

Alpine Garden Club of British Columbia



*By Bill Bischoff,
taken at Bear Creek Park, Surrey, BC*

Volume 60, Number 1 Quarterly Bulletin, Winter 2017

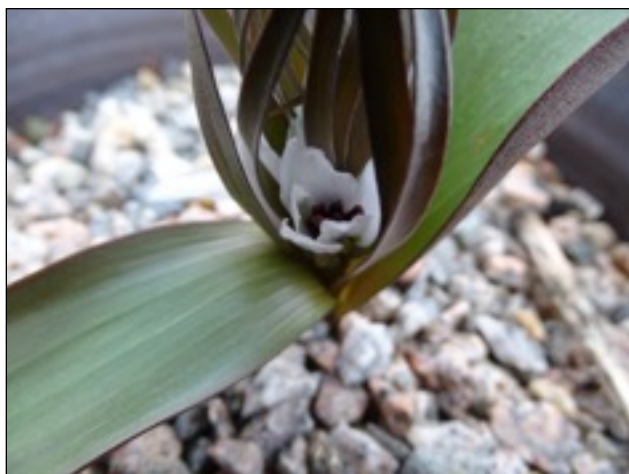
AGCBC meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month except July and August in the Floral Hall, VanDusen Botanical Garden. Doors and Library open at 7:00 p.m. and the meetings start at 7:30 p.m.

Please bring plants for the plant draw; the proceeds of which go toward paying for the hall rental. Don't forget to bring your coffee/tea mug.

2017 AGC-BC Upcoming Events

- **March 8, AGC-BC Meeting** – Hans Roemer on Alpine Flora of Vancouver Island
- **April 1, 12pm-4pm** – Alpine Garden Club Annual Spring Show and Sale
- **April 12, AGC-BC Meeting** – Lawrence Harder on What is an Alpine Plant?
- **April 21, AGC-BC Bus Trip** to Far Reaches Farm and Heronswood Botanic Garden
- **May 10, AGC-BC Meeting** – Alan McMurtrie on Canadian Bred *Iris reticulata* Hybrids (see Bulletin 59:3 and this issue, page 21)
- **May 13, Bowen Island Garden Tour** (see page 7 for details)
- **June 14, AGC-BC Meeting** – Jiri Papousek: Diversity of Methods of Growing Alpines in the Czech Garden

For more information, visit <http://www.agc-bc.ca/events>



Blooming Now in the Alpine House

Fritillaria stenantha emerges from dormancy in mid-winter with flowers already showing on the stem.

Photo by David Sellars

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

You will think I am weather fixated, but I had to think long and hard about the cover photo. A wintry one to reflect our present reality of snow, ice, sleet, slush, rain? Or a forward thinking one, to give us hope? I have gone with the latter, a sunny, cheeky one, taken by Bill Bischoff at Bear Creek Park. Everyone back east and upcountry will think, “what whinging ...” but, on the coast, we just aren’t used to this!! So, several of the new series - “Blooming Now in the Rock Garden”, “Using Carnivorous Plants” and “Using Hardy and/or Native Orchids” are held over to the spring issue. There is no way to know who is alive under the snow, but there is action on the seed front:



Above: Editor's Rock Garden, February 5 (it looks even worse as I write this on February 9),

Left: Reserve troops: Drosera rotundifolia, about 2 cm across, from ICPS seed.

In Member Gardens

Carla Bischoff managed to find some *Hamamelis* blooms peeking out from under the snow on February 5.



Now, down to business:

First, a **request re the format of the Bulletin Index**. I need to catch up on indices for the “Bulletin”. So what kind to do? I need your feedback please. Which of these two do you prefer?

Options: 1: A streamlined index, like that of the NARGS Rock Garden Quarterly – just Author Names (with the title of their article given) and Latin Names of Plants (coded to show those with illustrations)

Or Option 2: Like the cumulative one done for our Volume 56, 2013, <http://www.agc-bc.ca/bulletin> inspired by the indices of AGS Alpine Gardener – it includes Authors, Titles of Articles and Reports, Subjects of Articles, all Latin Names of Plants (coded to also show those with photos in colour or black/white), Photographers, Book Titles, etc.

WANTED:

1. Correspondent to write reports on the talks given at AGC-BC Meetings and take photos.
2. Correspondent to report on and take some photos of the Spring Show and Sale.
3. Correspondent to report on and take some photos for upcoming club trip to the USA.
4. Book Reviewers. Have you read a book on alpenes and rock gardening you would like to review?

No remuneration, but the joy of seeing your name in print, giving your opinion and showing your prowess as a photographer!

In this issue: The Editor gives heartfelt thanks to Paul Spriggs for his article on “The Four *Erythronium* of Vancouver Island”, giving us hope for spring; to Mike Kintgen for his report on the “2016 NARGS Conference: A Higher State”; to Alan McMurtrie (who will be speaking to the AGC-BC in May) for a further report on “Canadian Bred Reticulata Iris - Down the Road”; Ger van den Beuken for another Plant Portrait, this time *Dionysia bryoides*; to Dr. Vlastimil Pilous and Paul Krystof for a Plant Portrait on *Campanula zoysii*; and to David Sellars, as always, for his insightful “Gardens Rock”.

Deadlines for next issues: Spring: May 1, Summer: August 1, Fall: November 1

AGC-BC Website New Section: SEED LISTS from other organizations/individual collectors can now be found under Members - <http://www.agc-bc.ca/seed-lists>. If you have a list you recommend, please send the details to David Sellars at programs@agc-bc.ca. The first two listings are for Czech long-standing seed collectors – Dr. Vlastimil Pilous and Vojtech Holubec. Thank you to member Paul Krystof for suggesting this addition to the website and for providing the list from Dr. Pilous. Paul notes that all the Iris, Crocus and most of the Galanthus species are sold out on the present list, but most other species are still available.

Useful Resources and Links

Available from The Scottish Rock Garden Club (SRGC) Website:

Erythroniums in Cultivation:

A 278-page monograph on *Erythronium* is now available as a pdf download: Grahame Ware (via Bill Bischoff of the AGC-BC) reports that “Ian Young of the Scottish Rock Garden Club, etc., has just published this guide that has been years and years in the making. *Erythronium* and its hybrids are, by and large, well-suited to N. Scotland and their conditions. They are also well-suited to conditions on the east coast of Vancouver Island and possibly even better suited to conditions on northern Vancouver Island where it is wetter and colder. They are a great forest/woods denizen and are very useful at knitting the understory together as many of you probably know. A wealth of info is contained here. Let’s all thank Ian for this great effort!”

[Http://Files.Srgc.Net/General/Erythroniums-In-Cultivation%20-2016-Ianyoung.Pdf](http://Files.Srgc.Net/General/Erythroniums-In-Cultivation%20-2016-Ianyoung.Pdf)

278 Pages chock full of detailed photos and topnotch information. Not to be missed.

Bulb Log: In case you haven’t already discovered it, Ian Young is the creator and author of the “Bulb Log Diary”. Since January 2003, Ian has been publishing these logs, full of photos and detail, available to all: <http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/index.php?log=bulb> Ian published 52 issues to the end of 2016 and has so far done six for 2017. A wealth of material on all things bulbous.

International Rock Gardener: Also freely available to all is the “International Rock Gardener”: <http://www.srgc.org.uk/logs/index.php?log=international>

Published since January 2010 as a monthly, it is now at issue #85. Each issue is jam-packed with photos and useful information on all things alpine from authors around the world. Co-ordinated/edited by Margaret Young, Zdeněk Zvolánek and Ian Young. A must read every month.

Valerie Melanson

Bowen Island Garden Tour

On May 13, 2017 Alpine Garden Club members are invited to tour three gardens on Bowen Island, BC. Two of these gardens belong to members, and the third is a keen neighbouring gardener. The gardens will be open from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

This will be a full day trip and it is recommended that you bring a picnic lunch along. Lisa has kindly offered to make her waterfront patio available for the picnic lunch from 12 noon to 1:30 pm. More details will be available closer to the tour date.

Kathy Leishman 1765 Arbutus Pt, Bowen Bay

Kathy's garden was started in the spring of 1997, just as the house she and her husband David were building was nearing completion. They were lucky to be able to include a deer fence into the landscaping budget, and so the north portion of the garden is protected, while the seaside is open to all the local fauna. She did work out a plan which involved a little research into the habits of the local deer, and just which plants would survive without supplementary water in the dry summers. Like so many plans this has gone through quite a few adjustments! Now the seaside garden is a naturalistic planting of Mediterranean shrubs like *Cistus*, perennials like *Achilleas*, *Eryngiums*, *Thymes*, *Stipas*, *Miscanthus* - with self seeding encouraged, and only moderate editing. The fenced part of the garden has two slightly different areas. The one closest to the house is sunny and a little more formal with *Boxwood* and *Taxus* providing visual weight, and gravel used in place of a grass lawn. The *Agapanthus*, *Geraniums*, *Euphorbias*, *Sedums* give high points during the summer, and *Tulips* bloom with dwarf apple trees in April. The driveway winds up through an area shaded by large firs, and this is where Kathy has planted a few *Rhododendrons* (the very large *R. auriculatum* was transplanted from her West Vancouver garden), lots of *Hellebores*, *Camellias*, hardy *Fuchsias*, various ferns like *Blechnum cordatum*, small grasses like *Millium* e. 'Aureum'. This woodsy part has a relaxed feel, and the small bulbs and perennials mingle as a carpet of foliage. Being on a community water system means that all water use is metered, and this has a major impact on which plants to chose, and how to place them. However, all gardeners have something to challenge them! And Kathy feels the challenge could be seen as part of the fun!

Patty Smith 1747 Arbutus Pt, Bowen Bay

In 2002, Patty and her husband Erwen moved from their family home in West Vancouver to build a permanent home on Bowen Island. Patty began her garden by contouring the south facing lot into terraces down the slope. By 2005, the construction of their house was completed including some of the details designed by Patty herself such as the driftwood shed and green roof, the cedar fencing, the iron entry gate, and the many paintings inside their beautiful west coast home. There are many conifers and large shrubs. A ferny shade garden is tucked near the front door, and its treasures can be enjoyed equally from the house or garden. Being the furthest inland of the three gardens on this tour, this property has the most sheltered microclimate. Stroll through the garden, pause, and enjoy the view as well as the plantings, which is what Patty encourages while you visit.

Lisa O'Donnell 1829 Arbutus Pt, Bowen Bay

After acquiring this property in May of 2015, the first order of business in Lisa's garden was to remove several trees- six firs that blocked the view, a huge cedar that was growing under Hydro lines and needed annually topping, and six holly trees! She has concentrated her work on the garden within the "deer gates". Many shrubs were quite overgrown as the former owner hadn't gardened for a few years. Some plants were blocking sprinklers or simply didn't appeal so they were removed. Her goal was to reduce the workload in the garden. Also water saving was a necessity as, even though the property has a well exclusively to serve the garden, its capacity is limited. A huge change occurred in early February 2016 when, having had a windmill on top of a microwave tower removed, and anticipating reworking the garden around its location, Lisa found that two 70 foot firs had fallen onto the carport and two others had been rocked so badly that they needed to go! Another had already been taken down in order to facilitate removing the windmill tower, so suddenly they are "down" five 70 foot trees and have a lot of firewood! In March last year, as soon as the debris was removed, Lisa built a rockery where the fallen trees had been, using stone found on the property. A rock retaining wall was added by John and their son spread gravel to form a pathway. As in her Vancouver garden, she is trying to do all the work herself, with help with the heavy lifting from her husband and son. Conifers predominate - and after learning that big lesson from the wind, the majority are dwarf. Being on a point, this garden is very exposed and interesting to adapt to the conditions!

Seed Exchange Report

Diana Hume

Another year, another seed exchange! This year's exchange went well and finished with the local orders being picked up at the January meeting and the last few being mailed the next day. The overseas, the US, and the rest of the Canadian orders were mailed the week before. We had done the mailing the Thursday before the meeting at Gill Collins with the help of Linda Verbeek, Marilyn Plant, Patricia North, and Marika Roe. Thank you!!

And a big thank you to all the seed packagers. We met once a week from mid-November to just before Christmas and again, after Christmas to do the order filling. The Vancouver group met at Pam Frost's house every Thursday with Pam, Linda Verbeek, Marilyn Plant, Gill Collins, Ann Dies, Patricia North, Karen Thirkle, and Jo Turner. The Sechelt group met at Verity Goodier's house on Tuesdays with Bill Terry, Karin Tigges, Ali Thompson, and Beverley Merrifield. And the North Shore Group met on Tuesdays at my house with Pam Yokome, Ruth Anderson, Wendie Kottmeier, Angela Miller, Lynn Batt, Geri Barnes, Margot Ketchum, and Dana Cromie.

Next fall, if you feel so inclined to join us, please email me seedrequest@agc-bc.ca.

And, of course, a huge thank you to all our seed donors. Without you, we could not have an exchange. The donors are listed at the beginning of the seed list.

Some of the popular seeds this year were *Aquilegia jonesii*, *Astragalus purshii*, *Claytonia megarhiza* v *nivalis*, *Clintonia andrewsiana*, *Douglasia nivalis*, *Eriogonum umbellatum*, *Erythronium hendersonii* and *E. revolutum*, *Lewisia tweedyi*, many of the Trilliums, and *Viola trinervata*. Many of the Cyclamen were popular too as well as many others.

In Memoriam

JOSEPHINE BRIDGE, "Jo" to members, passed away December 4, 2016 at home. Jo at 92 had a long gardening life. Her friendship I treasured. As far back as I can remember Jo was a member of the AGCBC. Always willing to help, she was a regular on the seed packing committee. At a number of Study Weekends, Jo and Rachel MacKenzie manned the book sales stall – "heavy work". Jo was always available to sell and donate plants at our twice yearly sales.

Jo, addicted to snowdrops, was filled with excitement when a new one first flowered. Cyclamen were another fascination.

For years the Bridge family spent much of the summer at their cabin on Thormanby Island up the Sunshine Coast. In this rocky low rainfall environment, Jo planted a garden bit by bit. Hard found soil back filled the walls she had raised or containers. Seaweed was a big help in the survival of many plants as was precious fresh water doled out, a bucket at a time. Olive trees were her most recent addition to her landscape. Long may they live, in her memory.

Margaret Charlton

2016 NARGS Conference: A Higher State

Report and photos by Mike Kintgen, Denver, Colorado

Thanks to many hands, minds and feet that helped with the 2016 NARGS Conference in Denver and Steamboat Springs, almost 250 participants enjoyed tours at the Denver Botanic Gardens, lectures in the evening, garden tours in Steamboat Springs and two days of hiking in the Northern Colorado Rockies. The weather was perfect (no smoke, rain or cold weather).

The lectures given by Nick Courtens, Marcela Ferreyra,

Johan Nilsson, Kelly Norris, Kenton Seth, and myself were well received. The speakers addressed various topics relating to the steppes and related semi arid mountain ranges of the world. Happily, some people say it was one of the best line up of speakers in a long time. One of the foci of the conference was the number of young people in rock gardening and almost 20 of the 240 plus conference goers were under the age of 40. Five of the six speakers were under 40 as well.



Young Blood

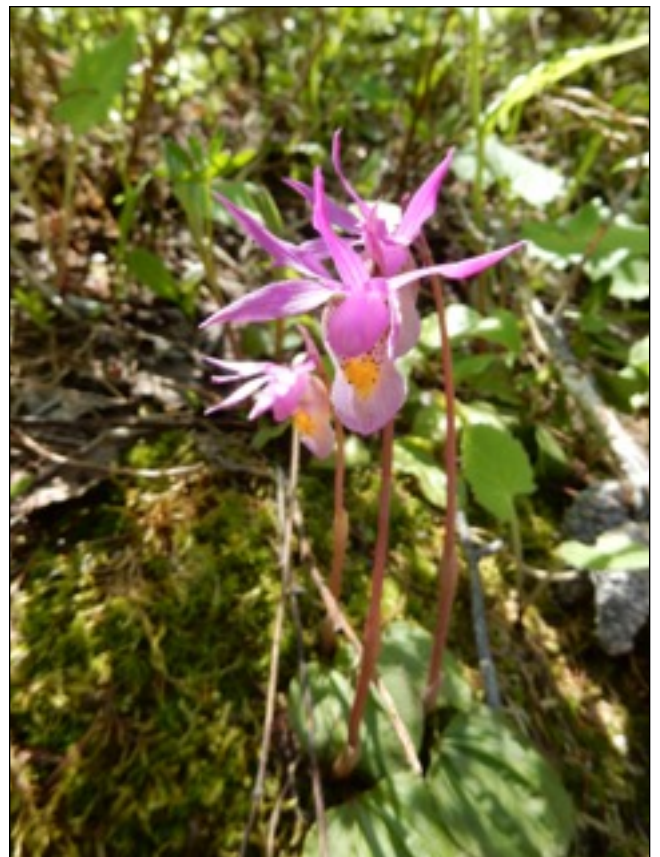
The wildflowers were good, and the various hikes allowed participants to see everything from early spring blossoms (and snow at the highest hikes) to almost mid-summer blooms in the valleys below. During the hikes, and in preparing for the hikes,



Corallobiza wisteriana

I saw several species of plants I had never seen before which was exciting. Ironically, the hike I saw the highest number of new plants on, was up the Steamboat Ski Mountain on June 15, while doing a dry run for the actual conference hikes. We saw *Corallobiza wisteriana*, a smaller and earlier flowering coral root; *Ribes viscosissimum*, which I thought would make a beautiful ornamental; and I finally saw *Prosartes trachycarpa*, which was not quite in bloom.

All of them are rather uncommon in Colorado but could be common in other regions of the continent. Sadly, I think some of these were done blooming by the time we had the official hikes although Nick Courtens of Betty Ford Alpine Garden did find one last *Calypso bulbosa*, I heard. On Saturday I led a day long trip to the North Park area of North Central Colorado. Here a large broad valley (park) is filled with steppe, surrounded by high mountains. The variety of habitats is fascinating, ranging from classic sagebrush steppe with cushions and buns, to fens, and alkali lakes. There are even two areas of sand dunes, and acid bogs at the edges. We had a lovely day filled with a variety of habitats. I think one of the highlights was seeing *Lewisia rediviva*, although several native orchids



Calypso bulbosa

including *Cypripedium fasciculatum* and several species of *Listera* made the day as well.



Listera cordata



Lewisia triphylla

The final stop was a fen with *Primula incana*, and several other unusual plants. On Sunday I led a hike on Windy Ridge near Rabbit Ears Pass and here the meadows of flowers were quite good. There were classic things like *Aquilegia caerulea* and *Castilleja miniata*. One spot still had a snow patch and the last *Erythronium grandiflorum* were still in bloom. We saw both *Lewisia nevadensis* and *Lewisia triphylla*, and a possible hybrid between them?

One group led by my father, made it all the way up to the alpine tundra on the Flattop range south of Steamboat Springs. I heard it was a mass of *Polemonium viscosum*. That would have been a beautiful sight. The flattops can be a bit like the “Sound of Music” with flower filled meadows stretching across an undulating volcanic plateau at about 11,000-12,000 feet above sea level. I heard overall the plants were good and most people enjoyed what they saw. I wished the ski area had a little more variety on it for everyone but I hope the views and good company made up for the lack of flora variety. I think one of the biggest draws were

the meadows of flowers along the roads to and from the hikes. It was great to share one of my favorite parts of the world with everyone.



On the search

This conference would not have been possible without the tremendous number of volunteers who came together to make it happen – from the Rocky Mountain Chapter of NARGS, from the Front Range, Steamboat Springs and in reality internationally with several of the volunteers being from Philadelphia, England and points near and far. A giant “Thank You” to all who helped make it possible. For 2017, there will be a conference in North Carolina in November and a study weekend in Wisconsin. Both promise to be great events. I hope to see you there.

Also seen



Gentiana fremontii



Ribes viscosissimum



Mike Kintgen is the Curator of Alpine Collections at the Denver Botanic Gardens (DBG) where he oversees the Alpine Collection and eight gardens including the Rock Alpine Garden, and South African Plaza. In 2012 he finished a two-year project to have DBG's collection of alpines recognized in the North American Plant Collection Consortium through the American Public Gardens Association. He interned at the Chicago

Botanic Gardens and at Rhododendron Species Foundation under Steve Hootman. He has been a member of NARGS since 1993 (age 12) and is a former president of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of NARGS. Travel opportunities since a young age have allowed him to observe alpines in Alaska, Hawaii, Argentina, Morocco, Spain, the Alps, and throughout the American West.

Mike began gardening at a young age with a specific interest in alpine and rock garden plants. Anything with chlorophyll attracts his attention but especially cushions and buns, along with the genera *Eriogonum*, *Penstemon*, *Phlox*, *Saxifraga*, *Dianthus*, *Gentiana* and *Androsace*. He currently gardens in both Denver and Steamboat Springs, Colorado. The two different climates allow him to experiment with a wide range of plant material.

The Four *Erythronium* of Vancouver Island

Paul Spriggs, Victoria, BC

Did you know that there are four species of *Erythronium* growing wild on Vancouver Island?

Yes. It's true. That charming little wildflower, so cherished by woodland gardeners all over the world is well represented here on the island, yet they all come from very different habitats, presenting a welcome challenge for gardeners. The four species that occur on Vancouver Island are *Erythronium oregonum*, *E. revolutum*, *E. grandiflorum*, and *E. montanum*.

Erythroniums, one of our most beautiful spring ephemerals, belong to the lily family (liliaceae). Like many lilies, they stem from a deep underground bulb. In the springtime (summer for the alpine species), this bulb pushes up a pair of basal leaves, clear and unmarked in some species, and heavily mottled in others. Following almost immediately after the appearance of the leaves, the flower bud then rises above to open into a beautiful, reflexed flower.

There are roughly 20 known species of this genus. The great majority occur here in North America, with the greatest distribution in the West. Europe hosts three species, the best known being the Dog Tooth Violet (*E. dens-canis*), and Asia has only *E. japonicum*. They come from many different habitats, suggesting that one cannot assume they all want the same treatment. Like many bulbs, all Erythroniums have one common need: good drainage and varying degrees of humus if they are to survive in the garden. Gardeners may be familiar with the oft seen cultivars and selections 'Pagoda', 'White Beauty', and 'Lilac Wonder', but the purity of the true species is what enchants gardeners far and wide.

Perhaps the most recognizable of the genus to Vancouver Islanders is the Fawn Lily (*E. oregonum*). The reason for its familiarity is because of its tendency to grow in the Mediterranean rain shadow of the island's south-east coastal plain, where most of the population lives.

This lowland species can be so abundant that it is not uncommon to find natural colonies right in people's rural backyards!



Erythronium oregonum



It is a plant associated with the Oak and Camas meadows of the island and so, naturally, it doesn't mind a slight drying period in the summer. That being said, the bulbs usually dig themselves so deeply into the meadow loam, that there is likely some moisture way down there. So they shouldn't be baked in summer. Like all

bulbs, ample water during the growing season is a requirement. This plant has mottled leaves and a creamy-white flower, the inside of the petals, ringed with exquisite reddish-brown markings, and a yellow centre at the base.

Being native to where many of us garden, it is generally not difficult to grow, and with the right conditions of rich meadow loam, spring water and a summer rest, will thrive and even naturalize. Those lucky enough to be gardening on Garry Oak loam can have success by simply scattering seeds about and waiting.

As mentioned above, this plant is so ubiquitous, that it can be seen in almost any of our natural parks and roadsides along the dry east coast of the island during its bloom period which typically happens in early to mid-April.

Another *Erythronium*, and probably the second best known to local gardeners is the exquisitely beautiful Pink Fawn Lily (*Erythronium revolutum*).



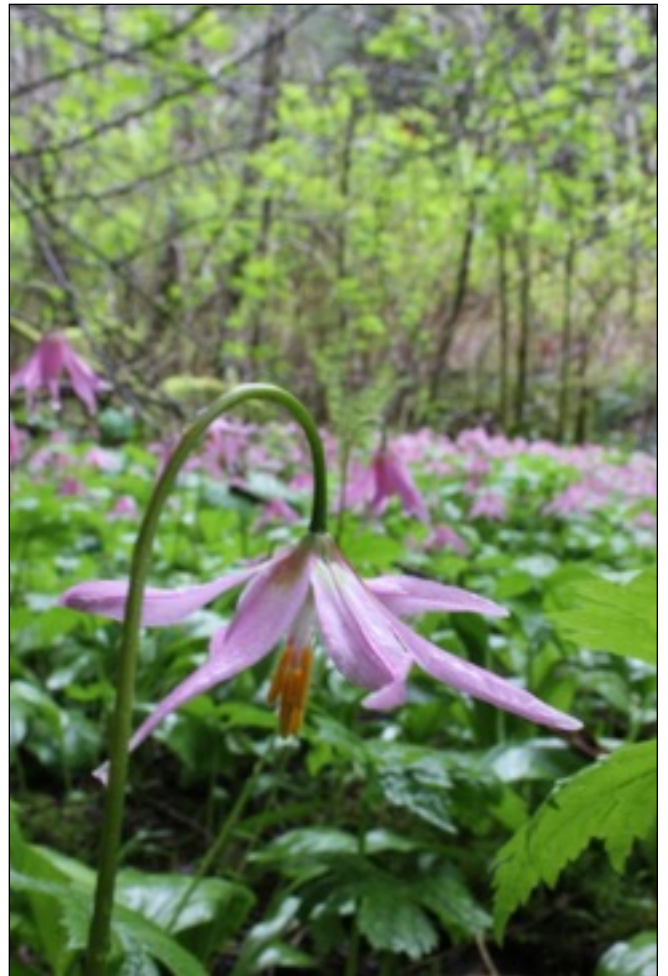
Erythronium revolutum



This is also a lowland species, but contrary to the above *E. oregonum*, this species inhabits the other side of the island, typically on the rainy and wild west coast, rarely far from the ocean.

On Vancouver Island, this is most commonly found in valley bottoms along the riparian zones of rivers and streams. Gardeners can take a cultivation clue from this. These areas are much wetter than the east side habitats, often flooding in winter, and never really drying out in summer.

This is a plant for irrigated gardens where it will naturalize freely in gravelly, almost sandy soil with some humus that stays wet all year. Allow it to dry out in the summer and you will certainly lose it. I am aware of one colony in a Victoria garden where it has naturalized on the screenings of an irrigated pathway! Here the colony has increased quite rapidly. If the irrigation system was not covering the path, this would never have happened.



Last year I found a surprise. Deep down in an almost inaccessible canyon of a remote west coast river, a colony of pure white *E. revolutum*!

Here it was growing alongside pink ones, and they had hybridized, resulting in all shades of white, pink and everything in between. One of the best places to see this on Vancouver Island is in Honeymoon

Bay Wildflower Reserve, 10 kilometres past the village of Lake Cowichan. Here you will see acres of it carpeting the valley floor of the Sutton Creek watershed in late April.

As easy as the above two *Erythroniums* are to grow, the other two Islanders are sadly not so easy. This is mainly because they come from mountain habitats that are difficult to re-create in the garden. That the two hail from the mountains is reflected in their names: Avalanche Lily (*E. montanum*), and Glacier Lily (*E. grandiflorum*).

Glacier Lily is the most widespread of all four of our *Erythroniums*, ranging all the way from British Columbia south and east to the central Rockies of Colorado. This one is different because it is our only pure yellow species and unlike the aforementioned, its leaves are not mottled, rather a pure, shiny green. Vancouver Island forms also tend to be smaller than mainland forms, with usually only one flower per stem. It is a snowmelt species, inhabiting south facing slopes and appearing immediately after the retreat of the snowpack.

Like the above species, it can grow in great numbers, often carpeting the ground. The difficulty in cultivating this species is due to its habitat requirements. Dry, cold, snow covered ground in winter, and hot, dry summers. It is not common on Vancouver Island, and many of its localities are difficult to get to during its bloom period since it blooms so early. So often I have seen the ripening seed



heads and withering foliage of this plant peppering the herbaceous subalpine meadows and wish I had visited a month earlier. The steep, south facing meadow leading to the saddle between Mt. Cokely and Mt. Arrowsmith is a relatively accessible location for this plant. However, its bloom time can vary greatly depending on the snowpack, usually in June or July.

The last of our four island *Erythroniums* is the Avalanche Lily (*E. montanum*), right. This is another un-mottled leaved species, and the only one of the four with a pure white flower. So pure is its whiteness, and so dense the colonies, that when it blooms, the ground can appear to be covered in snow! The centre of the flower is ornamented with yellow, similar to the lowland Fawn Lily. Like the Glacier Lily, this is also a plant of the mountains, and consequently is difficult in cultivation.

Though common in the mainland ranges of the Cascades and the Olympics, the Avalanche Lily is only known to occur in one place on Vancouver Island: the San Juan ridge behind Port Renfrew.

Although only 1,000 metres high, this ridge receives an immense amount of snow, creating sub-alpine conditions at a fairly low elevation. What's interesting here is that it grows in the clearcuts leading to the ridge, and the openings left by the tree harvesting has improved its habitat. Further up the ridge, where it grows in the mottled shade of the forest, each plant hosts only a single flower. However, in the clearcuts, some incredibly robust plants can be found, some with as many as ten blooms per specimen!! If only we could re-create this in our gardens. But alas, attempts to tame this wild child of the hills have proven to be fruitless, at least in my experience. Perhaps success may be had in highland gardens that experience colder winters, but for lowland island gardens this one is a no-go.





Kenton Seth views a colony in a clearcut on San Juan Ridge

Fortunately, the colonies are easily accessed by car thanks to the logging roads that penetrate their hilly haunts.

One cannot help but be charmed by this magnificent wildflower, coveted by gardeners the world over. Whether growing in a garden, ornamenting a wild meadow, streamside or mountainside, it never fails to impress. It catches the eye of the casual passerby, its enchanting blooms calling out to be admired. How lucky we should be that our island hosts such a fine representation of the genus, and that we can visit with relative ease such a treasure.



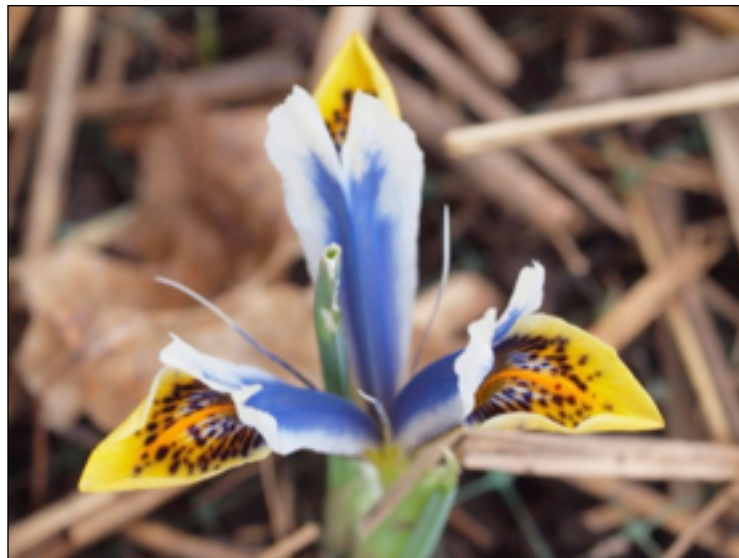
(Paul on Mt. Elbert in Colorado, photo by Kenton Seth)

Paul Spriggs has a passion for mountains and their flora. He has been the owner of Spriggs Gardens Landscaping Company in Victoria for 28 years. He is a rock garden builder with a specialty in the crevice style, having learned from innovators of that style, like Zdeněk Zvolánek and Vojtech Holubec. Among his friends he counts Mike Kintgen and Kenton Seth (whom he assisted on the Apex Crevice Garden in Colorado). Paul is a long-time member of VIRAGS (Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine Garden Society) and is currently Vice President and one of the programme co-ordinators.

Canadian Bred Reticulata Iris – Down The Road

Alan McMurtrie, Toronto, Ontario

I'm going to tease you with something you can't have; or more precisely, can't have for 10+ years: **Tequila Sunrise** (09-LE-2). It bloomed for the first time in 2016. I couldn't believe my eyes when I first saw it. I never would have imagined anything like this was possible. In case you don't realize, this is an incredible colour break. It's almost like someone took parts from two different flowers and glued them together. I hope people like it as much as I do. The **Catch-22** is, it will be about 12 years before there are enough bulbs to start sales. The good news is, it exists, and does reasonably well. It's a touch on the small side at 45mm tip-to-tip, but I have put it into a lab for conversion to polyploid, of which a tetraploid version could be 15-25% larger with slightly thicker petals (which might allow the flowers to last long). Typically I don't come up with a name until we're close to introducing a variety, but in this case **Tequila Sunrise** just seemed to fit.



Tequila Sunrise (09-LE-2)

I will be speaking to AGCVI in Qualicum Beach on May 8, VIRAGS in Victoria on May 9, and AGC-BC at the Van Dusen Gardens in Vancouver on May 10. The aim of this article is to wet your appetite and give you a glimpse of what I'll be showing, and to hopefully ensure you'll attend one of the talks.

When I went plant collecting in Turkey over 30 years ago to collect a diploid form of *Iris danfordiae*, one of the things I wanted to do was create a pale yellow Reticulata Iris. *Iris winogradowii* is a lovely pale yellow from alpine meadows in the Georgian Republic, but it needs moisture during the Summer which is something we often don't have in Toronto. **Smile** (03-CC-3) is that plant.

Another hybrid from 2003 seed that I particularly like is **Pristine** (03-FQ-1). It was shown for the first time at the RHS Early Spring Plant Fair in London, England in February 2016 and received a Preliminary Commendation. It has **Orange Glow** in its parentage.



Smile (03-CC-3)



Pristine (03-FQ-1)

Typically whites have blue ribs on their style arms as well as dotting on their falls. I refer to this as “blue accents.” Rarely there has been dark green accents, which may be the result of chlorophyll. One hybridizing goal is to create a white with cherry accents (i.e. purple accents). Time will tell whether this is possible.

I’ve shown you **Eye Catcher** (98-NP-4), which is a lovely white with navy markings and is available in Canada. My goal is to have you enjoy my hybrids, and hopefully have them last in your garden. They aren’t perfect, which is why I recommend planting some bulbs in a second location; just in case something happens to one of the plantings. Try to avoid the temptation to plant them too close together for an instant clumping effect. Well-drained soil is important. They enjoy moisture in the Spring, but it’s not good if they are sitting in it. Key is providing a long growing period so the bulbs can fully regenerate, and reward you with bloom year after year. I’m hoping that you enjoy them so much that you’ll want to try growing more – but not more of the same variety – more of other varieties. **Eye Catcher** is truly a beautiful variety. Another along this same line is **Cool** (03-FO-2). In 2016 the current Dutch grower was passing a small stock of it in the field and said it looks too much like **Eye Catcher**. To me **Cool** is a lovely pure white, with perfectly contrasting rich blue markings. I do hope to ensure it gets to market. The difficulty is needing enough bulbs to be able to bring it to market at a reasonable price. Something you probably don’t think about is it does cost money to build up a stock, and it takes many years. In the case of bulbs we’re talking 10+ years.

One Iris to bloom for the first time in 2010 was **It’s Magic** (05-HW-1). The name explains where the lovely brown fall markings come from. Being “magical,” one might hope it would give some interesting children. The first to bloom was 10-CR-1 in 2016 (two more are expected in 2017). Of particular note its orange colouring lasted four days before it started to fade!



Cool (03-FO-2)



It's Magic (05-HW-1)



10-CR

Back in 2008 I was visiting the Dutch grower who I was working with at the time. He asked me if I had a name for 98-YS-1, and I said no, I didn't. He replied that he and his son thought it should be called Holland's Glorie. That made me smile – that he thought it was so good that it deserved a name like that. Of course I can point to the exact spot in my front garden in Toronto where Holland Glory/Holland's Glorie first bloomed.



Holland Glory (98-YS-1)



Neptune (03-JM-2)

You may be interested that both **Holland Glory** and **Lilac Beauty** have **White Caucasus** parentage. White Caucasus is one of the last Reticulatas to bloom and is available in Canada.

One hybrid that was quite colourful in the field in Holland is **Neptune** (03-JM-2). The Dutch grower seemed quite impressed.

A cross that has proven quite good is 05-GQ. Four of its 25 seeds bloomed; one each year starting in 2010. The one I like best is **Wow** (05-GQ-3), but the others are quite nice as well. 05-GQ-2 is not necessarily as showy, but it has done well in my garden. All four are in Holland with 05-GQ-1 being there the longest, and so should be available first. I have a tetraploid version of it, which is about 17% larger. A few bulbs are now here in Toronto. I am particularly keen to find out whether its flowers last longer.



05-GQ-1



05-GQ-2



Wow (05-GQ-3)



05-GQ-4



Lilac Beauty (03-AN-3)



I now have a few polyploidy versions of my hybrids in my garden. I won't have time in my talks to explain why I'm doing this work, but hope to report some observations. In the photo above, based on the coarseness of the tunic, I wonder if the bulb on the left is octoploid ($8n$), or possibly even hexadeciploid ($16n$). The goal of polyploids is to be able to hybridize them at the tetraploid level. I have been cautioned that octoploids may be slower growing and as a result have smaller flowers, but I wonder if even thicker petals of octoploids would make the flowers last even longer than tetraploids. I won't know for sure unless I have the lab I'm using in Holland produce some. I was so keen that I paid an extra conversion fee to specifically have them create an octoploid version of **It's Magic**.



Tetraploid It's Magic

Final Words

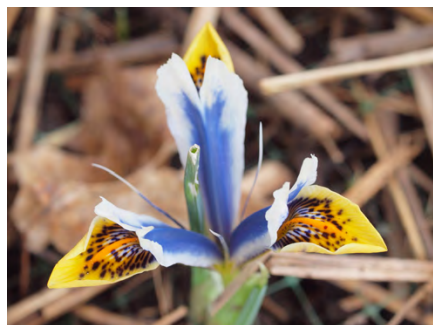
Unfortunately supply of several of my hybrids will be limited over the next two or three years. A Dutch grower who had some of the stocks rented a field for 2015/16 that turned out not to drain properly. As circumstances would have it, my smallest stocks were planted right at that end, and coincidentally 2016 turned out to have a wet Spring. What then didn't help is he oversold a couple of the varieties. At the end of January 2016, he announced that he was closing his company. He told me not to worry, he would look after 2016 sales, but I would need to find another grower for the

2016/17 growing season. It turned out he wasn't concerned about future sales; he simply wanted to maximize his share of the profits. So on one hand it was great to learn last fall that we sold 22,500 Sea Breeze, but it turns out I now hear from the new grower we only have sufficient stock to sell 7,500 in 2017. It would have been much better to limit sales to 15,000, and then have 22,000 available for 2017, with that or more for 2018. Needless to say, I'm not happy with that grower.

Sales of Eye Catcher were "through the roof." We couldn't supply all of the orders: going from 9,500 in 2015 to 47,000 in 2016! Plus there were unfilled orders for 10,000 more. As a result of the way orders came in we oversold, so only 26,000 will be available this year. E.g. a customer ordered 4,000 bulbs and subsequently asked for

5,000 more. The order was approved, but somehow got recorded as 5,000 when the actual order was for 9,000. Given the demand, the aim is of course to build the stock, so we need to cut back sales a bit in order to make that happen.

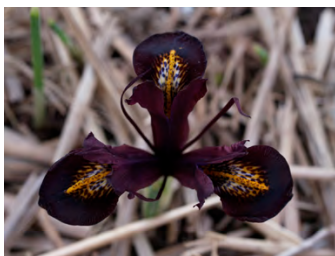
Hope to see you at one of the talks. Check out www.Reticulatas.com



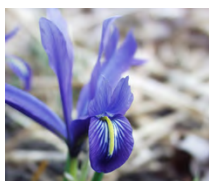
Tequila Sunrise (09-LE-2)



03-CV-4



03-EK-1



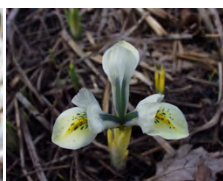
sophenensis



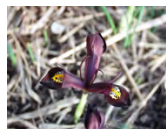
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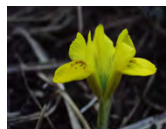
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97-DZ-8



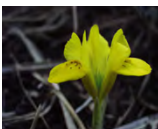
88-AX-1



danfordiae ANMc2325



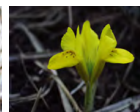
91-FC-3



danfordiae ANMc2325



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danfordiae ANMc2325



danfordiae Atilla



sophenensis

L: Tequila Sunrise's family tree

Plant Portrait - *Dionysia bryoides*

Ger van den Beuken, The Netherlands



Habitat

Like almost all other *Dionysia* species, *Dionysia bryoides* is an endemic plant of the Zagros Mountain range in the southwest of Iran. It grows on north or northwest facing limestone cliffs in semi-shaded and shaded crevices, at an altitude of 2,000 to 2,800 metres.

The plants form dense, deep green cushions with short branched stems that become woody as they age. Cushions can grow sometimes up to more than 35 centimetres across. The flowers can range from pale pink to dark purple with a white centre. The leaves are hairless but are covered instead with numerous minute glands.

Cultivation

Being difficult to propagate, *Dionysia bryoides* was rarely seen in cultivation in the past. However, thanks to several botanical expeditions, different clones are available now from some expert growers. The culture of *Dionysias* is not easy, as they need the right conditions like a glass covered raised bed or more conveniently an alpine house with a lot of air movement.

My collection is grown in clay pots sunken in a deep sandbed with a watering system from beneath. The alpine house is surrounded with louvres to provide plants with air. Besides this I'm using two big vents for additional air movement. Good light

conditions are also essential, but too bright sun will burn the plants during summer very quickly. Therefore shading is a must. The substrate I use is a mix of pumice, seramis, perlite, coarse sand and a very small addition of peat. Repotting the plants is necessary every two years.

Propagation

My way of propagation is only from cuttings. This is a very difficult job and the rooting results are often disappointing. The cutting substrate is a mix of very fine perlite and coarse sand. The cuttings are inserted in this mix, moistened beforehand and covered with a transparent lid, then kept out of direct sunlight. Springtime immediately after flowering, when the plants show new growth, is the best time for taking cuttings. Seeds are rarely seen due to lack of good pollinators, so this is not an option.

When giving a talk last winter in New Zealand, somebody was shouting from the back of the hall... "It's a shame, I can clearly see the pollen from here, that means hand pollination would be a possibility." ... but I leave that job to other people.



Dionysia bryoides...four forms in the centre of the photo, grown by Ger van den Beuken. These were collected on an expedition to Iran by a group of German plant hunters – Jäger, Löbke, Mayr, Stopp



Dionysia bryoides 'Bolero'



Dionysia bryoides 'Henrik Zetterlund'

Plant Portrait: *Campanula zoysii*

Dr. Vlastimil Pilous, Czech Republic

Nowadays, the growers of rock garden plants have a choice of many small, beautiful bluebells. They are among the most attractive of alpinists, with flowers being large, compared to the low height and small size of the foliage. One feature they mostly share is the shape of their flowers. This is not to their detriment, one can never have too many of them. For us, the flower shape can serve as a useful tool to recognize the genera. Once it flowers, with this feature in hand, any beginner can readily recognize a *Campanula* that arrived as an anonymous gift plant. It does not matter where in the world it came from. But, it would not be nature, if evolution did not make an exception or two. One does not have to travel too far from central Europe to find one. In the southwest Alps grows a bluebell that is more than sufficiently different to keep some guessing about its identity.

In the past, during the years of restricted travel, under the communist rule, the Czech growers of alpinists would source this plant from the mountains of northwestern Yugoslavia, where it was somewhat easier to travel to. Despite that, it remained 'Hamlet-like', questioning its existence in collections. Not many can boast of a successful cultivation of the species and likely there are none that have kept it for long.

It would be of no use to go into absolute detail to describe the plant as its photographs are available in the literature or on the internet. Some lucky enthusiasts may have seen it in nature or during its brief spells in the garden. The most appreciated features of this species are its small size, compared to other species of the genera, and the very atypical flower shape. No other bluebell (and there are roughly about 400 species) has such narrow, pitcher-like flowers. To make things even more unorthodox, the 'bell' gets narrower towards its opening, unlike other bell flowers which get wider. The flowers are about 1.5 to 2 cm long narrowing toward the opening, where just before the terminus is a very tight restriction, hidden by a small rosette of petal tips.



Close-up photo by Jiri Papousek

The different flower shape can possibly be explained by the very old origin of this plant. It could be a tertiary relic, with other similar species gone extinct. The very narrow passage into the flower is very restrictive to many common pollinators, the bumblebees would be the most likely to access the long tube. One feature that it shares with most bluebells is its varying bluish or purplish colour. The tendency, though, is toward the lighter shades.

The species was named after the first Slovenian/Austrian botanist, Karl von Zoys, a baron, who lived in the second half of the 18th century. *Campanula zoysii* is found only on limestone and is a typical petrophyte of high elevation karst. It is very strict in its predilection toward only inhabiting tight crevices, never being found on ledges or wider gaps of the rock, where more collected organic matter would be found. It can also be present in high screes composed only of weathered rock.

It is a very narrow endemic, growing in a very small area. Restriction to a small area is a characteristic shared by two other members of the 'Alp Trio', *Campanula rainieri* and *C. morettiana*. Another two species of exquisite bluebells, *Campanula alpestris* (*C. allionii*) and *C. cenisia* are somewhat more widespread. This may be due to their greater tolerance to the various types of rock they grow in. They can be found on limestone as well as on dolomite and even on rocks with smaller amounts of calcium, such as some shales. *Campanula zoysii* hails only from mostly limestone ranges, bordering Austria, Italy and Slovenia. It is a typical representative of the alpine to subalpine habitat, found mostly between 1,500 and 2,300 metres above the sea level. Occasionally it can be found lower, apparently where it gets washed down from the higher screes.



Cultivated in tufa, photo by Jiri Papousek

Campanula zoysii is highly valued not only by the growers of alpines but also by the nemesis of many rare plants, the slugs and snails. While they enjoy munching on many of the Campanulas, this species appears to be the most desired one of the genera. Many enthusiasts have 'thrown in the towel' for that reason. Still, even if you defeat these almost ever present enemies, success is not easy to achieve. It is an unfortunate reality that this gem is relatively short lived in culture. The year when it develops a good bloom, is likely its last time.



Cultivation on tufa, photo by Dr. Vlastimil Pilous

In my experience, the best way to plant it may be in a 'blind' hole in a tufa block, filled in with tufa grit. I also locate the planting spot close to the upper part of the rocks, where the likelihood of the slugs and snails is the lowest and, as well, the drainage is perfect. Positioned this way, on two different occasions, a few seedlings were found growing straight out of the travertine block. While these lasted a relatively long time, unfortunately it was not forever.

Note: *Campanula zoysii* is a synonym of *Favratia zoysii*.

(Previously published in Skalničky, the journal of the Czech Rock Garden Society (<http://czrgs.cz/>). Republication here was arranged, and translation done, by AGC-BC member Paul Krystof.)

David Sellars

Why Grow *Kabschia* Saxifrages?

If you are contemplating rock garden plants with floriferous tight buns, as many of us are at this time of year, then *Kabschia* saxifrages could be what you are looking for. Many alpine plants such as *Eriogonum* have nondescript foliage in the winter or no foliage at all. Saxifrages from the *Kabschia* series form attractive low mounds with year-round foliage interest and have flowers that are tight to the plant or extend skywards seeking out the sun and insects for pollination.



Many alpine plants do not perform as well in the garden as they do in the wild. For example, *Douglasia laevigata* puts on a magnificent show of flowers on the high ridges of the Olympic Mountains, but in our garden they have only a few, rather limp, flowers. *Kabschia* saxifrages, by contrast, always seem to flower in the garden as vigorously as they do in nature. *Kabschia* are also long-lived, slug resistant

and species-rich with lots of variation and flower colour. What's not to like?

Well for one thing they are rather particular about growing conditions. They must not get over-heated in the summer, but do not do well in the shade of overhanging trees. They need to be on north facing, open slopes and protected from full sun by an adjacent rock. *Kabschia* saxifrages flower early, mostly in March, but sometimes in February. Drenching rains and frost can spoil the flowers unless some overhead rain protection is provided. Nevertheless they are well worth growing, even for the foliage, and do not need much attention once they get established. A few of the *Kabschia* cultivars that do well in the open garden in our climate are the light pink 'Allendale Charm' (see photo above), dark pink 'Jenkinsiae' and yellow 'Winton' and 'Marianna'. Forms of white *Saxifraga burseriana* and *Saxifraga marginata* also do well.