

Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia



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BULLETIN

Winter 2013

Contents

Events of Interest 3-4

Rock On!- Editor's Column 5

Seed Exchange Report- Diana Hume 6

Anemone Suitable For The Rock Garden- Grahame Ware 7-12

**What's New? Book Reviews; "Alpine Plant Life" by Christian Korner;
and "Beyond Beauty: Hunting the Wild Blue Poppy" by Bill Terry 14-15**

Syneilesis acontifolia, Artful Rebel of the Aster Family- G. Ware 16-21

Some Reminiscences of Francisca Darts- Margaret Charlton 22

Upcoming Events AGC-BC- Our Spring Plant & Pot Sale at VanDusen BG April 6th. Set-up on Friday evening, April 5 and Saturday morning, April 6. Show and Sale from 12-4 pm. We will need volunteers to help with the Show and Sale. Please contact Chris Byra or Bill Bischoff (contact details on Page 2)

AGC-BC Speakers Program

The program for 2013 includes a variety of presentations ranging from the challenges of growing alpine plants to a tour of gardens in Scotland. The talks start at 7:30 pm. For much more information on the speakers, including photos, visit our website: <http://www.agc-bc.ca/events>

Wednesday, February 13, 2013: Jackie Chambers

Alpine Plants of New Zealand

Jackie Chambers has worked at several public and private gardens in Canada, England, the Middle East, and New Zealand. She received her horticultural training at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew in England and holds an M.Sc. in Ethnobotany.

Wednesday, March 13, 2013: Loren Russell

Losing It! Why did all my Alpines Die?

I allow "Losing It" to be a play on my own unreliable memory, my short temper, or perhaps the near invisibility of some of our most prized plants. In this talk, I use a riff on the late Geoff Charlesworth's witty poem, "Why did my plant die?" (You walked too close, you trod on it. You dropped a piece of sod on it...) to frame my take on the practices and beliefs of rock gardening.

Wednesday, April 10, 2013: Jan and Dave Dobak

Some Scottish Gardens Jan and Dave Dobak travelled north into Scotland after the Nottingham International Rock Garden Conference in April 2011, and visited many public and private gardens in Scotland.

Thursday, May 30, 2013: Chris Chadwell (Joint meeting with the Vancouver Rhododendron Society) NOTE DATE CHANGE

Paradise on Earth: The Beautiful Alpines of Kashmir

Chris Chadwell is a modern-day plant hunter specialising in the Himalaya. After organising and leading 27 expeditions along the Himalaya, from Kashmir, through the borderlands of Tibet and into Nepal and Bhutan, he is a leading authority on the study and cultivation of plants from this region. He is the proprietor of Chadwell Seeds.

Wednesday, June 12, 2013: Todd Boland

The Limestone Barrens of Newfoundland...where alpines meet the sea

Todd is the research horticulturalist at the Memorial University of Newfoundland Botanical Garden. He is involved in a variety of research projects at the Garden from the care of our *ex situ* rare Newfoundland plant populations, to the breeding and selection of new hardy plant varieties.

Wednesday, September 11, 2013: Claire Cockcroft

Parnassos & The Peloponnese: Spring Wildflowers of Southern Greece

Upcoming Events- Local

Hardy Plant Society Study Weekend UBC June 14-16.

Theme is, "The Garden: Insight & Inspiration From The Ground Up."

Speakers include: John Massey, Andy Sturgeon, Kelly Dodson/Sue Milliken, Thomas Hobbs, etc. Workshops and plant sales as well. For more info contact Lindsay MacPherson lmacphersonis@shaw.ca

Upcoming Events- International

International Rock Gardening Conference Czech Republic May 2-5, 2013

Link: <http://www.czrgs.cz/conference.html>

This is the second International conference that has been organized. Jiří Papoušek is the man to contact if you are interested in the conference and the exciting post-conference tour of Czech (Bohemian and Moravian) gardens. There might be a few spots left. Contact conference@czrgs.cz It is being held in the picturesque medieval village of Tábor in southern Bohemia some 60 miles from Prague. Speakers include Ian Young, Dieter Zschummel, Martin Sheader, ZZ, Peter Korn and other alpinophiles.

Rock On! Editor's Column- Grahame Ware

I am pleased to take the reins of the editorship for the Quarterly Bulletin. A tip of the hat to all the editors that have preceded me. Thanks. My priority will be to inform and educate but not at the expense of having some fun as well. As a longtime satellite member (someone that doesn't live in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver), I felt that my contribution to our club would best be served in a capacity like this where geography would not be an issue. I'm hopeful that we can publish a bulletin that rivals anything out there in the alpine gardening world. I know that I cannot do this alone. So make a New Year's resolution to contribute what you can only in print but also in terms of workshops (either leading or participating), organizing botanical hikes and tours, etc. In other words, if you have an idea don't be shy. Step up to the plate and take a swing.

Here are some categories that I would like you to think about and consider contributing to over the course of 2013 and beyond.

***What's New?** Whether it be plants, people or places- all things of interest and/or relevance to AGCBC members. Send material for consideration and editing/development to the editor.

***Speaker Reviews:** Random reviews from attendees. Comments should be no more than 300 words.

***Book & Digital Media Reviews-** Let's hear what you really think! The reviews can be done anonymously if that makes it easier to be honest real. I will assign you a *nom du critique* and please try to be reasonable.

***The Rock Gardening Tourist** Alpine and plant travelogues are always interesting. Let's see and hear about your latest trip close by or far away.

***Blogs or links to bring to the attention of the membership.** With so many webs and blogs of interest, I thought that an ongoing list of good ones would be worthy of inclusion in the Bulletin. I'll start by nominating Panayoti Kelaidis' blog, PrairieBreak. prairiebreak.blogspot.com. Witty and informative and of great interest to alpine gardeners. Let's hear about your fave links and/or blogs.

I recognize the value and credibility of our current executive and want to lend my energy to theirs. I hope that you will also feel the same way about the quality of our club. Together, I feel that we can make the Bulletin vibrant, informative and a source of inspiration to members both old and new. Happy New Year and may 2013 finally bring blossoms to your rock garden that you've always dreamt of having.*



photo Grahame Ware

Seed Exchange Report by Diana Hume

The seed exchange is now over for 2012. We did the mailing on January 10, 2013.

I would like to thank all the donors and also three additional donors who did not appear on the seed list- Steve Stehouwer, Gerrit van Lochem, and Kazimierz Kot. Their seed donations were wonderful.

A BIG thank you to all the volunteers who helped with packaging seeds, mailing and all the other jobs connected with the exchange.

Together, with the excellent seeds from the donors and the great work done by the volunteers, the AGCBC had a very successful exchange.✿

(Ed: Let's make a commitment to collecting and preserving more seed this year so that next year's seed exchange will be even more auspicious.)

***Anemone* Suitable For The Rock Garden**

© text and photos by Grahame Ware



Anemone blanda 'Radar' just emerging and showing bronze foliage

Anemone has long been a staple of gardens. Writing in 1629, John Parkinson was effusive that *Anemone* is "*of itself alone almost sufficient to furnish a garden with their flowers for almost halfe the year.*" (Paradis). He was likely referring to the wood anemone or *A. nemerosa*. Consumers of trendy plants are often dismissive of these trusty types. The smaller ones which are ideal for the rock garden shouldn't be penalized for their ease of culture or their showiness, should they? These stalwart members of the Ranunculaceae family are a diverse genus with about 120 species. Some *Anemone* are tuberous whilst others are fibrous rooted. Generally, they are creatures of the high forest and their edges ranging from montane to rocky subalpine and higher preferring some relief from the afternoon sun. Many of the montane species

aestivate as a survival strategy. They work well with many other perennial plantings (*Primula*, *Epimedium*, etc.) and almost any bulbs that you can think of.

Let us then, turn our attention back to those smaller species and cultivars worthy of inclusion in the rock and woodland garden.

Species and Cultivars

Anemone blanda is a tuberous species from SE Europe, W Turkey and the Caucasus where thin woodlands and rocky, subalpine meadows provide perfect habitat. This consists of well-drained, rocky ground that is humusy and that goes dry in summer. They perform best in areas with a zone 5-8 winter hardiness rating. They have solitary flowers and hairy stems and leaves. There is a serious list of selections and cultivars of which our cover girl, 'Radar' must be at the top of the list. Alan Armitage called it "*one of the finest cultivars*". (Herbaceous Perennial Plants, 1989). Its been a star in every garden I've had. There is something so uplifting about a little plant with such exotic-looking flowers that flowers so early in the season.

Others that rate consideration include 'Bridesmaid' with large white flowers ('White Splendor' really is no different); 'Violet Star' with amethyst flowers that are white on the outside; and 'Blue Shades' with finely dissected foliage and flowers that are pale to deep blue. There are some beautiful species forms coming from central Turkey. Reports of natural hybrids with the smaller but similar *A. caucasica* have surfaced.

As you would expect of a snow-melt bloomer, they have staying power in cool weather. They need more light than some of the other species and take to loose, limey soil, so they make for a good component in the sunny Spring rock garden. They grow nicely in my garden with *Narcissus rupicola*, *Scilla*, *Primula* cvs and beneath *Paeonia ostii*. I have found that they increase nicely and that you can successfully divide it very early in the Spring if you pot it up and shade it for about a week before planting it back out.

Anemone nemerosa is a rhizomatous species that performs well in deep shade and the acidic forest conditions that many of us here on the west coast know all too well. The common colour is white but there are many colour breaks. One of the oldest cultivars known to English horticulture is the selection 'Bracteata', a white, loose double. Last year I was able to

pick this one up at the VIRAGS Spring plant sale. For my money, the best cultivar is 'Blue Eyes'. It may not be as vigorous as some cultivars but in my mind that is a good thing given that it is a rhizomatous species. Be aware that it likes richer soil to do its best so it is not the best companion for those that like it leaner. It may take some time in the garden to really strut its stuff and be fully double. The other asterisk is that the blue eye develops as it ages or wanes in its flowering cycle. Rick Lupp of Mt. Tahoma Nursery south of Seattle, WA has a lovely selection of 'Blue Eyes' called 'Graham Grace' that I have found to be very good. As you might expect there are many *nemerosa* cultivars out there but keep your eyes peeled for the following: 'Green Dream'- even showier than 'Green Fingers'; 'Pink Delight'- sumptuous, double pink flowers; and, 'Blue Beauty' with strongly bronze-tinted leaves.



'Blue Eyes' early in the flowering cycle with no blue eyes



'Blue Eyes' from the back shows a darker colour before the petals drop



Anemone 'Blue Eyes' at its flowering peak

Anemone x lipsiensis is a good garden plant. The picture below shows the difference in foliage between it and *A. 'Blue Eyes'*. *A. x lipsiensis* is often offered as *A. x seemenii* or *x seemanii* (incorrect). It is an intermediate natural hybrid between *A. nemerosa* and *A. ranunculoides*. My plant takes after *A. ranunculoides* but has single flowers of a soft yellow and lovely, dissected foliage. It attains about 4" in height. It spreads very slowly. There is always a peak moment when the flowers are seemingly all out at the same time. It is a sweetheart.



Anemone x lipsiensis with *A. 'Blue Eyes'* in the background

Summary

Other good rock garden species to keep an eye open for include: *A. keiskeana*, *A. raddeana*, *A. rupicola* and *A. trullifolia*. The prize to look for though, is *A. obtusiloba*. It occupies a wide swath of geography in the Sino-Himalayan area from Afghanistan and Pakistan though to Mongolia, Tibet and Sichuan and NW Yunnan and ranges in altitude from 2100 to 4300 m. The higher altitude collections are yellow flowered whilst the lower ones grade to purple and white. There is also the wonderful Harold

McBride selection 'Pradesh'. (See AGS Bulletin, Dec. 2001, Vol. 69, p 501 for a stunning pic). In addition, there are some showy hybrids between *A. obtusiloba* and *trullifolia* that one might find if you are lucky. 'Pradesh' is a selection of that cross. See link below for pic. Now there is even some 'Pradesh' seedlings knocking the socks off alpine gardeners. Holubec had some wild-collected *A. obtusiloba* (036) in this year's AGS seedex.

Cautionary Advice

Growing from seed is always the best and most rewarding approach for the alpine gardener. Therefore, it is imperative that one has fresh seed for all the species mentioned above. Dry storage is lethal. This likely explains the abominable germination results from seed exchanges. It may also explain a certain apathy towards *Anemone* due to generally poor results because of a lack of understanding of this maxim. So a word to the crestfallen: The best thing to do is to collect the seed fresh (mid to late summer) and then store it in a ziplock plastic bag nestled in a media of vermiculite and a little coarse sand. Then pop it into the fridge next to the baking soda. Label it with a Sharpie. Doing this prevents dry storage thus retaining seed viability.

You may also choose to sow the seed directly into pots and house them in a shaded plunge bed. Germination can occur in late Fall or early Spring under this approach.✿

Sources

Fraser's Thimble Farms: Terrific selection of rock garden types

Mt. Tahoma Nursery: Very good selection of rock garden & neat woodlanders

Wrightman's Alpines: Just a few.

Links

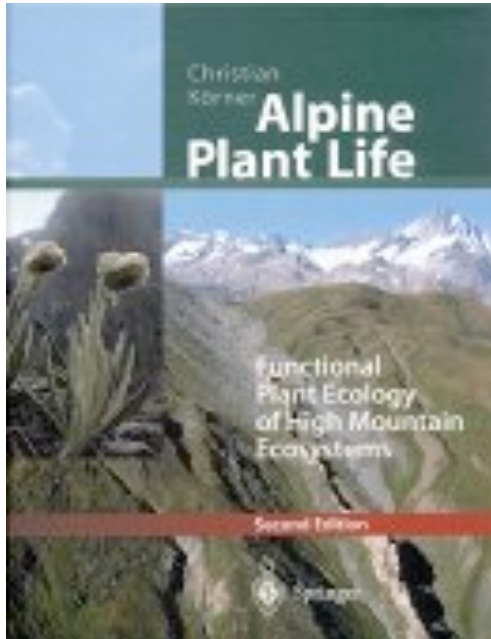
<http://magnar.aspaker.no/liste.htm> Good pics of many very suitable rock garden species

<http://www.avondalenursery.co.uk/index.php> Avondale Nursery are the National Collection (UK) holders for *Anemone nemerosa*.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/8140177@N08/4651432314/> Photo of *Anemone obtusiloba* 'Pradesh' at RBGE 2010

What's **new**?

News about people, places and plants (preferably alpine)



Dr. Christian Körner

"Alpine Plant Life: The Functional Plant Ecology of High Mountain Ecosystems"

"This book should be required reading for all ecologists and ecology students. Modern treatment of alpine ecology and the inclusion of tropics and good treatment of tropical alpine environments makes this book unique. ...the best modern treatment of "functional ecology" of alpine plants. Both the author and the publisher should be commended for this book." (Dr. Adolf Ceska, Botanical Electronic News)

Reviewed by Grahame Ware

This really is a terrific book for those keen to improve their understanding of alpine ecosystems. You'll have to have some scientific knowledge to tackle this tome as well as a fat wallet. Dr. Körner has spent his life in the field of alpine ecology and there is no one better qualified to teach you. This book focuses on the conditions of *krumholz*, the tundrascape, etc. and as such would be very useful to those that like to cultivate and duplicate the conditions of those gems of the high alpine persuasion.✿

Beyond Beauty: Hunting the Wild Blue Poppy by Bill Terry

Reviewed by Margaret Charlton

Bill Terry's latest book *Beyond Beauty: Hunting the Wild Blue Poppy* (Touchwood Editions, 2012) describes his adventures across the roof of the world with his wife Rosemary, a trip organized by the Alpine Garden Society of the UK. Bill's photographs are truly magnificent, his prose erudite, his tales of their adventures, and description of local histories all make for exciting and very enjoyable reading. Their 2500 km journey started at Chengdu in Sichuan and ended in Lhasa, Tibet.

The tour was led by Harry Jans, the well-known Dutch alpine specialist, and by John Mitchell, supervisor of alpine plants at the RBGE (Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh). The group was composed of twenty-three AGS members, all keen alpiners with much tracking experience. Bill and Rosemary were the only Canadians. They set out in eight Jeeps with local drivers, a much-needed mechanic and two equally-needed guides/interpreters to deal with local officialdom.

Bill tells us in such an interesting fashion the peculiarities of their driver, the tough conditions, road washouts, new construction, the scary drop-offs of road edges. And then- finally- the delight of searching for poppies and finding Nature's perfect gardens. These he photographed magnificently. There are histories of plant hunters that came before and descriptions of the many discoveries the group made along their way. Bill noted the contrast between the Brits daring to go almost anywhere but their reluctance to explore food adventures. As a consequence, much of the food was very bland. The accommodation though new was poorly constructed and the plumbing even worse. There was invariably a new unpleasant surprise each night.

However, this disappointment was balanced by the fact that each day there was a new adventure. These include discovering his first poppy on the trip- *Meconopsis integrifolia*, the yellow lampshade poppy. Bill didn't leave out the other plant delights they found such as *Lilium lophophorum* and many primulas as well as other exciting poppies, including at the end of the trip *Meconopsis baileyi*.

This book is a great follow-up to Bill's previous book *Blue Heaven: Encounter with the Blue Poppy* (Touchwood Editions, 2009). That book covered propagation of the many *Meconopsis* species. For the *Meconopsis* enthusiast, Terry's latest book provides critical, first-hand information on their growing conditions and ecology in nature, such as aspect and geology. This is valuable information for those wishing to grow these successfully as Bill surely does. Hopefully, all of us who read this book will improve their success rate as well.✿



Meconopsis 'Lingholm' in Bill Terry's garden

photo by David Sellars

Syneilesis aconitifolia, Artful Rebel of the Aster family

© text and photos by Grahame Ware



aka the Shredded Umbrella Plant in flower

This is one of those wonderful foliage plants of the huge Aster family that gardeners are only just becoming familiar with. Maybe that is because it isn't very Aster-like in flower and even less so in regards to its foliage. Possibly this explains its charm in a contrarian kind of way- a makeover of the pretty, sun-loving image of what a Composite is supposed to be. It all starts from the moment it starts to grow- it emerges as a stub that is hairy ("*densely arachnoid-tomentose*" states the Flora of China and that is the first time I've heard that term BTW!); then stoutly rises and morphs and splays big, shiny leathery robes of leaves. It is adapted to hanging out in woodsy margins and shadows. Yes, this is definitely a Lady Gaga approach that is befitting the black sheep of the Aster flock. But artful rebel or not, it has much to offer for the woodland gardener that values foliage and drama- and, yes, flowers too! *S. aconitifolia* has astonishing foliage but for most gardeners the asterisk moment concerns its flowers. However, I don't feel that its flowers are a drawback at all.

It hails from NE Asia- China, Japan, Korea and, yes, even slides up into the Russian Far East.

Tough beauty rules in this region and *Syneilesis aconitifolia* takes it one step further as a plant of marginal zones. Previous names that it has gone by in the past include *Cacalia aconitifolia* and *Senecio aconitifolius*.

Foliage

Yes, gardeners really go gaga (just plain, old gaga) for this plant's foliage. Whether it is emerging, unfurling or in full-leafed glory, it's alluring with an almost mystical presence. Plantsmen as diverse as Gene Bush of Munchkin Gardens and Tony Avent both wax euphoric about this plant.

Just look at this plant emerging in the spring all felted with silver hairs. Yowza!



"arachnoid-tomentose" leaves

Photo courtesy Cédric Basset in W. Honshu, Japan



The subcoriaceous leaves after the *arachnoid-tomentose* phase

The gorgeous leaves are staged on a platform about 2' off the ground and provide another springboard for strong, striated purple stems that rise up another 3'. Finally, on top of these stems are perched elegant clusters (corymbs) of frosted pink nibs that look so delicate yet are so strong. At this stage, in mid-Spring, the leaves are fully out and their leaves have a thick, almost coriaceous quality. All those emergent, tomentose cilia are compressed now and provide an excellent energy generator for the plant.

Flowers?

Almost forgotten in all of this lauding of its foliage is the fact that it has good 'floral parts' as well. Note I didn't say flowers as in big, honking petals. Most plants people come down hard on this aspect of the plant (Junker *et al*). I don't. For me, a continuation of the thrill of this plant's emergence from the ground in Spring comes with its clusters of soft pink and green corymbs that seem airbrushed by some ethereal painter. They stay in a state of sustained expectation for weeks on end. It seems like a kind of Tantric love for the spiritual gardener. Week after week after week, I am smitten.

This protracted state of floral expectancy is simply wonderful on a daily basis. Okay...I admit, that when they flowered for the first time, I was just a little crestfallen. Maybe Tantric love isn't all its cracked up to be. However, upon a closer look the following season, I came to love their flowers. And, no, I am not talking about the aberrations of macrophotography that can make anything that is bizarre seem beautiful. The naked eye will do just fine. But those frosted pink nibs?- well they are something else! Yes, we all have our weaknesses. The stalks are sensational too as the photo below shows.



Close-up of the flower clusters *before* flowering. Simply lovely.

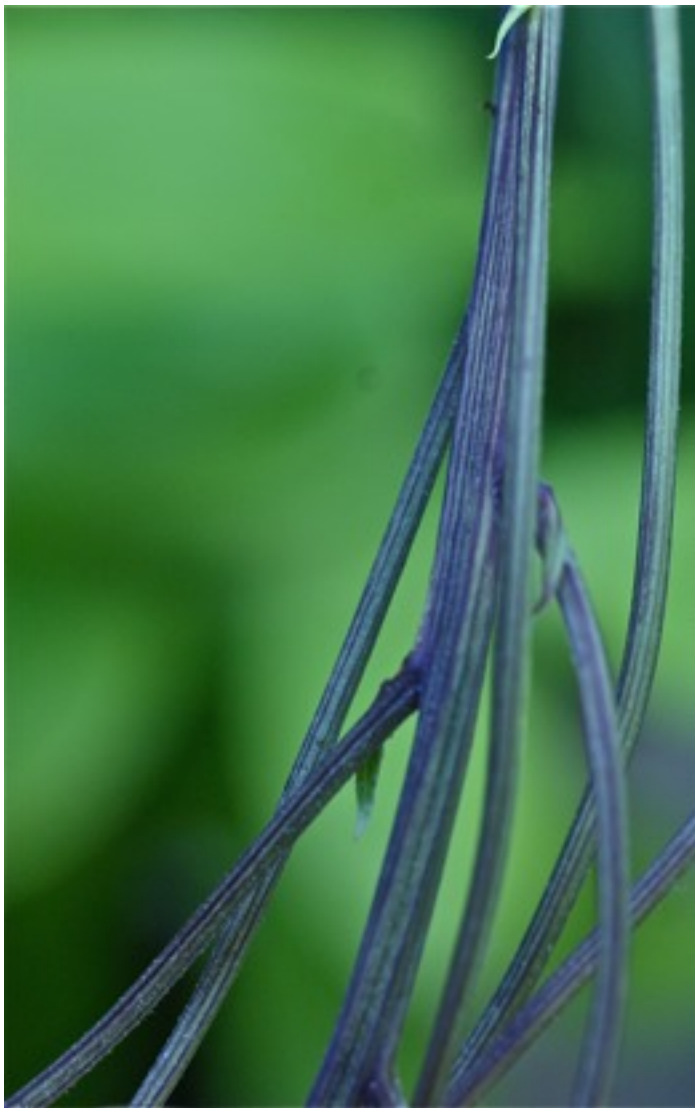
Cultivating and Growing

A lot of skill is *not* required to make *Syneilesis aconitifolia* happy other than siting. Fortunately it isn't pH anal and can flourish in most soils. It likes shade but with a little morning sun. In this regard, it can hang with buddies like *Epimedium*, *Hosta*, woodland saxifrage (*S. fortunei*, etc.), *Disporum longistylum*, *Mukdenia rossii*, ferns, etc. Remember to place it near or at the back of the border so that it doesn't overwhelm other plants. Know too that if it gets happy it might want to take over that bed. Thus, it may be better suited to a wild, naturalized setting. In the four

years that I have grown it, I have not found it to be pestiferous. I would also caution that they need drainage. On my property, sandstone is predominant and so this isn't difficult to achieve. However, if you have loamy soil, I would add coarse gravel or bird's eye pea gravel (1/4"). Once established it is quite drought-resistant.

Conclusion

Okay...so, you can't have it all. But exactly what is that thing anyway? For many observers the flowers may be the 'warts' but the 'all' is worth it, believe me. For me, this artful rebel is the kind of subversive that I think you'll love too.✿



Stalks are strong with lovely, purple striations



Francisca Darts Photo courtesy of Alex Waterhouse-Hayward

DARTS, Francisca Maria 1916 - 2012 Francisca died peacefully in her sleep on December 26 after a lengthy illness. She was born in The Hague, Holland. As a young girl she emigrated with her family to Manitoba.

Some Reminiscences of Francisca Darts

by Margaret Charlton

My memories of Francisca go back over forty years to when I witnessed firsthand the enthusiastic support that she and Ed gave to the many garden societies to which they belonged. When I joined the Alpine Garden Club, all of the plants in our sales were donated. It was impressive seeing Francisca and Ed bringing a truckload of plants to our annual spring weekend sale. If Saturday's sale was so successful that little remained for Sunday, when they got home they would dig another load. I also soon learned too that Ed was quick to correct anyone calling her Francesca. She was Francisca, as in San Francisco. When she became President, I vividly remember the first executive meeting. Francisca was totally in control. She quickly set out to fill all committee positions. As she circulated around the group she would single out individuals and say "I want you to do this job." She didn't let up until all positions were filled. I soon found myself Plant Sale Chairman. When Francisca became Show Chairman, the Club filled Burnaby's huge Cowan Centre with the show, plant sale, and a display garden. This has seldom, if ever, been surpassed. Another time, many years ago, when the Club hosted a very large Winter Study Weekend in Richmond, Francisca was in charge of all the displays. There was a huge space to fill. When Francisca asked, no one refused. No matter what she did, the results were always spectacular.

Through it all, Francisca was always positive and supportive, taking all the pressure in stride. When the occasion called for it, she could stand her ground and clearly, with vigour, present her opinion. She was never short of words. This was particularly evident the evening she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree by Kwantlen University in 2002. Well into her eighties, she gave a magnificent address to the graduating students. She gave herself and her family as examples of how hardship can be overcome by recalling in particular the difficult times her family encountered when they emigrated from Holland to Flin Flon, Manitoba. She also talked about her highly focused, competitive figure

skating days when she was their age.

I think that the first love of Francisca and Ed was trees and shrubs. For many years they would set out in the Fall on a buying trip to Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. And so their garden, Darts Hill, grew-path by path, bed by bed, plant by plant, seed by seed. Their memory lives on in the legacy they left- a wonderland of garden layers of trees, a superb rhododendron collection with many other shrubs, down to alpines. Not surprisingly, it was all gifted to the City of Surrey in 1995.

I treasure my recollections of Francisca and me travelling together. Ferris Miller's amazing Chollipo Arboretum in Korea and the big estate gardens of Britain stand out. Long live her memory.✿



Francisca Darts



Asarina procumbens compact form

photo Grahame Ware