

Alpine Garden Club of B.C.





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Committee Members

Mark Demers, Len Gardiner, Sara Jones, Joe Keller, Jason Nehring,
Stuart Scholefield

Honorary Life Members

Rosemary Burnham, Margaret Charlton, Grace Conboy,
Francisca Darts, Frank Dorsey, Pam Frost, Daphne Guernsey, Bodil Leamy,
Jim MacPhail, Vera Peck, Geoff Williams, Bob Woodward

Meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month except July & August, in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00pm and Meetings start at 7:30pm sharp with the educational talk. Don't forget to bring a prize for the raffle which goes a long way to paying for the hall rental.

Cover: *Briza maxima* - drawn by Nico Verbeek cf. article by Linda Verbeek
"Report from the Fall Sale" p.87

AGC PROGRAM

Nov. 9th 2005 South African Plants for Northwest Gardens. Jim Fox, Manager of [Wells Medina Nursery](#) in Seattle will base his talk on his January 2004 botanizing trip to this treasure trove of plants.

Dec.14th 2005 Christmas Plant Auction and Pot Luck Supper. It's never too soon to plan your plant contributions to our fundraiser for the [CKNW Orphans' Fund](#).

Jan.11th 2006 Richie Steffen, Coordinator of Horticulture of the [Elisabeth C. Miller Botanic Garden](#), Seattle. (Topic TBA)

Feb.8th 2006 Members' Slides – All those lovely photos you took during your summer holidays and trips will be welcome for this popular meeting. We can also accommodate computer based photos from your digital camera, just let us know ahead of time.

March 8th 2006 Araucariana – Plants of the Chilean Andes. Philip MacDougall has recently returned from a hunt for rosulate violets in Chile and will share his experiences.

April 8th/9th Spring Show (Date to be confirmed)

April 12th 2006 Dave Demers, Seed Collecting in Mongolia

May 6th 2006 Spring Sale at St. David's Church, W. Vancouver

May 10th 2006 Tour of the [E.H. Lohbrunner Alpine Garden at UBC](#)

June 14th 2006 Sue Milliken and Kelly Dodson From Far Reaches Farm will give us one of their very amusing talks – probably on “Where the heck is Nagaland?”



FALL SALE 2005

~ by Linda Verbeek, Burnaby, British Columbia

The fall sale was fairly late this year, not until September 25th. It was probably fortunate that we had a stretch of splendid weather before that, or the plants might have looked rather bedraggled. As it was, the sale presented the usual display of exuberance, although the fall sale is never as colourful as the spring one.

Glen Lewis, of Fragrant Flora, was present with quite a variety of plants - I know I am not even doing justice to a fraction of them, but what can you do. It is sad that he is closing his nursery at the end of the year, but hopefully he will still be gardening at home and find himself with surpluses, so we may see him back. He was very proud of *Salvia*

desoleana, a very pungently scented plant from Sardinia with medicinal values (although I don't know what they are). *Corydalis elata* is another blue-flowered *Corydalis*, obviously blooming later than the more familiar *C. flexuosa*. I think it was a somewhat softer blue, too.

Cyclamen purpurascens (used to be called *C. europaeum*) is a very pretty, scented hardy cyclamen, which I for one find hard to grow. Glen said it grew better for him in pots. I have found it once, in Austria, and noticed then that the tuber was buried quite a ways. It seems to like leafmold over limestone... *Dianthus* 'Mrs. Sinkins' dates back to the 16th century! It is white and feathery, and has a very strong scent.

I was really charmed by *Lupinus excubitus* var. *austromontanus*, as true a silver as I have ever seen. According to Glen, it comes from the mountains of California - probably almost impossible in our climate unless you have an alpine house. The flowers are deep blue-purple with a yellow spot. *Salvia digitaloides* from Yunnan had soft blue flowers. Glen also had a couple of plants of *Hacquetia epipactis*, a plant one sees for sale only very rarely. It is a most unusual member of the *Apiaceae*, with tripartite leaves, and very tight heads of



yellow flowers, surrounded by a fringe of rounded bracts, early in spring. The whole plant doesn't exceed 4" (10cm). It is not spectacular, but has a quiet charm, and it doesn't mind a shady spot.

Kaz Pelka had the usual splendid array of sempervivums and such. They do make a show all year round with their colourful leaves - good value! I was charmed by *Haworthia cymbiformis*. It has fatter leaves without markings, and the flowers are reminiscent of *Lobelia* flowers,

white with a centre stripe on each petal. I don't think they are truly hardy.

Daphne Guernsey had a whole collection of bulbs, some of which I knew, some I didn't - and one or two she didn't herself! I bought a mystery bulb, and will be curious to see what it turns out to be. Like a lottery! There was also *Muscari azureum*, which I fell in love with when I saw it once in Daphne's garden - all *Muscari* have the same shape, but this one has a wonderful clear blue colour. I don't know *Hesperantha scapulosa*, but I do have *H. baurii*. They are relatives of the gladioli, although you might not immediately see that, as the flowers are much more regular and starlike. *H. baurii* has nice, small pink flowers; I am curious to see what *H. scapulosa* will do. *Pterostylis pedunculata* is a terrestrial orchid from Australia. *Pterostylis* is a fairly large genus, with greenish flowers and a curious hooded look. They are pollinated by trapping insects inside the flower. The insects pick up the pollen in one plant and then deposit it on another plant as they struggle to get out again.

We also had Marian Allen again with a variety of gesneriads. She said that *Chirita tamiana* had survived outside last winter, with temperatures dropping to - 10° C. She did keep them under the eaves, so they were quite dry. They are charming plants, with flowers like white bells, and the whole plant quite miniature. I don't think the others are as hardy - *Streptocarpus* in various forms, and *Smithiantha*, with red leaves, and pale pink or rosy-red flowers.

Vera Peck had *Erysimum kotschyannum* - the real thing, of course! I have tried this from seed two or three times, and always get a plant that is much larger than what Vera had, with leaves that are maybe 6 or 7 cm long, and nearly a cm wide, and flower stalks that elongate to be 40 or 50 cm. The one that Vera had was tiny, the leaves no more than 1 or 2 mm wide, and the few flowers there were, sitting right among them. It probably needs to be in a trough or something, but I was delighted to find out what the real McCoy looked like. Then she had *Asarum caudigerum* var. *cardiophyllum*¹, one of the many asarums from the far East (this one comes from China). It has variegated leaves, and it had a flower and ripe seed at the same time. Still, you probably have to grow it in a pot with an electric fence around it - all those far eastern *Asarums* must be like nectar of the gods to slugs. Even with a copper collar I can't keep them. It's a real pity for they are quite showy.

Androsace hedraeantha is a somewhat unusual *Androsace*. I tend to think of them as cushions, but this one looked more like a miniature shrub, and as a matter of fact, at first glance I thought it was *Daphne arbuscula*. Vera had that one too, and when you put them together the difference was obvious. I don't know if the *Androsace* is as fussy as the *Daphne* (possibly even fussier, I usually don't even try them). *Daphne arbuscula* now seems to be surviving for me again on top of a tufa hill in

¹ [Flora of China](#) calls this *A. cardiophyllum* (syn. *A. caudigerum* v. *cardio*) Ed.

the garden. I had a thriving one for years in a trough, but it got too big, and sulked after I transplanted it, and I have had a lot of mishaps since.

I was also very pleased to find *Degenia velebitica*. This is a plant in the *Brassicaceae*. It comes from the Velebit Mountains in what used to be Yugoslavia. All the mountains there are limestone, so it is obviously a lime-lover. It has very silvery, narrow leaves, and rather large, pale yellow flowers in very short clusters. It blooms (in the garden) at the same time as *Gentiana verna*, and the combination was breath-taking. Unfortunately, it died last winter. I keep the trough covered in the winter, but the *Degenia* was rather on the edge, and perhaps it got a bit wet, I don't know.



Tropaeolum polyphyllum
[Universidad Central De Santiago De Chile](#)

The last plant of Vera's I want to mention is *Tropaeolum speciosum*. I actually have one in the garden, but it seems to get smaller instead of bigger. I know they like to have a cool root run, but I am afraid I put it in too shady a place, so it never gets enough oomph to grow up into the sun. This way I get another chance to try it out. I have a love affair with *Tropaeolums*, but so far it seems to be rather one-sided - they don't love me back. I bought a miniature form of *Tropaeolum polyphyllum* (the splendid yellow-flowered, grey-leaved one), and to my utter surprise, it came up again a few weeks ago. Not good timing on its part, but I'll try to keep it growing as long as I can.

We are growers ourselves, and I have never mentioned our own plants, but this time I think I will. The most popular item was surely the *Colchicum speciosum* 'Album' (at least I hope that is the right name). It is a pure white autumn crocus, with fairly small flowers on elegant long stems (actually the flower tube), and very floriferous. I think one corm may produce 3, 4, maybe even 5 flowers, and it multiplies happily in my garden. Not so popular was *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*, which is nevertheless a splendid plant. It is a true perennial, dying down to nothing every year, and not coming up till fairly late. Its glory comes in the fall, when it makes trusses of true blue flowers in reddish calyces. As

the fall goes on, the foliage also turns red, while the flowers keep coming. It is a good cut flower - even after 10 days, the flower buds were still coming out, and still the same blue, too. I feel the same way about *Erodium manescavi*, a plant that must be getting very rare in the wild. There are only seven known places where it occurs, and when we saw one of those again after 10 or 15 years that population had dwindled significantly. In the garden, it makes a clump of feathery leaves maybe 40 cm across, above which it triumphantly carries its umbels of magenta flowers, from May until the frost hits it. The plants appear to be fairly short-lived, but self-sow gently, so there are always new ones to replace them.

The Klapwijks were present with a varied collection of rhododendrons. (*Rh. lutescens* is deciduous, with red leaves in the fall, and yellow flowers. *Rh. nakaharae* is a very late one, not blooming till June, or even July, with salmony-orange flowers. *Rh. mucronulatum* is an early one, with rich pink flowers. All of these are on the small side. Not so *Rh. augustinii* 'Playfair' (not a registered name), which is a cutting of a plant raised by the late Milton Wildfong. It has large flowers with a green blotch.

Jason Nehring seemed to specialize in shade plants this fall. He had *Tricyrtis hirta*, one of the toadlilies. Some years ago, Bob Woodward wrote a whole article about them (Vol. 34, p.12, 1991). He had another toadlily in the display, *T. macrantha*, with huge yellow, waxy-looking hanging bells. Most unlike the usual toadlilies, which tend to be pinkish or purplish with spots. He also had *Hepatica nobilis* - *Hepaticas* are wonderful garden plants, but they are hard to propagate, and to transplant. The seed will only germinate when it is fresh, and I have killed some by transplanting.

Then he had the native *Disporum hookeri*, which produces creamy bells in pairs at the end of the stems in spring, followed by bright red berries in the fall. Jason had another *Disporum*, *D. pernyi*, from China, which made a patch of very dense, shiny foliage, but apparently, the flowers are rather small and not showy.

To stick with the disporums, Pat and Paige Woodward had yet another one, *D. cantoniense* 'Night Heron', with red foliage. I don't know what the flowers or the berries are like. They also had *Lilium rosthornii*, a name I haven't been able to find in my books, but it looked like a tiger lily and it was actually in bloom - which must be about the last lily to flower.

Osmunda regalis is a European fern. It likes moist places and grows quite tall. It is unusual in that the sporangia are concentrated at the upper end of the fronds, arranged in a plume, which makes them quite conspicuous.

The Woodwards specialize in native plants, and there were some special ones: *Salix arctica* and *S. rotundifolia* are both dwarf willows, creeping along the ground at about 1 inch. I've found them difficult, even when someone else has managed to raise them from seed or cut-

tings, but I'm trying again. *Abronia latifolia*, the beach sand verbena, is also very difficult, and that they grow it is quite a feat. We've collected the seed once, and there is only about one seed in every 10 or 20 seed-heads you harvest, so most of the time there is no seed in the packages one gets. And even if you get a seed, it is difficult. I think one germinated once, but that was as far as I got. It is a beautiful plant; it has trailing stems with heavy round leaves, and heads of yellow flowers.

The Club tables seemed to be quite full. There is always an incredible variety there, as many people each bring a few plants. I spotted *Wulfenia carinthiaca*.² It is reminiscent of *Horminum pyrenaicum*, but showier, with larger flowers. It is also much more difficult, as the slugs love it. *Veratrum formosanum* is a false hellebore, obviously from the far east, but it must be largely unknown otherwise, as I could not find it in any of my books. *Corydalis wilsonii* is one of the dryland *Corydalis*, with glaucous foliage and yellow flowers. *Gentiana occidentalis* is part of the group known as *G. acaulis* group, with large trumpets in spring. I loved *Parahebe cataractae*, a speedwell- relative from New Zealand. It is somewhat shrubby, quite compact, with small, roundish leaves, and white flowers with pink veining. It is supposed to be marginally hardy here (zone 9) so I'll see how it does planted against the wall of the house.

Daphne kosaninii is a smallish shrub from southeastern Europe with deep pink flowers. *Viola delphinantha* comes from the same part of the world. It has a reputation for being tricky, and the plant presented didn't look too happy, but then, it is the end of the season. *Borago pygmaea* is also a Mediterranean, but it rather belies its name in an ordinary garden setting - I think I mentioned this before, but when I planted it in a normal garden bed, the rosette covered something like a 60 cm circle, and the flower stems arched out twice that far, smothering all sorts of other plants. I didn't think the cute little blue bells were worth that.

Coryphantha vivipara is a hardy cactus with deep pink flowers, but as it is native to Arizona and New Mexico it may not appreciate our wet winters. I think I might treat that like the *Chirita* mentioned earlier, keeping it carefully under the eaves in winter.

Well, hopefully I've conveyed a sense of the amazing variety we see with every sale, and the excitement of going around and seeing them all.



² Was in the *Scroph.* family, now in *Plantaginaceae* with *Parahebe* and *Penstemon*. Ed.

In the volatile world of taxonomy, changes are made with breakneck speed. For example *Wulfenia carinthiaca* (along with genera *Parahebe* and *Penstemon*) have now moved from Scrophulariaceae to the Plantaginaceae family! As well, many of the more marvelously obscure Asian plants may be found online at www.flora.huh.harvard.edu/china (*Veratrum formosanum*), and the RHS Plant Finder, searchable for current names, is at www.rhs.org.uk/rhsplantfinder/ – Brent Hine, Curator, [UBC Alpine Garden](http://www.ubc.org/alpine).

FURTHER NOTES ON STYROFOAM TROUGHS

by Ian Gillam, Vancouver



Descended from a long line of mediaeval cathedral builders, Mark Demers is our instructor on creating simulated stone troughs from polystyrene foam containers³. Without going as far as Mark in this I have used such containers as planters over a number of years. They provide excellent insulation to keep the roots cool, much superior to standard black vinyl pots in this respect, yet are light in weight (and the price is right). I softened the glaring white of the exteriors with a couple of coats of neutral paint but originally did nothing more to disguise their origins. More recently I have followed Mark's procedures. When I admitted that I neither heated nor painted the lower interior and the bottom exterior of such containers, Mark expressed shock, pointing out that like the perfectly finished backsides of stonework eighty feet above ground on cathedrals, God will know if you skimp on workmanship, though it may not be obvious to onlookers.

Be that as it may there are reasons for finishing all surfaces (of the troughs, I mean). I recently decided that a container, simply painted, needed refreshing after several years of use outdoors and emptied it of plants and soil before repainting. When cleaned, it was remarkably heavy and dark roots could be seen penetrating the interior walls. The roots were firmly lodged and not removable.

These shipping containers are intended for use only for a limited time and are not totally waterproof. In time water penetrates between the individual beads of expanded polystyrene. Where the water goes roots follow. While this is considered desirable in hypertufa troughs it seems less so here. A further surprise was that the unpainted exterior base of the box showed marked erosion, possibly due to the activities of woodlice (sowbugs) or slugs and snails. There is no obvious benefit to these creatures in eating plastic and I hypothesize that bacteria or fungi begin to attack the constantly damp surface. These may provide a meal for larger creatures scraping the surface and removing more material with the microorganisms. It does seem desirable for the durability of these troughs to do a complete mediaeval job, finishing all surfaces with heating, paint and perhaps sand too.

In casting hypertufa troughs the traditional way of forming holes for drainage is to use sections of broom handle or corks to leave several

³ See pp. 68-69 in Bulletin, **48 #3**, Summer 2005.

holes under an inch (2.5 cm) in diameter. Mark prefers larger holes 2-3 inches (5- 7.5 cm) across. I feel this is sound as I recently discovered a trough with impeded drainage due to plugging of smaller holes by compost and roots, further compounded by setting the trough on a flat surface. It is essential to raise the base of the container just enough to allow completely free drainage.

A final concern is that drainage holes in the bases of troughs, whether hypertufa or polystyrene, are wonderfully cool and damp, prime real estate for slugs and with location handy for meals. In the past I have attempted to exclude these pests by cementing window screening onto the outside of the drainage holes but this too readily leads to plugging by roots. At present I am trying putting a circle of copper around the walls of the drainage holes in the belief it may make them less attractive. It remains to be seen if this will truly be effective. Finally, large drainage holes require some sort of screen to support the compost. Mesh cut from the black plastic flats used in the nursery trade to hold potted plants fills this need. Broken trays are usually plentifully available at any garden centre.



SELECT WESTERN ALPINE PLANTS

~ by *Daphne Guernsey, West Vancouver*

Erigeron aureus

This golden daisy, growing no more than six inches/15 cm. tall, is an indicator that one has reached the alpine region of our coastal mountains, around 6,000 ft./1,800 m above sea level. As such I have never succeeded in growing it for long in my garden on the lowest slopes of the North Shore mountains that attract heavy precipitation, almost all as rain.



Erigeron aureus – at Bow Glacier Falls, Alberta Canada

Seeking answers, I questioned two successful growers about composts and conditions. How their mixes differ! The first uses a simple mix of two parts of soil with one of grit. He keeps the potted plants by the house, sheltered by wide eaves. I didn't ask how long the plants live but they do bloom.

The second grower plants in pure pumice, a medium that holds moisture yet is very well aerated. His plant in a large pot continues to increase each year. He points out that pumice comes in hard and in soft forms. It is the soft material from Oregon that he uses.

Eriogonum

Other indicators of altitude are the many eriogonums, typically found on dry, stony slopes in the western mountains. For years I ignored them as uninteresting relatives of dock and sorrel, ungrowable too. How time changes one's interest and provokes new challenges!

About eight years ago I stood in Betty Lowry's garden in east Seattle and was speechless as I viewed her eriogonum bed. It was raised, of course, for drainage by two and a half to three feet/75–90 cm. The plants were growing well in a gritty medium despite the rainfall that Seattle gets, at least equal to ours.

Coming home, I walked around my garden and decided on a sunny slope among rocks (native to the property). Plants were not then readily available but it happened that Graham Ware from Armstrong, B.C. brought several to our next plant sale. Tentatively I bought just one to try and found it hugely successful. A second species added to this bed was even more successful. (I lost the labels and can't presently identify them as to species.)

In cultivation eriogonums require a sloping bed with sandy soil and lots of grit. They dislike lime and should be kept on the dry side as far as possible. Many are woolly, often markedly so. (Eriogonum translates as "woolly knees".) The flowers arise from a membranous sheath that remains after flowering, though it is not part of the seedhead. Lowland species tend to flower in April and May and the upland ones from July through to October.

Eriogonums are mostly compact growers and can be cultivated successfully even in wet climates. Their charms are subtle and you are unlikely to find them in your local garden centre but they have been cultivated over the years by keen growers of mountain plants. Thus Sampson Clay provides a thorough discourse on the genus. Will Ingwersen and Jack Elliot state that *E. torreyanum* is the easiest species to grow whereas Geoffrey Charlesworth favours *E. umbellatum*. Let's hope our seed collectors came up with a variety of species this summer.



ALASKAN JOURNEY

~ Brenda Wilson, Somerset, U.K.

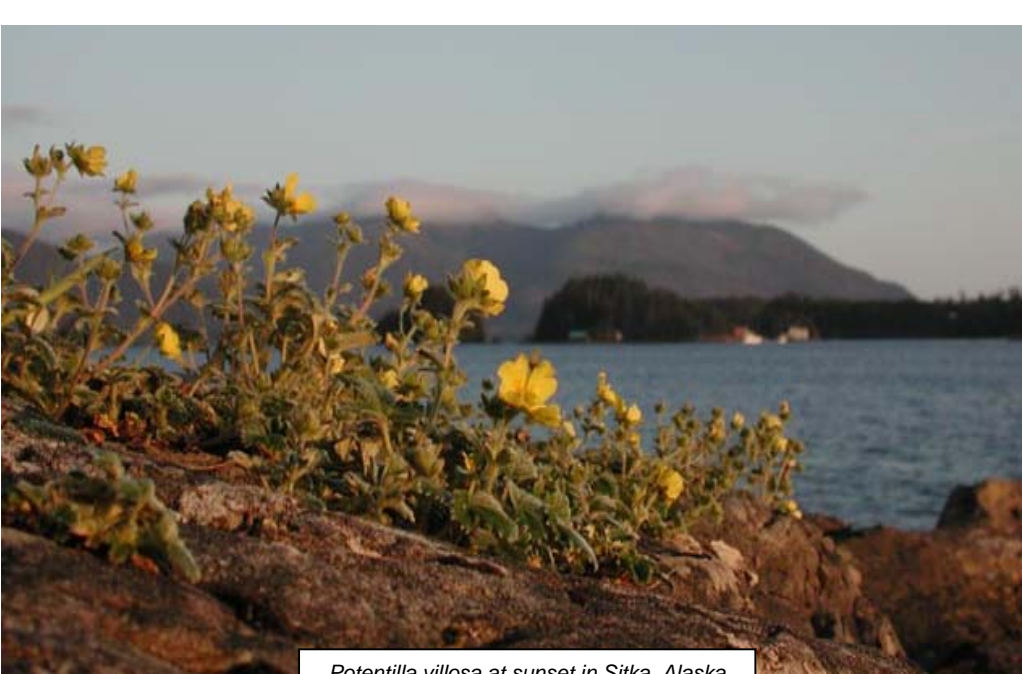
In June 2004 we spent a wonderful few days in Vancouver, when Joy Curran and other members of the AGCBC overwhelmed us with their kindness and hospitality. I and my husband then flew to



On the Alsek River, Alaska
Photo: Phyllis Plenderleith, Vancouver, BC



Lathyrus japonicus ssp. *maritimus*
[The Swedish Museum of Natural History](#)



Potentilla villosa at sunset in Sitka, Alaska
Photo: [Matt Goff](#), Sitka, Alaska



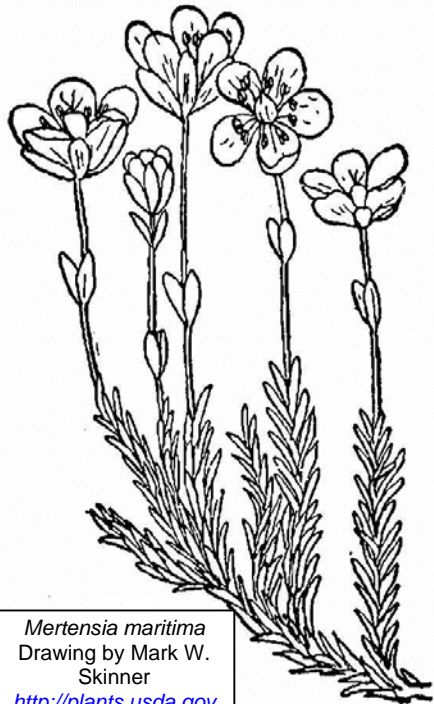
Salix reticulata, Sitka, Alaska
Photo: [Matt Goff](#)

Anchorage, for an organised bird watching tour with a group of 14 British and Americans. The first day started early as we had a 4:50am flight to St. Paul Island, far out in the Bering Sea. The island is one of five in the Pribilof Group, of which only two are inhabited, by Aleuts. They were enslaved by Russians in the mid 1700's to harvest the northern fur seals that breed on the islands. St. Paul village is now the largest Aleut community in the world with around 600 inhabitants, while the fur seal population is about one million. Not many visitors venture out to St. Paul. The majority of those who do are birders, as the island has magnificent seabird colonies. I didn't expect to find many plants of interest on this small, remote island but I was wrong. The coastal areas, where sand dunes back the beaches, have the tallest vegetation. Wild celery (*Angelica lucida*) stems are eaten when young, later becoming too bitter. Another member of that family, lovage (*Ligusticum scoticum*) also grows behind the beaches with Lyme grass, *Elymus arenarius*. On the low cliffs were large colonies of *Androsace chamaejasme* in full flower with *Viola langsдорffii*, *Potentilla villosa* and *Ranunculus eschscholtzii*. Our guide told me where to find a patch of the Chukchi primrose, *Primula eximia*. Its local name comes from the Chukchi people from the Asian coast of the Bering Sea who traded across the strait with native American Indians. The *Primula* grows 4" to 6" (10-15 cm) high and has an umbel of about 8 or 10 flowers in shades of pink. Along the roads, surfaced by volcanic grit, were drifts of yellow *Papaver alaskanum* and the first flowers of *Lupinus nootkatensis*, the downy leaves of which held tiny drops of moisture, making them sparkle. *Pedicularis verticillata* also grew in these areas while *P. sudetica* grew on wet tundra, the main habitat of the island, along with Crowberry, *Empetrum nigrum* and three species of dwarf willow. In sheltered hollows we found *Claytonia sarmantosa* and the Spiny Wood Fern, *Dryopteris expansa*. On the volcanic gravels *Minuartia arctica*, *Silene acaulis* and *Cerastrium beer-inganum* were flowering. Flying into St. Paul Island, it had resembled an area of barren moorland; the wealth of flowers we subsequently found was a wonderful surprise.

Our next base was the gold rush town of Nome on the Bering Sea coast of mainland Alaska. The town has no road connections with the remainder of the state, and all goods are either flown or shipped in during the brief summer. There are three gravelled roads out of town, each extending about 75 miles (120 km). During the four days we spent in Nome we explored each road, enjoying the spectacular scenery in constant sunshine. We first took the coast road to the south, and the beaches were strewn with huge pieces of driftwood as was the raised beach inland. It seemed rather incongruous as the landscape was devoid of trees apart from stunted forms in sheltered valleys. *Mertensia paniculata* (Tall Bluebells) was growing with *Iris setosa* and *Lathyrus maritimus* behind the beach. When gold was found at the settlement of Soloman, a railway track was started to connect the area with the coast. Later, this line was abandoned along with three engines, in a marsh.

We explored the area, finding *Primula sibirica*, *Potentilla egedii* and *Rhodiola rosea* (syn. *Sedum roseum*). The road turned away from the coast at this point and followed a river, and *Parrya nudicaulis*, like a small white May Flower, grew along its banks. The road climbed and we again saw *Papaver alaskanum* and white *P. lapponicum*, while cushions of *Crepis nana* studded a dry bank. The site chosen for our picnic lunch looked across to a Gyrfalcon's nest, and while there we found yellow *Anemone richardsonii* and white *A. parviflora*, *Thalictrum alpinum* and lovely *Dodecatheon frigidum*. Continuing inland we stopped at Snookum Pass, the highest point on the road. It is only 1250' (380 m) but the views were tremendous, with rocky, snowy hills for miles in all directions. The ground was carpeted with flowering plants including *Cassiope tetragona*, *Diapensia lapponica*, the woolly *Pedicularis kanei*, *Loiseleuria procumbens* and *Dryas integrifolia*. I was reluctant to leave this area but sightings of a herd of caribou crossing a patch of snow and a white arctic fox further along the road were adequate compensation.

The Taylor Highway runs inland through spectacular scenery and over the Kougarak Mountains. A scramble over tussocky hillsides clothed in dwarf willow to find a rare breeding wader, the bristle-thighed curlew, gave good views of two birds. Much more memorable was the view of a grizzly bear running effortlessly up a gully straight towards our group. Thankfully a lot of shouting and arm-waving, as previously instructed in readiness for just such an occasion, alerted the bear to the presence of humans and it turned whilst about 30 or 40 yards from the group and vanished back down the gully. Finally we took the Teller Road west of Nome and again saw a bear but this one was in the distance, and we were pleased to see musk ox too. On the coast I found *Mertensia maritima* in flower, and one plant even carried white blooms. However, the treasure of the day was *Rhododendron camtschaticum*, flowering on short stems. The individual bells are comparatively huge. *Silene acaulis* and *Potentilla biflora* were also in flower, as was another plant which I couldn't identify. After a later email to Verna Pratt, local



Mertensia maritima
 Drawing by Mark W. Skinner
<http://plants.usda.gov>

expert on Alaskan flora, it was found to be *Lagotis glauca* ssp. *minor*.

We next flew south to the 6 million acre Denali National Park and Preserve. The popularity of the park, with improved access from Anchorage, has led authorities to restrict vehicular traffic to shuttle buses. We were booked on the first bus of the day which left the Information Centre at 6am to travel the 66 miles to the Eielson Visitor Centre. The round trip, including stops, takes about eight hours. Near the park entrance the habitat is typically wet tundra with *Polygonum bistorta*, *Parrya nudicaulis* and *Cardamine purpurea*. We then passed woodlands of *Betula papyrifera* and *Populus tremuloides* with *Cornus canadensis* carpeting the ground beneath. I was interested to see the upright shrub *Shepherdia canadensis* growing on dry banks, as we have a specimen in our garden. Dall sheep were seen high on the hills above. We saw moose and caribou too, but we had to wait until we were at the visitorcentre to see bears. Three cubs were playing on a patch of snow while their mother rested nearby. In the same area we saw a Frog Orchid, (*Coeloglossum viride* ssp. *bracteatum*) growing with Alaska's state flower, *Myosotis alpestris* subsp. *asiatica*, and *Saxifraga oppositifolia*. Mt. McKinley (tallest in North America) was hidden by cloud but the views were still tremendous, broad braided river channels beneath bare mountains with snowpatches, all this and a rainbow too. On the return journey we stopped at a couple of different places and I found *Arenaria chamissonis*, *Boykinia richardsonii* and *Dryas integrifolia*. The next two days we spent birding along the gravelled Denali Highway. The clouds had vanished, and in fact we had perfect weather for the remainder of our holiday. Mt. McKinley loomed over the Alaskan Range and our views in all directions included peaks over 12,000' (3650 m). Technically, the habitat was taiga, with ponds, lakes and stunted conifers. Here we saw *Aster sibiricus*, *Senecio lugens*, *Potentilla fruticosa*, *Lupinus arcticus* and *Hedysarum alpinum*.

Our final section of the tour was based at Seward on the Kenai Peninsula. This area was devastated by a severe earthquake in 1964. The town has since been rebuilt and is now a popular tourist venue with a large and prosperous harbour. One day we had a nine hour boat trip to visit seabirds, whales and seals, also to go to the snout of a glacier where it enters the sea, below the immense Harding Icefield. Flowers wouldn't be a feature of the day, or so I thought. However, as we edged up to a small island to watch waders I serendipitously realized that I was looking straight at flowering plants of *Fritillaria camschatcensis*. We had experienced some wonderful days with amazing scenery but that day when the calm sea mirrored the glaciers and mini-icebergs, a pod of orcas passed close by our boat and we watched a humpbacked whale spouting while bald eagles flew overhead. It had to be one of the best, despite the lack of flowers, apart from the lovely chocolate lilies.





ON BEING EDITOR

~ by Geoff Williams, North Vancouver

About half a century ago my wife and I came to Canada as immigrants from the UK, which was then still an imperial power although the Empire was just about over. We were a young, recently married couple and, after two or three years renting, decided to buy a lot and build our own house. So, at the beginning of 1956, we found ourselves with a steep lot on the North Shore of Burrard Inlet, full of rocks but big enough to retain some native trees, mainly hemlocks and cedars but also a grove of vine maples and a cascara. I acted as the prime contractor having designed both the house and the landscaping and we did some of the work ourselves.

We were also keen hikers and amateur naturalists and joined the British Columbia Mountaineering Club soon getting to know the Coast Range and the Cascades in both BC and Washington State. At the same time we discovered the Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia and went to a couple of shows before finally becoming members. Therefore it seemed quite natural to terrace the land with rockeries between level lawns and to plant alpiners in the sunnier spots and shade plants among the trees with an emphasis on natives. We were very grateful for the generosity of the members and many of the trees and plants now in the garden were originally little seedlings given by them. Two in particular stand out, two huge native dogwood trees (*Cornus nutalii*) came from the late Nan Sherlock and are a true asset to the garden.

How did I become editor of the Club's Bulletin? My recollection is that the previous editor, Jim MacPhail, indicated that he wanted to stand down at about the same time as my stint as president expired and it seemed obvious that I should take over the editorship. In those days the membership was quite small and mainly local so that the Bulletin was really a monthly newsletter to remind members of the time and place of meetings, shows and other functions. It remained as a newsletter for the first few years, although I tried to improve the letterhead by drawing a selection of typical alpiners which were apparently recognizable. Then I changed the format so that the Bulletin was about the same size as the regular publications of the Alpine Garden Society of the UK and the American Rock Garden Society which has since added "North" to its title to accommodate chapters in Eastern Canada. The membership liked the new format and, despite several changes in editorship since then, has remained more or less unchanged over the years. One thing that I did not change was that the Bulletin remained monthly and

still reminded members of Club functions. Looking back to that time, it was a lot of work; I wrote every thing out long hand and my late wife, Audrey, did all the typing. My job was mainly to cut and paste so that the original was “camera ready” when I took it to the printers. In those days there were no computers to make life easy. All illustrations were line drawings, mostly drawn by me, so that the commercial printers would not have a problem. Many of the articles were excellent and the Club’s membership increased exponentially all over the temperate world. This was undoubtedly due, primarily, to the brilliant success of the seed exchange, although the quality of the Bulletin may have contributed a little.

Computers have not only made the Bulletin easier to produce; they have also made it much neater and more professional looking. And the inclusion of accurate coloured photographs is something that former editors, in the old days, could not even dream about.



THE HIGH ARCTIC, A MAGIC WORLD

~ By Grace Conboy, Burnaby, B.C.

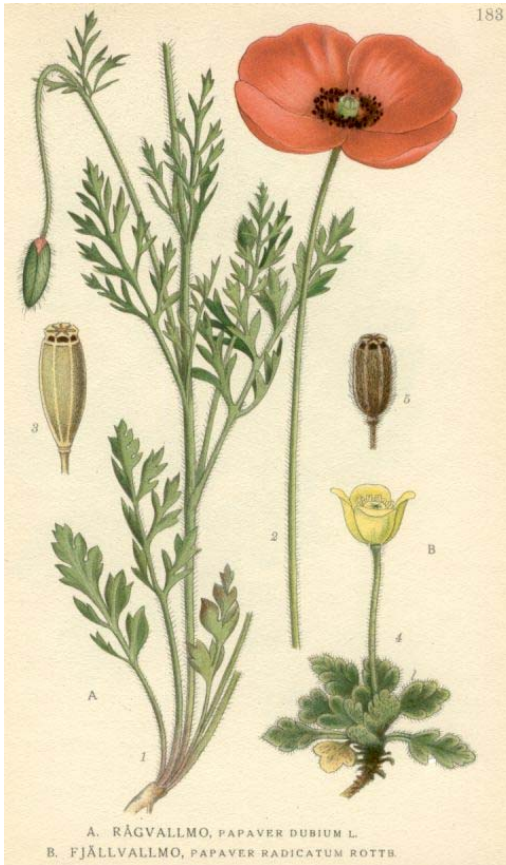
As a keen photographer and naturalist I wished to see this northern Land of the Midnight Sun. When Eco-Summer’s brochure described a trip to Ellesmere Island I signed up with anticipation. Our group of twelve met in Edmonton in early July. Our destination was Alexandra Fiord on the central eastern coast of Ellesmere Island at an approximate latitude of 79° N, just 320 km south of the geographic North Pole. Departing in early morning the checkerboard of Alberta’s golden rape and wheat fields beneath the airplane soon gave way to northland forests. In turn sparse dwarfed trees, muskeg bogs and innumerable lakes replaced them. Occasional rocky outcroppings and teardrop eskers relieved the flat barren taiga. Snow lay in pockets and on still frozen lakes. Yellowknife

We stopped briefly in Yellowknife, the isolated frontier capital of the Northwest Territories. The city is built around part of the glacier-scarred Canadian Shield on the north shore of Great Slave Lake. Yellowknife’s tourist slogan “Where yesterday rubs shoulders with tomorrow” well describes this city of log cabins and luxury hotels, dog teams and daily jet service, head frames and highways.

The second stage of our journey to Resolute was fogged in most of the way but the weather opened up sufficiently for our pilot to descend onto the tarmac bounded by huge piles of dirty snow, though this was the warmest part of the Arctic summer. Fog had closed Grise Fiord, our next refueling stop en-route to Alexandra Fiord. This meant we had a two day layover in Resolute before continuing.

Resolute

We were accommodated in the small hotel and our overflow shared a barracks building used by transient government employees and independent researchers. The weathered buildings of Resolute looked functional and drab, along with numerous storage warehouses, compounds containing snow removal equipment and row after row of red and yellow drums. Resolute is on the south coast of Cornwallis Island, where barren glacial-scoured hills fill the distant north and an ice-rimmed expanse of water lies to the south. After an exceptionally good meal we were well fortified and, fitted into our survival suits, we set out to explore our immediate landscape.



We were surprised at our first find snuggled in the inhospitable rocky soil, small colonies of lovely purple saxifrage (*Saxifraga oppositifolia*).

Damper areas produced mats of arctic willow (*Salix reticulata*) with fat catkins not yet in pollen. A yellow draba (*D. nemorosa*) was pushing up golden spikes and the black furry buds of arctic poppies (*Papaver radicatum*), bejeweled with moisture, were poking up, none yet in bloom. Mosses in vivid reds, yellows and soft greens served as a lovely foil for these precious plants.

A visit to an Inuit village about 8 km from Resolute entailed a walk along the shoreline, still supporting large blocks of shore ice. A single fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) cruised by on its single-minded

flight. It engendered even more the feeling of this remote landscape, this lonesome land just awakening to another summer. We knew we were nearing the village when we came to a skidoo bone-yard, reminding us that waste disposal is a perennial problem for the north. The village of 135 residents had an attractive new school and a small nursing station. The houses looked compact and comfortable. Children were playing on cycles and adults were wheeling on a tricycle with monstrous

tires. A white husky puppy complained at being tied up at a porch, prevented from exploring and joining the children at play. We saw seal and polar bear skins pegged on frames to dry. Polar bear skins in prime condition can sell for \$5,000 and I wondered how much the hunter got.

Ellesmere Island

Eventually it was time to board our Otter airplane and leave Resolute. We were never far from the sea choked with floating ice. After a brief stop at Grise Fiord, tucked into a narrow coastal plain below the mountains of southern Ellesmere Island, we saw the sea now covered in great sheets of white ice with large cracks extending out for miles, only just beginning the spring break-up.

We were glad our pilot was familiar with the area as we swooped into a wide valley, free of snow, where four neat, solid-looking white buildings stood. Mountains on either side were divided by great bulks of glaciers sweeping down from distant snowy peaks wreathed in light swirls of cloud. Landing at Alexandra Fiord on the very short runway of loose sand was a test of the pilot's skill. Excited anticipation could only describe my feelings as we alighted and I saw the abundance of wildflowers opening unlimited possibilities with twenty-four hour daylight in this Magic World.

In summer Alexandra Fiord is an Eden in the Arctic. Spring comes earlier here due to an upwelling of warmer water termed a *polynia*. This attracts abundant sea life and already all plants were hastening to complete their cycles, setting seed for another season. The arctic poppies were ablaze with tissuey, yellow flowers. Dense patches of field chickweed (*Cerastium arvense*) with starry white flowers crowded against cushions of purple saxifrage. Luxuriant mats of dwarf willow clambered over many rocks, the only trees of the Arctic. Their fat catkins with golden stamens, some silvery pink, were in various stages of maturity or fluffed out in seed. Neat buns of moss campion (*Silene acaulis*) were smothered with rosy blossoms. Patches of sorrel (*Oxyria digyna*) had attractive spikes of bloom. Their kidney shaped leaves are collected as a vegetable high in vitamin C. Patches of cotton grass (*Eriophorum* sp.) fluttered their tow-heads with the slightest breeze. Mountain avens (*Dryas octopetala*) was in bloom everywhere, its lovely cream blossoms shaped like single roses so well chosen as the floral emblem of the Northwest Territories. I only saw a few of its modest relative yellow dryas (*D. drummondii*) whose flowers on long stems were barely open. It is probably more attractive when the long twisted fluffy seed-heads mature. A red-stemmed saxifrage (*Saxifraga lyallii*) preferred moister areas to display its tall heads of flowers above neat rosettes. The spotted saxifrage (*S. bronchialis*) with freckled, starry white blossoms made a neat cushion or mat. How delightful it was to wander through these fields of flowers.

Exploring further afield I stumbled over the grassy tussocks following a stream towards the glacier at the head of the valley and came across masses of bell heather (*Cassiope tetragona*) intermingled with

dryas and creeping wintergreen (*Gaultheria humifusa*), leathery leaved with small rosy bells of urn shape.

Arctic birds

One of our group had discovered a nesting rock ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*) that I was keen to see. We got very close before I was able to distinguish her camouflaged plumage. She left the nest briefly, stepping pertly like a fussy little old lady with stockings on legs. The nest contained seven pale speckled eggs. We moved away and she returned quickly to resume her patient responsibility. At the head of the valley the view was wonderful. By the distant sea our lodges stood like dollhouses and a huge iceberg glistening in the bay looked like a toy. I felt moved by the pristine beauty and quietude of this true wilderness.

Returning across the valley I must have drawn close to nesting parasitic jaegers (*Stercorarius parasiticus*) as they swooped towards me threateningly and I beat a hasty retreat. Closer to the airstrip I saw a lovely red-breasted wading bird flying low ahead of me. I searched the area but failed to find the nest of the red phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*).

Along the shore I had been fascinated by the hovering Arctic terns



Sterna paradisaea Photo: Grace Conboy

(*Sterna paradisaea*) before they plunged to snatch a fish from beside an ice floe. It became clear I was intruding as I became the object of their shrieking dives, requiring me to hold my tripod above my head to protect myself. With difficulty I distinguished among the rounded granite stones several small balls of speckled grey fluff. After a few photographs I was sent on my way, just as well, as the cold wind would quickly chill the tiny chicks. Small flocks of sanderlings (*Calidris alba*) searched for morsels along the shoreline

and soared away in unison if disturbed. A few pairs of common eider (*Somateria mollissima*) were present as were black guillemots (*Cephus grylle*). Land animals seemed non-existent in the valley except for small lemmings.

Arctic mammals

We made numerous trips in Zodiacs, dodging huge ice floes in search of marine mammals. From quite a distance we could hear the growling and roaring of walrus. The six or so we found were contentedly sleeping, so closely packed that they were difficult to count. Their dark brown hides shone in the sun. By approaching quietly we came close enough to take good photographs. When we later drew in to another lone monster, also asleep on a small floe, he awoke suddenly and rolled clumsily into the water with a loud splash.

Another trip took us out to Skrayling Island, referring to the Inuit term for the ancient Thule people who had lived there. Ruins of their homes were still to be seen with long white bones scattered among the ruins. These may have served to support a skin roof over the foundation of rocks. Built near protective rocky hills, one could still discern the entrance tunnels to these ancient homes and visualize the interior covered in skins. Dryas and cassiope were permanent memorial gardens around the ruins.

Three military personnel arrived on a mapping survey of Ellesmere Island. They volunteered to take us by helicopter to Flagler Bay where they had seen several families of muskox. We landed on a wide plateau where the snow had only recently melted. Flattened willows, only beginning to bud, and occasional dryas starting to bloom were the only signs of growing plants. There were numerous varicoloured lichens on the rocks and around several small lakes coarse grass was more plentiful. Picturesque eroded hills were reflected perfectly in a larger lake against the deep blue sky.

We were to spend the next twelve hours or so in this remote landscape. Our tent was set up near a small lake where two arctic loons flew in and their plaintive cry broke the silence almost startlingly in this land of ever surrounding silence. The groups of muskox were grazing in a lower grassy area, where we had to tramp many hours to get near. Creeping up behind a ridge within fifty meters we got a few good pictures. On seeing us the muskox moved into a protective circle with calves shielded in the centre. With a snort and the bull in the lead they high tailed it over the hill. Their dense inner coat of soft, fine wool is overcloaked with a shaggy coat of extremely long hair that flows to their feet, reminding one of smaller bison with flowing petticoats.

Clouds gathered on and off and when they screened the sun the temperature would drop to zero. I did not feel sleepy though I rested at times by a warm rock when the sun came out. When the helicopter arrived I was ready to return to our base. The flight took a different route. Patterns of disintegrating sea ice were like lace with vivid blues and greens intermingled with snowy white outlines. Further majestic

mountains with their glaciers created more patterns as they crept towards the sea. It was good to return to the post and climb into a welcoming bed for a few hours of much needed sleep.

Last day

On the last trip in the Zodiac we cruised out to the most prominent feature of the bay, a thirty-meter pyramid of translucent blue ice that had lodged there. Under shelves carved out of its sides by waves were myriads of small shrimp-like creatures, the krill we had heard about, so many of them in this one small area! It was understandable that they are food for so many other animals even up to the great whales.

Later that evening (I could only tell by checking my watch) I decided to go over to the biggest glacial river from which we had our water supply. It had cut deeply through the amber-coloured clay banks and even boasted a five-meter waterfall where rock had impeded its flow. I waited for the sun to drop low in the sky, when the amber banks reflected in the sparkling water at just the right moment for photographs. My watch showed it was one a.m.! I was entranced with the sheet of gold on the bay around the huge iceberg. The beauty of it all was breathtaking. I could capture it on film but how to capture the feelings?

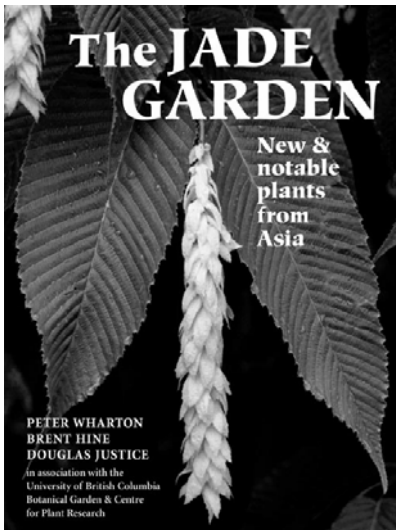
We were thankful for our opportunity to absorb some of the charisma of the high Arctic summertime in this grand land of the midnight sun, where we had seen no darkness since leaving Edmonton. The constant light seemed to imbue our spirits with a heightened perception of the surroundings such as we had never felt before. Everything we saw seemed to take on a luminous quality that will remain in the mind's eye for years. It had been a great adventure in a Magic World.



-The Jade Garden *By Peter Wharton, Brent Hine, and Douglas Justice ©2005, 300 pp., hardcover*
\$34.95 £25.00

Available from [The Shop In The Garden, UBC Botanical Garden & Centre for Research](#)

An authoritative guide to 130 of the most fascinating yet little-known ornamental trees, shrubs, and perennials from "the green mantle" of Asia. Based on detailed research and observation of one of the largest and oldest collections of Asian plants in North America, the subjects of this book were chosen for their superior



garden qualities, their rarity in everyday horticulture, and their commercial availability. From an extraordinary, nearly black geranium with reflexed petals, to a ground-creeping honeysuckle with bicolored flowers and blue berries, gardeners are sure to find something new and exciting in these pages. Although plants included are from the "cutting edge" of plant exploration and discovery, the authors have included only those selections that have undergone thorough evaluation at the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden for hardiness and garden appeal. In addition, the authors have taken special care to exclude potentially invasive plants, allowing readers to be confident that any selection from the book will be an environmentally responsible one. With many of its plants appearing in a garden book for the first time, *The Jade Garden* is certain to be a groundbreaking horticultural event.

~ [Timber Press](#)

~ Wharton and company share an affiliation with the University of British Columbia Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research, a wondrous place known for its magnificent plant collections. Calling upon their vast knowledge of Asian perennials, shrubs, and trees, the authors have compiled an encyclopedic guide to a bevy of gardenworthy specimens, especially little-known selections. A botanical perspective informs an introductory overview of the breathtakingly varied geography of China and its neighbors, thus setting the stage for the plant entries. Written in an engaging style, each plant listing contains a description of native habitat, growing habit, and hardiness, along with cultivation and propagation advice. Observations document how plants perform at the botanical garden, and suggest what one might expect in a cooler or warmer region. This valuable resource on cutting-edge Asian species includes photographs of plants in the wild as well as detailed shots of alluring characteristics.

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