

Alpine Garden Club
of
British Columbia



Vol 54 No 4

Bulletin

Autumn 2011



Alpine Garden Club of BC

Internet Home Page: www.agc-bc.ca

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Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month except, July and August, in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00 pm and the meetings start at 7:30 pm. Please bring plants for the plant draw; the proceeds of which go toward paying for the hall rental.

Front Cover: *Eriogonum pyrolifolium*. Iron Peak, Washington State. Photograph by Paul Krystof

MEMBERSHIP

All club members are reminded that their club membership for 2012 will soon be due for renewal.

AGCBC Bulletin

Sadly, there is a complete lack of material for forthcoming bulletins. Growing that impossible plant, excitement in your garden, trips near or far afield are but a few of the topics of interest to other club members. Please help the bulletin editor by sending your story.

PROGRAMS

David Sellars

November 9: Bill Terry will give a presentation entitled "**The Lizard of Oz, and other stories of plant hunting in South East Australia**". Bill and his wife, Rosemary recently spent three weeks botanizing in the 'Southern Alps' of S.E. Australia. Their travels took them into the highest regions of the country with lovely alpine meadows, as well as along the coastal forests. Bill lives in Sechelt and many of us visited his marvelous garden on an AGCBC tour last spring. Bill specializes in plant propagation and has a splendid collection of Asiatic poppies featured in his recent book *My Blue Heaven*. More information at www.meconopsis.ca.

December 14: Our annual Christmas Party and plant auction. Please bring goodies to share and plants for the auction. Remember, the proceeds of the auction go to a children's charity.

January 11, 2012: Popcorn and a Movie. A film by Harry Jans.

February 8, 2012: Talking Turkey.

In June 2011, four intrepid members of AGCBC explored the mountains of Eastern Turkey. This presentation of the outstanding flora they discovered will be given by some yet to be decided combination of Alan Tracey, Philip McDougall, Paul Krystof and Dana Cromie.

March 12, 2012. Malcolm McGregor: Saxifrages around the world and in the garden. Note the date change. This is a **Monday**.

Malcolm McGregor is a leading world authority on Saxifrages and his recent Timber Press book "Saxifrages: A Definitive Guide to the 2000 Species, Hybrids and Cultivars" has become the standard reference work for gardeners. Malcolm was the Editor of the Scottish Rock Garden Club Journal from 2000 to 2006 and is the current Editor of the NARGS Quarterly. He lectures regularly on alpine plants and rock gardening and has travelled widely in North America, Europe, Turkey and the Himalayas observing and photographing plants in the wild.

April 4, 2012. Fritz Kummert: Two presentations starting at 7:00 pm sharp: **Andalusia and its flowers** and **Our new alpine-house and crevice garden.**

Note the date change. This is the **first** Wednesday of the month.

Fritz Kummert is a well-known plantsman in European horticultural circles and had his apprenticeship in horticulture at the municipal gardens of Vienna. His garden at Wohngraben is situated in the south-eastern part of Austria in the province of Styria (Steiermark) at an elevation of approximately 480 m. He grows a large collection of plants in a wide range, not really specializing in any particular genus. Many photographs in Baldassare Mineo's well-known book, Rock Garden Plants: A Color Encyclopedia, were supplemented by Fritz Kummert.

Courtesy of the NARGS 2012 Speaker Tour. More information on Fritz: http://www.nargs.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=178:speakers-tour-2012&catid=62:speakers-tours&Itemid=121

Seed Collecting in the Wild, 2011

Linda Verbeek

Most years we go for a seed collecting trip in late summer, early fall. The first thing to decide is where to go. Unfortunately, since Vancouver is on the ocean, there are only 180 ° to choose from, and actually going north is not much of an option. But more important is the question whether to go to a familiar area, or to pick a region we

haven't visited as often. If we go where we've been many times, we collect the same seeds every year. But then, we are also more likely to know the exact places where plants grow, and we are more likely to recognize the plants we find – a plant in seed doesn't necessarily look exactly like it did when it was in flower. As far as knowing the right place: there is a small marsh somewhere in the Oregon Cascades, where *Dodecatheon jeffreyi* grows. This is a plant that is standing in water when it flowers, but by the time the seed is ripe the ground is more or less dry. We've seen it in flower decades ago, and identified it then with a flora, so that we knew what we were looking at a few years ago when we discovered this small marsh. To get there, we have to find a particular campground, and then hike a particular road out of there, keeping an eye out for a clearing some ways off in the forest. But we've found it back at least once.

This year, however, we wanted to see some new country – after all, this is a holiday for us, not a paid job. Not that Idaho and Montana, which was where we spent most of our time, were totally unknown to us, but we hadn't been there for some time, and we certainly haven't driven all the available roads, which is pretty well the case closer to home. We stayed in BC all the way to the Kootenays and found some seeds before we left the country. At a roadside which was really not much more than a rest area and a couple of picnic tables hidden in the forest, we found a population of *Clintonia uniflora* encroaching on the road edge in the gravel. This wouldn't seem to be optimal habitat, but it was those plants on the edge of the road that were fruiting most heavily. We didn't feel at all bad about picking berries there – sooner or later someone was going to drive over the lot. And *Clintonia* is easy to recognize, with the steely blue berries; nothing else has that colour.

Once we get beyond the familiar, a flora is an essential tool. A flora, for those of you who may not be very familiar with them, is a book to identify plants. Unlike the more familiar field guides, it doesn't primarily work with pictures. A flora consists of a series of tables and a series of plant descriptions. The tables give you choices about the characteristics (sometimes rather picayunish) of your plants. Each choice leads to another choice, until you reach a definite answer. These tables are called keys, and they are arranged in a hierarchy: first a table to determine the family, then one to determine the genus, and eventually one to give you the species. With experience you can

usually start with the family, and often even with the genus. When you have your answer, you check with the species description, and hope it fits. If it doesn't, you start over again. The species description always includes not only the plant itself, but also its habitat and its distribution. This all sounds pretty straightforward, but in practice it often isn't. Floras can ask the most impossible questions – like wanting to know what the seeds are like, when you've found a plant that has just started flowering, or whether the capsule is nodding or not, which is also impossible to tell in the flowering stage. And sometimes the questions don't have very clear answers – there is a distinction in the genus *Lupinus* about the nature of the whorls in the inflorescence that I still haven't figured out. For this trip (and many others) we mainly use Hitchcock, Flora of the Pacific Northwest. Our Hitchcock is a little old, and some of the names are outdated now, but there isn't a real replacement. To use the flora, you usually also need a hand lens – and some experience helps!



Fritillaria pudica Photograph by Alan Tracey

The flora helps in various ways, even if you can't use the keys, which generally depend on flowers being present. For instance, on this trip we found three *Fritillarias*. The flora will tell us that *F. pudica* doesn't have winged capsules, whereas *F. affinis* and *F. atropurpurea* do. It will also tell us, that the last two don't really overlap in distribution, so on the basis of location we can be sure that we named the species correctly.

This is quite often how we manage to identify plants. We were looking for *Calochortus eurycarpus* in SW Montana, where we had once seen it in bloom, growing so thickly that it looked almost like a Dutch tulip field. It is convenient that there isn't much else there in the way of *Calochortus*. It could overlap with *C. apiculatus*, but the flora tells us that one has nodding capsules. We would have loved to find it, too, but we only spotted two or three capsules, and they were

empty. Nodding capsules are a nuisance that way. And it also overlaps with *C. macrocarpus*, which is one of the most widespread species, but that has a very distinctive capsule. Even so, it took us quite a while at a number of spots to find seed, because it was obviously a late season even so far east, and at first we only found green capsules. Eventually we ran it to earth on a campground in the Sawtooth Mountains in Idaho, where the local microclimates must have been very variable, because we found ripe seed, but also still a few flowers – just in case we'd doubted our own identification.

However, it isn't always that easy. Further west in Idaho, just across



Calochortus macrocarpus
Photograph by Alan Tracey

the Snake River from Oregon, we found *C. eurycarpus* again, but also something that looked very similar, except that the capsules seemed to be a little longer. Now there could possibly be another *Calochortus* around there, *C. nitidus*, and the description in the flora isn't clear enough to distinguish the capsules. So at first I thought – it's different, and then later we found some old petals hanging

on and I started to doubt, and I still don't know.

Sometimes finding a plant is serendipity. You look for one thing – in this case the *Calochortus* and run into something else, like *Dodecatheon jeffreyi*, which grew on the same campground, in exactly the same sort of setting as in Oregon, except a little shadier. It is also identified by its rather long, narrow leaves, and moreover, the flora assured us that yes, it did occur as far east as Idaho.

In the same stroll we also ran across a *Frasera* – obviously not the big Monument Plant (*Frasera speciosa*), which we had found earlier, in Montana, but a much smaller one, which, like all smaller *Fraseras*, had opposite leaves. It didn't have ripe seed, but it gave us a search image, and we did manage to find it in seed later on and at a lower elevation. We had found *F. speciosa* when we turned off on a National Forest road, because we saw such a lovely grassy area there. It is unmistakable, with its whorls of leaves with flower clusters

in every axil. But I had only ever seen it in an alpine/subalpine setting, and was surprised to read that it does occur in open woodland, too. Again, there isn't anything else in that area. There is another whorled one, with blue flowers no less (the Monument Plant has greenish, speckled flowers), but it only occurs in the Blue Mountains. When we ended up there, much later, we found a big *Frasera*, but couldn't be sure which of the two it was – they both occur. However, when we compared, the seed looked different, so we hope.

Sometimes even plants in seed can be identified with a flora. There are a few *Lomatiums* for which this is true, because the leaves are so distinct. Most of them have very finely divided, ferny leaves, and then you do need to know at least whether the flowers are yellow or white. By the time the seed is ripe, that is pretty well hopeless. But *L. nudicaule* and *L. triternatum* have unmistakable leaves, and although they are mostly dry and dead by this time, they are still recognizable. The yellow *Lomatiums* are so cheery when they bloom in the spring, with their flowers nearly at soil level, but white or yellow, they are all handsome in seed, when the big oval fruits are sitting perkily on top of the stiff stalks of the umbel. If only they were a little easier to grow!

There are not many *Penstemons* I would like to identify vegetatively (*P. fruticosus* is an exception), but fortunately, they often hang on to their dead flowers for some time, and with a little patience and a magnifying glass, it is still possible to distinguish characteristics of the stamens, which is a major element in identification, and also to make a guess at the size of the flower. I identified *P. venustus* that way last year.

This year, we found our first *Penstemon* in flower on a hike high up in the mountains, and I took a little sample back to the campground to key (I wasn't hiking with the heavy flora this year). This was a beautiful, large-flowered, clear blue *Penstemon*, of which we saw only one specimen in full flower. It turned out to be *P. attenuatus* v. *militaris*, and 1000 ft lower on the campground it was in seed – with enough trace of flowers to be sure it was the same. On another campground we found a different *Penstemon*, and again, with patience and some luck, we came up with a name (*P. payettensis*). A third one eluded us for days – we found it in seed in various places, but I could never come up with a name for it. And I don't like

collecting a totally unknown *Penstemon*, because some are quite small-flowered and not very interesting. It was maddening, when there was so much seed to be had. But eventually, somewhere, I found a few dead flowers, which not only allowed me to name it, but also showed that it had quite reasonably-sized flowers of what seemed to have been a nice blue (*P. wilcoxii*).

Sometimes it is difficult to decide how much to collect. I don't like to get too much seed, especially since seed that no one wants eventually gets destroyed. I'd much rather leave it in the wild, then, even if it probably mostly gets destroyed there too. But you can't clean the seed as you go, and there is always some chaff, and some infertile seed. The best situation is if you can just shake the ripe seed out of the capsules – no cleaning, and you have a good idea how much you have. Generally you can do that with *Calochortus*, but *C. lyallii* gave us troubles this year. We were rather late for it, and most of the capsules were empty or nearly empty and wide open. If you tried to shake the remaining seeds out of them, they often jumped as soon as you touched the capsule – and gone they were. So in the end we just collected the whole capsule, carefully closing our hands around them before picking them. And then you get something like *Clematis hirsutissima*, which is notorious for having infertile seed. We were lucky to find a good population of it, full of ripe seed – so ripe that it just fell in your hand when you stroked the seed head, but perhaps still didn't collect enough. It was a large envelope full, though, and we didn't have too many envelopes!

Sometimes you only need to be able to identify the genus. We stopped along the road somewhere, looking for *Calochortus macrocarpus*, another one that we only found with unripe capsules for the longest time. Again, we had no luck, but my husband spotted an *Olsynium* – the inflorescence and the capsules are very similar between *Olsynium* and *Sisyrinchium*, but the round, rush like leaves of *Olsynium* are diagnostic, and the only two species in the Northwest don't overlap. It was while we were looking for more of it (knowing that it likes to grow in areas that are wet in spring but dry in summer) that we found the other large *Frasera*.

The same is true for *Iris*. Last year in California we had a choice, but up in north-eastern Oregon there is only *Iris missouriensis*. And *Iris* capsules are also unmistakable.

Zigadenus capsules are very similar to *Delphinium* capsules – and in fact, last year I was fooled for a while – but the seed is unique, long and narrow, light brown and twisted. *Delphinium* has black seeds, sometimes with a white aril. There are two species of *Zigadenus* in the area, but *Z. venenosus* has a much denser inflorescence than *Z. elegans*, and that can still be seen at seed time – especially if most of the flowers set seed. I think the individual flowers of *Z. elegans* are much prettier, but the dense head of flowers in *Z. venenosus* is also attractive.



Zigadenus elegans Photograph by Alan Tracey

Allium tolmiei, which in the spring makes masses of flower heads in the wettest parts of the meadows. It must not have been a good year for it, as there were far fewer seed heads than usual.

Off Washington Highway 20 west of Okanogan we discovered *Dodecatheon dentatum* a few years ago – also nearly with its feet in the water, but in quite a bit of shade. This year, just a little closer to the creek, if not quite in it, we also found *Aconitum columbianum* in flower, as well as in seed. That helped with the identification, because I had at first thought it was another *Delphinium*, the leaves are quite similar, the fruits differ, but it is somewhat subtle.



Dodecatheon dentatum
Photograph by Alan Tracey

It doesn't pay to count the miles or the money you spend to come up

with these seeds. But it makes a great holiday, and for both of us, seed hunting gives us some of the pleasures of the chase – without doing harm.

Club Financials Charlie Sale

Notice to Reader

I have compiled the attached Balance Sheet of **The Alpine Garden Club Of British Columbia** as at June 30, 2011 and the Statement of Income and Members' Equity for the twelve months from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011.

These statements have been compiled from information provided by your Treasurer. I have not audited, reviewed or otherwise attempted to verify the accuracy or completeness of such information. Readers are cautioned that these statements may not be appropriate for their purposes.

Charles G. Sale
Accountant.

Alpine Garden Club of B.C. Balance Sheet as at 06/30/2011

ASSETS		LIABILITIES	
CURRENT ASSETS		CURRENT LIABILITIES	
North Shore Credit Union	\$4,161.03		0
NSCU Membership Acct	8.90	TOTAL LIABILITIES	0
CIBC	4872.94		
Total Cash	\$9,042.87		
NSCU - Term Deposit	59,470.11		
Prepaid Expenses	0	EQUITY	
Accounts Receivable	0	Retained Earnings	\$17,238.66
Total Other	0	Current Earnings	4,913.11
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$68,512.98	TOTAL	\$22,151.77
		Dickenson Bequest	45061.02
		Current Earnings	1300.19
		Total Bequest	\$46,361.21
TOTAL ASSETS	\$68,512.98	TOTAL EQUITY	\$68,512.98
	=====		=====

Statement of INCOME and MEMBERS EQUITY
(Unaudited - see Notice to Reader)
For the Year Ended June 30, 2011
(with comparative figures for previous years)

	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
REVENUE								
Membership Income								
Fees	7029.39	7016.99	7232.09	7334.59	7376.08	8648.38	9797.94	8750.79
less: Expenses	23.95	130.12	791.49	562.07	642.19	3142.61	14.80	42.12
Net Membership Income	7005.44	6886.87	6440.60	6772.52	6733.89	5505.77	9783.14	8708.67
Spring Plant Sale								
Revenue	6907.25	10001.00	11729.10	10393.10	10509.92	13583.35	14778.25	13338.05
less: Expenses	5353.19	7236.12	9088.92	7262.34	8798.73	8017.90	12692.12	10611.44
Net Spring Plant Sale Income	1554.06	2764.88	2640.18	3130.76	1711.19	5565.45	2086.13	2726.61
Fall Plant sale								
Revenue	6786.00	4713.00	5181.70	0.00	5555.50	5755.50	0.00	6214.20
less: Expenses	5497.94	3830.28	3998.97	0.00	4064.79	3956.38	0.00	4290.33
Net Fall Plant Sale Income	1288.06	882.72	1182.73	0.00	1490.71	1799.12	0.00	1923.87
Seed Exchange								
Revenue	1259.58	671.04	417.25	633.45	712.30	1496.17	861.70	1568.57
less: Expenses	1071.64	1285.59	653.71	950.92	646.52	193.00	580.96	800.00
Net Seed Exchange Income	187.94	-614.55	-236.46	-317.47	65.78	1303.17	280.74	768.57
Other Revenue								
Interest	59.02	363.89	673.88	883.88	962.36	543.65	503.16	694.51
Miscellaneous	808.00	160.00	480.88	931.75	50.00	1305.96	190.25	0.00
Total Other Revenue	867.02	523.89	1154.76	1815.63	1012.36	1849.61	694.41	694.51
Total Ordinary Revenue	10902.52	10443.81	11181.81	11401.44	11013.93	16023.12	12844.42	14822.23
Expenses								
General Expenses	2180.40	1686.36	1862.33	2295.58	2069.78	1806.98	2472.04	2821.73
Bulletin Expense	1089.01	1567.06	3888.63	9462.02	5107.77	6795.99	7514.81	7147.01
Annual Show Expenses	715.90	1081.59	1392.11	1306.80	395.47	1116.26	1155.54	763.54
Monthly Meeting Expenses	2004.10	2207.54	4392.41	3669.95	2255.40	2918.42	1923.79	1317.98
Other Venue Show Expenses					132.50		354.43	
Total Regular Expenses	5989.41	6542.55	11535.48	16734.35	9960.92	12637.65	13420.61	12050.26
Net Income before Special Events	4913.11	3901.26	-353.67	-5332.91	1053.01	3385.47	-576.19	2771.97
WSW Net Income				-1536.23				
Total Net Income before Donations	4913.11	3901.26	-353.67	-6869.14	1053.01	3385.47	-576.19	2771.97
Donations	0.00	2500.00	176.00	2500.00	8100.00	4610.00	3789.37	6800.00
NET INCOME, before bequests	4913.11	1401.26	-529.67	-9369.14	-7046.99	-1224.53	-4365.56	-4028.03
Bequests								44545.00
TOTAL INCOME	4913.11	1401.26	-529.67	-9369.14	-7046.99	-1224.53	-4365.56	40516.97
Net Income on Bequest Funds	1300.19	980.96	1311.37	1566.68	1640.52	891.43	825.06	0
Members' equity, beginning of year	62227.87	59845.65	61027.30	67538.68	73385.15	78877.88	78689.67	36742.78
Members' equity at year end	68512.98	62227.87	59845.65	61027.3	67538.68	73385.15	78877.88	78689.67
Breakdown of Members' Equity								
Retained Earnings	22151.77	16866.85	15465.59	15995.38	25476.67	29923.66	31148.19	35514.75
Dickenson Bequest Balance	46361.21	45361.02	44380.06	43068.69	41502.01	43461.49	42570.06	41745

NOTE: 2005 & 2009 results are for 10 months.

There was no Fall Plant Sale in the 2005 & 2008 fiscal period.