regularly check your plants and any time root aphids are seen, immediate action should be taken.

Root aphid, like regular aphid, will produce winged adults late summer into fall, hence the August treatment which can be monitored with yellow sticky cards. The article said the winged adults



*P. nutans*, Northway, AK Ed Buyarski photo



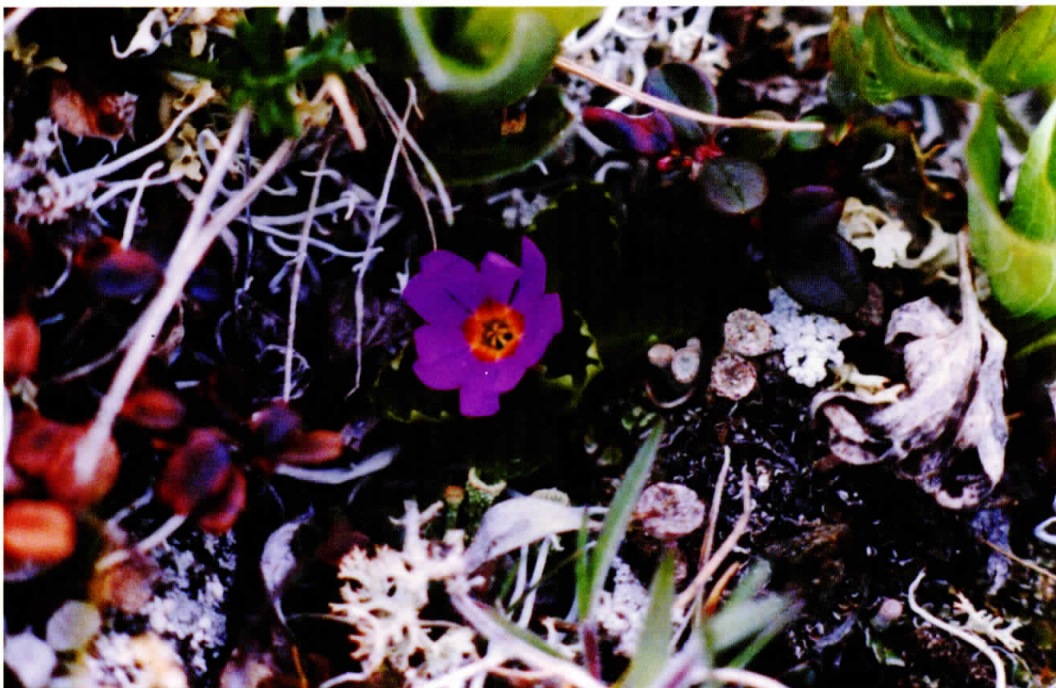
Anchorage Groups first meeting. Pictured are President Ed, Sally Arant, Jeanette Bock, Mary Moline, Kathryn Zins, Mary Jo Burns and Alice Lynch.  
RT photo



Ed's Chariot packed for the 2000 mile road trip to the annual NARGS convention. RT photo



Left *P. incana* Kluane Lake Yukon right *P. egalikensis* Donnelly Creek, AK E.Buyarski photos



*Primula cuneifolia* wild in Anchorage Alaska. Robert Tonkin photo



Sally Arant's *Primula* garden in Anchorage Alaska RT photo



*P. nutans*, Donjek River, Ed B. photo

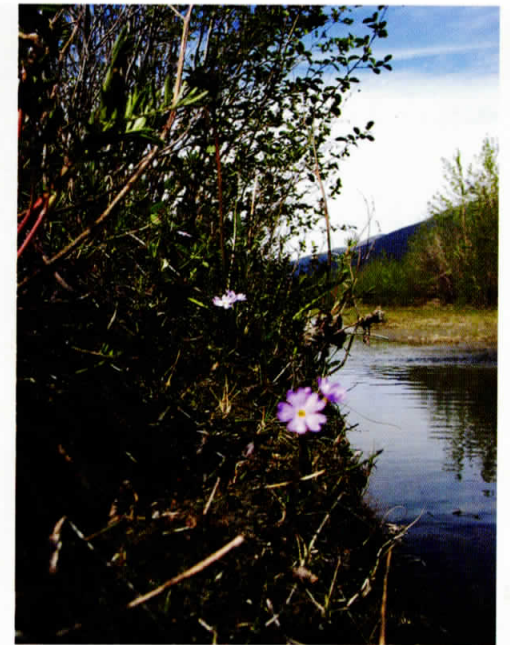
*Dodecatheon pulchellum*, Ed. B. photo



Wild fox along the Alaskan Highway, Yukon Territory. Ed Buyarski photo



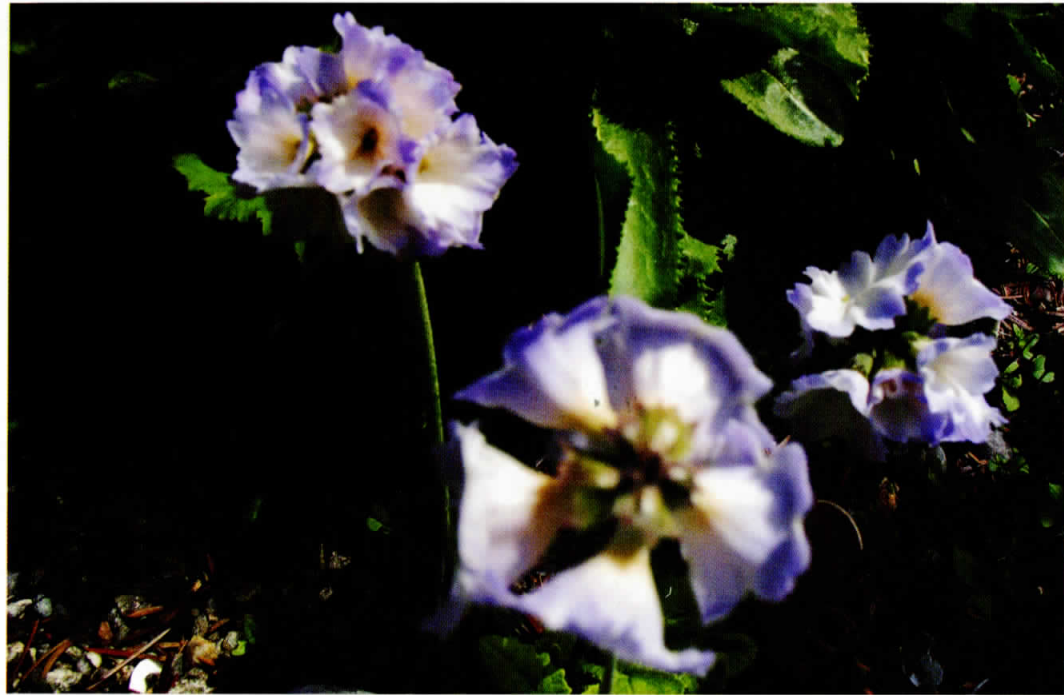
*Marginata* bed, Sally Arant's garden



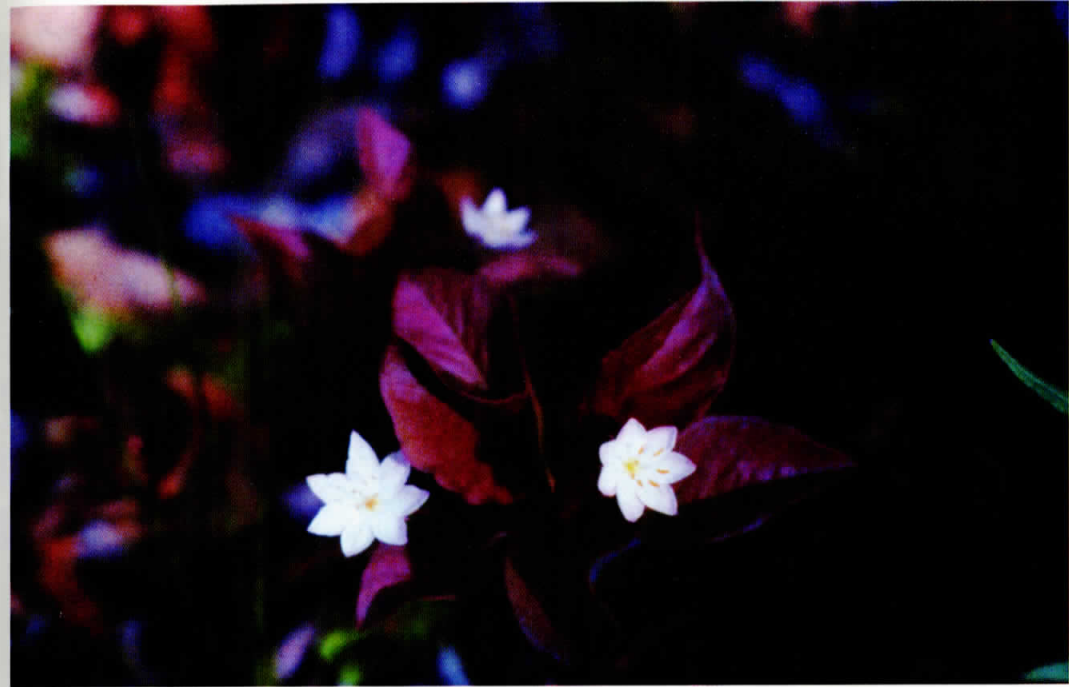
*P. nutans* Donjek River tributary, RT photo



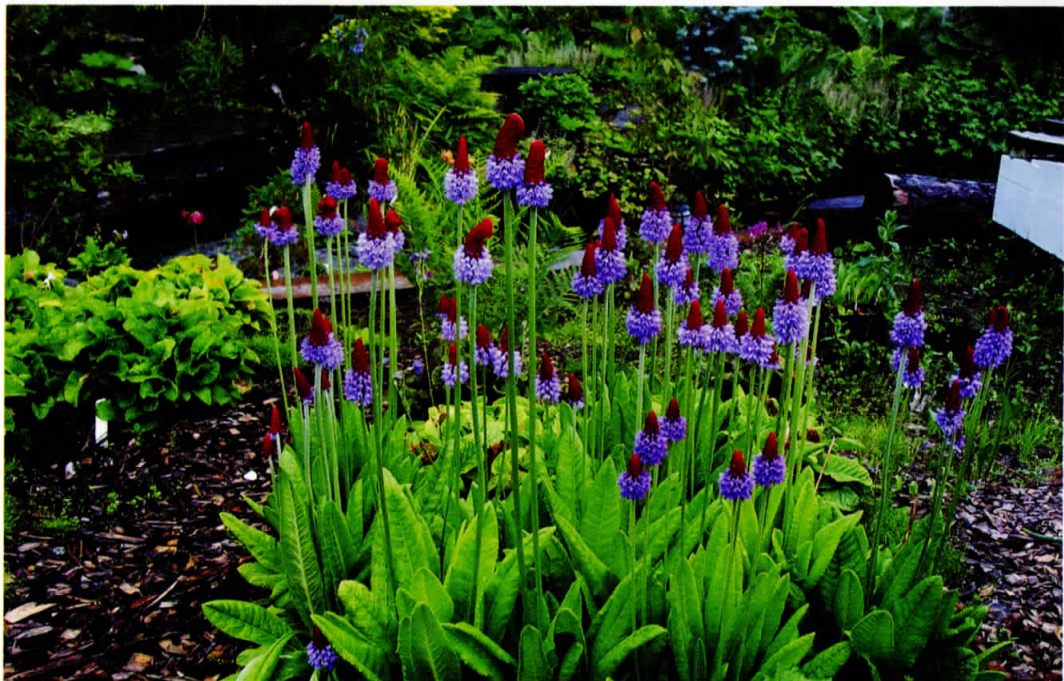
Donnelly Creek, *P. egalikensis* habitat. RT photo



*P. reidii* in Ed Buyarski's garden. RT photo



*Trientalis borealis*, also known as the "Starflower" Ed Buyarski photo



*P. vialii* in Ed Buyarski's garden. RT photo



*P. edelbergii* and *P. malacoides* grown and photo by RT



*'American Beauty' red self auricula's in April Boettger's greenhouse*



*Dorothy Springer, Kerri Tonkin and Cheri Fluck in Cheri's greenhouse*

are the result of high levels of infestation on individual plants. With wings they are then ready to travel to new plants and will soon establish new colonies. Needless to say, seeing winged aphids is a serious sign of large populations and severe problems. Of course growing in heated greenhouses makes all this worse, since it lets them continue breeding without letup through the cooler seasons.

Here are a few things to help prevent the aphid in the 1st place. Keep all weeds cleaned out of and around your greenhouse. Use microscreens on intake vents or open windows. Check all new plants for pests before bringing them in your greenhouse, because this pest is being found in more and more perennials too. Additionally watch for ants, which are often harbingers of aphid problems.

Auricula growers in general are finding that Isopropyl alcohol (often referred to as rubbing alcohol) is another effective way to eradicate root aphid, including the wax they produce. When buying your alcohol find a sprayer bottle of the same height and lid size. Screw the sprayer nozzle onto the alcohol bottle, so that it is kept labeled. In general when the aphid is noticed, water well and let your plant drain a bit. Carefully remove it from the pot and spray any areas that look infested. At transplanting time wash the bugs and old soil off the roots. It would be a good idea to destroy that soil. Trim the roots as desired and give a good spray with the alcohol. Some folks use this at full strength; others mix it half and half with

water. I have used it full strength on seedling auricula, with no harm, but did not monitor it to see how effective it was. Likely a follow up spray should have been used to kill any eggs that may have survived and hatched.

Clare Cockcroft, a former APS editor, said that alcohol will also kill botrytis and passed along these tips. Clean out any rotting foliage and spray the area with the alcohol. Also if you have auricula seed almost ripe and the stem starts to get soft, hit it with a spray of the alcohol-the seed should finish ripening. She also said she had used it on many other kinds of plants without any problems-except ferns. Teetotallers I guess!

I emailed Stanton Gill with a Thank You and this information. Maybe in the future we will see another article on these pests that includes research using alcohol. I hope all this provides some newer solutions for dealing with this hideous pest.

Finally some DON'TS: Don't reuse old soil; don't dump old soil anywhere near your plants; don't mix pesticides without knowing that it's OK for you and your plants to do so; and don't use the same pesticides over and over, the PESTS build up an immunity.

Do remember: use the recommended protective gear when using pesticides. Pesticides kill beneficial creatures too, so be careful when and how it is applied. Always thoroughly water your plants before applying insecticides (unless the directions say otherwise). And probably most important of all to remember; a little common sense goes a long way.

**ALASKA**

Arant, Sally Goodwin 3021 De Armoun Rd. Anchorage AK 99516  
 Bash, Roxanne PO Box 21272 Juneau AK 99802  
 Beadle, Stan 4660 Glacier Hwy Juneau AK 99801  
 Beck, Nancy PO Box 92116 Anchorage AK 99509  
 Blase, Cid 2949 Spruce Cape Rd #10 Kodiak AK 99615  
 Brown, Penny 4013 Halibut Pt Rd Sitka AK 99835  
 Buck, Tracy P. O. Box 20698 Juneau AK 99802  
 Buell, Duane P.O. Box 32319 Juneau AK 99803-2319  
 Burns, Mary Jo 4169 Westwood Dr. Anchorage AK 99517-1035  
 Buyarski, Edward Ed's Edible Landscaping P.O. Box 33077 Juneau AK 99803-3077  
 Callison, Debbie 4319 Taku Blvd Juneau AK 99801  
 Canaday, Debbie 11220 N Douglas Hwy Juneau AK 99801  
 Clasby, Pat 1200 Fritz Cove Rd Juneau AK 99801  
 Constantino, Laurie H. POB 112767 Anchorage AK 99511  
 Crawford, Cheryl A. PO Box 33585 Juneau AK 99803  
 Daniels, Robert L. POB 20511 Juneau AK 99802  
 Dick, Paul E. 2906 Blueberry Hills Rd Juneau AK 99801  
 Finney, Pamela PO Box 23096 Juneau AK 99802  
 Fluck, Cheryl 17275 Lena Loop Rd. Juneau AK 99801-8310  
 Geiger, Theresa 6300 Trappers Trail Road Anchorage AK 99516  
 Griffin, Michael N. P. O. Box 20530 Juneau AK 99802  
 Hagevig, Rosemary P.O. Box 240423 Douglas AK 99824-0423  
 Haines, Susan 2039 Brandilyn St. Anchorage AK 99516  
 Haldorson, Julia L. P.O. Box 210913 Auke Bay AK 99821  
 Hall, Debra 1110 Stellar Way Kodiak AK 99615  
 Hauck, Judith K. 10624 Starlite Court Juneau AK 99801  
 Hudson, Nancy 10437 Fox Farm Juneau AK 99801  
 Jefferson, Mary 9351 Miner Dr. Juneau AK 99801-8015  
 Jensen, Caroline 23035 Glacier Highway Juneau AK 99801  
 Karlsson, Meriam 303 O'Neill Bldg., U. of Alaska P.O. Box 757200 Fairbanks AK 99775-7200  
 Kasson, Joan M. 625 W 10th St. Juneau AK 99801-1819  
 Kempton, Charlie 1020 H Street Anchorage AK 99501  
 Kvasnikoff, Linda 9183 Parkwood Dr Juneau AK 99801  
 Landis, Bonnie 4935 Dearmain Anchorage AK 99516  
 Mahle, Sarena 9124 Fireweed Lane Juneau AK 99801  
 Mallinger, Sharon P.O. Box 211308 Auke Bay AK 99821  
 Marshall, Kathleen 4100 Blackerby St Juneau AK 99801  
 McConnochie, Peggy Ann 3172 Pioneer Juneau AK 99801-1962  
 McCormick, Donna PO Box 240312 Douglas AK 99824  
 McDole, Ammon C. 1003 - 1st St. Douglas AK 99824-5405  
 McQueen, Bruce & Nancy 527 - 5th St. Douglas AK 99824  
 Meek, Carla Box 33881 Juneau AK 99803  
 Mehrkens, Helen 2992 Linda Ave Juneau AK 99801  
 Meyers, Vivian M. 9156 Wolfram Way Juneau AK 99801  
 Middleton, Jane Box 15293 Fritz Creek AK 99603  
 Millard, Mark 3110 Douglas Highway Juneau AK 99801  
 Mobley, Dorte 575 Jerome Dr Wasilla AK 99654  
 Moline, Mary S. 9601 Copper Dr. Anchorage AK 99507-1205  
 Monson, Mildred W. P.O. Box 211542 Auke Bay AK 99821  
 Munk, Kristen M. PO Box 34356 Juneau AK 99803  
 Myser, Elizabeth A. 1339 Pond Reef Rd Ketchikan AK 99901  
 Nielsen, Sue 2150 Glacier Hwy. Juneau AK 99801  
 Nord, Elfrida 1135 Slim Williams Juneau AK 99801  
 O'Brien, Sr., John A. 9450 Herbert Place Juneau AK 99801-9356  
 Peters, Darlene E. 2845 Knik Ave. Anchorage AK 99517  
 Powelson, Lee Box 20808 Juneau AK 99802  
 Preston, Jane POB 210336 Auke Bay AK 99821  
 Ramanoff, Andy 1014 Bonnie Doon Juneau AK 99801  
 Rasmussen, Mrs. Loren 4020 Spruce Lane Juneau AK 99801  
 Reep, Janine 753 St. Ann's Ave. Douglas AK 99824  
 Reeves, Philip 1670 Mendenhall Peninsula Juneau AK 99801  
 Reid, Jani 4293 Marion Drive Juneau AK 99801  
 Roberts, Ann 2821 Totem Drive Fairbanks AK 99709

Rushmore, Carol PO Box 2132 Wrangell AK 99929  
 Sallup, Ronda PO Box 903 Ketchikan AK 99901  
 Sandor, Lenore 3311 Foster Ave. Juneau AK 99801-1926  
 Schroer, Beth 57670 Clover Ave Homer AK 99603-9560  
 Sharrock, Marcie 11760 Alderwood Loop Anchorage AK 99516  
 Shultz, Rita Jo PO Box 15226 Fritz Creek AK 99603  
 Simpson, Marion 1310 Fritz Cove Rd. Juneau AK 99801-6808  
 Skidmore, Lee M. 108 Plaza Port West Ketchikan AK 99901  
 Skonberg, Marie P.O. Box 70 Ouzinkie AK 99644  
 Smiley, Tina M. PO Box 210347 Auke Bay AK 99821  
 Smith, Deborah 1782 Evergreen Ave Juneau AK 99801  
 Smith, Gail P. O. Box 22845 Juneau AK 99802  
 Soriana, Nerita PO Box 34351 Juneau AK 99803  
 Stover, Lois Box 727 Kodiak AK 99615  
 Sturrock, Kathleen O'Brien Box 32453 Juneau AK 99803  
 Swick, Kathleen 2106 N Star St. Anchorage AK 99503  
 Taylor, Carol 8922 Tanis Dr Juneau AK 99801  
 Taylor, Carole PO Box 5235 Ketchikan AK 99901  
 Tonkin, Kerri 3155 Pioneer Ave Juneau AK 99801  
 Tonkin, Robert 3155 Pioneer Ave. Juneau AK 99801  
 Trucano, Alma PO Box 020870 Juneau AK 99802  
 Tynan, Pat 8351 River Place Juneau AK 99801  
 Tysver, Carmel 2030 Patriot Circle Anchorage AK 99515  
 Vaughn, Brenda P. O. Box 33075 Juneau AK 99803  
 Walden, James M. 2688 Engineers Cutoff Rd Juneau AK 99801  
 Weiss, Dixie 3220 Foster Juneau AK 99801  
 White, Elana S. PO Box 476 Kodiak AK 99615-0476  
 White, Linda PO Box 22452 Juneau AK 99802  
 Wilson, Patricia C. 9621 Kelley Ct. Juneau AK 99801  
 Zastrow, Sheila 3530 Denali Ketchikan AK 99901

**CALIFORNIA**

Adams, Wanda 919 Palm Ave. South Pasadena CA 91030-3028  
 Bailey, Larry 1168 Silver Lake Dr. Sacramento CA 95831-1734  
 Bird, Mary E. P.O. Box 115 Quincy CA 95971  
 English, Marguerite 12350 Yucca Rd Descanso CA 91916  
 Kawaguchi, Jon 3524 Bowman Ct Alameda CA 94502  
 Ladendorf, Sandra 74 Paseo Hermoso Salinas CA 93908-9167  
 Laughner, Linda 120 S Dunning Ventura CA 93003  
 Pierce, Rosemary P.O. Box 789 Hayfork CA 96041  
 Rozman, H. E. 20341 Chateau Drive Saratoga CA 95070  
 Sessa, Beverley 421 Yerba Buena St Morro Bay CA 93442  
 Sykora, Sylvia L. 6250 Melville Drive Oakland CA 94611  
 Trout, Steve 89 Yosemite Ave Oakland CA 94611  
 Serials Recors Section, University Library University of California - Davis Davis CA 95616-5292  
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**COLORADO**

Helen Fowler Library, Denver Botanic Gardens 909 York St. Denver CO 80206-3799  
 North American Rock Garden Society, Gwen Kelaidis, Editor 7530 E. Mississippi Dr. Denver CO 80231-2504

**CONNECTICUT**

Fisher, Alexander E. Box 277 Bridgewater CT 06752-0277  
 Fox, Melanie M. 14 Westbrook Place Fairfield CT 06432  
 Hall, Gabrielle H. 159 Stanwich Rd Greenwich CT 06830  
 Held, Paul 195 North Ave. Westport CT 06880  
 Hill, May Brawley 184 Brick School Rd. Warren CT 06754  
 Irwin, Mary 6 Spruce Mountain Ter. Danbury CT 06810  
 Malloy, Cynthia 9 Abbott St Danbury CT 06810  
 Schneider, Elizabeth C. 155 Clapboard Ridge Rd Greenwich CT 06831  
 Vukich, Anton M. 444 Round Hill Rd. Greenwich CT 06831-2639

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Greider, Linda F. 5931 Utah Ave. NW Washington DC 20015-1616

Library of Congress, Register of Copyrights Washington DC 20559

**DELEWARE**

du Pont, Mrs. Pierre S. P. O. Box 120 Rockland DE 19732  
Lake, Robert W. 24 Argyle Rd. Newark DE 19713-4049  
Schlieder Jr., Quentin C. 36 S Main St Smyrna DE 19977-1431

**GEORGIA**

Bryan, Dr. John H. D. 295 Cedar Creek Dr. Athens GA 30605-3309

**HAWAII**

Brunson, Inez 86-560 Wikolia Place Waianae HI 96792

**IOWA**

Quinn, Janice 2767 Half Moon Ave NW Tiffin IA 52340

**IDAHO**

Lloyd, Jacquelyn 18222 Daffodil Lane Lewiston ID 83501  
Paradise Gardens, Judith Miller Rare Plant Nursery RR1 Box 488 - B Bonners Ferry ID 83805

**ILLINOIS**

Anderson, Craig J. 2344 Lincoln Park West Chicago IL 60614  
Bates, Violet L. 4735 Black Oak Trl Rockford IL 61101  
Bisso, Richard 2503 Curtis Road Champaign IL 61822-9630  
Cooper, Frank E. 604 E. Florida Ave. Urbana IL 61801-5949  
Fassl, Frank R. 28 W 166 Lakeview Dr. Naperville IL 60564  
Grissom, Miss Lauren 1656 Birmingham Lane Crystal Lake IL 60014  
Kruk, Raymond J. 5446 West 63rd Place Chicago IL 60638-5613  
Wetzel, Barbara 20 Braeburn Lane Barrington Hills IL 60010

**INDIANA**

Benedict, Mr. Keith J. 845 Keck Ave. Evansville IN 47711  
Bush, Gene E. 323 Woodside Dr. NW Depauw IN 47115-9039  
Snyderman, Joy M. 7134 Canalers Ct. Fort Wayne IN 46804-4783

**MASSACHUSETTS**

Banfield-Weir, Cynthia 760 Pratt Corner Road Amherst MA 01002  
Barker, Rodney M. 49 Woodcliff Rd. Newton Highlands MA 02461  
Burton, Kristine 27 Locust Ave Lexington MA 02421  
Chin-Shong, Naomi 101 Green River Rd Great Barrington MA 01230-8922  
Dyen, Mark R. 132 Church St. Newton MA 02158  
Fay, Jerry J. 23 Cairo Circle Scituate MA 02066-2662  
Hawley, Peter 12 Kildee Rd. Harwich Port MA 02646  
Hehn, Mrs. Constance B. 25 Ash St. Hopkinton MA 01748  
Hoffman, C. Paul 120 Sawyer Hill Road Berlin MA 01503  
Jones, Barbara B. 46 Bartlett St. Chelmsford MA 01824-3902  
Lopez, Vernon & Mary 108 Meeting House Rd. Mashpee MA 02649-2614  
McDonough, Tess 16 Alma Road Millis MA 02054  
Rindler, Doris 22 Toppans Lane Newburyport MA 01950  
Robbins, Evelyn 129 Acre Hill Rd Barnstable MA 02630  
Sacks, Ms. Janet L. Joe Pye Weed's Garden 337 Acton St. Carlisle MA 01741  
Vietze, Edna 555 Winter St. Walpole MA 02081

**MARYLAND**

Ames, Jr., Andrew 12000 Bethesda Church Rd Damascus MD 20872  
Powell, Barbara A. 5101 Wetheredsville Rd Baltimore MD 21207  
Ray, John F. 4971 Cliff City Rd Chestertown MD 21620  
Vanden Heuvel, Richard 123 Spruce Lane Annapolis MD 21403  
Kolosky, Linda 1200 New Church Lane Annapolis MD 21403

**MAINE**

Alberts, Wally 31 Sunset Lane Alfred ME 04002  
Anthony, Janice 291 Hatch Rd. Jackson ME 04921  
Brown, Michelle 135 Sodom Rd. Norway ME 04268

Felton, Elise 73 Seawall Rd., P.O. Box 729 Southwest Harbor ME 04679-0729  
Fernald, Elaine A. PO Box 623 Mt. Desert ME 04660  
Luce, Roger F. 2479 Kennebec Rd. Newburgh ME 04444-9715  
Marsh-Sachs, Rachel R. Zone 4 Perennials 3050 Middle Road Sidney ME 04330  
May, Richard 84 Beechwood Old Town ME 04468-9749  
Mitchell, Betsy 365 Mayall Rd Gray ME 04039  
Stich, Alda R.R. 1, Box 2079 Montville Freedom ME 04941

**MICHIGAN**

Benedict, Dr. Ralph H. No. 14 Alpine Ct. Wilson Lake Hillsdale MI 49242-7660  
Bloemers, Margaret P. 1940 Argentina Dr., S.E. Grand Rapids MI 49506  
Blyth, Bruce W. 20201 Angling Rd. Livonia MI 48152-2328  
Bradfield, Leila A. 8110 West Michigan Ave. Kalamazoo MI 49009  
Dee, James E. 441 N. Evangeline Dearborn Heights MI 48127  
Dodt, Beatrice 8945 McMartin Rd Kaleva MI 49645  
Hannula, Joanne 323 N Florida St Laurium MI 49913  
Kordes, Richard & Mary HC 2 Box 852 Allouez MI 49805-9610  
Matthews, Rowena & Larry 1609 S. University St. Ann Arbor MI 48104-2620  
Nelson, Mr. Marlyn 7449 S. Linden Rd. Swartz Creek MI 48473  
Pederson, Diana 3809 Calvin Dr Lansing MI 48911  
Rizzo, Victor 30101 - 30th St Paw Paw MI 49079  
Smith, John W. & Anita 2179 Newport St. S.W. Grand Rapids MI 49509  
Wickstrom, George M. 2293 Harding Ave. Muskegon MI 49441-1321  
Wilkins, Jr., Dr. James W. 7469 Hunters Ridge Jackson MI 49201-8562  
Wood, Nancy 916 Northwood St. Ann Arbor MI 48103-4665

**MINNESOTA**

Blake, Bruce 4314 Wentworth Ave Minneapolis MN 55409-1926  
Erickson, Nancy 1678 Glenview Ct. St. Paul MN 55112-2807  
Kelley, Steven 2325 Watertown Rd Long Lake MN 55356  
Larson, Deanna 8605 - 360th St. North Branch MN 55056  
Mannila, Bernhart 810 E. 38th St. Hibbing MN 55746  
Mierow, Brian 12387 - 150th St. N. Stillwater MN 55082-9423  
Schellinger, Karen 31335 Kalla Lake Rd. Avon MN 56310  
Stanley, Mary R. 9 Fenlea Circle Dellwood MN 55110  
Andersen Horticultural Library, University of Minnesota 1984 Buford Ave. St. Paul MN 55108

**NORTH CAROLINA**

Burt, Leah 157 East King St. Hillsborough NC 27278  
Coates, Lydia 909 S. Lindell Rd. Greensboro NC 27403  
Goodwin, Mrs. Nancy V. P.O. Box 957 Hillsborough NC 27278-0957  
Gray, Mary 3210 Debbie Dr. Hendersonville NC 28791-1036  
Hartman, Willard D. 397 Fearrington Post Pittsboro NC 27312  
Sims, William R. & Doris B. 24 Timberlane Circle Pisgah Forest NC 28768

**NORTH DAKOTA**

Ness, Tim & Kathy 906 Belmont Rd. Grand Forks ND 58201

**NEBRASKA**

Nott, Alice A. 2293 Rosedale Rd Fremont NE 68025

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**

Chalmers, Eunice High Mowing School, Box 850 Wilton NH 03086  
Fenderson, G. K. Grout Hill, P. O. Box 188 Acworth NH 03601-0188  
Kaplan, Kim 15 Stearns RD Keene NH 03431  
Lord, Ann W. 220 Sand Hill Rd. Peterborough NH 03458  
Petuck, Kathfryn 25 Perley Ave. Lebanon NH 03766  
Schiessl, Ludwig W. PO Box 147 Kearsage NH 03847

**NEW JERSEY**

Byk, John 136 Robertville Rd. Freehold NJ 07728-7700  
Knapp, Evelyn B. 30 Harbor Dr. Lake Hopatcong NJ 07849  
Miller, Ms. Ann L. 14 Compass Ave Brick NJ 08723  
Moran, Dennis P.O. Box 2 McAfee NJ 07428-0002



Moscetti, Paula 19 Lake Drive W Wayne NJ 07470  
 Staehle, Dr. & Mrs. George 83 Old Hollow Road Short Hills NJ 07078-2146  
 Sternlieb, George 66 Old Short Hills Rd. Short Hills NJ 07078

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 Landers, William K. 9005 Dinglehole Road Baldwinsville NY 13027  
 Larter, Elizabeth 70 Hearthstone Lane Rochester NY 14617  
 Malloy, Elaine & Alex P.O. Box 38 South Salem NY 10590-0038  
 Markert, Irma & Norbert 102 Proctor Ave. Ogdensburg NY 13669  
 Meinhold, Anne 41 Old South Country Rd. Brookhaven NY 11719  
 Mommens, Jacques P.O. Box 67 Millwood NY 10546-0067  
 Robinson, Mary M. 41 Faraday St Rochester NY 14610  
 Schrack, Ralph 211 Washburn Drive East Syracuse NY 13057-1633  
 Sellers, Judith C. 300 Frank Youngs Rd. Unadilla NY 13849  
 Sette, Vincentine 819 Camby Rd. Millbrook NY 12545  
 Turner, James 63 A High Street Fairport NY 14450  
 Ujueta, Albert P.O. Box 127 Armonk NY 10504  
 Webster, Julia Christy 62 Burdick Hill Rd Ithaca NY 14850  
 Whalen, Karen P.O. Box 98 Central Square NY 13036  
 New York Botanical Garden, L. T. Mertz Lib., Serials Exchange 2900 Southern Blvd. Bronx NY 10458

**OHIO**

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 Davis, Mr. Edward J. 226 S. High St. Hillsboro OH 45133-1445  
 Emig, Ms. Lura 1878 Demorest Rd. Columbus OH 43228-3426  
 Hackman, Bettie 5543 Kay Dr. Milford OH 45150  
 Karcher, Frederick 1840 Bauman Hill Rd. S.E. Lancaster OH 43130-9459  
 Kasserman, Pauline PO Box 141 Winesburg OH 44690  
 Lechner, Jeff 9669 Kim Dr. Chesterland OH 44026  
 Malone, Mrs. Therese C. 6009 Westbrook Dr. Brook Park OH 44142-3076  
 Patz, Frank & Charlene 114 Carolin Ct. Perrysburg OH 43551-1607  
 Sigmund, Sandie 13138 Pond Rd. Burton OH 44021  
 Smith, Carole P. 1842 Hines Hill Rd. Hudson OH 44236  
 Tew, Roy C. 6392 Surrey Dr. North Olmsted OH 44070-4860  
 Ward, William G. 16495 Old State Rd. Middlefield OH 44062-9118  
 Weller, Judith L. 1200 Forest Walk Dr. Centerville OH 45459  
 Yates, Thomas A. 9224 Sperry Rd. Mentor OH 44060

**OREGON**

Alexander, Anita 35180 S.E. Highway 211 Boring OR 97009  
 Bridges, Angela Parkdale Gardens 5056 Woodworth Dr. Parkdale OR 97041  
 Chelstad, Vivian 192 - 21st Ave. Sweet Home OR 97386-2701  
 Dunn, Patricia 22855 SW Eno Place Tualatin OR 97062  
 Dunstan, Dot 5105 N.W. 137th Portland OR 97229  
 Graham, Russell 4030 Eagle Crest Rd. NW Salem OR 97304  
 Held, Frederick W. 40611 HWY 226 Scio OR 97374  
 Hogue & Family, Anne E. P.O. Box 1552 Sandy OR 97055-1552  
 Iler, Kathy 95131 Mattson Lane Coos Bay OR 97420  
 Kellar, Marvin and Evelyn 75630 Meserve Rd Rainier OR 97048  
 Kendall, Peter 4234 SW Shattuck Rd Portland OR 97221  
 Keuscher, Barbara J. 13925 NW McLain Way Portland OR 97229-5705

Liston, Sara & Aaron 615 NW Witham Dr. Corvallis OR 97330  
 Lumsden, Maryan 1152 Orchard Ct N Apt A Box 13 Kaiser OR 97303  
 Lunn, Ann 6620 N.W. 271st Ave. Hillsboro OR 97124  
 Lunn, Jay G. 6620 N.W. 271st Ave. Hillsboro OR 97124  
 Mlodoich, Dawn 356 NE 108th Place Portland OR 97220  
 O'Byrne, Ernie & Marietta 86813 Central Rd. Eugene OR 97402  
 Oppen, Mrs. Arthur 604 Clarmar Drive N.E. Salem OR 97301  
 Potter, Jane Elizabeth 2211 SW 1st Ave #G30 Portland OR 97201-5012  
 Robinson, Addaline W. 41809 S.W. Burgarsky Rd. Gaston OR 97119-9047  
 Sauer, Vickey D. 516 Wall St Silverton OR 97381  
 Sullivan, Dale C. 7511 SE Harold St Portland OR 97206  
 Whitman, P. Perryman & Robert 3025 Neslo Lane Eugene OR 97405-1932  
 Multnomah County Library, Periodical Department 801 S.W. 10th Ave. Portland OR 97205-2520  
 Berry Botanic Garden, 11505 S.W. Summerville Ave. Portland OR 97219-8309  
 Siskiyou Rare Plant Nursery, 2825 Cummings Rd. Medford OR 97501  
 Schademan, Morris 18561 S Terry Michael Dr Oregon City OR 97045

**PENNSYLVANIA**

Bartlett, John 381 Long Rd. Gettysburg PA 17325-8608  
 Cressman, Wilbert Rockhill Menno. Community, % Assisted Living, #116 3250 State Road Sellersville PA 18960  
 Dribin, Beth 226 Indian Creek Rd Wynnewood PA 19096  
 Guthrie, M.D., W. James 283 Blacksmith Rd. Douglassville PA 19518  
 Hudnall, Ann 325 W Ashbridge St West Chester PA 19380  
 Katz, M.D., Richard G. 3500 Fifth Ave. Pittsburgh PA 15213  
 Lynch, Sylvia 184 Spring Grove Road Pittsburgh PA 15235  
 Mirick, Sally Box 145 Ottsville PA 18942  
 Oleri, Mary E. 231 Fairville Rd. Chadds Ford PA 19317  
 Oliver, Charles G. The Primrose Path R.D. 2, Box 110 Scottsdale PA 15683  
 Plyler, Dot 18 Bridle Path Chadd's Ford PA 19317  
 Rettger, Timothy 426 Shenley Drive Erie PA 16505-2232  
 Russell, Clifton 725 New Rd. Southampton PA 18966-1043  
 Thoman, Ronald J. 1010 Wiggins Way West Chester PA 19380  
 Zell, Tatiana E. & Howard 504 Montgomery Rd. Ambler PA 19002  
 Longwood Gardens Library, P.O. Box 501 Kennett Square PA 19348-0501

**RHODE ISLAND**

Swift, Dorothy G. 48 Lands End Dr. Wickford RI 02852

**SOUTH CAROLINA**

Wuosmaa, David P. O. Box 2890 Summerville SC 29484-2890

**TENNESSEE**

Fjelstad, Jo P.O. Box 213 Morristown TN 37815  
 Garrett, Denis P. O. Box 188 Pegram TN 37143-0188  
 Henson, Janet E. 3734 Pollard Cemetery Rd. Kodak TN 37764

**UTAH**

Curtis, Ken 8155 Emigration Canyon Salt Lake City UT 84108

**VIRGINIA**

Addamiano, Betty 4222 Robertson Blvd. Alexandria VA 22309  
 Henderson, Dale 1116 Bruton Lane Virginia Beach VA 23451  
 Rexrode, Karen Ann Windy Hill Plant Farm 40413 John Mosby Hwy. Aldie VA 20105  
 Rowand, Sylvie I. 517 Greenwich St. Falls Church VA 22046  
 Lewis Ginter Bot Gdn, 1800 Lakeside Ave. Richmond VA 23228-4700

**VERMONT**

Cook, Dr. Philip W. Poker Hill Gardens P.O. Box 338 Underhill VT 05489  
 Danielson, Amy POB 35 Peacham VT 05862  
 Kuchel, Marianne I. 1815 Blood Brook Rd. Fairlee VT 05045  
 Perkins, Arlene 580 Perkins Rd. Montpelier VT 05602  
 Talbot, David 476 Quechee Rd Hartland VT 05048

**WASHINGTON**

Akridge, PhD, Robert E. 9252 - 7th Ave NW Seattle WA 98117  
 Andreasen, Florence 13303 - 30th Ave E Tacoma WA 98446-1803  
 Bailey, Linda 1720 Highway 20 East Colville WA 99114-9006  
 Baxter, Mary 22422 - 9th Ave. S.E. Bothell WA 98021-8255  
 Becker, Gregory E. P.O. Box 422 Entiat WA 98822-0422  
 Benjamin, Thresa 6232 E. Lux Sit Lane Guemes Island WA 98221-8928  
 Boettger, April 244 Westside Highway Vader WA 98593  
 Brock, Rosemary L. P. O. Box 788 Duvall WA 98019-0788  
 Brotherton, J. C. 20620 NE Freedom Rd Battle Ground WA 98604  
 Caplar, Jim 145 Agape Court Roseburg WA 97470-2292  
 Carlson, Colleen O'Brien 503 S Grand St Moses Lake WA 98837  
 Carroll, Skylar 2313 E Olive St Seattle WA 98122  
 Clarke, Sheri 11000 NE Tulin Rd Kingston WA 98346  
 Cockcroft, Claire 1403 - 143rd Ave. NE Bellevue WA 98007-3914  
 Combelic, Esther 18019 - 25th NE Seattle WA 98155  
 Dolphin, Ida D. 5704 N. Greenwood Blvd. Spokane WA 99205-7537  
 Dupey, Jeannette 1608 Samish Way Bellingham WA 98226  
 Dwyer, Dorothy 3702 Hunt St NW #23 Gig Harbor WA 98335-8257  
 Eichman, Dr. Roger 223 Griffiths Point Rd Nordland WA 98358  
 Eldredge, Terry 5095 Lone Bear Ln SW Port Orchard WA 98367-7498  
 Ford, Kathy 4111 Hope St. Bremerton WA 98312  
 Frey, Mary L. 23329 - 172nd Ave SE Kent WA 98042  
 Garton, Linda 10540 Ashworth Ave. N. Seattle WA 98133  
 Hansler, Phyllis 4911 Silver Lake Rd. E. Eatonville WA 98328  
 Happel, Ruth 3235 Sierra Ct SW Issaquah WA 98027  
 Happy III, Cyrus 11617 Gravelly Lake Dr. S.W. Tacoma WA 98499  
 Hirdler, Kathy R. 24797 Brotherhood Rd. Mount Vernon WA 98274  
 Jackson, Louise 364 Clover Lane Sequim WA 98382  
 Jansons, Ilga 16021 - 76th Pl. N.E. Kenmore WA 98028-4239  
 Jenkins, Ms. Nancy 10903 NE 135th Pl Kirkland WA 98034  
 Jernberg, Elaine PO Box 327 Brinnon WA 98320  
 Jones, Rosetta 170 East Dunoon Place Shelton WA 98584  
 Keefe, Mary 22604 N.E. 20th Pl. Sammamish WA 98074  
 Kelley, Patricia 17912 NE 232nd Ave. Brush Prairie WA 98606  
 Koken, Mrs. Virginia M. 477 Sandy Bend Rd. Castle Rock WA 98611  
 Konz, Mr. Wilbert A. 4237 - 11th Ave NE Unit A3 Seattle WA 98105  
 Lantz, D. R. 2116 N. Castle Way Lynnwood WA 98036  
 Lockhart, Anita R. 1535 Garfield Port Townsend WA 98368  
 Lundquist, Margaret 2011 Castle Dr. Bothell WA 98021-9259  
 Lupp, Richard C. 28111 - 112th Ave. E. Graham WA 98338  
 Lynd, Carole 27810 - 168th Ave. Ct. E. Orting WA 98360  
 MacGowan, Ian 4712 Smugglers Cove Rd. Freeland WA 98249  
 McCleery, Verna 4038 East G Street Tacoma WA 98404-1462  
 McDonald, Donald B. 1213 S.E. Lider Rd. Port Orchard WA 98367  
 McKee-Donahe, Heathir 732 S. Tyler Tacoma WA 98405  
 Mehlin, Tracy L. 2806 NW 61st St Seattle WA 98107  
 Meredith, Sharon 1223 Lancaster Way SE Sammamish WA 98029  
 Minch, Fred and Jean 4329 Chrisella Rd E Puyallup WA 98372  
 Norris, Mary C. 2117 Jackson Ave NW Apt C Olympia WA 98502  
 Oakley, Harold & Thea 3304 - 288th Ave. N.E. Redmond WA 98053-3111  
 Parks, Joen W. 48521 - 282nd Ave SE Enumclaw WA 98022  
 Patriarche, Jennifer 12930 - 182nd Ave. N.E. Redmond WA 98052-1318  
 Petrovich, Phyllis Box 424 Forks WA 98331  
 Politika, Diana L. The Greenhouse Nursery 81 S. Bagley Crk Rd. & Hwy. 101 Port Angeles WA 98362  
 Potter, Sharon 13337 - 202nd Ave SE Issaquah WA 98027  
 Preston, Roy W. 2828 - 27th Ave. Wst Seattle WA 98199  
 Rayner, Gizelle C. 227 Satsop Ave. Shelton WA 98584  
 Reed, Jill 3444 Hunts Point Rd. Bellevue WA 98004-1116  
 Reek, Alice O. 809 - 6th St. Kirkland WA 98033  
 Sexton, Viola L. 10904 Peter Anderson Rd. Burlington WA 98233  
 Simott, Nina 5025 - 220th N.W. Stanwood WA 98292  
 Skidmore, June 6730 W. Mercer Way Mercer Island WA 98040-4860  
 Smith, E. White 4317 North 18th St. Tacoma WA 98406-4307

Springer, Mrs. Frank L. 7213 South 15th Tacoma WA 98465  
 Stevens, Anita E. 1015 Georgiana Port Angeles WA 98362  
 Strickland, Candy 6911 - 104th St. E. Puyallup WA 98373  
 Stuart, Elizabeth Ann PO Box 638 Fall City WA 98024  
 Tait, Mrs. L. G. 9617 - 212th St. SE Snohomish WA 98296  
 Terry, Lois E. 802 N. 40th Ave., #30 Yakima WA 98908  
 Tucker, Herb & Mary 1812 50th Ave. N.W. Gig Harbor WA 98335-7550  
 Wyatt, Norman 35507 S. Oak St. Kennewick WA 99337-6410  
 Zeigler, Jack 2719 N.E. 92nd Seattle WA 98115  
 Eastside Primula Society, Thea Oakley 3304 - 288th Ave. N.E. Redmond WA 98053-3111  
 The Rhododendron Species Foundation &, Botanical Garden P.O. Box 3798 Federal Way WA 98063-3798  
 Elisabeth C. Miller Library, Box 354115 Seattle WA 98195-4115  
 Tacoma Primrose Society, % Candy Strickland 6911 - 104th St. E. Puyallup WA 98373  
 Lockwood, Julie Shady Lane Nursery P. O. Box 580 Kalama WA 98625

**WISCONSIN**

Bawden, Jean D. 4385 Oak Hill Road Oregon WI 53575  
 Burns, Bruce 583 Oak Dr Hudson WI 54016  
 Cadoret, Ruth 4308 Hillcrest Circle Madison WI 53705-5017  
 Ferreri, Jack 3118 Timber Lane Verona WI 53593-9056  
 Glover, Edward 503 Johns St. Mount Horeb WI 53572-1827  
 Graewin, Joyce 211 W. Center St. Norwalk WI 54648-9601  
 Lawrence, Alan J. PO Box 37 Lake Delton WI 53940  
 Pearcy, Hiram R. 407 Lincoln St. Verona WI 53593  
 Rodini, Eleanor M. 1632 Adams St. Madison WI 53711-2140  
 Thomson, Olive S. 9349 Malone Rd. Mt. Horeb WI 53572-2726

**WEST VIRGINIA**

Glick, Barry #5 Primrose Lane Renick WV 24966

**CANADA**

Brown, Margaret 28 Varcourt Pl. NW Calgary Alberta T3A 0G8  
 Eveleigh, Pam 6520 Law Dr SW Calgary Alberta T3E 6A1  
 O'Keefe, Patti 96 Riverbirch Crescent SE Calgary Alberta T2C 3L9  
 Paulson, Mrs. Sheila 6960 Leaside Dr SW Calgary Alberta T3E 6H5  
 Stadnyk, Bob c/o Holes Greenhouses & Gardens Ltd. 101 Bellerose Dr. St. Albert Alberta T8N 8N8  
 Calgary Rock & Alpine Garden Society, E Keddie 1519 Cavanaugh Pl NW Calgary Alberta T2L 0M8  
 Davis, Bryan 1359 Vista Heights Victoria BC V8T 2J2  
 B. C. Primula Group, #70 - 4900 Cartier Street Vancouver BC V6M 4H2  
 Carlson, Judy 5673 Willow Rd. Port Alberni BC V9Y 8H4  
 Chong, Mrs. Ruby 6870 Union St. Burnaby BC V5B 1X5  
 Crossman, Jo-Ann R.R. 4, S1 C-C1 Matson Rd. Terrace BC V8G 4V2  
 Gordon, Robert B. 3896 W. King Edward Ave. Vancouver BC V6S 1N1  
 Hausermann, Jean 20265 - 82nd Ave. Langley BC V2Y 2A9  
 Hogarth, Mrs. Hanna Box 477 Terrace BC V8G 4B5  
 James, Tony 3936 Braefoot Rd. Victoria BC V8P 3T2  
 La Fortune, Michael 9475 - 113 B St. N. Delta BC V4C 5G6  
 Martin, Mrs. M. J. 951 Joan Crescent Victoria BC V8S 3L3  
 Weesjes, Mrs. Evelyn 10629 Derrick Rd., R.R. 1 N. Saanich BC V8L 5M8  
 Alpine Garden Club of B.C., % Graeme Bain, Librarian 1009 Nanaimo St. New Westminster BC V3M 2E7  
 Connolly, Nita Box 347 Atlin BC V0W 1A0  
 Connolly, Shirley Box 53 Atlin BC V0W 1A0  
 Curran, Joy M. RR 1 - B38 Bowen Island BC V0N 1G0  
 Larsen, Jeannine 24938 50th Ave Aldergrove BC V4W 1A3  
 Plumb, Michael & Rhondda 9341 Kingsley Crescent Richmond BC V7A 4V6  
 Turgeon, Teresa 5519 Forest Hill Rd Victoria BC V9E 2AB  
 Healey, F. Patrick Box 6 Belmont Manitoba R0K 0C0  
 Parker, Brian 27 Marshall St. Fredericton N.B. E3A 4J8  
 Atkins, Stanley 89 Whiteway St. St. John's Newfoundland A1B 1K5  
 Hogan, Lorna % Murray's Horticultural Services Ltd. P.O. Box 182 Portugal Cove Newfoundland A0A 3K0  
 Agriculture & AgriFood, Library Sir John Carling Bldg Ottawa ON K1A 0C5  
 Adam, Judith 101 Gordon Rd. North York ON M2P 1E5  
 Belanger, Mrs. Janus 1815 Meach Rd., RR#1 Selby ON K0K 2Z0

Cave, Nik 3230 Uplands Dr. Apt 22 Ottawa ON K1V 0C6  
 Cole, Trevor 2863 John Shaw Rd, R.R. 2 Kinburn ON K0A 2H0  
 Combella, Mark 2594 Upper Dwyer Hill Rd Carp ON K0A 1L0  
 Illingworth, Rob and Sharon R.R. #7 Thunder Bay ON P7C 5V5  
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 Johnson, Tom 83 Edmund St. Sudbury ON P3E 1L4  
 Moyer, Elinor R.R. #4 Woodland Gardens Warton ON N0H 2T0  
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 Taaffe, Gerald 2190 Alta Vista Dr. Ottawa ON K1H 7M1  
 Wilkins, Barbara Ann 213 Rosedale Heights Dr. Toronto ON M4T 1C7  
 Addison & Richardson, Bedrock Gardeners 201 Wagon Dr., Box 9015, R.R. #1 Dunrobin ON K0A 1T0  
 Aubert, Jean Marc c/o Pneus Dominic, Inc. 26 Rue de l'Artisan Victoriaville Quebec G6P 7E4  
 Jardin Botanique de Montreal Bibliotheque, 4101 Sherbrooke Est Montreal Quebec H1X 2B2  
 Galletti, Maria Alpines Mont Echo 1182 Parmenter Rd Sutton Quebec J0E 2K0  
 Miller, Seldon 1519 7th Ave. Val Morin Quebec J0T 2R0  
 Lehmann, Ruth 23 McQuesten Rd Whitehorse YT Y1A 3R9

## OVERSEAS

Hughes, Judith, 38 Gunn Street Devenport TAS 7310 Australia  
 Klok, Gabriel, 2 Red Chapel Ave. Sandy Bay Tasmania 7005 Australia  
 Royal Botanic Gardens, Librarian, Birdwood Ave. South Yarra Victoria 3141 Australia  
 Hinterwirth, Hubert, Hausmanning 140 A 4560 Kirchdorf/Krems Austria  
 Thiers, Geert, Bloemenlei 10 B 2930 Brasschaat Belgium  
 Londono, Eugenia Maria, P. O. Box 1112 Medellin Columbia  
 Johansen, Herlof, Ostervaeng 12 Haldbjerg 9900 Frederikshavn Denmark  
 Mikkelsen, Erik L., Nyvangsvej 113 Randers 8900 Denmark  
 Moller, Knud A., Poppelalle 13 2840 Holte Denmark  
 Nyborg, Sigfred, Gronbjergvej 45 6971 Spjald Denmark  
 Austin, R. G., 10 Forestside Garden Poulner Hants BH241SZ England  
 Bracewell, Gordon, 6 Marlin St. Nelson Lancashire B39 8HY England  
 Davis, Brian, 7 Beech Tree Rd Walsall Wood Walsall Staffordshire WS9 9LS England  
 Ellams, Robin and Linda J., School House Evenjobb LD8 2SF England  
 Forsythe, Jackie, "Glen Rosa" Syryt Isa Near Pen-Y-Ffordd Chester CH4 0JY England  
 Gibson, John N., "Farinosa", 3A Primrose Lane Kirkburton Huddersfield Yorkshire HD8 0QY England  
 Giles, Mrs. J., Windy Ridge Bolton Percy Yorkshire YO5 7BA England  
 Laskey, Mrs Pat, 15, Martins Road Exmouth Devon EX8 4LN England  
 Leeming, K. J., 3 Daisy Bank Drive Sandbach Cheshire CW11 4JR England  
 Leighton, Harry, 102 Abbey Drive, Sunnyside Estate Houghton-le-Spring Tyne & Wear DH4 5LB England  
 Lill, H., 17 Newton Ave. Newton Hill Wakefield W71 2PX England  
 Lockey, Derek, 312 Hexam Road Heddon on the Wall Northumberland NE15 9QX England  
 Micklem, Henry S., 1 Dryden Place Edinburgh EH9 1RP England  
 Mitchell, Mr. Terry, 17 Fearnley Dr. Ossett West Yorkshire WF5 9EU England  
 Pinches, Dr R. S., 5 Dalbury Close Malvern Wores. WR141HV England  
 Pugh, Mrs. V. A., Wilkin Post Office 94 Hednesford Rd. Brownhills West, Walsall West Midlands W58 7LT England  
 Salt, Derek William, East View, Main Road Friskney Boston PE22 8QU England  
 Spiller, Mr. G., 50 Cumbrian Way Lupset Park Wakefield WF2 8JS England  
 Standen, Mrs Francine, Daffodil House 140 Myton Rd Warwick Warwickshire CV346PR England  
 Town, M. A., 33 New Lane Skelmanthorpe Nr. Huddersfield W. Yorkshire HD8 9EY England  
 Wilson, Stephen, 1 Friars Cottages Wentworth Rotherham S627TL England  
 Woolley, Dr. Valerie A., 26 Burnside Grove Tollerton Nottinghamshire NG12 4ET England  
 Young, Mrs June, Kiln Cottage 33 Park Hill Wheatley Oxon OX333 1NE England  
 Royal Horticultural Society, Lindley Library - Helen Ward, 80 Vincent Square London SW1P 2PE England  
 N.A. & P.S. (Midland & West Section), Mr. Brian Coop, Hon. Editor, 5 Warwick Court Eaton Socon St. Neots, Cambs. PE19 3HH England  
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 The Alpine Garden Society, A.G.S. Centre, Avon Bank Pershore Worcestershire WR10 3JP England  
 Kugler, Francis, 18 Rue du General Rampont F67240 Bischwiller France  
 Lawson, Mrs. Lynne, Barnhaven Primroses 11 Rue du Pont Blanc 22310 Plestin Les Graves France  
 Horn, Bianca, Bruchwitzstrasse 9 12247 Berlin Germany  
 Kress, Dr. Alarich, Edelweiss - Strasse 9 D - 82194 Grobenzell Germany  
 Maerz, Georg, Postfach 150308 D-70076 Stuttgart Germany  
 Wainwright-Klein, Jennifer, Maria-Ward-Str. 1 i Muenchen 80638 Germany  
 Bibliothek, Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem D - 14191 Berlin Germany

Hoskuldottir, Anna, Espilundi 1 IS-600 Akureyri Iceland  
 Skulason, Fridrik, P.O. Box 7180 IS - 127 Reykjavik Iceland  
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 Aoki, Gishu, 17-5 Shibahara -1 Saitama-shi 336-0917 Japan  
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 Kloppenberg, H., Meibergsdijk 1A Liederholthuis Ralte 8144RJ Netherlands  
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 Nicolle, Geoff., Rising Sun Cottage Nolton Haven Haverfordwest Pembrokeshire SA62 3NN Wales

## Continued from page 1

two species in Kotzebue this September after a caribou hunting trip, possibly *P. nutans* and *borealis* in a damp area near a brackish slough. Then while moose hunting near Gustavus, I found still another, probably *P. egalikensis* in a seasonally wet area (some were under water). There were plenty of seeds to collect for the Seed Exchange and I want to return next June to try to see them in flower. Oh yes, the hunting was successful too. *Primula capitata* is still blooming in mid October as I write, since we've had only one frost so far. Many of the *petiolarid* species that came

from a Scottish nursery last spring are also still blooming. Now if I can keep all those flats of new seedlings alive until spring, I'll be happy. The autumn gentians are putting on a great show and we've had a much better display of fall leaf color than I expected. We just hope for a good snow cover this winter.

Keep thinking and dreaming of those new plants to grow or old ones to grow better and share some in case yours are lost and need to be replaced

Ed Buyarski

## APS Website Growing

Duane Buell brought the APS into the World Wide Web with the creation of the Official APS website in 1999. He has done a tremendous job as our APS Webmaster and I would like to thank him for his vision in creating and hard work in maintaining the site. Duane has passed the Webmaster position on to me and I am looking forward to taking up the challenge.

I plan to take the APS website through a number of renovations in the near future. A fresh, new look will appear and a reorganization of the extensive material will follow. The most exciting addition will be made in conjunction with the APS seed exchange. Plans are underway to post the seed list on the APS website approximately 2 weeks after the paper copy of the seed list has been mailed to APS members. Those members whose copies are held up in the mail or who misplace their copies can then look for the list on-line. The seed list will be regularly updated on the APS website to reflect seeds which are sold out. Eventually the posted list will turn into the surplus seed list. Questions on this project can be directed to the Seed Exchange Committee Chair, Jacques Mommens, at [mommens@advinc.com](mailto:mommens@advinc.com).

I would welcome any ideas from APS members about what they would like to see on our website. Don't miss all the fun at [www.americanprimrosesoc.org](http://www.americanprimrosesoc.org) !

Your new Webmaster,  
Pam Eveleigh  
[eveleigh@shaw.ca](mailto:eveleigh@shaw.ca)

## APS Board Minutes

Our meeting was held August 24<sup>th</sup>. It was a combination of a Juneau meeting, a telephone conference, and online communication. Present were Judy S., Mary K., Pam E., Phyllis P., Terry M., Ed B., Julia H., Cheri F., Mary I., Cy H., Thea O., Candy S., and Rosetta J.

The treasurer's report revealed that as of 6/30/2002 the Society had \$11,072.52 in cash and \$13,342.53 in our investment account. For the previous 12 months we had \$14,809.27 in income offset by \$16,202.98 in expenses. As of 8/22/02 the Society had a membership of 524, an increase of 55 new members.

A motion passed to itemize any expense exceeding \$250 on the income statement. Clarification of old business affirmed only overseas members receive their seeds without cost. There was unanimous consent, without vote, affirming the 2003 National Show will be held in Juneau May 16<sup>th</sup>. There was discussion of judging held at the 2001 Tacoma Show. An explanation of events and an apology was offered by the Chairperson and was accepted by the Board. There was discussion and direction given to the Judging Committee to propose changes to Show Rules to avoid similar occurrences. A nominating committee was formed for the upcoming spring election. A vote to hold the next Board meeting by phone passed.

Respectfully,  
Robert Tonkin,  
APS Secretary

## Get Involved in the APS

The coming winter issue of *Primroses* will include your ballot for our 2003 National APS elections, offering every member the privilege of voting and the opportunity to run for office. Become involved in our exciting society! The Nominating Committee is looking for enthusiastic volunteers so we may have a full slate of Officers and Directors on the ballot. The ballot will include APS President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, as well as two seats on the Board of Directors (three year terms). For more information or to volunteer, please contact (as soon as possible) Judith Sellers, 300 Frank Youngs Rd., Unadilla, NY 13849 Email [jsellers@mkl.com](mailto:jsellers@mkl.com) or Candy Strickland, 6911-104th St. E., Puyallup, WA 98373.

**Helpful support will be provided for new officers,  
so don't be shy!**

### Want More Primroses?

Back issues of the A.P.S. quarterly, *Primroses*, are available from the A.P.S. Quarterly Librarian. Prices depend on the issue date:

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 325 W. Ashbridge St.  
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 3304 288th Ave. NE  
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 P.O. Box 23096, Juneau, AK 99801  
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Chairperson, Mary Irwin  
 6 Spruce Mountain Terrace  
 Danbury, CT 06810  
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### Tacoma Chapter

Co-President Candy Strickland  
 6911 - 104th St. E.  
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 Tel: (253) 841-4192  
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Robert Tonkin  
 3155 Pioneer Ave.  
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