

Bulletin
of the
Alpine Garden Club
of
British Columbia



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Alpine Garden Club of BC

Internet Home Page: www.agc-bc.ca

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Meetings are held 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: Castilleja sp., Three Brothers Trail, Manning Park, British Columbia.
Photograph by A. S. Tracey*

Special Club Business:

NOTICE OF MOTION

At the Annual General Meeting the following motion will be presented:

Moved that the fiscal year end of the Alpine Garden Club of BC be changed from August 31 to June 30.

Programs:

Philip MacDougall

We have a great slate of speakers for this autumn. Their topics will cover geophytes from South Africa, the blue poppies of the Himalayan mountains and a surprise, a topic as yet unknown.

Linda Verbeek: Sept 9th, Geophytes of South Africa.

Bill Terry: Oct 14th; *My Blue Heaven*, including a book signing (<http://www.meconopsis.ca>, also see the review of this book by Douglas Justice in this Bulletin)

Sean Hogan: Nov 11; Topic to be announced. Proprietor of Cistus Nursery <http://www.cistus.com/>, Author of [Trees for All Seasons](http://www.timberpress.com/authors/id.cfm/1128) <http://www.timberpress.com/authors/id.cfm/1128>. There is a chapter devoted to Sean in "The Plant Hunters Garden" by Bobby Ward

Annual auction and Christmas pot luck: Dec 9th

Open Gardens:

We had an excellent program of Open Gardens this spring. Those that opened their gardens were pleased with the number of visitors. I am disappointed to have to tell you that there were no reports of any of our club members bringing their trowels or secateurs along with them.

We are particularly pleased that Wilhelm and Karla Bischoff had an open garden this spring as their garden placed second in a province-wide Great Garden Search Contest hosted by the Vancouver Sun newspaper. Although this garden is on a regular city lot, it features an

amazing variety of plants including numerous cypripedium orchid and cyclamen species. Also, a huge variety of less hardy orchids are found in the house. From our Open Gardens organizer, Lisa O'Donnell: "A fabulous collection of interesting plants, many in pots. There is a spectacular water feature and orchids are featured outside (huge clumps!) and inside- all thriving under Carla and Bill's care. Beautifully pruned conifers abound and pathways guide the visitor through a maze of pots and plants. Covered areas house pots of cyclamen and other special plants. Barely a spot is bare!"

Seed Exchange 2009:

Note from Marilyn Plant

The deadline for receipt of seeds this year is **Friday, October 23rd**.

Because of printing deadlines, seeds must reach us by that date. If for some reason your seeds might not reach us by that date you may send a list of your seeds, alphabetized if possible, by mail or e-mail (marilyn.plant@gmail.com) to reach us by the deadline.

If seeds are wild collected please send information about where they were collected and any information about flower colour, height, etc especially for unusual plants or plants that cannot be completely identified. A description of a garden grown plant that exists in more than one form or again is not completely identified is also useful to us.

Seed donations should be sent in an envelope marked Flower Seeds Of No Commercial Value and mailed as early as possible to:

ALPINE GARDEN CLUB OF B. C.
c/o 4049 West 36th AVE.
Vancouver B.C. V6N 2T1
Canada

No permit is needed to send non-commercial seeds to Canada.

Any club member may order seeds but Donors get special privileges. To qualify as a Donor a minimum donation of five different species is required. North American members should donate this minimum in seeds native to North and South America. After that seeds from any

region are welcome. Overseas members receive donor status for seeds from any country. The success of the exchange depends on the donors so they do get special privileges. They are able to order up to 60 packages (30 for non-donors) and get priority where seeds are in short supply so it does pay to make the effort to become a donor.

Detailed ordering information will be sent out with the Seed List in the Fall Bulletin. I hope that everyone is thinking of the seed exchange as summer progresses and seeds ripen. This looks as if it might be an excellent year for seed collectors at least here in southwestern B.C. I will put in the reminder that wild collected seeds are very desirable especially to our overseas members.

As Pam Frost mentioned in the last Bulletin we are splitting up responsibility for the seed exchange to make it less of a burden for one person. I will be taking over receiving the seeds from Pam. My address is as above and I can be reached by e-mail at (email address removed).

Happy collecting

Autumn Plant Sale 2009

This is a reminder to you all that our Autumn Sale is on Sunday, September 20, 1-4 PM, in the Floral Hall at VanDusen Garden. As is usual there will be a pre-sale at 12 noon for volunteer workers and sellers. There will always be jobs available for those who turn out to help. Please remember to bring plants for the club tables for, as always, plants will be needed.

From Joan Bunn:

There's still time to pot up/pretty up whatever you can spare from your garden for the club table. The spring sale included some beautiful offerings at incredible prices -- the club tables were a hunter's delight. Remember that the choicest items go quickly in the pre-sale, before the doors open to the public, so be sure to arrive in the morning to volunteer with preparations or donate plants, in order to qualify for attending. (Usual limit on the number of plants, and where possible throughout the sale please leave some blooming specimens for the public.) Lunch is always most spectacular in the spring, when we

have the whole kitchen available at St. David's, but goodies are all the more appreciated in the fall.

This year we'll have door prizes, including a one-year subscription to Garden Wise. In a past sale, some very generous club members donated special plants & pots for the prizes, which were much appreciated. If you can provide something, please bring it to the table by noon. Remember that winners have often left by the time of the draw, so smaller, easy-to-transport items are best.

Poster/flier distribution is important starting by early September. If you are able to deliver a poster or a batch of small fliers to gardening centres, shops, etc. near you, please contact Joan at (email address removed) or 604-732-9206.

Linda Verbeek: A report on this year's Spring Plant Sale.

It is about 9 am on a Saturday morning, in the church hall of St. David's Church, and it is a madhouse. People are milling around, other people are walking by with flats and boxes of plants, some people are busily arranging plants, others are walking around with sheets of paper, some tables are groaning under the greenery, other tables are still bare black plastic, and it all looks pretty chaotic. But pretty soon a few points of order begin to emerge. First there is Joe Keller's display (he must have brought his plants in the night before, everything looks so orderly). It is ablaze with *Lewisia*s, most of them are forms of *C. cotyledon*, in all the colours it comes in, a veritable rainbow, but also *L. columbianum rupicola*, which is smaller, with much smaller flowers in large, airy panicles. This form has red flowers the type form has white flowers with pink lines. Also there was *L. nevadensis rosea* that has a tight rosette of leaves with almost stemless flowers nestled between them. There were, however, lots of other treasures, like a large flowered form of *Rhodohypoxis baurii*, in the creamy white colour. I'd lost most of my *Rhodohypoxis* this winter, so I was happy to see it. Remarkably, the only one that survived in the garden was one that I had not roofed over. The snow cover obviously kept it sheltered enough, whereas the others, although they were drier, were also exposed to the fierce nights we had for some time. So far, not even the tiniest shoot has appeared, and the little tubers I did find were all mush. There was a lovely little *Androsace*, *A. jacquemontii*, with pink flowers in umbels on short stems. Actually, *Androsaces* more or less all look like that, although a

good many of them are white, some have taller stems, and some have more flowers, at the limit there are some with virtually no stems and single flowers, but those are mostly ungrowable except for experts. *Suksdorfia ranunculifolia* is a Saxifrage relative which is native to the mountains of NW North America, although I had never heard of it. It has panicles of white flowers, and is most comfortable on wet mossy rocks.

Next we spot a table that has large numbers of identical plants – a commercial grower we figure. There are some really delectable specimens here: *Cypripedium calceolus* (most likely var. *pubescens*, which is the North American form) in full bloom. I actually paid the \$30.- for it, as we lost our own a few years back – probably because I divided it too far, and maybe also at the wrong time. Lyle Curtis also had *Edgeworthia chrysantha* Red Dragon. *Edgeworthia* is a fascinating shrub, which blooms in the winter with tight clusters of small, tubular flowers which hang down from the bare branches. The clusters are about the size of a smallish rose. Normally the flowers are yellow, but in this form they are red. They are also wonderfully scented, and the display goes on for a long time. It needs some shelter, and probably some of them didn't survive the past winter, but it is worth trying again if you have the right spot. The shrub will eventually get fairly large, to 1 ½ m or more, and equally wide. Furthermore there was a whole flat of *Arisaema sikokianum* Silver Centre, also in full bloom. These plants are anyway dramatic, with the spathe almost black on the outside and really white on the inside, but these have silver patterns on the leaves too.

Across from Lyle was Ray Beckhurst from Langley. He specializes in Hellebores, such as double forms of *H. hybridus*, or *H. X nigercors*, a hybrid between *H. hybridus* and *H. corsicus* (which has been renamed *H. argutifolius*), and *H. X sternii*. *H. X nigercors* has very attractive, almost glaucous leaves (from the *argutifolius* parent), and mostly white or greenish flowers. The flowering habit is more that of *H. niger*, and the flower shape is also closer to that parent. *H. X sternii* is also a hybrid of *H. argutifolius*, but here the other parent is *H. lividus*. The foliage is also very pretty, a matte grey green with some reddish hints in it. The flowers are in large trusses like in *H. argutifolius*, mostly greenish though some clearer tints occur too.

Then we spot some Rhododendrons – oh of course, there is Chris Klapwijk, our own rhododendron specialist. There was *R. campylogynum*, a dwarf rhodo with single, bell-shaped flowers carried on short stems above the leaves, rather an unusual habit. The flowers are mostly a fairly dusky dark rose to dusky red. *Rhododendron keleticum* is also a small, creeping rhodo, but it has larger, campanulate flowers in reddish purple or purple. For variety, Chris also had *Andromeda polifolia* 'Blue Ice'. *A. polifolia* is an ericaceous shrub normally occurring in bogs. In Holland, where I've seen it, it grows on the side of the big bunched grasses and sedges you often find emerging from the water in bogs. That way it keeps its roots aerated as well as damp. It also grows on the North Shore mountains above Vancouver, but I've found it impossible to keep in my garden. I checked it out on the web, and found a whole discussion going on, from which I gathered that it is generally a very difficult plant. Two people reported good success, one had basically established a mini-bog, by digging a hole, lining it with plastic (with a few holes in the bottom), filling it with a mix of peat and sand, and planting live *Sphagnum* on top. Once that got established, the *Andromeda* flourished in it. The other person had planted it in a raised bed consisting of a mixture of mostly very well composted manure with sand, over a sandy bottom – also providing moisture retention coupled with drainage. Good luck to anyone who bought it. It is a most attractive plant, with Rosemary-like foliage (after all, its common name is Bog Rosemary), and little clusters of pink to white bells. The 'Blue Ice' cultivar has very blue leaves.

Well by now it is going on 10:30, and there is coffee in the kitchen, and some goodies, so we can have a breather.

In the meantime, two members who are new to selling plants have got organized. Diana Hume was definitely in love with *Daphne* at some point, she had a number of species, of which I noted *D. oleoides*, an evergreen species with ivory-white flowers and a lovely scent, *D. tangutica*, another evergreen species with pink flowers and also a lovely scent, and *D. giraldii*. The last one particularly pleased me, for I tried several times to grow it from seed. I did succeed, a few years ago, but the plant (put out into the garden) was still tiny, and this spring I stepped on it..... It wasn't half the size of Diana's anyway, so I am very happy to be able to buy such a sturdy specimen from her. And I will keep it in a pot till it is too big to step on! This species

has yellow flowers and it is also fragrant. In fact, I don't know whether there is any *Daphne* without fragrance. Diana also had some native plants, among which were *Goodyera oblongifolia*, the coast Rattlesnake Plantain, an orchid with most uninteresting, tiny greenish-white flowers in a narrow spike, but beautifully patterned leaves. It lives in deep coniferous forests. I think it is like *Calypso*, in that it can't stand tap water. Years ago we had a little article about that, and the author argued that the chlorine in the tap water killed the symbiotic fungus that orchids depend on (Vol. 29, 2, April 1986, p. 39). Diana also had *Tiarella unifoliata*, a little white foamflower that also grows in our conifer forests.

Ann Dies had a lot of special plants too. Every one always loves the double *Sanguinaria canadensis*, and it is usually in short supply. I haven't grown it myself, preferring the (fleeting) single one. I know that one spreads fairly readily, and also self-seeds. But of course the double one is sterile, and maybe not as vigorous overall. *Trillium rivale* may be one of the easier Trilliums (it is certainly the one that germinates the most readily), but it is also one of the most charming ones. *T. parviflorum* has smallish white flowers that are characterized by rather narrow petals. It also has a pleasant scent. *Jeffersonia dubia* is a woodlander from Japan, and I have raved about it before – it is another one of those fleeting joys. It has large, pale lavender blue, anemone-like flowers, and beautiful wine-red foliage when emerging, but the flowers last only a few days. *Omphalodes* are a group of spring-flowering plants with small, but intensely blue flowers. *O. verna* is the least tidy one of the lot, it sprawls and runs, quickly covering large areas, but I still keep it, because it is also the earliest one to bloom, and will do so even in pretty deep shade, where little else will grow. It does, of course, constantly try to escape towards the light, and needs to be kept in check. Ann had a white form of it. I could imagine that the brilliant white flowers would also light up a dark corner.

Ian Gillam never brings very many plants, but what he has is choice. This year he had *Cypripedium formosanum*, and there were very few available. We have had years that there were 30 or more for sale, but certainly not this time. Also *Asplenium trichomanes*, a cute little fern that likes rock crevices. It looks like someone stuck two rows of green buttons on either side of a dark wire. *Gaultheria* 'Pearls' is a typical

Gaultheria, small shrub with white flowers in early summer, and red berries in autumn.

Jason Nehring often has plants I've never even heard of, like *Impatiens omeiana*. This is a hardy *Impatiens* – at least here -, with single stems that carry a tuft of narrow leaves near the top. The leaves have a very broad pale stripe down the centre, it must cover at least 1/3 of the surface. It likes shade, and blooms very late in the autumn with yellow flowers. But I think one would grow it for the leaves, all the whorls together make a very pretty pattern. *Podophyllum delavayi*, a relative of the eastern north American May apple has strikingly patterned leaves, with lots of variation between plants, and red nodding flowers below the leaves. *Trillium pusillum* is a small woodlander from the eastern US. It has rather narrow leaves, and the white petals have clearly wavy edges. It apparently multiplies well, and seems to behave a bit like our *T. rivale*.

Dan Szierzega is another one who can be counted on to bring something unusual. However, quite often they are not hardy. This is definitely not the case for *Erythronium* 'Pagoda', with pale yellow flowers and unspotted leaves. It is a hybrid between *E. tuolumnense* and *E. oregonum*. In my garden it flowers later than either of the parents. Hardiness is more of an issue with *Tweedia caerulea*, a floppy shrub or weak climber from South America. It belongs in the Asclepiadaceae, and is at best marginally hardy in our area. It does, however, bloom the first year from seed so could be grown as an annual. It has mostly simple stems with fairly large, pointed leaves and clusters of very starry, almost turquoise-blue flowers. My last selection of Dan's array is definitely not hardy. This is *Kaempferia rotunda*, in the ginger family. It is deciduous and flowers before the leaves, which get up to 60 cm. The flower looks like a huge *Roscoea* flower, white or pale lilac with a darker lip. I thought it was gorgeous, but it would need a big pot and somewhere to overwinter. Moreover, Dan said it needed a hot spring to flower well, and Mother Nature hasn't exactly been providing us with those, lately.

Next to Dan was Kaz Pelka. His love of Crassulaceae is still evident, but he is definitely branching out. *Phlox subulata* is not uncommon as an early spring flower. It usually has pink flowers. It particularly likes to grow over rocks, and can then make quite large mats. *Sedum roseum* is a North American native (also in northern Europe). It is in

the Crassulaceae, but it does not have the standard shape at all. It makes upright stems with roundish, somewhat glaucous leaves crowded all along them, and on top a little rosette of yellow flowers. More like a dainty version of the autumn Sedums than like the *Sempervivums* etc.

Julie Coomey had some plants that are not all that well known, but old friends to me. One was *Zauschneria californica*, the California Fuchsia. It is perennial from a woody crown, making lots of slender stems with narrow greyish leaves. In August these carry narrow scarlet trumpets in the leaf axils that can provide quite a show. In California it almost always grows on hillsides. Another old friend of mine is *Hermodactylus tuberosus*. Its common name (or one of them), is green Iris. And that is more or less what it looks like, a narrow-flowered green Iris with black falls. It is not a flower that shouts at you from across the garden, but if you take the trouble to look at it, it is very pretty. Probably one of the rarities in the whole sale was *Kirengeshoma koreana*. It is similar to the somewhat more familiar *K. palmata*, with the same palmate leaves on stems up to a metre, but the waxy yellow bells open up considerably more than in *K. palmata*. This means that it is definitely showier. I had never seen a plant of this before.

Ann Jolliffe is a fairly new grower with lots of different plants. This year she had a few plants of *Asyneuma compacta*, a Campanula relative from the Middle East. It forms a mat of narrow leaves, above which are short, dense spikes of deep blue flowers. They have rather narrow petals so the effect is almost frilly. *Symphandra wanneri* is another Campanula relative, this one from south-eastern Europe. It makes a rosette of leaves and then a flowering stem with large, pendent, deep blue bells. It tends to be monocarpic, but is quite hardy before flowering. It will also self-seed (at least if you have more than one). *Aquilegia chrysantha* is a North American native, and one of the parents of the commercial hybrids. It has beautiful, clear yellow flowers – not one of the most common colours in Columbines! I have had no time to do much about our own table, but my husband Nico has been arranging things so the plants are shown to advantage. Some of the more striking ones are a few pots of *Erythronium tuolumnense*, the true species from the Sierras in California. It is similar to *E. pagoda*, but the flowers are a much deeper yellow. It doesn't seem to multiply all that much – it's been in the garden for 25

years or more, and this is the first time I've felt the need to reduce the clump! Much less showy, but very dainty, is *Saxifraga rotundifolia*, a woodlander from Europe. It makes clumps of rounded, scalloped, somewhat heavy looking leaves, and a panicle of white flowers with red dots, somewhat like London Pride. It thrives in the shade and blooms most of the summer. *Polemonium carneum* is a California native, with panicles of fairly large flowers, of a shade between pink and salmon; flesh-coloured (as the species name indicates) doesn't do it justice, but nevertheless comes close. It is happy in the regular garden bed, and flowers for a good part of the summer. It grows no more than 25 cm or so tall.

Well, heavens, how the morning is flying – pretty soon they'll call the pre-sale, and I haven't even looked at the Club table, and the plants we ordered from Roger Barlow. Well, here goes, then, quickly. *Chrysosplenium davidianum* is a Saxifrage relative that likes damp, shady seeps. This one comes from China. It makes mats of small, round, bright green leaves, and very early in the spring produces little umbels of flowers, surrounded by yellow bracts. I was interested because we also had a *Chrysosplenium*, but I had called it *oppositifolium*, for one thing because it had a triangular stem. It did look slightly different. The *Chrysospleniums* are all pretty similar, and again, more subtle than spectacular. Mine thrives at the bottom of a north-facing rock. *Salix (lindleyanum?)* is a beautiful dwarf willow, with small leaves (2 x 6 mm), and tiny, nearly black, erect catkins. I do covet that! The club table was also the only one where I saw *Pleione*, *P. formosana* to be exact. I find *Pleione* frustrating. They are and they aren't hardy. A few years ago mine nearly succumbed to a major frost – only the tiny offsets survived, which is quite common among geophytes. I had just nursed them back to health last fall, and would you believe it, the same thing happened! Luckily I'd taken one pot in this time.

Among Roger's plants I noted some real alpiners. *Eritrichium nanum* needs no introduction, but you sure don't see them around very often! *Aquilegia jonesii* is another classic. On the other hand, I'd never heard of *Lepidium ostleri*, a crucifer from Utah, where it grows in crevices – sounds pretty undoable, but I bought one anyway and will try it in a trough. It looks like *Hutchinsia alpina*, a tuft or small mat of small, divided leaves, but the leaves are greyer and the small flower clusters are creamy. *Astragalus coccineus* is also a native American,

coming from the dry areas of the Southwest. It had beautiful greyish leaves, and if you can keep it alive, it produces large, bright scarlet flowers.

Oh dear, five minutes to the pre-sale – I've got to run.....

A Spring of Resurrection

Margaret Charlton

A few months ago I set out to document the plant deaths in our garden after three months of extended cold last winter. Many plants looked dreadful. Death was a natural assumption. When spring finally arrived in May, husband Charlie declared it a Toronto Spring - late and with a much-compressed blooming season. Wrong! This was a Spring of Resurrection.

Many genera did not appear until late June or July. Among these was a favourite – *Vestia foetida*. Blooming at the same time, and beautifully paired with the vestia, used to be the climbing *Solanum* 'Glasnevin'. The *Solanum* died but to my amazement the vestia shot up from the root in late June. This is a gem with yellow tubular flowers and woody stems reaching 4' to 5'.

In July *Myrtus communis* var. *tarentina* from the Mediterranean arose from the dead, unlike its relative *M. ugni* from Chile. Another Chilean, *Crinodendron patagua*, looking ready for the chipper well into spring, began shooting from the stem. This is the white flowered relation of *C.hookeriana*, the red flowered Chilean Lantern Tree. *C.hookeriana* took a serious hit. There was much bark split and dieback. After a major pruning of the worst hit stems new growth came from the base. This was a better outcome for our thirty-three year old multi-stemmed tree. It had previously been frozen to the ground three times after previous cold winters. This time it retained its 25' height.

Three other woody plants hailing from Chile were badly damaged but recovered. We have two evergreen *Rhaphithamnus spinosa* – one growing exposed to winds and the other with tree cover. The latter fared extremely well while the former took until mid-July to look semi-presentable. *R.spinosa* has charming violet flowers and attractive violet fruits. I very recently read in Dan Hinkley's new book, *The Explorer's Garden – Shrubs and Vines*, that having more than one

clone of this shrub will give better fruiting. *Escallonia ivelyi* was hit but was in full flower in July. This large shrub suffered considerable dieback. Our *Azara lanceolata*, still a young plant in the garden, needed many branches removed but the remaining live ones flowered well. *A.serrata* was unscathed. Both azara have puffy yellow flowers.

There is not much to be said about shrubs from New Zealand. Most left us in the November freeze three years ago. One exception though is *Olearia solandrii*. It survived the last freeze but this time looked totally dead. Then, in July, like magic new growth started from the roots. *Brachyglottis* 'Sunshine' surprisingly came through with very little branch damage. Three tough hebes also came through the winter.

Assorted cistus pegged out, but we are accustomed to this. *Ballota pseudodictamnus* from the south Aegean region of the Mediterranean, planted in a large tub, is passing through a miserable period as I write in late July. The same can be said for *Osthamnus leptophylla*. Not so fortunate was one of my favourites, *Vaccinium delavayi*. Surprisingly it perished after having survived the November freeze of three years ago.

The weight of snow toppled over two large shrubs – a camellia and a *Viburnum plicatum* 'Summer Snowflake'. This saved some decision making as both had outgrown their space.

Death and destruction was greatest in our seedling frame and cutting frame. Both had covers and pots were buried in peat moss. We have never before experienced losses as extensive. The rock gardens didn't suffer badly. But as usual *Convolvulus cneorum*, a zone 8 plant, was a victim. The blue member of the family, *C.sabatius*, appeared to be dead until the end of June. Now it is full of life. A third convolvulus and the most tender we have, pink *C.cantabricus*, another zone 8, left this world in company with *Euphorbia clavariodes*, a tiny erigium species, and *Verbascum* 'Letitia'. These last three plants were all residing in a large pot with overhead protection.

Most of our plants with grey foliage departed our company. Surprisingly though, two *Astelia* 'Silver Sword' survived in the garden but we lost it in a large pot which was covered during the cold spells.

The two in the garden were still recovering from the freeze of three years ago. It will be awhile before they get back their stately look.

A further surprise was seeing a mass of voodoo lily, *Sauromatum venosum*. There was not a sign of them until July and now they are looking vigorous. I had always thought of them as window sill plants until we saw them growing at The Melbourne Botanical Garden.

Most arisaema have been very late in coming up; an unexpectedly large number came through the winter though some didn't perform as well as in other years.

Eucomis species had me concerned for they were so very late in appearing. The red foliage ones came first with the rest following gradually with the last not until July.

Rhodohypoxis baurii once again came through winter outdoors in the garden. Because of its reputation for being tender, I am always surprised. I shouldn't be after seeing it at 10,000' in miserable conditions covered in sleet in Lesotho in southern Africa.

A real surprise was the extraordinary appearance in late July of *Polygonatum cirrhifolium* - a red form growing to 4'. I was the winning bidder for this treasure at the UBC Collectors Plant Auction in the spring. No plant was showing at the time but there was note from the plant on the pot saying it was just having a nap. By the end of June, certain that it was dead, I dumped it out of the pot and to my surprise there was a live shoot. I quickly repotted the plant and is now growing robustly. Other polygonatums bought at the auction were also very tardy.

After so many years of trying and growing tenderish plants, we have concluded that those from the southern end of South America are a much better bet than those from New Zealand.

In conclusion I emphatically urge you after any winter like our last to be slow to remove your apparent corpses. Patience is a virtue and the virtuous will be rewarded.

Trillium “ovatum x rivale”

Roger Whitlock

Seeds and plants have been making the rounds under the name “*Trillium ovatum x rivale*” for about 20 years. I believe most, if not all, of these are traceable to seed distributed by the AGCBC some time in the late 1980s under that name, next generation seed of which I have redistributed from time to time via various exchanges.

The correct name of this plant is actually *Trillium rivale* 'Del Norte', per the conclusion of Richard Fraser, the proprietor of Fraser's Thimble Farms on Saltspring Island.

Though this is an exceedingly vigorous plant that sets much viable seed, it shows no signs of hybrid origin. Aside from some variation in flower coloration and form within the range of variation observed in pure *Trillium rivale*, it shows no significant variation in leaf shape, nor in general stature. If *T. ovatum* were involved in its parentage, you would expect to see quite a lot of variation in all respects.

Moreover, *T. ovatum* has the characteristic that after the flowers are fertilized, they turn a deep wine color. Nothing of the sort happens with this plant.

Finally, it should be pointed out that careful genetic study of *Trillium* and its relatives has led to the conclusion that *T. rivale* is sufficiently distant from all other trilliums to justify being placed in a monotypic genus of its own, *Pseudotrillium* S. Farmer. Ipso facto, hybrids (especially fertile ones) between *T. rivale* and any other trillium are very unlikely.

It is possible that the plant under discussion is a polyploid form of *T. rivale*, but without a chromosome study of it, to say so is sheer speculation with no factual basis.

Time to correct your labels, everyone.

[*Phylogenetic Analyses of Trilliaceae based on Morphological and Molecular Data*](#): Susan B Farmer and Edward E. Schilling, **Systematic Botany** (2002), **27**(4): pp. 674–692.

Book Review

Douglas Justice

Blue Heaven: Encounters with the Blue Poppy, by Bill Terry. 2009. Published by TouchWood Editions, Heritage House Publishing Company Ltd., Victoria, BC, \$24.95

It was with some significant anticipation this spring that I leapt into Bill Terry's recently published compact treatise, *Blue Heaven*. The subject is *Meconopsis*, the holiest of horticultural holies, the ethereal, mystical blue poppies of the high Himalaya, and I was ready—bound and determined, actually—to learn from the acknowledged master. Most gardeners I know have tried growing blue poppies. Whether started from seed-exchange seed, commercially packaged seed or nursery seedlings, the results usually run from (rarely) short-lived exhilaration to (commonly) abject failure. My current high spirits are based on seeing leaf rosettes of my own living *M. betonicifolia* plants after the brutality of last winter. No sign of flowers as I write this (in June when such things are potentially achievable), but it's simply the idea that with living roots, flowers are a possibility. Like many Vancouverites, I have seen *Meconopsis* in flower in Vancouver. Gerry Gibbens has, over the years, cultivated a number of different species and hybrids in the Sino-Himalayan Garden at VanDusen where conditions appear close to ideal. Even there, though, the displays are mostly fleeting.

Bill Terry is a legend in the Vancouver area, a gardener who proves that we actually have the ability to grow, really grow, blue poppies here on the south coast of British Columbia. His success with *Meconopsis* is not horticultural happenstance; Bill is quite clearly observant, clever, resourceful and absolutely determined to succeed. He understands our soils, the vagaries of our climate, and our rainfall, all of which he describes in some detail in this book. One significant challenge, he explains, is that the rainfall here is basically opposite to the Himalayan summer monsoon to which many *Meconopsis* are adapted. Another is the summer heat (and drought) we enjoy, which also wreaks havoc with these inhabitants of misty, cool alpine meadows. He ably explains the requirements of poppy seeds, tender germinants and mature plants with equal, detailed weight. In contrast to most of us, he has studied his subject and learned from everyone

else's mistakes. If he's made mistakes of his own, he certainly doesn't dwell upon them. And long after we'd given in, he and Rosemary were off to Scotland (the font of all *Meconopsis* knowledge), to study blue poppies some more. Most importantly, Bill Terry knows how to communicate this experience.

I'll admit I was dubious about the book at first. It's lovely to look at, with a knock-out cover and at least a hundred of the photographs on the inside are outstanding, as well. Bill's self-effacing, fireside approach reminded me of magazine writing—good magazine writing, but with a strong narrative structure—and I was concerned that I'd not be able to extract those vital kernels of horticultural wisdom I was hoping to find, without having to go back through the whole book again and again. A cursory flip through the book, seeing chapter titles like The Rainbow Collection, Blue Poppy Heaven and Heavenly Blue, and I was ready to call it quits. Happily, I found it an effortless read, and a pleasure to go back over parts of it again. Bill's clear, matter-of-fact writing is rife with fascinating tidbits of garden history and plant exploration, and anecdotes from his own travels. His own sense of wonder and imagination come through it all; this is what the reader hopes for in an author: good story telling. I suppose if one needs to locate all of his references to pre-treating the seeds of *Meconopsis punicea* for reliable germination, this approach could be cumbersome. Am I ever going to find myself in a position where it might be helpful to know this? Doubtful, but in the event that I do, I look forward to re-immersing myself in his blue heaven.

Visitors to Our Area

Various members of our club had the pleasure of hosting John Walford of Inverness, Scotland, this summer. From his email message it is evident he had a wonderful time while he was here.

From: John Walford
Sent: July-21-09 9:46 AM
To: Moya Drummond
Subject: Re: FW: AGCBC Membership

Hello Moya

This is just a short note to thank you for fixing up the various contacts for me when I was in Vancouver last month. Everybody was very friendly and helpful and my whole holiday in Western Canada was splendid. Pam and David Frost pulled out all the stops for me, as did Ian Gillam (also Shirley with a delicious lunch - totally unexpected!).

Pam, David and I found we had lots of shared interests and experiences - even including amateur radio and similar call-up histories in the UK in the 1940s. Ian took me on an extended tour of Vancouver: Queen Elizabeth Park, much of the Marine Drive, and both the "old" UBC Garden (much as I remember it, though it has suffered a bit from recent climatic effects) and the new Asian Garden (wonderful, and all new for me). On the recommendation of all of them, I went on a long day-trip (almost 14 hours) to Victoria by way of the Gulf Islands and the Buchart Gardens - all fabulous! And, of course, they showed me their own gardens: very impressive and again reminding me of the several gardens we were taken to see in 1976; Ian's troughs are so numerous I think they must breed! Finally, I managed to pack in a two-hour seaplane trip up the west BC coast, flying up one fiord and over the mountains into the next, and landing on a sea channel and calling at a "wilderness lodge" for drinks and salmon on toast.

With all this I could hardly expect to do more, nor was there time during my brief three and a half day stay in Vancouver. So I didn't get to take up Linda Verbeek's offer of a garden visit, and my apologies to her. Again, my thanks for getting things going for me and to your AGC members for their hospitality - not least for ferrying me to and fro between downtown Vancouver and the UBC area.

With best wishes,
John (Walford)
Inverness, Scotland.

In Memoriam

Patrick Nigel Desmond Seymour 1928----2009

Barbara Cook

Director of the Devonian Botanic Garden, 1971---1996, horticulturist, botanist, teacher, educator, plant explorer, reader, gourmet cook and more.

Patrick's forebears were Irish and Scottish and he, being born in Cornwall, happily embraced all three cultures.

His career in horticulture began with McGredys in Dublin, one of the two great rose breeders. His three and a half years there, gave experience in all aspects of the nursery business with exposure to a very wide range of trees and all plant material.

Patrick then crossed the North Sea to Edinburgh, where he took a Certificate Programme at the Royal Botanic Garden of Scotland. Here, for three years, he combined practical day-work, with evening academics. After qualifying, he became a staff member for one year.

When he saw a posting on the notice board, Patrick applied to the Botany Department, University of Alberta, as a greenhouse technician. During this time he obtained a B.Sc., and when the Devonian Botanic Garden was proposed in 1959, Patrick became first the Curator and in 1976, the Director

The following excerpts are from his family, compatriots and friends---

'At about the age of two, Pat was photographed sitting in his toy car, with the back full of flowers from his mother's garden. His grandmother predicted that this was evidence for his destined career in horticulture. In every other photo he is smiling or laughing---just so happy to be in the world. I asked him his favourite flower and he immediately answered "primula." '

‘Pat compartmentalized his life and one did not know about the parts in which you were not directly involved. We have just discovered that many did not know of his teaching Scottish Country Dancing, nor of his annual Address to the Haggis at Burns Night suppers. Sometimes I thought that Pat was not too sure whether he was English, Irish or Scottish. Once I asked “why I an Englishman and he were such good friends?” “Your grandmother was Irish, so that makes it all right!” He was adamant that he was not English and vehemently insisted that Cornwall was not part of England.’

‘Patrick was an avid reader with firmly entrenched ideas and would argue passionately on the merits of favourite authors. He was not above heaping scorn on any he did not like.’

‘In 1995, in honour of his many contributions to the Garden and to the horticultural life of Edmonton, Patrick’s special alpine space was named The Patrick Seymour Alpine Garden.’

We were to find that indeed Patrick had a very wide range of rich contacts, kept lively with frequent phone calls. Just four days before he died, staff from the Garden had visited, for more of his unstinting advice, from his lifetime of profound study and knowledge.

Alleyne, in 1947, when working in Duncan and Davies Nursery in New Zealand, began a correspondence with Patrick. As both of them moved addresses were lost. Then one day Roy Forster came to Stanley Park and said “Alleyne. I would like you to meet Patrick Seymour!” So he came that night to stay. Our cottage entrance was into a sloping sun room. As this large man came through the door, he looked about and said, “How do you do, it’s awfully good of you to have me, are you sure it’s all right, there’s rather a lot of me you see!”

Patrick’s quirkiness, warmth and love of fun endeared him instantly. On his not infrequent visits to Vancouver friends and cohorts, Patrick was often one of the judges of the Alpine Garden Club of B.C. Spring Show.

And so, sadly, another great Plantsman has left us.

New from New France

Ian Gillam, Vancouver

Paris c. 1740

King's Physician! The nomination represented a recognition of status in the profession. Further, there would be a regular salary. The trouble with a successful practice among the nobility and wealthy merchants was that the patients required the finest drugs and constant attention yet, when the bill was respectfully rendered, settlement was much delayed.

There was a drawback. The position was only titular. He would be only one of the King's Physicians and not directly physician to the royal family. Indeed, the position available was not in Paris or even in France but in distant New France, at the capital and garrison of Québec. Still it was an adventure and a chance for a botanist to explore new territory, the investigation of novel plants as drugs being part of the duties. Besides, in that new world a man with connections could acquire estates vaster than conceivable in France.

Jean-Francois Gaultier (born in 1708 and variously written Gaultier etc.) accepted the posting and arrived in Québec in 1742. He apparently never returned to France, dying at his home in Québec in 1756. One of the plants growing in the woods of Canada was a small creeping evergreen shrub unknown in Europe and used by the native people as a tea for a variety of illnesses. Known in English as wintergreen, it contains an oil that, applied externally, serves as an effective relief for sore and aching muscles. The strong but not unattractive smell of its active ingredient, methyl salicylate, is familiar to all who have used embrocation for this purpose, though nowadays the active material is usually synthetic.

Orders came from Paris that a Swedish physician and botanist planned to visit New France. In view of earlier hospitality afforded in Sweden to French scientists he was to be entertained and escorted at government expense. This duty fell, of course, to the King's Physician. The visitor was Pehr (Peter) Kalm, who had recently studied and worked with the leading botanist, Carl Linnaeus, in Uppsala. Kalm traveled first to British North America, staying long enough to marry a widow in a Finnish-Swedish settlement that served as his base before crossing the wilderness border into the rival settlements of New France.

Among many other plants, medicinal and otherwise, Gaultier showed Kalm his valued wintergreen and the latter sent samples back to the professor in Uppsala where it was named *Gaultheria procumbens*, a new genus in the Ericaceae not represented in the European flora. (By coincidence another member of the same family found by Kalm was named in his honour by Linnaeus as *Kalmia latifolia*.)

On his return to Sweden after three years in America Kalm wrote a book on his travels, the colonial society and customs and the natural wonders he saw. Among these was the first description of Niagara Falls. His work was in demand, translated into several languages and is still an important document that remains interesting reading.

Another Gaultheria

Thanks to an unknown donor I received seeds of *Gaultheria sinensis* from the Club's Seed Exchange some years ago. Sown onto a peaty, leafy medium, tiny seedlings eventually appeared and grew on very slowly, possibly awaiting establishment of mycorrhizal connections. Planted out in peat bed, the surviving plant or plants eventually spread to form a cover of slender stems with evergreen leaves, now perhaps 45 cm across and only about 5 cm high. It took several years for flowers to appear, surprisingly large and clear white on the small shrub. As in many members of the Ericaceae the ovary develops into a dry capsule filled with tiny seeds. What is unusual in many *Gaultheria* species is that the lobes of the flower's calyx expand and thicken to envelope this capsule and form a surprisingly large, 1 to 1.5 cm long, and fleshy fruit (thus not strictly a berry). The fruits pale as they ripen and flush with colour from lilac to pink., unexpected in shape and colour.

This species comes from high mountains in western China and northern Burma (Myanmar). Those in cultivation probably originated from seed collected by Kingdon-Ward. Plants came through the recent unusually cold winter here. Some burning of tips of leaves seen in one illustration may due to winter damage. The limit of hardiness is unknown to the writer.

Other species of *Gaultheria* occur in four continents other than Europe and make interesting additions to peat beds as shrubs in a range of sizes. This small species must produce one of the largest fruits. (*Photos overleaf*)

Gaultheria sinensis in flower. Note the modest calyx.



Gaultheria sinensis in fruit with enlarged calyxes. Photos by Ian Gillam

