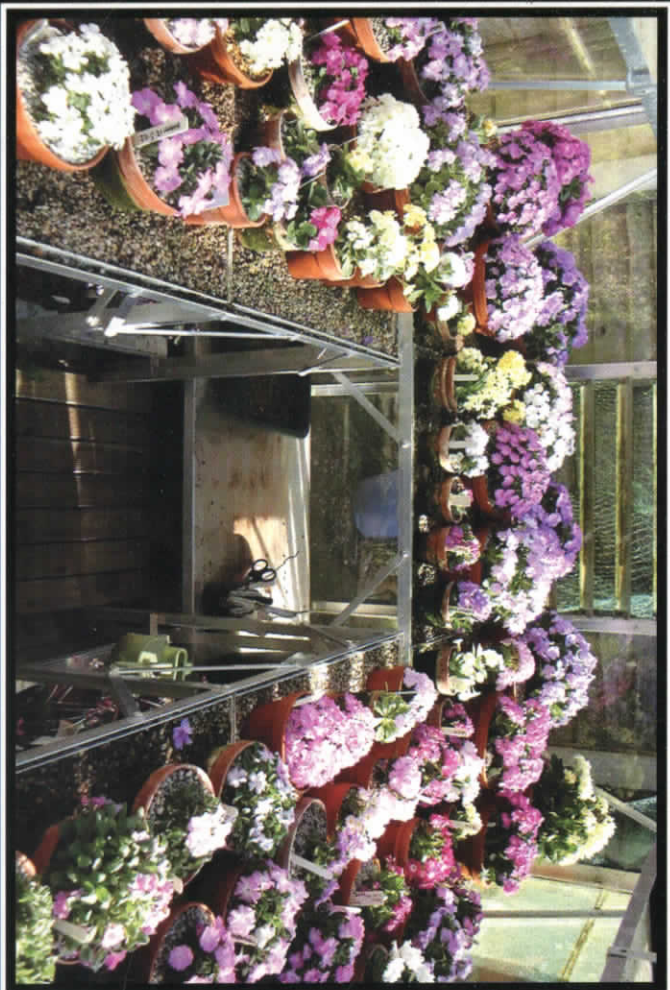


Primroses



Spring 2003

Primroses

Quarterly of the
American Primrose Society
Volume 61, Number 2, Spring 2003

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*.

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Cover Photo: Viv Pugh's Greenhouse
in bloom, photo by Henry Pugh

Back Cover : Top Left: 'Fred Booley'
Top Right: 'Vesuvius', both by Derek Salt
Bottom: *P. marginata* 'Linda Pope' grown and
shown by April Boettger at 2002 National.

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Presidents Message

Greetings folks, its spring time in Alaska! The old saying about the early bird gets the worm has been painful to watch as the robins that arrived two weeks ago are finally able to poke into the thawing ground here in Juneau. I suppose that's not so unlike some of us gardeners who are anxious to do the same. The hummingbirds should show up next week according to my 20 years of garden logs, and with them (or for them), the blueberries should be blooming. Crocuses are showing color and a few hardy julies are blooming in sheltered spots. Sky blue buds on my *Primula sonchifolia* and P.x "Tantallon" give me hope for my favorite season (gardening season of course). We always like to see the yellow flowers of skunk cabbage as a sure sign of spring in Alaska.

This time of year also means that Primrose Shows are coming for us all to enjoy. This year, Easterners will be lucky enough to see an informal Show put on by the New England Chapter and Westerners have their choice of the Tacoma Chapter Show and the National Show put on by the Juneau Chapter. As always these are great recruiting opportunities for us to gain new converts. We have redone our membership form rack cards for those that may want them. To those of you who attend one or more of the Shows, please let us know what you think and how we can improve them.

We must welcome the new Gig-Narrows Chapter in Washington State, and I will be visiting them to show them some Alaska Primroses and find out about their other activities. I hope to see some nice gardens in Western Washington while in their neighborhood too.

Before we get too far into the season, there is still the dream that we may have a weed free garden; the slugs, porcupines, and bears will stay in the woods where they belong; and just enough rain will fall only at night. After all, as gardeners we must always remember that Mother Nature turns dreams into reality (with a few modifications during the year).

Never stop dreaming! **Ed**

From the Editor

If ever your humble Editor were to be accused of bias in his responsibility of editing this journal, it would no doubt reflect his personal fondness for the auricula. I am pleased to reprint what many believe to be one of our finest articles on the subject by member Larry Bailey.

From the kindness and generosity of Jay and Ann Lunn (once again) we are fortunate to publish, for the first time in color, many of the Society's finest benched auricula from past decades' shows. These slides are from the Orval Agee collection, passed on to the Lunn's for safekeeping. We are grateful they have shared them with us. Hopefully these accomplishments will inspire other members to take up the craft of raising and breeding the show auricula again.

Staying with the auricula section - from across the pond come two contributions from seasoned practitioners of the hybridizing craft. Derek Salt showcases the double auricula and Viv Pugh showcases *P. allionii*.

Words alone cannot express enough gratitude to Maedythe Martin for her consistent and outstanding support of *Primroses*. With this issue she adds her experiences as an accomplished hybridizer and grower with a marginata showcase article, and her dedication to the history of our pursuits, this time with "The Canadian Connection."

With two new Groups/Chapters in the formation we should have positive expectations of continued growth and sharing. Thank You Folks!

The Florist Auricula

by Larry Bailey

Talk before the NARGS Eastern Study Weekend January 26, 1986

Questions on the Exhibition Auriculas have been directed to me in increasing numbers these past couple of years, especially from this Coast. When experts in the field of botany ask me questions on florist plants, I know there is a need for discussion and education.

What I hope to do here is to provide a good general knowledge of the florist primula: The history of the Show Auricula; its types; the point systems on judging; culture in an alpine house; how to prepare the plants for a primula show; the naming of the plants, and a little about the differences in judging between the English and the American Primula Societies.

To achieve many of the rewards in life (and horticulture is no different), we must understand what rewards we are after. John Macwatt gave a key when he related a comment by James Douglas: "No better opportunity could be afforded to anyone who keenly desires to exercise patience than by attempting to raise Show Auriculas." The hobby of growing florist primulas is certainly just the ticket for those who are looking for a slower pace of life.

This brings me to a delightful story I read some years ago. The article was in an old publication, the Yearbook of the National Auricula Society (Northern Section), brought home by my wife after she discovered it at one of those "garden sales".

The article was written by one of the legendary growers of yesteryear, Dan Bamford, from Middleton, Lancashire. In this article he was reminiscing about visiting old well-known gardeners of his time; a time when "the old auricula growers of an age which knew neither automobiles, radio, television, cinemas and what have you were florists, pure and unadulterated. Their ambition was to produce something better this year than last; if they failed, they started again. That is how they spent their leisure; there were no other forms of amusement". Strange as it may sound, the story was talking about one of the very old gooseberry growers he visited; and "as the auricula and gooseberry were very often grown by the same grower", it will give you an impression of the perseverance and patience of the old florists of the North Country, whose like we shall not see again.

Mr. Bamford was returning home with a business friend when it occurred they were not many miles from a town where an elderly gooseberry grower resided. His friend instructed the chauffeur to drive to old Jack's cottage. After the customary "cup o tay" they took a tour of the garden where Dan Bamford had visited as a small boy over sixty years before. Something seemed to snap internally, and he was once again in the long-gone age of boyhood. The world of changing fashion they had left a short time ago seemed to be no more. There were the same type of bushes he remembered so well when he was a boy. None were over 12 inches high; the branches radiated horizontally; some

were very old and resembled the dwarfed Japanese trees trained in the best Bonsai type. The berries were hanging on them like small Victorian plums. He looked round to see the reaction on his friend, but the man stood there as though mesmerized - all he could do was gasp.

Now Dan's friend owned a large business and was rather proud of his successes in life, but he was no match for this tough old Lancashire gardener. His first and only round was lost when he asked, "Can my gardener grow gooseberries like these"? The old boy paused for a short time, looked up, and with a twinkle in his eye, said, "Ay, if he knows how." To know why and how is my purpose in what follows.

Before plunging into the Show Auricula and its history, let me give you a quick definition of "Florist." During the Elizabethan era, any grower who showed his specialized flowers was called a florist. This is the definition used here.

The history of the Florist Primula has been the subject of a lot of discussion. No one that I know of really knows the origin of the Show Auricula. Speculation has been made on the parent species and how they developed into the three major classifications of the exhibition plants we are familiar with today.

A couple of things are fairly certain: (1) The species *Primula auricula* (a natural yellow form) is a good candidate for the family tree; (2) as well as *Primula hirsuta* (*rubra*), both of which are found in the alpine regions of central Europe. But many of the different species in the Section Auricula have the same

chromosome count. It becomes very difficult to pinpoint the parent, and if, in fact, natural or unnatural mutations occurred. Other candidates for parentage include (3) *Primula viscosa*, (4) *glaucescens*, and (5) *minima*. What is known, is that the characteristics of the exhibition plants today do not occur in any natural environment known to botanists.

One of the most reliable sources for the botanical history of the auricula is in the records of the Primula Conference of the Royal Horticultural Society in April 1886. This Conference indicated: the first publications mentioning the auricula as a garden plant was during the mid and latter half of the sixteenth century, when the plant was known and grown in Austrian gardens of noble families. Most likely it had been grown in humble gardens much earlier. Also during the sixteenth century traditions, the auriculas were first taken into England by refugees from the continent. (England is where most of the present day auricula and polyanthus derive.)

According to Sir Biffen (an authority on primula history), the refugees "settled to a great extent in Lancashire, Yorkshire and the neighborhood of London which, for years to come, were the chief centers of auricula cultivation."

By the end of the century the plant was well established in England, and in 1597 the first English description of it was published in the Gerarde's Herbal. It was then known to botanists as *Auricula ursi* (or "Bear's Ears"), while another name in common use was the "Mountain Cowslip."

A later publication, Parkinson's Herball (*Theatrum Botanicum*) in 1694 expands and introduces the striped auricula. His description includes the remark that the flower color would change wholly into either color of the stripe.

Records are scanty on the development of auriculas during the first half of the eighteenth century, although a number of books on gardening were published. This is unfortunate, for at this time there appeared an auricula with a green flower border, white center and a black ground - a sensational break. Here were flowers with either a green edge, or green edge heavy with meal-"a flower having no counterpart in the horticultural world."

By 1757 the "Edged Auricula" was listed by nurserymen, indicating that the new break must have been somewhat earlier. Even at this early stage of the Edged Auricula the plants required to be grown under glass to protect the fragile meal on leaves and flowers. The exacting competition became fierce and standards developed for the plant made the Edged Auricula an Exhibitor's plant with no equal.

The early years of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of a new era of horticulture. "This was the era of the florist's flower in which men set themselves the task of producing symmetry, an ordered beauty, and refinement in flowers previously grown for the sake of their own natural charm." Their efforts were directed not only to the improvement of the Auricula, but to the Tulip, Ranunculus, Primrose (jack-

in-the-green), Polyanthus (gallygaskins), carnation, pinks, etc.

The Show Auricula was extremely popular not only in Great Britain but all over the European continent. Holland, France, and Germany were some of the major areas where these auriculas achieved widespread popularity. Elaborate stages were constructed to show the plants to their best advantage.

The growing of the Show Auricula was not limited to the well-to-do but was an intense hobby for many in the working class; most notable were the cottage silk weavers of Lancashire and the miners of Yorkshire. Here each year they would gather the best of their plants (usually two out of a collection of a couple hundred) and hold small show in the local village's public house. The awards were modest, a copper kettle being the most appreciated. Competition was keen. However, after the judging, the small group would finish up with a mug of ale and discuss the merits of their plants.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century all this amazing popularity subsided, fashion moved to other hobbies and by 1870 the number of growers quickly dwindled to a dedicated few.

It was at this moment that the name Douglas first became synonymous with Show Auriculas. In 1876 James Douglas was instrumental in helping to organize a society for ". . . gentlemen interested in the advancement of Floriculture." This society was a forerunner of the National Auricula and Primula Society Southern Section. Within a few years

after organizing, the Society held its first show in the spectacular Crystal Palace in London.

Three English societies kept alive the interest in the show auricula: the National Auricula and Primula Society, the Northern Section, and Midland Section and the Southern Section. Since the late nineteenth century the growth and membership in these societies fluctuated greatly due to the World Wars. During the war years, all energy was directed towards the war effort, and most of the older legendary plants were lost. It has only been in the last few decades that a revival of the Show Auricula has taken place in England. Reintroduction of fancies and striped auriculas by growers like Allan Hawkes, has sparked and kindled new interest.

In the United States little is known of those few growers who cultivated Show Auriculas before the founding of the American Primrose, Auricula and Primula Society in 1941. After the Second World War, interest in the Show Auricula was largely promoted within the Pacific Northwest where a subsociety of auricula growers was briefly organized within the American Primrose Society.

It was during this period in the late 1950's and early 1960 that so much of the work on the double primrose, gold laced polyanthus and the double auriculas took place in the United States.

As with the case of most wars, the Viet Nam conflict saw interest in horticultural hobbies wane as concern for sons, daughters and friends dominated. Popularity of the Show

Auricula has not recovered from the effects of the Viet Nam War, but there are signs of renewed interest starting to develop across the country for this gentle folks' peacetime pastime. Let us hope that this new interest will not be interrupted by other conflicts.

TYPES OF EXHIBITION AURICULA

The nomenclature of Exhibition Auricula can be confusing. In the Exhibition classes there are two major headings: Show Auricula and Alpine Auricula. The Show Auricula has farina (also called meal, paste or flour) on the center of the pip surrounding the tube; this meal can also be present on the leaves of the plant and petal edges of the flowers. An Alpine Auricula (a name only remotely connected to the specie auriculas found in the alpine regions), has no meal on flowers or leaves.

Going deeper, there are two basic types of Show Auriculas with meal: In one the flower has a white paste eye and only one color on its petals. This is called the Self Show Auricula. The second also has a white eye, but with a colored ground (usually black), and green petal edges actually incorporating leaf tissue. This is called an Edged Show Auricula.

The Self Show Auricula, the one with the single colored petals, usually come in yellow, red, blue and almost black.

The Edged Show Auricula (with leaf-tissue petals) is broken down still further:

The Green-edge has green petal edges, quite free of meal, on a black ground.

The Grey-edge has the green petal edges overlaid with a light dusting of meal.

The White-edge is similar to the Grey Edge, but with a heavier dusting of meal - so heavy that no green shows through at all. (See photos pages 19-21).

It should be noted the amount of meal on the leaves is not a criteria for classifying Show Auriculas. There is another classification of the Edged Auricula called Fancy. Fancies include all Edged Auricula with a ground color other than black (usually yellow or red but sometimes purple or brown).

Alpine auricula (sometimes referred to as Alpine Show Auricula) will be disqualified from exhibition if it has meal on either petals or leaves. The distinguishing factor in the Alpine Auricula is the shading of the petal color from dark at the center to light at the edge. It has only been in this past century that the Alpine Auricula has been classified as an Exhibition or Show flower at all. Previously it was considered a garden plant. The colors usually come in gorgeous shades of red, blue, brown or gold. The Alpine Auricula is often broken down into two classifications: gold centered and light centered.

It should be noted that in recent years two other classifications of auriculas are making their way onto the exhibition tables: the Striped and Double Auriculas.

Confusing, yes. And to be quite frank about it, I do not think anyone really knows how some of the names were derived. But taking a quick review, there

are two major classes of the Exhibition Auricula: the Alpine Auricula and the Show Auricula. The Show Auriculas are further classified into Self Show Auricula (with the solid color petals) and the Edged Show Auriculas.

POINT SYSTEMS

A point system for judging show auricula has been slowly evolving over the past generations. One of the first authoritarians to establish the "Rules for judging" was the Royal Horticulture Society of England. From the Royal Horticultural Society's simple standards have come the slightly more encompassing standards used today. I say standards, because most primula societies have generated their own set of rules, and continue to do so.

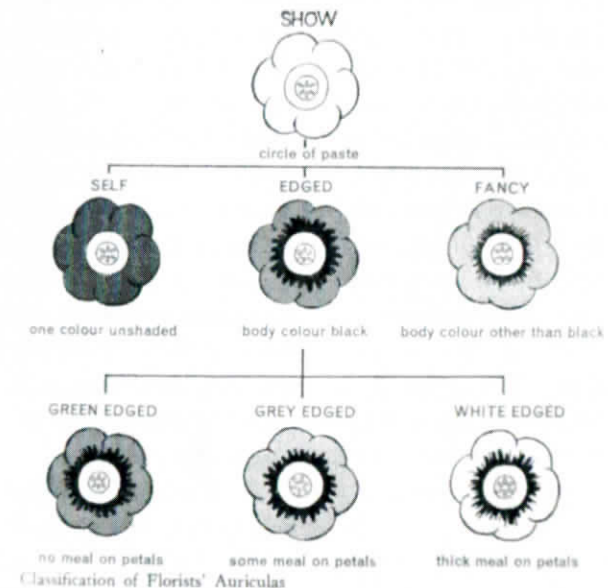
There are some general areas of agreement that seem to have a universal

appeal: 1. A healthy plant. 2. A plant of good proportions. 3. Symmetrical or asymmetrical appearance without recognizable flaws. 4. Clear and distinct colors.

Florist plants are no different. The distinction between a florist plant and a typical garden plant is: the characteristics of beauty are trying to be emphasized and perfected.

When showing an exhibition primula three basic rules have to be followed: 1) no pin eyes are allowed; 2) at least 5 pips must be opened on a named plant and one pip on a seedling; and 3) the plants are to be groomed, possess a single umbel, and be in clean pots. Any plant not abiding by these rules would be disqualified from being shown.

In exhibiting the Edged and Self Auricula, the emphasis is placed on the flower itself, not on the plant. The



following pointing system is one promoted in the 1960s by the National Auricula and Primula Society - Northern Section, authored by R. H. Briggs. (Other societies' pointing systems are very similar).

SELF STANDARDS

The standards and points for the Self Show Auricula are the same as for the Edged Auricula except: Ground Color: Bright clear color. Must be devoid of meal and farina, unshaded, and twice the width of the paste. Pip: Round and flat, composed of 6 or 7 petals, neither notched nor pointed.

ALPINE SHOW AURICULA STANDARDS

In judging the Alpine Show Auricula, a little more emphasis is placed on the over all appearance of the plant, giving 60 possible points to the flower, and 40 to the plant (umbel symmetry (15), a strong stalk (15) and a well balanced plant (10) to equal 100 points. Differences in the standards between the Edged/Self Auricula and the Alpine are: Center: Round, clear color (yellow or white) cut sharply where it joins the body/ground color. Color: Rich brilliant luster, unclouded. Deep where it joins the center, and paler tint at the edge of the petals.

During the judging of a plant in a show, one cannot expect a judge to keep a written record of each plant. Nor would the judge have time to mentally keep track of the points. But they rely on their own experience in growing to make their selections.

EDGED STANDARDS

FLOWER

Tube: rich yellow, circular, outer edge level with expanded pip. Anthers: dense, curving inwards to cover the stigma. Paste: smooth and dense, white, free from cracks, the meal on the foliage of the Grey-edged enough to give a grey appearance, on White-edged to completely mask the green, Green-edged free from meal. Ground Color: circular where it joins the center, feathering a little into the edge color and as near black as possible. Pip: round and flat and no notches in the petal; 6 or 7 petals in each pip (if 6 they must be broad enough to fill in a circular outline), color zones of equal width.

PLANT

Stem and Footstalk: stem strong enough to carry the truss well above the foliage and rigid enough to allow each pip to display itself. Size, substance and general refinement: good overall proportions.

Many growers would swear that the judges, when judging their own plants, have a tendency to throw the rules out the window. It is only when plants are in very close competition and judges cannot agree on top winners, that the need to point a plant arise. The only other time a plant will be pointed is when it is being named by the American Primrose Society.

There is a major difference between the method of judging a primula plant in England and in the United States. English shows use the "Standard

Judging System." Each classification of entry has only one first award, one second and one third.

In the American Primrose Society the show is judged on the "Merit System." Each plant is judged on its individual merit for a blue, red or white ribbon. The premier awards and trophies are then selected out of the blue ribbon plants.

NAMING A SHOW AURICULA

There is also a difference between the way a Show Auricula is named in England and in the United States. In England, any seedling that has won an award is usually named by the grower. (Any Show Auricula is classified as a seedling before naming, regardless of how old it is.)

In the American system, before a seedling can be named, it must have been awarded a blue ribbon for three years, and to achieve a score of over 90 when judged by three official judges of the APS. This method for naming a plant is one reason why so few plants are named in the United States. In the past seven years I am aware of only two plants being named by the American Primrose Society: A yellow Self named "Mary Zack" grown by Orval Agee, and an Alpine named "Tait", nominated by myself.

STARTING FROM SEED

If Show primulas are difficult to grow well, they are extremely easy to start from seed. But before I get too far into explaining just how easy it is, let me say that exhibition primulas do not come

true to seed. Without a selective breeding program, a grower can hardly expect one plant in over a thousand to be of show quality - and a much smaller percentage to produce an award-winning plant.

A few words about storing seed. If seed is put in small envelopes, placed in zip-lock bags, and stored in a refrigerator at around 40°F., it will remain viable for many, many years. Do not throw away seed stored in this manner. Plant it!

I think every grower has his own method of starting seed, and all major seedsmen with primula seed (Barnhaven, Goodwin, Chiltern, Thompson & Morgan, etc.) have excellent instructions for sowing primulas.

Two basic concepts are usually proposed depending upon the space or facility limitations. The first is to sow the seed in a typical starting tray, set the tray outside and let nature take over with its freezing, thawing, etc. Many growers will press the seed into a soil/peat mix and place about 1/4" of pumice or coarse sand on top to hold the seeds in place, and wait. Some growers place a cloth over the trays to keep the seed from splashing out. The cloth is weighted down by pebbles. Germination for the "natural way" takes somewhere between 2 and 8 weeks, and one can expect about 75% to 80% germination.

The second method (and one that I use) is to start Primula seed in a controlled environment. I use this method on all except those seed that require direct sun for germination, like

the *P. sapphirina*. I press the seed into Redi-Earth, sprinkle about 1/8" to 1/4" of Redi-Earth over the seed, spray with a heavy mist until the tray is very damp, place a sheet of glass over the tray and set it on the lower shelf of a heated greenhouse. Daytime temperature is kept between 50 and 60°F. One should expect about 95% germination within two weeks.

After pricking out the seedlings (when the first true leaves appear) I place the trays of ungerminated seed outdoors where I leave them for 3 to 4 years!

When pricking out new seedlings, a word of caution. There is a time when the heavier, thicker permanent roots are just beginning to form and the initial fine hair-like root system is just about depleted. To transplant at this time is very dangerous. The problem develops because the food supply is cut off when the fine root system is damaged and the permanent roots are temporarily checked from growing.

If a person finds himself in this situation of having waited too long to transplant (I do it all the time), it is much better to wait until the permanent root system is established and able to supply the necessary food for the plant.

I would like to note that I do find intermediate transplanting very beneficial to keep the young seedlings growing at a rapid rate. If kept growing at a good clip, oftentimes primroses will flower within the first year and auriculas will bloom within the second year. Otherwise a person will have to wait a third year to see the results of his labor.

Another point to remember - Show Auriculas are grown for pot culture and

should be grown on in pots; they may not grow well in the ground. I have found that many plants which grow well in the garden, do not do well when grown in pots; and vice versa. It is indeed heartbreaking to see a potential award winning seedling grown in the garden flounder in a pot because its root system cannot adjust to restricted growth.

OFFSETS AND DIVISIONS

To obtain a plant with true show qualities from seed is difficult. Because of the unknown parentage of the Show Auricula, a hybridizer can expect just about anything to show up when it blooms. Many are deformed or monstrosities, lacking any of the point qualities.

Because the flowers do not come true from seed, about the only way to start a collection of Show Auricula is to take offsets from named plants.

The best time to divide (take offsets) and repot is in late Winter or early Spring. This allows the maximum time in the growing cycle before the summer or winter dormant periods. Many publications indicate that the best time to repot is right after the plant blooms. I have not found this to be the case. A late winter repotting will not check the bloom cycle; if anything, the fresh soil allows the plant and flowers to become more vibrant.

It should be noted that transplanting can be done from late Winter to early Fall. Care should be taken to avoid transplanting in the late fall when early freezes can damage a plant before it

becomes established. I am always getting caught! Early summer transplants might find the root systems damaged by a hot midsummer drought period.

A few words on size and type of pots. When starting from seed, I try to transplant three times before maturity. 1) From the seedling tray into the pony pack; 2) from the pony pack into 2 1/2" plastic pots; and 3) from the 2 1/2" pots into 4 1/4" plastic pots.

I try to repot my named plants each year. This gives me the opportunity to examine each plant, especially the root systems. After a couple of years of examining auricula root systems, a grower can get a pretty good idea of how well the plant grew that year -if it needs more enrichment in the soil, and the diseases and pests that affected it.

If the root system looks sickly, the plant is not healthy. When examining the roots, if the ends are brown and decayed, it is a sign you had better start doing something about the growing conditions. These signs of damage can point to insects in the soil (most likely the problem), poor soil, or a fungus. (*see root aphid article, last issue...Ed*)

A grower can expect a small amount of dead tissue on the tips of the roots on the older root systems while the newer roots are forming. I mention this problem with the roots only because many of the auriculas, grown under glass I have received from other growers show poor root structures. I also repot each year to take the offsets, and to start preparing the plants for possible showing. Transplanting each year is not

required if the plant has adequate nourishment.

Clay or Plastic pots? So much has been said about the merits of plastic versus clay pots, I will not rehash the discussion. When I first got started growing auriculas I put them all into clay pots and had excellent results; but to tell the truth, I found it a chore in summer to keep the thirsty pots watered; and I started having nightmares about washing and scrubbing all those clay pots. I have found plastic pots adequate, but they need a little more watching to avoid over-watering. Plants so potted also need a little more shade in the summer months. Clay pots will keep a plant cooler in summer by evaporation through the clay.

ALPINE HOUSE CULTURE

As with most alpine plants, culture in a greenhouse is not difficult if:

1. Treatment of insects is accomplished as soon as an infestation occurs;
2. A person is very careful about watering;
3. The proper amount of shade is used;
4. And there is good ventilation at all times.

Almost all problems of growing Show Auriculas can be traced to insect or bugs. Some of the worst damage can result from the sciarid gnat or maggot. This is a very minute transparent worm that riddles the crown, allowing rot to take hold and forcing multiple crowning. A person can notice the small gnat (there are about three varieties) hovering about the plants and on the soil. The gnats love peat, but will survive in

just about any soil. A strong systemic insecticide has been found to be most useful. I use temik. I should add, I use temik very, very carefully. The other bugs that cause problems are cutworms, green worms, and root aphids. I have found temik most helpful with all insects, but only use it for the sciarid maggot and root aphid. For cutworms, green worms, etc. there are many products on the local garden shop shelves to help.

Watering. A nuisance about auriculas is that they vary in their demands for water. Some cultivars require water constantly, while other cultivars seem never to need it. This is why in most of the old culture information, they expound upon hand watering of each plant. Rule; water only when the plants need watering.

During the Spring and Fall growing seasons, the soil should be kept moist, never allowed to dry out. Drying of the roots at this stage will check growth of plant and flowers. In Summer and Winter months, the soil can be somewhat dryer.

During the summer months, ventilation becomes a problem, and if adequate ventilation is not available in the alpine house, the plants should be moved outdoors, under some deciduous tree or partly shady area.

Shading is far more important than first thought by most. To get the large leaves and large umbels, a balance of shading and watering is required. More shade, hold back some on water; less shade, little more watering.

Auriculas can be grown in full sun in

many regions of the country, if given the proper water and soil conditions. The plants have a tendency to appear yellow, small-leaved and have dwarfed umbels if these needs are not properly met. I quickly learned that plants on the floor under the bench in the alpine house did much better than those on the benches under glass shading (whitewash). Now I put a shading cloth over the plants in the alpine house. This allows me to have shading on the upper plants while the lower plants have the opportunity to get some sun through the clear side panels.

Ventilation is simple - give as much as you can in the summer months and almost as much during the winter months. Only during very deep freezes with windy conditions do I close the louvers on the alpine house to protect the plants from wind/freezer burns.

A quick word about tidying up in the alpine house. I have not found the dried leaves around the plant detrimental to the growth or health of the plant. I suppose they could harbor insects and rot; but I have not found it so. The main reason I pull off the dead leaves is for appearance sake. And I usually do it right before a guest shows up.

IN THE GARDEN

Alpine Auriculas grown in the garden require very similar conditions as those in the alpine house.

1. Watch for bugs. The sciarid gnat is not such a problem in garden soil, but the strawberry root weevil is. Root weevil can be controlled with diazinon if the grubs are still working.
2. Watering. Here again, in shady areas

the plants do not require so much water; but in the sun, apply a little more during the growing seasons.

3. Partial shading is desirable in the summer, but the plants can be grown in full sun or very shady areas too. Soil conditions and drainage are more important.

Auriculas can grow very well in the rock garden and other areas of the garden. The soil should be well drained, rich in humus, and have a somewhat neutral pH reading. Extreme care should be taken about over-fertilizing. A little goes a long ways with auriculas; a little manure is really all it takes. I work it into the soil when dividing about every three years and spread a little around the plant "when I get to it."

I try to divide about every three years, but must admit I do have some very large beautiful clumps that have been "untouched" in the ground for over six years. If any primula appears to be suffering in its present location - sometimes just moving it a few feet into a different bed can make all the difference.

Winter protection? Yes, if required on other alpine plants in your garden. Snow cover is wonderful, especially if the area is subjected to dry freezing winds. A leaf mulch, if removed in the very early spring, can be of some help.

Let me finish by saying I see no reason why auriculas cannot be grown on the East Coast, and any other areas of the country if a balance of shade, ventilation and water is achieved.

Seed in Need

by Judy Sellers

As your plants bloom and you enjoy their beauty, please don't forget to pollinate them and save the seeds so others may grow and appreciate their progeny. As obtaining commercial seeds becomes increasingly complicated, your Exchange needs Member Donors more than ever before. Excellent tips for hand pollination are available from the APS official website, under Information/FAQs and from many articles in previous issues of *Primroses*. Please remember: dead-heading destroys seeds, so please leave a few unkempt patches for the sake of posterity.

Triumph for a Primrose

We sometimes tend to think the only Primulas that can win at the large flower shows are the exotics or named auriculas. Rodney Barker, a valued member of our New England Chapter, earned a coveted "First" at the 2003 New England Spring Flower Show with a more common species. Rodney entered one of his beautifully grown *Primula vulgaris* in the highly competitive class 'Plants Grown from Seed by the Exhibitor in the Last Twelve Months.' Rodney has a special fondness for the *P. vulgaris*, as he has strong memories of seeing it growing wild in the fields and hedgerows. The Barkers have lived near Boston, Massachusetts since coming from England in 1965. We hope Rodney will soon be sharing his skills with all of us as a newly elected Director on the APS Board.

Primula allionii

by Viv Pugh

From a small area of the Maritime Alps bordering the Col de Tende comes *Primula allionii*, the only cushion forming member of the huge family of Primula. Here they grow in crevices on limestone cliffs and in cave entrances sometimes even upside down under overhanging formations. The little plants put long roots into these crevices gaining moisture and nutrients from the water trickling through the rock. In these conditions they form tufts and mounds covered with flowers ranging in color from white through all shades of pink to a deep magenta. If we keep in mind the growing conditions prevailing in their natural surroundings we have clues as to the environment and nurture necessary for successful cultivation.

The first step is to select a small healthy plant. Small is beautiful in this case so that the round shape can be built up. When examined closely it becomes apparent that the small dark green leaves are slightly sticky. For this reason be careful not to get compost or sand on the leaves or they will look unsightly and are almost impossible to clean. Repot in a very free draining compost. I use more than half grit in mine with the rest made up of a mixture of a good loam based compost (in England John Innes No 2) and a humus rich potting compost. When possible I use a little shredded sterilized bark as part of the humus element of the compost, as I think that part of the growing medium in their natural conditions will be leaf litter from the

previous year. I find that this helps with root formation. Clay pans make good containers but try not to over-pot. Between the top of the compost and the base of the plant cushion should come a thick top-dressing of sharp grit or fine gravel.

Having potted your small plant into your preferred growing medium, find a suitable place in your greenhouse. *P. allionii* like as dry an atmosphere as you can manage and appreciate some summer shading. Having said this they are more amenable than many primulas and will stand quite warm summer temperatures. Because of the very gritty compost you will find that the water will pour through the pots and care must be taken to water regularly in the warm summer days, trickling it gently around the edge of the pot. Do not water from above. If you get water on the leaves blot it gently with something like kitchen paper. Do not be tempted to feed them or you will get leaf formation at the expense of flower.

A regular regime of repotting after flowering should give sufficient nutrients, though I do use a very weak feed, 0-10-10, with no nitrogen in the Autumn to harden them and promote flowering. Many growers do not even do this.

The next choice to make is whether to grow on a gravel tray or in a plunge bed. I have no experience of growing *P. allionii* in a plunge bed for the simple reason that I did not have one when I set out and have found that they are quite happy to sit on a tray of gravel. I think myself that they benefit from the added circulation of air round the pots, but the

jury is still out on this one. In order to keep the desired round shape they should be turned regularly. I turn mine a quarter turn clockwise each week and find that if the labels all face the same way in the pots it is easy to remember whether they have been turned.

As the plants grow they become very dense and it is important to keep them as clean and free from dead vegetation as you can. The great enemy is botrytis, which can quickly spread through a plant. For this reason all flowers should be taken off when they are over or they can become a focus for infection. Dead leaves should also be removed. Tweezers are very useful for this. Within the mound of the plant it is impossible to remove all dead leaves and in fact they contribute to the shape of the plant, but those on the surface can quickly become damp and a target for fungus unless you are fortunate enough to have very dry cool growing conditions.

The many pure *P. allionii* clones can flower as early as January in a bright year though their peak flowering time is during the first half of March. They are surprisingly variable as regards size of flower and are very floriferous. The plants can be so covered that you can't see any leaf. The petals have a uniquely crystalline sheen and the little flowers seem to glow in the winter light. Like many early flowering plants busily trying to maximize their chances of being noticed by a rare passing insect the flowers are held for a long time. *P. allionii* has many hybrids, some of the most successful being with *P. marginata*. These hybrids make larger plants which

can be very showy and which grow rather more quickly. These hybrids give a further color range and flower a little later. A greenhouse bench full of both *P. allionii* and *P. allionii* hybrids is a breathtaking sight. All the work and the attention to detail put in during the year suddenly becomes worthwhile. Although I am always trying new Primula and enjoying their beauty these are my first love. Try one or two if you can. They are worth the challenge.

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(Our good friends across the pond)

Twenty Years With Double Auriculas by Derek Salt

After an initial interest in my younger years, I started to grow auriculas for the second time around 1980. I grew alpines and shows at first, as they were easier to obtain. My first doubles were from Barnhaven seed. By present standards they were poor, although at the time I thought them wonderful!

I showed the best at the 1983 NAPS(S) show at Brompton Church Hall in London. To my surprise I won the K.J. Gould cup for most points in the section. At this show I met Gwen Baker for the first time. We later became good friends and she gave me an offset of her 'Diamond', which was the Premier double at the show. Some growers criticize this variety, but to me at that time it was one of the best. Gwen was at this time one of the top breeders of doubles in the UK.

I became very interested in doubles and started to build up a collection of named plants. This was not easy as they were not very popular at the time. I remember the late Gordon Douglas saying to me, "Mr. Salt, you know that doubles are not proper auriculas." This was the attitude of many of the old growers at the time. Things have changed and most growers now have at least one or two doubles.

I continued to raise doubles from purchased seed, but around 1984 I made my first pollination. I have been doing it every year since then. In 1984 I showed again with named sorts,

Susannah, Walton Heath, Doublet and Watts Purple and some seedlings, one of which was Stripy. All these except Watts Purple I still have. I was also showing alpines and shows as well as Gold Laced Polyanthus. In 1985 and 86 I won the K.J. Gould cup and Premier double with Shalford.

In 1986 I resigned from my job and started my own nursery, Donington Plants, in Wrangle, Lincolnshire. At the time I was helped by a local man, Fred Booley. We became good friends and after he died I named a plant after him. In 1986 with my collection of about 30 varieties I was granted National Collection status by the NCCPG.

The work was hard for someone who had been "driving a desk" for most of his life, and without Fred I probably would not have made it. The nursery started to show at the RHS in 1988, and in 1989 it was awarded the coveted Gold Medal. This was the first Gold for a display of auriculas for seventy years since James Douglas senior won one in 1910. We were quite excited and we had many visitors and letters of congratulation. It also was the first Gold Medal display to have double auriculas in it. This included Trouble and an unnamed yellow seedling which I later named Gwen Baker. These two are still grown and Trouble is available in many countries.

We showed every year 1988 through 1992, but in 1993 I was seriously ill and on my own and had to retire. The nursery was sold. In 1999 we went back to North Staffordshire. Early that year I married Pat who now helps me in many



Top: 'Stromboli' (2001) Rebecca Baker x Prometheus Grown by Derek Salt

Bottom: 'Burnished Gold' (2001) Rebecca Baker x Prometheus. Grown by Derek Salt





Top Left: 'Jimmy Long' , Right: *P. marginata* grown in Victoria for 20 years, may be 'Lake Como'
Bottom left: Distinctive meal, particularly on the edge identifies *P. marginata*, this plant may be 'Marvin' Bottom Right: *P. marginata* 'Holden Clough' a longtime favorite in Britain



Top: *P. allionii* 'Jo-Jo' grown by Viv Pugh, Photo Henry Pugh
Bottom: *P. allionii* 'Joan Elliot' grown by Viv Pugh, Photo Henry Pugh





Top: Viv Pugh's Greenhouse Bench, Photo Henry Pugh
 Bottom: *P. allionii* 'Stradbroke Charm' grown by Viv Pugh, Photo Henry Pugh



Top: Green Edged Show Auricula from April 1983 Orval Agee Collection
 Bottom: Green Edged Show Auricula May 1977 Orval Agee





Grey Edged Show from April 1965

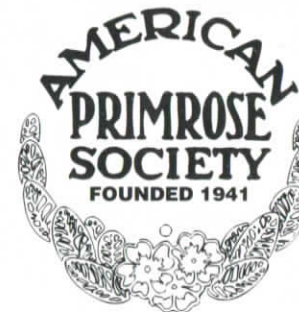
*Grey Edged Show grown by
Cy Happy, Tacoma Show April 1963*

Grey Edged Show from March 1959



American Primrose Society 53rd National Show

Sponsored by the
Juneau Alaska Chapter



Saturday May 17

Plant Sale 9:00 am to
4:30 pm
(APS Members 8:30)
Show 11:00 to 4:30

Sunday May 18

Plant Sale and Show
12:00 am to 4:00 pm
Garden Tours 12:30
pm to 3:30 pm

Workshop Speakers

Ann Lunn
Dorothy Springer
Rosetta Jones

Saturday 1 to 2 pm Primula Cultivation Workshop
Saturday 2 to 3 pm Juliae Primroses
Saturday 3 to 4 pm Judging Workshop

Event Locations

The 2003 National Show will be held at the Mendenhall Mall, Juneau, Alaska. The mall is in the "Valley" of Juneau. We will also be host to the Juneau Garden Club and the Master Gardeners plant sale in addition to the local Chapter plant sale. Local artists and crafts people will have booths at the show Saturday and Sunday.

Friday night setup and show entry registration will be held from 3 to 5:30 pm. A picnic pot-luck BBQ and Social will be held Friday evening in Ed Buyarski's garden at Tee Harbor following Friday night setup and registration. Saturday night at 7:00 pm there will be an Alaskan Fare BBQ and Social at 3155 Pioneer Ave. in West Juneau (near downtown). There will be a \$10.00 charge for the BBQ Social. Maedythe Martin will be the featured speaker at the Social, presenting a slide program "Auricula, Old and New".

Sunday will bring local garden tours from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm. There will be a \$10.00 charge which will cover all three workshops and maps to local gardens.

Registration Information:

phone: (907) 463-3155
or (907) 586-3469

ShowChairs: Paul Dick and Kerri Tonkin
email: primroses@gci.net

Schedule of Divisions and Classes

DIVISION I – POLYANTHUS

- Section A- Hybrids
- Section B- Jack-in-the-Green
- Section C- Poly/Acaulis Plants over 6.5"
- Section D- Hose-in-Hose
- Section E- Cowichan
- Section F- Any Other

DIVISION II - ACAULIS (*vulgaris*)

- Section A- Hybrids
- Section B- Doubles
- Section C- Jack-in-the-Green
- Section D- Any other

DIVISION III – JULIAE HYBRIDS

- Section A- Stalked form
- Section B- Cushion form
- Section C- Stalked/Cushion
- Section D- Any other

DIVISION IV – NOVICE ANY PRIMULA

Open to those who have never exhibited previously or have not won a Blue Ribbon at an APS Primula Show

- Section A- Polyanthus
- Section B- Acaulis
 - Class 1- Lavender
 - Class 2- White
 - Class 3- Red
- Section D- Auricula
- Section E- Juliae Hybrid
- Section F- Any other

DIVISION V- AURICULAS

- Section A- Garden/Border Auricula
- Section B- Semi-Double Auricula
- Section C- Double Auricula

DIVISION VI- EXHIBITION PLANTS

Minimum three open pips, thrums only

- Section A- Show Auricula
 - Class 1- White Edge
 - Class 2- Green Edge
 - Class 3- Grey Edge
 - Class 4- Self
 - Class 5- Fancies and Stripes
- Section B- Alpine Auricula
 - Class 1- Light Center
 - Class 2- Gold Center
- Section C- Laced Polyanthus

DIVISION VII –SPECIES

- Minimum one open pip
- Section A- Auriculastrum
 - Class 1- Marginata
 - Class 2- Auricula
 - Class 3- Pubescens hybrids
 - Class 4- Any other
- Section B- Aleuritia/Farinosae
- Section C- Primula/Vernales
 - Class 1- Elatior
 - Class 2- Veris
 - Class 3- Vulgaris/Primrose
 - Class 4- Any other
- Section D- Denticulata
 - Class 1- Lavender Denticulata
 - Class 2- Red Denticulata
 - Class 3- White Denticulata
 - Class 4- Any other
- Section E- Proliferae-Candelabra
 - Class 1- Japonica
 - Class 2- Any other
- Section F- Crystallophlomis
 - Class 1- Chionantha
 - Class 2- Any other
- Section G- Petiolaris

- Section H- Creophlomis
 - Class 1- Rosea
 - Class 2- Any other
- Section I- Cortusoides
 - Class 1- Sieboldii
 - Class 2- Any other
- Section J- Sikkimensis
- Section K- Any other

DIVISION VIII- SEEDLINGS

A plant grown by the exhibitor from seed, showing its maiden spring bloom, at least one open pip, not more than three crowns. Maximum of four entries/section/exhibitor.

- Section A- Polyanthus
- Section B- Acaulis
- Section C- Juliae Hybrid
- Section D- Aleuritia/Farinosae
- Section E- Garden Auricula
- Section F- Alpine Auricula
- Section G- Show Auricula
- Section H- Denticulata
- Section I- Doubles
- Section J- Any other

DIVISION IX- GREENHOUSE

- Section A- Malacoides
- Section B- Obconica
- Section C- Sinensis
- Section D- x kewensis
- Section E- Any other

DIVISION X- ODDITIES AND RARITIES

Those plants rare by virtue of limited supply or infrequent occurrence such as the mutations Jack-a-napes on Horseback or Gallygaskins or other novelties.

DIVISION XI- HYBRIDIZING

Must be grown by seed produced by the exhibitor. Limit of three entries/exhibitor.

DIVISION XII- DECORATIVE

Arrangement in which Primula must predominate. Accessories and other flowers and foliage permitted.

DIVISION XIII- OTHER GENERA IN PRIMULACEAE

Androsace, Cortusa, Cyclamen, Dodecatheon, Soldanella, etc.

DIVISION XIV- GROWERS EXHIBIT

Display of 6 Primula in one container
Class 1- Six same species
Class 2- Six related species or hybrids
Class 3- Six unrelated

DIVISION XV- FOLIAGE PRIMULA

Buds allowed, but no open pips.

National Show Trophies

- Ivanel Agee** - Best Hybrid Julie
- Wesley Bottom** - Best Hose-in-Hose
- Rae Berry** - Best Species
- Cpt. Comely Hawkes** - Best Laced Poly
- Bamford** - Best Edged Show Auricula
- John Haddock/CF Hill** - Best Alpine Auricula Seedling
- Frank Michaud** - Best Named Show Auricula
- Herb Dickson** - Best Picotee Auricula
- Mary Zach** - Best Show Self Auricula
- John Shuman** - Best Show Alpine
- Ellen P. Hayden** - Best Double Auricula
- John Kerridge** - Most Species in Bloom
- J. Kerridge Memorial** - Best Cowichan Sweepstakes Award - for Most Points Earned by one Exhibitor
- Dorothy Dickson Bronze Medal** - for Outstanding Service to the APS

Juneau Chapter Trophies

- Best of Show** - Gold pan
- John O'Brien Denticulata Trophy** - Gold pan
- Best Species** - Framed print of P. megasaefolia
- Best Vernales** - Print of P. elatior
- Novice Trophy** -
- Best Juliae** -
- Best Polyanthus** - Framed print
- Show Chairman's Award**

1. Exhibits will be received Friday, May 16th from 4- 7 PM and Saturday, May 17th from 7- 9:30 AM. Contact Show Chair Paul Dick at 586-3469 or Kerri Tonkin at 463-3155 for details
2. All Divisions and Sections are open to both amateurs and commercial growers and no difference in judging will be shown. Exhibitors do not need to be members of APS.
3. All plants entered in the show shall have been grown by the exhibitor for at least 3 months.
4. Staking is permitted on Exhibition plants only. Pin-eyed plants are disqualified in all sections of the Exhibition Division.
5. Only Show Chairpersons, Judging Committee and Clerks will be permitted on the show floor during judging.
6. Entries are the property of the show during the show hours and must not be removed until after 4 PM Sunday May 18th.
7. Exhibitors shall furnish their own pots, which shall be of clean ceramic, pottery, or plastic with no designs or printing. Division XIV-Grower's Exhibit, may be more creative. These should bear the name of the exhibitor on the bottom of the pot. No top dressing around plants in pots except peat moss. Fine gravel allowed for species only.
8. Temporary labels should be on all seedling plants for proper placing.
9. All exhibits shall be judged by the standards of excellence established by the American Primrose Society. Plants are judged as shown. Mature plants must have three open florets to be judged, except as noted in Show Schedule. Judges may award more than one Blue ribbon in a Class if plants are of award quality. Additional Classes may be added if needed at the discretion of the Show Chair.
10. It is understood that the American Primrose Society and their members will not be held responsible for personal injury, or loss or damage to property.
11. The Show Management may make such rules as it may deem necessary for the proper conduct of the show.



Yellow Self 'Mary Zack' May 1975



Yellow Self May 1981

Yellow Self from April 1975



Assistance in staging plants will be available at time of benching. All plants exhibited must be clearly marked with the name of the plant, the exhibitor, and the Division/Class entered on entry cards supplied. All exhibits are to be handled only by the exhibitor or by the show steward. Exhibitors must not handle any other exhibitors plants. Plants incorrectly staged will not be penalized, but will be moved by the show steward to the appropriate class on discovery of the mistake. If any Division or Class does not have an award considered worthy of a prize, no prize will be awarded. All decisions of the judges will be final.



Red Self 'American Beauty'
grown-by Cy Happy April 77



Dark Self April 1961

Red Self April 1961

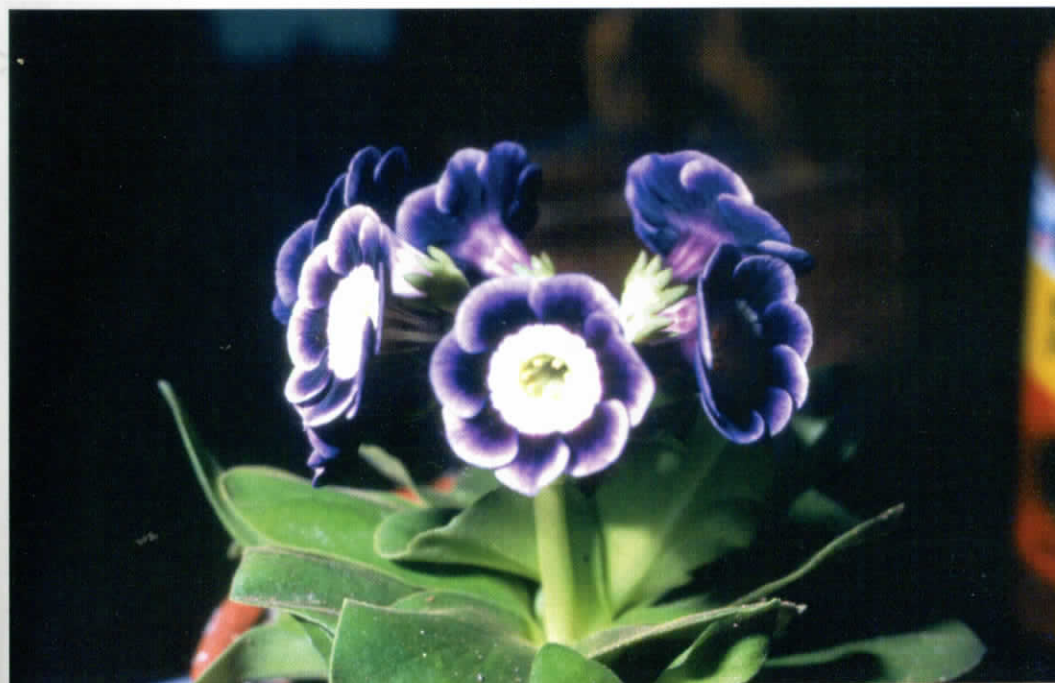


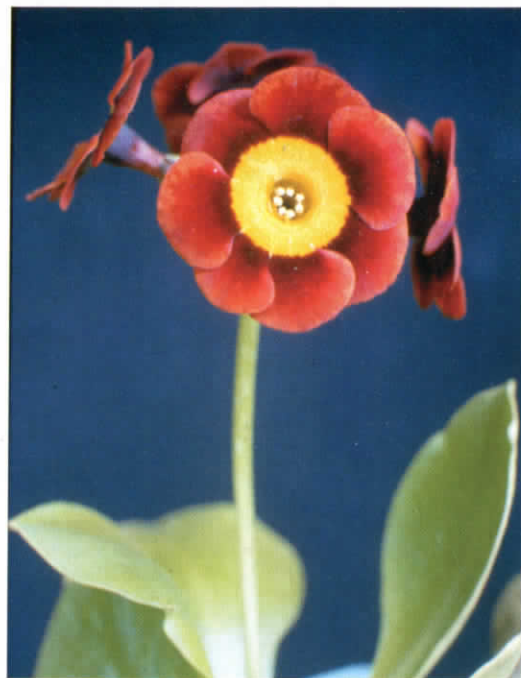
Light Centered Alpine 'Gordon Douglas' May 60



Light Centered Alpine "Joy" May 1964

Light Centered Alpine Best Seedling Tacoma Show L Bailey April 82





Gold Centered Alpine Cy Happy April 1968

Gold Centered Alpine May 1964

Blue Garden Picotee April 1960

Cream Garden Picotee Pink Blush April 1986

Gold Centered Alpine from April 1961

Yellow Garden May 1984

Light Red Garden April 1963





Red Double Auricula April 1979



Yellow Double Auricula April 1978

Blue Double Auricula April 1978



ways, being chief pollinator, pricker out of seedlings and plant dresser at shows.

From 1995 on I grew mainly doubles and concentrated on breeding. I find breeding quite fascinating and much more interesting than just showing, though we still show, simply to let the judges see our plants. This is essential, as a breeder tends to think all his plants are superb. Often they are not.

During the years 1994-1998 we made lots of crosses, mainly to explore the genetic potential of the many varieties which we had. The results were interesting and we were able to dispose of many that were of little use for breeding purposes. In 1998 I withdrew from the NCCPG as we had more plants than we had room for. A National Collection holder is required to keep three plants of each variety in the collection. This was putting a great deal of pressure on the space we had available and reduced the number of seedlings we could raise. In 1998 we moved back to Lincolnshire, our favorite county, although it is not ideal for auriculas, too much sun and wind.

At the moment we seem to be selecting seedlings which are fully double i.e. they have neither pin or pollen. We call them "end of the line plants". In the long term of course this could be a disaster, as breeding would cease, so we have started to select from the same cross plants with a pin and pollen to continue the line.

Our work has shown which plants are good seed parents, i.e., with a good pin, smooth petal edges, color and form. Quatro and Reverie are two good

examples of blues. These have been line bred (by Gwen Baker) and give a high proportion of blue seedlings. Good blue pollen parents are Sarah Lodge and Walton Heath. Both quite old but still very useful. Possibly the best seed parent for most purposes is Helena Dean (HD). It gives good seed, which germinates well, and the seedlings normally have good strong stems and footstalks. Jayne Myers (JM) is also good and Ken Whorton, a very experienced breeder, says it produces a higher proportion of doubles for him. My own experience tends towards using HD as it gives such good plants. Some people, like Ed Pickin, use only HD as seed parent, although he now admits that he has gone as far as he can with it and needs another seed parent.

Another double is Mathew Ruane's "Rebecca Baker" I have used it to breed good reds; Stromboli, Vesuvius, and Cardinal Red are good examples. The pollen parent for these was Martin Sheaders "Prometheus". HD x Prometheus (Prom) gives some good browns. HD has yellow and blue parentage, Prom has red and yellow. HD x Prom also provides some super bright yellows. Good gold colors come from Helena Dean crossed with plants like Prometheus and Digit. Purples are easy but real quality is more difficult. The best I have is Joanne from a Ruane seedling x Walton Heath. It offsets very slowly so we have done it again to see if anything better is produced. I doubt whether it will be. We find most plants give similar results no matter how often you try.

Probably the most fruitful cross has been Quatro x Sarah Lodge, which has given us Fred Booley (FB), Lincoln Fair (LF), Clueless and several more under test. Of these most people like FB, although I feel that when it is more widely grown LF will be the best plant for showing. Only time will tell.

We have Reverie x Sarah Lodge to flower in 2003. Quatro and Reverie are from the same line. Reverie has a better flower. Stripy x Jayne Myers and the reverse cross give interesting plants, some are nicely striped, i.e. Wizard, the F2 is of interest. The colors segregate into greenish/yellow and pale blue and some very nice laced and striped forms, however these are extremely variable and may never be distributed. They vary from not very nice stripes to a superb laced form both from the same plant in different seasons.

There is no true blue in double auricula or any other type, at the moment we are crossing HD with various seedlings and have one or two interesting seedlings; good color but only semi-double. I have just ordered from the APS Seed Exchange seed of a semi-double blue border, which will add some more blue genes to the pot.

A white double would be interesting, others have raised a number but we feel that better plants could be possible. We are trying Helena Dean x Sea Mist and this year hope to try Diamond x Sea Mist. A Barnhaven F2 x Diamond gave Partney, when we did it in 1987. We then lost Diamond and have only just been able to get a new plant.

We did not show in 2002 as I felt that

we had earned a year off, so in 2003 we will have two years seedlings weather permitting. We are hoping that the judges will like some of our new plants. Over the years I have found that my own plants grow better for me than those of other breeders, I have discussed this with some other breeders and they also find this with their varieties. Makes good sense if you think about it, they are used to my growing conditions. I recommend that all those who show doubles to experiment and raise some seedlings. In time they will be rewarded.

The actual mechanics of pollinating and growing are set out in many good books, I recommend "Auriculas" by Baker and Ward. The only point I make is that to avoid too many seedlings in your greenhouse and frames. It is essential to feed to get plants to flower within 15/16 months of sowing, but avoid high nitrogen and go for high potash fertilizers.

Some knowledge of genetics is useful. I have little, and by careful observation and common sense you can go a long way. Some things will become obvious. Seed parents which are slow to offset give similar properties to their seedlings. Dwarf stems tend to give dwarf stems and plants with weak stems should be avoided if possible. It is sometimes useful to try the F2 crosses, as some properties are recessive. Line breeding can be useful but it can be a long process, and it is very easy to lose doubling if selection is not good.

It is important to keep records. Each breeder needs to have their own way. We give each cross a number and record it

in a notebook rather like Rosetta Jones does with her primroses. For the last two years we have been using modern technology to put an image of all more interesting seedlings on our computer, I spend many a happy hour looking at these.

Many of the varieties mentioned are available only in the UK, but over the next few years we shall be trying to get some of them into the USA and other countries. Photos of many are on the APS and other websites. Some newer varieties are illustrated for this article.

Recognition and many thanks should be given to my wife Pat for all the work she has done over the years. All photos shown are to her credit.

Page 17 Top: 'Stromboli'

Page 17 Bottom: 'Burnished Gold'

Back Cover Left: 'Fred Booley'

Back Cover Right: 'Vesuvius'

Derek Salt

Interested in a Primrose Twin?

Contact Judith Sellers
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Primula marginata

by Maedythe Martin

Primula marginata is a very hardy, slow growing and garden-worthy plant. Though, perhaps garden-worthy is misleading, for it really does very well in pots.

It comes from the southern Italian Alps, in a region called the Cottian Alps, but extends over to the French border and grows north of Nice. It is found growing down shady cliffs and steep slopes, often growing out of rocky fissures. This may explain why it will grow in pots and definitely explains why it likes good drainage.

Once you've seen one, you will recognize *Primula marginata*. The leaves are leathery, like auriculas, but toothed on the edge, and covered with meal or farina, particularly when young. Older leaves sometimes have the meal just on the toothed edges, or margins, of the leaves, hence the name marginata.

The cultivars can be difficult to tell apart. There are three distinguishing characteristics: the shape of the leaf; its degree of farina; the kind of toothed edge; the color of the flower; whether it is pin-eyed or thrum-eyed and the time of flowering being early or late.

Most cultivars are shades of violet or lavender. There are white-flowered and pink forms, though in each case the color is a bit muddy. Lately there have been some excellent deep blue varieties named from the late Herb Dickson's stock. Identifying one variety from another is tricky. A table is included at

the end with some of the more commonly available varieties, listing their distinguishing characteristics, which may help you identify a particular plant.

There are many more varieties listed in the books, but not generally found in cultivation in North America. Our balmy sea air here at the West Coast seems to agree with them, and they deserve more attention and a place in everyone's pot garden. They are certainly a welcome addition when they begin to bloom in late February.

For a potting mix, use equal parts loam, peat and sharp grit. Repotting once a year is recommended, but the plants will grow in a pot forever. In the spring, water well and feed once a week with half-strength liquid fertilizer. In winter, keep the plant on the dry side. If you want the effect of the farina on the leaves, keep the plant out of the rain. You will be rewarded with a jewel in spring.

**American Primrose
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and Plant Display**

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email: elaineprim@aol.com

Name	Leaf	Flower	Flowering
<i>P. marginata</i> (type)	Variable, toothed edge, silver or gold meal	Mauve-blue small flowers, pin and thrum	Early Season
<i>P. marginata caerulea</i>	Toothed, well covered in meal	Small, pin eyed, Funnel-shaped, good clear blue, no farina in center of flower	Early Bloomer
<i>P. marginata rosea</i>	Regular serrations on narrow, elliptical leaf	More pink than lavender, thrum-eyed, some pin-eyed	Mid Season
<i>P. marginata</i> 'Dwarf form' (from England)	Neat, small evenly-toothed, gold farina	Lavender-blur, slightly funnel-shaped pin-eyed. Small white eye	Early Bloomer
Selected Forms	U.S. Introductions		
'Agee'	Long narrow large-toothed leaf, covered in white meal	Large head flat flowers. Mauve-blue, frilled. Thrum	Mid Season
'Herb Dickson'	Very evenly serrated large leaf	Rich deep blue-violet with distinctive darker ring around eye. Pin	Mid Season Good repeat bloomer
'Allan Jones'	Similar to Herb Dickson's leaf, but more regular	Deep blue-violet. Small white eye, no ring. Pin	Mid Season
'Jimmy Long'	Distinctive ragged leaf with uneven shallow serrations	Palest lavender, slightly frilly, very nice. Pin	Early to mid Season. Offsets freely.
Selected Forms	From England		
'Drake's Form'	Plump round leaves with uneven deep teeth	Large deep rose flat pin-eyed flowers	Late Season?
'Pritchard's Variety'	Small, neatly serrated leaves	Light mauve, flat pin-eyed flowers	Mid to Late Season
'Kesselring'	Similar to but smaller than 'Pritchard's Variety'	Flat, rich deep lavender flowers with pin eye	Late Season
'Holden Clough'	Toothed, covered in distinctive golden meal	Clear light blue funnel shaped, loose head. Pin-eyed with slight farina ring	Mid Season
Hybrid 'Linda Pope'	Large round leaf with large deep serrations	Large flat lavender-blue flowers with prominent white eye. Thrum	Mid Season. Top form exhibition plant
Hybrid 'Janet'	Silver farina	True Pale blue. Flower stems tend to fasciate	Mid Season Old Variety

The Canadian Connection

by *Maedythe Martin*

Did you know that the Alpine Garden Society of British Columbia began when a group of Primula enthusiasts in Vancouver joined with some alpine plant growers to form the Canadian Primula and Alpine Society in 1955? This group was an affiliated society of the American Primrose Society (APS) from the mid-1950s and through the 1960s. The formal affiliation seems to have been discontinued when the society changed its name to the current Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia (AGCBC) in the late 1960s.

Tracing the history is a challenge. Bits and pieces can be found in the APS Quarterlies, and the bulletin of the AGCBC. But there is no clear path. Take, for instance, the case of one of the founding members of the Canadian Primula and Alpine Society, Susan Watson.

Susan Worthington Watson

Whenever I heard Susan Watson spoken of at APS events it was always Susan Worthington Watson. Indeed, in the Fall, 1956 APS quarterly there is a tribute to Susan Worthington, written by Florence Levy (later Bellis), which provides a few facts. Susan came to the job of editor in 1952 with little knowledge of Primula and none of editing. She followed Florence Levy as editor, and in an effort to learn about primroses, mentions in a later column that she kept a binder with a page for each primrose she came across. It is from

this binder that the genesis of the Pictorial Dictionary of the Genus Primula arose, which was published piece by piece in the quarterly from Fall 1953 (October) through 1954 and 1955. The history of the Dictionary deserves another historical article.

During this period as editor, Susan, and her husband, Dale B. Worthington, are each listed in the membership lists. Dale followed Mary Zach as president of APS in 1954. (Remember the yellow self show auricula called 'Mary Zach'? It is grown in England today, as well as in the Pacific Northwest, and I wonder if the British know it was named after an APS president?)

Susan worked tirelessly as editor, it seems, for in two years she had researched and published, with her editorial team, the Pictorial Dictionary, coordinated a group called the Show Auricula Floriculturalists of America, and "brought about a unity of standards among the British, Canadians and Americans," writes Florence Levy. She also introduced the APS Quarterly Award for Outstanding Achievements in Hybridizing that was first won by Linda Eichman in 1953 for the introduction of clear pink polyanthus. Hard to imagine there were no clear pink polyanthus before this. We take so much for granted, don't we?

Susan may have had to learn about primroses and editing, but she seems to have mastered organization very well. She put in place a system of regional editors in England, Germany, Switzerland, Canada and throughout the United States, and fostered relations

personally and for APS with all these contacts. In between times we find notes that she went with Florence Levy to Friday Harbor in the San Juan Islands to visit the Primrose Club there and set off another time on a trip with Florence and her husband and Mrs. A.C.U. Berry to find, successfully, three native North American Primula.

But by 1956 Susan Worthington had a health problem, and decided to resign. Florence Levy says, "Her friends know that the last six issues were assembled, edited, and published during hospitalization and a long convalescence which is still in progress, and which is the reason for her resignation."

And in 1958, Mr. Dale Worthington is listed alone as a member of the APS. Now all during this time, a Mr. Watson, owner of Acme Peat Products, Vancouver, B.C. has also been listed as an APS member. And lo, in 1960, there is listed Mr. and Mrs. Watson in the APS membership list. Just how this happened, I don't know. Maybe someone still remembers. But from here on we get the occasional column in the Quarterly by Susan Watson, from Vancouver.

Grace Conboy

(pictured top right of page)

Word about the Canadian Primula and Alpine Society first appears in the Winter, 1957 Quarterly with a report from Grace Conboy in Vancouver. The group "has made favourable progress in its short span of existence. In May, 1956, we staged our first parlour show which was non-competitive." Some of the entries are described and a note made



that during the year, the group met to show slides, to work on useful lectures on Primula classification, raising plants from seed, and basic general culture of the more easily grown varieties. The Canadian Society "looks forward in '57 to having our first real show..."

Reports of Canadian shows continue to appear in the Quarterly through the next years, many written by Grace Conboy, who also contributed articles. Some of the reports list Grace as a prizewinner, as well. And in the Winter 1960 Quarterly, in "A Letter from British Columbia, in the Pacific Northwest" written by Grace, with photos also by the author, there is a photo of her standing by her rock garden on Marine Drive. Lovely plants are mentioned. One prizewinner is a "superb rose primrose-type Jack-in-the-Green" staged by Mr. V. Costley. Grace was growing the Petiolarid primrose *P. sessilis* as her photos attest.

Frank Michaud

One of the sources for plants for this

Canadian Society was Frank Michaud's nursery Alpenglou in New Westminster, B.C. The Fall 1961 issue of the Quarterly has a little article entitled, "Introducing Frank H. Michaud of Alpenglou Gardens." The photo on the page shows Frank winning the Bamford Trophy in 1955. Frank had a nursery at Chelles, France, just outside Paris, but this was destroyed by a flood after six years in business. Frank left his family and ended up in British Columbia where he started a nursery there. The first list was issued in 1923. After a few years he was able to send for his family. Besides alpine and Primulas of all kinds, Frank was particularly interested in the show auriculas. He imported them from England, and made crosses of his own. Reading the old catalogs from the 1960s makes one's mouth water. Many auricula growers in the Pacific Northwest found a unique source at Alpenglou Gardens.



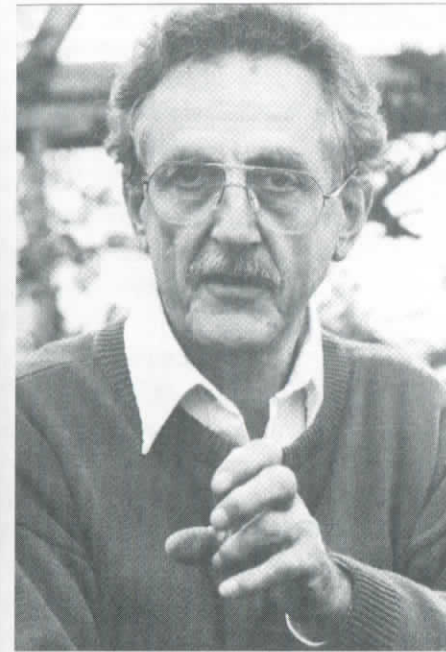
Frank Michaud holds the Bamford Trophy which he won in 1955

Thea Foster

The one written history of the AGCBC I have found was by Thea Foster. She lived in North Vancouver, and was on the editorial committee of the APS quarterly from 1990 to 1991. Thea was a keen Primula grower and hybridizer, and we, in the Lower Mainland, still grow and remember her wonderful auriculas. If you ever got a letter from Thea, you would remember it. The handwriting was distinctive; the letter was long, and sprinkled with drawings, to illustrate her point. But the prose was perfect wonderful paragraphs that outlined her thoughts clearly and, with her experience of growing Primulas and Auriculas over many years, the information was well worth the read.

Thea picks up the history of the AGCBC when it is formed by the merger of the primrose group and some alpine enthusiasts. It appears the primrose group had been meeting regularly before the creation of the new group. Susan Watson indicated in later years that her husband had been fundamental in getting the primrose group started in Vancouver. But over time, the primulas began to take second place to alpine, and finally the name was changed to reflect this in the late 1960s. The executive had none of the old Primula guard, and the name change was passed easily, but not without some hard feelings on the part of some of the original members of the Primula group. Nonetheless, Primula were still grown and shown at the pot shows of the AGCBC. The annual show fell into abeyance, until it was revived in 1993. And the same year, another primrose

group in Vancouver was formed under the direction of Dr. John Kerridge.



John Kerridge

Dr. John Kerridge was a true Primula aficionado. Doing nothing by halves, he grew thousands of seeds and had hundreds of plants. Most were in his garden bed, on the south slopes of Vancouver. He took plants to the National APS show in Washington and Oregon every year for about 7 or 8 years, which was always a challenge for a Canadian taking plants into the United States. In short order John became President of APS. He was interested in tissue culture, and two of his gold-laced polyanthus are still available today due to micro propagation: 'Mahogany Sunrise' is one of these. John took frequent trips to England to visit

relatives, and brought back many auriculas and primroses from there as well. Due to the stress of travel and some inexperience with growing highly hybridized show auriculas, most are no longer with us. But he sold seed of his gold-laced polyanthus crosses to Steve Craven of Craven's Nursery that sold under the name 'Doctor's Delight'. And John organized and chivied the B.C. Primula Group into existence. With his good friends Renee and Dennis Oakley the group flourished and put on an attractive and educational display (designed so cleverly by Roxanne Muth) each year at the AGCBC annual show. John's driving energy was cut short by his untimely death from a massive heart attack in November 1998.

The B.C. Primrose Group is about to celebrate its 10th anniversary this May. Small but keen, the group hosted the APS National Show last year, and continues the annual display and sale of primroses each April in conjunction with the AGCBC. It's almost as if we have gone full circle from the first informal primrose group that met in 1954 and 1955 in Vancouver.

Bibliography

Sentimental Journey, Ninth West Coast Winter Study Weekend, February 24, 25, 26, 1984. Gary and Penny Finholt, editors. Port Townsend, WA., 1984, p97 Issues of the American Primrose Society Quarterly, *Primroses*, 1953 to 1961. "A Visit with Susan Watson" by John Kerridge. *Primroses*, Fall, 1991, v. 49, no. 4. p. 6-7. Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia. Bulletin. Sept., 2001, p. 92.

New England Chapter Fall Gathering

by Mary Irwin

On a beautiful September Saturday, our group, including several Hosta Society members looking for exciting companion plants, met in the beautifully landscaped garden of the old farmstead in New Hampshire belonging to G.K. Fenderson and Alston Barrett. G.K. Fenderson is the author of *A Synoptic Guide to the Genus Primula*, available from the APS bookstore.

Led by our hosts, who have designed and planted the garden during the past thirty years, we toured several acres of mature specimen trees and wonderfully shaped evergreens under-planted with a collection of rare shrubs and perennials, large container plants, and annuals. Of special interest were several half barrels, which remain outdoors through all weather, filled with auriculas, marginatas and other Primulas. Self-sown *Primula japonica* rosettes dotted the lawn in a few corners, where they obviously found conditions to their liking. We imagined it was spring as we looked at a large bed of *P. kisoana*, which would bloom at that season.

We lunched on the patio as we admired our surroundings of light colored autumn annuals in containers and some choice shrubs, many of which were unfamiliar to us as northern gardeners.

Our business meeting began with each of us telling the story of how, when, or where we first became involved with, or addicted to, Primulas. A wealth of

fascinating information was shared in just a few minutes, and we realized there are many roads to Primula Enthusiasm.

General discussion followed, concerning the wisdom of ordering by mail from Chinese nurseries, progress of our APS Seed Exchange, auricula allergies, the Garden Conservancy Open House at this garden on July 19, the 2003 Primrose Day at Cider Hill, our winter meeting plans, and the proposed First Annual New England Chapter Primula Show. Berkshire Botanical Garden became our choice of venue, with "around, but not on, Mother's Day" being the preferred time for such a Show.

Following too many desserts and some time for informal chat, Alex Malloy led us in an auction of plants. Hellebores, Hostas and Primulas (including *P. kisoana*, and show auricula from England,) were the primary items up for bid. Most people went home with inspiration for their own gardens, cars filled with promising plants, and cameras containing photographs from a truly beautiful garden.

Anchorage Group Grows

by Mary Jo Burns

As the long winter brightens, Anchorage gardeners are nurtured with information on Primroses. A group gathered to "talk" primroses in February at my home. Pictures were passed around, seeds were shared and plans for the next meeting were set. On March 19th we hosted Robert Tonkin as our guest speaker with a slide show on the

auricula. We were pleased when over thirty people filled the room. One of our own enthusiastic primrose growers and nursery owner, Sally Arant, recently taught a class on growing primroses in southcentral Alaska. The class showcased her new handbook, *Alaskan Primrose Primer*. As you can see, Primula are coming up "roses" in Anchorage this spring!

New Gig-Narrows Chapter Joins the A.P.S.

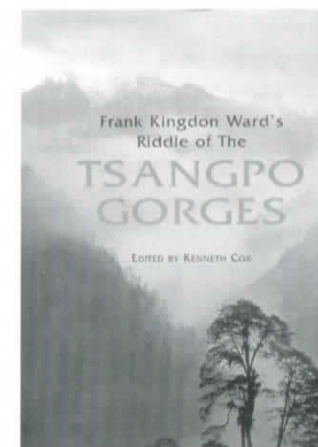
by Dorothy Dwyer

As of March 14, 2003, the Gig-Narrows group voted to apply for membership to the APS. We were organized September 2002 and have gradually grown in membership to where we now have officers and interesting programs. We have requested Chapter status from the APS Board.

Our officers are: President: Dorothy Dwyer; Vic President: Rosetta Jones; Secretary: Jewel Doering; Treasurer: Correne Hall; Program Chair: Dorothy Springer.

The April meeting was a fantastic study and explanation of the primrose plant to educate and encourage our new members. Many plants were shown along with Rosetta's new hybrids. It was a great day! We look forward to our next meeting, as President Ed Buyarski will be our guest.

(Our APS Board has voted to accept Gig-Narrows as our newest Chapter. Welcome Folks!!)



Frank Kingdon Ward's Riddle of The Tsangpo Gorges Retracing the Epic Journey of 1924-1925 in South-East Tibet

Original Text by Frank Ward

Editor: Kenneth Cox

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Book Review by Robert Tonkin

How many of us would not be drawn to a book with chapter titles that read "The Paradise of Primulas", "The Land of the Blue Poppy", or "In the Rhododendron Fairyland"? This reprint of Frank Kingdon Ward's *Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges* brings considerable value to readers with any interest in Ward's fascinating account of his 1924-25 trek into the depths of Tibet.

Contributing editors and authors Baker, Storm, and Cox do an outstanding job of weaving their own brilliant color photographs, field notes and botanical knowledge between the pages of Ward's original account and photographs.

Ian Baker was the leader of the 1998 National Geographic Society expedition documenting the Tsangpo Gorge. Ken Storm has made five journeys to the Tsangpo River; one being the first Western expedition to the upper gorge since Ward's 1924 expedition. Scotsman Ken Cox is a world-class expert and renowned author of the genus *Rhododendron*, and it shows.

Following sixty-five pages of background history of the area, Ward's original account of his expedition follows. The text chronicles their journey into 1924 Tibet and his daring descent into the world's largest river gorge, known as the Tsangpo. Between the two massive peaks of Namcha Bara (7757m. 25,446ft.) and Gyala Peri (7287m. 23,901ft), a distance of only 13 miles, Tsangpo Gorge lies at the bottom of a vertical drop of over three miles. Spreading out from this deep narrow river gorge over a radius of one hundred miles is the intersection of the Trans-Himalayan Range, the Great Himalayan Range, and the Salween Divide. The mountainside forests, valleys, alpine meadows and river banks that drain this massive land mass are the native habitat to some of the world's most beautiful *Primula*, *Rhododendron*, *Meconopsis*, *Gentiana*, and countless other botanical gifts of Mother Nature.

While the majority of the species described by Ward are of the genus *Rhododendron*, extensive accounts of *Primula* abound. Among the highlights are descriptions of vast fields of fragrant *P. alpicola* var. *luna*, *P. waltonii*, and Ward's wife's namesake, *P. florindae*.

Dozens of other "lesser known to cultivation", read: "almost impossible to keep alive" species of *Primula* such as *P. advena*, *cawdoriana*, named for Lord Cawdor, Ward's companion and major financier of this expedition, *dickiena*, *baileyana*, named for F.M. Bailey, another great plant hunter who had been to the Tsangpo area in 1911, *tibetica*, and *valentiniana*, among many others.

Ward's writing style is easy to follow, detailed in scope, and often humorous as he describes hardships, horrific weather, personal accomplishments (digging under five feet of snow to find rare *Rhododendron* seed), the local's native "brew", or simply his detailed accounts of the majestic beauty that swallowed the expedition for eleven months. His journal is supplemented with excellent photographs and detailed observations of terrain, flora, and people provided by Cox, Baker and Storm. Their photographs and field notes of rare flowers and breathtaking terrain, taken seventy five years later, are made possible by Ward's detailed descriptions of plant and terrain locations.

The editors thoughtfully reprinted Ward and Cawdor's original maps of the expedition on the inside covers of the volume so the reader may follow their journey of just under a year.

I highly recommend this book to anyone with an interest in botanical history, or to those simply possessed with the desire to understand the native habitats of the plant species we humbly attempt to tame. I found it to be informative as a plant grower and entertaining as an adventure journal.

The APS Bookstore

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Primulas The Complete Guide	Mary Robinson	\$21.50
The Genus Primula	Josef Halda	\$20.00
Auriculas, An Illustrated Guide	Malcolm Guest	\$14.00
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