

ALPINE GARDEN CLUB of BC



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AGCBC MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS & RENEWALS

It is that time of year when we remind the membership about renewals and inform new members on some easy ways to initiate membership.

There are two ways to do this:

1- An on-line sign-up with payment by credit card through PayPal (Membership in PayPal is not required for one-time or occasional payments.)

2- The AGCBC application form for download and mailing (Print out, fill in and mail with payment by cheque etc. or through PayPal.)

However, the payment by cheques, etc. gets complicated by the currency that cheques are denominated in.

Please note we can accept credit card payments only through PayPal. We can accept personal cheques (CAD\$30, US\$30, GB£19 or €23) payable to Alpine Garden Club of B.C.

Outside these countries, please pay by postal money order, bank cashier's money order or by banknotes (no coins please; cash mailed at your risk).

Thus, we encourage you to renew or initiate your membership electronically on-line below.

The easiest way to do this is to click on the [live ON-LINE links below](#):

>[Become a New Member](#)<

>[Renew membership](#)<

>[Alpine Garden Club of BC application form for download and mailing by post.pdf](#)<

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Upcoming Events

FRIDAY, February 20th, Peter Korn's Rock Garden. The Swedish King of Sandbed Construction will use his recently published book, www.peterkornstradgard.se/book.html, to illustrate a bold, ecological style. Don't miss it!

Wednesday March 11 Hans Roemer: Alpine Treasures of Waterton National Park. The highly trained and accomplished Roemer will present on his trip in 2013. See: <http://www.agc-bc.ca/events/Hans-Roemer-Alpine-Treasures-of-Waterton-National-Park>

Wednesday, April 8th Douglas Justice- My Colombia Magnolia Adventure

This presentation resulted from a Magnolia Society tour in January 2014 to see magnolias in Colombia. There are some 30 species of *Magnolia* native to Colombia growing in the foothills of the Andes mountains. Unfortunately, most of them are endangered because of habitat degradation- especially timber harvesting as it is a prized furniture wood. Colombian botanist and magnolia researcher, **Marcela Serna** led the tour, along with a retinue of Magnolia Society heavyweights, including **Richard Figlar** (scientific advisor to the Society and an authority on the genus). The group of 10 spent a week criss-crossing the Andean foothills enjoying not just the incredible array of flora but the culture as well.

SATURDAY April 25th 1-4 PM Pam Eveleigh- Modern Plant Hunting

This afternoon talk will be held in conjunction with the Primula Group of BC. Pam will discuss how state of the art technology can be combined with information about historic quests to enable plant exploration. Pam is an expert on *Primula* and hosts/ runs the incredible website www.primulaworld.blogspot.com

Saturday, April 5th, AGCBC SPRING PLANT SALE AND POT SHOW at the VanDusen Gardens. This is an all day event for vendors with the public able to participate when the doors open at 12:30. One of the events of the year and no gardener will want to miss this. For the newbie to alpines, the pot show is a real eye-opener demonstrating why the world of alpines is so enticing.

Seed Exchange Report

by Diana Hume, Seed Exchange Director

The main part of the seed exchange is over for another year. They were mailed out on Wednesday, January 14th. The remaining seeds and late coming seeds are being packaged up for sale at various venues - club meetings, Seedy Saturday at Van Dusen, our Spring Show and Sale, etc. A big 'thank you' once again to our seed donors who make it all work so well. Some of the most popular seeds this year have been: *Arisaema candidissima*, *A. tosaense*, *A. triphyllum* - red veined leaves, *Callianthemum anemonoides*, *Campanula zoysii*, *Clematis scottii*, *Cyclamen purpurescens* - deepest colours, *Erythronium hendersonii*, *E. montanum*, *E. oregonum*, *Fritillaria camschatsensis*, *F. pudica*, *Galanthus rizehensis*, *Lewisia tweedyi*, *L. tweedyi* - apricot, *Lilium formosanum var. pricei*, *L. mackliniae*, *Trillium chloropetalum* - yellow, *T. rivale*, and *Viola delphinensis*.

I would also like to thank all the workers for their packaging, order filling, and mailing. North Shore helpers were Ruth Anderson, Wendie Kottmeier, Lynn Batt, Angela Miller, Margot Ketchum, Geri Barnes, Dana Cromie, Lyn Noble, and Pamela Yokome. In Vancouver, Pam Frost hosted getting help from Linda Verbeek, Marilyn Plant, Ann Dies, Gillian Collins, Patricia North, Jo Turner, Judy Echols, Karen Thirkell, Louise Hutchings, and Ian Plenderleith. On the Sunshine Coast, Bill Terry hosted a group with Verity Goodier, Ali Thompson, Nancy Webber, and Kathie Kennedy.



Bill Terry on left with the Sunshine Coast group including their manager Teddy

Links of Interest

This being snowdrop season, whet your appetite with these few links. Some excellent info on *Galanthus/Snowdrops* with more links and info

<http://carolynsshadegardens.com/tag/greatorex-double-snowdrops/>

A great pic of 'Ballerina' galanthus-ballerina-3-23-2014-2-54-13-pm.jpg (600x800)

The book that many consider by many to be the best is: **Snowdrops: A Monograph of Cultivated Galanthus** by Matt Bishop, Aaron Davis, and John Grimshaw (Griffin Press 2006) already out of print but readying for an updated Second edition.

Far Reaches has many *Galanthus* cvs <http://www.farreachesfarm.com/g-s/1848.htm>

Douglas Aitken of the PNW Palm & Exotic Plant Society has written a very informative review of *Magnolia* (and near *Magnolia*) that have shown horticultural merit in the Pacific Northwest in a recent issue of *Davidsonia*: http://www.davidsonia.org/files/Aitken%20Davidsonia_25_1f.pdf

AGCBC Member Jay Akerley has a new blog: www.rockgardener.ca

Tom Taylor is a very good and literate landscape architect. He has created a simply fabulous website that I have been using for years. This link takes you to the a very little known aspect of garden history- Germany in the Renaissance- an extended review of a translation of Gothein's *History of Garden Art*.

http://www.gardenvisit.com/history_theory/library_online_ebooks/ml_gothein_history_garden_art_design/town_augsburg_germany

This beautifully researched chapter demonstrates that the proximity of cities like Nuremburg and Augsburg to Venice through the Brenner Pass, made S. Germany unique in the evolution of European gardens. Some superb etchings and woodblock prints.

The National Parks Service in the USA has a great new search database available now. Before planning a mountain hiking trip, take some time to see what you may be able to see *in situ*. <https://irma.nps.gov/NPSpecies/Search/SpeciesList>

Another mega-site for searching the flora of the Rocky Mountains is here: <http://www.rmh.uwyo.edu/data/search.php>. The University of Wyoming site is fantastic.

Saddened to hear that Bob Tuckey's Natural Gardener store on W.10th <http://www.thenatural-gardener.com/> has closed down. It was a mecca of sorts for plant enthusiasts. His garden tours which were such a very popular activity will continue as he is now working for David Hunter. His newsletters contained so much practical information on a wide range of subjects. One such article is on the care and cultivation of *Sarracenia*. <http://www.thenatural-gardener.com/article15.shtml>
We'll miss your shop but well done Bob!

Very interesting and well done blog by a young Permaculture family and their travels on the Australian coast. Spearfishing and foraging with a young family and doing it on bicycles! Embryonic alpine gardeners. <http://theartistasfamily.blogspot.ca/>

Bioscapes indeed! Amazing things are happening in photography and if you don't believe me go here: <http://www.olympusbioscapes.com/gallery/year/2014>
Especially interesting to those of us in perpetual plant geek mode is this series of plant tissues: <http://www.olympusmicro.com/galleries/plants/index.html>



leaf showing xylem and phloem cells

Something closer to home (Van Isle) that is mysterious and confusing: *Mimulus* (*Erythranthe*) x *sookensis*

<http://www.phytoneuron.net/2013Phytoneuron/69PhytoN-Mimsookensis.pdf>

The indefatigable **Ian Young** of the Scottish Rock Garden Club (SRGC) has embarked on an in-depth, serialized ebook within his regular **Bulb Log** on the genus *Erythronium*. I would encourage you to join the SRGC or make a donation as a token of appreciation.

Here's the first two chapters.

Chapter 1 **SEEDS** : http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/logdir/2015Jan141421233053BULB_LOG_0215.pdf

Chapter 2 **BULBS**: http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/logdir/2015Feb041423060721BULB_LOG_0515.pdf

Recently Young gave a talk at the bulb conference at [Termonfeckin 2012](#) in Dublin on *Erythronium*, the Trout lilies. Thanks to **Billy Moore**, Editor of the AGS Dublin Group, for this summary below which has been further edited by yours truly.

Erythronium- A Talk by Ian Young

The genus evolved from *Tulipa* and Young talked about its distribution. There are Eurasian sites and sites in eastern North America, but the most important area by far is western North America. If you can grow but one species it must be *E. californicum* in the form of 'White Beauty'. Young has also selected another form of the same species which he calls 'Craigton Beauty'.

Erythronium are not true bulbs as the parent bulb dies off each year and is replaced by new bulbs. So, is it a bulb or a corm? Ian's conclusion: "most probably a bulb".

The plants are easily raised from seed. (Ed: [See above link](#)) The seeds of the different species are distinct. For the western North American species the seed should be sown on the surface. It is not necessary to sow thinly. The young plants should be repotted in the third year after which the leaf pattern begins to develop. The aim should be to get flowers in the fifth year.

Regular repotting is essential, as the bulbs tend to burrow down, often escaping through the drainage holes. If a bulb gets broken both parts of it may grow, but one certainly will.

Most species do best in the open garden and the clump-forming ones should be split every three years. Diagnostic characteristics in the genus are difficult to pin down as some species show wide variation in leaf, flower colour and shape and in the colour of the pollen, which is no longer considered an important diagnostic tool.

As with most genera some species are easier than others but Ian has found that over generations the more difficult ones will adapt to garden conditions.

E. revolutum can have beautifully marked foliage and could be grown for this alone. The hybrids, 'Susannah', 'Minnehaha', and 'Craigton Cream' are gorgeous, especially the last, of which the scented *E. helenae* is a parent.

E. multiscapoideum is lovely and not difficult. *E. elegans* is a fine plant, better and easier than *E. montanum*.

The form of *E. toulumnense* generally available in commerce is not great, having a disproportionate amount of foliage. There are better forms. *E. hendersonii* is highly desirable but is slow to increase.

From eastern North America, *E. americanum* is shy flowering and *E. rostratum* is nice, and it's scented.

Of the Eurasian species *E. dens-canis* is closer to the eastern than the western North American species, and is a great garden plant. The pollen on this species is always purple. *E. sibiricum* and *E. japonicum* are delightful.

Ian grows *Erythronium* in leaf mould and sand: they don't like peat moss. He applies some sulphate of potash when they are in growth.

Rock On!

As the Pineapple Expressos continue to pulse their southwest march into March, it seems that we may be spared any late Winter whiplash of the sort that we had last year. An early start to Spring is always lovely as those marginally hardy woodies and temperennials are given a reprieve and given another sequence of seasons to adapt and toughen up. Seedlings of geophytes can also continue to advance without interruption. Alpine gardeners know that when there is an even and predictable oscillation of late Winter/early Spring temps, seeds in pots outside or in a cold frames yield great germination results. Late Winter is the time of germination for *Narcissus*, *Tulipa*, *Ornithogalum*, *Bellevalia*, *Colchicum* and so many more species. As I write this in early February, I have been delighted to see many things germinate from June '14 seedlings especially *Narcissus* and especially the cv. 'Ara'. The local hares have developed a great appetite for my tulip bulbs but leave the *Narcissus* alone due to the presence of alkaloids such as lycorine that are toxic to them as well as deer. Thus, *Narcissus* are taking over ground formerly occupied by *Tulipa*.

Everyone has their systems for seeing these seedlings through to flowering. I have found that double potting of the 4" tech mesh pots from McConkey are ideal in that they provide an extra layer of insulation from Winter cold and prevent root singe and soil desiccation in the Summer.

Doubled up, they will last for decades especially if they are white that has good photochemical resistance unlike green or black. I like to keep them in cold frames sitting on top of a good thick layer of coarse sand and a bit of perlite.

Later they will come out tray-in tray (for added strength) square 17" propagation trays- a nice, tight 16 pots- and sit on polystyrene tables with smooth, round legs that make it impossible for mice or voles to climb up. I try to give them as much Spring sunshine as they can manage before shifting them to a shadier and drier Summer site. Almost without exception they are exposed to the elements year round. After two years in pots, in mid-Spring, I always plant out some of the seedlings into future garden positions both as a safeguard and as a chance to compare the growth of those that are being mother-hen'd by yours truly.

Most of you will have heard other alpine gardeners before me say that one of the best reasons to grow your own bulbs from seed is that they will, in many cases, be virus free. True, but beyond that and the variability of seedlings with the odd sport strutting its stuff, is the fact that you'll have more of them and can use them in ways that creates impact. The impact comes in a few ways- one of which is the wonderful way that a good number of plants can 'echo' (to use Pam Harper's term) in a garden. Not only can that colour or foil bounce around the vista of the garden but there can be a longer continuum of the bulbs because of the microclimates. You may also discover a few spots with exposures and/or substrates that are superior- all because you had numbers and you just had to find spots for them.

Every garden has its mysteries and it always astonishes me how some species and/or cultivars flourish and others just give up. I look for simplicity and self-sufficiency in my gardens, so anytime plants bid me Sayonara, I take that as a good sign and I too move on.

Philip MacDougall's Travel Journal: One Spring Week in Taiwan

Text and Pics by Philip MacDougall



Rhododendron pachysanthum from Big Snow Mtn. Taiwan

April 2nd

The number 366 bus had wound its way up Yamingshan from Taipei central station in just over 40 minutes, depositing me and my fellow bus passengers just above the Yamingshan Park headquarters. A small line waits for the number 10 shuttle, which winds its way through the park. I'm distracted by vendors of purple shelled peanuts and savory fried pancakes, I missed the first shuttle. I catch the second, I'm not in a rush; it takes me near the highest peak of the 5 mountains in this group, at an entrance to one of the network of well signed park trails. The path is a narrow line cutting through ubiquitous *Yushania niitakayamensis*, and today many of the volcanic fumaroles of the area are venting, occasionally they come up through the path and have to be stepped around. But there's no avoiding the sulphurous, rotten egg stench. The *Miscanthus transmorrisonensis* fields are still brown from winter, on this trip I'm searching for spring flowers. It's 30 minutes of walking and I've found my quarry. It's now apparent why my friend Jens and I had had difficulty spotting *Rhododendron hyperythrum* in the fall of 2007. In full flower they're easy to spot, isolated pink

shrubs. No hillside seems to have more than one plant, often far out among the bamboo. Plowing through bamboo is no easy task, I seem to lose each plant several times, returning to the trail to reorient. I'm not the first at one plant, and two women call me through the thicket. The foliage is unmistakable. Can they transfer heat tolerance to some of the lepidote hybrids? I don't know, at 1100m elevation they are near the peak, it always seems chilly. But Winter here probably never sees more than a brief dip below the freezing point and a dusting of snow is rare. To many Taiwanese, the frost-covered *Miscanthus* fields in Winter are one of the finest sights on the mountain. The *Rhododendrons* certainly seem to be in the wrong place, competing with the grasses rather than at the forests edge. The other *Rhododendron* on this mountain is *Rhododendron simsii*, and although it occurs here naturally, most of the plants are near the park entrances or along the road. I don't pay them much attention, Taipei is in the middle of a yearlong floral expo, thousands of these shrubs have been planted throughout the park.

April 3rd

I drive into Lushan Hot Springs in the evening. It's 20 clicks off the main road leading to Heuhan Shan. I had planned to stay closer, at Ching Ching farm, but to my chagrin there are 2 national holidays this week, one of them new this year. On any other Monday, dozens of hotels should be empty on this mountain. The hotel I was pulling into had the only rooms available anywhere in this area; I'd found it yesterday after a 2 hour internet search. There's a single lane, a cobbled street at a 45 degree angle up to the hotel, my rental fails twice to climb the grade. I'm reduced to a spectacle as I'm forced to drive the stick shift backward down through the crowds, directed by a manager who doesn't speak English. As always, making up for it, the food. Fast food here is not Macdonalds! I settle on an open air stand displaying about 200 items, only half of which I recognize. I split between adventure and safety, picking some foods I know but also several I don't. I try to remember what my number sounds like in Cantonese, but that's a no go and I wind up just paying attention to who ordered before me. And in 5 minutes I have a bag, skewers of meat and vegetables, a spicy fried tofu and green beans, a broth of several species of mushroom mixed with fiddleheads. At under 6 bucks I'm already looking forward to tomorrow's meal.

April 4th

I'm the first person at the breakfast buffet today. This is often the case here. My internal clock converts me into an early morning riser in Asia. At home I'm unspeakable before 10 AM. I begin the drive up to the summit of Heuhan Shan. At 2300 meters I stop to look at 3 species of snake bark maple coming into leaf. I've grown all 3, only one has done well at my zone 7b residence in suburban Surrey, albeit many plants considered hardy perished last year in an abnormally harsh early freeze. The most attractive of these *Acer*, of course, seems the most problematic in terms of hardiness. Higher up in spots, *Spirea formosanum* appears in thick stands, the ever-present mist prevents me from getting an acceptable picture of the scene. There's an altogether different species, the 6 inch high *Spirea morrisonicola*, it blooms in August /September, that grows on the peak above. Also in bloom, *Berberis*

morrisonensis, one of 7 endemic species here. I'm a big fan of this genus; there are as many species in this genus as there are among the temperate rhododendrons. This taxa is deciduous, turning a vibrant scarlet in the fall. I also grow an evergreen species from the area, *Berberis kawakamii*, its tiny leaves come with a white glaucous undercarriage.

It's already apparent that I'm early in the season, as I climb higher wads of snow start to appear on the pavement. Suddenly it comes clear; a car passes with a melting snowman on the hood. Soon soppy legions of sad melting homunculi litter the road. There has been a rare, late snowfall on the peak, Taiwanese vacationers are building snowmen on their car hoods for the kids, then driving down the mountain. I stop at one of my favorite locations, at 2900 m ancient stands of *Tsuga formosana* are underplanted with many temperate trees and shrubs. Among them, as I've noted before, 30 foot specimens of *Schefflera taiwaniana* are by far the most interesting from a horticultural standpoint. These are high altitude and near the tree-line.



Schefflera taiwaniana

I had received this illustrative e-mail (below) in March from one of my earlier collections of this species.

"I'm pretty sure this is one of yours, *Schefflera taiwaniana*...? A seedling I think. Do you have any info about the source; is it supposed to be quite hardy? One reason I ask, it was left out while we were out of the country last November...in your tiny plant band/ pot...must have frozen totally solid. That freeze took out tons of things at my place, but this *Schefflera* got just a bit singed and has carried on growing this year. Pretty amazing when other supposedly hardier deals croaked under the same conditions."

They bloom in the Fall, fruiting over the winter. Disappointingly, no fruit is left on the trees at this late date. There's a trailhead here, marked with a red plastic tie. I've learned to watch for these random markers along the mountain roads, I think they're set by the country's hiking association. I enter and disappear into the forest in 2 steps. It's a straight descent down the mountain. After 2 km I begin to worry about how fatiguing the climb back up will be. But there's luck! A *Schefflera* has fallen over, delaying ripening perhaps, or saving it from the birds, fruit is scattered everywhere. I collect a pocketful. Even with fresh seed however, it's not an easy plant to germinate.

I start back up, I have a feeling the trail must descend far down the mountain, it's certainly not going to be able to wind back to a lower point on the road that I've just come up. Common along the trail but not in bloom, a member of the Ericaceae, a *Pyrola*, probably *morrisonensis*. And very similar in appearance and from the closely related family Diapenseaceae, disappointingly also not in bloom is one small patch of *Shortia rotundifolia*. There's a fern I haven't seen before- dozens of 20 cm long filaments less than 1 mm wide hang in clumps from under the bole of a fallen tree. Taiwan has about 700 species of ferns. By comparison *all* of North America has about 400 species. Taiwan is a center of diversity for the pteridophytes.

Rhododendron morii is scattered among the trees, a few plants here and along the road have been showing color, I need to be here a week later. Returning to the car I cross the tree line, now patches of snow are evident. I'm not going to see either *Rhododendron rubrospilosum* or *Rhododendron pseudochrysanthum* in bloom; in areas above tree-line they are at times the dominant vegetation. Near the top it's gridlock, hundreds of cars parked on the shoulder of a one lane mountain road. People are playing everywhere in the snow. The snow is covering *Rhododendron pseudochrysanthum*.

An hour later I'm through the traffic, now the tree-line I descend to is a forest of *Pinus morrisonicola*. Soon I'm at the site of *Viburnum parvifolia*, it's just leafing out, no sign of bud. At least there's fast food to look forward to when I return to Lushan Hot Springs.



Adenophora pereskiiifolia

April 5th

Wuling Farm was my base camp for the trailhead to Nanu Shan and *Rhododendron pachysanthum* last year. The mountain has the same elevation as snow covered Heuhan Shan, I won't be able to hike to the site. But there are great plants on the drive there. *Prunus campanulatum* is an occasional sight, I expect many have been lifted from the forests and planted on mountain properties. Then at a road repair, I get out of the vehicle, it looks like we're stopped a while. One plant of *Rhododendron morii* is on the hillside, it's in full flower at this elevation, the first I've seen. And then the honking, traffic is moving, I run back to the car. I arrive at Wuling in the afternoon, I'm at peak blooming season for *Rhododendron ovatum*. It dots the vertical banks, often growing lithophytically in seemingly impossibly dry locals. I check in, and then drive to the Loshan waterfall site. Roadside botanizing eats up a chunk of each day, even this 7 km route takes almost 2 hours.

Arisaema consanguinum is flourishing under a small copse of trees, there's wide variation in the leaves and sinister spathes. Several fit into the concept of *Arisaema consanguinum*/ *A. bicoloratifolia* Group, surprising me as I thought this was only described in 1997 from an isolated mountain area. In fact all the plants here have been described as distinct sub taxa. Some have leaves suffused with purple, or the stringy leaflets of *A. consanguineum* ssp. *kelung insularis*, some are the opposite, broad rippled leaves. And then, there are the pewter forms. The trail itself is very popular, 4 km long and wide enough to drive a vehicle up. I remember that near the top are substantial shrubs of *Rhododendron noriakianum*, even many of the large plants are pancake flat along the ground, but at some point they must decide to assume a more upright form. Perhaps it's induced by an opening in the canopy. I turn off the main walk, there's an unguarded trailhead to the Sixiu or 'four shows', made up of four mountains, Taoshan, Kelayeshan, Chiyoushan and Pintianshan. The other trailhead on the farm proper has a manned police post; papers are required to ascend the more popular Snow Mountain. I'm enthralled with another fern at the start of the hike, 5 fronds radiate out from a central point on each 7 foot stalk, perfect umbrellas. It's deciduous; the possibility that it might be very hardy crosses my mind. On a disintegrating shed roof large clumps of *Pyrosia sherri* display their cinnamon indument to perfection. The trail does not meander, steep switchbacks go straight up the mountain, I expect the ridge line could be reached with 3 or 4 hours of hiking. I hoof up the trail, I don't see any *Rhododendron noriakianum*, it seems common in the area, and perhaps in my rush I've missed it. A petite woman, seemingly overloaded with an immense backpack, passes me on her way down; she has obviously just finished the 3 day trek over the 4 peaks of this area. Sometime later 2 men also pass. I turn back myself; I dislike being caught by falling darkness, even though the excellent trail would be easily negotiable with my headlamp. I've no burden and quickly pass the 2 men. The woman however is already in the parking lot when I get there. Apparently the 2 men were her hiking companions, one had hurt his leg, and she had shouldered his hiking gear while her husband supported him on the descent. They are part of the 100 peak club, alpinists who have hiked at least 100 mountains 3000m or higher on the island. We strike up a conversation about Taiwan and Canada, she's fluent in English. When their party departs I wander over to the edge of the lot for some photos of *Rhododendron oldhamii* in bloom. I'm familiar with it flowering in the fall, I wonder if this is out of season or do the plants bloom sporadically. The second, I think, it hadn't been open at Ching Ching farm where they overhang the roadside banks. I avoid the platter of baby octopus at the buffet that evening-flavorless rubber that requires some hard chewing and the crunching beaks are disturbing.

April 6th

Breakfast at 7:00. I want to cover as much of the trail up Nanu Shan as possible today. No cars at the entrance, good, I'm uneasy about the chance of meeting forestry officials without my permit. This was a surfaced road around the mountain 30 years ago, the earthquakes and typhoons have not been kind, a few chunks of asphalt are

left over the 7 km walk to the trailhead. Initially I don't see a significant difference between what's here now and the fall vegetation. I've collected seed from a *Styrax* growing on this trail in 2008, it's germinated well. I've already seen several on this trip; it's a bit embarrassing that I've only spotted them after seeing the jettisoned blossoms on the ground. I'm now skeptical of identifying the individual species; the defining characters from 'The Woody Flora of Taiwan' (Hui-Lun LI,) seem a bit plastic. As there's only one identified as growing at this elevation, I'll run with that. One of my favorites in the late winter garden is suddenly frequent, not observed in the Fall.



Ypsilandra tibetica and a *Viola* sp. on a moist, mossy bank

Ypsilandra umbellata, probably a form of *tibetica* and now properly of the genus *Hellionopsis*. Or maybe they are now all of *Hellionia*! The family may now be Melanthiaceae. Botanists! This plant would be familiar to many in eastern North America as the swamp pink. The blooms are almost finished, back home if the winter is mild it comes into flower in late January. My fascination with this plant comes from the fact that, being liliaceous (or maybe Melanthiaceous) it propagates from leaves. Bulbs of members of the lily family, composed of modified leaves, propagate in the same way, a process called scaling. Another plant along this trail has had a botanical revision. *Mahonia oiwakensis* is the only member of the genus on the island, now correctly in the genus *Berberis*. It's an attractive single stemmed shrub in this setting. I've previously only seen it in pots at Taiwan's oldest and now tee shirt touristy mountain area, Alishan. At 2.3 km in the trail is cordoned off with red tape. Just beyond, perhaps half a kilometer of the mountain has slid down into the mist. The ground appears unstable even some distance from the edge. It looks irreparable. I've really put 2 days into getting here, I'm a bit put off, given that I could have tried to make the ridge line of the mountains at Wuling farm had I known. I opt for an easy day, and fuss about the trail and neighboring environs. The road cuts have carpeting mats.

The most common element is *Viola formosanum* but there's also another scarcer distinct *Viola sp.* in white. *Oxalis acetosella subsp. formosana* is common among a stand of *Cryptomeria formosanum*, competing with 3 species of *Asarum*. An old foundation has filled in with a ground-cover orchid, perhaps a species of *Cheirostylis*. Two fumitories round out the colonizers here, *Corydalis pallida* in yellow and the blue-toned *Corydalis incisa*.

April 7th.

Taiping Shan always seems shrouded in mist. I have never not had to drive in pea-soup thick fog on this mountain. The drive from Wuling Farm is at the typical drive, stop, look, drive pace. At around 1800 m I collect seed from an early flowering *Clematis* with trifoliolate leaves, a second collection from a unifoliolate species with evergreen leaves at lower elevations soon follows. The descending road from Wuling passes through long stretches of scenic woodland. With every stop the forest floor is layered with woodlanders. This wasn't apparent on my fall trips, these types of plants must die back somewhat earlier here than in my home garden. *Podophyllum pleianthum* is the one thing easily spotted from the car. *Arisaema* and *Paris* are common, both *Arisaema heterophyllum* and *Arisaema taiwanense* are blooming, *Paris bockiana* is only in bud. I love *Paris*. As I descend from 1500 m to sea level and then rise again *Abelia ionandra* is the flowering *shrub de jour*. Just past the Taipingshan Villa is the policed entrance to the 21 km road to Cheifong Lake. The guard bolts a bit from his seat as I drive past the raised control arm at the entrance, he expects a mountain permit. Seeing my face, obviously foreign, he then waves me through. My goal is a 6 km round trip hike just past the lake, its endpoint is the mythic Taiwan beech, *Fagus hayatae*. It takes me a while to get there. Fine examples of *Prunus campanulatum* are worth a stop. There are a few trees of another cherry here; known only at this type location, *Prunus maruurai*, its flowering is almost complete. At the car park there are trees of *Ilicium tashiroi*. Also known as star anise, the seed pods of this and closely related species are an ingredient of the traditional culinary Chinese five spice powder. A member of the Magnoliaceae, the active ingredient is anethol, the same chemical as in the spice anise, from the unrelated Mediterranean carrot, *Pimpinella anisum*.

A light mist swirls around parts of the forest; I'm hoping the intermittent clearing presages better weather. Immediately, the best form of *Rhododendron morii* I've seen, pure clear pink blossoms. Ah, the trouble with collecting seed, it's unlikely you'll collect from a great form. There's exactly one flower of *Pleione formosanum* along the trail. I've seen pictures of this covering a bank at Alishan Resort. It is extremely collectable but I'm told they have since disappeared. Last year we had seen numerous plants of this drying along the banks that the Bong Bong train ran along. The next day, I would take this train just to see these colonies, there's no sign left of them here either. At least I've seen one.

But here's something just as nice along the trail. *Viburnum sympodiale* is flushing deep wine, the new leaves combine dramatically with the white flowers, the plants swim out of the mist. It immediately enters the top of my hit list if I'm ever back to collect seed. The fog becomes thicker. There are naturalist signage posts on the trail,

in Taiwanese and English, almost mocking me with pictures of what the view should be. But despite the fact that the beeches are still bereft of foliage, they are magical in the fog. They are imposing, muscular trunks, with twisting and rising branches, windswept specimens, under-planted with colonies of my now favorite, for today at least, shrub, the aforementioned *V. sympodiale*.



Dipteris conjugata

I'm not alone on the trail; two photographers from the area are here to capture the beech. We talk a while, they love this mountain, I'm startled when they tell me they haven't travelled to some of the other mountain habitats on the island. I get a discourse on the beech and its distribution pattern. I'm using a Sony Nex 3, the woman has the same camera, we chat about its practicality.

Back at the entrance, the fog seems to have cleared, so I decide to try the 3 hour trail around the lake, reasoning that I can shave a fair amount of time off that number because I have my headlamp. The groves of *Rhododendron formosanum* I had hoped to see are still in tight bud, it and *R. morii* maintain distinction through a temporal disjunction. The fog rolls in as I come to a hillside thick with *R. morii* in full flower. Fog and dusk, no pictures here. The final 2 km are along the entrance road, I

reminisce, last fall the trees of the road I'm walking along were covered in the flowering lianas of *Schizophragma hydrangenoides*.

April 8th

Breakfast is more interesting and buffet style, I make up for lost time. The hotel, the Taipingshan Villa, is built among the remnants of an old growth forest, with planked walkways meandering among immense boles of *R. formosanum*. Once again I'm reminded that I'm a bit early in the season. I walk through mats of *Shortia exappendiculata* not yet in bloom. I'm reminded that my *Shortia* bed back home has been in flower while I've been travelling, and I'll miss that completely. *Coptis quinquefolia*, flowers for me in February, but here it is only just now coming into bloom. By the time I'm finished on the first run of the Bong Bong train, it's now 10 AM. I decide to try one more run around the lake; the views had looked too tempting yesterday. But the fog starts to roll in quickly. On the trail I meet another group, they also start to talk about the beech, one tells me disarmingly that unless starting at sunrise, the area is always cloaked in fog. Whoops!

Then my last short hike of the trip. It's along another long abandoned narrow gauge railway line. I'm interested in the mixture of fern spp. along this route, including another favourite, *Araiostegia pedurans*. I've never seen a more perfectly cordiform leaf, the new fronds are rusty red. I have a bit of this at home and will trial it out this winter. I see plenty of small *Paris* along the trail, all at least a week from bloom. There's more signage along the trail, it describes 2 plants of the area, they are similar in appearance and share the same habitat, *Wasabi japonica* and *Petasites formosanus*. The *Petasites*, a native, is growing lustily along the streams, in flower just another signal that I'm early. As I wind down the hill toward Taipei I find myself already planning a return, perhaps next year in sultry June. *Rhododendron pachysanthum* should be in bloom then, I'll leave myself enough time for the longer approach from the other end of the trail.

Endnotes:

Full suite of Philip's pics here: <https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B1q6eJhORcyONmdILVNkWUY3VmM&usp=sharing>

Cédric Basset of the Lyon Botanical garden made a trip to Taiwan in late 2013. Here is a link to that trip with a great selection of ferns: <http://www.asianflora.com/voyage2013.htm>

For more on Taiwanese ferns check out the trip that Tony Avent made to Taiwan in 2008. Here is an edited version of that trip that I did for the Hardy Fern Foundation entitled "Tony And The Taiwanese Ferns": <http://www.hardyferns.org/articles.php>

Two new *Polystichum* spp from Taiwan: <http://tai2.ntu.edu.tw/taiwania/pdf/tai.2014.59.1.86.pdf>

Tripping on *Tripterospermum*
Text and pics by Dana Cromie



20 *Tripterospermum* sp. CDHM 14711 in Nov '14

In 2009, I purchased a *Tripterospermum japonicum* from Jason Nehring at the Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia spring sale. In my usual fashion of overplanting, it went into a small pot with an *Acer palmatum* 'Nishiki Gawa' and a not-very-hardy, unnamed *Davillia*. The pot sits at the top of my front stairs, where I often take my lunch and sometimes a glass of wine at sunset. This is a perfect spot for subtle plants which normally go unnoticed. The *Davillia* died during its second winter, but the *Tripterospermum* rewarded me with a few small gentian-like flowers each Fall until 2012 when it died. I was intrigued with this climbing genus closely related to *Gentian* and determined to keep my eye open for others.

At the Hardy Plant Society Study Weekend in Vancouver, June 2013, I spotted a *Tripterospermum* in the **Far Reaches Farm** selection in the sales area. The Vancouver Hardy Plant Group are serious plant buyers and the vendors never disappoint. **Kelly Dodson** and **Sue Milliken** of Far Reaches were speaking about their travels to China that weekend and they brought along some great plants to highlight those Asian forays with a terrific array of plant material they grow at their nursery in Port Townsend, Washington.

Kelly and Sue have been on many trips to China collecting seeds, sometimes with other plant collectors. This particular *Tripterospermum* sp. was coded as CDHM 14711. It was collected on a trip by Kelly and Sue to Sichuan-Guizhou-Guangxi in 2012 with Peter Cox of Glendoick Gardens, Steve Hootman of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and Tom Hudson of Tregrehan Garden. Collected in the Daming Shan in Guangxi, they did not see the plant in flower (as is often the case when collecting seed) but did note that it was 3m tall and herbaceous. That was enough for me, I bought the plant.

The usual investigations begin

Tripterospermum in the Flora of China lists only *T. australe* and *T. nienkui* as being from Guangxi. Viewing herbarium sheets on-line from the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris online, I found a very similar plant labelled "*Crawfurdia fasciculata* Wall, Cueill. 8 Nov. 1893, Sommet du ?ay mo chan, (Continent chinois, vis a vis Hong-Kong!) (2,800 peids anglais) Fleurs pourpre'er - violacies - bleuaties. Ne se trouve pas dans l'ete. Em. Bodinier." [http://sonneratphoto.mnhn.fr/2012/03/27/3/](http://sonneratphoto.mnhn.fr/2012/03/27/3/P00348809.jpg)

[P00348809.jpg](http://sonneratphoto.mnhn.fr/2012/03/27/3/P00348809.jpg)

This sheet was relabelled "*Tripterospermum nienkui* (Marq.) C.J. Wu DET. Jim Murata 1994." Emile-Marie Bodinier was a French missionary and botanist who collected plants in China. Bodinier's plant has longer tips on the calyx but CDHM 14711 appears very similar to *Tripterospermum nienkui*.

Cultural Approach

I planted CDHM 14711 in a 12cm tall terra cotta pot with a 1m stake for it to climb. The pot was in airy shade throughout the summer with overhead irrigation three mornings a week. I fertilize all my pots weekly with ¼ strength Schultz 10-15-10 liquid solution. Growth was fairly reserved the first summer and it spent winter in an unheated greenhouse. In 2014, it grew more than 2m.

This past Fall, I was rewarded with an abundance of buds opening to delicate blue trumpets. The flowers were 4-5cm long, larger than *T. japonicum*, and more distinctly striped with the pale green strips of bud exterior contrasting with the clean violet of the pleats.

In advance of -10C weather, I moved CDHM 14711 into my greenhouse, where the unopened flowers froze and the plant died back by 50%, notably the finer stems that twine back on themselves. The associated leaves, which are quite fleshy, moulded and had to be removed. As I write this in mid-January, there are healthy signs of expansion in some of the leaf axils. This Spring I will be replanting it in a bigger pot with a taller support. Hopefully our first hard freeze will be later than the one this past November and I will be able to enjoy many weeks of bloom. I would also like to layer a piece and leave it in the ground (with a mulch) to see what kind of beautiful giant it could become. Now...where is that perfect sweet spot in my garden?

Endnotes

Dr. Lena Struwe maintains the *Gentian* website at Rutgers University. See here for the latest classification(s). www.gentian.rutgers.edu/tribeGen.html

According to the International Plant Names Index, this species has “unresolved status” but the botanical history shows that before Wu’s authorship in 1984 in the Bulletin of Botanical Research (Harbin), Harry Smith in 1965 had it as *Crawfurdia nienkui* (RBGE) in his then large treatment of these closely related *Gentian* relatives.

The plant was originally authored as *Gentiana nienkui* in 1931. <http://tinyurl.com/nqj9t84>



Close-up of the *Tripterosperrum* in Dan Cromie’s yard

Conrad Gessner- Renaissance Father to all Alpine Gardeners

by Grahame Ware

(This was part of my presentation at the September 2014 meeting)

This 16th C. Swiss polymath was according to Anna Pavord, “A 16th C. one man Google”. He was born in Zurich 1516 and died from the plague in the Catholic Swiss town of Lucerne 1565 while treating people as the town’s physician.

He was first and foremost a philologist and was highly recruited by Venetian publishers that were leading the way in the publication world mostly translations of Greek and Hebrew texts.

He was a prolific encyclopedist and his first great work was *Bibliotheca Universalis* 1545-1549. It listed all of the works known in Greek, Latin and Hebrew and by including them on his book of lists, it got him into trouble with the Roman Catholic church. However, his Swiss citizenry and status in society saved him from any legal problems. Undaunted, he published *Mithridates linguarum* he listed 130 known languages and published the Lord’s Prayer into 22 languages thus enabling and facilitating translations by many Renaissance scholars. Later, he published *Historia Animalinum* with Durer’s famous rhinoceros engraving. This was the world’s first great zoological work.

Historia Germaniae was his first publication with a plant orientation. In this work he shows the great degree of garden development in N. Europe especially the south German towns of Augburg and Nuremburg as well as the Netherlandish cities.

Gardening was a relatively recent phenomena. Gessner has a section on the Flemish pharmacist Coudenburg who invented the greenhouse to protect exotic plants especially those from India.



The publication that is of deep interest to alpine gardeners is the *Lunarien*. He believed in mountain climbing as one of the best ways to keep the body and spirit alive and healthy. In it, he goes into lyrical ecstasy about the clarity of mountain water, purity of its air, the fragrance of the wildflowers, the richness of the milk and the flavour of the handmade cheeses, the stoutness and the beauty of the 'alpenstock'. On alpine plants, he states that he has seen many *Gentians* and not just those in the classical texts.

Essentially, Gessner throws down the gauntlet for a new paradigm on plants using morphology and what you can see *not* what you've been told. Gessner initiated for the first time, ecological and phenological descriptions and states that one can see all seasons and all stages of development in the mountains and alpine setting. Vegetation zones are described. This marks the real beginning of Swiss cultural identification to the mountains and its life as part of a larger ideology of Swiss-ness. Later, another friend **Stumpf** publishes a more popular account of his mountain travels in Swiss Alps inn by inn, cheese by cheese, wine by wine with credit for this ethos to Gessner. The freedom of Swiss mountain lifestyle becomes romanticised in periodicals that themselves are becoming more commonplace because of printing

Gessner's friend and colleague **Josias Simler** publishes the first book after Gessner's passing, on mountaineering complete with crampons and sunglasses to guard against snow blindness. Other mountainous areas such as Austria, Slovenia and the French & Italian Alps follow suit becoming areas of study and travel over the next two centuries. It is not until the 18th C and the understanding of geology, that mountains become less threatening but English travelers, as Simon Schama points out (Landscape and Memory), are still blindfolding themselves to go through high passes well into the 18th C because they are afraid of the chasms and darkness.

In his final work before his death, *Historia Plantarum*, Gessner uses watercolours and with extensive morphological marginalia/detail in his plant drawings. Subsequent authors such as **L'Obel** and **Clusius** would follow this lead in natural history morphing into botany. Botanists like **Jacob Trew** centuries later would pick up on this approach and attempted to develop a vocabulary of plant part terms based on Gessner's lead.

Gessner was, according to Kew Orchid expert Philip Cribb, first one to draw the seed of orchids. Gessner was centuries ahead of everyone!

Gessner's work lead inspired generations of alpine based scientists to make major advances such as Von Jacquin, Hacquet, Wulfen, Unger and especially Kerner, the world's first scientific alpine gardener. Kerner trialled alpine plants at gardens in Innsbruck, Austria in the 1850's. One of his students was Franz Sündermann who started the world's first commercial alpine nursery in Bavaria. It is still running today. Graham Stuart-Thomas comments in his book, The Rock Garden and its Plants (1989), that in the 1920's it was easier and cheaper to order plants from Sundermann than to grow them themselves. (p. 113)